

## FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ROSS McROSTIE FRAYNE MiD US Air Medal

### World War 2 & Korean War Pilot

Ross McRostie Frayne was born in Rose Park, a suburb of Adelaide, on 29 June 1924, the son of George McRostie Frayne and Olive Rigby Ross. He grew up in Avenue Park, an inner southern suburb of Adelaide now largely known as Cumberland Park in the City of Mitcham. He was educated at Westbourne Park Primary School and then Adelaide High School from 1937 to 1940, from which he completed his Intermediate Certificate.

He joined the Air Training Corps from June to October 1942. On 15 October he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force at No. 5 Recruitment Centre in Adelaide and was allocated Service Number 437049. He listed his employment at the time of enlistment as Motor Driver.

Upon enlistment, he completed No. 11 Aircrew Drill Course at No. 1 Recruit Depot at Shepparton in central Victoria from 15 October to 6 November 1943. The course is unusual for a trainee aircrew as the majority of such trainees progressed straight to an initial training school upon enlistment for their basic training.

Frayne then posted to No. 2 Air Observers School at Mt Gambier from 5 November 1942 to 1 January 1943 prior to proceeding to basic training. This was another unusual step and could have been due to availability of a basic training spot at one of the initial training schools but in such cases, members were normally placed on the reserve and called up for enlistment when a training position became available.

On 1 January 1943, he was posted to No. 1 Initial Training School (1ITS) located at Somers, near Westernport Bay, Victoria. Over the next four months, Frayne completed basic training and was screened for aircrew training, eventually being selected for pilot. His posting to 1ITS was again somewhat unusual as most South Australian trainee aircrew completed their basic training at No. 4 Initial Training School at Victor Harbor, South Australia. Once again, Frayne's posting to 1ITS rather than 4ITS suggests there was a backlog of trainees and he was slotted into a training opportunity at another initial training unit.

1ITS was a new defence establishment with 92 acres of land compulsorily acquired under the National Security Act in 1940 with the first students arriving in late April 1940. Facilities were fairly simple initially, with no local water supply and the cold and windy weather necessitating the construction of suitable accommodation.



*Trainees in their simple barracks accommodation in 1940. (AWM)*

The initial Commanding Officer was Flight Lieutenant Thomas Walter White, the former World War 1 Australian Flying Corps veteran who served in Mesopotamia and was captured by Turkish forces and imprisoned as a prisoner of war. Serving as a Federal Member of Parliament between the wars, he rejoined the RAAF just after the outbreak of war.

1ITS was one of six basic training schools established around Australia to provide basic training of aircrew trainees and members of the Women Auxiliary Australian Air Force. Aircrew trainees were also screened for aircrew specialisations such as pilot, navigation, wireless operator or air gunner. Trainees received training in maths, navigation, military law, military administration, signals, medical, physical training, science, armament, gas defence and hygiene. For aircrew trainees, there was also a Link trainer to provide flying training familiarisation. By September 1941, the strength of 1ITS was 35 officers and 266 airmen with 914 trainees. Almost 13,000 aircrew and 1,270 WAAAF recruits were trained at Somers between 1940 and 1945.

Completing basic training and selected to undergo pilot training, on 20 April Frayne was posted to No. 7 Elementary Flying Training School (7EFTS) to undergo basic flying training located at Western Junction Aerodrome, Launceston, Tasmania. Established in late August 1940, 7EFTS was one of 12 elementary flying training schools established around Australia as part of the national mobilisation effort to train aircrew as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme. It was the RAAF aircrew training unit located in Tasmania during the war. By the end of October 1944, 7 EFTS was equipped with approximately 60 Tiger Moths, and had trained 1,801 pilots. Flying training at 7EFTS was suspended in December 1944 as the need for new aircrew slowed and all flying ceased on 28 March the next year. The school was disbanded on 31 August 1945.

The twelve-week introductory flying course was undertaken in two stages; the first involved four weeks of instruction (including ten hours of flying), which were used to determine trainees' suitability to become pilots. Those that passed this assessment then received a further eight weeks of training including 65 hours of flying. During his time at 7EFTS, Frayne completed 31 dual and 28 solo flying hours on the DH-82 Tiger Moth and four hours of night flying training.



*A 7EFTS instructor and trainee pilot alongside a Tiger Moth at Western Junction Aerodrome, Tasmania in 1941. (AWM)*

Completing basic training, Frayne was posted to No. 6 Service Flying Training School at Mallala about 60 km north of Adelaide. Mallala was one of three major training bases in South Australia established during World War 2 to train aircrew.

