

## SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILE

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### LT FREDERICK 'FRED' GEORGE HUXLEY MC

*Veteran of Both World Wars*



Fred Huxley – Image from NAA  
'Discovering Anzacs' Profiles

Frederick 'Fred' George Huxley was born at Currie on King Island in Bass Strait on 29 August 1891 to George Patrick Huxley and Elizabeth Franklin. Working as a storekeeper, following the outbreak of World War 1, he enlisted in the AIF at Ulverstone Tasmania on 13 April 1915 and was appointed to 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion, D Company. His Unit embarked from Brisbane, onboard HMAT A60 *Aeneas*, on 29 June 1915.

Fred served on Gallipoli from September 1915 until November 1915 when he was evacuated with jaundice to Mudros and then Cairo. Following recovery, he was transferred to 52<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in April 1916, and after spending time in the Arabian desert, he went to France in May 1916. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in September 1916.

After serving seven months in the trenches in the Somme, Fred was chosen as one of five from 15,000 to go to England to undergo six weeks theoretical training for the Flying Corps. In December 1916, he was accepted for pilot training at the Royal Flying Corps School at Reading and then Netheravon, graduating in May 1917 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Australian Flying Corps. According to the Launceston *Daily*

*Telegraph* of 28 August 1917, an extract from a letter sent home by Fred appeared to be sufficient evidence of his efficiency:

*"I'm getting on first class with flying. I went up 9000ft for two hours yesterday and go on a cross-country flight tomorrow of about 250 miles. I have flown every different kind of machine in the Squadron. I can loop the loop and do pretty well anything in the air. I flew 360 miles in three hours and a half on a cross-country flight two days ago, which is the longest and quickest that has been done here. Yesterday I went to Birmingham by motor bike to bring back a new machine. It took me two hours to go by motor, and I flew back in 25 minutes. They want to keep me here as an instructor, but that cannot be done unless I transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, a matter which I am now thinking over."*



An Airco DH.5 of No.2 Squadron, AFC (AKA '68 Squadron RFC').  
Image AWM.

In July 1917, he proceeded to France for operational training with 66 Squadron AFC and returned to England to join 68 (Australian) Squadron before again proceeding to France with 68 (Australian) Squadron in September 1917, flying Airco DH-5 aircraft.

On 26 October 1917, he was promoted to Lieutenant.

Fred scored the Squadron's first confirmed claim by destroying an Albatros. He destroyed two further German aircraft before the Squadron specialised in ground strafing during the Battle of Cambrai in December 1917.

The Squadron was instrumental in the success of this battle and was recognised with the award of six Military Crosses for pilots and four Military Medals for

ground crew, mainly for salvaging aircraft wrecks under fire. Fred was one of those awarded a Military Cross, with his citation reading:

*“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He dropped a bomb upon a gun which was being moved to the rear, damaging it and killing three horses; and another bomb on a wagon, which was blown over, two of the personnel and one of the horses being killed. He then engaged a body of 300 troops marching along a road, and scattering them, causing fourteen casualties. Later, having disorganised a large body of enemy infantry with bombs and machine gun fire, he shot down an enemy scout. He is a very keen and daring pilot.”* (Commonwealth Gazette No. 95)



*Group portrait of officers of the 68 (Australian) Squadron, at Baizieux, after the fighting at Cambrai. Fred Huxley, kneeling, dressed in flying clothing and leather flying helmet. Image AWM.*

In January 1918 the Squadron was renamed 2 Squadron AFC and Fred was appointed as a Flight Commander with the rank of Temporary Captain. The Squadron converted to SE-5a aircraft and Fred destroyed one more German aircraft. In February 1918 he was posted sick with “aero neurosis” and the following month was sent to England where he did not improve. He relinquished his rank as Temporary Captain on being evacuated to England.

Fred was returned to Australia in April 1918 “for a good rest.” His appointment was terminated and he was discharged on 12 July 1918 as being no longer fit for active service.

