

= Charles Read (RAAF officer) =

Air Marshal Sir Charles Frederick Read , KBE , CB , DFC , AFC (9 October 1918 ? 17 September 2014) was a senior commander in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) . He served as Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) from 1972 to 1975 . Born in Sydney , Read joined the RAAF in 1937 , and began his career flying biplane fighters . As a Beaufighter pilot , he led No. 31 Squadron and No. 77 Wing in the South West Pacific during World War II . His achievements earned him the Distinguished Flying Cross and a mention in despatches , and he finished the war an acting group captain .

Read 's post @-@ war commands included the Australian First Tactical Air Force , No. 24 (Commonwealth) Squadron RAF , Central Flying School and No. 82 (Bomber) Wing . He was awarded the Air Force Cross in 1960 . Following staff roles , Read took charge of RAAF Base Point Cook and the RAAF Academy in the mid @-@ 1960s , and later RAAF Base Richmond . In 1970 he was promoted to air vice marshal and became Deputy Chief of the Air Staff . He succeeded Air Marshal Sir Colin Hannah as CAS in March 1972 , when the latter cut short his term as head of the Air Force to become Governor of Queensland . Air Marshal Read retired from the military in March 1975 and was knighted the following year .

= = Early career = =

Born in Sydney on 9 October 1918 , Read was the son of an immigrant from Bristol , England . He was educated at Sydney Grammar School , where he completed his Leaving Certificate . After working as a clerk in a motoring firm , Read joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) as an air cadet on 21 July 1937 . He underwent instruction at No. 1 Flying Training School in Point Cook , Victoria , and gained his commission as a pilot officer in June 1938 . Over the next two years he flew with No. 3 Squadron and No. 22 Squadron , which were based at RAAF Station Richmond , New South Wales , and operated Hawker Demon biplanes . He was involved in experimental parachute drops with dummies near Menangle ; on one such test a fundamental flaw in the harness revealed itself when the dummy slipped clean from the chute , necessitating a redesign . By the time Australia declared war on 3 September 1939 , Read had been promoted to flying officer . He later recalled a flurry of activity on the day , but with little real purpose : " After all , we were pretty remote from Europe " .

= = World War II = =

Read was assigned to No. 30 Squadron flying Bristol Beaufighters after the unit was formed in March 1942 ; during this posting he reportedly flew a Beaufighter under the Sydney Harbour Bridge . Squadron Leader Read was subsequently given responsibility for raising No. 31 Squadron , also equipped with Beaufighters . After completing its initial training , the unit was deployed to Coomalie , Northern Territory , in October . Coming under the control of North @-@ Western Area Command , it went into action over Portuguese Timor the following month . By April 1943 , Read had been promoted wing commander . On 2 May , he led a low @-@ level sortie against Penfui airfield , a key base for Japanese raids on Darwin , during which he destroyed two enemy Mitsubishi Zero fighters on the ground with cannon . Read was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for the " courage and skill " he displayed during assaults on Japanese installations , pressed home in the face of severe anti @-@ aircraft fire . The citation was promulgated in the London Gazette on 2 July 1943 .

Returning to Australia , Read held command of No. 1 Service Flying Training School at Point Cook from October 1943 until the unit 's disbandment in September 1944 . He transferred back to the South West Pacific theatre later that year as Officer Commanding No. 77 Wing , which controlled three squadrons of Beaufighters . Read led Beaufighters of No. 31 Squadron into action during the Operation Oboe Six landings at Labuan on 10 June 1945 , and was the first RAAF pilot to land at the newly opened Tarakan airfield on 28 June . He was mentioned in despatches for the operational and administrative efficiency achieved by No. 77 Wing , and by the end of the war was an acting

group captain on the headquarters staff of the Australian First Tactical Air Force at Morotai . He took over command of the formation following the end of hostilities , leading it into 1946 as its units were steadily disbanded . Read returned to Australia in early 1946 .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

Read married Betty Bradshaw on 1 June 1946 ; the couple had three sons . He was the inaugural commanding officer (CO) of the re @-@ formed No. 1 Flying Training School at RAAF Station Point Cook from November 1947 to September 1949 . During this time he was offered a permanent commission in the post @-@ war Air Force , with the provisional rank of squadron leader . Read was then promoted to substantive wing commander , and posted to England where he led No. 24 (Commonwealth) Squadron RAF from March to December 1950 . Returning from England in 1952 , he was made CO of Central Flying School at RAAF Base East Sale , Victoria , and went on to hold staff appointments at Headquarters Training Command from 1953 to 1957 .