Formed on 25 August 1941 under the command of WGCDR Norman Brearley, a former World War 1 Australian Flying Corps veteran, 6SFTS was one of eight Service Flying Training Schools established as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme across Australia to consolidate trainee pilots who had completed their elementary flying training by introducing them to instrument flying, night flying, advanced aerobatics, and formation flying. The training comprised an intermediate and advanced phase with trainees graduating at the end of the course with their wings.

6SFTS operated Avro Ansons and Airspeed Oxfords as the training aircraft with Tiger Moth and Moth Minor as support aircraft. Over two thousand trainees underwent pilot training at the unit during World War 2. Mallala was a large base

comprising up to 140 aircraft, 14 main hangars and two large concrete parking aprons that were connected to five grass runways by concrete taxiways.



*Image showing the large 6SFTS infrastructure at Mallala during World War 2 including Avron Anson and Airspeed Oxford aircraft on two main concrete parking aprons, several connecting taxiways and 14 large hangars. The parade ground where graduation parades occurred is located in the centre of the base with barracks located around it and the primary 6SFTS classrooms located between the parade ground and the central hangars.*

Commencing the intermediate phase on 3 August 1943, Frayne completed 46 hours on Ansons comprising 26 hours in a dual configuration and 20 hours solo and 5 hours night training. From 24 September, he commenced the advanced phase of the course completing 80 flying hours on Ansons with 23 in a dual configuration, 23 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> captain, 31 flying hours solo, 10 flying hours at night, 9 hours performing formation flying and 5 hours consolidation on the ground in a Link Trainer simulator.

Frayne graduated as a pilot on 18 November, being presented with his wings and promoted to Sergeant. He was then placed in a holding pattern for several months pending posting to the European theatre.

Arriving in England, Frayne posted to No. 11 (RAAF) Personnel Dispatch and Reception Centre at Brighton in late January 1944. Located on the south coast in Sussex about 80 kilometres south of London, 11 PDRC was the receiving station for Royal Australian Air Force non-commissioned air crew arriving in the United Kingdom to wait for up to 4



*RAAF personnel on parade at No 11 Personnel Dispatch and Reception Centre, Brighton, in 1943. (AWM)*

months before being posted to training or other units. The Unit occupied both the Grand Hotel and Metropole Hotel on the beach front; the hotel fittings were removed to make way for service style billets. In mid-June 1943, the unit had 20 officers, 25 NCOs and 33 other ranks on the permanent staff, with almost 950 aircrew and over 200 officers awaiting further posting. While at 11PDRC, Frayne was promoted to Flight Sergeant in May 1944.

He was posted to No. 20 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit at RAF Kidlington in Oxfordshire, England, from 13 June to 21 August 1944. 20(P)AFU was established to train pilots from the British Commonwealth, primarily instructing them on twin-engine aircraft during WWII and familiarizing them with flying in Europe. More than one hundred RAAF pilots completed such training at the unit at any one time acclimatizing to the flying conditions in the UK, which were notably different from those in Australia. During this period, he completed beam approach training in July. He recovered from an inflight engine failure on a day training sortie in July.



*Airspeed Oxford training aircraft of No 20 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit at RAF Kidlington in October 1943. (AWM)*

On 8 September 1944 he was posted as a staff pilot to No. 10 Radio School located at RAF Carew Cheriton just east of the large flying boat base at Pembroke Dock in southern Pembrokeshire, Wales,. First established in World War 1 as a Royal Naval Air Station, RAF Carew Cheriton was rebuilt as a Coastal Command airbase at the start of World War 2 and was attacked several times in the first years of the war but was handed over to RAF Technical Training Command in



*RAF Carew Cheriton in Southwest Wales, home of No 10 Radio School, during World War 2*

October 1942. No. 10 Radio School was established shortly after to train wireless operators. The course was five weeks, with trainee wireless operator aircrew undergoing wireless operator training on the ground and in the air in Airspeed Oxfords and Avro Ansons. Although not an operational unit, the flying still had its risks as evidenced by several flying accidents such as when two Oxford aircraft collided at the intersection of the two runways in September 1943 killing the six aircrew. Four aircrew were lost when an Anson crashed into the sea in late April 1944. Both accidents involved RAAF aircrew. The unit was disbanded in November 1945.

