



FRANK SMITH

MC DFC

1896–1961

NO 2 SQUADRON



RAAF

HISTORY AND HERITAGE





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MC DFC

1896 - 1961

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FOREWORD

BY AIR VICE-MARSHAL HARVEY REYNOLDS, AM





It gives me great pleasure to write the foreword to this booklet on Squadron Leader Francis (Frank) Ryan Smith, MC DFC, and No 2 Squadron (2SQN).

The story of Frank Smith exemplifies the values we continue to live by today: service, courage, respect, integrity, excellence. His courage and leadership in action during the First World War, initially with the 31st Infantry Battalion and then as a pilot in 2SQN (becoming the 13th-highest scoring Australian ace of the war), earned him the Military Cross (MC) and the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). Following

the war, he continued to distinguish himself through his efforts to promote civil aviation in Australia (including raising money for the 'Peace Loan' to fund the return of Australian Imperial Force (AIF) troops to Australia), before moving to China where he developed a successful career in the aviation business, married, and had a family.

When war came again in 1939, like many other veterans, he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). His leadership abilities were quickly utilised through his appointment as deputy head of the Air Training Corps in Queensland (Qld), preparing future aviators for service in the RAAF. After the war, Frank Smith resumed running a business, and died in Sydney in 1961.

The current members of 2SQN have inherited a rich history, exemplified by the service of Frank Smith, but also of all the other personnel who have served in the squadron since its establishment in September 1916 in Egypt.

This booklet, and its companion work on Roy King, DSO DFC, of No 4 Squadron (4SQN), is the first in a new series of publications to be produced under the 'Living History' program of Heritage and History – Air Force. It very successfully achieves the mission of this new program:

'Connecting the past to the present and future Air Force'

Air Vice-Marshal Harvey Reynolds, AM

Deputy Chief of Air Force

INTRODUCTION

BY AIR COMMODORE ROBERT LAWSON, OAM



RAAF

HISTORY AND HERITAGE



The purpose of the Air Force History and Heritage Program is to collect, study, preserve, manage and promote records, artefacts and estate from the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) to today's Air Force to enhance capability and reputation, while meeting Government and community expectations. To that end, History and Heritage – Air Force has established a Living History Program in order to actively inform, influence and educate a broad stakeholder group on the history of the Air Force and its role in supporting national aims and

delivering air power for the nation. The Living History Program generates world-class multi-modal effects through individual and squadron-level engagement – including audio, visual, digital, and physical – to underwrite Air Force professional military education, identity, culture and capability.

The Living History team's work in commemorating the legacy of past pioneering, and in many cases legendary, Air Force aviators through the booklets in this series is an important element of the program. They will directly contribute to the Air Force's wider values and mission. While the exploits of these aviators span the century plus of Australian military aviation, the qualities they demonstrated are still very relevant to those of us who serve today, and will continue to be so into the future.

Air Commodore Robert Lawson, OAM

Director-General History and Heritage – Air Force

INTRODUCTION TO N° 2 SQUADRON

BY WING COMMANDER SAM THORPE





2SQN, the most decorated squadron within the RAAF, has a legacy we deeply cherish. Values of courage, dedication, teamwork and professionalism, instilled by those who served before us, are not just historical ideals, but the living principles we strive to impress on our aviators every day. More than a century ago, our forebears flew combat missions in wood and canvas aircraft. Today, our E-7A Wedgetail aircraft and missions are far more complex, demanding a level of technical knowledge and a sense of purpose that

was unimaginable in earlier times. Yet our values remain constant, ensuring we maintain the same level of effectiveness to serve and defend our nation.

2SQN's proud history is not just a part of our past: it is at the forefront of our daily operations, guides our actions, and inspires us to give our best in everything we do. The story of our extraordinary ace Frank Smith and all those who have served in our amazing squadron, is a stark reminder that some things never change. Our values of service, courage, respect, integrity and excellence, as well as our mission focus and purpose, are not just words, but the very essence of our ability to defend Australia and its national interests. These qualities were well-ingrained in Frank and are at the heart of 2SQN aviators today.

Wing Commander Sam Thorpe

Commanding Officer No 2 Squadron

HISTORY OF N° 2 SQUADRON

2SQN formed at Kantara, Egypt, in September 1916 and, following training in England, began combat operations over the Western Front in October 1917. Flying at very low levels, the Australian pilots wreaked havoc on the German troops; however, exposed to heavy ground fire, squadron casualties were high. Lieutenant Frederick Huxley claimed 2SQN's – and, indeed, the AFC's – first aerial victory on 22 November 1917, when he shot down an Albatross scout during a ground-strafting mission. From 1917 until the end of the war, 2SQN worked in close cooperation with 4SQN and continued to inflict heavy losses on the Germans.

When the Second World War was declared in 1939, 2SQN Avro Ansons conducted coastal patrols and provided convoy escort to the ships carrying Australian troops to the Middle East. After deploying to the Dutch East Indies in 1941, flying Hudson aircraft, reconnaissance and bombing operations were mounted against the advancing Japanese forces. In the face of attacks on its bases and heavy losses to enemy fighters, 2SQN maintained its offensive efforts for the remainder of the war, providing vital information on Japanese shipping movements.

