



**Tasmanian Aviation
Historical Society**

Preserving Tasmania's aviation history



“ROARING FORTIES”

***OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TASMANIAN
AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED***

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TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Welcome to the 23rd edition of our quarterly Newsletter “Roaring Forties”.

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In this issue:

Wayne Dearing continues exploring the remarkable stories of Tasmanian born aviators. In this issue he introduces us to Alan Bowman who served in the RAF during the 1930s and the Second World War. As well as flying Allied planes, he also flew a German Stuka.

One of the mysteries of Tasmanian Aviation history is the fate of a German World War One captured Halberstadt plane that was delivered to Tasmania for use in a War Memorial display. Previously Paul Richards and Iain Pinkard investigated the story of the plane and compiled a book on it which is available on our [website](#). In this Newsletter, Ray Munday (and his assistants) have relooked at the story. In this extended article, they tell the story of the war trophies, the plans to display them and the story of the Halberstadt Cl.II which was assigned to Tasmania.

In our last article, Ray Mudway continues his series on Air Crashes in Tasmania. In this edition, in his third article, the focus is on the crashes after the Second World War, up until 1959.

This newsletter was prepared by the Executive Committee. If you have any ideas for articles for future newsletters, please contact us.

WING COMMANDER ALAN MACDONALD BOWMAN
(DFC & BAR) - TASMANIAN BORN WORLD WAR 2 RAF AND GERMAN
STUKA (JU87) PILOT

By Wayne Dearing

A strange introduction indeed for a brave Tasmanian World War 2 pilot, however as our story unfolds, fly the German Stuka he did, in his short and somewhat far-reaching career as an allied pilot during World War 2.



Bowman was born in 1911, the son of Adrian and Olive Bowman, in the rural Tasmanian township of Deloraine.

His initial education was at Victorian private schools whilst his secondary education was completed at the Launceston Church Grammar School.

Soon after completing his education, Bowman decided a career on the land was not for him. Instead, at the age of 19, he commenced pilot training starting with his time at Point Cook during 1930 and graduating at the end of 1931.

Following his graduation, Bowman was one of a small number of graduates who were invited to join the Royal Air Force (RAF) on a four-year temporary commission, leaving Australia in December on the P & O ship *Strathnavar*. On arrival, he was sent to the flying training school at Sealand in north-east Wales before joining 33 Squadron near Oxford to fly the Hawker Hart light bomber. As a member of the RAF, Bowman now undertook a range of specialised courses.

In mid-1933 Bowman was recommended for a permanent commission in the RAF, subject to him passing an examination. Of the 60 applicants only the first 12 would be offered the commission and as fate would have it, Bowman came in at number 14. This created somewhat of a dilemma and in early 1935 had him applying for a return to the RAAF. Unfortunately, the RAAF would only offer him a short-term commission that he would not accept. In June, rather reluctantly, Bowman accepted an appointment as adjutant of 33 Squadron.

During this period Bowman, when on leave, travelled to Europe undertaking snow skiing lessons in Austria and, back in England, rock climbing.

In 1935, with tensions over a border dispute growing, Bowman found himself and 33 Squadron in Mersa Matruh, Egypt. Bowman found little to like during this posting, constantly complaining of the dust storms that, in his words, “played havoc with our equipment while we ate it, drank it, slept in it, washed in it”. As he later said, the only good thing that happened in Egypt was his promotion to Flight Lieutenant and a permanent commission in the RAF. When he finally returned to England in June 1936, leaving 33 Squadron, he commenced a twelve-month armaments training course at Eastchurch in Kent.

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March 25, 1938, saw him set sail to Ambala in North India. His role, as a liaison officer, would be part of a fully co-operative venture between a German and British team of mountaineers seeking to climb the peak of Nanga Parbat in the Himalayas.



Junkers JU52 similar to one flown by Bowman and on the right Nanga Pargat (Wikipedia)

The mountain had, during the 1930's, witnessed three unsuccessful German attempts that ended in failure and death. This attempt was planned to provide several supply drops to the climbers at heights of up to 20,000 feet and it was here Bowman was introduced to the Junkers JU 52 aircraft, flown by German Alexander Thoenes.

Bowman was part of the crew who flew several supply drops to the climbers and on the fifth and final flight he climbed the aircraft to a height of 8,000 metres, taking only a "pinch" of oxygen every five minutes. Once again, the mountain claimed a victory and the venture was called off.

Following the aborted Nanga Parbat attempt, Bowman found himself still in India, but, although World War 2 had not commenced, he became involved in the guerilla warfare conflict between Britian and Muslim tribes in Waziristan. Stationed at Risalpur and Pershawar, he flew missions that involved large quantities of bombs being dropped on the village which was harbouring the leader of all the trouble, Mirsa Ali Khan.

During this period he also found time to sit exams for promotion to Squadron Leader and although he failed the exam, at the end of 1938, found himself promoted to Squadron Leader. In July, Bowman was informed that RAF No.39 Squadron, who at the time were flying Blenheim bombers, was being sent to Singapore and that he was to take command. On August 6th 1939, nine of 39 Squadron's Blenheim bombers left Risalpur for Singapore. Due to appalling weather on route only three aircraft arrived safely with six aircraft crashing and three crew members killed. On August 19th 1939, World War 2 began. Bowman was 28 and his appointment as commander was crucial in determining how he spent the last two years of his life.

April 1940 saw 39 Squadron ordered back to India. However, with the likelihood of Italy joining the conflict, they flew their Blenheim's to Aden during the second week of May. Their first combat mission occurred on June 12th, two days after Italy declared war on England, on the Assab airfield. By July 10th all the Italian aircraft at Assab had been destroyed and October saw the Italian aerial threat diminished significantly. It was at this time Boman found he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

In late November Bowman's squadron was again ordered to move, this time back to Egypt and the British air base at Halwan about 30 kms south of Cairo, where he was in command of the station, holding the rank of acting Wing Commander. In mid-January 1941 he reverted back to Squadron

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Leader and moved 39 Squadron to Heliopolis where they were the first RAF squadron in the Middle East to be equipped with US-built Martin Maryland bombers. Bowman had travelled to the RAF base at Takoradi in Ghana where he and his pilots flew the Martin Maryland aircraft across Africa to rejoin 39 Squadron. The squadron now had to contend with the German Luftwaffe who were a far more formidable opponent than the Italian air force and suffered the loss of five aircraft during May.