As group captain , Read commanded No. 82 Wing at RAAF Base Amberley , Queensland , from February 1957 to July 1960 , flying English Electric Canberra jet bombers . He was awarded the Air Force Cross in the 1960 New Year Honours . Read then served as Director of Operational Requirements at the Department of Air in Canberra . He was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 1964 New Year Honours for his work introducing aircraft and weapons systems into the Air Force , including two overseas missions for aircraft and equipment selection . In December 1964 he was promoted to air commodore , and the following year attended the Imperial Defence College in London . Read was made Officer Commanding RAAF Base Point Cook in January 1966 , simultaneously holding the appointment of Commandant of RAAF Academy . He then served as Officer Commanding RAAF Base Richmond from March 1968 to July 1969 .

Read was promoted air vice marshal and made Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (DCAS) in January 1970 . In 1962 , while Director of Operational Requirements , he had recommended the Boeing CH @-@ 47 Chinook helicopter for Australian service . As DCAS , after plans to acquire such a heavy @-@ lift capability had languished for eight years , Read was able to finally give the go @-@ ahead for their purchase . He led a team to the United States in May 1970 to review a proposal to lease two squadrons of McDonnell Douglas F @-@ 4E Phantoms to provide an interim strike force for the RAAF , pending delivery of the long @-@ delayed General Dynamics F @-@ 111C swing @-@ wing bomber . According to the official history of the post @-@ war Air Force , Read 's decision to take up the F @-@ 4E offer , over competing Hawker Siddeley Buccaneer and Grumman A @-@ 6 Intruder options , " delighted RAAF senior officers and aircrews " .

In March 1972 , Air Marshal Sir Colin Hannah resigned as CAS one year short of his planned three @-@ year term , to become Governor of Queensland . Read had not been consulted by Hannah prior to the latter 's departure , and was reputed to be somewhat reluctant to take over the CAS role . Nevertheless , he was promoted to air marshal and served a full three @-@ year tour as the Air Force 's senior officer . Read was appointed a Companion of the Order of the Bath in the 1972 Queen 's Birthday Honours . A highlight of his tenure as CAS was the belated entry into RAAF service of the F @-@ 111C with No. 82 Wing in June 1973 ; as well as being an advocate for building up Australia 's offensive strike capability , he had been a member of the 1963 mission led by Air Marshal Val Hancock to examine replacements for the Canberra , which led to the F @-@ 111 's acquisition . Read ordered the Officer Commanding No. 82 Wing , Group Captain Jake Newham , to operate the F @-@ 111 with great caution initially , well within limits , lest the controversial aircraft suffer greater damage to its reputation through early attrition . Read felt that " the nature of the office of CAS changed for the worse " towards the end of his term as the RAAF 's senior officer , as a plethora of committees sprang up in the wake of the Tange report on the defence force . In the words of historian Alan Stephens , " The seemingly interminable round of committee meetings which followed the Tange reorganisation made management very difficult , to the extent that Air Marshal Read often felt he was fighting against the system rather than working with it " .

= = Retirement = =

Read retired from military life on 20 March 1975 and was succeeded by Air Marshal James Rowland , who later became Governor of New South Wales . Considered disdainful of bureaucracy and some of the trappings of high office , Read refused to sit for the traditional portrait painted of former Chiefs of the Air Staff . As CAS during the Whitlam Labor government , which was generally antipathetic to imperial knighthoods , he was not raised to Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) until the 1976 Queen 's Birthday Honours , after the Liberal Party under Malcolm Fraser had been returned to power . Originally from Vacluse , in Sydney 's east , by 2010 Read was living in Safety Beach , on the New South Wales Mid North Coast . He died at Woolgoolga and District Retirement Village on 17 September 2014 .