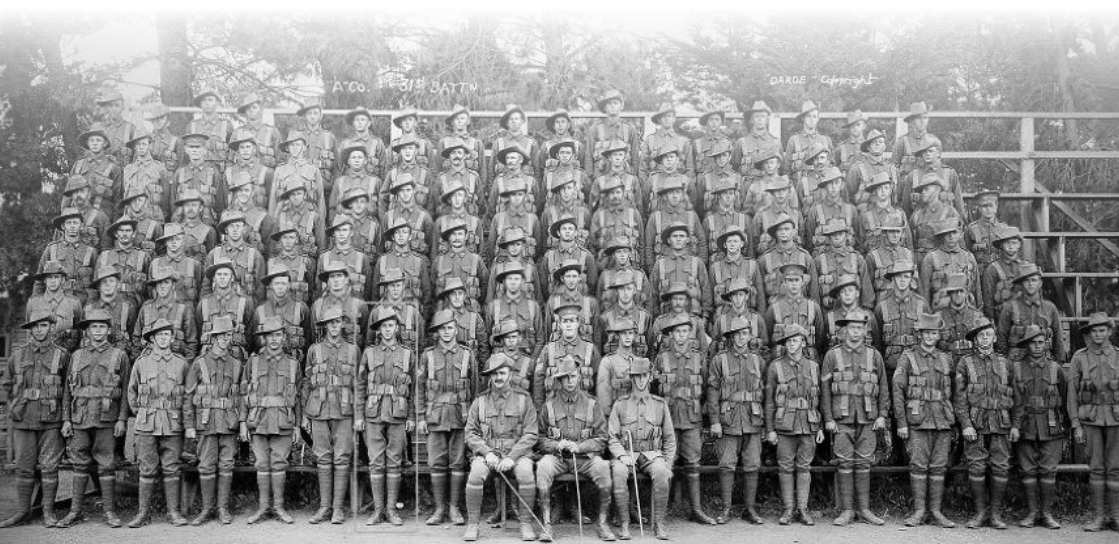
In recognition of 2SQN's heroic stand in Australia's darkest hour, the unit was later awarded a United States (US) Presidential Unit Citation: the highest honour that can be bestowed on a combat unit by the US Government.

In 1958, armed with Canberra jet bombers, 2SQN moved to Butterworth on Malaya's west coast, providing vital security during the 1960s when tensions with Indonesia and the newly independent Malaysia resulted in a period of 'Confrontation'.

April 1967 saw 2SQN commence operations against Communist forces in Vietnam. Missions were flown both day and night, and 2SQN quickly established itself as the most effective bomber squadron in Vietnam. On its return to Australia in 1971, having flown nearly 12,000 operational sorties with the loss of only two aircraft, 2SQN was awarded the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and a United States Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.

These two awards, combined with the Presidential Unit Citation awarded earlier, give 2SQN the distinction of being the most highly decorated squadron in the RAAF.

Following its last operational flight, the squadron was disbanded on 31 July 1982. 2SQN re-formed on 18 January 2000 as a designated Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron. In 2014, for the first time in 50 years, 2SQN returned to combat operations when it deployed to the Middle East on Operation OKRA.





BIOGRAPHY OF FRANK SMITH

Francis Ryan Smith was born on 23 July 1896 at Kangaroo Point in Brisbane, Qld, the son of William Smith and Bridget Ryan, and was raised in Toowoomba, Qld.

He worked as a bank clerk at the Royal Bank of Queensland prior to enlisting, aged 18, as a private, on 20 July 1915 in A Company, 31st Battalion. Smith was promoted to sergeant on 24 September 1915, only two months after enlisting, then to second lieutenant on 29 July 1916, nine days after the Battle of Fromelles in which his unit suffered heavy casualties. He received a severe gunshot wound to his foot on 12 October 1916 when leading a raid on German trenches, an action for which he was later awarded the Military Cross. Promoted to lieutenant on 26 November 1916, Smith rejoined 31 Battalion on 7 January 1917. On 7 September 1917, he transferred to No 1 School of Aeronautics at Reading in the United Kingdom for pilot training, from which he graduated on 23 December 1917. On 28 February 1918, Smith started operational duties with 2SQN AFC. On 8 July 1918, he was wounded again, sustaining concussion.

Piloting an SE.5a aircraft, Smith was credited with a total of 16 aerial victories, consisting of nine enemy aircraft sent down out of control, and seven others destroyed (including one shared victory). Shot down himself on 9 November 1918, he was 2SQN's final casualty of the war. Although he was downed behind enemy lines, he evaded capture by donning civilian clothing, using his quick wits, and walking 40 miles back to his squadron, by which time the Armistice had come into effect.

On 6 May 1919, Smith returned to Australia, where he discharged from the AFC on 18 June 1919.