Martin Maryland (above) and Beaufort (right) types flown by Bowman (Courtesy Aircraftfaces)



September 1941 saw the squadron again moved, this time to Wadi Natrun where they were equipped with Beauforts for an expanded role of maritime reconnaissance and torpedo-bombing raids against Mediterranean enemy shipping. Bowman had commanded the squadron for two and a half years and left this command in September for a senior role at 204 RAF Group Headquarters, but not before he was awarded another DFC.

Bowman had been at 204 Group Headquarters about a week when news came though that eleven Stuka (Junkers JU 87) aircraft had run out of fuel and made forced landings, with their crews captured by British troops. It was further believed that the aircraft were undamaged and capable of being flown. A quick proposal to the Air Officer in Command was accepted and Bowman, Squadron Leader Rosier and a captured Italian Suka pilot, headed off to find a flyable aircraft. The first day found only a damaged and unflyable aircraft, but next morning revealed a German aircraft standing on a firm patch of sand. Anxious to fly the aircraft back to their base whilst still daylight, the aircraft was quickly refueled from cans of fuel that the searchers carried with them. Even more frantic preparations were conducted after two Italian biplane fighters overflew the group at 5,000 feet. After a few attempts at starting the engine, it finally fired and with Bowman at the controls and Rosier in the back seat, the aircraft became airborne.

After twenty minutes the engine stuttered and stopped. Following a forced landing and some tinkering, the engine restarted and they were airborne again. Now it was the turn of the hydraulic gauge to burst and another forced landing was made. This resulted in a blown tyre on touchdown. That night they slept wrapped in their parachutes and at dawn, with only their water bottles and a forty-mile walk to look forward to, spelt out a message on the ground with stones and headed north. Around lunch time they were rescued by a long-range patrol led by a South African officer.



Junkers JU87 Stuka aircraft similar to Bowman's aircraft (Photo courtesy Pinterest)

The next stage of the Stuka rescue attempt comes from two contemporary sources. One written by Squadron Leader Houghton, who was in charge of public relations and another written by Lieutenant John Alliston, commander of the Royal Navy destroyer HMS Decoy that was ferrying supplies to Tobruk during 1941. By chance, Alliston met Bowman and in his own words talked Bowman "into taking me along for the ride." Alliston joined the three-day and eighty miles adventure that consisted of two lorries, each with a Vickers Machine gun mounted on its cabin roof and loaded with fuel, tools, food and water, three fitters, two drivers and Bowman. Early next day soon after they crossed the border into Libya they found an intact Stuka, which suggests it was not the same aircraft that Bowman and Rosier had tried to fly out, for they had flown it many miles from the general area. The fitters got to work repairing the aircraft and early next morning the aircraft with Bowman and Alliston, were airborne flying at 200 feet and 150 knots.

There is some conflict as to Allison and Houghton's account of who did what and which aircraft was flown back, but the irrefutable fact is Bowman had flown a Junkers JU87 Stuka, the first airworthy Stuka available to the RAF for assessment. Bowman's only comment was "The aircraft is working very well but everyone will shoot at me when I fly it."

On November 30th, during an approach to Jalo, Bowman's Blenheim aircraft was fired upon by friendly fire, apparently mistaken for a Junkers JU88. All onboard the aircraft were killed.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to acknowledge the kind permission of Peter Henning author of "No Chains in the Sky" – Alan Bowman Tasmanian War Pilot and Bowman's sister Jean McNeill for allowing access to their manuscripts and memories.

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THE FATE OF OUR HALBERSTADT CL.II A TASMANIAN WW1 TROPHY

By Ray Mudway and Assistants

The fate of the WW1 German Halberstadt Cl.II aeroplane trophy delivered to Tasmania is a sad one. It has been long forgotten over these past 100 years, but research is still going on in an attempt to find the identity of the plane that Tasmania got.

Australian War Records Section

By 1917, the Canadian and Australian governments were aware that a war museum was being formed in Britain. In May 1917, the Australian War Records Section (AWRS) was formed in London to record the stories of Australians in the war, and to obtain trophies, particularly aircraft that had been shot down or captured by Australians. The AWRS would on no account, would allow the British to secure the Australian 'trophies' and records which it wanted for its museum which would be established in Canberra, after the war was won.

The AWRS was set up at the prompting of Charles Bean, Australia's official war correspondent, soon to be made official historian. Bean had been impressed with the work of the Canadians in establishing in London a Canadian War Records Office and like the Canadians, the Australian section quickly began collecting and commissioning a wide range of material.

On 16 May 1917, the AWRS led by Lieutenant John Treloar, got down to work with a staff of just four. He was later appointed the Memorial's Director. The section's task was to collect and organise the documentary record of the Australian forces so that it could be preserved for Australia, rather than be absorbed into Britain's records. Based in London, it developed networks of field officers in France and Egypt and by late 1918, was employing over 600 staff, military and civilian. Through its circulars and by personal contact, it encouraged soldiers of all ranks to maintain the best possible official records and to collect and send in the best museum objects.

By February 1919, the AWRS acquired approximately 25,000 objects, as well as paper records, photographs, film, publications, works of art and animal remains! Due to the stories of endurance that they represented, Hubert Wilkins, an official photographer working with the AWRS, recovered a dead French Army carrier-pigeon and had it stuffed for the collection. The bird was believed to have died from exhaustion near Amiens on 11th June 1918.

Australian War Museum, Melbourne

All the objects were brought back to the Melbourne Exhibition Building in 1919 and formed the basis of the collection of what would become the Australian War Museum (AWM). Many German guns of various kinds were later distributed to towns around Australia. As far as captured aircraft were concerned, the AWRS wanted seven of every type – one of each type for each state and territory. Initially over 170 examples were earmarked – observation, fighter, escort/strike, light and heavy bomber types including Gotha G.IIIs. But in the end only thirteen complete aircraft (incl. one LVG C.VI in crashed condition) and part of the wing of an armoured Junkers JU.I observation/bomber, were dispatched to Australia.

