

Thomas Charles Richmond Baker

Figure 1: Cadet Thomas Baker during flight training
Source: Vwma.org.au, n.d.



Premier's Anzac Spirit School Prize 2022

Aberfoyle Park High School, SA

Aston Joshy, Year 9

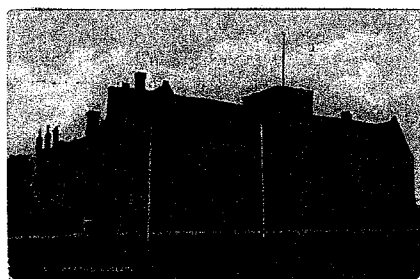
Part-A

Figure 2: Archduke Franz Ferdinand with his wife, Sophie
Source: Britannica, n.d.



citizens, was left (Mougel, 2011). This war was one of the deadliest conflicts in history; its belligerents involved over 30 countries that began with a mere number of 2: Serbia and Austria-Hungary (Imperial War Museums, 2022). Most countries were equipped with technological advancements: machine guns, chemical weapons and high explosives. They were monstrous instruments that massacred millions in cold blood (Taylor, 2014). WW1, or 'The Great War' as titled by the contemporaries, began on the 28th of July 1914 and concluded on the 11th of November 1918 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). There were 416,000 Australians that served in WW1, amongst them was a simple bank clerk that sacrificed his life for his country; a courageous soldier, an inspiring soul, Thomas Charles Richmond Baker (Awm.org.au, 2022).

Figure 4: St. Peter's College, Adelaide
Source: State Library of South Australia, 1953



gained qualities advocated for by the ANZAC spirit: patriotism, discipline, honour, and leadership. During his schooling, Baker acquired an avid interest in aviation and developed his hobby of constructing airplane models. This instigated in Baker a goal to achieve an occupation related to aviation. In 1914, Baker graduated from secondary school and worked as a clerk in the Adelaide branch of the New South Wales Bank (Tong, 2022).

Initiated by humanity's imperialistic greed, World War 1 (WW1) became a bloodied race to power (Norwich University Online, 2022). The use of artillery and weapons encouraged citizens to show their nation's might, power, and dominance (HISTORY CRUNCH, 2022). The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand igniting the befalling of alliances and WW1 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022) (figure 2). A battlefield stained by the blood of approximately 20 million people: 9.7 military personnel and 10 million

Figure 3: Thomas Charles Richmond Baker
Source: vwma.org.au, n.d.



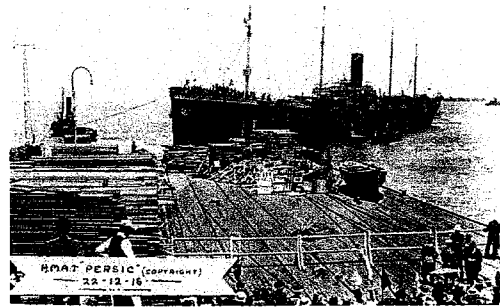
Baker was born on the 2nd of May 1897 in Smithfield, South Australia. He was the eldest son of 5 children. His father, Richmond Baker, was a schoolmaster and a farmer while his mother, Annie Martha Gardener, was a housewife. Baker completed his education at the prestigious Collegiate School of St. Peter's, located in Adelaide (figure 4). He was an enthusiastic individual with a genuine interest in tennis, rowing, and football (McCarthy, 1979). Additionally, Baker was a member of the cadet corps. It was here he

Figure 5: Bank of New South Wales
Source: Wikipedia, 1931



On July 29th 1915, Baker travelled to Victoria and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (A.I.F) (McCarthy, 1979). Although he enlisted at the age of 19, Baker displayed immense courage and valour in serving his country and willingness to sacrifice his life for Australia. Upon completion of his training, Baker was assigned as a reinforcement gunner for the 6th Field Artillery Brigade in the Middle East (Tong, 2022). On the 22nd of November 1915, he departed from Melbourne aboard the HMAT Persic to carry out his duty (Figure 6) (McCarthy, 1979). His battery, the 16th, moved on from Egypt to France, arriving in time to take part in the main battle of Somme,

