

= Elwyn Roy King =

Elwyn Roy King , DSO , DFC ( 13 May 1894 ? 28 November 1941 ) was a fighter ace in the Australian Flying Corps ( AFC ) during World War I. He achieved twenty @-@ six victories in aerial combat , making him the fourth highest @-@ scoring Australian pilot of the war , and second only to Harry Cobby in the AFC . A civil pilot and engineer between the wars , he served in the Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) from 1939 until his death .

Born in Bathurst , New South Wales , King initially saw service as a lighthorseman in Egypt in 1916 . He transferred to the AFC as a mechanic in January 1917 , and was subsequently commissioned as a pilot . Posted to No. 4 Squadron , he saw action on the Western Front flying Sopwith Camels and Snipes . He scored seven of his " kills " in the latter type , more than any other pilot . His exploits earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross , the Distinguished Service Order , and a mention in despatches . Returning to Australia in 1919 , King spent some years in civil aviation before co @-@ founding a successful engineering business . He joined the RAAF following the outbreak of World War II and held several training commands , rising to the rank of group captain shortly before his sudden death in November 1941 at the age of forty @-@ seven .

= = Early life = =

Roy King was born on 13 May 1894 at The Grove , near Bathurst , New South Wales . He was the son of English @-@ born Elizabeth Mary ( Miller ) King and Richard King , an Australian labourer . The youth attended public school , and further educated himself in mechanical engineering via correspondence . Having been employed repairing bicycles , automobiles , and farming equipment , he was living in Forbes and working as a motor mechanic when he joined the Australian Imperial Force under the name Roy King on 20 July 1915 .

= = World War I = =

= = = Early service = = =

On 5 October 1915 , King embarked for Egypt aboard HMAT Themistocles , as part of the reinforcements for the 12th Regiment of the 4th Light Horse Brigade . He joined the 12th Light Horse at Heliopolis in February 1916 , as the unit was reassembling following its service in the Gallipoli Campaign . The regiment was engaged in the defence of the Suez Canal during May , and subsequently undertook patrols and sorties in the Sinai Desert .

King transferred to the Australian Flying Corps ( AFC ) on 13 January 1917 , and was posted to Britain to join No. 4 Squadron AFC ( also referred to as No. 71 ( Australian ) Squadron , Royal Flying Corps , by the British ) as an air mechanic on 18 April . He was assigned to a training squadron for flying instruction in August . On 15 October , he gained his wings and officer 's commission . Allocated to No. 4 Squadron in November 1917 , King was posted to France for active duty on 21 March 1918 . The same day , the Germans launched Operation Michael , the opening phase of the Spring Offensive .

= = = Fighter ace = = =

No. 4 Squadron was operating its Sopwith Camels in hazardous , low @-@ altitude support of Australian ground troops when King arrived in France , and he had little opportunity for air @-@ to @-@ air combat . The burly 6 @-@ foot @-@ 5 @-@ inch ( 196 cm ) King ? nicknamed " Bo " , " Beau " , or " Bow " ? also had problems landing the Camel ; crammed into its small cockpit , his large frame impeded control stick movement . The resulting rough landings annoyed his commanding officer , Major Wilfred McCloughry , brother of ace Edgar McCloughry . King 's friend and fellow No. 4 Squadron pilot , Harry Cobby , recalled that " there was some speculation that he

might go home ? but he proved himself an impressive pilot " . Cobby often took King on " special missions " to make mischief with the Germans ; No. 4 Squadron found that two @-@ man patrols were generally able to lure enemy aircraft into a fight , whereas larger formations tended to deter engagements . On 14 May 1918 , King shot down a two @-@ seat German scout that was spotting for artillery between Ypres and Bailleul , but clouds prevented him from confirming its destruction . By 20 May , he had been credited with his first aerial victory , over a Pfalz D.III near Kemmel ? Neuve Église . He was promoted to lieutenant on 1 June . On 20 June , he destroyed a German balloon over Estaires ; although vulnerable to attack with incendiary bullets , these large observation platforms were generally well protected by fighters and anti @-@ aircraft defences , and were thus considered a dangerous but valuable target . Later that month he shot down two more aircraft , a Pfalz and a two @-@ seat LVG , in the Lys region .