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It should be stated here that the individual identities of most of these German aircraft is suspect due to a failure to inspect them as well as poor record keeping by the British, AWRS & AWM. There are hundreds of erroneous rumors and some survived into the 1970s.

Most of these aircraft, along with a few relevant British types, were displayed in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide in 1920.

A crashed LVG was displayed on the Melbourne Exhibition buildings, outside the balcony as an advertisement.

Photo of the crashed LVG on the Melbourne War Museum Exhibition Building (AWM).



The Sydney and Adelaide aircraft (except an airworthy LVG C.VI in Adelaide which was stored in a local motor-garage and soon scrapped), were returned to the Australian War Museum in Melbourne and stored in a wooden shed, which burnt down in September 1925.

The fire was started by sparks blown from a rubbish fire burning in the park next door. Two engines were salvaged by the AWM – a 180hp Mercedes D.IIIa and a 200hp Benz Bz.IV. The Benz and the Mercedes D.IIIa out of their Albatross D.Va (to lighten the weight on the airframe) are currently on display in the AWM, Canberra. There are rumours that an engine (the other Mercedes D.IIIa ?) was recently sold to New Zealand or Canada.



Newspaper Photo of 1925 Melbourne War Museum Exhibition Building Fire.

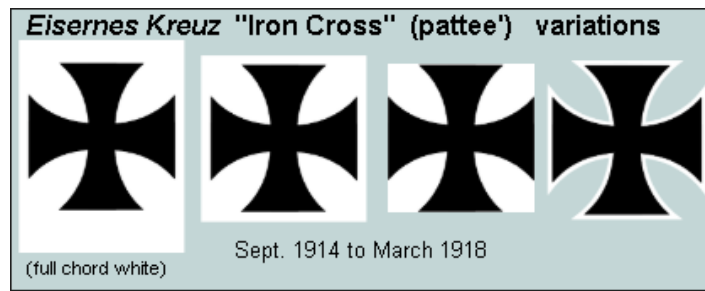
The War Memorial's Canberra foundation stone was laid on 25th of April 1929, but work was curtailed by the onset of the Great Depression. Work on the main structure began in 1936 and was finally completed in 1941.

The Luftstreitkräfte

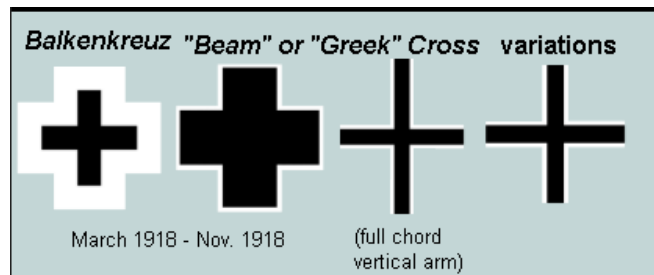
Before October 1916, the Imperial German air arm was called Die Fliegertruppen des Deutschen Kaiserreiches, literally "The flying troops of the German Kaiser's Reich" - also referred to as the Idflieg (Imperial Deutschen Fliegertruppen). After October 1916 it became the Deutsche Luftstreitkräfte – Air Force.

German National Markings

Orders in September 1914 were to paint black Eisernes Kreuz (iron or pattee' cross - with flared arms) insignia on a white square on the wings and tails of all aircraft. The form and location was largely up to the painter, which led to considerable variation. Explicit proportions came in July 1916, but in October, the white was reduced to a 5 centimetre border completely surrounding the cross.



In March 1918, the Balkenkreuz, a straight black "Greek" cross, with narrow white borders on all sides, was ordered. Sizes were not set until April 1918, resulting in many of those repainted in the field being non-standard. This was then replaced in May 1918 by a narrower, straight cross that extended the full chord of wings, with the white border restricted to the sides of the cross's bars. In June 1918, it ceased to be used full chord, with the bars all being the same length - this style was used until the end of 1945 when the Eisernes Kreuz was reinstated for the post-1950 Luftwaffe. Many aircraft had the crosses in eight positions - wings, fuselage and fin/rudder.



Halberstadt Company History

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The Halberstadter Flugzeug-Werke, G.m.b.H., aka Halberstadt, was a German aircraft manufacturer founded in 1912 in the town of Halberstadt in the Province of Saxony. Its original name was Deutsche Bristol Werke Flugzeug-Gesellschaft mbH, a joint venture with the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company, Ltd.. In 1913 the name was changed to Halberstadt. The joint venture terminated with the outbreak of WW1 and Halberstadt began producing aircraft for the German forces.

During the First World War, German aircraft officially adopted for military service were allocated a designation that included (1) the name of the manufacturer, (2) a function or "class" letter and (3) a Roman numeral. The Halberstadt company only built 85 D type (fighter) aircraft but with LFG / Roland more than 1,700 C type (reconnaissance) aircraft were constructed.

One of Halberstadt's most successful aircraft was the Halberstadt Cl.II, a two-seat fighter/ground attack aircraft, initially used to escort observation aircraft. The Cl.II began in May 1917 when the Luftstreitkräfte ordered the development of a smaller, lighter two-seat aircraft to replace the older, slower C types then in use. Halberstadt based the Cl.II on its earlier unsuccessful D.IV, a single seat fighter. By making the D.IV fuselage and cockpit area longer and larger, they ended up with a two-seat aircraft that was faster and more agile than existing C types. It featured a wood frame fuselage with plywood covering and conventional wing and fin/rudder construction. These qualities suited it for ground attack and infantry support.

Forward armament was a single 7.92mm LMG 08/15 "Spandau" machine-gun mounted on either the left or right side. The observer manned a 7.92mm LMG 14/17 Parabellum machine gun placed on an elevated gun-ring that offered good visibility and field of fire. This allowed it to direct fire at targets on the ground. The Cl units proved so successful that their title Schutzstaffeln (Protection / escort Flights) were changed to Schlachstaffeln (Battle Flights), shortened to "Schlasta".

