

## SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM INC

### SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

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#### HERBERT BINDLEY (BERT) HUSSEY



*H.B. (Bert) Hussey in his WW1 uniform  
[Photo SAAM collection]*

Bert Hussey was born at Port Elliott on 11 February 1896 into the family of George Charles Hussey and Emma Louise Hussey.

In 1902 he attended the local Port Elliott public school and at age twelve went to the Victor Harbor High School where he stayed for three years. Bert and his sister Marjory rode their push bikes to school which was a distance of around five miles (eight kilometres). In 1908 he was given a 'double barrel shot gun' which was used for rabbiting. Bert also had his own horse.

Due to the Compulsory Military Training Scheme, Bert joined the Senior Cadets and, in 1912 the 22<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Regiment due to his ability to handle horses and his adventurous nature.

In 1913 Bert left school for work with the South Australian Railways as a porter at Port Elliott, undertaking clerical, telegraphy and general duties. Between 1913 – 1916 was the only time Bert was at home and had any social life with other Port Elliott people. It was around this time he met his future wife Una Olivia Giles on one of her parents' Christmas visits to the town. Bert also obtained his Driving Licence at this time along with a certificate from the Ambulance Corps of the South Australian Railways.

In 1914 war was declared between the United Kingdom and Germany. As a result Australia joined the fray.

Bert started to take an interest in aviation in 1915 and endeavoured to make a model aeroplane using wood, wire, silk and a propeller driven by clockwork. It is not reported if the model flew.

He enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 3 April 1916 (No. 12693) when he was aged twenty and he left the South Australian Railways. After a few weeks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Depot Battalion and then the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reinforcements for the 5<sup>th</sup> Pioneers, he was appointed as Private, Motor Transport Driver, in the 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance (FA) and embarked on 31 May in *HMAT A29 Suevic* from Outer Harbor. The 11<sup>th</sup> FA was part of General Monash's Australian Infantry Division that formed in the United Kingdom, bypassing the Middle East.

Hussey landed in the United Kingdom on 21 July 1916 and trained there until crossing the English Channel to France on 24 November. The Unit took over the Divisional Rest Station at Steenwerck and from there carried out various duties in support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division, including the operation of Advanced Dressing Stations. The FA was involved in various sectors across the Western Front,

including at Ypres, the Somme and Villers Bretonneux. This was highly hazardous work and the unit incurred 19 killed in action, 56 wounded in action and 41 gassed, of whom one died. Thus, in just under two years of active service, the unit suffered 116 casualties.

During the rest of 1916 and in the early part of 1917, Hussey had several spells in hospital suffering from bronchitis and influenza, before being appointed Motor Transport (MT) Driver in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divisional Supply Column with the No. 12927 on 20 April. (In April the Drivers, Horse and Motor Transport, in the Field Ambulances who had been members of the Australian Army Medical Corps were transferred to the Australian Army Service Corps, but remained attached to the Field Ambulances. AIF soldiers in the First World War did not have an 'army number' but had a 'regimental number'. That meant when Hussey was transferred from AAMC to AASC he was allocated a new number.) A week later he was again admitted to hospital because of a hernia, and it was 5 August before he returned to duty attached 11<sup>th</sup> FA.

In 1917 Bert celebrated his twenty first birthday in France. During his AIF service he had endeavoured to obtain a transfer into the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) to be trained as a pilot. but was unsuccessful. On 12 March 1918 he was posted as Driver 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Motor Transport Company whilst remaining attached to the 11<sup>th</sup> FA, an appointment he held until after the Armistice on 11 November.

At the end of the War in 1918 Bert received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. On 27 April 1919 he ceased to be attached to the 11<sup>th</sup> FA and was posted to 5<sup>TH</sup> Australian Motor Transport Company (AMTC) before returning to the United Kingdom on 26 May to take leave under the Non-Military Employment Scheme. This was a scheme for AIF soldiers awaiting repatriation to Australia. Training courses and work experience was arranged for them until shipping was available. This leave. was from 29 May to 29 August, which was extended to 9 December.

