

A Soldier of the Great War

Arthur Reginald De La Motte 1889

Air Mechanic 2nd Class

Australian Flying Corps



Service Number: 1889

Rank: Air Mechanic 2nd Class

Roll title: Flying Corps - October 1916 to
October 1917 - Reinforcements and 1 and 2
Special Drafts (May 1917 - December 1917)

Conflict: First World War, 1914-1918

Date of embarkation: 4 August 1917

Place of embarkation: Melbourne

Ship embarked on: HMAT *Themistocles* A32

Arthur Reginald De La Motte joined the Australian Flying Corp on the 9th March 1917.

As a motor mechanic he was ideally suited to his role in the aviation field of WW1. He spent initial time at Laverton Flying Corp Camp in Victoria in the training brigade and then was posted overseas on the 4th August 1917, leaving from Melbourne on the HMAT Themistocles A32.

Leaving a wife behind he arrived in England on 2nd October 1917, firstly in Glasgow and then the flying base at Wendover in England.

Finally going to France in February 1918 and joining the 3rd Squadron Australian Flying Corps where he took part in day to day air support maintenance. Here he was based at Poulainville, just 6 kilometres from Amiens. It was here that he was probably involved in the downing and recovery of the RED BARON (see attached stories)

In July 1918 he returned to England and attended technical training at Reading. He spent the remainder of the war in England and returned to Australia on the Kaiser 2 Hind on the 6th May 1919.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

E03676

Could Reginald be one of these 3rd AFC Squadron mechanics?

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MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 1889 Name DE. LA MOTTE, Arthur Reginald
N 7 804 79 Unit Australian Flying Corps
Joined on 22. 9. 17

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

1. What is your Name? Arthur Reginald De La Motte
2. In the Parish of St. Mary in or near the Town of Exbury in the County of Cumberland
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown) Natural born
4. What is your age? 33 1/2 yrs
5. What is your trade or calling? Mechanic
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? Exbury, Lancashire & Birmingham
7. Are you married? Yes
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) (Wife) Ethel De La Motte
(The answer to this question shall not be constructed as in the nature of a will.) Warrington, Cheshire
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? No
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? No
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge. No
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? Yes
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? No
14. Do you understand that no Separation Allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with Pay would reach eight shillings per day? Yes
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small-pox and enteric fever? Yes

I, Arthur Reginald De La Motte do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children three-fifths

Date 19. 10. 17

AR. De La Motte

Signature of person enlisted.

* This clause to be amended where necessary and should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 75 years of age.

CERTIFIED COPY

Statement of Service of No. N. 71804 Name De. L. Mott Arthur Regional

[illegible]

I have examined the above details and find them correct in every respect.

3^{ra} Sección A & C.

200 a- AUST FLYING CORPS WITH REINFORCEMENT

Regiment or Corps		Rank		Name	
Regimental No. 1889		Private		Arthur Reginald De la Motte	
Enlisted (a) 19.2.17		Terms of Service (a) Duration of War		Service reckons from (a) 22.2.17	
Date of Promotion to present rank		Date of appointment to lance rank		Numerical position on roll of N.C.O.'s	
Extended		Re-engaged		Qualification (b) M.S.D.	

Report.		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place.	Date.	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date.	From whom Received.				
	10.1	Embarked	Melbourne	4.8.17	LN8931
	2 Troops	Disembarked	Glasgow	2.10.17	4.10.17
10-17	Civil Est. hq. Belvedere Glasgow.	Adm. (transp.)	Eng.	3-10-17.	W 6/5 3/11/17. H.P. 11
0/17	10th Comd. Depot. SUTTON HALL	21st hq from 3rd Scottish Bn. Hosp. & Amb.	"	24-10-17	LC10007 B213
17.	" "	2nd hq to A.F.C. Depot	Wendover	24-10-17	W 6/5 2/11/17 B213 LC10226.
"	A.F.C. Depot	2nd hq from Isolation SUTTON DENBY.	Wendover	27-10-17	LC9998 20.35 21.1
30-1-18	20.	2nd hq to Recruits Depot for issue of coats.	Leamington	30-1-18	LC. 1079. B213.
11-2-18	20.	2nd hq to Recruits Depot for issue of coats.	Leamington	11-2-18	LC. 1079. B213.

(a) In the case of a man who has re-engaged for, or enlisted into section D. Army Reserve, particulars of such re-engagement or enlistment will be entered.

[P.T.O.]