Figure 6: HMAT Persic in Wartime Service
Source: Birtwistlewike.com.au, 1916



between July 1, 1916 – November 18, 1916 (Imperial War Museums, 2022). This was *one of the most bloodied battles in history where over a million people were wounded or killed* (A+E,

Figure 7: Battle of The Somme
Source: Nam.ac.uk, 1916



2022). However, Baker and the 16th Battery were posted at the battle of Pozieres and the Moquette Farm, a subset of the Battle of Somme. Throughout this battle,

Baker and the other ANZACS lacked artillery and were desperately requiring ordinance trades. The fight increased in difficulty; the decline of hope accompanied by countless fatalities (Australian War Memorial, 2022). Although the ANZACS held the major disadvantage, Baker and the 16th Battery persevered and gained a major advancement in the battle. This event highlighted Baker's

determination as he persisted with all odds against him.

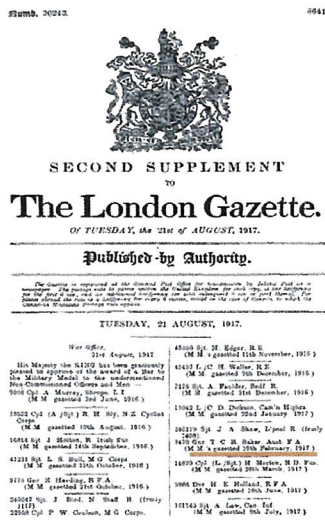
Figure 8: Why Trenches Were Used in World War 1
Source: ThoughtCo, n.d.



Akin to many other soldiers, Baker fought in the trenches. He and other soldiers endured vile living conditions, including overflowed toilets, rat infestations, and gruesome diseases that caused the death of many individuals (BBC Bitesize, 2022). Soldiers were exposed to the corpses of their friends, firing was constant, and opportunities to properly mourn the dead were few. The physical and mental challenges they faced were immense. Baker displayed tremendous endurance in living through such horrific conditions.

On the 15th of December 1916 during an action near Gueudecourt, Baker was posted as a telephonist in an observation team (McCarthy, 1979). They were sent forward to assess and report the fall of shells to secure a range for bombardment. The team departed with only a telephone line for communication. The team was positioned on a forward slope of the Australian frontline. Additionally, this location was under constant observation by the German snipers and riflemen. This was a major setback as the chances of getting shot were significantly

Figure 9: Supplement promulgating Thomas Baker (underlined in orange)
Source: The London Gazette, 1917



high. Under German heavy fire, Baker crawled and repaired the destroyed telephone lines over 30 times. Hence, he displayed perseverance amidst the significantly high chances of being killed. His lieutenant didn't even "expect to see him come back" (Playford's Past, 2022). Baker's lieutenant further commended him in the St. Peter's Collegiate magazine by saying he was a "brave and willing lad" (Playford's Past, 2022). Later on, Baker and his lieutenant celebrated by eating a Christmas cake. Via the referral of his lieutenant, Baker was decorated with his first military medal. This was then promulgated to the public by a supplement of the London Gazette the following year (figure 9).

Baker contracted Trench Fever along the course of his military courier. However, on June 21st, 1917, he recovered and reunited with his battery. The veneer of pit number one had caught on fire. This pit was filled with 300 rounds of high explosive shells and

endangered the life of all the people around it. Whilst putting himself at great personal risk, Baker and 5 other soldiers reacted instantly and put out the fire by using water taken from a nearby well. Furthermore, he completed this episode under heavy fire (Larkins, 2015). Baker displayed mateship having completed such a dangerous task; risking his life to save the lives of his peers. He was awarded the Military Bar in the 1st ANZAC Corps Routine Order.

