

South Australian *Eagles*

A Century of Distinguished Service by
South Australians in the Air Force

Greg Weller

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Front Cover Photo Captions **Top row left to right:** FLTLT John Napier Bell (wearing cap) and his crew with a Supermarine Seagull V (Walrus) of No. 5 (Fleet Cooperation) Squadron at RAAF Base Richmond, NSW, in 1938. FLTLT Bob Cowper DFC in June 1944 when he was serving with No. 456 Squadron, RAAF. FLG OFF Michael Herbert (Left) with his navigator, FLG OFF Carver, in front of their No. 2 Squadron Canberra bomber armed with the 60,000th bomb dropped by the squadron over Vietnam in 1970. **Middle row left to right:** FLTLT Viv Shearn in front of his No. 77 Squadron Meteor Betty Toot in Korea in 1953. SQNLDR Tracy Smart serving in Rwanda on a UN Deployment in 1997. Air Marshal Richard Williams during World War Two. CAPT Ross Smith in the cockpit with his observer in a No. 1 Squadron Bristol Fighter in 1918 in Palestine. **Bottom row from left to right:** LAC George Tongerie in 1946, an indigenous South Australian airman who served overseas during World War Two. ACW Rena Pascoe who served in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force during World War Two. Thomas Charles Richmond Baker as a cadet undergoing pilot training in England. FLG OFF Thomas Kleinig with his No. 8 Squadron Beaufort crew in mid-December 1943 - 12 days before they were killed on a mission on Christmas Day, 1943.

Contents

About the Author	6		
Introduction	7		
Abbreviations - Honours and Awards	8		
Williams, Sir Richard	9	Pascoe, Rena June	26
Baker, Thomas Charles Richmond	10	Kleinig, Theodore "Ted" Victor Benno	27
Taplin, Leonard Thomas Eaton	11	Shannon, David John	29
Sutherland, Alan D'Arcy	12	Leicester, David Lewis	30
Howell, Cedric Ernest	13	Dennis, Kevin John	31
Smith, Ross MacPherson	14	Tindale, Norman Barnett	32
Shiers, Walter "Wally" Henry	15	Tongerie, George	33
Kingston-McCloughry, Edgar James	16	Quinn, Eldred "Ted"	34
Bell, John Napier	18	McAloney, William "Bill" Simpson	35
Clisby, Leslie Redford	19	Fopp, Desmond	36
Reynell, Richard "Dickie" Carew	20	Shearn, Hartley Vivian "Viv"	37
Millington, William "Bill" Henry	22	Macintosh, Robert "Bob" Andrew	38
Williams, Robert Graham	23	Herbert, Michael Patrick John ("Herbie")	40
Cowper, Robert "Bob" Barson	24	Espeland, Brenton "Jack"	41
Bonython, Hugh Reskymer "Kym"	25	Smart, Tracy Lee	42

About the Author

Greg Weller joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1989 as an Intelligence Officer. Career highlights include operational service in both East Timor and the Middle East and an Exchange Officer posting with US Pacific Command, Hawaii. He completed a range of command and staff officer positions including Commanding Officer No 87 Squadron, the Air Force's Intelligence Squadron, Deputy Director Air Power Doctrine, Air Power Development Centre, where he wrote several RAAF doctrine publications, and Chief of Staff, Air Warfare Centre, RAAF Edinburgh, where he regularly performed the duties of Senior ADF Officer, Edinburgh Defence Precinct.



In 2017 he transferred to the Active Reserve to allow his family to remain in Adelaide. As a Reservist, he is now the Director, Community Engagement, RAAF Edinburgh, a part-time position where he promotes the Air Force in South Australia through building relationships and partnerships across the broader community. He has been researching and promoting South Australia's Air Force heritage to help South Australians better understand the Air Force story in their state. He is a regular contributor to the South Australian Aviation Museum History Group and Newsletter.

Greg is particularly active in the veteran community and other not for profit organisations working in a variety of volunteer and Board positions.

His passions include his family, military history and air power, cricket and footy, and gardening.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts, Master of Defence Studies, and Graduate Diploma in Management, and is a graduate of the Australian Command and Staff College. Greg was awarded a Chief of Air Force Commendation in 2011 for his contribution to Air Force joint doctrine.

Introduction

Introduction

South Australia has a long and proud history with military aviation dating back to its earliest days, with almost 350 South Australians serving in the Australian Flying Corps and Royal Flying Corps in World War One. During World War Two, at least 22,000 South Australians enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) serving not only across Australia but in the stormy skies over Europe, the hot and dusty deserts of North Africa, the tropical jungles of Southeast Asia and across the islands of the South Pacific. The great majority were trained at bases across South Australia including Victor Harbor, Mallala, Parafield, Port Pirie and Mount Gambier. Post-war, South Australians served in Korea, Southeast Asia and then the various conflicts and non-military operations that have prevailed across the globe in the modern era.




















Unfortunately, many South Australians would be unaware of the proud Air Force legacy their state has inherited. Many would not be familiar with the once well-known names of Sir Ross Macpherson Smith, Sir Richard Williams, Les Clisby or Thomas Charles Richmond Baker. Even less is known about the not so famous South Australians who were simply ordinary people who enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) but still greatly contributed to the Air Force and their country.

The centenary of the RAAF in 2021 provides an opportunity for our community to rediscover this legacy and the South Australians who contributed so much to the Air Force over the last 100 years. The aim of this booklet is to briefly introduce thirty such South Australians whose stories span a wide range of Air Force service. Some are decorated aircrew. Some are air aces. A few rose to the highest echelons of Air Force leadership, while others served on the ground in supporting roles. Some returned to South Australia serving the community in fields such as sport, indigenous reconciliation and the arts. Tragically, many did not return, paying the ultimate sacrifice for their nation.

The author acknowledges the key support of Peter Ingman and others who have assisted in developing this booklet to profile South Australians who have contributed to the Air Force's legacy over the last 100 years.

Abbreviations - Honours and Awards

This table lists the Honours and Awards that are cited in this publication using the abbreviations shown.

Air Force Cross	AFC		Distinguished Service Order	DSO	
Air Force Medal	AFM		George Medal	GM	
Companion of the Order of Australia	AC		Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire	KBE	
Companion of the Order of Bath	CB		Medal of the Order of Australia	OAM	
Companion of the British Empire	CBE		Member of the Order of Australia	AM	
Conspicuous Gallantry Medal	CGM		Member of the Order of the British Empire	MBE	
Conspicuous Service Cross	CSC		Military Medal	MM	
Conspicuous Service Medal	CSM		Military Cross	MC	
Distinguished Flying Cross	DFC		Officer of the Order of Australia	AO	
Distinguished Flying Medal	DFM				

Williams, Sir Richard KBE, CB, DSO

1890-1980 Air Marshal



Australia's first military trained pilot who became known as the father of the RAAF

RICHARD WILLIAMS was born in 1890 at Moonta Mines. He attended Moonta Public School before working for the Moonta Post Office and then the Union Bank. After joining the permanent military forces, he was posted to Victoria where he graduated as Australia's first military trained pilot in November 1914.