The Cl.II remained in service until the end of the war. Eventually 700 were built before production shifted to the simplified & improved Cl.IV in mid-1918 and then the Cl.V. The Cls.I was a very late modification which had a standard type gun-tub separate from the cockpit instead of the usual combined gunner's / pilot's section with raised gun-ring.

After the war, because of restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles, the company produced agricultural machinery and repaired railroad equipment. The company went into insolvency in 1926 and later its factories were used by Junkers from 1935 to 1945.

Halberstadt Cl.II Colours

The mainplanes, horizontal tail & fin/rudder were covered with either four or five colour lozenge fabric laid at a 45 deg. angle. The wood fuselage and plywood central section of the upper wing were painted in "scrumble" in similar colours.

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Scrumble is an art form where patches of paint are applied with a sponge or brush resulting in a spotted finish. The under-side of the fuselage & upper-wing center-section were varnished natural plywood. Many had natural metal engine cowlings, but others were painted to match the fuselage.

This photo is an example of a hand-applied Scrumble fuselage.



German aircraft often didn't have their serial numbers painted on the fuselage, the only way to identify them was by the serial stamped on internal structural parts like wing ribs etc. Some had squadron markings like an arrow, a personal cartoon or Roman numeral.

Several Schlasta painted some machine's horizontal stabilizers white with black stripes. This was probably done as an identifier of a senior crew's aircraft and a Roman numeral as the individual ID within the staffel – II, III and V being noted.

In service, most had severe exhaust staining on the starboard tailplane.

After 1918, Halberstadt Cl.II aircraft were used by a few foreign countries, notably Poland.

Paul Strahle (a German World War I flying ace) bought three Cl.IV planes, a couple of fuselages and many other spare parts in early 1919 for his newly founded aviation company, Luftverkehr Strahle. By the end of the year these aircraft and spares were confiscated by the Allies under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. In 1920 Strahle bought them back from the reparation commission for ten times his original purchase price. Two aircraft had the gunner position divided from the cockpit and fitted with two folding seats for passenger and mail transport.

Today there are eight Halberstadt Cl.II / Cl.IV / Cl.V aircraft and one late-war Cls.I fuselage preserved in Europe & the USA – four of these were from the Strahle company. Four replicas, one Cl.II and two D.IV fighters (one of which is now in New Zealand) were built in the USA and one Cl.II is being finished for the local museum in Halberstadt, Germany.

The Tasmanian Halberstadt Cl.II

There were three Halberstadt aircraft among the German aircraft War Trophies delivered to Australia in 1919 – two Cl.II's with 180hp Mercedes D.IIIa engines and one later Cl.V Serial No. 6867 with a 200 hp Benz engine.

One of these Cl.II was delivered to Tasmania in 1922 -- but which one ??

In England, due to unsupervised troops crating up the aircraft for shipping to Australia, many were put in crates with markings of previous occupants. One Cl.II with 180 hp Mercedes D.IIIa engine was packed in a crate previously used for a Pfalz D.IIIa fighter and marked as Serial No. 8284/17.

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This resulted in Tasmania being initially allocated a Pfalz D.IIIa which was amended to a Halberstadt Cl.II after inspection by Captain Wackett, RAAF (ex-3 Sqdn, AFC).

This led to the Halberstadt being mistakenly allocated the Pfalz' serial number by the AWM - and is still wrongly labelled this in many book & internet listings. It is now confirmed that Serial No. 8284/17 was a Pfalz D.IIIa possibly sent to Australia and later destroyed in the 1925 fire. It had served with Jasta 77b, the pilot being Vfw. (Vizefeldwebel) Jacob Pollinger.

Treloar, head of the War Museum, Melbourne, thought it might have been the Halberstadt Serial No. 15342/17 captured by Armstrong and Mart, however, Capt. Wackett, who was present in France when 15342/17 was captured and saw British roundels being painted on, said the aircraft he inspected in the crate was the same model (so was a Cl.II) but was "not Armstrong and Mart's aircraft".

However, he may have been wrong! See explanation below.

This Halberstadt's serial number and history is still unknown, the aircraft was probably found on an airfield in France. There are no known photographs.

The other Cl.II may have been Serial No.15342/17, Werk. No.929 with 180 hp Mercedes D.IIIa engine. It was sent to Royal Prussian Schusta 13 which was founded 1 January, 1917 and renamed Schlsta 13 on March 27, 1918.

This aircraft was from the fourth production order placed with Halberstadt in November 1917 for 200 aircraft and was delivered shortly after it was completed on 14 April 1918. As a late-production machine, it had a LMG 08/15 "Spandau" on the starboard side of the fuselage and a LMG 14/17 Parabellum on the gun-ring aft



On 9 June 1918, 15342/17, flown by Gefreiter (Lance-Corporal) Conrad Max Hermann Küster and Vizefeldwebel (deputy Sergeant-Major) Paul Müllenbach, became lost after a low-level attack on French trenches near Montdidier and was forced to land at the aerodrome of 3 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps at Flesselles (near Amiens), Somme, France by Lieutenants RC Armstrong and FJ Mart as observer flying RE.8 serial D4689, "P" of 3 Squadron, AFC.

One of 3 Squadron's personnel who observed the landing on the day was Cpt. Lawrence Wackett who was to later feature in Australia's aviation history.

Küster and Müllenbach were taken prisoner and sent on 19 June to a PoW Camp.

All previous references to this event wrongly record the German pilot's name or spelling. The correct name was found when checking capture and Red Cross records.