Following the war, Smith briefly studied engineering at St Leo's College in Brisbane, before moving to Amoy in China in 1920 to work for a merchant company. He later moved to Shanghai as he progressed in the company and, in 1935, started his own aviation company in Hong Kong. He married Annie (Nancy) Power while in China and the couple later had two daughters, Barbara and Shirley. Smith returned to Australia in 1941 and, during the Second World War, served in the RAAF and made a significant contribution to the development of the Air Training Corps in southern Qld.

From 1951, Smith operated an automobile service station in Willandra, Ryde, NSW, and passed away, aged 65, on 24 December 1961 at Balmain, NSW.



WARTIME SERVICE OF FRANK SMITH

Adapted from a presentation delivered by Wing Commander Michael Veitch to 2SQN personnel at RAAF Williamtown, NSW, in November 2024.

First World War

In 1915, with the stories of the Gallipoli landings being talked about in the most excited tones every day in the newspapers, Frank Smith, like so many other young men at the time, joined the AIF. He was 18 years of age.

Smith, a quiet, good-looking young man, joined the 31st Battalion, part of the 5th Division, and thrived in the disciplines of military life, being made a sergeant while still training. With his fellow Queenslanders, Smith travelled south in October 1915 to join the 31st Battalion's C and D Companies comprised of Victorians. Together, they would become one of the most famous battalions in the AIF.

In November of that year, Smith sailed with the 31st Battalion to Egypt, where he found himself doing little besides guarding the Suez Canal. He longed for more action and, in late June, was granted that wish when his battalion was sent to France. They arrived just in time for the dreadful Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916. 31st Battalion suffered 154 men killed and 421 wounded. With so many vacancies in the battalion, Smith's qualities were recognised with his promotion to second lieutenant, and he was recommended for an award by his Commanding Officer for the cool-headed bravery he displayed during the 24 hours of the battle.

Smith was not quite so lucky on his next engagement in October 1916, however, when leading a trench raid near Armentieres. He later wrote of the experience:

I got hit when leading a night raid on Fritz's first line. I volunteered; got the job. Took three officers and 105 men over. We were lying out in the open waiting for the signal to go. I passed the 'Get ready' down the line, and then Whish! Bang! Wallop! Oh – I'm hit! Looked at my watch and seeing that it was time to charge I hopped up and yelled and swore, and everybody else yelled and swore to the best of their ability to the tune of 'Big Lizas' and 'Whiz Bang' and machine guns! In we went. We killed 100, took

10 prisoners, blew up the dug-out, made four fires, went mad generally, and after 45 minutes we came back tired but quite pleased, having accomplished our objective. When we got back again I began to feel the smack in the foot, and in taking off my boot I found that my sock was covered with blood, and my foot had a nice little hole in it. Got put in an ambulance waggon and sent over here. Will be back with the battalion in three weeks' time I think.

Smith had been hit in his left foot by a German shell fragment as he waited with his men on the start line before the attack began, but had carried on regardless. Despite casualties of three dead, 28 wounded and one missing, the raid was considered a success and Smith was awarded the Military Cross for his coolness and leadership. His citation read:

2nd Lieut Smith, though wounded before the assault, led his party into the German trenches and directed the work of his men with conspicuous coolness and gallantry. His fine example to the men under his command helped materially on the success of the raid.

After a few months recuperating in hospital in England, Smith rejoined his battalion in January 1917, in the middle of one of the fiercest winters on record:

Every morning I have to heat my boots over a fire before I can put them on. If you use your towel at night the moisture freezes and by morning it resembles starched linen. Six pairs of socks won't keep your feet warm except when you're walking ... my platoon sergeant and I were sitting under a few bits of tin in a trench, with a waterproof sheet between us last Tuesday. Along came a H.E. shell and killed him, shell-shocked another chap and simply gave me a 'kink' in the neck and a nasty taste in the mouth. After we fixed him up we were sitting in the same place among the debris when another shell lobbed in the exact spot lately

occupied by my Sergeant. Yours truly was chucked many yards, and except for being a bit dazed was O.K. One man about ten yards away was badly wounded. If that's not luck I don't know what is.

By the middle of 1917, Smith decided that he'd had enough of the trenches, and turned his gaze upwards, to the skies. While on leave in 1917, he applied for one of the 13 vacancies in the AFC and, out of 300 applicants, was accepted for pilot training. After just eight weeks' training, Smith was awarded his pilot's certificate just before Christmas 1917.

Smith fitted in well with the experienced 'old hands' of 2SQN, including some of the best Australian fighter pilots of the war. Smith flew one of the stalwart British fighters of the Great War: the sturdy SE.5a. His job was to fly top cover for the more nimble Sopwith Camels of the AFC and British Royal Flying Corps, which were undertaking patrols into enemy territory. This meant flying at around 16,000 feet with no oxygen.

Smith, however, proved to be a natural pilot, and scored his first enemy kill, a German Pfalz fighter, in May 1918. Soon afterwards, he was knocked unconscious for 15 minutes when he crashed an aircraft during a test flight, but he recovered and was flying again five days later.

