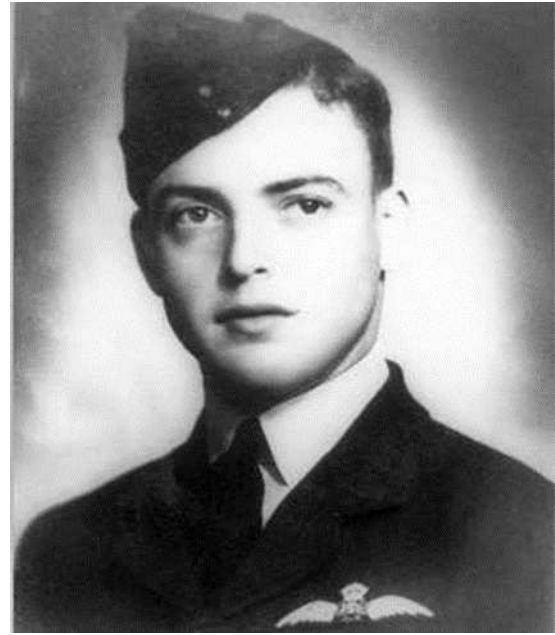


Bell, Maxwell Herron
Pilot Officer
Royal Australian Air Force
19 Squadron
Royal Air Force
405995



Possunt quia posse videntur - ("They can because they think they can")

Maxwell "Max" Herron Bell was born in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, on Monday, February 19, 1923. The city is located over sixty miles west of Brisbane, the capital of Queensland. Son of John George Kingsborough Bell and Evelyn Mary Bell. Maxwell had a brother, John, and three sisters, Patricia, Mary, and Diana. The family lived in Bowenville in Queensland. The Bell family attended the Presbyterian Church. Father John was a World War I veteran, having served as a private with the 5th Light Horse Regiment, the 15th Reinforcement and with the 15th Light Horse Regiment. He returned to Australia on September 25, 1919. He picked up his profession as a farmer again and started a farm.

Max was educated, among other things, at the Brisbane Boys High School, from 1938 to 1940, where he was a member of the School Cadets. At the end of 1940 he left school to work as a tractor driver. His hobbies included football, rowing and driving.

Maxwell was also known as "Dinger".

On 20 July 1941 he enlisted with the Royal Australian Air Force in Brisbane. Max got the rank of Aircraftman Second Class and was assigned to No 3 Initial Training School, Kingaroy, Queensland.

Signature, ... *M. H. Bell* ...

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, not only the construction of aircraft was urgently considered, but also the training of technicians, pilots and aircrew. Established in late 1939, the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) was an agreement between Great Britain and the Dominions, specifically Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to train aircrew in those countries for service in the Royal Air Force.

On October 11, 1941 he was promoted to Leading Aircraftman (LAC) and five days later, on October 16, 1941, Max received further training at the No 2 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) in Archerfield, Queensland. It was one of twelve basic flying training schools of the Royal Australian Air Force. There he received fifty hours of basic flight instruction on a simple trainer such as the Havilland Tiger Moth and the Havilland DH.60 Moth during eight weeks.

On 14 December 1941 Max continued his training for sixteen weeks at No 2 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) and was based at RAAF Station Forest Hill near Wagga-Wagga, New South Wales, training in CAC Wiraway and Avro Anson airplanes. The CAC Wiraway was an Australian military training aircraft and was the Australian version of the North American NA-16 trainer.



Source : Wikipedia

Training at a Service Flying Training School usually consisted of two parts, intermediate and advanced, and included techniques such as instrument flying, night flying, advanced aerobatics, formation flying, dive bombing and aerial gunnery.

On 3 April 1942 Max entered No 5 Service Flying Training School (SFTS) for further training at RAAF Station Uranquinty, New South Wales, which was one of the so-called "Wagga Flying Training Schools". There he received his 'Wings' on April 30, 1942 and was promoted to Sergeant.



