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Airlines (WA) Ltd.



Capt. Charles William Snook (right) founder of Airlines (WA) Ltd. together with pilot Robert Hickson standing in front of the Stinson SR-7B Reliant VH-UTW Meekatharra at Maylands, WA, in 1938. West Australian Newspapers.

AIRLINES (WA) LTD. by G. Goodall

Airlines (WA) Ltd. is a name that has been all but forgotten in Australian aviation history, yet for twenty years it operated ambitious and successful services on a large number of routes in Western Australia. Known locally, simply as "Airlines", it was MacRobertson-Miller Aviation's only rival until finally taken over by them in 1955.

The airline was formed by Capt. Charles W. Snook, who was determined to provide a service for the people of outback Western Australia. He was born in Perth in 1891 and after education at Hale School, Perth, travelled to England in 1915 gaining a commission in the RFC. After World War One he returned to Australia to become a director of Australian Aircraft Pty. Ltd., in Adelaide, SA, flying their Avro 504's and Armstrong Whitworth in 1920 before returning to his home state to run a motor garage at Brookton, WA. During 1921, from March to July, Snook commanded the auxiliary yacht *Acielle* which acted as tender for a Curtiss Seagull which made a flight from Sydney, NSW, to Launceston, Tasmania, and return. (see March-April, May-June 1968 Journals). In 1929 Snook did a refresher course with the Aero Club at Maylands, then joined Western Air Service which had been formed at Maylands earlier that year by ex-WAA pilot Charles Nesbit, and Laurence Smith, to fly Moth VH-UKM and Simmonds Spartan VH-UMQ on charter work. In September 1930, Snook and Nesbit formed a new company named Wings Ltd. using VH-UKM and VH-UMQ and a brand new DH 80 Puss Moth, VH-UPC, which was christened *Fleetwings* in a ceremony at Maylands on September 28. However, the new firm's training and charter operations got off to a tragic start when, only a fortnight later, the Puss Moth crashed in the Darling Ranges while returning to Maylands after a cross-country navigation exercise, killing Nesbit and his two students. Snook and other pilots searched for them in Moths all the following day before the wreckage was found. Wings Ltd. continued under Snook until late the following year when put into voluntary liquidation, and VH-UKM and VH-UMQ were put up for sale by tender. After his time with Wings Ltd., Snook then went on to a new Maylands company in late 1931, Air Taxis and School of Aviation which owned Moth VH-UNI. He was the instructor while the company was owned by Stanley Kirby. This Company ceased operations in mid-1933. In 1934 Snook was flying Western Mining Corporation's DH 84 Dragons VH-URF *Golden Prospector* and VH-URG *Golden West* on photographic surveys of the Kalgoorlie minefields. This was an impressive project, planning to cover 80,000 square miles using the two Dragons equipped with Williamson "Eagle 4" cameras and a ground party of seven trucks equipped with wireless and darkrooms.

The following year, 1935, Snook began work on the formation of an airline to serve the Kalgoorlie and Wiluna areas that he had come to know so well from his time with the WMC survey. People in these remote areas had a two-day road trip to Perth and prospects were good for an air service. On September 27, 1935, Airlines (WA) Ltd. was incorporated and announced its first route was Perth-Wiluna-Kalgoorlie. A new ST.25 Monospar had been ordered from General Aircraft Ltd. in England, and as backup aircraft, Spartan Three-Seater VH-URB was purchased from James Taxiplanes Ltd., Perth, on October 3. The Monospar, c/n GAL/ST25/60, made its first flight in England on October 9, 1935 then shipped to Fremantle. It was assembled at Maylands in late November to be ready for the first airline service and was registered VH-UVJ.

On December 2, 1935, the Monospar departed Maylands with Capt. Snook at the controls on the first trial run over the new route, and the press-men as passengers. The Perth newspapers hailed the new airline and, before the first official service on December 9, the Monospar was named *Miss Wiluna* in a ceremony at Maylands. A small unofficial airmail was carried on this first service Perth - Mt. Magnet-Wiluna-Kalgoorlie-Perth, and items posted at stops along the route. Snook was very pleased with the Monospar's performance, saying that it was superior to the Dragon on take-off, however he wished to modify the cockpit because of distortions and reflections with the windscreen glass in the heat of the WA summer. He was later to submit drawings to DCA on a new cockpit design but these were not incorporated before the aircraft's accident.