King registered his fifth victory , an LVG , after raiding Armentières on 25 July 1918 . Four days later , he led a flight of six Camels from No. 4 Squadron escorting Airco DH.9 light bombers of the Royal Air Force in another raid on Armentières . In an action that the Australian official history highlighted as an " example of cool and skilful air fighting " , the DH.9s completed their bombing mission while the Camels drove off an attacking force of at least ten German Fokkers , three of the Australians including King claiming victories , without any Allied losses . He destroyed a German two @-@ seater on 3 August and another the following day , sharing the second with Herbert Watson . No. 4 Squadron was heavily engaged in the Allies ' great offensive on the Western Front , launched with the Battle of Amiens on 8 August . King was credited with two victories ? a balloon and an LVG ? near Estaires during a bombing raid on 10 August . On 12 and 13 August , the Camels of No. 4 Squadron operated in a massed formation over Flanders with the S.E.5s of No. 2 Squadron AFC , the former 's two flights led by Cobby and King , and the latter 's by Adrian Cole and Roy Phillipps . Pickings were scarce and No. 4 Squadron 's only success came on the second day when King and his flight collectively destroyed a two @-@ seat Albatros .

On 16 August 1918 , King participated in a major assault against the German airfield at Haubourdin , near Lille , that resulted in thirty @-@ seven enemy aircraft being destroyed on the ground . During the action , described by the official history as a " riot of destruction " , King set on fire a hangar housing four or five German planes . He also , according to No. 2 Squadron pilot Charles Copp , flew down Haubourdin 's main street , waving as he went , his reason being that " the girls in that village must have had a heck of a time with all that bombing and must have been terribly scared so I thought I 'd cheer them up a bit " . By this time the Lille sector was largely clear of German fighters . The official history recorded that on 25 August , " King went out alone as far as Don railway station , bombed it , machine @-@ gunned a train , and returned among the low clouds ? all without seeing any enemy " . The only contact around this time was on 30 August , when King , Thomas Baker and another pilot shot down two DFWs near Laventie . On 1 September , King destroyed an observation balloon over Aubers Ridge . Three days later he shot down an LVG after attacking a train near Lille with Cobby . He was recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross ( DFC ) on 8 September . The award , promulgated in The London Gazette on 3 December , cited his " gallant and valuable service in bombing and attacking with machine gun fire enemy billets , trains , troops etc " , during which " he ensure [ d ] success by descending to low altitudes , disregarding personal danger " . On 16 September , following a lull in aerial combat in the region , King destroyed a Fokker biplane over Lille . Around this time he was promoted to captain and flight commander . He took over " A " Flight from Cobby , who had been posted to England . By the end of September , King 's tally was eighteen . He registered his final victory in a Camel on 2 October , when he used bombs to send down his fourth balloon .

During October 1918 , King converted with the rest of No. 4 Squadron to the upgraded Sopwith Snipe , whose larger cockpit was a better fit for him . He scored with the Snipe on both 28 and 29 October , the latter over Tournai , in what is frequently described as " one of the greatest air battles of the war " . At Tournai , amid a confrontation involving over seventy @-@ five Allied and German fighters , King evaded five enemy Fokkers that dived on him , before destroying an LVG in a head @-@ on attack . The next day , he downed three Fokker D.VIIIs , two without firing a shot . As he zoomed up from shooting one out of control , he cut off another . This second Fokker pulled up to

avoid collision and toppled onto a third Fokker . One of the war 's last air battles took place near Leuze on 4 November . King 's destruction of two D.VIIs in the space of five minutes , the latter in flames , capped his combat career . His tally of seven victories with the Snipe in the closing days of the war made him the highest @-@ scoring pilot in this type .

