

= Cedric Howell =

Cedric Ernest " Spike " Howell DSO , MC , DFC (17 June 1896 ? 10 December 1919) was an Australian fighter pilot and flying ace of the First World War . Born in Adelaide , South Australia , he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1916 for service in the First World War and was posted to the 46th Battalion on the Western Front . During November 1916 , he was accepted for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps and was shipped to the United Kingdom for flight training . Graduating as a pilot , he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and posted to No. 45 Squadron RFC in France during October 1917 ; two months later the unit sailed to the Italian theatre .

Howell spent eight months flying operations over Italy , conducting attacks against ground targets and engaging in sorties against aerial forces . While in Italy , he was credited with shooting down a total of nineteen aircraft . In one particular sortie on 12 July 1918 , Howell attacked , in conjunction with one other aircraft , a formation of between ten and fifteen German machines ; he personally shot down five of these planes and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order . Howell had previously been awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Flying Cross for his gallantry in operations over the front . He was posted back to the United Kingdom in July 1918 . In 1919 , Howell was killed while taking part in the England to Australia air race . Piloting a Martinsyde A1 aircraft , he attempted to make an emergency landing on Corfu but the plane fell short , crashing into the sea just off the island 's coast . Both Howell and his companion subsequently drowned .

= = Early life = =

Cedric Ernest Howell was born in Adelaide , South Australia , on 17 June 1896 to Ernest Howell , an accountant , and his wife Ida Caroline (née Hasch) . He was educated at the Melbourne Church of England Grammar School from 1909 , and was active in the school 's Cadet unit . On completing his secondary studies in 1913 , Howell gained employment as a draughtsman . By 1914 , he held a commission in the 49th (Prahran) Cadet Battalion , Citizens Military Force , as a second lieutenant .

= = First World War = =

= = = Australian Imperial Force to Royal Flying Corps = = =

On the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 , Howell attempted to enlist in the newly raised Australian Imperial Force but was initially rejected . The following year , he resigned his commission in the Citizens Military Force and re @-@ applied to join the Australian Imperial Force for active service in the war ; he was accepted on 1 January 1916 . Due to his age , Howell was ineligible for a commission in the force and was instead granted the rank of private . Allotted to the 16th Reinforcements of the 14th Battalion , he embarked aboard HMAT Anchises in Melbourne , Victoria , on 14 March . Arriving in France , he was posted to the newly raised 46th Battalion on 20 May and promoted to corporal four days later . While the unit was engaged in action along the Somme , Howell was temporarily raised to sergeant in July , before taking part in the Battle of Pozières the following month . He relinquished his temporary appointments and reverted to lance corporal in August . Considered an expert shot , Howell had been trained as a sniper during his service with the 46th Battalion .

On 11 November 1916 , Howell was among a group of 200 Australian applicants selected for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps to undergo flight training . Shipped to the United Kingdom , he was posted to No. 1 Royal Flying Officers ' Cadet Battalion at Durham for his initial instruction . On graduating as a pilot , he was formally discharged from the Australian Imperial Force on 16 March 1917 and commissioned as a probationary second lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps the following day . Howell was posted to No. 17 Reserve Squadron in April , where his rank was made substantive . Appointed a flight officer on 25 July , he was attached to the Central Flying School for

duties . On 12 September , Howell wed Cicely Elizabeth Hallam Kilby in a ceremony at St Stephen's Anglican Church , Bush Hill Park .

= = = Fighter pilot over Italy = = =

In October 1917 , Howell was posted to No. 45 Squadron RFC in France , piloting Sopwith Camels . Just prior to joining the unit , Howell had suffered a bout of malaria while still in England giving him a " tall , thin and dismal looking " appearance ; he was consequently nicknamed " Spike " . His service over the Western Front was short @-@ lived , however , as the squadron moved to Italy in late December . While operating over the Italian Front , Howell was engaged in both aerial combat missions and ground @-@ attack sorties , which included " destroy [ing] enemy transport crossing the Alps " . On 1 April 1918 , the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Naval Air Service were combined to form the Royal Air Force , with personnel from the former services transferred to the new branch ; Howell thus became a lieutenant in the new service from this date .

Throughout the first half of 1918 , Howell conducted several raids on ground targets , including one on an electrical power plant . From a height of approximately 100 feet (30 m) , Howell , with " great skill " , scored three direct hits with his bombs on the facility . He was also active in aerial engagements against Central aircraft during this period , achieving flying ace status early in the year . During a particular patrol with two other members of his squadron on 13 May , the trio intercepted a party of twelve rival planes . In the ensuing battle , Howell " carried out a most dashing attack " , being personally credited with the destruction of three of the aircraft and with driving a fourth down out of control , despite suffering " frequent jams in both of his machine guns " . Cited for his " conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty " in carrying out ground @-@ attack missions , coupled with his destruction of seven Central aircraft , Howell was awarded the Military Cross . The announcement of the decoration was promulgated in a supplement to the London Gazette on 16 September 1918 .

Promoted to temporary captain on 1 June 1918 , Howell led a party of three machines out on patrol eight days later . The trio spotted a formation of six Austrian scout planes and went in to attack ; Howell shot down two of the aircraft . Later that month , he took off on a similar sortie with two other aircraft . They intercepted a party of nine machines , and during the consequent battle no less than six of the Central planes were destroyed with a seventh shot down as out of control ; Howell was credited with two of these . Described as a " fine fighting officer , skilful and determined " , Howell was commended for his efforts in destroying five aircraft during June , which resulted in his award of the Distinguished Flying Cross . The notice for the decoration was gazetted on 21 September 1918 .