Using the five-passenger Monospar and the two-passenger Spartan, Airlines now settled into the Wiluna service, which was run weekly in alternate directions. In March 1936 the Spartan was modified at Maylands to enclose the two front passenger seats with a canopy, giving passengers at least a small degree of comfort. Snook flight tested the aircraft and was most enthusiastic, stating that the modification gave the aircraft a 2 mph increase in speed! The Spartan was named *Miss Leonora* after the town on the northern goldfields. Official PMG airmail was carried for the first time on February 17, 1936 when Snook flew the Monospar on the Wiluna-Kalgoorlie route. A Commonwealth Government subsidy was finally granted to the company on October 4, 1936 and the following day, Snook added Meekatharra, Cue and Leonora to the route.

On December 22, 1936, the Monospar made a forced landing at 6.00 pm due to the failure of the starboard engine twelve miles from Mt. Sir Samuel. The pilot, Snook, and the three passengers were unhurt but the aircraft suffered substantial damage and was trucked back to Maylands. In October the following year the wreckage was still in the company's hangar at Maylands and the decision was made not to rebuild. To replace the Monospar, the Stinson Reliant VH-UTW was

purchased from P.H. Moody of Brisbane, Q, and ferried across to Perth by Snook and a new pilot, Robert Hickson, arriving at Maylands on January 21, 1937. The three-passenger Stinson was named *Meekatharra* and immediately entered service. The Reliant and Spartan continued service successfully, both suffering numerous forced landings due to engine troubles, while the Reliant suffered further damage at Kalgoorlie on October 19 when caught on the ground by a willy-willy.

In 1937 Airlines began a service from Maylands to Rottnest Island, eight miles off the coast near Fremantle and the first service was flown on July 1. By February the following year, no less than 127 passengers had been flown on the Rottnest run, but soon after operations dwindled and a lengthy dispute began between James Taxiplanes Ltd. and the WA Transport Board over James' right to carry out charter flights to Rottnest while Airlines held the airlines licence.

The De Havilland 84 Dragon VH-URY was purchased from MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Co. Ltd. on August 13, 1938 but two months later the fleet was again reduced to two when the Spartan was written off in an accident on October 16 while being flown under low cloud near Mundaring Reservoir in the Darling Ranges, twenty miles from Perth. Pilot John Moore crashed the aircraft into thick scrub after being caught in a severe down-draft, but there were no injuries. With the Dragon and Stinson, Airlines continued their services without any major changes until late 1939 when the RAAF advised them that the Dragon would be required for the Air Force due to the War situation and that it would soon be impressed. Airlines requested a substitute aircraft to enable them to continue the essential Wiluna-Kalgoorlie service, and the Commonwealth Government requisitioned the DH 90 Dragonfly VH-ADG from J.V. Fairbairn, the Minister for Civil Aviation who used the aircraft for his private purposes from a strip at Derrinallum, V. Airlines took delivery in October 1939. The Dragon was kept in service as long as possible but finally the RAAF ordered it to be delivered to 1 EFTS, Parafield, SA, and Snook ferried it across, arriving there on July 18, 1940. It became A34-6.

At this time Snook surveyed the area between Meekatharra and Marble Bar, locating sites for emergency landing grounds etc., for a proposed service between these two towns. He kept a file on possible landing grounds which was later to prove invaluable for the Air Force. As the War situation deteriorated, Airlines continued with the Wiluna run, but were also used for military purposes several times. When the Japanese attacked the north-western areas of the state in February 1942, the Stinson was flown to Broome to assist in the evacuation work in the area, including flying survivors of the ship *Koolama* from Drysdale Mission to Broome. On March 20 1942, the Stinson was destroyed during Japanese raid on Broome Airfield while in the midst of the *Koolama* evacuation.

This now left Airlines with just the Dragonfly VH-ADG *Murchison* to fly their route, and there were great problems with lack of spares and the Dragonfly's limited load capacity in the hot climate. In May 1942 Government permission was granted for Airlines to purchase the ST.11 Monospar VH-UAZ from K.R.M. Farmer of Melbourne, and the camouflaged aircraft was ferried Essendon-Maylands in one day on May 31 1942 in 21½ hours flying time, giving a good indication as to how urgently it was needed in WA. On November 24 a forced landing was made at Rockwell while en-route Cue-Maylands, and the undercarriage was damaged. It was ferried to Maylands the next day and repaired, re-entering service in January 1943.

