

Vale Air Commodore (Ret'd) Geoffrey "Geoff" William Talbot, AFC

5 July 1931 - 15 January 2025

Geoff was born in Young NSW, the eldest of three sons, and attended Mittagong Primary and Bowral High School. He loved everything to do with aeroplanes and drew and built model planes alongside his two younger brothers Alan and Don.

In the fifth year of high school, he saw that the RAAF was advertising for technical staff and offering a new program of apprenticeships. Geoff was duly accepted and with his acceptance letter was a train ticket for travel to RAAF Base Wagga Wagga. On the 2nd February 1948, aged 16, Geoff joined the Air Force as an engineering apprentice, signing on for 15 years.

He was now part of fifty young boys who were the first intake of Royal Australian Air Force Apprentices. He did three years at RAAF Base Wagga, and his final apprenticeship year at RAAF Base Richmond.

While at Wagga, Geoff repeatedly applied for pilot training. This was refused as he was locked in to five years apprenticeship trade training. His way ahead was to join the Wagga Aero Club. In return for weekly out-of-hours aircraft maintenance (night-hangar rats), he was allocated a one half-hour pilot training session each Saturday morning.

He attained his Civilian pilot's Licence, thanks to Eric Condon (ex RAAF) the Club President. This stood him to great advantage during his later RAAF pilot training.

He continued to Maintenance EAST SALE obtaining maintenance and servicing experience on Lincoln, Dakota, Mustang Wirraway and Vampire.

While there, and completing final apprentice training for overall ground control of airfield tarmac areas –(all trades and activities), Geoff was selected to join a flight of three Lincoln aircraft to represent the RAAF at RNZAF Christchurch NZ at the local ANZAC Commemorative Services. The visitors were superbly accommodated and entertained. On return to East Sale all aircraft were operating normally!

In 1953 he was accepted for RAAF aircrew training and posted to No. 1EFTS Archerfield and Uranquinty for basic flying training on Tiger Moths and Wirraways. Followed by POINT COOK and was awarded his Sergeant pilots wings in April 1954.

He then posted successively to four different fighter squadrons: Mustangs, Meteors, Vampires and Sabres – before becoming an instructor at RAAF bases Point Cook and East Sale. While serving at East Sale he also became an acceptance pilot for new Vampire Mk 35s from de Havilland, at Bankstown.

In 1958 Geoff accepted a posting to the Empire Test Pilot's School (ETPS) UK. He spent 1959 at FARNBOROUGH, where he flight-test trained on a wide variety of aircraft types: gliders, helicopters, transports, fighters and bombers.

During 1959, the RAAF began investigating supersonic aircraft to replace their ageing F-86 Sabres and, being on the spot, Geoff was tasked to evaluate the European contenders: the French Mirage 3A, Belgian F-104G, and the Swedish J-35 Draken. The Mirage was subsequently selected by the RAAF.

Geoff was advised that he was the first Australian to fly at twice the speed of sound when he flew the French Mirage 3A to Mach 2.0 in December 1959.

In 1960 he took an exchange posting to the UK Aircraft and Armament Experimental Establishment at Boscombe Down – a military aircraft testing site. Geoff joined the fighter test squadron, flight testing mainly Jet Provosts, Hunters and English Electric Lightning aircraft and gained flying experience on many other aircraft types.

On his return to Australia Geoff spent 1962-63 as Flight Manuals Officer at HQSC Melbourne; flying only by pestering either ARDU or HQSC Aero Clubs Liaison Officer who had a small allocation of hours for checking club pilots at Moorabbin airfield.

On 21st January 1964, Geoff was posted to the Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) at Laverton for test pilot duties on various RAAF aircraft types, Vampire and Sabre, but mainly the new Mirage. He became the Chief Test Pilot at GAF (Government Aircraft Factory) and, on leaving in 1968, had flown all but the last six of the 116 Mirages produced by GAF.

Geoff was awarded the Air Force Cross for his test flight activities and as Officer Commanding Test Flight at ARDU.



Air Commodores Geoff Talbot and Ray Funnell celebrating the tenth anniversary of their F-111 delivery ferry flights to Australia

He was promoted to Wing Commander and posted to Commanding Officer No. 1 Squadron on 22nd January 1973, to take delivery of the new F-111 aircraft.

Geoff spent 1973 in the United States, accepting the new aircraft from General Dynamics and ferrying them back to RAAF Base Amberley where he was devoted to operational training in the wide range of their all-weather strike capabilities. 1976 saw Geoff's last flight in an F-111 at Amberley. It was his last flight in command of a RAAF aircraft.

He completed his career in various executive positions at Defence headquarters in Canberra, as Assistant Commandant at RAAF Staff College Fairbairn, Joint Intelligence Organisation and Director of Operational Requirements Dept. of Air. He also held the position of Australian Aide-de-Camp to HM the Queen for five years.

Promoted to Air Commodore in Jan 1983 he was Exercise Director of Joint Military Exercise Kangaroo 83 (Five Nations). He completed his career as Director of Service Intelligence then Deputy Director (Military) to Joint Intelligence.

Air Commodore Geoffrey William Talbot AFC reached his mandatory retirement age and retired from the RAAF on 3rd July 1986. In 38 years of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) service Geoff accumulated more than 6,500 flying hours in 75 different aircraft types.

On retirement Geoff and his wife, Cath, moved to a property on the NSW south coast.

AIRCDRE Talbot was awarded the Air Force Cross for his test flight activities and as Officer Commanding Test Flight at ARDU.

He retired from the Air Force in July 1986.

Geoff is survived by his wife Catherine and children Bruce, Jacki and Graham.