

= Jerry Pentland =

Alexander Augustus Norman Dudley Pentland , MC , DFC , AFC (5 August 1894 ? 3 November 1983) , known as Jerry Pentland , was an Australian fighter ace in World War I. Born in Maitland , New South Wales , he commenced service as a Lighthorseman with the Australian Imperial Force in 1915 , and saw action at Gallipoli . He transferred to the Royal Flying Corps the following year , rising to captain . Credited with twenty @-@ three aerial victories , Pentland became the fifth highest @-@ scoring Australian ace of the war , after Robert Little , Stan Dallas , Harry Cobby and Roy King . He was awarded the Military Cross in January 1918 for " conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty " on a mission attacking an aerodrome behind enemy lines , and the Distinguished Flying Cross that August for engaging four hostile aircraft single @-@ handedly .

Pentland served in the fledgling Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) , and later the Royal Air Force , before going into business in 1927 . His ventures included commercial flying around the goldfields of New Guinea , aircraft design and manufacture , flight instruction , and charter work . In the early 1930s , he was employed as a pilot with Australian National Airways , and also spent time as a dairy farmer . Soon after the outbreak of World War II , he re @-@ enlisted in the RAAF , attaining the rank of squadron leader and commanding rescue and communications units in the South West Pacific . Perhaps the oldest operational pilot in the wartime RAAF , Pentland was responsible for rescuing airmen , soldiers and civilians , and earned the Air Force Cross for his " outstanding courage , initiative and skill " . He became a trader in New Guinea when the war ended in 1945 , and later a coffee planter . Retiring in 1959 , he died in 1983 at the age of eighty @-@ nine .

= = Early life = =

Alexander Augustus Norman Dudley Pentland was born in Maitland , New South Wales , on 5 August 1894 . His father Alexander was Irish , and his mother Annie Norma (née Farquhar) was Scottish . Educated at The King 's School , Sydney , and Brighton Grammar , Melbourne , Pentland went on to study dairy farming at Hawkesbury Agricultural College , and later worked as a jackaroo . His father was a physician who joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during World War I and served as a major in the Australian Army Medical Corps .

= = World War I = =

Pentland enlisted as a private in the AIF on 5 March 1915 , sailing for Egypt with the 12th Light Horse Regiment aboard HMAT A29 Suevic on 13 June . In August , his unit deployed to Gallipoli , where he fought as a machine gunner before being hospitalised the following month , suffering from typhoid fever ; he was evacuated to England in December . Determined to leave the trenches behind after recovering , he volunteered for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and was discharged from the AIF on 21 February 1916 to take up his commission as a temporary second lieutenant in the RFC . His first solo flight in a Maurice Farman Longhorn at Brooklands , after two hours of dual instruction , ended with him overshooting the runway and crashing in a sewage farm , but he was unhurt and immediately undertook a second solo attempt , landing successfully . It was at Brooklands that he was first nicknamed " Jerry " . After completing pilot training , he was posted to France in June , flying B.E.2s with No. 16 Squadron . Though the slow and vulnerable B.E.2 was considered " Fokker fodder " by its crews , Pentland and his observer quickly managed to score the former 's first aerial victory , bringing down a German Eindecker over Habourdin on 9 June . He was then posted to No. 29 Squadron and was converting to DH.2 " pusher " fighters when he broke his leg playing rugby . After recovering , he instructed at London Colney until June 1917 , when he joined No. 19 Squadron , flying SPAD S.VIIs. This would become Pentland 's favourite type due to its strength and manoeuvrability , even though it had to be ' flown ' constantly and was unforgiving at low speed .

On 20 July 1917 , soon after arriving at his new unit in France , Pentland achieved his first victory in the SPAD when he shared in the destruction of an Albatros two @-@ seater . He followed this up

with a solo " kill " on 12 August . Four days later , after stopping an enemy truck convoy in its tracks by crippling its lead vehicle with machine @-@ gun fire , he reportedly engaged ten Albatros fighters single @-@ handedly ; by the time he had driven them off , four bullets had penetrated his leather flying suit without injuring him , while his plane had absorbed so much punishment that it had to be scrapped when he got back to base . After sharing another Albatros two @-@ seater on 20 August , Pentland led a raid on Marcke aerodrome , home of Baron von Richthofen 's Jasta 11 , on 26 August . On the way , he helped bring down a DFW C.V , then achieved complete surprise at the airfield , which he and his flight proceeded to shoot up . On the return journey , he strafed an enemy train until his guns jammed and then , having managed to clear them , engaged two more German scouts . His part in the raid earned him the Military Cross , promulgated in the London Gazette on 9 January 1918 :

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty . On a recent occasion he flew to an aerodrome fifteen miles behind the enemy lines , descended to within twenty feet of the ground , and fired into eight hostile machines . On his return journey he attacked a train with considerable effect from a low altitude . He has in addition brought down several enemy machines , and has always set a splendid example of fearlessness and devotion to duty in attacking enemy balloons and troops on the ground .