In June 1943 the first new major route was opened, Maylands-Ravensthorpe-Esperance-Norseman-Maylands with the first run being on the 25th, then each Friday. After a few months, Ravensthorpe was dropped because Airlines pilots were not happy with the small strip at that town. In September 1943 Snook was negotiating with the Government over his proposed new route to Port Hedland:— Maylands-Mullewa-Yinnietharra-Mulga Downs-Corunna Downs-Marble Bar-Port Hedland and return via Marble Bar-Corunna Downs-Nullagine-Roy Hill-Ethel Creek-Meekatharra to Maylands. This proposed up one day/back the next weekly service was not approved due to lack of licenced aerodromes at some stops and the route approved was:— Maylands-Yalgoo-Yinnietharra-Mulga Downs-Marble Bar-Port Hedland. It was anticipated that this service would begin on March 20, 1944 but when it did commence, it was further modified to:— Maylands-Mullewa-Yinnietharra-Mulga Downs-Marble Bar-Port Hedland returning via Marble Bar-Nullagine-Roy Hill-Meekatharra and Yalgoo. By late 1944 Airlines had north-bound services leaving Perth each Wednesday and Monday, returning Thursdays and Tuesdays, following both routes. In addition they provided for stops at Mt. Magnet, Big Bell, Cue and Reedy when required. At the same time the original Wiluna route had been developed as follows:— Maylands-Mt. Magnet-Cue-Reedy-Nannine-Meekatharra-Wiluna and Maylands-Norseman-Kalgoorlie-Leonora-Agnew-Mt. Sir Samuel-Wiluna. This service went out each Saturday and Wednesday, returning the following days over both routes.

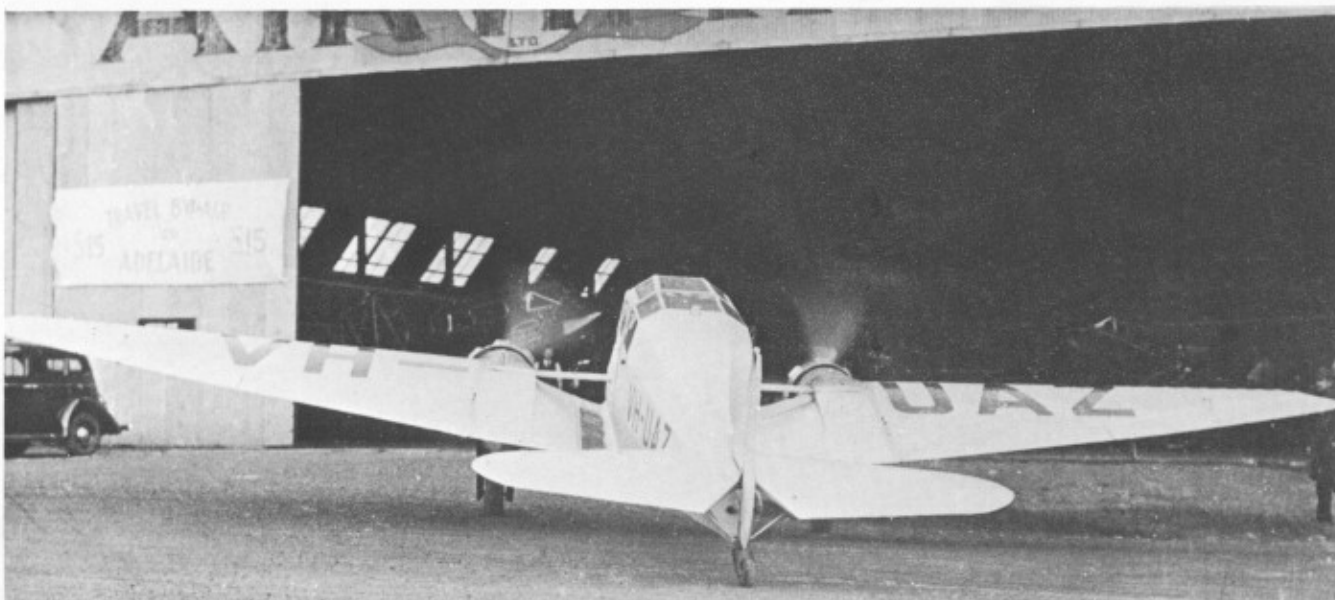
With these extensive new routes, the four-passenger Dragonfly and the three-passenger Monospar were being stretched to the limit of their utilisation. Airlines urgently requested DCA help in obtaining another aircraft and after some negotiations with the RAAF, DCA advised that a damaged DH 89A Rapide, A33-6, was available but required a complete rebuild. It was at present with De Havilland at Mascot, NSW, after a crash at Cape Sidmouth, Q, on January 27, 1944. So, on March 17 the crated Rapide was shipped from Sydney to Perth on the ss *Madura*, with a large consignment of DH 89 spares from RAAF Stores and stripped from the crashed VH-UXT being sent from Melbourne on the ss *Lowana*. Work began on the rebuild in the Company's Maylands hangar immediately but it turned out to be a major job due to the poor