At the end of their training, aircrew and ground crew were posted to embarkation depots where they were properly equipped and were given a final medical before being deployed elsewhere. On 2 June 1942 Max went to No 3 Embarkation Depot, at RAAF Station Sandgate in Brighton, Queensland. Lessons were taught in navigation, armaments and signalling, along with revision courses in navigation and Morse code, as well as lectures were given on administration, air force law and first aid. But sports were also part of the daily activities of the Depot.

On 15 June 1942, Max then went to No 2 Embarkation Depot in Bradfield Park, Lindfield, New South Wales. He prepared himself to go to England, and on 18 August 1942 he was assigned to the No 3 Personnel Reception Centre of the Royal Air Force in the seaside town of Bournemouth, the arrival point for thousands of aircrew. On September 1, 1942, Max was assigned to the No 5 Pilot Advanced Flying Unit in Ternhill, Shropshire, England, near the towns of Newport and Market Drayton. On 29 September 1942 he was posted for further training to No 53 Operational Training Unit at the Royal Air Force base near the village of Llandow, Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales, 15 miles west of Cardiff. Maxwell Herron Bell trained there in Supermarine Spitfires.



Spitfire

Source: wallpapersafari.com

This unit used a satellite station at Royal Air Force Base Rhoose, also in South Wales. He was promoted to Flight Sergeant on October 30, 1942, and he completed advanced flying.



Maxwell "Max" Bell was assigned to No 19 Squadron of the Royal Air Force (122 Wing, 83 Group, 2nd Tactical Air Force) on December 22, 1942. He then underwent training on the P51 Mustang, the American long-range fighter and fighter-bomber designed by North American Aviation. He had a series of training sessions, outside the squadron, at base headquarters. He spent June 1943 in hospital after a major operation on June 20 on his thyroid gland, where he was listed as '*very seriously ill*' on June 23, 1943.

After his recovery, he was promoted to Warrant Officer on October 30, 1943. After which he was posted back to No 19 Squadron, Royal Air Force on 17 March. No 19 Squadron was in this phase equipped with the Royal Air Force version of the P51 Mustang and was deployed on ground attack and reconnaissance missions over the west coast of occupied Europe in preparation for the D-Day landings. After D-Day, No 19 Squadron commenced long-range escort duties from the Royal Air Force base at Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, in the north of Scotland, for Coastal Command off the coast of Norway. On August 22, 1944, Max was promoted to Pilot Officer. Maxwell was also called "Dinger" by his comrades.

In September the No 19 Squadron operated from a Forward Operating Base in Grimbergen, Belgium. This base was called Royal Air Force Base B60, and was liberated by British troops on September 4, 1944. The military base was used to support strategic and tactical objectives of the Allied Forces.

On Saturday September 9 at 12.45 pm Maxwell "Max" Herron Bell took off from Grimbergen in his Mustang MK IIIB FX 887 for a flight together with three other Mustangs MKIII airplanes. This was for a reconnaissance mission near Arnhem, Zwolle and across the German border in Lingen, in the federal state of Lower Saxony.

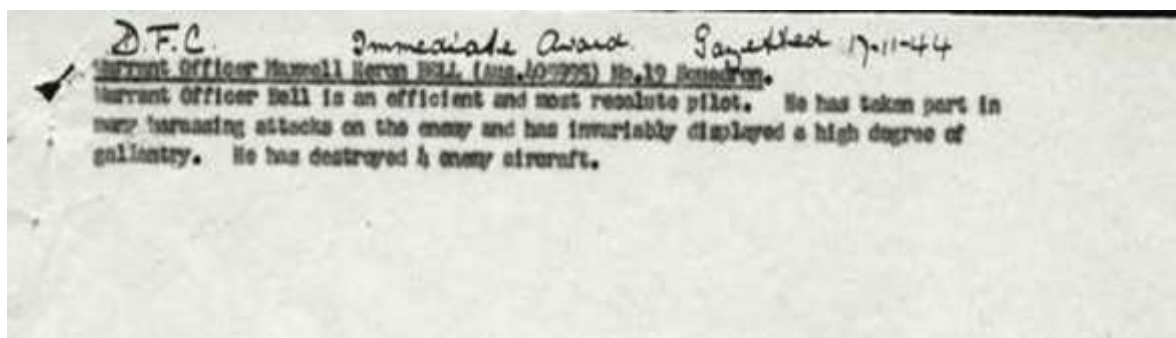
During the attack, three locomotives were badly damaged. Around 3.50 p.m. the Mustang was hit by German anti-aircraft guns, Flugabwehrkanone also called Fliegerabwehrkanone, which was positioned in Zutphen.



