

= Alister Murdoch =

Air Marshal Sir Alister Murray Murdoch , KBE , CB (9 December 1912 ? 29 November 1984) was a senior commander in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . He served as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) from 1965 to 1969 . Joining the Air Force in 1930 , Murdoch trained as a seaplane pilot , and participated in an Antarctic rescue mission for lost explorers in 1935 . During World War II , he commanded No. 221 Squadron RAF in Europe and the Middle East , and later occupied senior positions on the staff of RAAF formations in the South West Pacific . His post war appointments included Commandant of RAAF College from 1952 to 1953 , Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Training Command from 1953 to 1955 , Deputy Chief of the Air Staff from 1958 to 1959 , and AOC Operational Command from 1962 to 1965 .

As AOC Training Command in 1954 , Murdoch headed a program to determine aircraft purchases for the RAAF ; his recommendations included the C @-@ 130 Hercules transport , considered one of the most important acquisitions in the Air Force 's history . His term as CAS coincided with increased commitment to the Vietnam War , and he came into conflict with Australian Army commanders over the employment of helicopters in battle . He was also involved in assessing the readiness of the General Dynamics F @-@ 111C for RAAF service . Appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath in 1960 and Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1966 , Murdoch was the fourth in a series of CASs who had been cadets at the Royal Military College , Duntroon . He retired from the Air Force in December 1969 , and died in 1984 .

= = Early career = =

Alister Murdoch was born on 9 December 1912 in Elsternwick , Victoria , the son of engineer Thomas Murdoch and his wife Kathleen . A lieutenant in the Commonwealth Military Forces at the time of Alister 's birth , Thomas was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in World War I , and rose to the rank of brigadier as Director General of Engineer Services in World War II . Educated at Caulfield Grammar School , Alister entered the Royal Military College , Duntroon , in 1929 , following his elder brother Ian (later a major general) . Alister was one of four cadets sponsored that year by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) , which did not at that stage have its own officer training college . Budgetary constraints imposed during the Great Depression necessitated the transfer of these cadets out of Duntroon midway through their four @-@ year course . Although offered positions in the Australian Public Service or nominations for short @-@ term commissions with the Royal Air Force , all were determined to serve with the RAAF and were more than pleased with the prospect of entering their chosen service early .

Murdoch enlisted in the Air Force on 10 December 1930 , and completed his pilot training the following year . He was commissioned in 1932 and later qualified as a flying instructor and seaplane pilot , undertaking navy cooperation and maritime patrol operations . In December 1935 , Flying Officer Murdoch was selected to join an RAAF rescue mission for explorer Lincoln Ellsworth and his pilot , Herbert Hollick @-@ Kenyon , who were presumed lost while journeying across the Antarctic . Flying a de Havilland Gipsy Moth , Murdoch located Hollick @-@ Kenyon near the Bay of Whales . Hollick @-@ Kenyon led the search party to Ellsworth , who protested that he was not lost and did not need rescuing . Murdoch was posted to England in 1936 ? 37 to undertake a course in long navigation at RAF Manston and serve on attachment with No. 114 Squadron . Returning to Australia , he married Florence Miller on 27 December 1937 ; the couple had a daughter . Murdoch spent the next two years on the staff of the Directorate of Operations and Intelligence at Air Force Headquarters , Melbourne . In June 1938 , he helped inaugurate RAAF instruction in long navigation , with a nine @-@ month course in the discipline .

= = World War II = =

Ranked squadron leader at the outbreak of World War II , Murdoch took charge of No. 1 Air Observer School at Cootamundra , New South Wales , from April 1940 until mid @-@ 1941 .

Following this posting he was promoted to wing commander and sent to the European Theatre . In August 1941 , he became Commanding Officer of No. 221 Squadron RAF , a Coastal Command unit flying Vickers Wellingtons on reconnaissance and anti @-@ submarine patrols out of Iceland during the Battle of the Atlantic . The next year , Murdoch accompanied the squadron to the Middle East , where it carried out anti @-@ submarine and maritime strike operations . He also served as Staff Officer Operations with No. 235 Wing RAF . Back in London in July 1942 , Murdoch was assigned to Combined Operations Headquarters , where he assisted in planning the Dieppe Raid before returning to Australia in 1943 .