Credited with one more victory during August 1917 , and another four the following month , Pentland 's score stood at ten when he was injured on 26 September after an artillery shell struck his SPAD and forced him to crash land . Following his recovery , he again spent time instructing before being posted back to a front @-@ line unit , this time No. 87 Squadron , operating Sopwith Dolphins . Promoted captain , he returned to France in April 1918 , having transferred the same month with the rest of the RFC to the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF) . Pentland went on to achieve thirteen victories with No. 87 Squadron , where his aggressive tactics saw him dubbed the " Wild Australian " by colleagues . Appointed commander of ' B ' Flight , he also frequently acted as a " lone wolf " , actively seeking dogfights with enemy aircraft on his own . On 18 June , he was alone on patrol when he engaged a flight of four Rumpler high @-@ altitude reconnaissance aircraft , forcing down three of them . This action earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross , gazetted on 3 August :

A gallant flight commander , who in the last three months has destroyed two enemy machines and driven down four out of control . Recently , whilst on special patrol , he , single @-@ handed , attacked four enemy aeroplanes ; having driven down one out of control , he engaged the leader , damaged his engine , and compelled him to glide to his lines . One of the remaining machines followed the leader , but he attacked the other and drove it down in a steep dive .

On 25 August , Pentland attacked and destroyed two German planes , a DFW two @-@ seater and Fokker D.VII , before himself being shot down and wounded in the foot . These would be his last victories ; his grand total of twenty @-@ three included eleven destroyed , one of which was shared , and twelve out of control , three of them shared . This score ranked him fifth among the Australian aces of the war after Robert Little , Stan Dallas , Harry Cobby and Roy King .

= = Between the wars = =

Pentland relinquished his RAF commission and returned to Australia at the end of the war , earning money by giving joyrides in an Avro 504K . Looking for a more secure future , he joined the newly established Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in August 1921 , following an interview with Wing Commander Stanley Goble , a wartime acquaintance through the RAF . Ranked flight lieutenant , Pentland was put in charge of the RAAF 's complement of S.E.5 fighters at Point Cook , Victoria , part of the Imperial Gift recently donated by Great Britain . The young Air Force had the atmosphere of a flying club , where everyone knew everyone else . Tensions sometimes arose between those who had served with British forces during the war , and those who had belonged to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) ; the former considered that they were discriminated against when it came to filling senior positions , and came the day Pentland and fellow ex @-@ RAF member Hippolyte De La Rue threw an " uppity " AFC man into a mess fireplace . Deciding that his RAAF career was not

progressing , Pentland applied for a short @-@ service commission as a flying officer with the RAF in 1923 , which was granted as of 23 April . He journeyed to Britain with new wife Madge (née Moffat) , who he married on 5 March , just before departing Australia ; they had one daughter , Carleen , the following year . Pentland completed the course at Central Flying School , Uphavon , and became an instructor there , gaining promotion to flight lieutenant before leaving the RAF on 20 July 1926 and returning to Australia .

In 1927 , Pentland formed Mandated Territory Airways with entrepreneur Albert Royal to fly freight to and from the goldfields of New Guinea . The pair bought a DH.60 Moth biplane , which Pentland ferried to the firm 's base at Lae in February 1928 . The business prospered in the short term , to the extent that the partners took on another Moth and more pilots . By the end of the year , however , Pentland was suffering from malaria and had to abandon the venture , selling one of the planes to Guinea Airways and returning to Australia with the other . After recovering in the new year , he embarked on a series of new enterprises , including aircraft manufacture , a flying school , and charter work . In February 1929 , he formed the General Aircraft Company with Royal and another partner to produce an Australian @-@ designed aeroplane , the Genairco , of which eight were eventually sold . With the Moth from Mandated Territory Airways , he established Pentland 's Flying School at Mascot , New South Wales . He also flew charters with a Moth owned by The Sun newspaper , using the same aircraft that September to compete in the East @-@ West Air Race from Sydney to Perth , as part of the celebrations for the Western Australia Centenary . The event attracted several veteran aviators of World War I , including Horrie Miller ? the eventual winner on handicap ? and Charles " Moth " Eaton , whom Pentland beat into fifth place across the line .

