

= Charles Crombie =

Charles Arbuthnot Crombie DSO , DFC (16 March 1914 ? 26 August 1945) was an Australian aviator and flying ace of the Second World War . Born in Brisbane , he was working as a jackeroo when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in May 1940 . Completing flight training in Australia and Canada , he flew in the European , Mediterranean and Middle East Theatre and South @-@ East Asian theatres , amassing a tally of 12 Axis aircraft shot down , with an additional four probables . In a particular attack on 19 January 1943 , Crombie intercepted a formation of four Japanese bombers over India . Despite his aircraft being set alight early in the engagement , he shot down two of the bombers and severely damaged a third before he was forced to bail out . He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for this action . Returning to Australia late in 1943 , he was promoted to squadron leader and posted as a flight instructor with No. 5 Operational Training Unit . Crombie was killed in a flying accident in August 1945 .

= = Early life = =

Crombie was born in Brisbane , Queensland , on 16 March 1914 to David William Alexander Crombie , a grazing farmer , and his Indian @-@ born British wife Phoebe Janet (née Arbuthnot) , the daughter of Lieutenant General Sir Charles Arbuthnot . During his youth , Crombie was educated at the Sydney Church of England Grammar School in North Sydney . Completing his schooling , he was employed as a jackeroo on his family 's property near Warwick , Queensland . In 1934 , Crombie enlisted in the Citizens Military Force and was allotted to the 11th Light Horse Regiment . His service with the unit was to last until 1938 , by which time he had obtained the rank of sergeant .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Training , European and Middle Eastern theatres = = =

With the ambition of becoming a pilot in the Royal Australian Air Force , Crombie undertook instruction in civil flying . Completing his course , he enlisted in the Air Force on 24 May 1940 . He was initially posted to RAAF Station Richmond , before transferring to No. 2 Initial Training School at RAAF Bradfield Park in June , where he was advanced to leading aircraftman . The following month , Crombie was attached to No. 5 Empire Flight Training School . On finishing his stint with the unit , he was posted to No. 2 Embarkation Depot on 18 September . In a ceremony two days later , Crombie married Betty Deane @-@ Butcher ; the couple would later have a son .

On 3 October 1940 ? two weeks after his wedding ? Crombie embarked a ship at Sydney , bound for Canada . He arrived three weeks later , where he completed an additional two months of advanced flight training . Crombie was commissioned as a pilot officer on 17 January 1941 , and set sail for the United Kingdom nine days later . In May , he was attached to the Royal Air Force 's No. 25 Squadron , piloting Bristol Beaufighters . While with the unit , he flew his first operational sortie on 13 June ; he was promoted to flying officer the next month . Crombie continued to serve with the squadron until October , by which time he had flown a total of twelve operational sorties over the European theatre , including two raids ; one over Germany , and the other to Brest , France .

Crombie was transferred to the Mediterranean and Middle East Theatre and posted to No. 89 Squadron RAF in October 1941 , operating over Egypt and Malta . Also flying Beaufighters , Crombie piloted his first foray with the unit on 21 October , and by the end of the year had been accredited with the destruction of six Axis aircraft , with an additional two probables . Throughout 1942 , the squadron continued to operate over North Africa and the Middle East , with Crombie adding three more aircraft to his tally .

= = = South @-@ East Asia = = =

In January 1943 , Crombie was once again transferred , this time to No. 176 Squadron RAF stationed in India , operating in support of operations in the Burma Campaign ; he arrived at his new post on 12 January and was promoted to flight lieutenant five days later . By the time he left the Middle East , Crombie had been accorded an official tally of nine Axis aircraft shot down , with two probables .

In the evening of 19 January 1943 , Crombie was airborne over India with his navigator Warrant Officer Raymond Moss . At approximately 20 : 45 , the pair intercepted a formation of four Japanese bombers flying over Budge Budge . Crombie flew his aircraft towards the group but his initial attack drew fire from the bombers , setting the starboard engine ablaze . Despite the damage , he pushed ahead with the assault and shot down one of the bombers . Flames from the burning engine then began to sweep back , and Crombie ordered Moss to bail out . Alone , Crombie continued the assault , shooting down a second bomber , before turning his attention to a third . Due to his efforts , the penultimate aircraft was " so badly damaged ... that it could not have reached its base " . At this time , Crombie sought out the fourth and final machine . However , his petrol tank exploded , and he was forced " to bale out with his clothing alight " . He landed in " the most God awful swamp " , and walked for three or four hours before he reached an army unit in the area , which returned him to his squadron .