In 1916, Williams arrived in Egypt with No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC). He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in August 1917 for attacking an enemy force while flying through intense anti-aircraft fire and landing behind enemy lines to rescue a downed fellow pilot. In the Middle Eastern Campaign, he commanded No. 1 Squadron and then No. 40 Wing (Royal Flying Corps), completing the war as the AFC's foremost operational commander.

Returning to Australia, Williams was instrumental in the creation of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as an independent service in 1921. Showing immense political acumen, he then fought to not only preserve

but to actually expand the fledgling RAAF over the next two decades, serving as the initial Chief of Air Staff and its longest serving leader over thirteen years in three separate terms. Promoted to air vice-marshal in 1935, he became the RAAF's first air marshal in 1940.

Ironically, Williams lost the support of his political masters and spent most of the Second World War in Britain and the USA. Forced into retirement from the RAAF in 1946, Williams served as the Director-General of Civil Aviation, but his enduring legacy is being known as the father of the RAAF and probably the most significant figure in its history.



Air Marshal Richard Williams in 1942.

Baker, Thomas Charles Richmond DFC, MM and Bar

1897 – 1918 Captain



A brilliant young World War One flying ace killed just a week before the Armistice

THOMAS CHARLES RICHMOND BAKER was born in Smithfield in 1897. As a youth he enjoyed building model aircraft and attended St Peters College before working for an Adelaide bank.

In 1915, Baker enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and served in France in 1916 in the artillery where he was awarded the Military Medal twice for gallant action. He transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) in September 1917 completing pilot training in England.

Posted to No. 4 Squadron (AFC), Baker quickly established himself as a daring pilot in France.

On 31 July 1918 Baker recorded his first victory and by early October he had claimed six aircraft earning recognition as an ace. He was renowned for closing at close quarters and engaging the enemy at a mere 20 feet or less.

On 4 November 1918, No. 4 Squadron participated in a mass raid to harass the German retreat and bomb an airfield. Baker was flying in an escorting formation of Sopwith Snipes

that engaged a dozen German Fokkers. After a furious dogfight, one of the last of the war, Baker and two other Snipe pilots were shot down.

In a cruel and ironic way, Baker, a young 21-year-old air ace with 12 aerial victories, was killed in action just one week before the guns fell silent over the Western Front.

His Commanding Officer noted upon his death:

*He was one of the bravest officers
I have ever had in this squadron.*

A stained-glass window at St John's Church of England in Adelaide is dedicated to Baker's memory.



*Thomas CR Baker
as a cadet.*

Taplin, Leonard Thomas Eaton DFC

1895 – 1961 Lieutenant



World War One Australian Flying Corps ace who became a Prisoner of War

LEONARD THOMAS EATON TAPLIN was born in Unley in 1895 and was educated at Prince Alfred College. After school, he moved to Sydney and worked as an electrical engineer.

In late 1915, Taplin enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force and arrived in Belgium in October 1916 where he served on the Western Front with the 5th Field Company Engineers.

Taplin transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) and after training as a pilot, was posted to No. 1 Squadron (AFC) in Egypt. He survived an aircraft crash a week after arriving in October 1917. By January 1918 he had gained recognition for his skill in photo reconnaissance missions behind Turkish lines where he sometimes engaged enemy aircraft. Taplin was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions with No. 1 Squadron.

By July 1918 Taplin had joined No. 4 Squadron, AFC, in France. Ironically, he again survived another crash only weeks after arriving at the unit. Taplin was back in the air recording his

second aerial victory only four days later.

Within three months he had become an experienced and deadly ace with 12 aerial victories. However, after barely surviving an engagement with 30 German aircraft on 5 September in which he recorded his final aerial victory, he was shot down behind German lines and became a Prisoner of War.

Taplin eventually returned home in 1919 and pioneered aviation in Australia's remote north-west. Today, the family name is prominent in Adelaide through the Taplin real estate company.



Leonard Taplin, second from left, with other pilots in Perth about to commence Australia's first scheduled airline service in December 1921.

Sutherland, Alan D'Arcy

1889 – 1917 Lieutenant

World War One pilot killed during training in England

ALAN D'ARCY SUTHERLAND was born in Adelaide in 1889. He attended St Peter's College where he served in the school cadet unit and was skilled at cricket and football.

After leaving school, Sutherland worked for his uncle, a Yorke Peninsula stock and general auctioneer. In 1913 he married and had two sons before enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in 1915. After completing officer training, he embarked for overseas duty and served in Egypt for two months before arriving in England in mid-1916.

After a serving in an AIF Training Battalion, Sutherland transferred to the Royal Flying Corps on 22 October 1916 and was posted to No. 2 Flying Corps School of Instruction at Oxford.

Sutherland completed his Ground School examinations and then commenced his flying training with the Central Flying School at Upavon, Wiltshire. However, he was killed just three days into his course when his Sopwith 1½ Strutter crashed on 28 February 1917 when the

wings failed as he pulled out of a dive too quickly.

Tragically, his son Pilot Officer Lancelot Sutherland, perished in a RAAF Bristol Bulldog crash on 22 April 1938 at RAAF Richmond, New South Wales, while rehearsing for an air display to be held next day. Lancelot had only graduated as a pilot four months before the accident.

Like many young World War One aviators, Sutherland was one of the tragic casualties where the life expectancy of a new pilot could be measured in weeks. Approximately 50% of the 14,000 Royal Flying Corps pilots killed during World War One met their deaths in England while training.



Alan D'Arcy Sutherland in a Sopwith Strutter shortly before his death.

Howell, Cedric Ernest DSO, MC, DFC

1896 – 1919 Captain



World War One air ace who perished in the Great Air Race of 1919

CEDRIC EARNEST HOWELL was born in Adelaide in 1896 but completed his education in Melbourne. After school, he became a draftsman and was a member of the Citizen Militia Force.

Howell enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1916 and served in France from May of that year. Seeing action in the Battle of Somme as a sniper, he was noted for his marksmanship. In November, he transferred to the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) where he gained his wings. By October 1917 he had joined No. 45 Squadron, RFC, flying Sopwith Camel aircraft.

The unit soon transferred to Italy where Howell quickly proved to be an adept pilot and served for the remainder of the war. In a dogfight on 13 May 1918, he recorded four victories becoming an air ace.

On 12 July, Howell and one other pilot intercepted 15 enemy aircraft with Howell accounting for five of them, before winning another three victories on 14 and 15 July. For this remarkable series of

actions he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order with the citation reading:

Captain Howell is a very gallant and determined fighter who takes no account of the enemy's superior numbers in his battles.