From the 3 Squadron, AFC diaries :

"Lieutenant Rod C. Armstrong and Lieutenant Frank J. Mart as observer, were carrying out an artillery reconnaissance in the vicinity of Meaulte-Gressaire Wood-Warfusee Abancourt, but on this occasion had found the front comparatively quiet with little of importance to report. The observer had just fired a number of rounds from his Lewis gun into the enemy trenches near Morlancourt when, at about 11.30 am, the pilots attention was attracted by four anti-aircraft

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shell bursts over Querrieu. These were followed by other bursts, and Lieutenant Armstrong then noticed an enemy aircraft flying in an easterly direction and endeavouring to reach its own territory. It afterwards transpired that this enemy aircraft had been engaged in a low flying attack on the French lines near Montdidier, and that the pilot had lost his bearings. Lieutenant Armstrong headed the enemy off, where the enemy pilot became panic stricken, made no attempt at resistance and, after one or two feeble attempts to escape, allowed Lieutenant Armstrong to take up position about 300 feet in the rear and lightly above him and force him steadily down to land on No.3's aerodrome. The enemy pilot and observer were taken prisoners and the aircraft captured intact, together with the maps and papers giving details of the German forces employed against the French in the Noyon area. The feat gained the congratulations of Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, the G.O.C. Australian Corps".

Lieutenant Armstrong was awarded the DFC for this event. 3 Squadron requested that the aircraft be preserved for Australia. The gunner's 7.92mm Parabellum 14/17 LMG was souvenired and later sent to the Australian War Museum in Melbourne. It is still on display in Canberra.

From Mr. F.M. Cutlack's official history.

Driving the "Lone Wether" Home.

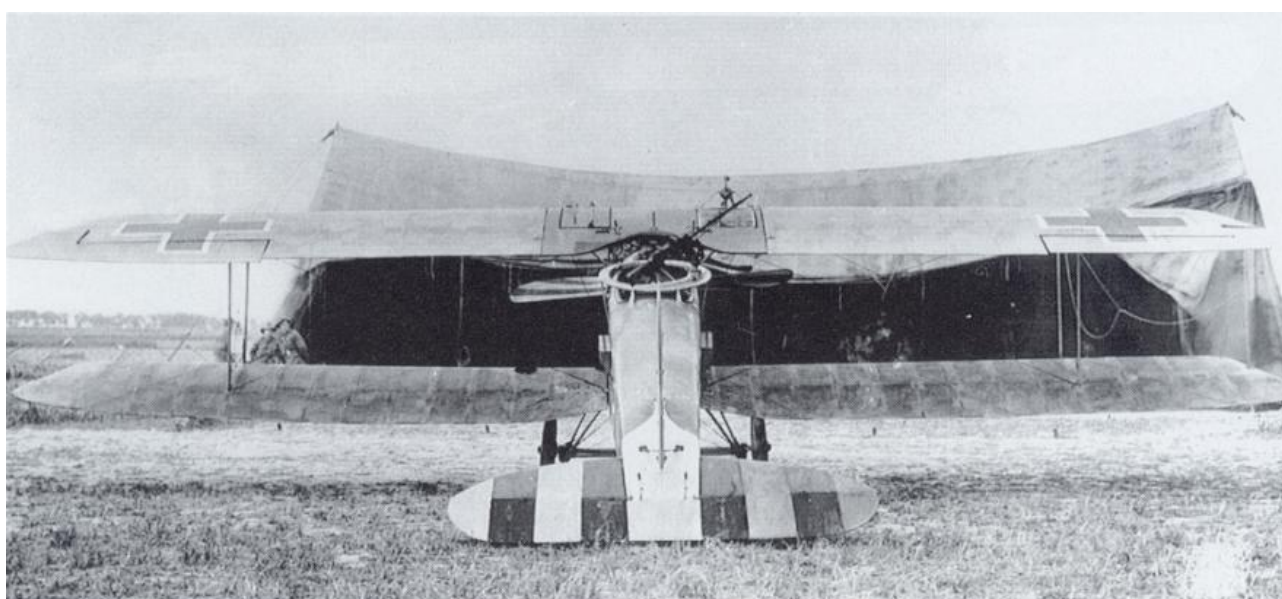
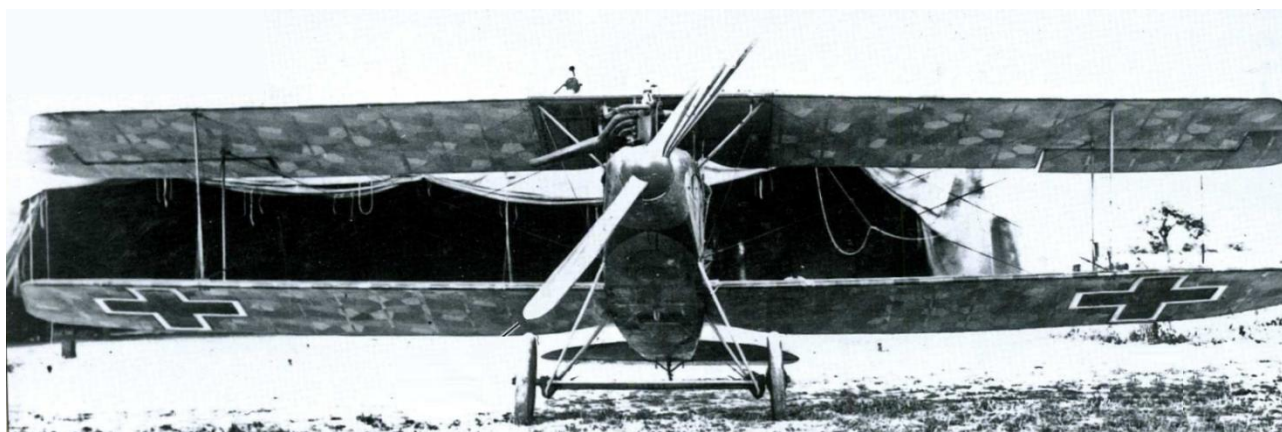
The Australians' R.E.8 had dived and machine-gunned Morlancourt for the edification of the Australian trench-garrison opposite, and was returning to the aerodrome.