General Aircraft Monospar VH-UVJ Miss Wiluna at Dalwallinu, WA, on the first trial flight to Wiluna, December 2, 1935.
West Australian Newspapers.



Spartan Three-seater VH-URB at Mundaring Reservoir, WA, after its accident on October 16, 1938.
West Australian Newspapers.



General Aircraft Monospar VH-UAZ taxi-ing at Maylands, WA, in 1945. The unusual wing layout can be clearly seen in this view.
West Australian Newspapers.

condition of many of the components. Airlines complained bitterly to DCA who endeavoured for many months to obtain replacement parts. The job was finally completed on November 17, 1944. Two days later the CofA was issued and the aircraft registered back to its pre-war marking VH-UZY when used with Airlines of Australia. The "new" eight-passenger Rapide entered service mainly on the long haul up to Port Hedland. Although MMA also served that town on their coastal run to Darwin, there was no competition because the last leg on Airlines' route (Marble Bar-Port Hedland) was not available to through passengers.

A further improvement to services was offered early in the next year when DCA issued a second Rapide to the company. This machine was VH-UFF which arrived at Maylands from Parafield, SA, after two years with Guinea Airways. During its overhaul at Maylands prior to entering Airlines service, it was fitted with sound-proofing which was now considered necessary on long trips. VH-UFF was actually transferred to Airlines' ownership from DCA on June 30 that year and along with VH-UZY flew most of the routes while the Dragonfly and Monospar were kept as reserve aircraft and for charter work.

During 1945 the company began reviewing its routes and preparing submissions for post-war services. Although warned that they could not operate into ports already served by MMA, their first new application in October was for an extension of the Wiluna run across to the popular coastal town of Geraldton. This was claimed to allow miners from the goldfields to join other routes without the necessity of travelling right down to Perth, and also to allow them to fly directly to Geraldton for their holidays. The proposed route was:- Maylands-Mt. Magnet-Wiluna-Meekatharra-Reedy-Cue-Mt. Magnet-Yalgoo-Mullewa-Geraldton. Although this proposal was not approved, other changes to the Wiluna route were made so that it joined at Kalgoorlie with the southern Esperance route. In April 1944 Snook requested permission to begin an airline service to Busselton and Albany in the south, to be expanded in the future to cover a number of large towns in the south-west district as airstrips became available. The service was approved but delayed in commencement due to the poor condition of airfields at both towns.

Meanwhile the most turbulent period of Airlines' history was beginning. A long and bitter struggle with Australian National Airways began in May 1946 when ANA announced that because of the pending new Douglas DC-4 Skymaster direct flights Adelaide-Perth, their daily DC-3 service (Adelaide-Ceduna-Forrest - Kalgoorlie-Perth) was to be reduced to only three services a week in each direction. This caused much concern for the residents of Kalgoorlie, who asked ANA to put a DC-3 on a daily Perth-Kalgoorlie-Perth run. ANA's request for this service was approved by DCA, but not by the WA Transport Board due to competition with the existing Airlines service as part of the Wiluna route, and the railways. In late June a major sensation was caused by ANA's announcement that they had been refused permission to run DC-3's to Kalgoorlie, and criticism was heaped on the WA State Government and the existing Airlines service. In an emotional letter to the *West Australian* newspaper on July 5, Airlines asked for loyalty for the local airline and although admitting that ANA's DC-3's were "more attractive" than their Rapides, promised much better service when the new De Havilland Dove was delivered. In addition they stated "however, feeling that Kalgoorlie people have become Douglas minded, Airlines is at present negotiating for the acquisition of a Douglas aircraft for operation to Kalgoorlie".

Which Douglas aircraft the Company had in mind is not known, however negotiations ceased soon after when the Transport Board weakened under great political and public pressure, and in July, approved ANA's service. At the height of the controversy MMA had announced that they had applied for a Kalgoorlie service in 1944, via Narembeen and Wyalkatchem, but had been refused also. At 8.00 am on August 1, 1946 the ANA DC-2 VH-AEN *Mungana* left Guildford Airport on the first Kalgoorlie service, returning at 1.00 pm. To further publicise their service, ANA made it a twice-daily run from August 21, but within a fortnight reverted to the original daily run. As a direct result, Airlines was forced to discontinue their added services to Kalgoorlie due to poor loadings.

As the company announced in their letter to the press, Airlines had placed an order for a brand new DH 104 Dove feeder-liner, which it felt, was the perfect aircraft for their WA services. Delivery was due by Christmas 1946 and it was a major financial step for the Company. Meanwhile, RAAF Ansons were becoming available at low prices through the Commonwealth Disposal Commission (CDC) and fourteen Ansons were purchased from RAAF Station, Geraldton where over a hundred were lined up for disposal from 4 SFTS. The Ansons were purchased over a nine-month period and ferried down to Maylands.

| Serial | Date Purchased | To | Serial | Date Purchased | To |
|--------|----------------|-----------------|--------|----------------|---------------|
| W1657 | 17.9.46 | VH-AXV 7.1.47 | W1965 | 24.3.47 | Spares |
| W2149 | 30.9.46 | VH-BAU 24.12.46 | EG421 | 24.3.47 | Spares |
| W2473 | 3.2.47 | VH-AGX 6.3.47 | W2114 | 24.3.47 | Spares |
| R9899 | 3.2.47 | VH-BFC 1.7.47 | R3549 | 27.6.47 | VH-BIU 8.9.47 |
| W2047 | 24.3.47 | VH-BEH 1.5.47 | R3342 | 27.6.47 | Spares |
| W2043 | 24.3.47 | VH-BEP 30.5.47 | R3555 | 27.6.47 | Spares |
| W2041 | 24.3.47 | VH-BLY 2.11.48 | MG173 | 27.6.47 | Spares |

The conversion of these Ansons to civil airliner standard was a major job for the Airlines' maintenance staff at Maylands, and the first aircraft worked upon was W1657 which emerged in an all-over silver scheme as VH-AXV *RMA Albany*

in September 1946. It was test flown successfully on the 18th and a CofA issued. It entered service immediately, mainly on the Albany run, but due to a clerical error, was not entered onto the civil register until the following January. The second Anson converted was W2149, which was hurriedly put into service in December as VH-BAU still fitted with its RAAF seating, to replace the Dragonfly which was damaged in one of its frequent ground-loops at Kalgoorlie on December 17. The following Ansons were added to register, on the dates shown, as their CofA overhauls were completed — all went into airline service except for VH-BEP which was purchased by Airlines' chief engineer Allan R. Wegener during conversion. He departed Guildford on November 12, 1947 for England, where he intended selling the Anson, however, after a forced landing in India, he and his crew abandoned the aircraft and obtained employment with an Indian firm.

Earlier in 1946, on April 18, the airline had purchased a Tiger Moth, A17-237, from the CDC at RAAF Station Cunderdin. This was test flown on May 24 as VH-ARU after an overhaul at Maylands. Painted overall silver, the company name was inscribed on the tail. By July the Tiger was in the Meekatharra district doing experimental aerial dingo-bait dropping, and the success of the operation led to a £4,000 (\$8,000) four year Government contract being awarded to the airline in 1947. This was followed by an £8,000 (\$16,000) contract in which both Ansons and Doves were used, fitted with specially designed doors with chutes for dropping the baits.