By August 1918, he completed his tour having scored a remarkable 19 aerial victories in only six months flying the Sopwith Camel.

In 1919, Howell joined with fellow Australian George Henry Fraser to fly a Martinsyde aircraft in the Great Air Race from England to Australia. After departing England, both men perished on 10 December while trying to land in bad weather on Corfu in Greece.



Cedric Howell (right) in France. The other man in the photo, Raymond Brownell, would be a pall bearer at Howell's funeral in 1920.

Smith, Ross Macpherson KBE, MC and Bar, DFC and two Bars, AFC

1892 – 1922 Captain



Highly decorated World War One AFC pilot and globally recognised long-range aviation pioneer

ROSS MACPHERSON SMITH was born in Semaphore in 1892. He attended Queens College, North Adelaide, before undertaking school in Scotland. After returning to Adelaide, Smith was one of the first South Australians to enlist in the Light Horse in August 1914, and saw action at Gallipoli.

Smith transferred to the Australian Flying Corps where he served as an observer and then a pilot with No. 1 Squadron in the Middle East between October 1916 to November 1918. He quickly established himself as an outstanding aviator conducting air defence, ground attack, bombing and aerial reconnaissance missions.

Smith was awarded two Military Crosses and three Distinguished Flying Crosses making him one of the most decorated allied airmen of the war. In late 1918 he was awarded the Air Force Cross for a pioneering long-range flight from Cairo to Calcutta.

Inspired by this flight, he entered the 1919 Great

Air Race from England to Australia with his brother Keith as co-pilot and two mechanics. After a grueling 28 days they won the race and became instant celebrities.

Ross Smith tragically died in front of his brother in an aircraft accident in England on 14 April 1922. During his funeral in Adelaide, 100,000 people lined the streets to pay their respects to the great aviator.

Today, a monument to Sir Ross Smith stands on War Memorial Drive in front of the Adelaide Oval. He remains one of Australia's most accomplished military aviators and pioneer aviators.



Ross Smith (left) in the cockpit of his No. 1 Squadron Bristol Fighter with his observer, Ernest Mustard.

Shiers, Walter “Wally” Henry AFM and Bar

1889 – 1968 Sergeant / Honorary Lieutenant



World War One air mechanic who was part of the famous 1919 England-Australia Vimy crew

WALTER “WALLY” HENRY SHIERS was born in 1889 in Norwood. Educated at Richmond Primary School, Keswick, at the age of 15 he moved to Broken Hill where he worked in a mine.

In 1915, Shiers enlisted in the 1st Light Horse Regiment as a trooper and served in Egypt prior to volunteering for service with the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) in October 1916. The following year he was serving with No. 1 Squadron, AFC, as a 1st Class Air Mechanic where he was under the command of Captain Ross Smith.

After earning the respect of fellow South Australian Smith, Shiers was selected to be one of two air mechanics on a long-range endurance flight from Cairo to Calcutta in December 1918. This was one of the longest endurance flights ever attempted at the time and Shiers was awarded an Air Force Medal for his actions in maintaining the aircraft.

Shiers was then invited by Smith to be one of

the two mechanics to crew the winning Vickers Vimy G-EAOU in the Great Air Race from England to Australia in 1919. During the 28-day epic flight, Shiers, the more junior of the mechanics, proved critical to the overall success working long nights in repairing and maintaining the engines and other parts of the aircraft.

Prior to passing away in Adelaide in 1968, he was the last surviving member of the Vickers Vimy crew to be present at the dedication of the Vickers Vimy Memorial at Adelaide Airport in April 1958.



Wally Shiers (left) with his fellow Vimy mechanic, Jim Bennett.

Kingston-McCloughry, Edgar James CB, CBE, DSO, DFC & Bar

1896 – 1972 Air Vice-Marshal



Courageous World War One pilot who became a senior World War Two strategic air war planner

EDGAR JAMES KINGSTON-McCLOUGHRY was born in 1896 at Hindmarsh, South Australia. He was educated at the University of Adelaide and trained as a mining engineer.

After enlisting in the Australian Imperial Force, Kingston-McCloughry served in France in 1916 before transferring to the Royal Flying Corps. He was posted to No. 23 Squadron in August 1917 but was wounded in a crash one day after arriving in France.

By mid-1918 Kingston-McCloughry had transferred to the Australian Flying Corps where he served with No. 4 Squadron in France, and quickly established himself as an aggressive pilot with 21 aerial victories between June and September 1918. He recorded multiple victories in the one day six times, and his citation for the Distinguished Service Order described him as:

... a bold and fearless officer who has performed many gallant deeds of daring.

In the 1920s Kingston-McCloughry joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) and attended the RAF Staff College where he subsequently became assistant commandant. During World War Two he held several senior RAF staff positions, including Head Operations Planner, Allied European Air Force Headquarters, in 1944 where he oversaw air force plans for the D-Day invasion.

Proving to be an air power intellectual, he wrote six books on air power before and after World War Two.

In 1952 Kingston-McCloughry retired from the RAF as an air vice marshal, completing a

remarkable 35 years of service across two world wars. However, few would know his name in South Australia.



Edgar Kingston-McCloughry during his time with No. 4 Squadron.



Captain Ross Smith (left) with his observer and No. 1 Squadron, AFC, Bristol Fighter aircraft.



No. 4 Squadron, AFC, pilots including Edgar McCloughry in front of their Sopwith Camel fighters.

Bell, John Napier

1916 – 1940 Flight Lieutenant

Seaplane pilot flying secret 1940 mission was the first RAAF member to be killed on active service in World War Two

JOHN NAPIER BELL was born at Largs Bay in 1916 but grew up in the South Australian outback. After completing his education at St Peters College, he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1935 and was trained as a pilot.

Bell completed seaplane training and subsequently flew Walrus seaplanes from Royal Australian Navy warships.

In 1939 he went to Britain to be trained on the new Sunderland flying boats which had been acquired to equip No. 10 Squadron, RAAF. Flying the large Sunderland, Bell conducted maritime reconnaissance missions over the North Atlantic.

Against the background of the invasion of France, No. 10 Squadron was tasked with a secret mission to fly an army officer to the French coast in a Walrus. Bell was tasked with the mission as he was an experienced Walrus pilot. After

departing Britain in darkness at 0255 on 18 June 1940, nothing more was heard of the aircraft.

It has since become known that this was a secret mission to extricate General De-Gaulle's family from northern France. At approximately 0400, an aircraft was seen flying low on fire near the small village of Ploudaniel, before crashing in a nearby field. All four onboard were killed. To this day, the villagers acknowledge the sacrifice of the four airmen by holding a service at their graves every year on the 18 June.

