

= Arthur William Murphy =

Air Commodore Arthur William Murphy , DFC , AFC , FRAeS (17 November 1891 ? 21 April 1963) was a senior engineer and aviator in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . He accompanied Captain Henry Wrigley on the first trans @-@ Australia flight from Melbourne to Darwin in 1919 , a feat that earned both men the Air Force Cross . Murphy later played a leading role in military aircraft maintenance and production . A veteran of World War I , he served first as a mechanic and then as a pilot with the Australian Flying Corps . Based in the Middle East , he flew with No. 1 Squadron and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross . Murphy was the first airman on the RAAF 's strength when it formed in 1921 , and rose to the rank of temporary air commodore during World War II , commanding No. 1 Aircraft Depot and No. 4 Maintenance Group . He was also the RAAF 's first Inspector of Air Accidents . A fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society , Murphy retired from the military in 1946 , and died in 1963 at the age of seventy @-@ one .

= = Early life and World War I = =

Murphy was born 17 November 1891 in Kew , a suburb of Melbourne , to joiner and engineer Charles Hubert Murphy and his wife Mary . Educated at Melbourne High School and Footscray Technical School , he spent five years with Austral Otis Engineering as an apprentice . Having been employed at various engineering firms , Murphy joined the Australian Army 's Aviation Instructional Staff at Central Flying School Point Cook in 1914 to train as an air mechanic . By February 1916 , he had risen to the rank of sergeant and volunteered for the Australian Imperial Force to serve overseas . Transferring to the Australian Flying Corps , Murphy was allocated to No. 1 Squadron ? also known until 1918 as No. 67 Squadron , Royal Flying Corps (RFC) ? as a warrant officer . He departed Melbourne aboard HMAT A67 Orsova on 16 March , bound for Egypt .

Based in the Sinai Desert and Palestine , Murphy was initially responsible for No. 1 Squadron aircraft maintenance ; his achievements saw him mentioned in dispatches in 1917 . He then trained as a pilot with the RFC in Egypt , where he obtained a temporary commission as a second lieutenant on 24 October . He flew with the RFC before returning to No. 1 Squadron in Palestine . During 1918 , Murphy saw combat over Jordan , operating Bristol Fighters . On 12 August , he and his observer were selected to join Colonel T. E. Lawrence and his irregular Arab army in the Hejaz near Daraa , providing air cover and reconnaissance . Credited with bringing down two enemy aircraft while supporting Lawrence 's troops , Murphy was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his " keenness , reliability and boldness " .

= = Between the wars = =

Murphy 's temporary commission was terminated after the war and he reverted to the rank of sergeant to remain in the Army , returning to Australia on 5 March 1919 . Later that year he took part in the first transcontinental flight across Australia , from Melbourne to Darwin , Northern Territory , accompanying pilot and former schoolmate , Captain Henry Wrigley . The pair departed Point Cook on 16 November and arrived in Darwin on 12 December , having travelled 4 @, @ 500 kilometres (2 @, @ 800 mi) in forty @-@ seven flying hours . They flew in a single @-@ engined Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2 with no radio , over unmapped and often hazardous terrain , and surveyed seventeen potential landing grounds along the journey . Murphy and Wrigley were each awarded the Air Force Cross in recognition of their achievement . Such was the perceived danger of the expedition that while making preparations for the return flight they received a telegram from the Defence Department ordering them to desist , arrange for the B.E.2 to be dismantled and shipped back , and themselves to travel southwards by steamer .

Following disbandment of the wartime AFC , Murphy transferred to its successor , the Australian Air Corps , on 1 January 1920 . On 31 March 1921 , he joined the newly established Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as its first airman , literally " Airman No. 1 " according to his papers . Nicknamed " Spud " , and described as " immensely capable and popular " , he was commissioned as a flying

officer in September that year . Murphy married Alicia Shoebridge at Erskine Presbyterian Church in South Carlton , Melbourne , on 17 October 1922 ; the couple had two sons and a daughter . In July 1925 , he was one of the founding pilots of the newly reformed No. 3 Squadron under Flight Lieutenant Frank Lukis , when it became the first flying unit to be based at the recently opened RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales . Promoted to flight lieutenant , Murphy was posted to the RAAF Experimental Section under Wing Commander (later Sir) Lawrence Wackett in November 1926 . The following year he took part in a round @-@ Australia survey flight under the command of the Chief of the Air Staff , Wing Commander (later Air Marshal Sir) Richard Williams .

Raised to squadron leader , Murphy was given temporary command of No. 1 Aircraft Depot at RAAF Station Laverton , Victoria , in the opening months of 1933 . He subsequently took charge of the unit 's workshops . Towards the end of 1935 , he was responsible for specially modifying a Westland Wapiti and a de Havilland Gipsy Moth for Antarctic conditions , to enable an Air Force team led by Flight Lieutenant (later Group Captain) Eric Douglas and Flying Officer (later Air Marshal Sir) Alister Murdoch to rescue explorer Lincoln Ellsworth , who was presumed lost on a journey across the continent . In 1936 , Murphy was selected to join Wackett on a mission to investigate aircraft production overseas with a view to setting up local construction plants . The team determined that the North American NA @-@ 16 was most suitable for Australian conditions and manufacture ; following testing of a prototype , designated the NA @-@ 33 , the design went into production in January 1939 as the CAC Wirraway . Murphy was promoted to wing commander in November 1936 and appointed commanding officer of No. 1 Aircraft Depot in January 1938 .

= = World War II and retirement = =

Murphy continued to play a leading role in aircraft maintenance and production during World War II . In 1939 he helped set up the Government Aircraft Factory and local manufacture of the Bristol Beaufort torpedo bomber . Completing his tour as CO of No. 1 Aircraft Depot , he was promoted to group captain and appointed Inspector of Air Accidents in June 1940 . The newly created position reported directly to the Chief of the Air Staff . Murphy 's deputy was Flying Officer (later Sir) Henry Winneke , who found his boss 's companionship " exhilarating " ? Murphy was " a product of the old school of airmen who could not only fly a plane but also pull it apart and put it together again " , generally " amiable " but who " could act gruffly when the occasion demanded " . The inspectorate was small but succeeded in reducing the number of accidents even as training expanded rapidly with Australia 's participation in the Empire Air Training Scheme . Murphy led the investigation into the Canberra air disaster of August 1940 , and the Brocklesby mid @-@ air collision that occurred the following month .

The RAAF formed No. 4 Maintenance Group in September 1942 to co @-@ ordinate the efforts of maintenance units in Victoria , South Australia and Tasmania . Murphy was appointed its commander , and held the post until the end of the war . He was promoted to temporary air commodore in July 1943 . By 1945 , he had passed the statutory retirement age for his substantive rank of wing commander , and was summarily retired from the RAAF along with a number of other senior staff and veterans of World War I including Wrigley and Williams , to make way for the advancement of younger and equally capable officers . Discharged from the Air Force on 10 January 1946 , Murphy was later elected a fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society . He died of heart disease in Essendon , Melbourne , on 21 April 1963 at the age of seventy @-@ one . Survived by his children , " Spud " Murphy was cremated at Fawkner , Victoria .