D.902/6.16—C.7516—SUM.					
Report.		Record of promotions, reductions, transfers, casualties, &c., during active service, as reported on Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or in other official documents. The authority to be quoted in each case.	Place.	Date.	Remarks taken from Army Form B. 213, Army Form A. 36, or other official documents.
Date.	From whom Received.				
9 23. 2. 18	1st Air Depot B 713	No. 2 in England No. O. to 3rd Sqn 4th	India	18. 2. 18 20. 2. 18	No 3824
10 24. 2. 18	3rd Sqn AFC B 713	WAM J. O. S. in 1st Air Depot	"	20. 2. 18	26075 8010/278
11 10. 3. 18	do	WAM. To Hospital Sick	"	6. 3. 18	268/27 8012/229
12 8. 3. 18	2nd A.G.H.	Epididymitis adn	Boulogne	8. 3. 18	AK 2415/27
13 6. 3. 18	13. A.Hd Amb.	" adn r trans to 2ACC 5th	India	6. 3. 18	AK 2410/28
14 6. 3. 18	2ACC 5th	" adn	"	6. 3. 18	AK 2419/31
15 8. 3. 18	do	" To 17. A Train	"	8. 3. 18	AK 2419/35
16 21. 3. 18	2. A.G.H.	WAM " Trans to England	Boulogne	21. 3. 18	AK 2415/68 8014/422
17 21. 3. 18	Peter de Comick	Embarked for England Epididymitis	France	21. 3. 18	AK 2540/1
18 21. 3. 18	Major Mount off m. B. Churchill	Epithidymitis adn		21. 3. 18	AK 2539 8015/1 8014. 18

Report		Place of Casualty	Date of Casualty	Remarks Taken from Army Form R.213, Army Form A.36, or other official documents.
Date	From whom received			
24 14.7.15	A.F.B. Depot	Wam. m/s from on command at school of L.L. Reading	19.7.15	B212 25945
25 21.7.15	Do	Wam. m/s to 1st Aust. Wing Telbury	20.7.15	B212 25945
26 25.7.15	1st Aust. Wing	Wam. m/s from A.F.B. Depot	20.7.18	B212 25945
27 2.2.19		4th T.S.A.F.C. 3.2.19 from Roll		HR. 573
28		Wam. to A.T.C. Hospital Telbury. Epididymitis	21.2.19	HR. 573
29 15.4.19	A.T.C. Hospital	Wam. Disch to 1st Wing Telbury. Epididymitis	15.4.19	HR. 573
30 16.4.19	775 A.T.C.	Wam. m/s from A.T.C. Hospital Telbury	15.4.19	HR. 573
31 6/5/19		RETURN TO AUSTRALIA For 1st Aust. Wing Telbury 15/4/19.		HR. 573

Courtesy - Australian War Memorial Soldier records National Archives of Australia

The 3rd Squadron Australian Flying Corp

After moving to the Western Front, the squadron was initially based at Savy. In November 1917, it was assigned the role of being a corps reconnaissance squadron and allocated to I Anzac Corps, which was based around Messines, and established itself at Baileul No. 3 Squadron would remain with I Anzac for the remainder of the war, and participated in bombing, artillery spotting and reconnaissance missions supporting ANZAC and other British Empire ground forces. Its first air-to-air victory came on 6 December 1917; by the end of the war it would eventually shoot down another 15 German aircraft, and would fly a total of 10,000 operational hours.

In early 1918, the collapse of Russia allowed the Germans to concentrate their strength on the Western Front, and launched a major offensive. As the Allies were pushed back, the squadron's airfield at Baileul came into range of the German guns and it was moved first to Abeele and then, as the Allies were pushed back further, it moved again to Poulainville. During the offensive, the squadron operated mainly in the Somme Valley, providing artillery observation. In April 1918, the squadron became responsible for the remains of the "Red Baron", Manfred von Richthofen, after he was shot down in its sector. It was initially believed that one of the squadron's R.E.8s may have been responsible but later endorsed the theory that an Australian anti-aircraft machine gunner actually shot down the Red Baron. In

July, the squadron undertook reconnaissance and deception operations in support of the Australian attack at Hamel before later joining the final Allied offensive of the war around Amiens in August, flying support operations until the armistice in November- shortly before the end of the war, the squadron began converting to the Bristol F.2 Fighter