Bell and a colleague, Sergeant Charles Harris, were the first RAAF members to be killed in active service in World War Two.



John Bell (centre, with cap) seen in front of a Walrus seaplane in 1938.

Clisby, Leslie Redford DFC

1919 – 1940 Flying Officer



Australia's first World War Two fighter ace, killed during the Battle of France in 1940

LESLIE REDFORD CLISBY was born at McLaren Vale in 1914 but grew up in Walkerville. A keen sportsman, he attended Nailsworth Junior Technical School.

Clisby joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a mechanic in 1935. He was accepted for pilot training and after only 30 hours of solo flying, made a successful parachute jump from a stricken aircraft, becoming only the second man in Australia to escape using an Irvine parachute.

After graduating in 1937, Clisby was among a number of RAAF pilots who went to Britain to serve with the Royal Air Force (RAF). He was posted to the RAF's leading fighter unit, No. 1 Squadron which was transitioning to Hurricanes.

With the outbreak of war, the squadron was sent to France, and from April 1940 Clisby saw regular combat with the enemy. During the Battle of France he was known as an aggressive and deadly pilot who rushed headlong into aerial

combat irrespective of the odds.

On 11 May he shot down three Bf 109 fighter aircraft and a Heinkel He-111 bomber which crash landed in a field.

After an engagement on 15 May, Clisby's Hurricane was seen going down trailing smoke and flame. The French later found Clisby's body and his burnt out crashed Hurricane.

At the age of twenty-five, and with only a few months of fierce air-to-air combat experience, Clisby had become No. 1 Squadron's top-scoring ace with an official tally of 16 destroyed aircraft. He was Australia's first ace of World War Two.



A portrait of Leslie Clisby.

Reynell, Richard “Dickie” Carew

1912 – 1940 Flight Lieutenant

Pre-war test pilot who was killed during the Battle of Britain

RICHARD “DICKIE” CAREW REYNELL was born in Reynella in 1912 to the prominent Reynell winemaking family. After attending St Peter’s College he went to England in 1929 to study at Oxford University.

Reynell joined the University Air Squadron in 1930 and transferred to the Royal Air Force (RAF) in September 1931. Completing pilot training, he was posted to No. 43 Squadron, one of the RAF’s main fighter squadrons.

Quickly establishing himself as an excellent pilot, Reynell became a member of the squadron’s aerobatic team. In 1937, he joined the Hawker Aircraft Company as a test pilot where he became recognised as an outstanding demonstration pilot. In 1939, he performed what was described at the time as the best ever aerobatic display at the Brussel Air Show in a Hawker Hurricane.

At the start of the Second World War Reynell re-joined the RAF and during August 1940, at the

peak of the Battle of Britain, he was attached to his old squadron at RAF Tangmere to gain operational experience. Over two weeks Reynell claimed one BF-109 fighter destroyed before he was recalled to Hawker. He decided to complete the day’s flying operations before returning, and on his third sortie of the day his squadron encountered a large enemy formation heading for London.

In a fierce aerial engagement, the 28-year-old Australian was shot down by enemy fighters.



Reynell baled out but his parachute did not open, and he fell to his death. Tragically, he left a widow and a 15 month old son, mirroring his father who was killed at Gallipoli when Reynell was only three years old in 1915.

Richard “Dickie” Reynell.



RAF pilots rush to scramble their Hurricane fighters in France in 1940. Three South Australian pilots were killed flying RAF Hurricanes in 1940: Les Clisby, Dickie Reynell and Bill Millington.

A Halifax bomber of No. 462 Squadron, RAAF, in 1945. In a similar aircraft, Wireless Operator Kevin Denis became the only South Australian to be awarded Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.



Millington, William “Bill” Henry DFC

1917 – 1940 Pilot Officer



Young ace fighter pilot killed in the last days of the Battle of Britain in 1940

WILLIAM “BILL” HENRY MILLINGTON was born in England in 1917 but emigrated with his family to Adelaide in 1926. He attended Edwardstown Primary School and later the Adelaide School of Mines. A keen and skilled sportsman as a youth, he fought bushfires around Adelaide in 1939.

Millington undertook civilian flying training at Parafield, and after being rejected by the Royal Australian Air Force, he travelled to England in mid-1939 and enlisted in the Royal Air Force.

After completing pilot training, Millington was posted to the No. 79 Squadron flying Hurricanes in the Battle of Britain. On 9 July 1940 he scored his first aerial victory when he shot down a German BF-109 fighter. Within weeks Millington had shot down several more aircraft including three Heinkel bombers during a single mission on 15 August. Experiencing combat over only two months, he was already an air ace recording five victories. Meanwhile, he earned the nickname *terrier* as he adopted pet dogs at the squadron.

On 31 August, after a tense period of missions, Millington bravely crash-landed his burning Hurricane rather than bale out over a town and risk civilian casualties. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Returning to combat in late September with No. 249 Squadron, Millington was declared missing after a dogfight over the English Channel in late October, ironically just days before the end of the Battle of Britain.

Conducting repeated combat air patrols, he recorded 11 aerial victories; all in only four

months in the Battle of Britain. He is one of eight South Australians to have flown in the Battle of Britain.



Bill Millington in his RAF uniform.

Williams, Robert Graham MBE

1914 – 1978 Warrant Officer



First class cricketer who served as a navigator and became a Prisoner of War before playing in the famous Victory Tests

ROBERT GRAHAM WILLIAMS was born in Adelaide in 1914. Growing up in St Peters, he attended Prince Alfred College before working as a wool classer. He was a talented cricketer and played for South Australia as a fast-medium bowler over three seasons in the late 1930s.

Williams enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1940, and trained as an Air Observer (navigator) before being posted to Egypt. He was on his 12th mission over North Africa when his Maryland bomber was attacked by a German fighter on 16 June 1941. Surviving the subsequent crash-landing, Williams was captured and saw out the next four years in Prisoner of War camps.

After being liberated and arriving in England in April 1945, Williams was selected to play for Australia against England in the famous Victory Tests, the first of which was played only two weeks after the surrender of Germany on 7 May. Williams was significantly underweight and still

recovering from his internment such that he initially struggled with the physical demands of bowling. When it was his turn to bat, the 15,000 strong crowd gave Williams a standing ovation which the great Australian cricketer and RAAF veteran, Keith Miller, described as “*the most touching moment I have ever seen or heard*”.

Williams returned to Adelaide in late 1945 but never returned to first class cricket.



The Australian Services Victory Test Team for the third match at Lords on 17 July 1945. Williams is second from the left in the back row. The great Keith Miller is third from the right in the back row.

Cowper, Robert “Bob” Barson DFC and Bar, OAM

1940 – 2016 Squadron Leader



World War Two night fighter pilot and ace

ROBERT “BOB” BARSON COWPER was born in Broken Hill in 1922 but grew up near Gawler and attended Queens College in Adelaide. He enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on his 18th birthday in June 1940.

