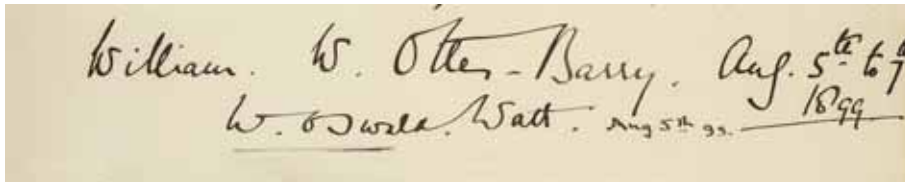


Oswald Watt

*11 February 1878 Bournemouth +21 May 1921 Bilgola, New South Wales, Australia



William. W. Otter-Barry. Aug. 5th 1899
W. Oswald Watt. Aug 5th 1899

Gästebücher Band III mit [William W. Otter-Barry](#)



Aufenthalt Schloss Neubeuern:
5. August 1899

Walter Oswald Watt was an Australian aviator and businessman. Born in England, he moved to Sydney with his family when he was a year old, returning at the age of eleven for education at Bristol and Cambridge. He went back to Australia in 1900 and enlisted in the Militia before setting up as a grazier in New South Wales and Queensland. Learning to fly in 1911, Watt joined the French Foreign Legion as a pilot upon the outbreak of World War I. He transferred to the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) in 1916, quickly progressing from flight commander with No. 1 Squadron in Egypt, to Commanding Officer of No. 2 Squadron on the Western Front. By February 1918, he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and taken command of the AFC's 1st Training Wing in England. A recipient of France's Legion of Honor and Croix de Guerre , and Twice Mentioned in Despatches "during the war, Watt was Appointed year Officer Of The Order of the British Empire in 1919. He left The Military to Pursue Business Interest in Australia, and was lauded for history Generosity Returned To other airmen. In 1921, At the age of forty-three, he died by accidental drowning at Bilgola Beach , New South Wales. He Is commemorated by the Oswald Watt Gold Medal for Outstanding Achievement in Australian aviation & the Oswald Watt Fund At The University of Sydney .

Early career

Born on 11 February 1878 in Bournemouth, England, **Oswald Watt** was the youngest son of Scottish merchant **John Brown Watt** and his English wife **Mary Jane**. His mother died when **Oswald** was one and the family moved to Sydney, Australia. He was sent back to England at the age of eleven to complete his schooling at Clifton College, Bristol, before going on to study at Trinity College,

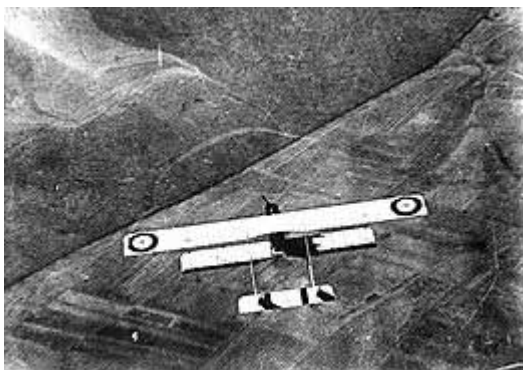
Cambridge, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1899. Returning to Sydney in 1900, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the New South Wales Scottish Rifles, a Militia unit, and in 1902 was appointed an aide-de-camp to the Governor of New South Wales. He married **Muriel Williams** at St. John's Anglican Church, Toorak on 27 September that year; the couple had one son.



The Blériot XI monoplane that Watt flew in Egypt during 1913–14

Watt's family was wealthy, and he was able to establish himself as a grazier with the purchase of several cattle stations in New South Wales and Queensland, before obtaining his Master of Arts degree from Cambridge in 1904. He later took flying lessons at Salisbury Plain, and qualified for his Royal Aero Club certificate on 5 July 1911—becoming the first Australian citizen to do so—after which he returned to Australia. By now ranked Captain, in March 1912 **Watt** recommended a location near the Royal Military College, Duntroon in Canberra as a site for the Army's proposed Central Flying School. However this site was rejected by the school's nominated commander, Lieutenant **Henry Petre**, who eventually chose 297 hectares at Point Cook, Victoria to become the "birthplace of Australian military aviation". **Watt** was divorced in 1913, on the grounds of his "misconduct" with actress **Ivy Schilling**, and lost custody of his son in the judgment. He then went to Egypt where he purchased and practised flying a Blériot XI monoplane; while there he met leading French aviators including Louis Blériot and Roland Garros.

World War I



Watt flying a Farman biplane over Europe, 1915

In May 1914, **Watt** left Egypt with his aeroplane and took up employment at the Blériot factory and airfield in Buc, outside Paris. On 2 August, the day France declared war on Germany, and fired by the widely-held conviction that Britain would stay out of a European conflict, **Watt** offered his services and his plane to the French government. These were welcomed and he joined the Aviation Militaire section of the Foreign Legion as a pilot. Though he was ranked an ordinary soldier, his colleagues in Blériot Squadron No. 30 referred to him as "*Capitaine*" in deference to his previous status in the Australian Militia. Posted to **Maurice Farman** Squadron No. 44 in April 1915, he was awarded the Légion d'honneur after he and his observer crash-landed in no man's land and succeeded in making their way back to French lines with valuable intelligence under intense fire from German positions. Soon afterwards, **Watt** earned the Croix de guerre—with palm leaves personally presented by

General Joffre—and was promoted to the provisional rank of Captain. As a foreigner, however, he was not eligible to command a French unit. **Watt** always proclaimed his antipodean connection while serving France, painting a kangaroo on the nose of his aeroplane, which he named *Advance Australia*. He transferred to the Australian Flying Corps on 1 March 1916 as a Captain. Posted to Egypt in May, he was made commander of B Flight, No. 1 Squadron, and took charge of the unit's first contingent of Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2s the following month. No. 1 Squadron was engaged mainly in aerial reconnaissance and army co-operation duties, but the two-seat B.E.2 proved inferior as a to German Fokkers and Rumplers in terms of speed, time-to-climb, and manoeuvrability. In September 1916, **Watt** was promoted to Major and given command of No. 2 Squadron, which was formed in Kantara. He was Mentioned in Despatches by General **Archibald Murray**, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, on 13 October; the commendation was promulgated in the *London Gazette* on 1 December.