Figure 10: Thomas Charles Richmond Baker MM and Bar
Source: Vwma.org.au, n.d.



Figure 11: Australian Flying Course Queen's College, Oxford (Marked yellow circles presenting the possible Thomas Baker)
Source: Vwma.org.au, n.d.



Although Baker proved himself as a courageous soldier, he wanted to pursue his childhood goal of gaining a job related to aviation. After seeing the allied aviators flying majestically in the air, Baker became interested in flying and recalled himself as being "almost green with envy" (Baker, 1917). As soon as an opportunity was presented, Baker became assigned to the A.F.C as an air mechanic in September 1917 (Tong, 2022). He eventually became assigned as a pilot and travelled to England to join a training squadron. Baker trained in the A.F.C at Queen's College, Oxford. He had his first solo flight in March

1918 and graduated as a camel pilot on the 15th of June later that year (Tong, 2022) (figure 13). The following day, with a flight time of only 57 hours and 40 minutes, Baker joined the 4th Fighter Squadron as Second lieutenant (Playford's Past, 2022). His operational career commenced on the 23rd of June 1917 in France (McCarthy, 1979).

Baker was an expert pilot as his tactics in the air showed great originality (Larkins, 2015). In October, he destroyed two hostile aircraft (Vwma.org.au, n.d.) (figure 12). Two weeks later,

his flying skills became outstanding. This act of excellence decorated Baker with his Distinguished Flying Cross. On the 2nd of June, he was promoted as Captain of the 4th Squadron (Playford's Past, 2022). Baker was commended for *sav[ing] his patrol numerous times from destruction by timely moves and countermoves* (Playford's Past, 2022). He was a model of leadership as inexperienced pilots would always look up to him: *they knew that in bakers' leadership, they wouldn't be left long in a predicament* (Larkins, 2015). In Baker's career, he shot down 8 Airplanes and 4 balloons; quoted by his lieutenant as *"a splendid record"* (Larkins, 2015) (Howard, n.d.).

Figure 12: *AWM Honours and Awards Section* (Highlighted is the section used in this essay)
Source: *Vwma.org.au, n.d.*

Serial No.	Rank	Regt No.	Rank and Name (to be used for award)	Award for which awarded (Date of issue of award and to what)	Presented by	How Award	Comments (if any)
	No. 4 Sqn, Australian Flying Corps.		Lieutenant Richmond Thomas Baker, D.F.C.	For gallantry in connection with aerial operations since joining No. 4 Sqn on the 11.11.18. The number of operations on which this officer has shown exceptional determination and courage are too numerous to include in this report, but his gallantry flying alone or as part of a small formation engaged in low flying attacks at ground targets under heavy anti-aircraft and machine gun fire, or under leading larger formations whilst revealing force of enemy machine gun and heavy search light beams, in the face of search and flares, and the great number of enemy planes shot down, is the highest amount of damage done by any pilot in the service. He has served out upwards of 40 low flying patrols on hostile troops, aeroplanes, transport, etc., has destroyed 8 hostile aeroplanes, and has rescued downed pilots in addition to a large number of offensive patrols during which nothing unusual occurred, but he has carried out 20 flights, all of which included incidents of a hostile character. On the 20.10.18 in the course of 2 flights, he completely destroyed 2 hostile aeroplanes and drove a third down out of control. On the 20th October 1918 he destroyed another hostile machine. On both these occasions the flight which he was leading was met by a large number of hostile aeroplanes, a result which must be attributed to the alert tactics adopted by him, by reason of which he out-maneuvred the hostile patrol before attacking.	Major-General, commanding 4th Wing, A.F.C.	By Order of the King	RECOMMENDED BY THE COMMANDANT.
		20th	October 1918.				