While at No. 10 Radio School, Frayne was promoted to Warrant Officer in May 1945 and commissioned to Flying Officer in September 1945. Completing his posting at No. 10 Radio School in early August 1945, Frayne was posted to No. 14 Aircrew Holding Unit at RAF Millom in Cumbria in northwestern England from August to December before returning to South Australia, disembarking at Perth in November 1945 and being discharged on 17 January 1946.

In February 1946, Frayne returned to school to complete his Leaving Certificate by November 1946 and then commenced studying engineering at Adelaide University in early 1947 as part of the Commonwealth Re-Construction Training Scheme (CRTS). The CRTS was established to offer vocational or academic training for men and women who had served with the Australian armed services during World War II. Its purpose was to aid in the return of ex-service personnel to civilian employment and help return the nation's peacetime economy. The CRTS commenced in March 1944, and applications were received until 30 June 1950. By the time the final acceptances had been finalised in 1951, over 300,000 people had been approved to undertake full-time or part-time training under the Scheme. Almost 100,000 people completed their training. The Scheme provided for the payment of tuition and other fees and included a living allowance for those undertaking full-time training.

In October 1947, Frayne successfully reapplied to be a pilot with the RAAF. He re-enlisted in the RAAF on 2 February 1948 as an airman aircrew trainee and was given the new Service Number of A4424 (later O4424) and proceeded to RAAF Richmond where he completed General Service Training at the School of General Service Training from 2 February to 12 March 1948. From 22 March to 11 June 1948, he completed No. 1 Pilot Refresher Course at RAAF East Sale where staff assessed on his final report *"This man will develop into an excellent pilot."* Clearly demonstrating his flying credentials and



*A Central Flying School CA-22 Winjeel at RAAF East Sale. (AWM)*

experience, Frayne was selected to be a flying instructor and proceeded onto No. 2 Flying Instructor Course from June to December 1948 at the Central Flying School, RAAF East Sale.

From December 1948 to December 1951, he was posted to Central Flying School as a flying instructor, accumulating hours primarily on Wirraway, Dakota and Tiger Moth aircraft but also flew Mustang, Lincoln, Anson and Oxford aircraft. In July 1950, he successfully applied for commissioning as Flying Officer on 4 July 1950. By mid-1951, Frayne was also flying the Vampire, Mosquito, and Winjeel.

During this period, he married Patricia Helene Sholly at St Joseph's Church, Neutral Bay, Sydney, on 21 December 1949. In September 1950, they had their first son, Mark.



*Ross Frayne in World War 2 wearing Flying Officer rank. (Frayne family)*

On 7 January 1952, Frayne was posted to No. 78 Wing at RAAF Williamtown and attended No. 2 (Fighter) Operational Training Unit from 1 April to May 1952 to convert to fighter aircraft. 2 OTU had only just reformed on 1 March 1952 to convert RAAF pilots to jet aircraft and train them for fighter operations flying Mustangs and de Havilland Vampire jets.

From 15 May to 27 August 1952, Frayne served with No. 77 Squadron in Korea. During this period he flew 15 strike/operational sorties, 60 other sorties for a total of 87 operational flying hours in Korea. Many of his missions were armed reconnaissance patrols along routes and rocket strike missions against troop concentrations, villages, supply depots and revetments.

He was awarded the US Air Medal in June 1952 by COL H.R. Thyng, Commanding Officer, 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Wing, United States Air Force, for his service in the Korean War.



Ross Frayne in 77SQN Meteor 'Dear Liz' in Korea. The aircraft is possibly A77-734.

By direction of the President, Flying Officer Ross M. Frayne, 04424 has been awarded the Air Medal.

C I T A T I O N.

Flying Officer Ross M. Frayne distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial combat as the pilot of a Meteor aircraft, flying missions against the enemy in Korea from 17 May 1952 to 31 May 1952. Despite intense enemy ground fire and adverse weather conditions these attacks, at dangerously low levels, were pressed home with vigor. His superior flying ability aided greatly in the successful completion of these assigned missions. As a result of his valor, proficiency and devotion to duty on these occasions, he has reflected great credit upon himself, his comrades in arms of the United Nations and the Royal Australian Air Force.



FLTLT Ross Frayne's Citation for US Air Medal and image of him being presented with the US Air Medal by COL H.R. Thyng USAF, Commanding Officer 4<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Wing, Korea. (AWM)

Frayne was also Mentioned in Dispatches.