Over Querrieu, well behind the British lines, the airmen noticed anti-aircraft fire. This could only mean one thing and the pilot steered for the shell-bursts. There, at 2,000 feet, he came upon a Halberstadt two-seater, making eastward for home. 'It appeared that this German machine had been engaged with others in a low-flying patrol during an attack on the French lines, near Montdidier and that its pilot had lost his bearings. He and his observer betrayed "some lack of experience"- afterwards admitted - by their faulty knowledge of the country, and by the panic they, betrayed as soon as the R.E.8 cut them off from home. They made no attempt to shoot and after one or two feeble attempts to escape, consented to be driven west like a sheep. Not another simile would fit the case. Armstrong shepherded the Halberstadt towards Flesselles aerodrome like a dog working a lone wether. Once he had set the Halberstadt on the desired course, the Australian pilot maintained position about 300 feet away; behind it and slightly above, and forced it steadily down. The forward Vickers gun of the R.E.8 was trained on the enemy. Now and again Mart would shout to the pilot "Give him a burst to make sure," but Armstrong would look back, grin and shake his head. He meant, as he said afterwards, to "take him home."

Major Blake, the squadron commander, described the arrival of the Halberstadt as follows:

"The Germans landed with their engine still ticking over and appeared to be on the point of taking off again, when the situation was saved by the corporal of the guard, the only armed man in the vicinity, who ran up with his revolver and presented it at the head of the pilot with the order, 'Hands up!' They did."

Three Photos - 15342/17 as captured are presented on the next page.



Halberstadt Cl.III 15342/17 (w/n 929)

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After capture, the aeroplane was much photographed then painted with British roundels and fin-flash. It was flown from Bertangles to the RAF base at Marquise, France on 16 June, 1918 by S.G. Brearley (another pilot of 3 Sqdn. AFC who was later an important person in West Australia's aviation history) and Captain R. Ross. Handed over to the RAF as a war trophy, it was given the British captured serial G.5Bde/16 and shipped to England.



Photo - Anderson & Mart pose with 15342/17 before it was flown to Marquise.

After evaluation by the RAF, it was repainted with German crosses and placed in the Enemy Aircraft Viewing Room at the Agriculture Hall, Islington, London. The fabric was removed from one wing to show the structure for people to study. An inspection of the Halberstadt (minus wings) by Flight magazine's journalist was published in their 1 August 1918 issue. The stripped wing was then recovered with new German lozenge fabric & the aircraft crated for shipping to Australia.



Photo - 15342/17 repaired & repainted after display to the public before crating for shipment to Australia. - Note that the rudder has the late Balkenkreuz applied but retains the British fin-flash while the other crosses are the early Iron Cross type.

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From the factory, national markings were Eisernes Kreuz (pattee / Iron) crosses in all eight positions. Soon after delivery to the staffel, the pattee crosses were painted out and Balkenkreuz (Greek) crosses with full white borders put on as per March 1918 orders. Presumably it was then that the lozenge covered fin/rudder was painted a solid colour before the new cross was added. According to the UK Ministry of Munitions report "the fin/rudder was painted grey, the belly of the fuselage is coloured yellow throughout" (but probably just varnished plain plywood like many other makes). As Vizefeldwebel (deputy Sergeant-Major) Paul Müllenbach was a senior staffel officer, this aircraft had the white horizontal stabilizer with black stripes and the staffel ID of a Roman "III" on the side.

The Great Conundrum

Even though No.15342/17 was requested by 3 Sqn to be sent to Australia, Mr F.M. Cutlack, in his books "Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918" and "The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War, 1914-1918" (1923), suggested that 15342/17 met another fate and that it was substituted by a second anonymous aircraft.

Cutlack was probably wrong, exhibiting the extremely poor research that has plagued these WW1 aircraft in Australia since 1919. It would seem that no-one, including the AWM, actually tried to positively check and document the identity of these aircraft.

Wing-Commander N. Wrigley's book on the history of No 3 Squadron AFC titled 'The Battle Below' (1935), says the aircraft 'has become a valued exhibit' – sounds like he thinks it still existed at that time though we know that in September 1925 it would have been destroyed in the fire.

Another case of not doing the most basic checking of facts.

As neither aircraft had roundels, proper identification of No.15342/17 is limited to other means such as the data-plate inside, the "shadow" of an over-painted roundel on the fuselage with camouflage paint, the black/white striped tailplane or the RAF flash on the rudder – all as seen on the last photo of No.15342/17 in England prior to crating & shipping to Australia.

Unfortunately, it seems Capt. Wackett did not know that 15342/17 was repainted in German markings by the RAF before being shipped to Australia. To specify: - the unknown Halberstadt Cl.II and 15342/17 would have both had late war national insignia when captured whereas 15342/17 was repainted with the early war Eisernes Kreuz (iron or pattee' crosses, see German National Crosses above) over-painting the British roundels. 15342/17 could have still been identified by the Roman "III", black & white striped tailplane and RAF fin-flash - the shadow of a roundel was still visible on the fuselage, but no mention is made of this by Capt. Wackett or anyone else at the AWM in 1919 / 25.

Meanwhile back in 1919, having received the Halberstadt, the Tasmanian Government argued and dithered about having a museum to "the barbarity of the German people" or not. They decided to spend the £5,000 allotted to building a War Museum on more important things due to the Depression. Tasmania's Halberstadt sat in its crate outside at the Newtown Infirmary, Hobart. A total lack of interest by the Government and all others meant that no inspection or photographs of the machine in Tasmania were done at the time.

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) is Australia's second-oldest museum with origins in the Royal Society of Tasmania, established in 1843. The first permanent home of the museum

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opened in 1863 and has gradually expanded, so one would wonder why the Halberstadt wasn't offered to them, since the government decided not to build a War Museum. Maybe it was, but it wasn't wanted. Eventually it deteriorated, being broken into and vandalised.

In 1928, a Mr. Vane of Hobart was planning to build an aeroplane and requested that he be given the engine, propeller and instruments of the vandalised aircraft to facilitate this. A Mr. S.H. Morris was asked to inspect the aircraft for the government and said in a report that it was wrecked, beyond repair and of no further use.

After correspondence between Tasmania and the AWM in 1930, the transfer was approved and the parts were passed over to Mr. Vane, so the rest of the aircraft was probably scrapped very soon after.

It would appear that Mr. Vane did not proceed with his plans as his family are unaware. Eventually the engine was put on display in a private collection of stationary engines. The engine is known to have still been seen in Hobart in the early 1980s, minus carburetor & magnetos, but rumoured to have gone to the mainland when that collection closed.