Figure 13: *Thomas Baker MM and Bar in the Cockpit of His Sopwith Camel Aircraft*
Source: *Vwma.org.au, n.d.*



On the 4th of November 1918, while over the city of Ath, Belgium, Baker flew his plane for the last time (McCarthy, 1979). His machine was tragically shot at the defence of others. He was seen attempting to land near River Eacaut; about 10 miles North of Tournai, however, the brutal force caused the plane to flip (Vwma.org.au, 2022). The same day, a car was sent out to trace the crashed machine but could not find it owing to the enemy line being slightly West of the River Eacaut at the estimated point of the crash (Schafer, 1918). The end of Baker's inspirational life was later confirmed; mourned by his

squadron and family. Baker died at just the age of 21. Posthumously, he was awarded many awards and promoted to captain. Alongside Baker, his family sacrificed for Australia, even without saying any last goodbyes, they kept their heads up, eyes high, and felt proud that their son and brother died a hero (Baker, 2019).

Baker was known to say the words, *"Faithful unto death"* during each of his flights; a quote that resembled this incredible person's life (Baker, 1917). Since the day that he wore his uniform, Baker showed the ANZAC Spirit through all he gave: his life, his courage, his loyalty, his mateship and his perseverance; all for the country that ran fiercely through his veins, for he was a true ANZAC. An ANZAC that was born, an ANZAC that lived and an ANZAC that died for Australia.

Lest We Forget.

Word count: 1495

Part B

To begin with, I only discovered the competition on the 23rd of May by my teacher's referral. As I was up for a challenge, I commenced my work with only 4 more days to the submission date. On the 23rd of May I searched for possible candidates; one of the most frustrating components was that most of the servicemen/servicewomen lacked a significant amount of background information. I passed two hours while completing this process. When I found Thomas Charles Philp Baker, I figured he was the perfect person to choose as he displayed many different ANZAC Qualities. Additionally, Baker had several primary sources on Vwma.org.au and Playford's Past that I embedded into my writing.

I utilised the Pomodoro Technique to maximise the efficiency and quality of my work. Mainly, I used 3 sites: Playford's Past, Virtual War Memorial and The Australian Dictionary of Biography. The information on these three websites were not written in chronological order, hence, I had to puzzle the retrieved information from the different websites by noting it down in my book. As this was very time consuming, I predominantly spent the 24th of May gathering information and citing references. Another challenge I faced was with the A+E website. Although I did retrieve information from the site's blurb (on google search), I was not able to view the information inside the website as it was blocked. This was very bothersome as I was unable to view the author's name for referencing purposes. The process of completing bibliographies and references apiece were very tiring due to its repetitive process; it spanned over 4 hours. A mistake that I should have recorrected was completing the references and bibliographies as soon as I used the sources, instead of just inserting the URL in a list. Another frustrating factor in my research was when I forgot to site where the London Article was from. I desperately wanted to include it because it was a primary source. Eventually, after searching through 6 different websites, I found the figure and utilised it in my writing.

On the 25th of May, I wrote my whole response as I had already conducted a large amount of research. Although I researched sufficient information for my essay, I wanted to construct my introduction by emphasising certain points. Subsequently, I found the Imperial Museum Websites (*5 things you didn't know about World War I*) that profoundly helped me. A technical error I experienced was the sudden enlargement of figures, this discorded the spacings between each paragraph and was also very frustrating. Afterwards, I overcame this problem by restarting Word.

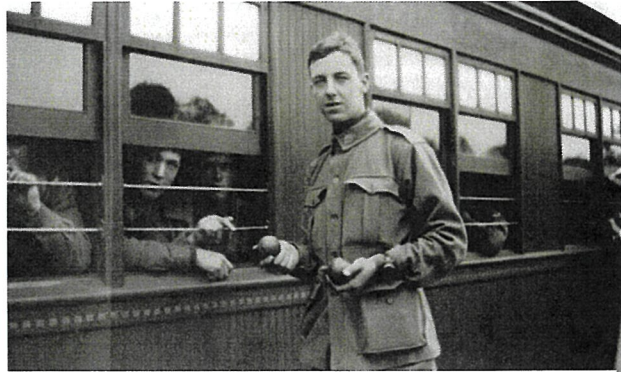
When I was concluding my essay, I was contemplating on how to leave the reader with a powerful impact. After asking for my teacher's advice, I learnt that I should summarise Baker's Anzac Spirit qualities and conclude with a powerful statement. Hence, I used one of the most common and significant phrases used to commemorate soldiers, "Lest we Forget".