The following was reported from the *North-Western Advocate* and the *Emu Bay Times* (Tas) on Tuesday, 10 September 1918, while Fred was home on leave:

*“He invariably used a fast single-seater of great velocity, with which he frequently “hustled the Huns.” He was among the Australian airmen who flew so low down at the Battle of Messines in June 1917, and he told a representative of the “Advocate” and “Times” that this action on their part, completely demoralising the Huns, was largely responsible, for the Allied success at that time. Captain Huxley, when further questioned, admitted that he had destroyed seven enemy machines “on his own.” Captain Huxley wears the Military Cross for his distinguished work; he has been mentioned in dispatches on eight occasions, and was recommended for the D.S.O. before his departure from the Western front on leave to Australia.”*

Back in Australia, Fred remained flying as a Flight Commander at Pt Cook from the middle of 1918 to the end of 1919. Fred applied to join the Australian Air Force in July 1921 but appears to have been unsuccessful due to his illness in 1918. In the early 1920s he was a proponent of air services to King Island, the first pilot to carry a passenger across Bass Strait and a founding member of the Tasmanian Aero Club. He was instrumental in taking some of the first aerial photographs of Tasmania. In his early years, Fred was also an accomplished jockey (being only 5ft 4in) and throughout his life was very good at golf.

By 1923 he was Chief Pilot with QANTAS in Queensland, having passed his ground engineer's licence in 1922. He held a commercial B licence (No. 54) until 1938 and then surrendered it for a private A class licence which he held until sometime after World War 2 with a total of 3,250 hours.

Fred did not last long with QANTAS and joined the Shell Company in 1923 as the Aviation Officer, based in Victoria, then Tasmania (1930s) and finally South Australia. He was based with the Shell Company in Adelaide at the outbreak of World War 2 and joined the RAAF on 16 October 1939 as a Pilot Officer, first in the General Duties Branch; a year later he transferred to the Administrative and Special Duties Branch. His postings included 1 Flying Training School at Pt Cook in 1939; 2 Service Flying Training School at Wagga, the Central Flying School at Camden in 1940; 8 Elementary Flying Training School at Narrandera and 10 Elementary Flying Training School at Temora in 1941; 5 Service Flying Training School at Uranquinty in 1942; 2 Aircraft Park at Bankstown and 4 Wing of the Air Training Corps at Adelaide in 1943; almost two years at RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne during late 1943, 1944 and 1945. By this time he had risen to the rank of Wing Commander. His appointment to the RAAF was terminated in October 1945.



*Pilots Course No. 21, 5 SFTS, Uranquinty, in 1942. Squadron Leader Fred Huxley in front row - centre.*

Following World War 2, Fred returned to his job as Aviation Officer with the Shell Oil Company of Australia Limited.

Fred was very active in the Air Force Association (SA Division). Following the decision to form a branch of the Air Force Association on 25 July 1947 and the inaugural official meeting of the Mitcham (SA) Branch on 29 August 1947, 27 ex-air force personnel applied to join the Branch. One of these was Frederic George Huxley, a veteran of both World Wars. Fred was elected President of the Air Force Association, SA Division for 1947-48 and 1951-53. As a founding member of the Mitcham Branch, he was elected one of five members of the inaugural committee. Fred was given Life Membership of the Air Force Association in 1949.

Fred Huxley died from cancer on 8 April 1960, in Malvern, South Australia.



*Shell Company Golf trophies presented by Fred Huxley in 1947.  
L-R: Eric Gogler, Peter Harman, Fred Huxley, Don Allnut, Ray Teakle.*

**Sources:**

NAA First World War service record & NAA *'Discovering Anzacs'*; Photograph, Weekly Courier (Launceston) 7 February 1918, p.20; 'By air to King Island', Daily Telegraph (Launceston) 14 May 1921, p.6; Mr Fred Huxley dies in Adelaide hospital', Mercury (Hobart) 9 April 1960, p.2; 'Mr F.G. Huxley dies in Adelaide: one of the first to pilot a plane to K.I.', King Island News 13 April 1960, p.7.

**Kevin Gogler  
For SAAM History Group  
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