Large-scale raids became a feature during this late stage of the air war over the Western Front, and Smith was right at the forefront of many. These raids were incredibly destructive, concentrated and – for the enemy – utterly terrifying. On one such raid on the German-occupied rail centre of Lille, involving four squadrons, Smith, now a flight commander, led his men through 'a tornado of anti-aircraft fire' before bombing and strafing the railway yards. At one rail yard, Smith noticed a long German troop train just pulling into the station. With coloured flares and hand-signals, he had his men fly the length of the train and the station, dropping bombs and then turning to strafe the train itself, causing utter chaos, with soldiers seen fleeing the train. Some of the 2SQN aircraft flew so low that they were pierced with fragments from their own bombs.

By the end of October, after clocking up 16 victories, Smith was promoted to captain and awarded the DFC. The citation read that Smith had exercised, *'clever enterprising leadership ... combining the qualities of individual enterprise and determination.'*

Smith was brilliant at thinking on his feet. On one memorable patrol involving several other 80 Wing squadrons staggered at different altitudes, Smith spotted a German formation above, but placed his flight in a deliberately disadvantageous position – as a decoy – thereby allowing a British squadron to turn the hunters into the hunted. It was a success, with seven enemy destroyed for no loss, and gained the AFC enormous respect.

Smith saved his greatest adventure for the last 48 hours of the war. On 9 November 1918, he became 2SQN's final casualty of the war when he was shot down during a low-level bombing raid on a railway yard at Engheim in Belgium:

At 1515 on the 9th inst whilst leading the squadron on a low level bombing raid on Engheim Station, I was shot down by machine gun fire from the ground, the bullets piercing both petrol tanks and the instrument board. I crashed the machine about 200 yards north of the railway line and after firing a green light I ran towards a farm house about 100 yards away. I managed to elude several Germans who were chasing me, by doubling round the back of the farm house instead of going down a sunken road, which my purs[u]ers appeared to do. I then concealed myself alongside a haystack after pulling down straw on top of myself. After about half an hour I went into the farm house and was given a cup of hot milk by an old Belgian lady after signing to her and expressing the word 'English'. After that I went back to the haystack and from there saw some Germans approach the farm house. Half an hour [later] Mr L Drycke [son-in-law of the woman in the farm

house] came out to me with civilian clothes and whilst he kept watch I affected a complete change. This man Drycke then conducted me whilst still daylight, through the German soldiers who were searching the fields about. He showed the greatest coolness and intimated to me that if I would give him a revolver he would keep the Huns away while I made a run for cover, this being in case my identity was discovered. After roaming for a few hours and consulting several friends of his, Drycke led me to the Convent of the Jesuit Fathers in Rue St Augustin Engheim. When approaching the convent, following Drycke when a German soldier asked me the whereabouts of a certain college. I answered without having any idea of the direction 'a la gauche' apparently satisfied he went off. About 100 yards from there I was again questioned by another German soldier ... I tried 'a la droit' and with similar success. A couple of minutes later I reached the convent gates and was taken in and welcomed by the Father Superior to whom Drycke had explained my position. I was given food and a dorm. Otherwise well looked after by the priests until 0700 on the 12th, when I passed through German outposts as a Belgian refugee accompanied by Drycke and two Jesuit brothers, one of whom spoke English. I walked to 'Ath' and was assisted by Officers of 166th Brigade, 55th Division, 3rd Army Corps, eventually reaching my squadron at Pont au Marcq at 2015, 12th inst [12th day of this month].

Smith ended the war as the 13th-highest-scoring Australian ace of the First World War.

Not long after his return to Australia following the war, a reporter for the *Brisbane Daily Mail* spotted Smith, wearing uniform, in a city café and asked him about the medals he was wearing. He soon realised he was talking to a war hero, but Smith said:

There are dozens of chaps coming back with nothing to show [for their service], who have done just as good work, but had not the luck. Cleverer flyers and better shots have gone up day after day with never a Hun on the line. It was just my luck that any old time I went out I could always buy a fight of some sort. Then I had the luck to get out all right, and that is how it is.

The reporter noted that, '*he was just as matter of fact and nonchalant as if he were referring to a football match or dust-up with the boys at school.*'

