

## Obituary

### Frederick George Swindley BSc, BA

11.6.1924 – 3.7.2017 (age 93)

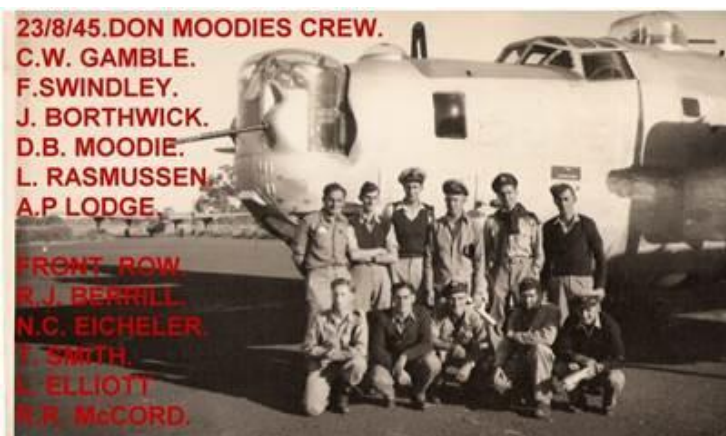
I have known Fred for about a third of his 93 years through our association with The Society for Insect Studies. I have visited Fred at home and spoke quite frequently by phone but did not learn a lot about his early years until I started to put this précis of his life together. Much of this information has come from others, to whom I am extremely grateful, and the genius of the World Wide Web.

Fred grew up in the Melbourne suburb of Blackburn with a younger brother. He lost his father at the age of 10. Fred attended Box Hill Technical College and later, at around the age of 25, he took up his first residency at the prestigious Queen's College in Parkville, Victoria, which is associated with the University of Melbourne. Studying science there in 1949, he later returned to Queen's to study agriculture, graduating in 1968 at age 44.

Fred's early jobs included being a message boy for the Herald newspaper, a junior clerk for a battery company (Union Carbide possibly), and with Victorian Railways as a porter.



University of Melbourne - Queen's College  
(DonalDYtong, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3753888>)



At age 19 Fred joined the Airforce. I shared a love of aeroplanes with Fred. Fred told me he flew (or flew in) a Liberator bomber before the war.

I told Fred that I had seen a Liberator in Cusco, Peru in about 1996, pushed off the runway into the bush. I told him it was damaged and derelict from lack of maintenance but appeared to be otherwise intact and complete. Fred got very excited and said he would like to get it back to Australia to be restored. We spent a few years trying to track it down by computer. We came up with an airframe number of one that flew in the area. However the airframe was tracked to one that crashed in Darwin.

I had seen a Liberator being restored in Melbourne and so I Googled them, made contact with B-24 Liberator Restoration Australia in Werribee and discovered that Fred joined R.A.A.F. Squadron 99. He trained as a pilot but failed his exam. He took the position as ball turret gunner.

The Werribee group was able to find an original photo of Fred and his crew of eleven, and a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary photo taken only a few years back.

Australia had 287 Liberators, fitted with ten Browning 50 calibre heavy machine guns and a pay load of 4 tonnes of bombs. They mostly



Top, Fred back row second from left; below Fred front right  
(images supplied by B-24 Liberator Restoration Australia)

flew bombing missions in S.E. Asia, Borneo and PNG, bombing Japanese positions. However, many Australian crews flew R.A.F. Liberators in Europe, Burma and India. There were 19,000 Liberators built and operated by twelve countries, today only two flying examples exist while eight others are being restored.

I have now discovered that 99 Squadron mobilised to Darwin ready for active service just as the war was called off. Squadron 99 did not see active service but were tasked with providing a taxi service returning prisoners of war back to Australia.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Fred was an officer of the Fisheries and Wildlife Department in Melbourne. During his time there, on 12.10.1961, Fred discovered the exotic plant species *Triglochin scilloides*, growing half mile N.E. of Laverton, Victoria. Details (as *Lilaea scilloides*) were published in 1967 in a scientific paper by botanist Helen I. Aston, titled 'Aquatic Angiosperms: records of four introduced species new to Victoria' [*Muelleria* Vol. 1(3): 169–174.]

*Lilaea* was a monotypic genus of uncertain taxonomic position sometimes placed in its own family, the Lilaeeaceae. Thanks to a DNA study, it is now included in genus *Triglochin* in the family Juncaginaceae (commonly known as small arrow grasses). The common names given to Fred's plant are Flowering Quillwort and Awl-leaf *Lilaea*. The plant is native to the Western third of the United States and is considered endangered in some of its original range. It has been recorded as an introduction from Canada to Chile and then Australia, thanks to Fred. It has since been found in other sites in Victoria and in New South Wales.

From 1969 to 1971, when Fred was 45–49, he lived in Papua New Guinea. He had something to do with plant introduction in PNG although the exact nature or any discoveries I was not able to uncover.

In 1971, Fred became a technician in the Entomological Department of the University of Queensland. Fred looked after preparing class material for student laboratory classes and occasionally helped on class field trips. In 1981, he left Brisbane for Sydney to be closer to his aged mother. In 1992, at age of 68, we know he was a clerical assistant at the Department of Veteran Affairs in Sydney.

