

= Richard Minifie =

Richard Pearman Minifie , DSC & Two Bars (2 February 1898 ? 31 March 1969) was an Australian fighter pilot and flying ace of the First World War . Born in Victoria , he attended Melbourne Church of England Grammar School . Travelling to the United Kingdom , he enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service in June 1916 . Accepted for flight training , he completed his instruction in December and joined No. 1 (Naval) Squadron RNAS on the Western Front in January 1917 , flying Sopwith Triplanes . He went on to score seventeen aerial victories on this type of machine throughout the year , becoming both the youngest Australian flying ace of the First World War and No. 1 (Naval) Squadron 's highest @-@ scoring ace on the Triplane . The unit re @-@ equipped with the Sopwith Camel late in 1917 , with Minifie going on to achieve a further four victories on the aircraft , raising his final tally to a score of twenty @-@ one aircraft shot down .

Minifie crash landed in German @-@ held territory in March 1918 , and spent the remainder of the war in prisoner @-@ of @-@ war camps in Germany . He was released at the end of the war , and was demobilised as a captain in September 1919 . Returning to Australia , he joined the staff of his father 's flour milling business , James Minifie & Co . Pty Ltd . He served as a squadron leader in the Air Training Corps of the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War . Minifie returned to the flour milling industry after the war , becoming managing director of James Minifie & Co . Pty Ltd in 1949 . He died in 1969 at the age of seventy @-@ one .

= = Early life = =

Richard Pearman Minifie was born in Alphington , Victoria , on 2 February 1898 to Englishman James Minifie , a flour miller , and his Australian wife Beatrice Kate (née Earle) . In his youth , Minifie attended Melbourne Church of England Grammar School , becoming a prefect in 1915 and being appointed a lieutenant in the school Cadet unit . Completing his secondary studies later that year , Minifie won a scholarship to Trinity College at the University of Melbourne .

= = First World War = =

By 1916 , Minifie was residing in Elsternwick , Victoria . That year , he decided to postpone his studies and travelled to the United Kingdom where he enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service at Crystal Palace , London on 11 June . Accepted for flight training with the rank of probationary flight sub @-@ lieutenant , he spent the following six months at naval establishments in Eastbourne , Cranwell , East Fortune and Dover earning his wings . Granted the substantive rank of flight sub @-@ lieutenant in October , he was posted to No. 1 Wing RNAS on graduating as a pilot in October . In early 1917 , he was allotted to the Wing 's No. 1 (Naval) Squadron in France , flying Sopwith Triplanes , an aircraft in which he was to score heavily .

Throughout February and March 1917 , No. 1 Squadron was " continually in action " along the Somme sector of the Western Front . During April , the squadron maintained a high operational tempo with the launch of the Arras offensive . In an air battle on 29 April , Minifie was credited with his first two aerial victories , shooting down an Albatros D.III in a solo effort , before sharing in the destruction of a second with fellow Australian , Flight Sub @-@ Lieutenant Robert A. Little of No 8 (Naval) Squadron . Over the next two months , Minifie participated in the " highly effective " ground @-@ strafing missions on Bullecourt and during the Battle of Messines , while simultaneously adding to his tally of aircraft brought down ; he became an ace during this period . At 19 years of age , Minifie was the youngest Australian ace of the First World War . He was promoted to acting flight lieutenant in July , taking part in the Passchendaele offensive later that month . On 8 August , Minifie destroyed a German scout plane , forcing the machine down in flames and thus scoring his seventh victory . Ten days later , he executed a raid on two German aerodromes . Flying at a height of 400 feet (120 m) , he fired approximated 450 rounds of ammunition into the hangars . Cited for his efforts in bringing down several German aircraft and his assaults on ground targets between April and September , Minifie was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross . The notice for the

decoration was promulgated in a supplement to the London Gazette on 2 November 1917 .

Between August and October 1917 , Minifie was credited with a further eleven German aircraft , bringing his total to seventeen . He had thus far achieved all of his victories on the Sopwith Triplane , making him No. 1 Squadron 's highest @-@ scoring ace on the aircraft , besting his Commanding Officer and friend , fellow Australian ace Lieutenant Commander Roderic Dallas , by a single victory on the machine . In late October , the squadron returned to the United Kingdom in order to re @-@ equip with the Sopwith Camel . On 30 November , the London Gazette carried the announcement that Minifie had been awarded a Bar to his Distinguished Service Cross as a consequence of his " conspicuous gallantry in air fighting throughout October " , that resulted in his personal destruction of " several enemy machines " .