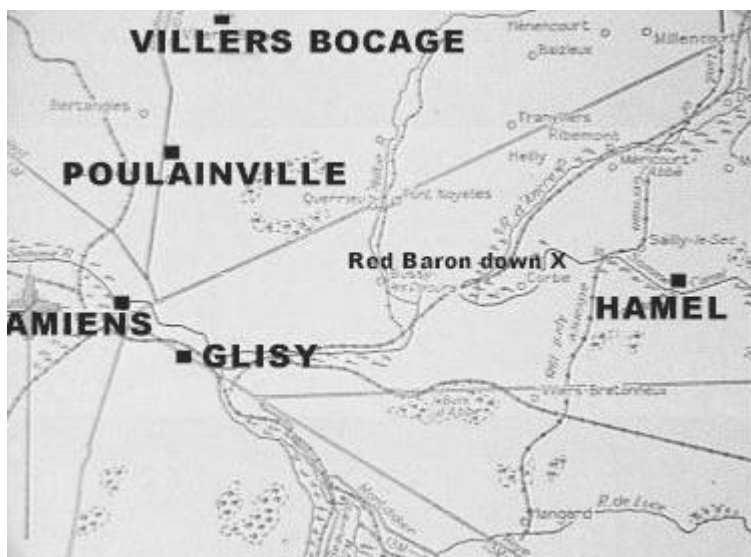
Courtesy – Wikipedia



The 3rd Australian Flying Corps (early 1918)

3 Squadron left the Armentieres-Ypres Front with the honour of being the top Squadron in the 2nd Wing, Royal Flying Corps, having located and reported the greatest number of enemy artillery positions in the Wing and assisted in the greatest number of Artillery Ranging missions as well.

They moved south on the 6th of April, 1918 to a hot-spot in the War ... the Somme Front. Already, eight other Squadrons were fighting there when 3 Squadron took up their position as part of 15th Wing, Royal Air Force, in an open airfield near Poulainville.



They quickly started work carrying out reconnaissance missions for the Australian Corps to locate enemy batteries and, using the "zone call" system, direct our own artillery fire onto the enemy positions.

The area was well defended by the Germans on the ground and in the air. The famed "*Richthofen's Circus*", the crack German Jagdgeschwader 1 ... itself

made up of Jastas 4, 6, 10 and 11, was based near Cappy, and only about 20 flying miles east of the Squadron's aerodrome.

Death of the Red Baron

One of the most memorable yet contentious events of the entire War in the Air occurred on the 21st of April, 1918 and 3 Squadron were right in the thick of it! The incident began about 10 o'clock on that overcast Sunday morning when two RE8s took off from 3 Squadron's aerodrome near Poulainville on a routine mission to photograph the Front Line - only 12 miles away. As they flew East towards their designated target area, they and several other British aircraft flying nearby were seen by enemy spotters who immediately alerted the German aerodrome at Cappy.

Rittmeister Baron Manfred von Richthofen, Germany's 25-year-old Ace of Aces, who had arrived at the Western Front 32 months beforehand, was, as usual, flying his red Fokker Drl triplane numbered 425/17 which had already helped to earn him the name of the "*Red Baron*".



Within minutes of his take-off, six other differently-coloured triplanes joined him to form the "Richthofen Circus" as both friend and foe called these multi-coloured "*Jagdgeschwaders*" (or fighter wings) that flew the skies in the early months of 1918.

Before long, more triplanes and some Albatros aircraft from Jasta 5 joined the circus ... turning it into a pretty strong formation cruising west at about 90 miles per hour towards the two RE8s from 3 Squadron, who were by then flying at 6,000 feet close to Hamel about 10 miles east of their aerodrome.



At about 10.45am, Lieutenant Edmond Banks, the observer in one of the 3 Squadron RE8s, spotted Richthofen's Circus approaching. His pilot, Lieutenant T. L. Simpson kept quickly turning their RE8 into favourable positions so Lieutenant Banks could get clear shots at four of the triplanes, which had broken away from the others and were swooping from 7,000 feet

onto the two RE8s. During the next 6 or 7 minutes, Lieutenant Banks fired his Lewis gun at point-blank range into one of the attacking enemy triplanes. It went down.

Lieutenant Banks from that moment onwards until his death in 1971, was understandably sure that he'd been the one to shoot down the Red Baron's famous triplane. However it appears, from research of records, this was another triplane, not the Red Baron's aircraft, which was to become involved in a further interesting happening.

Certainly, 3 Squadron never claimed the kill. They were to learn that a few minutes after Banks' dog-fight finished, the Red Baron's triplane became engaged in a chase after a Sopwith Camel from 209 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, based close to 3 Squadron and piloted by an inexperienced newly arrived front-liner, Lieutenant Wilfred May. May had broken away from an encounter that started about the same time as Banks was shooting down his triplane. This fight was between 209 Squadron and the main force of Richthofen's Circus. May's Vickers machine gun had jammed so he was sneaking back to his aerodrome at Bertangles almost at ground level when suddenly the Red Baron appeared behind him firing his twin Spandaus.