As a result of their " cool courage " , Crombie was awarded a " well deserved " Distinguished Service Order , with Moss receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross . The notification and accompanying citation for the decorations was promulgated in a supplement to the London Gazette on 19 February 1943 , reading :

Air Ministry , 19th February , 1943 .

ROYAL AIR FORCE .

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the following awards in recognition of gallantry displayed in flying operations against the enemy : ?

Distinguished Service Order .

Flying Officer Charles Arbuthnot CROMBIE (Aus.404099) , Royal Australian Air Force , No. 176 Squadron .

Distinguished Flying Cross .

Warrant Officer Raymond Christopher Moss (800670) , No. 176 Squadron .

As pilot and observer respectively Flying Officer Crombie and Warrant Officer Moss have flown together in many night flying operations in the United Kingdom , the Middle East and in India . They have destroyed 8 enemy aircraft and damaged another . One night in January , 1943 , they destroyed 2 of a formation of 4 Japanese aircraft before being compelled to abandon their own aircraft which was set on fire during the engagement .

Flying Officer Crombie and Warrant Officer Moss have displayed great courage , determination and devotion to duty .

Crombie completed his final patrol with No. 176 Squadron on 28 April 1943 , before moving to Air Headquarters , Bengal four days later . Later that month , Crombie carried out two raids over Akyab , Burma , the first a strafing attack on Japanese troops in the area , and the second assaulting Japanese shipping . On 25 May , the announcement that Crombie had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross was published in a supplement to the London Gazette . The decoration came as a result of his " High standard of courage and keenness whilst flying " with No. 89 Squadron in the Middle East , carrying out " ... Intruder patrols and ... low level attacks on enemy bases " in addition to his personal destruction of Axis aircraft .

Crombie piloted his final sortie of the war from Air Headquarters , Bengal on 7 July 1943 . His operational tour now finished , he embarked for Australia in August , arriving in Melbourne on 27 September . By the time Crombie 's tour completed , he had been accorded an official tally of 12 aircraft shot down , with an additional creditation of four probables .

= = = Home duties and death = = =

On his return to Australia , Crombie was posted for duties as an instructor with No. 5 Operational Training Unit at RAAF Station Williamtown in December 1943 . In March 1944 , Crombie piloted a Beaufighter from Brisbane to New Guinea , flying the aircraft in the local area for a period of eleven days testing the machine , before returning to Richmond , New South Wales . He was promoted to acting squadron leader on 1 September , and made chief flying instructor of No. 5 Operational Training Unit , heading the group 's two sections of Beaufighter and de Havilland Mosquito aircraft .

On 8 May 1945 , to celebrate Victory in Europe Day , 12 aircraft from No. 5 Operational Training Unit were detailed to do a flypast over Newcastle , New South Wales . Crombie headed the group , which comprised six Beaufighters followed by six Mosquitoes ; the final aircraft in the group was piloted by Flight Lieutenant Charles " Bud " Tingwell . The flypast concluded successfully , and the formation returned to base . However , as the group neared the aerodrome , the other pilots disobeyed Crombie 's orders and carried out a feint attack on the installation . He called the men into his office and reprimanded them as a result .

On 26 August 1945 , Crombie was flying a Beaufighter on a test flight . He completed the flight and returned to base . Coming in to land , a problem occurred in one of the engines and he fell short of the runway ; Crombie was killed in the resulting collision . Survived by his wife and one @-@ year @-@ old son , his funeral was attended by all the personnel of No. 5 Operational Training Unit . He was subsequently buried in Sandgate War Cemetery . Fellow No. 5 Operational Training Unit instructor Bud Tingwell later described him as " one of the best pilots in the air force " .