Lieutenant Colonel Watt (front row, second from right) with staff of the 1st Training Wing AFC, 1918

No. 2 Squadron's personnel was composed largely of former Lighthorsemen, as well as thirteen mechanics from the Australian Flying Corps' first combat formation, the Mesopotamian Half Flight, led by Flight **Sergeant George Mackinoly**. **Watt** personally trained the force in England commencing in January 1917, before deploying it to the Western Front that September. In the vicinity of Saint-Quentin on 2 October, it became the first AFC unit to see combat when one of its patrols engaged some German two-seaters, but the latter managed to escape. Because its complement of Airco DH.5s were handicapped as fighters by engine problems and low speed, No. 2 Squadron was employed mainly on ground support duties. During the Battle of Cambrai that commenced on 20 November 1917, **Watt** led his pilots on daring low-level bombing and strafing attacks against enemy fortifications and lines of communication. Their loss rate reached 30%, but morale remained high. After visiting the squadron, the Royal Flying Corps' Major **General Hugh Trenchard** described its airmen as "really magnificent" while **Charles Bean**, war correspondent and future editor of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, noted their "remarkably high level of conduct and general tone". Six of **Watt's** officers were awarded the Military Cross for gallantry during the battle, prompting **General Sir William Birdwood** to send him a personal message of congratulation on 16 December, declaring: "... *This is indeed a magnificent record for your squadron, and one of which I am sure everyone of you must rightly be extremely proud; I doubt if it has been beaten anywhere ...* By this time, No. 2 Squadron had begun converting to Royal Aircraft Factory S.E.5s, though it could achieve little in the winter months due to inclement weather.

In February 1918, **Watt** was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and given command of the AFC's 1st Training Wing (Nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8 Squadrons) headquartered at Tetbury in Gloucestershire, England; the wing's role was to train replacement pilots for the four operational AFC squadrons in Palestine and France. He was Mentioned in Despatches by Field Marshal **Sir Douglas Haig** on 7 April, the commendation being gazetted on 28 May. Shortly after the end of hostilities in November 1918, novelist **William John Locke** visited 1st Training Wing and found that "there was not one [of Watt's men] who ... did not confide to me his pride in serving under a leader so distinguished". A pilot later opined that as well as having "courage, determination, and an immense capacity for work", **Watt**

possessed "the greatest factor in leadership, a genius for endearing himself (without conscious effort) to all who served under him".

Post-war career and legacy



General Sir William Birdwood (fifth from left) with (left to right behind him) **Major Roy Phillipps**, **Captain Les Holden** (in flying suit), and **Lieutenant Colonel Watt**, Minchinhampton, March 1919

Watt was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire on 1 January 1919. He returned to Australia on 6 May with the rest of 1st Training Wing's personnel, aboard the troopship *Kaisar-i-Hind*. Leaving the AFC, he was elected president of the New South Wales section of the Australian Aero Club. **Watt** was esteemed as a man who did not forget old comrades, providing former AFC members with financial aid and helping them re-establish themselves in civilian life. He maintained an interest in commercial flying but refused an offer to take up the position of controller of civil aviation in 1920 due to his business interests, which included partnership in the family shipping firm of Gilchrist, **Watt & Sanderson Ltd**, and directorships of mining, rubber, and art corporations. He also turned down an invitation to stand for parliament.

Oswald Watt drowned at Bilgola Beach, near Newport, New South Wales on 21 May 1921. Cuts and bruising on his body indicated that he had slipped on rocks, struck his head, and rolled unconscious into relatively shallow water. Survived by his son, he was accorded a military funeral and buried at St Jude's Church, Randwick. Members of the AFC, Royal Air Force, and Australian Aero Club formed a guard of honour at the service, one of the largest in the suburb's history, which also included representatives of the Royal Australian Navy and Australian Army. Among the tributes was a floral wreath from an anonymous group of French admirers, and another that was dropped by parachute from a low-flying plane. In his will, **Watt** left two bequests to the Australian Aero Club, one of which was used to establish the **Oswald Watt Gold Medal** for outstanding achievement in Australian aviation. Winners of the award have included **Charles Kingsford Smith**, **Bert Hinkler**, **Henry Millicer** and, more recently, **Jon Johanson** and **Andy Thomas**. Most of the residue of his estate went to the University of Sydney. Considered one of the university's great benefactors, he was commemorated by the **Oswald Watt Fund**. Two years after his death, the **Oswald Watt Wing** of the Havilah Home for Orphans, Wahroonga was opened by the Governor-General of Australia. **Watt** was acknowledged as both a source and a reviewer by **F.M. Cutlack** in the latter's volume on the Australian Flying Corps that was first published in 1923 as part of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*. During World War I, **Oswald Watt** had been the only AFC officer to command a wing apart from Lieutenant **Colonel Richard Williams**, who was later to become known as the "Father of the RAAF". In 2001, military historian **Alan Stephens** noted that "...had fate drawn him to a post-war career in the Air Force instead of to business and an untimely death, 'Toby' Watt might have challenged **Richard Williams** as the RAAF's dominant figure in its formative years".

Quelle: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oswald_Watt