Hussey's training was at the Cambridge School of Flying, undertaking ground training by taxiing a Caudron G3 that was used to test overhauled engines. On one day Bert taxied the aircraft straight, at full throttle, along the runway and pulled back on the -'stick'- to see what would happen and to his surprise he found himself at least fifty feet in the air. Soon, slowing the engine he put the machine

carefully onto the ground again. He climbed down, turned the aircraft around and flew it back to where he had started. Bert's first two flights were therefore solo without instruction of any kind. Eventually, two instructors arrived, one bringing two DH6s and the other, two Avro 504s. His first flight with an instructor (Ortwieler) was on 28 July 1919 in an Avro 504 for ten minutes. Bert was given two hours and five minutes-dual instruction on the Caudron G3, Avro 504 & DH6 before officially going solo in the latter on 24 September. At the end of his training he had achieved ten hours and fourteen minutes total flying time.



*Bert Hussey in RAAF uniform with daughter Barbara Olivia and wife Olivia C1923  
[Photo SAAM Collection]*

While at Cambridge, in July 1919 he qualified at the Air Ministry for C and D Ground Engineer's Licences. He also qualified for a Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate on 4 November 1919 on an Avro 504.

Bert left the United Kingdom on 22 January 1920 when he embarked on *HMAT Friedrichsrub* to return to Australia. Soldiers' return to Australia (RTA) was based on a points system so that those who had been away the longest got most points and priority for shipping. Hussey's 1916 enlistment meant he had to wait. He landed at Melbourne on 9 March, from where he travelled to Adelaide to be discharged on 8 May 1920. He then returned to the South Australian Railways in Adelaide.

Bert joined the Australian Air Corps at Point Cook as No. 117 on 3 January 1921 and then on 31 March 1921 the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as an Aircraftsman 1 (AC1) Rigger based at Point Cook. On 10 December 1921 he married Una Olivia Giles and on 1 October 1922 their first daughter, Barbara Olivia, was born at Werribee, Victoria.

He commenced flying training in the RAAF on 1 March 1923 when he flew Avro 504 A3-19 for thirty five minutes undertaking 'straight & easy turns'. This was in the first training intake and he obtained his 'Wings' that year. In 1925 he was a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Pilot (Flight Sergeant) in the RAAF. During 1926 due to engine problems he safely force-landed his aircraft in the Melbourne city parklands.

While still a member of the RAAF, Bert wrote to the Australian Aero Club (SA Section) (later the Royal Aero Club of South Australia) in October 1926 seeking the position as their first pilot instructor, but he was unsuccessful.

His last flight in the RAAF was on 26 Jan 1927 in A6-5 DH-9 when he flew for one hour and thirty minutes from Point Cook. His total flying time in the RAAF was four hundred and sixty two hours and twenty five minutes.



*Bert Hussey in front of DH61 G-AUTL Old Gold c.1928  
[Photo SAAM Collection]*

With civil aviation in Australia expanding rapidly, pilots were in great demand and, as a result, Bert purchased his discharge from the RAAF on 2 February 1927. He obtained immediate employment with Australian Aerial Services Limited (AAS) and regularly flew the scheduled routes from Melbourne to Hay, Mildura, Broken Hill, Adelaide and Cootamundra. In March he was posted to Broken Hill as the base pilot for AAS. He was also offered a piloting job flying for Guinea Gold in New Guinea but turned down the offer. E A (Pard) Mustar took the job instead and made the initial flights for Guinea Airways. Aircraft types Bert flew for AAS were Sopwith Antelope, DH50 and Sopwith Wallaby,

In April 1928 Bert left AAS and moved to Adelaide where he joined Horrie Miller's Commercial Aviation Co. His role was to organise joy rides in country centres around South Australia, and fly at night with neon advertisements under the wings, around Adelaide. In August 1928 he had a lucky escape when he ran out of fuel in DH61 G-AUTL *Old Gold* and crashed near Uraidla on a passenger flight into Adelaide.

The DH61 did not have a petrol gauge so Bert suggested to Horrie Miller that one be fitted for safety reasons. Around this time he was flying Commercial Aviation Co DH60 Moths, a DH9, Fokker Universal and the DH61 on regular routes, periodic tours and taxi flights, all over South Australia and interstate. Aerodromes were few and far between, and many interesting pioneer flights were made, such as taking a party from Adelaide to Charters Towers and return.

