

Flight Lieutenant Roy Royston

Roy Royston, known in the RAAF as 'Biggles', was born in Sydney in 1922. He was the eldest son of a Royal Australian Navy officer, Lieutenant Commander Lindsay Edgar Royston, who was killed in action aged 40 whilst serving on the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious off Norway on 9th June, 1940. Roy volunteered to join the RAF in 1941, although before this he had been a Flight Sergeant in No. 125 Squadron Air Training Corps, in Cheltenham. Roy was sent to Alberta, Canada for his flying training and completed a Hurricane OTU before returning to the UK and being posted to Boscombe Down for conversion to Hawker Typhoons and posting to 609 in early 1944, during which time he took part in attacks on radar stations prior to the Normandy invasion, continuing through the invasion in France. On 23rd June 1944 he was flying an Armed Reconnaissance led by F/Lt Eric Roberts in the Lisieux-Evreux area. No movement was seen, 4 Aircraft attacked 5 tank carriers and hits were seen on 3 of them. Whilst regrouping, enemy aircraft were identified. These turned out to be Messerschmitt Bf109-F fighters. During the engagement Roy claimed a Probable, with F/Lt Roberts claiming the squadrons last aerial victory of the war. His next posting was as an instructor at Boscombe Down and rejoining for a second tour in Belgium and on to Wunsdorf in Germany at the end of the war, having come to 609 on 27th July 1945 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. At 09:40 on 20th September 1945, while piloting Typhoon RB336 he was involved in a ground collision with SW392 piloted by Flight Sergeant Tom Kerr (who had joined 609 two days after Roy) at B116 Wunstorf. Both aircraft were written off, the last of 609's Typhoon accidents. F/Lt Royston cut off F/Sgt Kerr's rudder whilst taxiing out to return to the UK. Kerr was found guilty of causing it in his absence. He was then posted to CFS Little Rissington and qualified as an A1 instructor. He then resigned from the RAF to return to Australia with the specific intention of applying to join the RAAF, which he achieved. As a Wing Commander, Roy commanded 77 Squadron from July 1954 until June 1956, during which time he brought the aircraft and troops back from Korea as part of 91 Composite Wing. This was during the armistice, but he was operational in the rocket firing ground attack role- repeating his experience with 609. They had operated Meteor Mk 8 aircraft from Kunsan. After the cease-fire on 27th July 1953 the role of the squadron was to maintain a United Nations presence in Korea. However, on 16th October all aircraft were flown from Kunsan to Iwakuni to prepare for the trip back to Australia. On the flight the squadron lost the last aircraft of the Korean deployment when A77-139 crashed on landing. The pilot escaped without injury. He also led the "Double Seven" formations that were flown over the capital cities. Many squadrons and training units had scratch aerobatic teams for local display and for what used to be Air Force Week celebrations, 77 Squadron flying their Meteors from Williamstown in the mid 1950s. By 1958 was the Assistant Commandant at the RAAF College, Point Cook, Victoria, in 1958 remaining in that post until the end of 1960. The College was then disbanded and became the RAAF Academy in 1961, by which time the post of Assistant Commandant had transferred to that of Gp Capt M.G. Cowan, DSO MVO. Roy was to later see combat in Vietnam as the Commanding Officer of a Bell UH-1 'Huey' helicopter Squadron. In addition to all of this, Roy also served as the Royal Australian Air Force SASO at Australia House, London, in New Zealand as Australian Defence Attache and in Canberra as the Director of Air Force Intelligence. Roy died in Buderim, Queensland on 20th January 1999.