Fred was invited by the French government to participate in the anniversary of a battle in France, and he attended these ceremonies at least twice. Fred's cousin, Flight Sergeant Tom Mills, had been killed at the age of 27 on 12 March 1944 near the village of Naujac-Sur-Mer, which is near Bordeaux. Fred mostly wore a beret like a Frenchman and I often wondered if this was a fashion he had brought back from France.

Fred's interests included:

- photography – he was an active member of the Ryde-Eastwood Camera Club;
- yoga – he attended yoga classes almost to the end;
- botany and gardening – he had a seed collection;



*Triglochin scilloides* (Public domain via [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilaea\\_scilloides#/media/File:Lilaeascilloides.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilaea_scilloides#/media/File:Lilaeascilloides.jpg))



Fred in France (dated May 2009), for the Memorial Service for his cousin (reproduced with permission from the official city blog of Naujac-Sur-Mer [http://naujac2008.canalblog.com/albums/inauguration\\_stele\\_du\\_pin\\_sec/photos/39342799-m\\_fred\\_swindley\\_parent\\_de\\_victimes.html](http://naujac2008.canalblog.com/albums/inauguration_stele_du_pin_sec/photos/39342799-m_fred_swindley_parent_de_victimes.html))



- insects – he was a member of The Society for Insect Studies Inc. and The Entomological Society of NSW that I am aware of. Fred was an active member of both groups and almost never arrived empty handed. He would bring photos he had taken, pupae for identification and live specimens of some unusual creature.

Fred has provided numerous photos of caterpillars, butterflies and moths to the Coffs Harbour Butterfly House via Don Herbison-Evans. Evans has published several articles on the Internet on the Monarch/Wanderer *Danaus plexippus*, Painted Lady *Vanessa kershawi*, Dingy Swallowtail *Papilio anactus*, the life stages of an unnamed *Tonica* sp. (Depressariidae) (see <http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au/depr/tonica.html>), and many others, giving credit to Fred for the photos.



A sample of Fred's photos published on the World Wide Web; clockwise from top left, *Danaus plexippus*, *Vanessa kershawi*, *Tonica* sp., *Papilio anactus* (all online at <http://lepidoptera.butterflyhouse.com.au>)



Fred receiving a certificate from Graham Owen, President of The Society for Insect Studies, for his contribution to Wallace bumper edition (Gary Harris)

In 2013, the Society for Insect Studies Inc. published a "bumper" issue about Alfred Russel Wallace on the centenary of his death. Members were asked to research different aspects of his life and times to contribute to this issue. Fred, despite being computer-illiterate, submitted a mammoth hand written summary of Iain McCalman's book "Darwin's Armada" (Penguin, 2009) in which he gave separate accounts of Darwin, Hooker and Huxley and told of their interrelations.

George Beccaloni of the Wallace Memorial Fund, on behalf of the Wallace family, gave the society permission to use many of the Wallace related images. When the Wallace family saw the finished production they asked permission for it to be made available on the Wallace Memorial Fund website. Despite only using extracts from Fred's summary, still almost 20% of the Wallace special issue was made up of Fred's contribution. This work will live in perpetuity. ►

◀ Fred won second prize in our inaugural 2015 photo competition with his photo of a Bee-killer Assassin Bug. He also entered in 2016 and his photos were published in the Society's Circular.

Fred came on several excursions including one to Cairns about seven years ago. He surprised everybody with his boyish enthusiasm, up at 6:00 am and still in front of a light sheet until after midnight for 10 days, swimming under waterfalls in Millaa Millaa and jumping over logs like a teenager.

Fred loved all things nature, birds, frogs, botany, gardening and insects.

Amongst his other pursuits, Fred loved his seed collection. Part of Fred's seed collection is housed in the National Herbarium of Victoria. I believe Sydney Botanic Gardens are also recipients of part of his collection.

In fact, at Fred's Memorial Service I learned just what a busy and social man he was. Fred's friends determined he belonged to at least the following 17 organisations:

**Insects:**

The Society for Insect Studies Inc.  
The Entomological Society of NSW

**Birds:**

NSW Field Ornithologists Club

**Botany:**

Sydney Royal Botanical Gardens  
Ross Garden Tours  
Ryde/Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society  
FAME (The Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species)

**Photography:**

Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Camera Club



SFIS 2015 Second Prize – Fred Swindley – Bee-killer Assassin Bug

**Armed Services:**

Australian Bomber Command Association in Aust. Inc.  
AIRTC AAFC Branch of the RAAF Association  
Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security  
Airforce Association of NSW  
Australian Air League  
Concord RSL Club

**Political:**

Monarchist League of Australia

**Industrial/Mechanical:**

Sydney Mechanics School of Arts

**Medical:**

Prostate Cancer Support Group

In addition he gave time to West Ryde Public School and a local Friendship Group

In his own way Fred was a quiet unassuming man but for those lucky enough to have got to know him, he left an indelible mark.

Rest in Peace, Fred.

**Graham Owen**

President

The Society for Insect Studies Inc.

Thanks to the following for supplying information and photographs: Geoff Monteith, Irene Denton, Kate & Ray Watson, David Miller from B24 Liberator Restoration Australia, Werribee.