



Bombing up a Lancaster for Wing Commander Douglas

Stella's first posting as official war artist was at RAF Binbrook Station in Northern England. This was a base for Australian aircrews flying Lancaster bombers over occupied Europe. They were part of the Bomber Command campaign, which inflicted massive death and destruction on Germany. For the members of the aircrew, it was a stressful and dangerous job and many did not survive.

- Stella described the plane as being like “a terrifying insect, full of eggs”. Why did she say this? Would you agree? Perhaps the plane reminds you of something else. What might this be?
- At the time of this painting, 22-year-old Keith Douglas (standing to the left of the plane) was responsible for a number of Australian squadrons that he commanded. What do you think he is thinking as he watches the plane being loaded?

Look again

- Look at the scene behind the plane. How does it match (or not match) the mood of the rest of the painting?

Activity: “Bombing up” was one of the jobs of the ground crew. Find out what other important responsibilities they had.

Painted in London, 1944, oil on hardboard, 63.4 x 76.2 cm, AWM, acquired under official war art scheme in 1944, (ART 26261)