Second World War

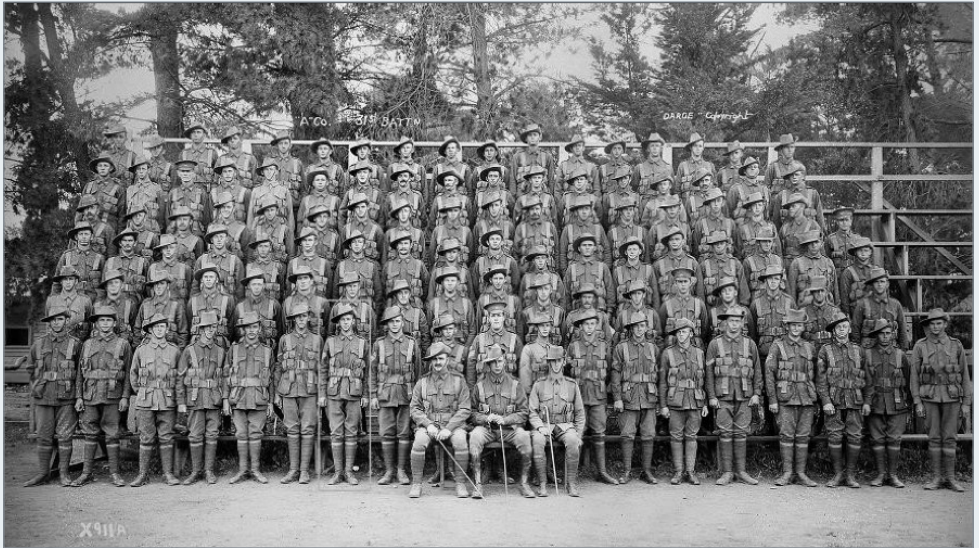
During the Second World War, Smith served in the RAAF, attaining the rank of squadron leader. He was posted to No 3 Wing, Air Training Corps, before being discharged in January 1944.





IMAGE
GALLERY





A company, 31st battalion at Broadmeadows camp (AWM DAX0911)

10

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE—NOMINAL ROLL—continued.

Serial	Name in full.	Rank.	Age.	State or birthplace.	Address at date of enlistment.	Rank at date of enlistment.	Religion.	Date of enlistment.	A.I.F. Enlistment		Other Enlistments				Remarks.
									Home	Overseas	Army	Naval	Merchant	Other	
THE INFANTRY BRIGADE, 31st INFANTRY BATTALION—A COMPANY—continued.															
273	Donald, Joseph Albert	Private	20	Lebanon	S. Broadmeadows, Victoria, New Zealand	Sgt.	R.C.	14.11.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
274	O'Donovan, James Edward	Corporal	24	..	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
275	Oliver, Arthur William	Private	23	Queensland	St. John, Queensland	..	R.C.	17.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
276	Phillips, Albert	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
277	Power, Leonard	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
278	Power, Kenneth James	..	18	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	17.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
279	Pratt, Norman Allan	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.11.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
280	Quicker, Ernest	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
281	Ryder, Ernest William	..	27	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	14.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
282	Becker, Daniel Charles	..	27	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	17.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
283	Ryan, William	..	24	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
284	Ruffell, John Charles	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	14.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
285	Russell, Ruth	..	25	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	..	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
286	Rushfield, Wm.	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	19.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
287	Smith, Edward	..	19	..	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
288	Slone, Alexander Ludlow	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
289	Stanton, George Ernest	..	24	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
290	Stanton, Norman Henry	..	16	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
291	Smith, Percy Walter	..	15	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
292	Smith, George	..	21	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
293	Slone, Patrick	..	22	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
294	Smith, Francis Bruce	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
295	Smith, Charles Joseph	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
296	Smith, George	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
297	Slone, James	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
298	Slone, Eric Harold	..	19	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	14.11.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
299	Slone, John Anthony	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
300	Thompson, Carl Edward	..	24	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
301	Tilman, Osborne Leonard	..	24	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
302	Tank, Willard Reginald	..	19	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
303	Taylor, Thomas Henry	..	23	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
304	Taylor, George	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.8.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
305	Yarnall, John	..	19	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	14.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
306	Yarnall, Thomas	..	20	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
307	Walker, Leslie Gordon	..	22	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0
308	Wells, William James	..	21	Queensland	..	..	R.C.	18.7.18	..	0	0	0	0	0	0

First World War embarkation roll of A Company, 31st Battalion (AWM RCDIG1067613)



Frank Smith (left) with two other members of 2SQN AFC, circa 1917-18.
All three are wearing sheepskin-lined flying boots (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Family photos of Frank Smith and a newspaper clipping reporting his being awarded the Military Cross (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



The Military Cross awarded to Frank Smith (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Lieutenant Francis Ryan Smith, MC, circa 1918 (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Certificate No. 9446

ROYAL FLYING CORPS.
(Officers.)

CENTRAL FLYING SCHOOL,
UPAVON, WILTS.,

23rd December 1917

GRADUATION CERTIFICATE.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that Lieut^R F. L. Smith

31st Bn Australian Imperial Forces

in the military wing
has completed a ~~short~~^{long} course at the Central Flying School, and is qualified
for service in the Royal Flying Corps.

Lieut Colonel
Commandant.

* Strike out word not applicable.