Cowper completed initial pilot training in Western Australia before completing advanced training in Canada. From July 1941 he underwent night fighter conversion and operational training in Scotland.

Cowper’s first operational posting saw him flying the Boulton Paul Defiant on night patrols over the Irish Sea where there was little combat. Cowper then converted to the Bristol Beaufighter and was posted to No. 89 Squadron (RAF) in Malta.

Based in Malta, Cowper flew fighter patrols over the Mediterranean. On the evening of 11 July 1943, Cowper shot down a Ju88 medium bomber which exploded and damaged his own aircraft, forcing him to bail out. He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross having completed

68 operational missions and destroying two enemy aircraft with the unit.

Cowper returned to the UK and served as an instructor, before joining his first RAAF unit, No. 456 Squadron. Flying Mosquito fighters, he saw action over the Normandy landings and against V-1 rockets.

Cowper rose to the rank of Squadron Leader and recorded seven aerial victories to be recognised as an air ace. In his later years he developed a strong relationship with RAAF Edinburgh before passing away in 2016.



Bob Cowper with Air Vice Marshal Mel Hupfeld, Air Commander Australia, in front of the Bob Cowper display at RAAF Edinburgh in 2012.

Bonython, Hugh Reskymer “Kym” AC, DFC, AFC

1920 – 2011 Squadron Leader



A prominent South Australian figure who completed three operational tours in the Pacific theatre

HUGH RESKYMER “KYM” BONYTHON was born in Adelaide in 1920 to a prominent Adelaide family. He attended St Peters College before working at an accountancy firm.

In March 1940 Bonython enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force and was trained as a pilot. Joining No. 2 Squadron, he flew Lockheed Hudsons on coastal patrols off the east coast of Australia. In early 1942 he was forward deployed to Timor and narrowly escaped capture by the Japanese after a long jungle trek.

Bonython converted to Beaufort torpedo bombers and joined No. 100 Squadron where he saw action in New Guinea flying maritime strike missions against Japanese shipping. After returning to Australia, he served as a Beaufort instructor and survived several crashes during torpedo training. He was awarded the Air Force Cross for his service as an instructor.

In August 1943 Bonython was posted to No.

87 squadron in the Northern Territory, which operated the Mosquito aircraft in the photo-reconnaissance role. In May 1945 he carried out the longest photographic mission ever undertaken by the squadron, flying deep into central Java, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Following World War Two, Bonython went on to greatly contribute to South Australia in the arts, motor racing, local government and as an author. Meanwhile, not forgetting his war time service, he returned to the recently reformed 87 Squadron at RAAF Base Edinburgh in 2009 to unveil the presentation of the No. 87 Squadron Battle Honours.



Kym Bonython with Wing Commander Trotman-Dickenson, the Commanding Officer of No. 87 Squadron at the unveiling of the No. 87 Squadron Battle Honours on 10 December 2009.

Pascoe, Rena June

1921 – 2020 Aircraftswoman

Pioneering member of the first South Australian Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force course

RENA JUNE PASCOE was born in Yorketown in 1921. Initially completing two years education at Edithburgh, she had to complete her initial education via correspondence until leaving school at 14 years old.

Living with her grandmother in Henley Beach at the start of World War Two, Pascoe worked as a dress maker. She registered her interest in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) but it was not until early 1942 that the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) began recruiting and training in South Australia. In March 1942, Pascoe was called up and joined the first WAAAF training course at Victor Harbor. She remembered that they wore overalls and as they had no pillows, they had to sleep with their boots in a pillow case.

Pascoe's first posting was to No. 6 Service Flying Training School at Mallala where she packed parachutes and painted camouflage on Avro Anson aircraft. In 1943 she was trained as a telephone

operator and served in Adelaide and Mallala until June 1945. A transfer to Melbourne followed where Pascoe worked at RAAF Headquarters before being discharged in November.

The WAAAF was a major success and established a precedent showing how women could be employed beyond their traditional roles. In this respect, Rena, like the 27,000 women who joined the WAAAF in World War Two, were pioneers.

Pascoe was a loved and respected member of the South Australian veterans' community

having joined the RAAF Association in 1951 and then the RSL. She was the 2017 Walkerville Volunteer of the Year at age 96. She passed away in September 2020 not far short of her 100th birthday.



Rena Pascoe in her WAAAF uniform.

Kleinig, Theodore “Ted” Victor Benno

1917 – 1943 Flying Officer

New Beaufort pilot killed on a mission on Christmas Day 1943 in New Guinea

THEODORE “TED” VICTOR BENNO KLEINIG was born in Stockwell in the Barossa Valley in 1917. He became a teacher and taught at Truro Primary School not far from Stockwell.

In 1941 Kleinig enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force. He completed his initial training at Victor Harbor and then basic flying training at Parafield.

Following time as a staff officer, Kleinig was posted to No. 100 Squadron, a Beaufort bomber unit operating in New Guinea. On 2 December 1943 he was transferred to another Beaufort unit operating in the same area, No. 8 Squadron. The units were conducting strike missions against Japanese forces including those at Rabaul.

Rabaul was a defensive fortress defended by searchlights, anti-aircraft batteries and fighter aircraft based at five surrounding airfields. On Christmas Day 1943, Kleinig and his crew were tasked with attacking the central Rabaul airfield at Lakunai.

Flying Beaufort A9-444 Kleinig dropped his

bombs over the target but one failed to release. Coming in to land with a “hung bomb” the aircraft bounced on the runway and the bomb exploded, destroying the rear fuselage. As the wreckage slid forward, the fuel tanks in the wings exploded and all four aircrew were killed.

Discovered in a house being demolished, Kleinig’s logbook was given to RAAF Edinburgh in 2015 by Playford Council. Today it is on display at the RAAF Edinburgh Officers Mess.



Ted Kleinig (back left) pictured with his crew in New Guinea only a short time before their deaths in a Beaufort landing accident.



A Tiger Moth being refuelled at Parafield, where many South Australian pilots were trained at No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School.



A Beaufort bomber of No. 100 Squadron over New Britain, similar to that flown by Ted Kleinig who was killed in a Beaufort crash on Christmas Day 1943.

Shannon, David John DSO and Bar, DFC and Bar

1922 – 1993 Squadron Leader



Lancaster bomber pilot who flew in the famous Dambuster mission

DAVID JOHN SHANNON was born in Unley in 1922. After attending Unley High School, he worked for an insurance company before enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force in January 1941. Shannon completed his flying training in Western Australia before being sent to Scotland for heavy bomber conversion training.