The Citation read *"He has displayed aggressiveness and vigour in all attacks and a great devotion to duty. His efforts in the air and cheerfulness on the ground have made him a fine example to all and done much towards the fine squadron effort."*

Meanwhile, Frayne's second son, Nigel, was born in May 1952. Patricia and Ross would become the parents of five children, all born between 1950 and 1955.

Frayne's last operational sortie was on 18 August 1952. He was withdrawn from theatre and assessed as medically unsuitable for flying, having broken his leg off duty in late August 1952. Returning to Australia, Frayne was admitted to No. 3 RAAF Hospital at RAAF Base Richmond on 11 October 1952, discharging ten days later. On 4 January 1953, he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant. He was posted to Headquarters Training Command on 9 February 1953 as the Command Aero Club Liaison officer, providing a respite posting for him to fully recover. He was then admitted to No. 6 RAAF Hospital at RAAF Laverton from 16 February to 16 March 1953.



Ross Frayne in Korea in flying suit. (Frayne family)

During his posting to Headquarters Training Command, he gained limited flying time. From July to December 1953, he flew a total of 16 hours as a Captain shared across Wirraway, Dakota, Tiger Moth, Mustang and Vampire aircraft and recorded 38 hours as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on Avro Lincoln aircraft. His duties involved working with the Citizen Air Force Squadron units, National Service Training units and Aero Clubs. His daughter, Louise Margaret, was born in Melbourne in August 1953.

On 4 May 1954, he was posted to Officer in Charge, Trials Flight, Aircraft Research Development Unit, based at Woomera. This was a Squadron Leader position and involved significant liaison and working with Weapons Research Establishment civilian and military staff, civilian contractors and defence industry representatives and other Air Force personnel at RAAF Mallala, Woomera and eventually Edinburgh. He was responsible for planning and directing the Flight's flying activities at Woomera and Mallala. With ARDU, he flew a large variety of aircraft. For example, between July and December 1954 he recorded 100 hours including 33 hours on the Beaufighter, 15 on the Canberra, 25 on the Avro Lincoln, 6 on the Meteor, 10 on the Mustang, 4 on the Auster and 2 on the Winjeel. He also obtained 1 hour on the Boeing Washington as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot. His third son, Lee Patrick, was born in Woomera in September 1954.



In January 1955, No. 1 Air Trials Unit was formed incorporating the ARDU Trials Flight and so, FLTLT Ross Frayne was posted to the new unit performing the same role. For the first six months of 1955, he recorded similar flying hours as with ARDU. However, he was selected as the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot of a small team comprising five aircrew (WGCDR Bill Kilsby (Lead pilot), FLTLT Ross Frayne (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot), FLTLT John Cook (Air Electronic Officer), FLTLT Scotland (Navigator) and FLTLT Wilson (Navigator), to complete conversion training on the Vickers Valiant with the RAF in the United Kingdom from May to 7 September 1955.

The intent was for the crew to complete ground training at the Vickers Factory at Brooklands southwest of London before proceeding to the production test airfield at Wisley south of Brooklands where they crewed new aircraft through the production test phase as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots to Vickers test pilots eventually becoming qualified captains.



*A RAF Vickers Valiant on the Edinburgh Airfield flightline in the 1960's. (Nigel Daw Image)*

The Vickers Valiant, one of the British V bombers along with the Avro Vulcan and the Handley Page Victor, that formed Britain's strategic nuclear strike force during the 1950s and 1960s. First flown in 1951, the Valiant was the first of the V bombers to become operational and was the only V bomber to have dropped live nuclear weapons (for test purposes). Several Valiants were attached to the Woomera based RAAF Air Trials Unit during the 1950s for the conduct of weapons testing in Australia. The first aircraft, Valiant B.1 (WZ209) left Farnborough in Hampshire on 31 July 1955, arriving at the Long-Range Weapons Establishment, at Edinburgh Airfield, on 11 August 1955 for weapons trials, taking over the work of Avro Lincolns and English Electric Canberras.

Although attached to the Air Trials Unit, the aircraft remained in the ownership of the British Ministry of Supply. Weapons trials were conducted by RAF crews but on occasions RAAF crew members were also on board. The aircraft remained in Australia until October 1960 when it was returned to the United Kingdom by an Australian crew. In

September 1956, two more Valiants (WP206 and WP207) of No. 138 Squadron RAF arrived in Australia as part of Operation *TOO RIGHT*. During 1956 and 1957, further Valiants from No. 543 Squadron RAF were based in Australia during *Operation Buffalo*, the dropping of the first Blue Danube atomic bomb at Maralinga. A further five Valiant aircraft were based in Australia at various times for short periods from 1959 to 1963 for specific weapons tests. Several Valiant aircraft were issued with RAAF Aircraft Status Cards. One Valiant even had a RAAF Roundel on it.