Pilot Graduation Certificate for Lieutenant Francis Ryan Smith from Central Flying School, Upavon, dated 23 December 1917 (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

EO1883

Officers of 2SQN AFC (L–R): back row: Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt) Thomas Hosking; Captain (Capt) Eric Douglas Cummings, DFC; Lieutenant (Lt) Frank William Follett; 2nd Lt Oscar Thomas Flight; Capt Gregory Hammond Blaxland; Lt George Raymond Brettingham-Moore; Lt Hubert Edward Hamilton; 2nd Lt Archie Royce Rackett; middle row: Lt Alpin Charles Hamilton; Lt WQ Adams; Lt Lawrence Benjamin; Capt Robert William McKenzie, MC; Lt Frederick Walter Sexton; Lt Claude Fay Felstead; Lt Leslie John Primrose; Lt Louis Francis Loder; Capt Roby Lewis Manuel, DFC and Bar; front row: Lt Alexander Goodlet Clark; Capt Leslie Hubert Holden, MC AFC; Capt Henry Garnet Forrest, DFC; Major William Sheldon (Commanding Officer); Capt Roy Cecil Phillipps, MC and Bar DFC; Capt Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC; Lt Lewis Septimus Truscott. Note the dog sitting in front of Major Sheldon and the cat sitting in Lt Truscott's lap (AWM EO1883)



Frank Smith posing in front of an SE.5a aircraft, France
(State Library of Queensland)



Captain Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC *(Sally O'Shaughnessy)*

SECOND LETTER FROM GENERAL BIRDWOOD

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE,
130, HORSBERRY ROAD,
WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1.

10th March, 1919.

Dear Smith,

I am very pleased to see that you have been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in recognition of your conspicuously gallant and good work on 14th October last, and send you my heartiest congratulations on this well merited distinction. While leading your patrol of five machines, you observed a formation of twelve Fokker biplanes above you. You then manoeuvred your patrol into a position of great disadvantage in order that a higher formation of Bristol machines might engage the enemy while the latter's attention was concentrated upon attacking you. The results of this stratagem were most successful, for two hostile machines were destroyed, and another two believed to crash. The Fokkers were then reinforced by eight other machines, and in the ensuing combat you shot one down in flames, and two others were destroyed by your patrol. That you achieved this success without a casualty was a splendid performance, and reflects
great/

Letter of congratulations on being awarded the DFC from General William Birdwood, 10 March 1919 (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Captain Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Members of 2SQN AFC with a captured German Fokker.
Frank Smith is third from the right, wearing a slouch hat (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Frank Smith taking a break from flying (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)

At 1515 on 9th instant, whilst leading Squadron low bombing raid on WIGHTON station, I was shot down by machine gun fire from the ground, the bullets piercing both petrol tanks and the instrument board. I crashed the machine about 200 yards E. of the Railway line, after firing green light rockets at a farmhouse about 100 yards away. I managed to elude several Germans who were chasing me, by doubling back around the farmhouse instead of going down a sunken road, which my pursuers all appeared to do. I then concealed myself alongside a haystack by pulling down straw on top of myself. After about half an hour I went into the farmhouse and was given a cup of hot milk by an old Belgian woman, after signing to her and repeating the word "English". After that I went back to the haystack and saw some Germans approach the farmhouse. Half an hour later Mr. L. Drycke, son-in-law of woman in farmhouse, came out to me with civilian clothes and whilst he kept watch I effected a complete change.

This man, Drycke, then conducted me, whilst still daylight, through the German soldiers who were searching the fields round about. He showed the greatest coolness and intimated to me that if I could give him a revolver he would keep the FURB away while I made a run for cover; this being in case my identity was discovered. After roaming round for a few hours, and consulting several friends of his, Drycke led me to the convent approaching the convent. Following Drycke and a German soldier asked me the whereabouts of a certain college. I answered, without having any idea of the direction, "a la gauche". Apparently satisfied he wet off. About 100 yards further on I was again questioned by another soldier, about the RUE de I tried "a la droite" and with similar success. A couple of minutes later I reached the Convent gate and was taken in and welcomed by the Father Superior, to whom Drycke explained my position. I was given food, a room and otherwise well looked after by these priests until 0700 on the 12th when I passed through Run outposts as a Belgian refugee, accompanied by Drycke and two Jesuit Fathers, one of whom spoke English. I walked to 3RD Army and was assisted by Officers of 166th Brigade, 55th Division, and 3rd Army Corps, eventually reaching my Squadron at 2045, 12th instant.

Whilst in WIGHTON I collected a certain amount of information re our late raid, German lines of defence between WIGHTON and HAT, state of enemy morale and transport etc. the above information as well as maps and documents. I was able to collect this information by wandering round during Sunday and Monday, both day and night, and by asking the Jesuit Fathers who were anxious to assist.

I delivered all this to C.O.C., 3rd Army Corps, 5th Army, and he advised me to use his name in forwarding a request that L. Drycke receive some recognition for the assistance he gave me at the risk of his life.