Promoted to group captain , Murdoch was appointed Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) at Eastern Area Command , Sydney , in July 1943 . In January 1944 , he became SASO at North @-@ Western Area Command , which controlled thirteen Australian , British , Dutch , and American squadrons from its headquarters in Darwin , Northern Territory . Murdoch planned many of the command 's bombing and mining operations in the South West Pacific Theatre , and was mentioned in despatches for his " distinguished service " in the role . He was posted as SASO to the Australian First Tactical Air Force (No. 1 TAF) in April 1945 , replacing Group Captain William Gibson after the latter 's dismissal in the wake of the " Morotai Mutiny " , when the threatened resignations of eight of the RAAF 's leading fighter aces caused a crisis in the formation 's leadership . Delegated operational responsibility by No. 1 TAF 's new Air Officer Commanding , Air Commodore Frederick Scherger , Murdoch received much of the credit for the " excellent " planning of the RAAF 's role in Operation Oboe Six , the invasion of Labuan . He accompanied Scherger ashore on the afternoon of the landings on 10 June 1945 . Murdoch was also praised for his staff work during Operation Oboe Two , the Battle of Balikpapan , in July .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

= = = Rise to Chief of the Air Staff = = =

Murdoch was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) on 25 June 1946 for " conspicuous service in operations against the Japanese " during World War II . One of a small coterie of officers earmarked for top positions in the post @-@ war Air Force , he was Director of Personnel Services in 1946 ? 47 before attending the Imperial Defence College , London , in 1948 . Returning to Australia , he served as Director of Air Staff Policy and Plans at Air Force Headquarters between 1949 and 1952 . In February 1951 , he led a team to the Middle East , where the possibility of Australia contributing a garrison force to the region was first raised . Two years later , No. 78 Wing was deployed to Malta to fulfil this role , operating leased RAF de Havilland Vampire jet fighters . Murdoch became Commandant of RAAF College in June 1952 , gaining promotion to air commodore . In December 1953 , he was raised to acting air vice marshal and appointed Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Training Command .

In 1954 , Murdoch led a mission to examine potential new fighter , bomber , transport and training aircraft for the RAAF , following a shift in defence funding towards the Air Force . He advocated the F @-@ 104 Starfighter as a replacement for the CAC Sabre , two years before the Sabre entered squadron service with the RAAF , as well as nuclear @-@ capable British V bomber strike aircraft to augment Australia 's Canberra jet bombers , and C @-@ 130 Hercules transports to replace the C @-@ 47 Dakota . Although his proposals for V bombers and the F @-@ 104 were not taken up , the Australian government acquired the C @-@ 130 in 1958 . Described as second only to the General Dynamics F @-@ 111 as the " most significant " purchase by the RAAF , the Hercules gave the Air Force its first strategic airlift capability , which in years to come would provide a " lifeline " for Australian forces deployed to Malaya , Vietnam , and other parts of South East Asia . Murdoch also recommended the locally built Vampire as a jet trainer for No. 1 Applied Flying Training School ; sixty @-@ nine were later delivered as T35s by the de Havilland factory in Bankstown , New South Wales .

Murdoch was seconded to the Department of Defence in January 1956 as Deputy Secretary (

Military) . By February 1958 , he had been made a substantive air vice marshal and appointed Deputy Chief of the Air Staff . In October 1959 , Murdoch was posted to London as Head of the Australian Joint Services Staff , and appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the 1960 New Year Honours . He returned to Australia in June 1962 , when he became AOC Operational Command . His tenure in the position coincided with the deployment of the first RAAF aircraft to South Vietnam , seven DHC @-@ 4 Caribous , commencing in August 1964 . Murdoch was promoted air marshal and appointed Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) on 1 June 1965 , succeeding Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock . He was the last of a quartet of army @-@ trained CASs ; from 1954 to 1969 inclusive , every RAAF chief ? John McCauley , Scherger , Hancock , and Murdoch ? had been a cadet at the Royal Military College , Duntroon , prior to serving with the Air Force . With this pedigree , Murdoch was described by Air Chief Marshal Scherger as " the last of the professionals " . The new CAS was raised to Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in the 1966 Queen 's Birthday Honours .