Frayne returned to Australia in early September as one of the small number of RAAF pilots who were qualified to fly the Valiant, travelling with Kilsby and Cook on a RAF Hastings courier aircraft. On 7 September, Air Trials Unit Lincoln RA644 flew Frayne, Kilsby and Cook from Edinburgh to Woomera. On 9 September, Frayne flew as 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain in his first Valiant mission in Australia flying Valiant WP209 in a ballistic bomb trial at Woomera. On 13 September, he flew another bomb ballistic trial flying a Canberra bomber. He was going to play a key part in the Australian supported British weapons testing in Woomera in the 1950s.

On 16 September, only nine days after arriving back in Australia, Frayne ferried a fellow pilot, FLGOFF Wallace Rivers from Woomera to RAAF Mallala to collect a Mustang and fly it to Woomera. He was flying Meteor A77-3/WM262, a dual seat NF11 aircraft based at Woomera with the ARDU Air Trials Flight. Delivered to the RAAF in June 1953 as an assembled aircraft with RAF designation WM262, the aircraft was assembled at No. 1 Aircraft Depot in September 1953 and given serial number A77-3

before being allocated to the ARDU Air Trials Flight in December 1953 to support the EMI/Vickers Blue Boar missile guided bomb weapon system trials. The aircraft had a unique modified/extended nose cone fitted to cover additional electronics and guidance systems.



RAAF NF11 Meteor A77-3 / WM262 of Air Trials Unit in flight in the 1950s



Front on shot showing the distinctive nose cone of Air Trials Unit Meteor N11 A77-2 / WM 262 A77-3



*Air Trials Unit Meteor N11 A77-3/WM262 at RAAF Mallala on 19 September 1954 at an airshow. (AWM)*

Having dropped off FLGOFF Rivers, Frayne took off at about 3:15pm to return to Woomera. The aircraft unexpectedly rolled at low altitude shortly after takeoff and spiralled out of control crashing into a wheat field.



*The wreckage of A77-3 / WM 262 at RAAF Mallala. (NAA)*

Having survived World War 2 and the Korean War, FLT LT Frayne was tragically killed in a peacetime accident aged only 31. His wife and four children (all under the age of five) were living at Woomera at the time of the accident and their fifth child, Quentin Frayne was born six weeks later in October 1955. Even more tragic was that his wife had lost her father the week before Frayne's accident and her mother the week after, meaning she had lost her father, husband and mother all within three weeks of each other. FLT LT Ross Frayne was buried with a full-service funeral on 20 September 1955 at Centennial Park Cemetery, Adelaide.

It was a tragic end to the life of a Korean War veteran who had also served as a pilot in World War 2. Over his brief 11 years of service, Frayne accumulated 2,498 flying hours.

Aircraft	No of Hours	Timeframe	Role
Avro Anson	546	World War 2	Training
C-47 Dakota	288	Post War	Training/Trials
Avro Lincoln	117	Post War	Training/Trials
Python Lincoln	8	Post War	Training/Trials
Bristol Freighter	5	Post War	Trials
Mosquito	13	Post War	Training/Trials
Airspeed Oxford	143	World War 2	Training
Meteor	110	Post War	Korean War/Trials
Beaufighter	40	Post War	Training/Trials
B-29 Washington	3	Post War	Trials
Canberra	15	Post War	Trials
Tiger Moth	383	World War 2	Training
Winjeel	9	Post War	Trials/Training
Wirraway	631	World War 2 / Post War	Training
Mustang	48	Post War	Trials/Training
Vampire	34	Post War	Trials
Auster	7	Post War	Training/Trials

FLTLT Ross Frayne was awarded the Australian Service Medal 1939-1945, The War Medal 1939-1945, the Defence Medal, the Korea Medal, The United Nations Medal, the United States Air Medal and Mentioned in Dispatches. He was posthumously awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Korea Clasp and the Australian Defence Medal.

**Greg Weller**  
**History Group Member**  
**October 2025**



*FLTLT Ross Frayne's Medals are proudly in the possession of the Frayne family.*