

= Charles Scherf =

Charles Curnow Scherf , DSO , DFC & Bar (17 May 1917 ? 13 July 1949) was an Australian flying ace of the Second World War . Born in New South Wales , Scherf was working on his father 's grazing property when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in 1941 . On graduating as a pilot , he was sent to the United Kingdom for service in the European theatre . Flying de Havilland Mosquitos with No. 418 Squadron RCAF , Scherf was credited with the destruction of 7 ½ aircraft in the air and on the ground , and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross . Afterward , he was posted for duties with Headquarters Air Defence Great Britain . He nevertheless returned occasionally to No. 418 Squadron and flew operational sorties with the unit , destroying a further 16 aircraft and earning two more decorations . By the end of the war , Scherf had achieved 14 ½ aerial victories in 38 operational sorties . He was also credited with destroying nine aircraft on the ground , and with damaging seven others .

= = Early life = =

Scherf was born at Emmaville , New South Wales , on 17 May 1917 , the son of Charles Henry Scherf , a grazier , and his Cornish wife Susan Jane (née Curnow) . An active sportsman , Scherf attended the local school where he obtained an Intermediate Certificate . In 1934 , he enlisted in the Citizens Military Force and was allotted to the 12th Light Horse Regiment as a private . He rose to the rank of corporal , before taking his discharge in 1939 . On 23 August 1939 , Scherf married Florence Hope O 'Hara in an Anglican ceremony at the Holy Trinity Church , Glen Innes ; the couple would have a son and three daughters . By this time he was working as a grazier on his father 's property .

= = Second World War = =

On 12 September 1941 , Scherf enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force for service during the Second World War . Posted for flight training at No. 10 Empire Flight Training School , Temora , and later No. 6 Service Flying Training School , Mallala , he graduated as a pilot with an " above average " rating on 2 July 1942 . Commissioned as a pilot officer on 17 September , Scherf embarked from Sydney bound for the United Kingdom the following month . Following a six @-@ week voyage , he disembarked on 27 November and was attached to Royal Air Force training units for " advanced flying and operational training " . He was promoted to flying officer during this time . On completion , Scherf was posted to No. 418 Squadron RCAF on 13 July 1943 , flying de Havilland Mosquito light bombers .

In August 1943 , Scherf commenced flying operational sorties against Axis airfields in France . On 15 September , he flew as an escort to a group of eight Lancaster bombers during a low level attack on the Dortmund @-@ Ems Canal , Germany . He was promoted to acting flight lieutenant on 29 December . During this time , Scherf took part in several night operations and was credited with damaging a variety of targets as well as shooting down four German aircraft at night . Praised for his " exceptional keenness and ... courage " , Scherf was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his night time exploits . The announcement and accompanying citation for the award was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 4 April 1944 .

During late February 1944 , Scherf took part in a sortie over Axis occupied territory with Squadron Leader Howie Cleveland ; Scherf flew the leading aircraft of the two . The pair attacked an Axis airfield at St Yan , France , and successfully destroyed three aircraft on the ground . Soon after , the two pilots spotted a Heinkel He 111Z twin @-@ fuselage glider tug towing two Gotha Go 242 gliders . Scherf and Cleveland attacked the party , with Cleveland firing first and destroying one of the gliders . Scherf then destroyed the second glider , before the pair assaulted the Heinkel . In the first pass , Scherf set the starboard engine ablaze while Cleveland hit the starboard side . Scherf made a second firing pass , before the Heinkel spiralled to the ground with three of its five engines on fire . This action was Scherf 's final sortie of his tour . The pair were consequently credited with shooting

down three aircraft for their efforts in the operation , with an additional three others damaged or destroyed on the ground .

On 13 March 1944 , Scherf was promoted to acting squadron leader and , with his operation tour at an end , was posted to Headquarters Air Defence Great Britain as a controller of Intruder operations . By the time of this posting , Scherf had destroyed seven airborne or grounded German aircraft , with an additional shared victory . Despite his new position , Scherf 's " impatient spirit was far from satisfied with a staff position " , and he occasionally returned to No. 418 Squadron when he was off duty , taking part in operational sorties with the unit . On 5 April , Scherf joined the squadron in a sortie over Northern France . During the engagement , Scherf shot down two Axis aircraft in the air and damaged three more on the ground . For his actions on the two operations in February and April , Scherf was awarded a Bar to his Distinguished Flying Cross . The citation for the decoration was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 12 May 1944 , reading :

Air Ministry , 12th May , 1944

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

Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross

Acting Flight Lieutenant Charles Curnow SCHERF , DFC (Aus 413671) , Royal Australian Air Force , No 418 (RCAF) Squadron .

Since being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross , this officer has taken part in numerous sorties and has continued to display the highest qualities of gallantry and skill . Towards the end of February , 1944 , he flew the leading aircraft of two detailed for a sortie far in enemy occupied territory . During the operation three enemy aircraft were shot down , and three others damaged on the ground . During another sortie over Northern France in April , 1944 , Flight Lieutenant Scherf destroyed two enemy aircraft in the air and damaged three others on the ground at an airfield . These 2 sorties were a fitting climax to an outstanding tour . This officer has destroyed at least 9 enemy aircraft , successes which pay an excellent tribute to his great fighting qualities and resolution .

On 2 and 16 May 1944 , Scherf took part in two further daylight sorties with No. 418 Squadron into " well @-@ defended areas far into Germany " . Leading a section of Mosquito aircraft in action against Luftwaffe bases in the Baltic area and over northern Germany , Scherf was ultimately credited with shooting down six aircraft in aerial combat , and damaging an additional three on the ground over the two operations . Commended for his " great skill , enterprise and fearlessness " , Scherf was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Order . The notification and accompanying citation for the decoration was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 27 June 1944 .

On 10 July 1944 , Scherf embarked from the United Kingdom to return to Australia . Arriving in Brisbane two months later , he was briefly posted to RAAF Station Sandgate . During October , Scherf was posted to No. 5 Operational Training Unit , Williamstown , as chief flying instructor . He served in this position until late December , when he was posted for duties with RAAF Base Richmond and later RAAF Bradfield Park . On 11 April 1945 , Scherf transferred to Royal Australian Air Force Reserve and returned to his home in Emmaville ; thus ending his wartime service . By this time , Scherf had been officially credited with shooting down 14 ½ Axis aircraft in aerial combat , as well as nine aircraft destroyed on the ground and a further seven damaged from a total of 38 operational sorties .

= = Later life = =

On 16 February 1946 , Scherf attended an investiture ceremony at Government House , Sydney , where he was presented with his Distinguished Service Order , Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar by the Governor @-@ General of Australia , Prince Henry , Duke of Gloucester . Scherf was discharged from the Royal Australian Air Force Reserve on 1 July 1947 .

Scherf found it difficult to re @-@ adjust to civilian life , and began to have nightmares about the Germans he had shot down and killed during the war . This consequently led him to drink heavily .

On 13 July 1949 , Scherf was driving his car along the Inverell road approximately 3 kilometres (1 @. @ 9 mi) from Emmaville when he struck a tree and the vehicle overturned ; he died later that day from his injuries sustained during the crash . Survived by his wife , their three daughters and son , Scherf was buried in the local cemetery .