Howell was out on patrol on 15 June 1918 when German and Austrian forces initiated the Battle of the Piave River by striking Allied lines on the opposite bank . After landing back at base at 11 : 40 , he was the first to bring news of the attack . With the aircraft refuelled and loaded with bombs , he ? in company with the rest of the squadron ? then led his flight on a total of four sorties against the enemy insurgents . No. 45 Squadron succeeded in destroying with its bombs a pontoon bridge , a boat , and a trench filled with soldiers , before inflicting at least a hundred casualties with machine gun fire . Heavy rain washed other bridges away and by 18 June the stranded Austrian forces on the Allied bank of the river were routed by a counterattack .

On 12 July 1918 , Howell and Lieutenant Alan Rice @-@ Oxley took to the sky in their Camels . The pair were soon confronted by a formation of between ten and fifteen Central aircraft . As the consequent dogfight raged , Howell destroyed four of the aircraft and sent a fifth down out of control . Two days later , Howell was credited with bringing down another plane , forcing the machine to crash down in Allied @-@ held territory . On 15 July , he led a trio of Camels in an assault on sixteen scout planes ; he destroyed two of the machines . The two scouts were to prove Howell 's final aerial victories of the war , bringing his total to nineteen aerial victories which were composed of fifteen aircraft destroyed , three driven down as out of control and one captured . His total made him No. 45 Squadron 's second highest @-@ scoring ace after Matthew Frew , although some sources place Howell 's score as high as thirty aerial victories . Late in July , following ten months of

active service in the cockpit , Howell was posted back to the United Kingdom where he spent the remainder of the war attached to training units as a flight instructor . Cited for his " distinguished and gallant services " in Italy , he was mentioned in the despatch of General Rudolph Lambart , 10th Earl of Cavan on 26 October 1918 . For his efforts in destroying eight aircraft over a four @-@ day period in July , Howell was awarded the Distinguished Service Order . A supplement of the London Gazette carried the announcement on 2 November 1918 , reading :

Air Ministry , 2nd November , 1918 .

His Majesty the KING has been graciously pleased to confer the undermentioned Rewards on Officers and other ranks of the Royal Air Force , in recognition of gallantry in Flying Operations against the Enemy : ?

AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE ORDER .

Lieut . (T. / Capt.) Cedric Ernest Howell , M.C. , D.F.C.

This officer recently attacked , in company with one other machine , an enemy formation of fifteen aeroplanes , and succeeded in destroying four of them and bringing one down out of control . Two days afterwards he destroyed another enemy machine , which fell in our lines , and on the following day he led three machines against sixteen enemy scouts , destroying two of them . Captain Howell is a very gallant and determined fighter , who takes no account of the enemy 's superior numbers in his battles .

= = England @-@ to @-@ Australia flight and legacy = =

While stationed in England , Howell attended an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace on 13 December 1918 , where he was presented with his Distinguished Service Order and Military Cross by King George V. Howell was discharged from the Royal Air Force on 31 July 1919 . During 1919 , the Australian Government offered a prize of £ 10 @, @ 000 to the first aviator to pilot a British or Commonwealth @-@ built aircraft from England to Australia within a period of 30 days . On 15 August , Howell was approached by British aircraft manufacturer Martinsyde to take part in the race flying their Type A Mk.I aircraft , powered by a Rolls @-@ Royce engine ; he accepted the offer . He was to be accompanied by Lieutenant George Henry Fraser , a qualified navigator and engineer who had served with the Australian Flying Corps during the war .

On 4 December 1919 , Howell and Fraser took off in their Martinsyde from Hounslow Heath Aerodrome . The pair , however , soon ran into poor weather and were forced to land the aircraft in Dijon , France later that day . Airborne again , they reached Pisa , Italy the following day , where a replacement tail skid was fitted to the A1 ; by 6 December , the pair were in Naples . On 10 December , Howell and Fraser took off in their fully fuelled plane from Taranto in the afternoon . They intended to reach Africa next , but poor weather conditions forced them to alter their plan and they instead headed for Crete . Their Martinsyde was reported flying over St George 's Bay , Corfu at 20 : 00 that evening . For unknown reasons , Howell and Fraser attempted to execute an emergency landing at Corfu . They were , however , unable to make it to the coast and were forced to crash into the sea . Citizens in the area later reported that they heard cries for help coming from the sea that night , but that a rescue was not possible in the rough conditions . Both Howell and Fraser were drowned .

Howell 's body later washed ashore and was returned to Australia for burial ; Fraser 's remains were never discovered . Howell was accorded a funeral with full military honours , which took place at Warringal Cemetery , Heidelberg on 22 April 1920 , with several hundred mourners in attendance ; his widow , parents and sister were chief among these . A firing party of the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery led the gun carriage bearing the coffin to the cemetery . Captains Adrian Cole , Frank Lukis and Raymond Brownell acted as pallbearers along with five other officers who had served in either the Royal or Australian Flying Corps . On 12 February 1923 , a stained @-@ glass window dedicated to the memory of Howell was unveiled by General Sir Harry Chauvel at St. Anselm 's Church of England in Middle Park ; Howell had been a member of the congregation there in his youth . Following the closure of St. Anselm 's in 2001 , the window was moved to St. Silas 's Church , Albert Park , which is now also the parish church for the former parish of St. Anselm .