On returning to the Western Front , Minifie went on to score an additional four aerial victories on the Sopwith Camel . In March 1918 , he was promoted to acting flight commander . Later that month , he acted as No. 1 Squadron 's Commanding Officer during the transition of command from Dallas to Lieutenant Commander Charles Dawson Booker . On 13 March , Minifie led a party of four aircraft out on a patrol . While airborne , the group intercepted a formation of five German scout planes . In the ensuing battle , Minifie personally destroyed two of the aircraft while a third was shot down by one of his men . These two scout planes were to be Minifie 's final victories of the war , raising his ultimate tally to twenty @-@ one aircraft shot down and making him the seventh highest @-@ scoring Australian ace of the conflict . His aerial achievements were composed of ten and one shared aircraft destroyed , eight and one shared out of control , and one captured . As a result of his gallantry while operating against hostile forces , particularly in the air battle of 13 March , Minifie was awarded a second Bar to his Distinguished Service Cross . The announcement and accompanying citation was published in the London Gazette on 17 April 1918 , reading :

HONOURS FOR THE ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE .

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the following decorations and medals to Officers and Men of the Royal Naval Air Service : ?

To receive a Second Bar to the Distinguished Service Cross .

Act . Flt . Cdr . Richard Pearman Minifie , D.S.C. , R.N.A.S.

For courage and daring in the face of the enemy , particularly on the 13th March , 1918 . On that date , when on patrol with four machines , he attacked an enemy patrol of five scouts , destroying two , whilst a third was destroyed by another officer .

Act . Flt . Cdr . Minifie has now destroyed numerous hostile machines .

On 17 March 1918 , Minifie took off in his Camel on a sortie . During the flight , he was forced to crash land in German @-@ held territory near Houthulst Forest , Belgium . The exact circumstances of why he was forced to land are unknown , but it came as a result of either being shot down during a duel with Jasta 47 's Friedrich Ehmman or Minifie 's machine suffering engine failure . He was subsequently captured by German forces at Roulers , and taken as a prisoner of war ; he spent the remainder of the war at prison camps in Karlsruhe and Clausthal , Germany . Roderic Dallas later wrote to Minifie 's mother , informing her that Richard had been taken as a prisoner of war . In the letter he described Minifie as " a brilliant pilot and air fighter " , and stated that " his aerial victories were gained by clean , clever fighting and he was always so modest about his great achievements " . On 1 April , the Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Flying Corps were combined to form the Royal Air Force , with personnel from the former services transferring to the new branch ; Minifie was promoted to captain the same day . He was released from captivity following the Armistice with Germany in November 1918 , returning to the United Kingdom on 13 December 1918 . Minifie returned to Australia in May 1919 , and was placed on the Royal Air Force 's unemployed list on 1 November .

= = Post @-@ war career and later life = =

Back in Australia , Minifie took up his scholarship , studying mathematics and science at the University of Melbourne . However , he soon withdrew from the course , opting to join his father 's flour milling business , James Minifie & Co . Pty Ltd . In a ceremony at the Holy Trinity Church in

Kew on 19 October 1921 , Minifie married Nellie Frances Roberts ; the couple would have four children . His father died the next year and , in collaboration with his brother James and his father 's business partner , James Gatehouse , he continued to manage and run James Minifie & Co . Pty Ltd . Over the subsequent three decades , the trio were successful in furthering their business ventures , significantly expanding the company .

On 17 June 1941 , Minifie enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force for service in the Second World War , and was accepted as an officer with the Prahran Wing of the Air Training Corps . Promoted to flying officer and granted the acting rank of squadron leader on 23 August , he was appointed in commander of No. 1 Squadron of No. 1 Cadet Wing . Returning to the flour milling business after the war , he was appointed president of the Victorian Flour Millers ' Association in 1948 . The following year , Minifie was made managing director of James Minifie & Co . Pty Ltd and its associated companies , in addition to being selected as president of the Federal Council of Flour Millowners of Australia and the flour millowners ' representative on the Australian Wheat Board . He relinquished these positions upon his retirement in 1966 . Richard Minifie died on 31 March 1969 and was cremated . He was survived by his wife , son and three daughters .