From 10 March 1930 Bert undertook further flying for AAS on regular passenger services. He also participated in the Donald MacKay 'Central Australia Survey' expedition flying the aircraft VH-UEZ ANEC III (Lasco Lascowl) *Diamond Bird*. In company with ANEC III (Lasco Lascowl) VH-UGF *Love Bird* the aircraft ferried from Melbourne to Canberra on 22 May for the expedition members to meet the Australian Prime Minister, James Scullin. Two days later the aircraft left for Central Australia to support the exploration expedition. Unfortunately Bert fell seriously ill with dysentery and was flown back to Alice Springs. At the conclusion of the expedition he returned to Adelaide on 25 June 1930 in ANEC III (Lasco Lascowl) VH-UEZ.

In 1931 Horrie Miller helped in politics by flying United Australia Party leader Joseph Lyons from Adelaide to Melbourne on 15 December, the day after his pilots Bert Hussey and Max Campbell left to distribute ballot papers throughout country areas. In mid-1931 Bert sought the position as Pilot Instructor at the Royal Aero Club of South Australia but he was unsuccessful once again.

In 1931 Bert left full-time flying and purchased a motor service station at Glen Osmond, an Adelaide suburb. However, he continued to fly for the MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Company and AAS on a part time basis. In 1932 he was a member of the First Annual Air Convention organised by H J Larkin and others to set a civil aviation policy, and in the same year he was advertising (as agent, presumably) the Airspeed Ferry (£4,450 'Free on Board' Hull) and Airspeed Courier (£2,800 'Free on Board' Hull).

On 7 November 1933, in VH-UNX DH60M, Bert flew photographs and film of the Melbourne Cup back to Adelaide for exhibition on the same night. He dropped the film in an area near the Adelaide Oval to newspaper reporters and then landed at Parafield with the aid of torches and drums of burning oil. Also in the same year he flew as an AAS pilot on the Camooweal – Daly Waters run until the service terminated.



"To Mum with love Bert" – Bert in airline uniform c1930s  
[Photo SAAM Collection]

In September 1934 Bert was taken to Western Australia to fly for MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Company (MMA) on its new airmail routes from Perth to Daly Waters. He undertook an early flight from 5 September flying the DH84 VH-URW around the Perth environs. He flew his first service on 3 October on the route: Perth/Geraldton/Carnarvon. His final flight with MMA was on 2 November in the DH84 VH-URY from Carnarvon to Geraldton. He then resigned from MMA and returned to Adelaide.



*Qantas DH61 VH-UJB early 1930s*  
 [Photo – D Darian Smith/SAAM Collection]

At this time Bert sold his service station business in Adelaide and moved to Brisbane to take up employment with Qantas in preparation for the United Kingdom to Australia Air Mail service. Bert regularly flew the DH86 passenger aircraft on the Brisbane to Singapore route. His first flight with the airline was on 26 November 1934 in the DH80A Puss Moth VH-UPA around Brisbane.

On 16 January 1935 he damaged the DH61 VH-UJC *Diana* in a take-off accident at Point Stuart near Darwin after participating in a search and locating the force-landed Imperial Airways Ltd AW15 *Atalanta* G-ABTK *Athena*.

Qantas first collected the mail at Singapore with VH-USF DH86 *RMA Brisbane*, leaving on 25 February 1935 and arriving in Darwin the following day. Captain Hussey took over there and flew on to Brisbane where he arrived on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Qantas had become an international airline.

Passenger services commenced on 17 April 1935 when Bert was the Captain of the first service which utilized VH-USF DH86 *RMA Melbourne*. Major H Phillips was the first passenger from Brisbane and Lady Louis Mountbatten joined at Charleville. In late 1935 Bert was one of the Qantas pilots involved in the search for Kingsford-Smith near Burma.

In 1937 Bert was awarded the 'Coronation Medal' in honour of the Coronation of King George VI and later that year he qualified for a second class radio licence. He also travelled to the United Kingdom that year with Captains R B Tapp and O D Denny for a five month conversion course to fly the Short Empire Flying Boats.