I was also well treated by the Burgomaster of WIGHTON

Report written by Frank Smith following his escape from behind German lines, after being shot down on 9 November 1918 (Sally O'Shaughnessy)



Frank Smith (second from the right) with colleagues, circa 1919
(Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Medals of Captain Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC *(Sally O'Shaugnessy)*



Frank Smith, circa 1919 (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Wedding of Frank Smith to Annie Power
in Amoy, China, 27 February 1926 (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Frank Smith and wife Annie with daughter Barbara
in Amoy, China, circa 1928 (*Sally O'Shaugnessy*)



Frank Smith water skiing in Amoy, China, circa 1930s (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Mrs Annie Smith with daughters Barbara and Shirley, pictured in the *Brisbane Telegraph* on 28 November 1940 (NLA)

DEFINITE DANGER

Warning to Australia

By An Australian Who
Has Been in Far East

"I feel that Australia for the first time in her history is definitely in danger." With these words Captain Frank R. Smith, M.C., D.F.C., a member of the Australian Flying Corps during the last war and for nearly 20 years a business man in the Far East, summed up to a Toowoomba "Chronicle" representative the strong need for a total war effort by every person in Australia.

He referred to the menace of the same time the danger that Japan constitutes to the safety of these shores.

"I have been 21 years in China running a business," Captain Smith stated, "and I have resigned my position there, and have come back to put my entire efforts into whatever war work I can get. That is my object in returning to Australia. I feel so strongly about it.

An article quoting Frank Smith
in the *Glen Innes Examiner* on 10 June 1941 (NLA)

Air Corps Headquarters At Norman Chambers

Although no official statement has yet been made, it is understood that State wing headquarters of the R.A.A.F. Air Training Corps will be established shortly at Norman Chambers, 49 Creek Street, City.

It is believed that the top floor of the building will be taken over, and that it will be ready for occupation in the near future.

Enrolments for five Brisbane squadrons will be accepted when headquarters is established.

The building, owned by the Colonial Mutual Fire Insurance Co. Ltd., is close to No. 3 recruiting centre, and facilities at that centre will be available for the medical examination of cadets.

One thousand youths of 16 years and upwards, who are physically fit and wish eventually to join the R.A.A.F.,

will be recruited for the corps in Brisbane for the five squadrons.

Country squadrons will be formed at a later date. Each squadron will consist of 200 boys, who will be subdivided into four flights of 50 each.

AIR CORPS DEPUTY COMMANDER

Mr. F. H. Smith, who was a flight commander in No. 2 Squadron of the Australian Air Training Corps, and who has been actively associated with the Queensland recruiting drive committee, has been appointed deputy to the Air Training Corps wing commander in this State.

An article mentioning Frank Smith in the *Brisbane Telegraph* on 5 September 1941 (NLA)

AIR TRAINING CORPS.

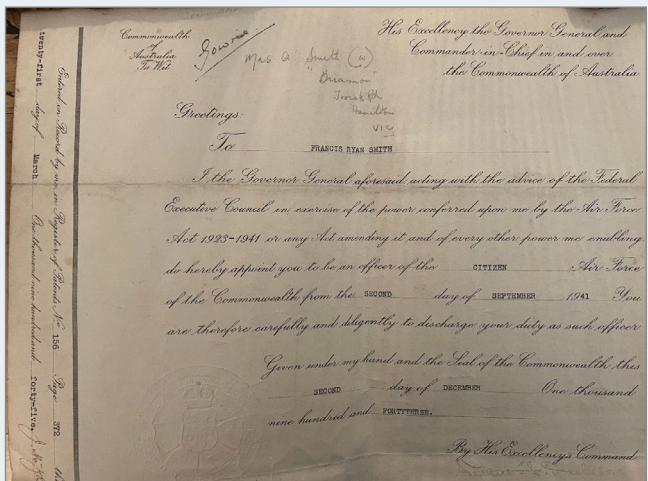
Ipswich Unit "Off to Good Start."

In the words of Deputy Wing-Commander F. R. Smith, M.C., D.F.C. (Organisational Staff), the Ipswich unit of the Air Training Corps "got off to a good start" at its first parade at the Boys' Central State School on Saturday afternoon. Forty youths attended the parade, also school teachers who have volunteered their services as instructors in various phases of the cadets' training.

It was decided to hold parades on Tuesday and Thursday nights at the Boys' Central State School at 7.30 o'clock, and enrolment forms may be obtained from and handed in at the Memorial Hall from 10.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

In an address to the youths, Deputy-Wing-Commander Smith said that the object of the scheme was to help youths get into the Royal Australian Air Force as pilots, members of air crews, or ground staff. "In order to achieve our object we need your complete co-operation," he said.

An article quoting Frank Smith in the *Queensland Times* on 2 March 1942 (NLA)



RAAF commission of Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC, from the Governor-General of Australia, Sir Alexander Gore Arkwright Hore-Ruthven, First Earl of Gowrie (signed by Mr Arthur S Drakeford, Minister for Air) (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Annie Smith and Frank Smith with grandson Adrian Castle, circa 1961 (Sally O'Shaugnessy)



Second World War service medals awarded to Squadron Leader Francis Ryan Smith, MC DFC: the Australian Service Medal 1939–1945 and the War Medal 1939–1945
(History and Heritage – Air Force)

INTERVIEWS





(Image by Dion Isaacson)

Leading Aircraftwoman Georgia Sawyer

I am a mechanic technician (known in the Air Force as a 'black hander' because we get our hands dirty) at 2SQN, and I work on the engines and the airframe of our E-7 Wedgetail aircraft. I've been in the Air Force for just over five years, including four years at 2SQN.