Word Count: 490

Appendices



Appendix 1: Gunners Baker (left) and Harrison (right) of the 16th Battery relax in a dugout, 1916



Appendix 2: Gunner Richmond Baker about to board a train

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Appendix 3: Military Medal and Bar, the 1914/15 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal (from left to right).



Appendix 4: Thomas Baker was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross posthumously



Appendix 5: Richmond Baker DFC MM* - A self-portrait taken during his flight training

apt. T. C. R. Baker
Re Capt. T. C. R. BAKER D.F.C. M.C. 4th Squad. A.F.C.
KIA 4.11.19. A.C.

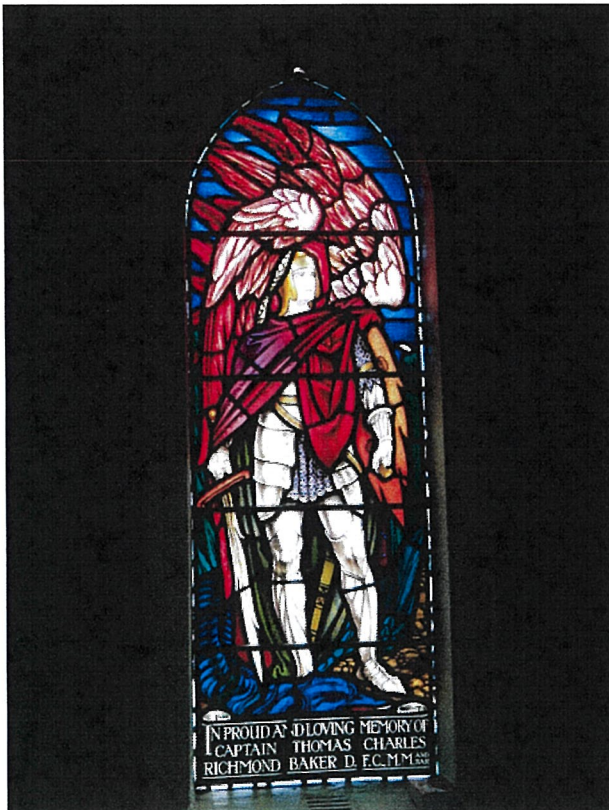
On November 4th 1918 Capt. BAKER was leading his flight in a Squadron escort provided for the bombing machines of a neighbouring Squadron. The bombs were successfully dropped on an enemy aerodrome near ATH (Belgium). On the return journey large numbers of hostile scouts were encountered at varying heights to the East of TOURNAI (Belgium). From the dog-fight which followed, three of our machines failed to return. One of our machines (supposed to have been piloted by Capt. BAKER) was seen to land and turn over on its back close to the River Escout about 10 miles North of TOURNAI. At this time (Nov. 4th) the enemy were retreating in Belgium and the exact positions of his front line were not known to the Squadron. Later in the same day a cer went out from the Squadron to endeavour to locate the crashed machine but could not reach it owing to the enemy line being slightly West of the River Escout at that point.

No subsequent information regarding this Officer has come to hand, either from repatriated pilots, or through enemy channels.

4th April 1919.

Major,
Commanding 4th Squadron, A. F. C.

Appendix 6: Regarding the loss of Captain T.C.R. BAKER by the commanding of the 4th Squadron, 1919



Appendix 7: A stained-glass window dedicated to Thomas Baker's Memory at St. John's Church of England, Halifax Street, Adelaide

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