In June 1942, Shannon was posted to No. 106 Squadron, Royal Air Force (RAF), which was converting to the new Lancaster heavy bomber. He conducted his first mission, a mass 1,000 aircraft raid over Germany, only four days after arriving at the unit. Quickly earning a reputation as a gifted pilot, he completed 36 missions between June 1942 and February 1943.

Shannon was hand-picked for a new specialist unit, No. 617 Squadron, which had been formed to conduct the famous “Dambuster” missions. At only 20 years old, he was the unit’s youngest aircraft captain. On the evening of the 16 May 1943, Shannon captained one of 19 Lancasters on the famous Dambuster Raid

against three German dams.

For the remainder of 1943 and 1944, Shannon served with No. 617 Squadron conducting dangerous and specialist strike missions against canals, dams, and V-1 rocket sites. He also flew low-level “Pathfinder” missions in Mosquito aircraft marking targets for larger bomber aircraft. By September 1944, Shannon had completed 69 Bomber Command missions across two tense operational tours.

Rested from Bomber Command, he was posted to transport squadrons before being discharged in December 1945. Shannon remained in Britain post war.



David Shannon during his time with No. 617 Squadron.

Leicester, David Lewis DFC and Bar

1923 – Squadron Leader



Bomber Command pilot and young leader who survived two full tours

DAVID LEWIS LEICESTER was born in Unley in 1923 and attended Unley High School. He worked briefly as an office boy before enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force in August 1941.

Leicester completed initial training at Victor Harbor and then basic flying training at Parafield, before proceeding to Victoria for advanced training. After graduating as an 18-year-old pilot in May 1942, he was sent to England for training on Halifax bombers.

In May 1943, Leicester was posted to No. 158 Squadron, a Halifax bomber unit based in Yorkshire. Six days later, Leicester and his crew were flying their first mission since arriving at the squadron, a massive 577 aircraft raid deep into Germany.

In August 1943, his commanding officer was shot down and Leicester, at the young age of 20, was made an Acting Squadron Leader. Reflecting great leadership, he then helped form a new unit, No. 640 Squadron.

Having completed his first operational tour of 31 sorties for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Leicester joined No. 35 Squadron, one of the original Pathfinder squadrons now operating Lancasters. With this unit he completed another 37 missions over Germany by January 1945, earning a Bar to his original award.

Leicester was one of the lucky few to survive two Bomber Command tours where more than one third of the almost 10,000 Australians who served in Bomber Command perished during the war.



Portrait image of Squadron Leader David Leicester taken in October 1943 in front of a Lancaster bomber.

Dennis, Kevin John cgm

1924 – Warrant Officer



Bomber Command radio operator who was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal

BORN IN CEDUNA IN 1924, KEVIN JOHN DENNIS grew up in country South Australia. After attending Nurioopta High School he worked as a bank clerk in Pinnaroo.

Dennis enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in late 1942 and received his initial training in Victor Harbor before being trained as a radio operator in Victoria.

Dennis arrived in England in January 1944 and completed operational training on heavy bombers where he was graded as a Wireless Operator (Air). He was finally posted to No. 462 Squadron (RAAF), in February 1945. Equipped with Halifax heavy bombers, the unit was given the role of disrupting the German air defences.

On the evening of 13 March 1945, Bomber Command launched several major attacks into northern Germany comprised of hundreds of bombers. In support, No. 462 Squadron had eleven aircraft in the air conducting spoof radio countermeasures over the Frankfurt area.

Dennis was flying with his crew on their second mission in Halifax RG384-M on the 13 March raid when the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. The starboard engine was knocked out, the flight engineer was killed and Dennis was severely injured. Despite bleeding profusely, Dennis refused to leave his post and assisted the crew to find an emergency airfield where they could land their aircraft.

For his courageous actions, Kevin Dennis was awarded an immediate Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, a prestigious bravery award second only to the Victoria Cross for airmen. He is one of only 11 Australians and the only South Australian, to be awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.



Kevin Dennis with his English wife at their wedding reception in 1945.

Tindale, Norman Barnett

1900 – 1993 Wing Commander

South Australian anthropologist becomes successful Second World War Intelligence Analyst

NORMAN BARNETT TINDALE was born in Perth in 1900, but his family moved to Adelaide in 1903. In 1907 they moved farther to Tokyo where Tindale grew up and attended a Japanese High School. After eight years in Japan, the family returned to Perth in 1915 and then Adelaide in 1917.

Tindale initially worked as an Entomological Assistant at the South Australian Museum in 1919. During the 1920s and 1930s he became one of Australia's most prolific anthropologists, travelling extensively throughout central Australia. Tindale was also a pioneering archaeologist.

After joining the Royal Australian Air Force in 1942 his Japanese language skills were recognised and he was employed as an intelligence officer. Using research and analysis skills developed at the South Australian Museum, Tindale developed the methodology for removing and analysing aircraft production parts from Japanese wrecks. The data was stored on a card system and by the end of the war Tindale's section had a database of 35,000 cards.

Tindale's work enabled him to gain insights into Japanese aircraft technology and production methods. His work was valued to the extent where he was specially requested to become part of a joint intelligence organisation in Washington responsible for analysing the Japanese aircraft industry.

After the Japanese surrender, Tindale was sent to Japan to help assess the effectiveness of the American bombing campaign. Completing the work in May 1946, Tindale was discharged in August 1946 returning to Australia and his work at the South Australian Museum.



Sadly, Tindale's significant contribution to the allied victory remains largely unknown and unrecognised.

Norman Tindale during World War Two.

Tongerie, George AM

1925 – 2013 Leading Aircraftsman



Proud indigenous veteran who served overseas prior to becoming a community leader

GEORGE TONGERIE was born in 1925 near Quorn. After his mother died during childbirth, he was taken from his family and grew up at the Quorn Colebrook Home becoming one of the Stolen Generation.

At only 18 years, Tongerie enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in June 1943 identifying his previous employment as a tanner's assistant. His enlistment was reported in a local Adelaide newspaper, suggesting that Tongerie was the second South Australian Aboriginal to join the RAAF in World War Two.

Enlisted as a General Hand, he initially served at a stores depot at Townsville and from April 1944 was posted to Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, where he served with No. 12 Squadron and No. 44 Operational Base Unit. He remembers being the only Aboriginal with the RAAF at Merauke and was looked at unusually by the New Guinea natives. He returned to Australia in July 1945, having served 16 months on operational service overseas, prior to his discharge in February 1946.

In post-war decades, Tongerie became a leader in South Australia's indigenous community. He was awarded the South Australian Aboriginal of the Year Award in 1985. In 1988, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia along with his wife for services to the aboriginal community. He was a proud veteran, serving as Vice President of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Veterans Association and marched regularly on ANZAC Day.

Passing away in 2013, George Tongerie emerged from being one of the stolen generation to serving for his country overseas and becoming a leading indigenous rights advocate.



George Tongerie as a young airman.

