Raymond Brownell

Air Commodore Raymond James Brownell , CBE , MC , MM (17 May 1894 ? 12 April 1974) was a senior officer in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and a First World War flying ace . Born in Hobart , Tasmania , Brownell was working as a clerk with a firm of accountants when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force on the outbreak of the First World War . He served during the Gallipoli Campaign before transferring to the Western Front . Awarded the Military Medal for his actions during the Battle of Pozières , he was accepted for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps in 1917 . Brownell undertook flight training in the United Kingdom . Commissioned as a second lieutenant , he was posted for operational service over the Western Front in September 1917 . Moving with his squadron to Italy , he was awarded the Military Cross and credited with shooting down 12 aircraft by war 's end . Taking his discharge in 1919 , Brownell returned to Australia .

Commissioned in the Royal Australian Air Force during 1921 , Brownell had risen to the rank of group captain by the beginning of the Second World War . Establishing the Royal Australian Air Force base in Singapore , he returned to Australia in 1941 as an air commodore and was appointed to lead No. 1 Training Group . He was Air Officer Commanding Western Area from January 1943 until July 1945 , when he took charge of the recently formed No. 11 Group on Morotai . Retiring from the Air Force in 1947 , Brownell assumed a partnership in a stockbroking firm . He died in 1974 at the age of 79 ; his autobiography , From Khaki to Blue , was published posthumously .

Early life

Brownell was born in the Hobart suburb of New Town , Tasmania , on 17 May 1894 to William Percival Brownell , a draper , and his wife Julie Ann James (née Scott) . Initially educated at Leslie House School , Brownell later attended Scotch College , Melbourne where he was an active sportsman . On graduation , he was apprenticed to a firm of public accountants and auditors in Hobart . In 1912 , Brownell enlisted in the Citizens Military Force and was posted to the 41st Battery , Australian Field Artillery .

First World War

Australian Imperial Force

On 12 September 1914 , Brownell transferred to the Australian Imperial Force for service during the First World War . Allotted to the 9th Battery , 3rd Field Artillery Brigade with the rank of gunner , Brownell embarked from Hobart aboard HMAT Geelong on 20 October , bound for Egypt . On arrival , the unit spent several months training in the desert , before it was posted for service during the Gallipoli Campaign . Instead of landing on the peninsula with the battery , Brownell was transferred to Alexandria where the Army required his administrative abilities as an accountant .

During July 1915 , Brownell was shipped to Gallipoli and rejoined the 9th Battery . Promoted to bombardier on 12 November , he was among one of the final Australian waves to be evacuated from the peninsula in December during the Allied withdrawal . Returning to Egypt , he was advanced to provisional sergeant on 24 February 1916 . Embarking with his unit from Alexandria , Brownell arrived in France for service on the Western Front on 29 March , following a six @-@ day voyage .

On 21 ? 22 July 1916 , Brownell was in action with his battery at Pozières , during which the unit was subject to severe German shellfire . Throughout the engagement , Brownell established and maintained communications between the battery and firing line , despite fatigue or personal risk to himself . Commended for his " particularly meritorious service ... and ... gallantry in this work " , Brownell was subsequently recommended for the Military Medal . The notification for the award was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 16 November 1916 .

Royal Flying Corps

In October 1916 , Brownell applied for a transfer to the Royal Flying Corps . One of 5 @,@ 000 applicants , Brownell was accepted on 1 January 1917 along with a further 200 Australians . Posted for pilot training , he proceeding to England and was posted to No. 3 School of Military Aeronautics at Exeter College , Oxford from 26 January . On graduating from the course , Brownell was discharged from the Australian Imperial Force on 16 March and commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps the following day .

Allotted to No. 45 Squadron RFC flying Sopwith Camels , Brownell moved to France for operational service over the Western Front during September 1917 . On 10 September , he took part in his first patrol , during which he shot down a two @-@ seater German aircraft . In his time flying over the Western Front , Brownell accumulated a total of five victories and achieved ' ace ' status before his squadron was transferred to Italy in December . Later that month , Brownell and his observer , Lieutenant Henry Moody , shot down German ace Alwin Thurm over Asolo .

Appointed a flight commander in No. 45 Squadron , Brownell was promoted to temporary captain on 11 February 1918 . During aerial engagements against Central aircraft over the Italian front , he was accredited with the destruction of a further seven aircraft , bringing his total to 12 with an additional nine probables . Brownell 's aerial victories were composed of five aircraft and one shared destroyed , two and one shared out of control , one shared captured , and one balloon . For his success in bringing six of these aircraft down over a three @-@ month period , Brownell was awarded the Military Cross . The announcement of the decoration was published in a supplement of the London Gazette on 4 March 1918 , with the citation for the award being published in a later issue on 16 August 1918 , reading :

War Office , 16th August , 1918 .

With reference to the awards conferred as announced in the London Gazette dated 4th March , 1918 , the following are the statements of service for which the decorations were conferred : ?

Awarded the Military Cross .

2nd Lt. Raymond James Brownell , M.M. , R.F.C. , Spec . Res.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty . Within the last three months he has brought down six enemy aeroplanes , four of which were seen to come down in flames , the other two falling completely out of control . The dash , gallantry and offensive spirit displayed on all occasions by this officer are worthy of the highest praise .

In April 1918 , Brownell was granted compassionate leave to visit his seriously ill mother . Leaving No. 45 Squadron , he travelled to Tasmania . At the end of his leave in September , he commenced his return journey to the United Kingdom . During the voyage , he became grievously ill with pneumonic influenza . On arrival , Brownell accepted a commission in the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF) . However , Brownell 's mother again suffered a deterioration in health , so he sought to resign from the RAF and was placed on the unemployed list on 14 August 1919 . Embarking for Tasmania , he arrived during September .