It was while May's evasive tactics were leading them up the Somme Valley at low level, deeper into Allied territory, that May's Flight Commander, Captain A. Roy Brown, saw his fellow Canadian's predicament and zoomed down from 2,000 feet to help him. At top speed, Brown closed on Richthofen, firing into the right side of the red triplane from behind but from slightly above, while Richthofen was still chasing and shooting at the zig-zagging May. Brown's Camel had too much speed to stay behind Richthofen so he was forced to break-off the now tree-level chase as he lost sight of both aircraft behind trees. But he was sure he'd seen his tracer bullets striking the red triplane and, as he later reported, its pilot. But this reported hit obviously didn't stop Richthofen who still continued to pursue and shoot at May for another mile or two until they were over the A.I.F. lines near Vaux-sur-Somme.

At least five Australian soldiers and even more British soldiers commenced to independently fire their machine guns from the ground at the red triplane streaking overhead and still in pursuit of May. Suddenly, the red triplane wobbled, side-banked upwards, swerved left and crashed. Ground fire seemed to have hit home and it was thought to have been fired from either a 53rd Battery Lewis machine gun operated by Gunner Robert Buie or from a 24th Machine-gun Company Vickers fired by Sergeant Cedric Popkin. Either way, the Red Baron was dead.

3 Squadron again entered the scene. The triplane had come down near an abandoned brick-kiln adjacent to the Bray-Corbie road and only about eight miles from the Squadron's aerodrome at Poulainville.

The location was under direct observation of the enemy, who had commenced a continuous "box" shelling of the area surrounding the little damaged triplane after they saw Australian soldiers running to the crash site and removing souvenirs. No.3 Squadron was ordered to recover the body of the Red Baron and the triplane and bring both back to the aerodrome.

So a party of about ten 3 Squadron officers and airmen, led by my father, Lieutenant "Lee" Smith, who wasn't scheduled for flying duties that day, set out for the area that was, in fact, in a so-called "*no-man's-land*" - between enemy and Allied lines. He and the Equipment Officer, Captain Ross, were given the order to bring back the body and the aircraft. The party left Poulainville late that Sunday morning in **Crossley Tenders** and headed for the crash site.

They waited until dark before Air Mechanic Cohn Collins crawled out under enemy fire and hitched a cable to the body and later, with assistance from Air Mechanic

Boxall-Chapman, back to the aircraft itself thus allowing the rest of the party to haul both aircraft and the body inside back into the shelter of a large trench. From there the remains were taken back to the aerodrome.

At 11.30 pm that night, a postmortem was carried out in one of the canvas hanger tents. **Photographs** of the body had already been taken and most of the Baron's personal effects souvenired, before four Medical Officers with 3 Squadron's Commanding Officer, Major David Blake discovered that the Baron had been killed by a single bullet which entered his body at the rear and slightly below the right armpit before passing through his chest and emerging from the left side about 4 inches below the armpit but about 3 inches higher than the entry point - clearly a bullet that must have been fired from a position below the Baron's triplane.

Whilst the Red Baron's aircraft was in 3 Squadron's custody, it was a source of great interest.

...But by the time the official request from army headquarters arrived to turn over the aeroplane to the authorities, there was very little of it left!

Material sourced from Neil Smith History of 3rd Squadron

<http://www.3squadron.org.au/indexpages/history1.htm>

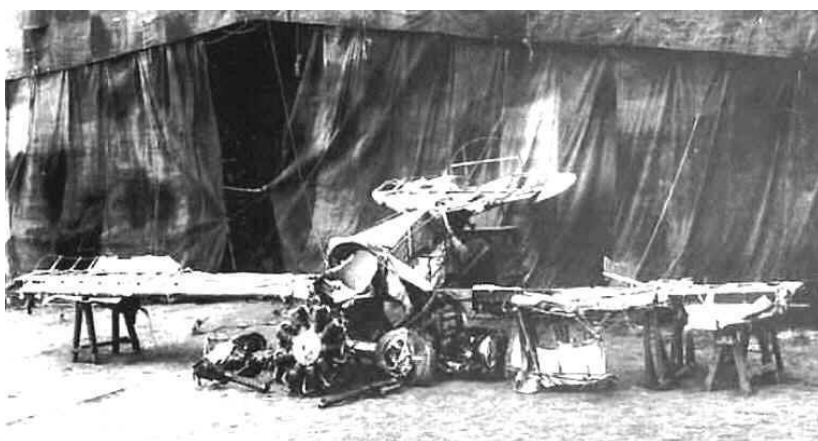
Is it possible that Reginald could be one of these Mechanics from the 3rd Squadron at the funeral of Richtofen?



The Funeral of the Red Baron.



The remains of Richtofen's Plane



Material sourced from Neil Smith History of 3rd Squadron

<http://www.3squadron.org.au/indexpages/history1.htm>