Quinn, Eldred “Ted”

1922 – 1945 Flight Sergeant

Kittyhawk pilot who was the last RAAF pilot to be killed in action in the Second World War

ELDRED “TED” QUINN was born at Gumeracha in 1922. He attended Birdwood High School and became a farmer.

Quinn enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on Anzac Day 1942. His initial training was at Victor Harbor and Parafield before he completed flight training in Victoria and New South Wales.

In November 1944, Quinn joined No. 80 Squadron which flew Kittyhawk fighters. Based at Morotai in the Netherlands East Indies, the unit flew close support missions for the army.

On 15 February 1945, Quinn was uninjured when the tyre of his Kittyhawk blew out on take-off, causing significant damage to the aircraft. He then received a new Kittyhawk, A29-1161, which he nicknamed *Us Feller’s* and gave it distinctive nose art – a caricature of Ginger Meggs sitting on a bomb.

On 9 August 1945, Quinn was tasked with attacking Japanese forces in eastern Borneo. It was to be his final mission as he had just

completed his operational tour.

However, Quinn’s aircraft was hit by ground fire behind the rear engine cowling at about 1,500 feet as he commenced his strafing run. The aircraft belly-landed in flames and skidded along the ground into an oil pumping plant, where the aircraft exploded. Quinn perished in the crash.

The next day, the squadron heard about the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and within a week Japan surrendered. Quinn’s fatal mission was the last combat mission flown by his unit and he was one of the last RAAF pilots to be killed in combat in the Second World War.



Ted Quinn with his P-40 Kittyhawk and unique Ginger Meggs nose art.

McAloney, William “Bill” Simpson GM, MBE

1936 – 1995 Wing Commander



Albert/George Medal winner who served for three decades from 1936 until 1966

WILLIAM “BILL” SIMPSON MCALONEY was born in Adelaide in 1910. He was educated at Thebarton Technical High School and worked as a mechanic before enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force in July 1936.

Completing initial training as a fitter, McAloney was posted to No. 1 Squadron at Laverton in Victoria. Less than a year later, he witnessed a Hawker Demon crash in flames. McAloney raced over to the aircraft and pulled out the pilot before being knocked unconscious himself by an explosion. He was pulled from the flaming wreck severely burned.

McAloney recovered after significant time in hospital. For his incredible bravery, McAloney was awarded the Albert Medal – becoming the only RAAF Member to receive the Albert Medal (which in 1971 was exchanged for the George Medal).

McAloney served through the Second World War, mainly in the Melbourne area but also in the Netherlands East Indies from late 1944 performing

engine maintenance. In 1952-53, he spent twelve months in Singapore servicing the Lincoln bombers involved in the Malayan Emergency.

After serving in various staff level engineering roles, from 1960 to 1966 McAloney commanded the Engineering Squadron, Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) during which he oversaw the introduction of the advanced Mirage III jet fighter into RAAF service. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1966 for his service at ARDU.

Bill McAloney was one of those extraordinary South Australians who demonstrated incredible bravery at junior rank and then served for



another three decades in the Air Force to be again recognised at the highest levels.

Bill McAloney as a squadron leader after World War Two.

Fopp, Desmond AFC

1920 – 2005 Squadron Leader



Royal Air Force fighter pilot and helicopter pioneer

DESMOND FOPP was born at Cudlee Creek in 1920. After attending St Peter's College, in 1936 his father died and Fopp went to live in England, with his mother.

In 1938, Fopp joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) Volunteer Reserve and was called up in 1939. After completing Hurricane conversion, Fopp was posted to No. 17 Squadron in May 1940 and saw combat during the Battle of France. In July he scored his first aerial victory during the Battle of Britain, but in September was badly burned after he baled out of a burning aircraft and spent three painful months in hospital.

Returning to service in 1942 he flew Spitfires in fighter sweeps over France, before serving out the war as an instructor. He was awarded an Air Force Cross for his quick and decisive actions in nursing a badly damaged training aircraft back to the airfield despite 90 percent of its tail being destroyed in an aircraft collision.

Post war, he flew Meteor jet fighters with No.

611 Squadron in Cyprus in the early 1950s. In 1955, Fopp returned to England and transitioned to helicopters, helping to establish search and rescue techniques. In the 1960's he flew helicopters in Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation..

He retired from the RAF in 1975 with the rank of squadron leader after a remarkable career spanning three decades of operations around the globe. He died in 2005 as Australia's last surviving Battle of Britain veteran and one of eight South Australian's to fly in the Battle of Britain. Despite serving in the RAF, Fopp held true to his Australian heritage and remained an Australian passport-holder all his life.



*A civilian portrait of
Desmond Fopp.*

Shearn, Hartley Vivian “Viv” DFC, AFC

1921 – 2018 Wing Commander



Distinguished career across two wars and as a test pilot at Woomera

HARTLEY VIVIAN “VIV” SHEARN was born in Perth in 1921. As a teenager he gained a private pilot’s licence before joining the Royal Australian Air Force in 1940.

Shearn was trained in New South Wales and Canada before arriving in England in mid-1941 where he joined No. 457 Squadron (RAAF) to fly Spitfires. In early 1942, he returned to Australia where he flew Kittyhawk fighters on over 150 operational missions with No. 77 Squadron in Northern Australia and New Guinea.

From 1944 Shearn served as a test and ferry pilot, flying a diverse variety of aircraft. After a period in the Citizen Air Force, he rejoined the RAAF in 1951 to fly Meteors with No. 77 Squadron in Korea between January and July 1953. He completed 163 operational missions primarily in Meteor A77-728 nicknamed *Betty Toot* and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

From 1953 to 1958, Shearn was employed on research and development tasks. He was

particularly involved in air-to-air missile procedures flying over 1,000 hours at Woomera and Edinburgh. He was the first person to successfully destroy a Jindivik target aircraft using a Firestreak missile fired from a Sabre.

In the 1960’s, Shearn flew Neptune aircraft with No 11 Squadron. He retired in October 1970 after a distinguished flying career in which he flew a total of 6,500 hours across 59 types of military aircraft. He was awarded the Air Force Cross on retirement.

Shearn settled in Adelaide and was the Burnside Mayor in the early 1990s.



Viv Shearn (right) in front of his No. 77 Squadron Meteor named Betty Toot.

Macintosh, Robert “Bob” Andrew AFC, OAM

1929 – 2019 Wing Commander



Korean War fighter pilot who then flew Iroquois helicopters in Vietnam

ROBERT ANDREW MACINTOSH was born in Nowra, New South Wales, in 1929. After starting an engineering degree he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a trainee pilot in 1951.

Macintosh was posted to No. 77 Squadron in Korea where he flew Meteors from May to July 1953. His missions involved escorting bombers and striking ground targets. After returning to Australia, he converted onto the new Sabre aircraft where he was at the forefront of the RAAF's new fighter capability for several years.