*G-ADUY S23 Capella on Southampton Waters 10 June 1937*  
 [Photo – SAAM Collection]

On 18 March 1938 Bert found Jimmy Broadbent who was 'down' and missing on Flores Island in the Netherlands East Indies. Jimmy was on an England to Australia flight solo record bid. He was rescued.

Also in 1938 Qantas moved its headquarters from Brisbane to Sydney over the weekend of 28/29 May. As a result Bert and his family followed when the flying boat service started between Sydney and Singapore. In August Bert made the first night landing with the Short Empire Flying Boat at Rose Bay, after which he was in charge of all night landings there. It was whilst he was in charge that Reg

Shepard, landing at night, hit a cable drum that the clearing boat had missed. The aircraft was holed and, although not in charge of the clearing boat, Bert was held responsible.

On 12 March 1939, when taxiing Short Empire Flying Boat G-ADUY *Capella* in at Batavia, Bert swung in close to the shore and the wreckage of a submerged frigate which had sunk years before and had been forgotten, ripped a gaping hole in the bottom of the aircraft. *Capella* was beached and later shipped to England to Short Brothers for repair but this proved impossible so that the hull was scrapped.

In December 1940 Bert Hussey and Orm Denny made survey flights to Dili, Timor in Short Empire Flying Boats. On 19 January 1941 Dili received its first fortnightly flight from Sydney via Darwin when Bert captained Short S.23 Empire G-AETV *Coriolanus* en-route to Singapore.

Also in 1941 Bert brought the first Lockheed Catalina, A24-3, and then seven more, from Honolulu except the third flight, A24-8, which he flew from San Diego on 28 June via Honolulu/Canton Is/ Noumea to Sydney on 5 July. Other than this flight Bert joined them at Honolulu after flying as a passenger from Sydney to Auckland with TEAL and then onward with Pan Am.

In December 1941 Bert brought the last flying boat through from Rangoon before the line was closed by the Japanese occupation of Malaya and Singapore. On Monday 8 December Japanese bombs fell on Singapore and the British Empire was at war with Japan. Singapore surrendered on 15 December and the air service was broken west of Batavia.

On 19 February 1942 Australia was bombed for the first time at Darwin. Bert was at the barber's shop in Smith Street when the air raid siren sounded, so he abandoned his shave and hurried towards the new Hotel Darwin for shelter where he was joined by other Qantas employees. After a second formation of Japanese bombers released its bombs Captain W H Crowther and Bert were convinced the Short Empire flying boat VH-ADU *Camilla* could not escape destruction if it stayed where it was near the ship *MV Neptuna* with its cargo of depth charges. The outcome was that Bert and Captain Crowther flew *Camilla* out to Groote Eylandt and waited there until the Darwin air raid finished.



VH-EAU Avro Lancastrian Iwakuni 16 July 1948  
[Photo – SAAM Collection]

On 6 January 1943 Bert, flying Short Empire VH-ABG *Coriolanus* went out amongst the New Guinea islands to rescue the crew of a downed USAAC B-17F Flying Fortress 41-24538 that had been on an air raid to Rabaul. The aircraft had landed in the sea close to an island and the crew got safely away on life rafts. The story of the rescue was published in the monthly 'Qantas Gazette'.

Bert was part of the war support flights that Qantas flying boats completed for the Australian armed forces. During this time he was given the honorary rank of Squadron Leader in the RAAF even though

he remained with Qantas. After WWII he was awarded the Qantas Empire Airways 'Gold Star' in recognition of his many long range flights

In 1945 Bert converted back to 'land aircraft' with his first flights in the RAAF Avro Lancaster A66-1 on 26 January at East Sale followed by Avro Lancastrian G-AGLS on 26 April from the same airfield. The Lancastrians supplemented the flying boats on the resumed 'Kangaroo Route' from Australia to the United Kingdom. The first service of the Lancastrian left Sydney on 2 June 1945.

Bert celebrated his fiftieth birthday in February 1946 and captained his last flight early in the next month. Effectively he finished his flying career on 13 March when he captained the Avro Lancastrian G-AGMB from Perth to Sydney and then left Qantas.

During his flying career he flew 14,005 hours and ten minutes, over one million miles, carried over 23,000 passengers, over 700 hours night flying and flew thirty four different types of aircraft .

