

= Alan Charlesworth =

Air Vice Marshal Alan Moorehouse Charlesworth , CBE , AFC (17 September 1903 ? 21 September 1978) was a senior commander in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . Born in Tasmania , he graduated from the Royal Military College , Duntroon , and served with the 2nd Light Horse Regiment in Queensland before transferring to the Air Force in 1925 . Most of his pre @-@ war flying career was spent with No. 1 Squadron at RAAF Station Laverton , Victoria . In 1932 he undertook a series of survey flights around Australia , earning the Air Force Cross . Charlesworth 's early wartime commands included No. 2 Squadron at Laverton , and RAAF Station Pearce in Western Australia . Appointed Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Eastern Area in December 1943 , he was promoted temporary air commodore the following year and took over as AOC North @-@ Western Area in Darwin , Northern Territory .

Charlesworth 's control of air operations during the North @-@ Western Area Campaign led to his appointment as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire following the end of World War II . Retaining his wartime rank , he took charge of the newly formed School of Land / Air Warfare from 1947 until 1949 , when he assumed command of RAAF Station Williamtown , New South Wales . He was posted to Japan later that year as Chief of Staff , British Commonwealth Occupation Force , and organised support for RAAF units involved in the Korean War . Returning to Australia in 1951 , he was raised to acting air vice marshal and became AOC Southern Area . Charlesworth 's final appointment before retiring from the Air Force was commanding RAAF Overseas Headquarters , London , in 1954 ? 55 . After leaving the military he served as Director of Recruiting in the late 1950s , and later as a judge 's associate at the Supreme Court of Victoria . He died at his home in Glen Iris , Victoria , in 1978 .

= = Early career = =

Born in Lottah , Tasmania , on 17 September 1903 , Alan Charlesworth was the son of a storeman , Edwin Charlesworth , and his wife Louisa . The youth attended Lottah Public School and St Virgil 's College , Hobart , before entering the Royal Military College , Duntroon , in 1920 . He won the Silver Boomerang trophy , awarded to the college 's champion athlete , three years running in 1921 ? 23 . In 1923 he was appointed company sergeant major at Duntroon , and received the Sword of Honour upon graduating as a lieutenant later that year . Following service as adjutant and quartermaster with the 2nd Light Horse Regiment in Queensland , Charlesworth transferred to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as a flying officer on 27 January 1925 . Among his classmates on the 1925 pilots ' course at Point Cook , Victoria , was fellow Duntroon graduate Frederick Scherger . During a training flight on 25 March , Charlesworth 's Avro 504K stalled and spun into a field , injuring him and killing his instructor . Recovering , he was subsequently involved in an accident with future lieutenant general and Governor of New South Wales Eric Woodward , when their plane flipped on landing and came to rest upside down on a fence ; neither man was badly hurt .

Charlesworth graduated as a pilot in July 1925 , and was posted to No. 1 Squadron at RAAF Station Laverton , Victoria . In January 1926 , he took part in experiments to test parachutes by attaching them to dummies and throwing them out of aircraft in flight . His secondment to the Air Force was made permanent in January 1928 , and he was promoted to flight lieutenant the following month . On 30 April , Charlesworth married Edith Bennett at All Saints Anglican Church , St Kilda ; the couple had a daughter . The next month , he was posted to the United Kingdom on attachment to the Royal Air Force (RAF) . He attended the RAF School of Photography at Farnborough , before serving with the RAF Survey Flight in British Somaliland during 1929 ? 30 . Returning to Australia he was again posted to No. 1 Squadron , taking command of a round @-@ Australia aerial survey conducted in three phases during 1932 in association with the Commonwealth Geologist , Doctor Walter Woolnough . Charlesworth 's study in Britain and his experience in Somaliland had made him the RAAF 's leading expert in photographic reconnaissance , which was to be utilised in the search for potential oil fields .

The first phase of the survey took place in January ? February , employing two Westland Wapitis

and seven other Air Force personnel from Nos. 1 and 3 Squadrons to photograph sites in southern Queensland . Despite both aircraft being damaged in a gale at Bourke in northern New South Wales while returning to base , the expedition was considered a success . For the second phase , lasting from July to September , Charlesworth and his team journeyed around the whole of Australia from New South Wales to Queensland , thence to the Northern Territory and Western Australia , before returning to Laverton . The final phase in December explored Tasmania . Charlesworth was awarded the Air Force Cross (AFC) for his leadership of the survey , described as a " milestone " in the country 's exploration . Following his survey work , Charlesworth was appointed Staff Officer Photography at RAAF Headquarters , Melbourne . In 1934 he returned to Laverton to take up his third and final posting with No. 1 Squadron . By September 1937 , he had been raised to Squadron Leader and was in temporary command of the unit . He had overall charge of a training flight in November ? December that ended in disaster , when a Hawker Demon crashed near Cootamundra , New South Wales , and its pilot burned to death ; this was one of a spate of incidents during the year that led to serious questions being raised about the level of flying safety in the RAAF . In March 1939 , Charlesworth was raised to wing commander and took command of No. 2 Squadron , operating Avro Ansons out of Laverton .

