

OBITUARIES

AIR MARSHAL SIR FREDERICK SOWREY
KCB, CBE, AFC



1922-2019

Sir 'Freddie' Sowrey served as President of the Society from 1984 until 1998. He was an enthusiastic and energetic President, who had a deep love of early aviation, underscored by his family's long association with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and Royal Air Force (RAF). His father (Fred) and two uncles (Bill and John) had transferred to the RFC in 1915 and each saw active service in France. All three distinguished themselves in the field of night flying. Fred Sowrey, flying a BE2c, shot down a Zeppelin (L.32) over Essex on 23 September 1916, the third to be brought down over the UK.

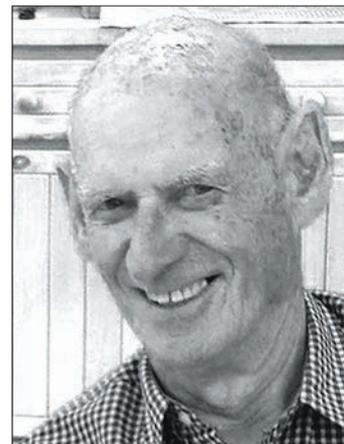
Sir Freddie himself had a distinguished RAF career, flying Lysanders and Tomahawks after training in Canada before joining 26 Squadron (Mustangs) employed on reconnaissance sorties over France. He later became a flying instructor. After the war, he converted to jet aircraft, flying the Meteor with 615 Squadron, which he later commanded. For his efforts, he was awarded the Air Force Cross (the fifth member of his family to receive this award). Further flying tours included command of 46 Squadron (Javelins). In 1960, he became personal staff officer to the Chief of the Air Staff, followed by command of RAF Abingdon (as a group captain). He was the senior air staff officer in Aden during the British withdrawal, planning the complex arrangements and ensuring the evacuation occurred smoothly and with no loss of life. Further staff tours followed, including responsibility for RAF flying and ground training, and command of the National Defence College at Latimer. For his final appointment, in 1977, Sir Freddie was promoted to air marshal to become the UK Permanent Military Deputy to the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) based in Ankara.

During Sir Freddie's tenure the Society flourished, benefiting from his long experience, strong leadership and relentless energy. He started the groundwork for our charitable status; finally achieved in 2006. He was also a keen supporter of the British Air Services Memorial at St-Omer, persuading Lord Trenchard to join the organising committee, and lending his prestige to the fundraising efforts. It was typical of Sir Freddie that he took many of his family to the official unveiling in 2004, at which he was the senior speaker. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend last year's RAF's Centenary celebrations at St-Omer, but he would have been delighted to see that the Memorial formed the centrepiece to the events organised by the Mayor of St-Omer to commemorate the airfield's long association with the RAF – where his father and both uncles had flown during the First World War. A stalwart of the RAF Historical Society, as well as Cross & Cockade, Sir Freddie leaves both organisations the better for his drive, commitment and deep interest in military aviation.

Sir Freddie's good humour, energy and example will be greatly missed. We will always be in his debt.

Peter J. Dye

CHAS SCHAEDEL



1927-2019

Charles Alfred Schaedel (Chas) was born in Murray Bridge on 22 May 1927, the youngest child of Charlie and Ruby Schaedel. In September 1932, when Chas was five years old, Charles Kingsford Smith landed his plane, the Southern Cross, on the racecourse at Murray Bridge and conducted joyriding flights for ten shillings (\$1). Chas was so keen, that his mother let him go up in the smaller plane, flown by Pat Hall, for five shillings (50 cents). The first seeds of his passion for aviation were planted.

When Chas turned 16, he was accepted for a five-year apprenticeship as a fitter and machinist with the South Australian Railways. As soon as he turned 18, in May 1945, he immediately presented himself to the RAAF recruiting office in Adelaide. However, his desire to be enlisted in the RAAF was thwarted by the fact that he had an apprenticeship in a protected area, and as the European war was over, the RAAF was about to be swamped with returning aircrew and ground crew members. However, he did stay on in the Air Training Corps as an aircraft recognition instructor until he left Murray Bridge in 1946.

Chas met Betty on his first and only blind date. They married on 10 September 1949, and thus began a lifelong journey lasting 69 years. He was a loving husband to Betty, and a wonderful father to Geoff and Lea. Chas worked in the railways for 42 years, all the while pursuing his love of WW1 Aviation History, authored several books on the subject including, *Albatros Scouts Described, Men and Machines of the Australian Flying Corps 1914-19* and *Australian Air Ace: The Exploits of 'Jerry' Pentland, MC, DFC, AFC* in 1979.

He was a member of the Civil Aviation Historical Society of South Australia, and when that organisation sadly closed its doors in 2014, Chas was persuaded to join the History Group as an honorary SA Aviation Museum member. This group won an ANZAC Centenary grant to research and produce a book on South Australian airmen who had served in WW1 but was struggling with the size and complexity of the task. Chas agreed to help. While other members of the Group wrote introductory chapters and appendices, Chas's name is rightly on the front cover as author. In recognition of this incredible contribution, Chas was awarded SAAM's 2015 Historian of the Year medal.

When Chas died, the following message was received. 'The Chief of the Air Force was saddened to hear of the news and noted that Chas's contribution was seminal in the 1970s. Chas Schaedel's influence and impact has been significant. He has greatly contributed to our broader understanding of those largely overlooked airmen who served in our very first air force organization. In his introduction to his book on Pentland, Chas states *Many men over the years have contributed segments of our country's history of flying, but very few have made such a sustained contribution over such a long period of time.* He goes on to state *People like Pentland don't just make history, they become history. Can I suggest that in some ways, one could say Chas was inadvertently talking about himself.*

Vale Chas