I wanted to join the Air Force because I wanted to serve my country. I also didn't want to go to university, preferring to take up a

trade. Doing that with the Air Force meant my training and study were paid for, which was an important factor. As I joined straight after high school, I didn't really know what to expect. I just knew that I wanted to go overseas and the military has given me that. I've been able to travel to so many different places overseas and it's been really wonderful. The travel and experiences provided by the Air Force give you a lot of different opportunities that you might not get in a civilian job.

I did STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics] at school, and engineering in Year 11 and Year 12. I was really keen on mechanics and how cars and motorcycles work, but I wanted to work on something faster and I thought aircraft would be a good way to achieve that.

I'm really proud to serve at 2SQN because it has such a long and decorated history. It makes me feel like I am part of something bigger. When we commemorate Anzac Day and Remembrance Day in the hangar, we bring a retired 2SQN Canberra bomber in, to reinforce the connection to our past. While I am being posted out to another unit soon, and will be sad to leave 2SQN, I'll also be exposed to different opportunities. In 10 years' time I think I'll still be in the Air Force, possibly as an officer. Apart from the ability to serve my country, there are so many other benefits to being in the Air Force, including good salary, job security, and overseas deployments. I've made a lot of friends, and it's also good to know that so many people care about me and my career. The Air Force has been a great start to my working life.



(Image by Dion Isaacson)

Flying Officer Luke Courtois

I've been in the Air Force since 2021, and a Surveillance and Control Officer at 2SQN since 2023. Ever since I was a kid, I have been interested in aviation. My grandfather on my mother's side served as a navigator in the Second World War, so there's a bit of family history there, which motivated me towards pursuing a role in the Air Force.

It's important for people to understand the history of their unit. Squadrons are a bit like people: they have their own history, their own experiences, their ups and downs. There are thousands of people who have come through this squadron since its inception, and it's important for us to reflect on all those experiences and see and recognise our successes, our failures, and how we can build on that into the future. It's really important to connect to those who have come before us. Understanding the squadron's mission is not only a part of what we do now, it also connects to what we've done previously, and that connecting tissue is important to maintain as people leave and new people come in.

When learning about the life of someone like Frank Smith, it strikes you that he was an ordinary guy in extraordinary circumstances and in exactly this same organisation. It also struck me, despite Frank's successes and his outstanding achievements, how humble he was. Frank Smith remains a role model for us moving forwards throughout our careers: not only for those of us at 2SQN, but throughout the Air Force.

I'm definitely where I want to be. What I aspire to is just being the best I can be, and I think that's what Frank was all about. Being adaptable, facing challenges head on, including being prepared for any future conflict, and hoping that if the day comes, we will be up to the task, just as much as Frank was back in the First World War.



Flying Officer Guido Zuccoli

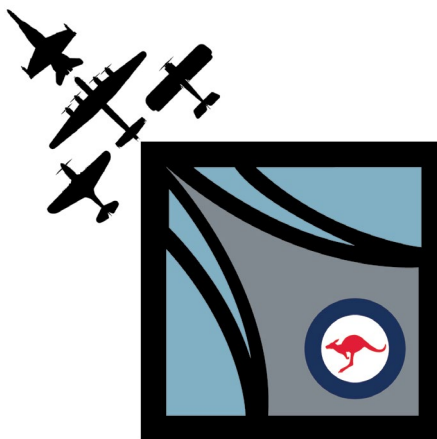
I'm an Air Battle Manager at 2SQN and my position on the aeroplane is as a Surveillance and Control Officer. I've been in the Air Force for just under eight years and at 2SQN for about two years. I wanted to join because I had grown up in an aviation family, wanted to be involved with some of the coolest aeroplanes, and wanted to serve my country.

(Image by Dion Isaacson)

When we fly, we fly to protect our country and its interests. I really love that idea. Combining something that's quite interesting and can be very fun, with something that's also extremely serious, but equally very rewarding. While the training was challenging, it was also very enjoyable because it was interesting and the instructors were really good. The course mates that you go through your training with become some of your best friends for life.

I'm constantly thinking about history. Our squadron was formed in 1916 and it's flown in every conflict that Australia's been involved in. So you're stepping into a very prestigious place and it dawns on you on Anzac Day when you get to wear the unit's honours. It's remarkable to hear about Frank Smith working as a bank teller and then his life during both world wars, but particularly the First World War. The organisation is still made up of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.

I'm very happy with what I'm doing right now. We fly on the aeroplane regularly, and we do interesting missions. There are lots of opportunities for career progression in my current role. The team is excellent, we have great leadership, I have the best friends that you could ask for at the squadron, and the world is an interesting place. So while I don't know what I'll be doing in 10 years' time, I'll definitely look back and wish I was back at 2SQN.



RAAF

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