= Hippolyte De La Rue =

Air Commodore Hippolyte Ferdinand (Frank) De La Rue , CBE , DFC (13 March 1891 ? 18 May 1977) was a senior commander in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . Joining the Mercantile Marine as a youth , he became a pilot in Britain 's Royal Naval Air Service during World War I. In 1918 , he was given command of No. 223 Squadron in the newly formed Royal Air Force . The following year he took charge of No. 270 Squadron RAF in Egypt . Returning to Australia , De La Rue joined the short @-@ lived Australian Air Corps in 1920 , and became a founding member of the RAAF in March 1921 . Specialising in maritime aviation , he led seaplane formations based at Point Cook , Victoria , during the 1920s and early 1930s .

De La Rue was appointed commanding officer of No. 1 Flying Training School at Point Cook in 1933 . He was promoted to group captain in 1937 and took command of RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales , the following year . At the outbreak of World War II , De La Rue was slated to lead an air expeditionary force to Great Britain , but this plan was abandoned after Australia committed itself to the Empire Air Training Scheme . Promoted to temporary air commodore , he served as Air Officer Commanding Western Area from 1941 to 1943 , and finished the war as Inspector of Administration at RAAF Headquarters , Melbourne . Nicknamed " Kanga " , De La Rue retired from the Air Force in 1946 , and died in 1977 at the age of eighty @-@ six .

= = Early life and World War I = =

Born on 13 March 1891 in Auburn , a suburb of Sydney , De La Rue was the son of jeweller Edmond Emile De La Rue and his wife Ellen . Following a " limited " education , he joined the Merchant Navy in 1908 , becoming a second officer by 1914 . De La Rue transferred to the Royal Navy 's Transport Service shortly after the outbreak of World War I , operating on troop ships between England and France . He saw service at Gallipoli as navigator on Huntsgreen , from the Allied landings on 25 April 1915 until the withdrawal in December . In July 1916 , he transferred once again , to the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) as a temporary flight sub @-@ lieutenant , and was awarded his wings in November .

Training as a seaplane pilot in Hampshire , De La Rue was posted to Wales in February 1917 . Later that year , he claimed an unconfirmed sinking of a German submarine while on coastal patrol . Promoted flight lieutenant in January 1918 , De La Rue became an honorary captain in the Royal Air Force (RAF) that April , following the merger of the RNAS and the Royal Flying Corps . He was posted to No. 223 Squadron in Otranto , Italy , later taking command of the unit . While piloting a Short seaplane escorting Allied bombers on a raid against the port city of Durrës , Albania , he rescued the crew of another seaplane that had been forced down in the Austrian @-@ held harbour . He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions , as well as the Italian Silver Medal of Military Valor .

= = Between the wars = =

De La Rue was posted to Alexandria , Egypt , in January 1919 to command No. 270 (Seaplane) Squadron . Offered a permanent commission in the RAF that August , he nevertheless returned to Australia and sought employment through Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Goble , an ex @-@ RNAS pilot then seconded to the Navy Office . Goble , desiring a specialist seaplane pilot for naval cooperation work , arranged a captain 's commission in the recently established Australian Air Corps , successor to the wartime Australian Flying Corps . On 17 June 1920 , in an Airco DH.9 , De La Rue accompanied Captain Adrian Cole on a flight to an altitude of 27 @,@ 000 feet (8 @,@ 200 m) , setting an Australian record that stood for more than ten years . Later that month , flying an Avro 504L floatplane , he became the first person to land an aircraft on the Yarra River in Victoria . In July he was put in charge of trials of the Avro 504L aboard the Royal Australian Navy 's flagship , HMAS Australia . De La Rue joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a flight lieutenant in 1921 , becoming one of the original twenty @-@ one officers on its strength when it was formed (as the

Australian Air Force) that March . Going by the first name of Frank , he was also popularly known throughout the service as " Kanga " . In August 1921 , he underwent the RAAF 's " No. 1 Course " at the Australian Army 's Central Training Depot in Holsworthy , New South Wales ; his fellow inductees included Flying Officers George Jones , Arthur Murphy , and Raymond Brownell .

 During the 1920s , De La Rue held a series of postings at RAAF Point Cook , Victoria , and at Air Force Headquarters , Melbourne . In May 1922 , then in charge of the Seaplane Flight , he crashed an Avro 504L into Port Phillip ; his rescuers claimed that his main concern following the mishap was the state of the corduroy trousers he was wearing . He lost the RAAF 's sole Bristol Scout in another accident less than a year later . De La Rue married Clara Stone in a Presbyterian ceremony at Scots Church , Melbourne , on 1 October 1923 ; the couple would have a daughter . He had another escape in August 1925 when he crashed a Sopwith Pup into a hangar ; a witness said that De La Rue , who was " renowned for his fiery Gallic temper " , strode from the wreckage and began to violently abuse the aircraft . By 1926 , he was the examining officer on the flight instructors course at No. 1 Flying Training School (No. 1 FTS) , Point Cook . On exchange in Britain during 1929 ? 30 , De La Rue underwent familiarisation with aircraft carriers , and served on the staff of No. 201 (Flying Boat) Squadron , based on the south coast of England . Upon his return to Australia in 1931 , he was given command of the RAAF 's Seaplane Squadron at Point Cook . Promoted wing commander in December 1932 , De La Rue led No. 1 FTS from early 1933 . He was promoted group captain in January 1937 , and took over as commanding officer (CO) of Headquarters RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales , from Group Captain Cole in January the following year .