Macintosh underwent Iroquois helicopter pilot training in the United States in 1962. He flew the new helicopters in Australian flood relief missions prior to postings in Malaya and then Vietnam from June 1966 to March 1967. Macintosh flew one of three Iroquois helicopters to evacuate wounded soldiers after the Battle of Long Tan. It was a feat of night flying which no training prepared him where he flew with no lights low over jungle. A month later, he was tasked with picking up a SAS patrol near Binh

Gia in the face of enemy fire.

Returning to Australia, Macintosh wrote the syllabus for the RAAF's first helicopter pilot instructors course for which he was awarded the Air Force Cross. He commanded RAAF Edinburgh prior to his retirement in 1978.

He subsequently became a “Flying Padre” in a Cessna 182 before settling in Adelaide where he was a tireless servant of the Air Force Association (SA Division). He served on South Australia's Veterans' Advisory Council from 2014 to 2016 sharing his passion, understanding and concern for the veterans' community.



Bob Macintosh in a RAAF Iroquois in Vietnam.



South Australian test pilot Viv Shearn taxiing a Sabre with a Blue Jay Firestreak missile at Woomera.



A RAAF Iroquois helicopter evacuates wounded after the Battle of Long Tan in Vietnam. South Australian pilot Bob Macintosh participated in these missions.

Herbert, Michael Patrick John (“Herbie”)

1946 – 1970 Flying Officer

*A young pilot is missing in action
in Vietnam for almost 40 years before
being laid to rest in Adelaide*

MICHAEL PATRICK JOHN HERBERT (“HERBIE”) was born in Freeling in 1946. He grew up in Glenelg and attended Sacred Heart College from 1957 to 1963. Wanting to fly as a boy, he joined the local Air Training Corps at 13 and gained a private aircraft licence at only 16 years old.

Herbert joined the Royal Australian Air Force in 1964. After attending the RAAF Academy, he completed pilot training in 1969. Following conversion to the Canberra jet bomber he prepared for a combat deployment to Vietnam.

In February 1970, Herbert arrived in Vietnam for his operational tour. No 2 Squadron had been operating the Canberra bomber in Vietnam since April 1967. Although showing its age, the aircraft was reliable and the squadron was performing well in Vietnam. By June 1970, the squadron was flying nine missions a day and Herbert had dropped the squadron’s 60,000th bomb on Vietnam.

On 3 November 1970, Michael Herbert was flying his 199th mission over Vietnam. Accompanied by his navigator, Bob Carver, they dropped their bombs on the target from 22,000 feet and were returning to base when the aircraft suddenly disappeared from radar screens.

Despite intensive searches, the missing aircraft was not located until 2009 when the remains of Herbert and Carver were recovered. On 7 September 2009, a state funeral for Herbert was held at St Xavier’s Cathedral, Adelaide. Their remains were the last previously unrecovered and listed as missing in action to be returned to Australia. Herbert is the last South Australian airman to have been killed in combat.



Michael Herbert (left) with the 60,000th bomb dropped by No. 2 Squadron in Vietnam.

Espeland, Brenton “Jack” AM

1948 – 2017 Air Vice-Marshal



From Woodville High School to Deputy Chief of Air Force

BRENTON “JACK” ESPELAND was born in Hindmarsh in January 1948. He attended Woodville High School and graduated in 1965 as dux of his year. After joining the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) he graduated from the RAAF Academy in 1969 and then pilot training in 1970. Espeland was posted to No. 36 Squadron where he flew for five years as a C-130A Hercules transport pilot. During this period he flew in Vietnam, including as captain of the last Australian Hercules flight out of Saigon on 25 April 1975.

In 1976, Espeland was selected for flying instructor duties flying the Macchi MB-326 trainer. This commenced a long and distinguished career in Air Force pilot training. An exceptional pilot, within four months of instructing, he was selected to be a member of the elite Air Force Roulette aerobatic flying team. In 1989, Espeland was selected to attend the prestigious United States Air Force Air War College at Maxwell Field, Alabama, after which

he was Director RAAF Air Power Studies Centre at RAAF Fairbairn, Canberra. Further prestigious staff positions followed including Air Officer Commanding Training Command, until his promotion to air vice marshal and appointment as Deputy Chief of Air Force from 1998 to 1999. His final position saw him responsible for the coordination of security and intelligence for the Sydney 2000 Olympic games.

In retirement, Espeland was an active veterans’ advocate and leader. Among his many appointments, he served as the National President of the Royal Australian Air Force Association, the Chairman of the Board of Governors’ of the Repat Foundation, and the

Chairman of the South Australian Veterans Advisory Council. Sadly he passed away in 2017 following a short battle with cancer.



Official portrait of Air Vice-Marshal Brenton Espeland.

Smart, Tracy Lee AO

1963 – Air Vice-Marshal



Excelling in aviation medicine and leadership as the first openly gay and lesbian senior ADF officer

TRACY LEE SMART was born in McLaren Vale in 1963. She attended Willunga High School before completing a medical degree at Flinders University.

After joining the Royal Australian Air Force full-time in 1989, Smart served as a medical officer at various RAAF bases before being posted to the UK where she completed a Royal College of Physicians Diploma of Aviation Medicine.

After further postings in Australia, Smart completed an operational deployment in Rwanda with the United Nations assistance mission in 1995. A challenging operation, she regards it as a career highlight.

From 1997-1999 Smart served as the first female commanding officer of the RAAF Institute of Aviation Medicine. She then undertook an exchange tour with the United States Air Force.

After returning to Australia, Smart saw service in Timor Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan. From 2010 to 2012 she served as Director General Garrison


Health Operations in Joint Health Command, where she managed the delivery of health care at over 70 defence locations throughout Australia.

In 2015, Smart was promoted to air vice marshal and assumed the positions of Commander Joint Health Command and Surgeon General of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), serving in that capacity until her retirement in 2019. She was appointed an Order of Australia in the Military Division for driving reform in post-traumatic, military and veterans' mental health.

Breaking traditionally conservative anti-gay ADF molds, she is believed to be the first openly gay and lesbian person to achieve senior rank in the ADF becoming a role model for others.



Air Vice Marshal Tracy Smart as Commander Joint Health.



For over a century, South Australians have served our nation's Air Force creating a remarkable legacy of service. Produced for the Royal Australian Air Force Centenary in 2021, this publication profiles thirty such South Australians. Some are decorated pilots. A few rose to the highest echelons of Air Force leadership, while others served on the ground in support roles. Some returned to South Australia serving the community in fields such as sport, indigenous reconciliation and the arts. Tragically, many did not return paying the ultimate sacrifice for their nation. The aim of this booklet is to inspire our community to learn more about the proud and enduring legacy of South Australians in the Air Force.

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