More rumours say that the forward fuselage section survived until 1967 when it was destroyed in a bush fire.

Inquiries to several organisations in Hobart have failed to receive information as to where in Hobart it was displayed or the possible current whereabouts of the engine, propeller or instruments.

Conclusion

It would seem logical that, as Armstrong & Mart weren't Tasmanian, their famous Cl.II capture, if properly identified as such, would be kept for the AWM and the unknown one sent to Tasmania. Unfortunately non-existent research by the Australian War Museum in Melbourne and Tasmanian organisations at that time means that ascertaining which Cl.II actually came to Tasmania is now impossible.

With the exception of the Albatross D.Va & Pfalz D.XII currently on show in Canberra, all other German WW1 aircraft in Australia were either scrapped or destroyed in a storage fire in 1925.

I must thank the following for their additional research:

Messers. Paul A.C. Richards A.M. & Iain Pinkard of TAHS (see their publication on our [website](#)), WW1 researcher & author Mr. C. Owers, Stephan Youngs of the Knacker Luftwaffe Arkiv and members of "The Great War" and "The Aerodrome" web-forums.

A book detailing the story of all the WW1 German aircraft that were earmarked for, or delivered to, Australia is in the research process.

If you have any information on these planes, please contact me via TAHS.

SNIPPETS

By Peter Manktelow

I just paid another visit to the Evandale Information Centre which also houses a small but fascinating museum. Among their "treasures" are a number of white binders chronicling the comings and goings of 7 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School). Pilot trainee names, accidents (and there were quite a few) and other records of the RAAF's time at Western Junction. It is really worth a visit and if perchance you are doing research on 7 EFTS, this is the place to go to.

Neil and Lynn Louis are fondly remembered.



These are the remains of a DH9A that caught fire whilst on the ground and attempting to start. I suspect that the engine was possibly over primed. Lower centre circular is the scarf ring gun mount for the rear cockpit. Centre and slightly right is the fuel tank. Don't know who the lady is. To the left side of the lady and further rearward is the engine. So even though it was a wood and fabric machine, there was a lot of metal in it. If you want the exact date of this incident, look up the Coffee Royale affair, as this was one of three DH9A that went out looking for Smithy. In Tasmania there have been over 100 crashes of aircraft; three of which have never been found. Of those three, one of them was a DH9A flown by Captain Billy Stutt and Abner Dalzell with a suspected crash site on the East Coast.

Tasmanian Crash Reports – Part 3 - 1946 - 1959

By Ray Mudway

Flying in the early days was dangerous – so it is not surprising just how many flights failed to make their destination. Aircraft were fairly crude and unreliable; they did not have the benefit of later design experience and pilots too did not usually have extensive experience. Of course, weather plays some part, but it is surprising how many accidents happened in good weather.

This is the third article in a series compiling major crashes in Tasmania of both civilian and military aircraft. This covers the period after the Second World War, up until 1959.

The articles have been compiled from various sources, and where known, the causes of them.

I have used a loose definition of a “crash” to include both those with and without fatalities. If there are other crashes you know about and we could detail in future newsletters, please contact me.

10 Mar 1946, ANA, DC-3, VH-AET

Scheduled passenger service. Two minutes after take-off from Hobart-Cambridge Airport, at 8.55pm while in the initial climb, the aircraft went out of control, nosed down and crashed in the Derwent estuary near Seven Mile Beach. The aircraft was destroyed and no survivors were found among the 25 occupants.

The exact cause of the accident could not be determined with certainty. It is believed the captain inadvertently switched on the autopilot system in lieu of the fuel cross-feed system and the aircraft plunged into the sea. The capacities and the performance of the captain were considered reduced as he suffered from diabetes. These days, pilots with diabetes are only allowed to fly in exceptional circumstances and not carry passengers.

4 Mar 1947, RAAF, DH.98 FB.40, Mosquito, A52-135

Demonstration flight, Western Junction, Tasmania.

Listed at No.2 Air Depot on 30 Aug 1945 and No.1 APU on 3 Oct 1946. Transferred to Central Flying School, Victoria on 11 Feb 1947 for participation in an air pageant after which A52-135 was to be converted to an instructional airframe. However, it was decided to do one last demonstration flight in Launceston, Tasmania. With another Mosquito & two Mustangs, A52-135 performed a spectacular flyby including individual displays. It showed good performance on one engine with the prop feathered and seemingly came down low to do a close fly past. With the airscrew still "feathered" the plane was coming in to land at about 4.15 but it did not touch down till past the centre of the landing area. It had been smooth flying when the Mosquito overshot the southern boundary of the 'drome' and the plane was wrecked. Two Mustangs flying at speeds ranging from 380 to 420 m.p.h. continued overhead. Few of the 7,000 spectators were aware of the injured aviators were being extricated from the smashed up plane. The pilot, F/Lt H Moore and his navigator F/Lt. Mitchell, were taken to hospital. Moore was suffering from multiple lacerations and Mitchell had a spine injury.

Skid marks on the aerodrome surface indicated that the pilot had endeavoured to brake before the Mosquito crashed through the boundary fence. The plane hit the bank of the railway cutting, just

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outside the fence and skipped across the 25ft. cutting to the other bank. An aerodrome boundary light was torn up and tangled fencing wire and posts were strewn about both banks.

A landing wheel was wrenched from the aircraft and left on the aerodrome side of the cutting, the two airscrews were ripped from the motors, which were set back in their mountings, and the fuselage was broken in half behind the main plane. The bottom portion of the aircraft was smashed when it hit the cutting bank.

The Civil Aviation Department fire tender and ambulance raced across the strip. Railway fettlers, who had been working nearby, were already there lending assistance. The crash did not alter the railway time-table. A goods train passed along the cutting a few minutes afterwards.

Souvenir hunters quickly gathered around the plane and managed to make off with pieces of metal and wood before a cordon of Launceston and North-West Coast A.T.C. cadets were thrown around the wreckage. The cadets, under the command of W.O. R. Simmons, guarded the area throughout the night.