Lack of patronage led to Pentland folding his businesses and taking a job in 1930 as a pilot with Australian National Airways (ANA) , a new airline founded by Charles Kingsford @-@ Smith and Charles Ulm . By 1932 , ANA was in trouble as well , and Pentland left to set up as a dairy farmer on a property he bought at Singleton . Within two years , drought forced him to sell the land and he returned to earning his living as a pilot , instructing at aero clubs in Queensland and New South Wales . By late 1937 , he was again employed as a transport pilot in New Guinea , where he was known as a practical joker who liked to hold a map in front of his face in apparent short @-@ sightedness and ask his passengers if they could see a landing ground anywhere . He returned to Australia after war was declared in September 1939 .

= = World War II = =

Having offered his services to the Australian government on his return from New Guinea , Pentland rejoined the RAAF on 17 June 1940 . He undertook the course at Central Flying School in Camden , New South Wales , and was posted as an instructor to elementary flying training schools in eastern Australia , including Brisbane , Tamworth , Temora , Bundaberg , and Lowood . Addressed by a young pilot at one school as " Pop " , Pentland responded in front of the large audience , " I 'm sorry son , but I don 't remember sleeping with your mother " . He was promoted to flight lieutenant in October 1941 , and joined No. 1 Communication Flight in June 1942 . Based in Victoria at Laverton and , later , Essendon , it was primarily engaged in army and naval cooperation , and operated as far afield as the Northern Territory and New Guinea .

Promoted to squadron leader , in November 1942 Pentland was posted to Port Moresby , New Guinea , as commanding officer (CO) of No. 1 Rescue and Communication Squadron , better known as " Pentland 's Flying Circus " . The official history of Australia in the war described this as the RAAF 's " most unusual operational unit " , asserting that its " strange assortment of light aircraft was as varied and as appropriate to its task as was the flying record of its commander ... " . Its inventory included such types as the de Havilland Tiger Moth , DH.84 Dragon , Fox Moth , Dragon Rapide , and Avro Anson . Perhaps the RAAF 's oldest pilot in any theatre of operations , Pentland was responsible for the rescue of downed US airmen , as well as the evacuation of civilians and soldiers . He also organised aerial surveys around Daru and Milne Bay , developing new bases and emergency airfields at locales such as Bena Bena , Abau , Kulpi , and Port Moresby .

Posted back to Australia after relinquishing command of No. 1 Rescue and Communication

Squadron in June 1943 , Pentland received radar training and helped to set up the RAAF 's early warning grid in northern Australia . He returned to New Guinea in March 1944 as CO of No. 8 Communication Unit , Goodenough Island , which had been formed in November 1943 from Pentland 's old Rescue and Communications Squadron . Operating Tiger Moth , Supermarine Walrus , Consolidated PBY Catalina , Dornier Do 24 , Bristol Beaufort , CAC Boomerang , Bristol Beaufighter , and Vultee Vengeance aircraft , the unit performed reconnaissance and bombing sorties over New Britain and north @-@ eastern New Guinea , as well as rescue and survey missions . In July 1945 , Pentland was posted to Mascot as CO of No. 3 Communication Unit , serving until September . His achievements in New Guinea earned him the Air Force Cross , the citation being promulgated on 22 February 1946 and concluding :

Squadron Leader PENTLAND has , at all times , displayed outstanding courage , initiative and skill , and these qualities , together with his excellent knowledge of New Guinea and its climatic conditions , have made his services invaluable , not only to the R.A.A.F. , but to the U.S. Army Air Forces and the New Guinea Forces as well .

= = Later life = =

With the end of hostilities in the Pacific , Pentland was discharged from the RAAF on 2 November 1945 . He took the opportunity to purchase surplus military equipment in New Guinea and established himself as a trader in Finschhafen , later expanding to Lae and Wau . In 1948 , he went into business as a coffee planter in Goroka , and also recruited labour from the highlands for industries on the coast . Prospering as a planter , he contributed to development of the region by building Goroka 's original constant @-@ flowing water supply and encouraging other businesses to set up there . His ongoing commitments in New Guinea meant that he was not invested with his Air Force Cross until 1950 . In 1959 , he sold his interests in Goroka and retired with Madge to their seaside home in Bayview , New South Wales . Madge Pentland died in 1982 , and Jerry eighteen months later , on 3 November 1983 , at the War Veterans Home in Collaroy . He was survived by daughter Carleen , and cremated on 7 November .