After leaving flying Bert operated various businesses in Adelaide and Brisbane. He died on 25 December 1958 and his ashes were scattered from a Queensland Airlines aircraft flying from Brisbane to Maryborough.

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South Australian Aviation Museum Inc  
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<sup>1</sup> Nigel Daw is author of 'Adelaide Airport – A History of Operations' published 1982 and co-author of 'An Iconic Airline – The Story of Airlines of South Australia – The People, the Places and the Planes' Published 2012

## APPENDICES

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### 1) AIRCRAFT TYPES FLOWN:

Caudron C3, Avro 504/504K, SE5A, Avro 594/616 Avian, Sopwith Pup, Sopwith Antelope, Sopwith Wallaby, DH6, DH9/9A, DH50/50A, DH60/60G/60M/60X, DH61, ANEC III, DH80A, DH83, DH84, DH86, DH90, Fokker Universal, Lasco Lascowl, Lasco Lascoter, Saro Cutty Sark, Short S.8/8 Calcutta, Short S.23 Flying Boat, Lockheed PBY5A, Catalina, Avro Lancaster, Avro Lancastrian.

### 2) Pilot Log Book:

First Entry: 28 July 1919 Avro 504 ten minutes flying time.

Last Entry: 10 March 1946 Avro Lancastrian G-AGMB Perth to Sydney, 8 hours 43 minutes flying time

### 3) Licences/Certificates Obtained<sup>2</sup>:

- |           |   |
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| 1919      | Aviator's Certificate British Empire<br>Federation Aeronautique Internationale Number 7835<br>Ground Engineers of Aircraft – Air Ministry Number 124  |
| 1924/1928 | Australian Pilot Licence – Department of Defence – Number 93  |
| 1928/1937 | Pilot's Certificate and Licence – Department of Defence – Number 93   |
| 1934/1941 | Aircraft Navigator's Certificate and Licence – Commonwealth of Australia – Number 6   |
| 1937/1946 | Pilot's Certificate and Licence – Commonwealth of Australia – Number 93<br>(Endorsed by British Air Ministry for Short Empire Flying Boat)  |
| 1937      | Licence for ground Engineers of aircraft – Commonwealth of Australia – Number 122<br>Certificate of Proficiency in Radio Telegraphy (Second Class) – Commonwealth of Australia – Number 126 |
| 1937/1941 | Aircraft Navigator's Certificate and Licence – Commonwealth of Australia – Number 6   |
| 1938      | Ground Engineers of Aircraft – Air Ministry Number 124/2  |
| 1941/1947 | Aircraft Navigator's Certificate and Licence – Commonwealth of Australia –<br>First Class – Number 25   |
| 1945      | Aircraft Radio Telegraph Operator's Certificate and Licence – Number 34   |

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<sup>2</sup> Many of these licences were merely reissue of the same licence.

#### 4) Sources:

- i. History document on H B Hussey compiled by R H Hussey (son of H B Hussey) - 1985
- ii. Photocopy of logbooks of H B Hussey;
- iii. 'Qantas at War' by Sir Hudson Fysh – published 1968 Angus and Robertson
- iv. 'The Defeat of Distance – Qantas 1919 – 1939' – John Gunn published 1985 University of Queensland Press
- v. 'Challenging Horizons – Qantas 1939 – 1954 – John Gunn published 1987 University of Queensland Press
- vi. 'Speck in The Sky' A History of Airlines of Western Australia' by Frank Dunn – published 1984 by Airlines of Western Australia
- vii. 'Early Birds' by H C Miller – published 1968 Rigby Ltd
- viii. 'Australian-Built Aircraft and Industry – Volume One: 1884 to 1939 Book 2' – K R Meggs – Published 2009 Finger-Four Publishing, Victoria, Australia
- ix. Notes on H B Hussey supplied by Chas Schaedel
- x. [AB-IX@yahoo.com](mailto:AB-IX@yahoo.com)
- xi. Email from Leigh Ryan of 14 January 2015
- xii. [www.raamc.org.au/web/11fda/index.php?Histor](http://www.raamc.org.au/web/11fda/index.php?Histor) RAAMC Association Inc – 11<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance History – accessed 19 Apr 2015
- xiii. Assistance from Mike Milln – SAAM History Group

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