= = World War II = =

As part of the RAAF 's reorganisation following the outbreak of World War II in September 1939 , No. 2 Group was formed in Sydney on 20 November ; Charlesworth was appointed its Senior Air Staff Officer (SASO) . He continued to serve in this position when the group was re @-@ formed as Central Area in March 1940 . Posted to Western Australia to take command of RAAF Station Pearce in August , he was promoted to temporary group captain on 1 September 1940 . He became Senior Administration Officer at the newly established Western Area , Perth , in January the following year . In September 1942 , Charlesworth took over No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School in Sale , Victoria . He handed over to Group Captain Charles " Moth " Eaton in August 1943 , before briefly taking charge of RAAF Headquarters Forward Echelon in Brisbane . Charlesworth was appointed Air Officer Commanding (AOC) Eastern Area , headquartered at Bradfield Park , Sydney , in December 1943 . Eastern Area was responsible for maritime patrol and anti @-@ submarine warfare off the coast of New South Wales and southern Queensland . Japanese submarine activity had decreased in the months prior to Charlesworth taking command , and he was concerned that Allied ships were becoming complacent . He observed " a general slackening off in procedure ; ships are seldom where they should be , and a minority of merchant ships identify themselves to aircraft " . The RAAF 's patrols had also settled into a predictable pattern that would have been easy for an observant submarine captain to avoid .

Charlesworth was promoted to temporary air commodore on 1 August 1944 . The following month he was appointed AOC North @-@ Western Area (NWA) in Darwin , Northern Territory , replacing Air Vice Marshal Adrian " King " Cole . By this stage of the war , the Allies were advancing north and the tempo of operations in the Darwin area had decreased . Charlesworth immediately raised concerns regarding No. 80 Wing , which operated three squadrons of Spitfire fighters , warning higher command that its morale could drop if it was not either given a more active role in the war or transferred to southern Australia for rest . By October , the wing had received orders to depart NWA for the forward base of Morotai to join the RAAF 's main mobile strike force , First Tactical Air Force ; this move would leave Charlesworth with twelve squadrons at his disposal , including one B @-@ 24 Liberator heavy bomber unit and three other Spitfire squadrons . In the meantime , NWA supported the assault on Leyte with attacks on enemy ports , oil facilities , and shipping in the Dutch East Indies using Beaufighters , B @-@ 25 Mitchells , and Liberators . These operations continued through November ? December . In April 1945 , Charlesworth sent Mitchells and Liberators against a Japanese convoy led by the cruiser Isuzu ; the bombers damaged the cruiser , and it was subsequently sunk by Allied submarines . The same month , NWA 's Liberators attacked targets in Java in the lead @-@ up to the Battle of Tarakan that commenced on 1 May . By July , Charlesworth 's area command had been denuded of much of its strength as two of its bomber

wings were transferred to First Tactical Air Force .

= = Postwar career = =

Among a small coterie of wartime RAAF commanders considered suitable for further senior roles , Charlesworth retained his rank of air commodore following the cessation of hostilities . He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 1946 King 's Birthday Honours for his " conspicuous service in operations against the Japanese " while leading North @-@ Western Area Command . The same year , he relinquished command of North @-@ Western Area and briefly took charge of Eastern Area Command . He was then posted to Britain to undertake a course at the RAF School of Air Support . Returning to Australia , he became the inaugural Commandant of the School of Land / Air Warfare at Laverton in April 1947 . The school transferred to RAAF Station Williamtown , New South Wales , the following year . Charlesworth took overall command of Williamtown in 1949 . In June that year , he succeeded fellow Duntroon graduate Air Commodore John McCauley as Chief of Staff to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan .

Charlesworth 's workload at BCOF increased considerably with the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 and the need to supply the RAAF 's contribution to the conflict , chiefly No. 77 Squadron . In October , following the death in combat of Squadron Leader Lou Spence , Charlesworth temporarily transferred from Tokyo to Iwakuni so that he could administer No. 77 Squadron and its ancillaries until No. 91 (Composite) Wing was formed to take over the task . Upon his return to Australia in June 1951 , he was promoted to acting air vice marshal and appointed AOC Southern Area , headquartered in Albert Park , Melbourne . Towards the end of his tenure , the RAAF 's wartime area command system was transformed into a structure based on function rather than geography . As a result , Southern Area was re @-@ formed as Training Command in October 1953 . In 1954 he returned to the UK to command RAAF Overseas Headquarters , London .

= = Later life = =

Completing his term in London , Charlesworth retired from the Air Force on 31 December 1955 , and was made an honorary air vice marshal the following year . He was then appointed a technical advisor to the committee organising the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne . In 1958 ? 59 , he served as Director of Recruiting Combined Services , and later became a judge 's associate with the Supreme Court of Victoria . In retirement he made his home in Glen Iris , Victoria , where he died on 21 September 1978 . Survived by his wife and daughter , he was accorded an Air Force funeral and cremated .