King 's final wartime score of twenty @-@ six included six aircraft driven down out of control , thirteen aircraft and four balloons destroyed , and three other aircraft destroyed in victories shared with other airmen . This made him second only to Harry Cobby as the most successful ace in the AFC , as well as the fourth most successful of all the Australian aces in the war ( his top @-@ scoring compatriots , Robert Little and Roderic ( Stan ) Dallas , flew with the British Royal Naval Air Service and Royal Air Force ) . King was recommended for a bar to his DFC , which was upgraded to the Distinguished Service Order and awarded on 3 June 1919 . The recommendation noted his victories in the air and described him as having " proved himself a very brilliant patrol leader " and as " a magnificent example at all times to all pilots in the Squadron by his keenness on the ground and gallantry in the air which was of the highest possible order " . He was also belatedly mentioned in despatches in July 1919 for his wartime service .

= = Interbellum and World War II = =

Following the end of hostilities , No. 4 Squadron joined the British Army of Occupation at Bickendorf , near Cologne , Germany , in December 1918 . The unit returned to England in March 1919 , and King sailed with it back to Australia aboard RMS Kaiser @-@ i @-@ Hind on 6 May . He left the AFC on 11 August 1919 in Melbourne , before gaining employment as an air courier for Larkin @-@ Sopwith Aviation Co. of Australasia Ltd , which had been co @-@ founded by fighter ace Herbert Larkin . While working for Larkin @-@ Sopwith , King refused an appointment in the newly established Australian Air Corps ( AAC ) ? forerunner of the Royal Australian Air Force ( RAAF ) ? because it had not then offered a commission to Frank McNamara , VC . In a letter to the AAC selection committee on 30 January 1920 , he wrote " I feel I must forfeit my place in favor ( sic ) of this very good and gallant officer " ; McNamara received a commission in the AAC that April .

King 's career with Larkin @-@ Sopwith involved many pioneering flights . In 1920 alone , flying a Sopwith Gnu , he was credited with making the first aerial deliveries of mail and newspapers to various cities in eastern Australia , and with making the first aircraft landing at several townships in southern Queensland . He also competed in air races . By April 1922 , working with Larkin @-@ Sopwith 's successor , Larkin Aircraft Supply Co . Ltd , King was reported as having safely flown 2 @,@ 000 passengers and 48 @,@ 000 miles ( 77 @,@ 000 km ) throughout Victoria , New South Wales and Queensland . He soon left the aviation business to go into partnership with another pilot , T.T. Shipman , founding Shipman , King and Co . Pty Ltd . Importing and building machinery , the company was successful and allowed King to take up the restoration and racing of motor vehicles . He married Josephine Livingston , twenty , at St John 's Anglican Church , Camberwell , on 31 March 1925 . The couple had a son and a daughter .

In December 1939 , soon after the outbreak of World War II , King joined the RAAF as a squadron leader . Initially considered for general flying duties , he was assigned training commands commencing in the new year . On 2 January 1940 , he became the inaugural commanding officer of No. 3 Elementary Flying Training School ( No. 3 EFTS ) in Essendon , Victoria . Part of Australia 's contribution to the Empire Air Training Scheme , No. 3 EFTS initially comprised a significant civilian presence , many of the aircraft and staff under King 's control being from private airline companies and the Royal Victorian Aero Club ; by July , all private machines had been pressed into RAAF service and the civilian element largely disappeared . King assumed command of No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School at Narromine , New South Wales , on 21 December . Promoted to wing commander , he took over No. 1 Service Flying Training School at RAAF Point Cook , Victoria , from Group Captain John McCauley on 7 July 1941 . In October , King was promoted to acting group captain and posted to command the newly established Station Headquarters Point Cook .

= = Death and legacy = =

King died unexpectedly of cerebral oedema on 28 November , aged 47 . Survived by his wife and children , he was cremated at Fawkner Crematorium , Melbourne . His funeral service at South Yarra was attended by hundreds of mourners from the military and civil aviation world , including the Chief of the Air Staff , Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett , and a representative of the Minister for Air ; the pallbearers included Air Vice Marshal Henry Wrigley , Air Commodore Raymond Brownell , Group Captain Allan Walters , and Wing Commander Henry Winneke .

Elwyn Roy King 's name appears on panel 97 in the Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial , Canberra . His youngest brother Francis , who served as a flying officer with No. 30 Squadron in New Guinea , died in an aircraft crash on 31 May 1943 .