= = Inter @-@ war years = =

On his return to Australia , Brownell was employed as a sub @-@ accountant for a firm of merchants in Melbourne , and later with the Hobart City Council as a clerk . On 22 April 1920 , Brownell acted as one of the pallbearers at the military funeral of his friend and fellow No. 45 Squadron officer , Captain Cedric Howell , who had been killed in an aeroplane crash while participating in the England to Australia air race . Seeking a position in the newly formed Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) , Brownell was commissioned as a flying officer on 12 September 1921 and posted to RAAF Point Cook in Victoria , training Air Force cadets . In a ceremony at St Andrew 's Presbyterian Church , Hobart , on 26 August 1925 , Brownell married Rhyllis Jean Birchall ; the couple would later have two daughters . The following year , Brownell assumed command of No. 1 Squadron . He led the squadron until 1928 , when he was appointed to the RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne as Director of Personnel Services .

During 1934 , Brownell was posted to England for exchange service with the RAF . Made second

@-@ in @-@ command of No. 3 Flying Training School at Grantham , he was promoted to wing commander on 1 April 1936 . While still serving in the United Kingdom , Brownell was appointed commanding officer of No. 23 (City of Perth) Squadron (later No. 25 Squadron) , which had been formed earlier in 1937 . The squadron moved to RAAF Base Pearce in Western Australia during March 1938 , at which time Brownell returned to Australia and assumed command of the unit along with the base . Brownell was the first Commanding Officer of Pearce , which was not only the first RAAF establishment to be located in Western Australia , but also the first permanent air force unit to be established in the state .

= = Second World War = =

On the outbreak of the Second World War , additional units were placed under Brownell 's purview at RAAF Base Pearce and he was consequently promoted to temporary group captain in December 1939 . With the introduction of Lockheed Hudson aircraft to the RAAF in February 1940 , several units were re @-@ equipped , including No. 14 Squadron at RAAF Base Pearce . The Hudsons replaced the squadron 's Avro Ansons , which were to be ferried back to the eastern coast of Australia in order to be used as training aircraft . On one occasion , Brownell took part in ferrying an Anson to RAAF Point Cook with No. 14 Squadron pilot Charles Learmonth . Arriving with the aircraft , the pair piloted a de Havilland Moth Minor ? a two @-@ seated , open @-@ cockpit , monoplane ? back to Pearce . The return journey took Brownell and Learmonth seven days to complete , and involved a total of twenty @-@ one refuelling stops along the way .
 In August 1940 , Brownell was ordered to Singapore in order to establish and command an RAAF station on the island , as well as administer the RAAF squadrons located in Malaya . Embarking aboard the SS Strathallan in mid @-@ August , Brownell and his staff formed the RAAF station within two weeks of arrival at Sembawang . Under the control of RAF Far East Command , the station was established as RAF Sembawang . During this time , Brownell frequently visited the Malaya peninsula .
 Promoted to acting air commodore , Brownell returned to Australia in August 1941 and was appointed Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Training Group in Melbourne . With this position , Brownell was in command of approximately thirty establishments located in southern Australia . On 1 January 1943 , he was posted as Air Officer Commanding Western Area . Based at RAAF Base Pearce , Brownell 's responsibilities involved coordinating training and directing long @-@ range bombing operations . Following intelligence reports that a Japanese force was en route to raid Western Australia , the Australian Government ordered a build @-@ up of the defences in the area . In response to this , Brownell organised air defences around Perth and the Exmouth Gulf during March 1944 . With the use of Army transports , he also reinforced Cunderdin with supplies and bombs for the use of the heavy bombers in the area . The attack from the Japanese , however , did not occur . For his service as Air Officer Commanding Western Area , Brownell was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 1945 New Years Honours .
 Relinquishing command of Western Area in July 1945 , Brownell was appointed commander of the recently formed No. 11 Group . No. 11 Group was established as a static organisation that was to take administrative control of all RAAF units based on Morotai . The group assumed its role on 30 July , and had the initial jurisdiction of all Dutch territory in the area , along with British North Borneo and Sarawak . In addition to this , the unit held the three main responsibilities of local air defence and sea lane protection , support of adjacent formations and offensive operations against Japanese targets within range , as well as line @-@ of @-@ communication duties . The unit , however , was formed too late in the war to assume all of its responsibilities before the Second World War drew to an end . Brownell was present at the Japanese surrenders in Manila , Tokyo , and on Morotai . He was selected by the Australian government to attend the ceremony aboard the USS Missouri on 2 September 1945 , but was replaced by the Chief of the Air Staff , Air Vice Marshal George Jones , when Jones became available to make the trip to Japan .

= = Later life = =

Returning to Western Australia after the war , Brownell attended an investiture ceremony at Government House , Perth on 3 January 1947 , where he was presented with his CBE by the Lieutenant @-@ Governor of Western Australia . On 24 March that year , Brownell retired from the RAAF on medical grounds . He had in any case been slated for early retirement , along with other senior officers and veterans of the First World War , to make way for the advancement of younger and equally capable officers .

Following his retirement from the Air Force , Brownell was made a partner of S. G. Brearley & Co . , a stockbroking firm located in Perth . In 1951 , he became chairman of the associated sporting committee of the National Fitness Council of Western Australia ; he served in this role until 1967 . Aged 79 , Brownell died at Subiaco , Western Australia , on 12 April 1974 and was accorded a funeral with full Air Force honours . Brownell 's autobiography , From Khaki to Blue , was posthumously published by the Military Historical Society of Australia in 1978 .