= = = Chief of the Air Staff and Vietnam = = =

Air Marshal Murdoch led the RAAF through the build @-@ up of Australia 's commitment to the Vietnam War beginning in the mid @-@ 1960s . He clashed with the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) , Lieutenant General Sir John Wilton , over the latter 's recommendation in mid @-@ 1965 to deploy two UH @-@ 1 Iroquois helicopters to Vietnam . Wilton believed that both services would benefit from gaining familiarisation with air / ground operations in the region before large @-@ scale commitment of Australian forces . Murdoch dismissed the idea on resourcing grounds , despite the fact that two @-@ thirds of the RAAF 's UH @-@ 1 complement had been purchased for the express purpose of army cooperation . He further contended that helicopter operations in Malaysia had afforded the RAAF sufficient experience in the type of conditions they might face in Vietnam , though Australia 's senior UH @-@ 1 pilot at the time considered that the former theatre offered " little if any hostile opposition , and there was none of the insertion and extraction of SAS patrols which was to become such an important part of the RAAF 's Vietnam operations " . Air Commodore Brian Eaton , as Director @-@ General of Operational Requirements , advised Murdoch that if the Air Force did not more fully satisfy the ground support requirements of the Army , then the Army itself would seek to take control of this sphere of operations , undermining the RAAF 's position as the main provider of Australia 's air power . Murdoch 's reluctance to deploy the helicopters was eventually overridden by the Australian government , and No. 9 Squadron 's UH @-@ 1s were in action in Vietnam less than a year later . When Murdoch visited the combat zone himself in August 1966 , he was informed by Brigadier David Jackson that the squadron was not performing the role the Army expected of it .

Wilton 's successor as CGS , Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Daly , urged Murdoch to procure specialised helicopter gunships such as the AH @-@ 1 HueyCobra for Vietnam , to support the more vulnerable troop @-@ carrying " slicks " . Murdoch largely ignored the suggestion , telling his staff to treat the Army 's recommendation with a lesser priority than " anything we now have on our ' shopping list ' " . His preference was for V / STOL fixed @-@ wing aircraft like the Harrier Jump Jet , which he thought would open a " new era in close support aircraft " . In the event , the Federal government earmarked eleven AH @-@ 1G HueyCobras for purchase in 1971 , though the deal never went ahead due to Australia 's withdrawal from South East Asia . Murdoch 's failure to appreciate the need for cooperation with land forces has been blamed for fostering long @-@ running enmity between the services , which twenty years later would contribute to the government 's decision to transfer the RAAF 's battlefield helicopters to the Army . Air Force historian Alan Stephens contended that despite Murdoch 's " competence " and " good mind " , his " comprehension of air power in its fullest sense and handling of inter @-@ service politics were respectively inadequate and disastrous ... A generation of lieutenant @-@ colonels and majors had come to believe that the RAAF did not care about army support , and they were to carry that belief into the 1970s and beyond " . Murdoch also opposed sending Canberra jet bombers to Vietnam on what were later described in the official post @-@ war history of the RAAF as " misleading "

grounds that the type was unsuitable for low @-@ level strike and close support ; their deployment went ahead in April 1967 .

In 1963 , Australia had selected the F @-@ 111 swing @-@ wing bomber as a replacement for the Canberra . Murdoch attended the much @-@ anticipated official hand @-@ over ceremony for the aircraft on 4 September 1968 at Fort Worth , Texas , with Defence Minister Sir Allen Fairhall , various US dignitaries , and RAAF F @-@ 111 crews . Within eight days a US Navy F @-@ 111B crashed , followed by a USAF F @-@ 111A twelve days later , creating a " public relations disaster " , and contributing to the type 's entry into RAAF service being delayed until 1973 . In late 1969 , Murdoch accompanied Secretary of Defence Sir Henry Bland to the United States to gain assurance of an adequate " safe life " for the F @-@ 111 's swing @-@ wing mechanism , amid the Australian government giving serious consideration to abandoning the program .

= = Later life = =

Murdoch retired from the military on 31 December 1969 after completing his term as CAS , which the government had extended for a further twelve months beyond its original three years . He was succeeded by Air Marshal Colin Hannah , whom Murdoch had earlier recommended for the position of Commander Australian Forces Vietnam (the role went to an Army officer , as had been previous practice) . In 1971 , Murdoch joined the board of directors of Meggitt Limited , an oilseed @-@ crushing firm that was chaired by World War II fighter ace Nicky Barr . Murdoch continued to exercise his interest in Australia 's defence after he left the Air Force , joining in 1975 a group of pundits , including retired Air Vice Marshal Ian McLachlan , who promoted augmenting the country 's arsenal with nuclear weaponry . He also followed sport , including horse racing . A resident of Church Point , New South Wales , Sir Alister Murdoch died on 29 November 1984 .