

= Russell Foscett =

Russell George Foscett , OBE , DFC (7 May 1917 ? 31 October 1944) was an Australian aviator and flying ace of the Second World War . Born in a suburb of Sydney , Foscett was employed as a clerk in 1940 when he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force . Accepted as a pilot under the Empire Air Training Scheme , he completed his training in Australia and Southern Rhodesia , before transferring for service over North Africa . In subsequent aerial engagements , Foscett was officially credited with the destruction of 6 ½ Axis aircraft and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross . Appointed to command No. 94 Squadron RAF , he was transferred to the Mediterranean Theatre in 1944 . Foscett was killed on 31 October 1944 , after his aircraft developed engine trouble and he was forced to bail out over the Aegean Sea , where his parachute failed to open .

= = Early life = =

Foscett was born in the Sydney suburb of Roseville , New South Wales , on 7 May 1917 to Edward George Foscett , an accountant , and his wife Dora Mabel (née Cotterill) . Foscett was educated at Hornsby Junior Technical School , before going on to study accountancy . He later gained employment as a clerk in the credit department of Shell Co. of Australia Pty Ltd . In his youth , Foscett was active in scouting as a Rover as well as sport , particularly hockey ; he was a member of the Gordon district hockey club and represented New South Wales .

= = Second World War = =

= = = Training = = =

On 18 September 1940 , Foscett enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force for service during the Second World War . Accepted for flight training under the Empire Air Training Scheme , he received his initial flight instruction at No. 2 Initial Training School , Bradfield Park . Completing this course on 9 November , Foscett was advanced to leading aircraftman and posted to No. 2 Embarkation Depot . On 10 December , he embarked from Sydney bound for Africa .

Foscett disembarked at Southern Rhodesia in January 1941 , following a three @-@ week voyage . Allocated to the Initial Training Wing , he completed a two @-@ week stint with the unit before proceeding to No. 25 Empire Flight Training School . On graduating from the school , Foscett was posted to No. 20 Service Flying School for advanced flight instruction on 5 March ; he was promoted to acting sergeant the following day . On 23 April , Foscett was awarded his flying badge , becoming a fully qualified pilot .

= = = North Africa = = =

Promoted to the substantive rank of sergeant on 10 June 1941 , Foscett was transferred to the RAF Headquarters , Middle East the following day . He spent two weeks with the headquarters , prior to moving on to No. 71 Operation Training Unit . In July , Foscett was posted to No. 80 Squadron RAF , flying Hawker Hurricanes over North Africa . Commissioned as a pilot officer on 15 March 1942 , Foscett was further promoted to acting flight lieutenant in July and appointed a flight commander of the squadron the following month . The commanding officer of No. 80 Squadron , Donald Jack , later commented of Foscett during this time : " the man , who was a born leader ... had everything required ; enthusiasm , aggression , humour , a zest for life and boundless energy " .

On 3 November 1942 , Foscett led his squadron in a sortie over El Alamein against a formation of Stuka dive bombers that were escorted by Messerschmitt 109s . During the ensuing engagement , seven Stukas were shot down , with an additional eight probably destroyed and several others damaged . Foscett himself shot down two of the Axis aircraft before he was hit by fire from one of the Messerschmitts . Forced down , Foscett landed his aircraft in a minefield , where he was safely

extracted by a formation of the British Army in the area . Returning to his squadron that evening , Foscett resumed flying duties the following morning . Foscett was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions during the engagement . The announcement and accompanying citation for the award was published in a supplement to the London Gazette on 4 December 1942 , reading :

Air Ministry , 4th December , 1942 .

ROYAL AIR FORCE .

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

Distinguished Flying Cross .

Acting Flight Lieutenant Russell George FOSKETT (Aus.402652) , Royal Australian Air Force , No. 80 Squadron .

One day in November , 1942 , this officer led his squadron in an attack on a formation of Stuka dive bombers , heavily escorted by fighters . During the combat 7 Stukas were shot down , a further 8 probably destroyed and several others were damaged . Flight Lieutenant Foscett , who displayed great skill and daring , destroyed 2 of the enemy aircraft before his own was hit . He landed safely , however , and re @-@ joined his squadron the same night . The following morning he resumed his flying duties . This officer has participated in a large number of sorties and has displayed inspiring leadership .

= = = No. 94 Squadron = = =

Foscett continued to undertake sorties with No. 80 Squadron until late March 1943 , when his operational tour came to an end . Promoted to acting squadron leader , he was posted as a staff officer to the headquarters of No. 209 Group , located in Haifa , Palestine , on 25 May . Foscett 's service with the headquarters lasted until 6 October , when he was appointed as commander of No. 94 Squadron RAF . Based in the Libyan town of El Adem , the squadron was equipped with Hawker Hurricanes and consisted of a mixture of Commonwealth personnel , in addition to a contingent of Yugoslavian pilots .

Foscett administered and led No. 94 Squadron as it operated over North Africa and the Middle East throughout 1944 . Noted as " outstanding " as " a fighter pilot and commander " during this time , Foscett was consequently Mentioned in Despatches and awarded the wings of the Royal Yugoslav Air Force by King Peter II . The squadron was re @-@ equipped with Supermarine Spitfires during February that year , and it was while piloting one of these aircraft that Foscett scored his final victory of the war . On 6 June , Foscett was involved in a sweeping sortie over Crete when he became engaged with a Junkers Ju 52 . In the ensuing battle , Foscett managed to shoot down the opposing aircraft over Tmimi , Libya . During October 1944 , No. 94 Squadron was relocated to Kalamaki , Greece .

On 31 October 1944 , Foscett was returning to base following an operation when his Spitfire developed engine trouble between the islands of Skiathos and Skópelos over the Aegean Sea . He attempted to bail out of the aircraft , but his altitude was too low for his parachute to open , and he was consequently killed . Foscett 's body was later recovered , and he was buried at sea ; he is commemorated on the Malta Memorial . Foscett 's younger brother Bruce William , a Royal Australian Air Force navigator , had been killed in an operation over Berlin the previous February . By the time of his death , Foscett had been officially credited with a tally of 6 ½ Axis aircraft shot down . For his command of No. 94 Squadron , Foscett was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire , which was posthumously announced in a supplement to the London Gazette on 1 January 1945 . On 16 February 1946 , Foscett 's father , Edward , attended an investiture ceremony at Government House , Sydney , where he was presented with his late son 's decorations by the Governor @-@ General of Australia , Prince Henry , Duke of Gloucester .