Source : <https://commons.wikimedia.org/>

His comrades heard Max shout that he had been hit and had to jump out of his plane. He was told to head for the woods, but nothing was heard from Maxwell "Max" Herron Bell again. A large cloud of smoke from the forest marked the spot where Maxwell Herron Bell's Mustang MK IIIB crashed. He managed to jump out of his plane with the help of a parachute. Max lost an aviator boot in the process. The fate of Maxwell "Dinger" Bell remained unknown for years, he was listed missing in 1953 on the Runnymede Memorial for Missing Aircrew, in Surrey, England, on panel 258.

A German Flak report stated about the crash: *'The pilot jumps from a height of about 200 meters, is captured by Uffz. Schütze, 4.Kp./Baupionier-Btl.801 and transferred to 14.Kp./SS.Pz.Gr.Rgt.19'*.



Huub van Sabben investigated the crash of Maxwell Herron Bell in the eighties and came to the following conclusion:

In September 1944, units of the 9th SS-Panzer-Division Hohenstaufen were sent to the vicinity of Klarenbeek to reorganize. A Canadian soldier, Stanley E. Cupps, who had been captured by this unit and was on his way to be sent to a prisoner of war camp, had to perform household chores for the SS.

A local resident, Marinus Diks, discovered a fresh grave and he believed Stanley E. Cupps was buried there. Diks kept his mouth shut until the liberation in April 1945.

He told his story to the Dutch resistance and to a Canadian official. The tomb was opened and the authorities began an investigation into a possible war crimes charge. In September 1945 the remains were taken to the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery and buried as "*An Unknown Canadian Soldier*". In March 1947 a more thorough autopsy was performed and the doctor stated: "*Dental work in the lower jaw is absent, the clothes are of a pilot and not of a soldier. The body has one aviator boot on and the uniform is partially burned.*" The body was identified as that of Maxwell "Max" Herron Bell.

Albert Verhoeve, who also witnessed the crash and saw the pilot being arrested, said: "*The pilot is taller than his captors and I see that he has got one boot on and is taken to a local pub in Klarenbeek*". Shortly afterwards he was executed by the SS Hohenstaufen Division and buried near the farm 't Woud in Klarenbeek. The eyewitness to this was Ferdinand Wijn.

According to the War Crimes Report, the following persons were charged with murder:

Walter Plock, Paul Bruno Herklotz, Paul Rudolf Scheibner, Paul Reuther, Fritz Geyer, Walter Schenkman, Rudolf Schrembs, Helmuth Peter, Derk de Vries. On August 12, 1998, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission recognized the identification.

Pilot Officer Maxwell Herron Bell has an entry in Christopher Shores' book "*Aces High*", which records the circumstances of his death after his jump from his plane. Maxwell Herron Bell's name is on panel 118 in the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Pilot Officer Maxwell Herron Bell was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in November 1944.

On September 4, 1945 Maxwell Herron Bell was buried at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **IX. A. 12.**, initially as "Unknown Canadian".

