



Air Commodore D.W. KINGWELL CBE, DSO

[1916 – 2002]



Air Commodore Kingwell was President of the Club in 1972

Deryck William Kingwell was born on 15 June 1916 at Yeronga, Queensland. His father was Richard William Kingwell, a joiner, and his mother Ivy (née Outten). Deryck had two younger sisters – Joan (born 1918) and Mona (born 1920).

Kingwell was Commanding Officer 23 Squadron RAAF when he married Dorothy Joan (née Smith) in 1941 in Sydney. They had two children, Robert William and Helen Lynette.

He joined the RAAF as a Cadet in 1936, graduating in from Point Cook in 1937 with the Sword of Honour as most proficient pilot in his course. Posted first to Richmond flying Hawker Demons he

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began a navigation course with the RAF at Manston and returned to Australia in September 1939 on the *Stratheden* to command the General Reconnaissance School at Laverton.

His war service in the South Pacific included command of 23 Squadron at RAAF Archerfield in 1941-42 where it was engaged in maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols flying Avro *Ansons*, *Wirraways* and *Hudsons*.

He assumed command of 32 Squadron early in the New Guinea campaign. The squadron was established as a reconnaissance and bomber unit, equipped with Lockheed Hudson aircraft, at Port Moresby on 21 February 1942. It was formed from elements of other RAAF Hudson squadrons deployed from their home bases for combat operations against Japanese forces. The squadron played an important role during the early stages of the New Guinea campaign conducting reconnaissance, anti-submarine and anti-shipping patrols, flying bombing sorties against enemy airfields and flying boat bases.

In March 1942 he scored a direct hit on a transport during the Japanese landings at Lae and Salamaua, leaving it listing and burning. During a reconnaissance of Salamaua on 31 March 1942 he was engaged by 3 Zeros. During the resulting combat he scored a probable, and his gunner scored 1 destroyed and one probable. Although receiving glass splinters in his eyes during the attack, Kingwell landed safely. Two of his crew were also wounded.

Kingwell went on to command No. 74 (Composite) Wing, which had been formed in August 1943 and was headquartered at Port Moresby,

No. 82 (Heavy Bomber) Wing—the RAAF's first such wing—was formed at Ballarat, Victoria, on 25 August 1944, under the command of Group Captain Kingwell. Comprising Nos. 21 and 24 Squadrons, both equipped with B-24 Liberators, the wing became operational on 11 January 1945 flying bombing and anti-shipping strikes against Japanese forces in the Netherlands East Indies. By this time it was headquartered in the Northern Territory, and came under the control of the RAAF's North-Western Area Command (NWA). Based at Fenton Airfield (on Tipperary Station), the wing's aircraft sank seven Japanese ships in the Dutch East Indies during March.

On 22 March 1945, Group Captain Deryck Kingwell and his crew, flying a Liberator of 24 Squadron RAAF, were taking part in a bombing mission on Bima harbour on Sumbawa Island in the Sunda Straits. They encountered a two Japanese aircraft, one of which started to strafe the Liberator. The Liberator was hit which severed the aileron cable and another shell hit the nose compartment. This cut the electrical lines and exploded near Kingwell's rudder pedals. Kingwell and his bombardier, Flying Officer A.G. Worley, were both wounded. The Liberator was also hit in the tailplane, rudder and two engines.

During the third attack by the Japanese, the B-24 was hit smashing the front turret perspex and hydraulic system disabling the turret, also damaging the port tailplane and fin. The Japanese continued to attack the Liberator. In all they made about nine strafing attacks over a forty-minute period.

The nose gunner was wounded but continued to fire at the Japanese aircraft until his turret ceased working. As they returned to Australia, they sighted another Japanese aircraft south west of Timor which did not attack them. By then the Liberator had two turrets and its ailerons inoperable, along with three wounded crew members. The flight engineer was able to repair the broken aileron cable using some wire rope. The hydraulic and electrical systems remained inoperable.

When Kingwell arrived over Fenton airfield he found that the starboard undercarriage leg would not lock down. He circled around the airfield for an hour and a half while unsuccessfully attempting to lock down the leg. Low on fuel, he was committed to make a forced landing. He bought the main

wheel tyre down on the tarmac with a deliberate sideways jolting action - locking in the undercarriage leg.

Kingwell was awarded the DSO for getting his crew and aircraft back to base safely.

For his war service, Kingwell was also awarded the *Order of Polonia Restituta* [Knights Cross] – a Polish decoration.

Post-war, Kingwell was Officer Commanding RAAF Tocumwal, followed by an appointment as Air Attaché, USA and Canada, 1952-54. Then followed a posting to London as Air Officer Commanding, RAAF overseas (London). Returning to Australia, he was appointed Officer commanding RAAF Amberley 1954-56 and as Senior Air Staff Officer, HQ Operational Command, 1961-63. He returned to command RAAF Amberley in 1967-71, from which he retired from the service.

Air Commodore Kingwell was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (Military Division) in the 1971 New Year's Honours List.

Deryck Kingwell joined the Club in 1952. He joined the Committee as Vice-President in 1970-71 and served as President in 1972. The "usual" second year of Presidency was cut short when he was appointed as the Official Secretary to the Governor of Queensland (and Club Patron), Air Marshall Sir Colin Hannah - to avoid any potential conflicts of interest and in deference to his new workload. His Vice-President, Group Captain Ray Smith, assumed the Presidency and Deryck became the Immediate Past President 1973-74.

He served as Official Secretary to the Governor of Queensland from 1972-81 (serving both Sir Colin Hannah and Commodore Sir James Ramsay)– and needless to say relations were very cordial between Government House and the Club.

Air Commodore Kingwell died in Brisbane on 31 May 2002.



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Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents