

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM

SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

BROTHERS-IN-ARMS – CHARLES & LAURENCE MATULICH

MATULICH, C. de C.



*Charles Matulich as a pilot with
No.1 AFC in Egypt.*

Charles de Courcy Matulich was born on 6 May 1894 at Petersburg (later Peterborough) in SA, and became an electrical engineer before enlisting at Keswick on 25 June 1915. He served first in "K" Group Base Infantry before joining the Australian Army Medical Corps (AAMC) as an ambulance driver on 1 August, transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) on 14 January 1916 with a posting as corporal to No.1 AFC Laverton on 14 March, and embarked in HMAT A67 *Orsova* on 16 March 1916 as sergeant in "B" Flt.

The squadron disembarked at Suez on 14 April 1916 and Matulich was attached to No.14 RFC for operational experience. On 25 October 1916 he was promoted 2nd Lieutenant (2Lt) to complete the AFC establishment and received a posting to No.2 AFC, the new Australian squadron which was forming at Kantara to go to England early in 1917, but he was taken back on the strength of No.1 AFC on 24 November. A week later he attended No.3 School of Aeronautics (SMA) Aboukir for initial instruction in aviation, and after flying training with No.57 Reserve Squadron Royal Flying Corps (RS RFC) Ismailia and No.22 RS RFC Aboukir he qualified as a pilot on 1 January 1917.

Matulich then awaited a passage to England, presumably to complete his training, but instead he graduated in Egypt as Flying Officer (FO) pilot on 1 February 1917 and was posted to No.1 AFC, which he joined on 7 March. The squadron was operating from Rafa on 6 April when he and his observer Lt F. W. F Lukis, setting out on reconnaissance in a BE2e escorted by Capt A. Murray Jones in a Martinsyde, encountered five enemy aircraft heading for the Australian aerodrome. Jones fought them but was eventually driven down to where his aircraft was gunned and bombed on the ground, fortunately without injury to him. In the meantime Matulich was able to return home for assistance. Several Martinsydes immediately took off and drove the German airmen back to their own lines, unable to carry out their intended bombing raid on Rafa.

Matulich was promoted Lt on 1 May 1917, but was admitted to hospital on 14 June with dysentery. His condition developed into debility and neurasthenia over the next four months, and on 12 November 1917 he embarked at Suez in HMAT A18 *Wiltshire* to return to Australia. He landed at Melbourne on 17 December and the next day reached Adelaide, where he was classified medically unfit for further active service with an incapacity total of six months.

When his Australian Imperial Force (AIF) appointment was terminated on 6 March 1918 Matulich was to be given honorary rank of Lt on the Reserve of Officers. It was presumably in that capacity that he flew a number of operations in May 1918 as observer with pilot Capt F. H. McNamara, VC, in the Point Cook FE2b CFS-14 as they searched from Yarram in Gippsland Victoria for German surface raiders that were suspected to be operating off the coast.

During his service with No.1 AFC in the Middle East Matulich was one of a number of AFC officers and men who were Mentioned in Despatches by General Sir Edmund Allenby, K.C.M.G, K.C.B, C-in-C EEF, for distinguished service in connection with military operations under his command, as gazetted on 16 January 1918. During the Second World War he served in the RAAF until his discharge from No.1 Recruiting Centre as Wing Commander on 6 March 1946, and he died in Queensland on 1 May 1980.

MATULICH, L. C.



Laurie Matulich working on the engine of a No.1 AFC Bristol Fighter in Palestine.

Laurence Claude Matulich was born on 1 March 1898 at Petersburg (now Peterborough) SA, was an engineer when he enlisted at Adelaide on 10 January 1916, and served with Base Engineers at Mitcham until he was posted to Melbourne on 29 February. He embarked at age 18 as Spr 3rd Reinforcements (Rfts) 13th FCE in HMAT A20 *Hororata* from Sydney on 2 May 1916, and joined his unit at Tel-el-Kebir in Egypt on 29 June.

Matulich transferred to the AFC on probation on 12 July 1916 and served throughout the war with No.1 AFC, first as Air Mechanic 2nd Class (2AM) with promotion to 1AM on 1 January 1917 and to Corporal (Cpl) on 1 March 1918, then to Cpl Mechanic on 13 December 1918. During his time in the Middle East he was one of a number of AFC members Mentioned in Despatches by General Sir E. H. H. Allenby, GCMG, KCB, GOC-in-C EEF in

his communication of 3 April 1918. His older brother Lt Charles de Courcy Matulich flew as a pilot with No.1 AFC and had also been Mentioned in Despatches on a previous occasion, while their father Warrant Officer (WO) Charles Matulich served with the Australian Broad Gauge and Railway Operating Company in France during the war.

After the Armistice Matulich embarked at Kantara on 5 March 1919 in HT *Port Sydney* to return to Australia, where he reached Adelaide on 5 April and was discharged on 28 May 1919. In 1929 he gained his "A" licence with the South Australian Section of the Australian Aero Club and bought the DH60X G-AUGS (VH-UGS) that the Hon H. R. Grosvenor had earlier that year flown solo around Australia. Matulich operated a radio business at Unley in SA, and entered VH-UGS regularly in races at aerial pageants at Parafield until he sold the Moth around 1939 to Gertie McHengie of Melbourne.

In May 1933 South Australian Airways Ltd (S. A. Airways Ltd) was formed in Adelaide to take over Aircraft Engineers & Supply Co and establish passenger and freight services, with

directors F. P. Roberts, H. L. Bastin, L. C. Matulich, L. Newman and J. A. S. Mitchell. Matulich died on 5 October 1961.

**Chas Schaedel
History Group
South Australian Aviation Museum Inc
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