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM FACE/CONCEN/2790

Report No. Dordrecht 136 E - 195

The following has been concentrated here have

(Name of Cemetery) Nijmegen Cen. Cemetery, Holland
 (Full Map Reference) MR 3.748567 Sh. 2833a 1/250,000 NATIONALITY- CANADIAN

(1) Serial No.	(2) Regt. or Corps	(3) Army No.	(4) Name & Initial	(5) Rank	(6) Date of Death	(7) S, A, D, W or Dead	(8) Pos	(9) Rate	(10) Grade	(11) Date of Burial	Previous location of grave	
											Place & Map Ref.	Serial No.
✓ 1	C Scot. R	2464	Bossart, M.	LCpl	31Dec44		9	A	4	6Sep45	Budburg Neu Cem Ger	Germany MR 931898 Sh/4802 18815
✓ 2	RCAC		UNKNOWN		10Dec44		9	A	5	"	"	"
✓ 3			UNKNOWN		7Dec44		9	A	6	"	"	"
✓ 4	RCAC		UNKNOWN		10Dec44		9	A	7	"	"	"
✓ 5	CANADIAN ARMY. REE	F91044	THOMPSON, N.F.	SPR	26-1-45		9	A	8	6Sep45	Banan Civ Cem Holland	33 MR 518750 Sh/582 5894
✓ 6	RAF (VR)	1680109	Phillips, B.H.	FSgt	7Feb45		9	A	2	"	Nistalrode Com Cem Holland	5895 MR 500490 Sh/5
✓ 7	RAF	339837	Collins, J.T.	F/O	7Feb45		9	A	10	"	"	"
✓ 8	RAF	466843	UNKNOWN		19Sep45		9	A	12	4Sep45	Groesbeek church Holland	15904 MR 500682 Sh/5802
✓ 9	R.A.C.		UNKNOWN		19Sep45		9	A	13	"	Groesbeek Holland	15905 MR 757517 Sh/12
✓ 10	R. REGT. C.		UNKNOWN		19Sep45		9	A	14	"	Groesbeek	" MR 754516 Sh/12
✓ 11			UNKNOWN		19Sep45		12	A	1	25Sep45	Nijmegen Holland	17480 MR 490225 Sh/5

Date: JAN 25 1945

When a grave has not already been registered, a Registration Report on A.F.M. 7377 (4) to be prepared and attached to this FORM.

(Signed) [Signature]
 Rank & Appointment: COX & S BACH
 753 2275 10 M.

Text on his grave:
 A SOLDIER OF THE 1939-1945 WAR
 A CANADIAN REGIMENT
 19 SEPTEMBER 1944
 KNOWN UNTO GOD"

After the identification had given clarity, the following text was put on his grave:

SON OF JOHN GEORGE KINGSBOROUGH BELL
 AND EVELYN MARY BELL OF BOWENVILLE,
 QUEENSLAND
 AUSTRALIE



Photo : Marian Straatman

On May 27, 1999, a memorial was held at the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery with three sisters and a brother of Maxwell Herron Bell, eyewitnesses Marinus Diks, Huub van Sabben and Albert Verhoeve. Also present the Australian ambassador Ted Delofoski, Military Attaché Colonel Gerry McComack, members of the Dutch and British air forces and a representative of the No 19 Squadron, the Australian Stephen Miles.

While flying with 19 Squadron he was the highest scoring Australian Mustang Ace, with four confirmed kills and one shared. The airplanes he shot down were of the type Focke-Wulf Fw 190. (nickname: Würger; hunting bird)

Awards Maxwell Herron Bell:

- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Australia Service Medal 1939–1945





Life Story: Gijs Krist - Research Team Faces To Graves.

Sources:

National Archives of Australia

Virtual War Memorial Australia

<https://aviation-safety.net>

https://issuu.com/collegianmagazine/docs/collegian_september_2015

Wouter van Dijken

Marian Straatman



November 2016 – Photo Alice van Bekkum



Photo : Wouter van Dijken

* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information, please contact info@facestograves.nl