= = World War II = =

 De La Rue and his staff at Headquarters Richmond worked " flat out " in the days prior the outbreak of World War II to get the base to a fit state of readiness and , immediately after hostilities were declared on 3 September , to liaise with the Central War Room in Melbourne passing instructions to squadrons . The following day , Richmond 's first wartime sortie took place , a flight of three Avro Ansons and three Supermarine Seagulls patrolling the ocean off Sydney . Within a month the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) , Air Vice Marshal Goble , proposed despatching a six @-@ squadron air expeditionary force to Great Britain , with De La Rue , then the RAAF 's seventh most senior officer , in charge . Air Marshal Richard Williams , Goble 's long @-@ time rival for leadership of the Air Force in the 1920s and ' 30s , later contended that the CAS was unduly favouring his fellow RNAS veteran and seaplane specialist to lead what would have been the RAAF 's largest formation to date , particularly considering that other contenders for the role such as Group Captains Cole , Frank McNamara , and Henry Wrigley had greater landplane experience than De La Rue . The concept was in any case abandoned soon after , as Australia concentrated on participation in the Empire Air Training Scheme . Some time in the latter half of 1940 , De La Rue was seeing dinner guests off the base at RAAF Richmond , and attempted to re @-@ enter the perimeter via the main gate . Wearing civilian clothes and without his security pass , he was challenged and then locked up by the guards , who did not recognise him or believe his assurances that he was their commander . De La Rue was finally released by the orderly officer but was still fuming the next morning ; only the advice of the base warrant officer (disciplinary) , who had congratulated the guards on their diligence , prevented the CO from taking action against all concerned .

 After completing his tenure at Richmond , De La Rue briefly took the role of senior air staff officer (SASO) at Central Area Command in October 1940 . The following month , his name was put forward to establish an RAAF depot in London to look after the interests of the many thousands of Australian airmen disembarking there , but financial considerations led to the plan being scuppered temporarily . In fact , RAAF Overseas Headquarters would be formed on 1 December 1941 , with Air Marshal Williams appointed Air Officer Commanding (AOC) . Meanwhile , De La Rue also missed out on a potential posting to the Middle East that was suggested by the British but turned down by the Australian government . Promoted acting air commodore , he became the inaugural AOC Western Area , headquartered in Perth , on 9 January 1941 . Among the units he controlled in this position were No. 14 (General Reconnaissance) Squadron , No. 25 (General Purpose) Squadron

, No. 35 (Transport) Squadron , and No. 77 (Fighter) Squadron . De La Rue worked assiduously to prepare the latter for operations , as it was the only fighter squadron able to defend Perth and Fremantle . He also lobbied RAAF Headquarters for a force of long @-@ range PBY Catalina flying boats to augment the Lockheed Hudsons of No. 14 Squadron , but none were offered to him . De La Rue was made a temporary air commodore in July 1941 . By February 1942 , he was the eighth most senior officer in the RAAF . Handing over Western Area Command to Air Commodore Ray Brownell in January 1943 , De La Rue became Inspector of Administration at RAAF Headquarters , in which post he saw out the rest of the war . On 8 June 1944 , he was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire .

= = Later life = =

 De La Rue was summarily retired from the RAAF after the war , along with a number of other senior commanders and veterans of World War I , partly to make way for the advancement of younger and equally capable officers , and also due to his suspect health . In recommending early retirement , the CAS , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , noted that De La Rue possessed " fairly good Service knowledge " and was of strong character , but that " sometimes his efforts [were] ill @-@ directed " . De La Rue was , furthermore , above the statutory retiring age for his substantive rank of group captain . He was officially discharged on 1 April 1946 . An honorary air commodore from 1956 , his chief hobby in retirement was painting in water colours . On 31 March 1971 , he was among a select group of surviving foundation members who attended a celebratory dinner at the Hotel Canberra to mark the RAAF 's Golden Jubilee ; his fellow guests included Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams , Air Vice Marshals Henry Wrigley and Bill Anderson , and Wing Commander Sir Lawrence Wackett . Frank De La Rue died at his home in Kew , a suburb of Melbourne , on 18 May 1977 . He was survived by his daughter , and cremated .