In 2023 a few of the items souvenired that day were presented to RAAF Pt Cook Museum by a Hobart resident.

8 Aug 1951, TAA, C-47-A-20-DK (DC-3), VH-TAT

9.00pm Freight service, Hobart-Melbourne.

While in initial climb from Hobart Airport, the crew started a turn at low height when the aircraft stalled and crashed into Barilla Bay, less than 3 km from the airfield. Both crew members were killed. It was probably caused by ice on the aircraft surface.

3 Nov 1952, Auster Arrow

A plane of the Aero Club of Southern Tasmania turned on its back when it ran into a fence while making a forced landing at South Springfield, near Scottsdale.

The pilot, Mr. B. S. Machín of Hobart, was on a flight from Cambridge to Western Junction, via Swansea and St. Helens. He got off course and when the petrol supply was getting low he decided to land in a paddock. The machine ran into a fence, tipped on its nose and turned over. He was not hurt.

Three officials of the aeroclub, including the chief engineer (Mr. A. L. Hume), went to South Springfield and hauled the plane back on to its wheels. The Chief Instructor of the club (Mr. Lloyd Jones) said the damage was only slight. The propeller was broken, and the carburetor and rudder were slightly damaged. New parts were taken to the machine, and it was to be flown out when weather permitted.

10 Nov 1952, De Havilland DH-82 Tiger Moth

Cambridge aerodrome, Hobart.

Training/Solo. When taxiing on the tarmac in gusty conditions and close to obstructions, the aircraft swung and struck a vehicle. Carelessness on the part of the pilot in failing to retain wing-tip clearance.

12 Jan 1956, Ansett, C-47 (DC-3), VH-BZA

Cargo service (refrigeration equipment), Melbourne-Hobart.

While descending to Hobart at 3.40am, the crew passed through clouds at 2,000ft, then completed a turn over Frederick Henry Bay when the aircraft crashed into the bay about 13km from the Runway 30 threshold. The captain Peter Kemp was rescued while the copilot Alan Jay was killed.

Probable cause: Due to an irregular approach, the pilot paid insufficient attention to the instruments losing the correlation of time, height and position.

11 Jan 1957, DC-3

Devonport Aerodrome.

After landing the starboard undercarriage collapsed due to the failure of the rear brace strut assembly.

15 Jan 1957, Bristol Sycamore Mk.4 Helicopter

Mount Sorell, 19km from Queenstown.

Auto-rotation landing in heavily timbered country following engine failure in flight due to fuel starvation.

19 Jan 1957, Vickers V-756C "Viscount", VH-YVJ

Launceston airport.

Regular passenger service. Collided with hangar.

27 May 1957, De Havilland DH-82

Near Smithton

Private flight. The aircraft ground looped during the take-off run. The pilot attempted to take-off from an unsuitable take-off area and lost control of the aircraft.

6 July 1957, De Havilland DHC-1 Chipmunk, VH-BSL

Frederick Henry Bay, Hobart.

Private flight. At a low height, a right turn was commenced over water and the aircraft struck the water and cartwheeled. The reason for the low flight was not determined.

6 Oct 1957, De Havilland DH-82

Sandy Cape N/W Queenstown.

Private flight. The pilot selected unsuitable terrain for take-off. Aircraft swung at right angles to the take-off path and eventually overturned when it encountered a gust of wind. The pilot could not cope with the wind conditions due to his inexperience.

19 Dec 1957, Vickers 756D Viscount, VH-TVJ

Launceston.

Regular passenger service – night. After engine start, the hydraulics system failed and the aircraft moved forward striking the Tasmanian Aero Club building.

22 Dec 1957, Avro Anson

Bridport Aerodrome

When landing in a moderate crosswind, the aircraft touched down over half way down a 5,000 ft strip and ground looped due to misuse of controls by the pilot.

23 Feb 1958, Percival EP.9, VH-SSW

Furneaux Estate, Flinders Island.

Ag-flight. In an effort to land short, the pilot misjudged his altitude and the tailplane struck an obstruction on the threshold.

7 Mar 1958, De Havilland DH-82 Tiger Moth, VH-FAJ

Near Colebrook.

Ag-flight. Whilst manoeuvring at low level in turbulent conditions for a spreading operation, the pilot was unable to prevent the aircraft descending into trees.

22 Apr 1958, Cessna 170, VH-BVA?

Cape Portland near Launceston.

Private flight. As full power was applied for take-off, the pilot's seat slid to the full rearward position from where he was unable to reach the controls. The aircraft ground-looped damaging the undercarriage.

4 Jun 1958, Piper PA-22

Near Cygnet

Charter flight. The undercarriage collapsed during a forced landing arising from carburettor icing. The pilot landed heavily in a crosswind.

22 Sept 1958, De Havilland DH-82 Tiger Moth

Near Bridport

Ag-flight. The take-off was abandoned and the aircraft ran into a fence. Strip length was inadequate for overloaded downwind take-off.

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12 Nov 1958, Bell Helicopter

Clumner Bluff, South of Burnie

Charter flight. During an attempt to land in conditions of extreme turbulence, the aircraft descended into the ground and overturned.

24 Dec 1958, De Havilland DHC-1T, VH-BSN

Near Kimberley / Burnie

Private flight. During climb away with full flap following a dummy run over a field, the aircraft stalled and crashed to the ground.

28 Dec 1958, Auster J.1B

Bridport Aerodrome

Private flight. While removing a peg and rope from the path of an aircraft a wing-tip assistant walked into the rotating propeller.

14 Mar 1959, Bell 47G-2 Helicopter

South-west Tasmania

When loading the aircraft a tent pole was thrust into the main rotor and then thrown into the tail rotor.

1 Apr 1959, DeHavilland DH-82 Tiger Moth

Smithton Aerodrome

Private flight. The engine power failed at 100 feet after take-off and in the ensuing forced landing, the pilot allowed the aircraft to stall onto ploughed ground and the aircraft overturned.

Remember, if you have any historical articles you would like to share, just send us an email. Look forward to hearing from you!

NEXT NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025

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