In late 1946, with the Anson entering service, Airlines were at last in the position to implement the country feeder services that Capt. Snook had envisaged. The first submission placed before the Government in October was for a station service based at Port Hedland, using Rapides and Ansons to carry mails and passengers to a large number of isolated properties in the Pilbara and Murchison areas, to be operated in conjunction with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. In the same month a second proposal was submitted, this being a highly ambitious series of "circuits" out of Perth to some 120 towns and localities. Each circuit covered an average of fifteen stops and various frequencies were being considered. As an example Circuit No. 5 was as follows:— Perth—Gingin—Moora—Coorow—Carnamah—Three Springs—Mingenew—Morawa—Perenjori—Latham—Buntine—Dalwallinu—Kulja—Koorda—Wongan Hills—New Norcia—Perth (548 miles). A total of six circuits had been carefully planned and their details were offered with the estimates of the required Commonwealth subsidy to operate them economically. The total mileage of these proposed new services was a staggering 6,811 miles!

October also saw a dispute with MMA over an aerial newspaper delivery service to the south-west. Millers wished to commence this five days a week for the Perth evening newspaper *Daily News*, but Airlines claimed they should have the contract since they had the airline rights for the same area. Snook proposed that they could drop papers from their scheduled airline flights without placing special aircraft on the run, but this was rejected by DCA. A lengthy wrangle now began with MMA and the Transport Board, and finally in May 1947, Airlines received approval for this newspaper delivery service. The first trip was made on May 29 in the Dragonfly VH-ADG, dropping bundles of newspapers at selected sites at the towns of Pinjarra, Waroona, Yarloop, Harvey, Collie, Bunbury, Brunswick Junction, Busselton, Donnybrook, Greenbushes, Nannup and Manjimup. The only landing en route was at Busselton for refuelling.

Meanwhile the arrival of the first Dove had been delayed, but the Company had raised the necessary capital to place an order for a second machine scheduled for delivery in May 1947. These brand new aircraft cost £23,000 each and were dubbed "Pocket Skymasters" by the advertising media at the time. The long-awaited first Dove arrived at Fremantle on March 25, 1947, crated aboard ss *Telemachus*, and was taken by road to Maylands for assembly. De Havilland's Brian (Black-jack) Walker arrived from Sydney to do the test-flying as he had been demonstrating De Havilland's own Dove VH-AQO in the eastern states since the previous October. On April 21, Walker lifted the polished silver Dove VH-AQP off Maylands' grass and Airlines (WA) Ltd, entered a new phase. However, the Company's pleasure with their new aircraft was short lived, as, on May 17, the day before it was due to enter regular service on the Kalgoorlie run in competition with ANA, Brian Walker was flying five passengers on a VIP trip over Perth, with an Airlines pilot in the right hand seat. On arriving back at Maylands, the Dove landed gracefully — but without wheels! No-one was hurt and the aircraft suffered little external damage but it was a disaster for the Company's image and the cause of much embarrassment. Capt. Snook announced that they would be taking delivery of DH's demonstrator immediately to replace VH-AQP which was ferried to Bankstown for a rebuild. VH-AQO arrived in Perth on June 19 flown by Brian Walker. On June 22, 3,000 guests attended a ceremony in Airlines' new hangar at Guildford Airport to see Capt. Snook christen the new Dove *RMA Bunbury*, and finally, the first service by a Dove was flown on June 29, 1947:— Perth—Kalgoorlie—Norseman—Perth.

During 1947 the Company moved its base from Maylands Aerodrome to the newer Guildford Airport and as well as shifting the Maylands hangars and buildings, an ex-RAAF Bellman hangar was trucked down from Kalgoorlie. By October the move was completed and all services were operated from Guildford. The remaining unconverted Ansons were ferried across and the old Monospar, VH-UAZ, which had been dismantled for overhaul at Maylands after its last flight on October 6, 1945, was trucked to Guildford but soon afterwards sold to a Company engineer who took it home to his backyard. During its discontinued overhaul, Airlines had proposed fitting DH 90 Dragonfly undercarriage and Gipsy Major motors to the Monospar.

The second new Dove arrived by sea to Fremantle in February 1948 and was assembled at Guildford. On February 16 VH-AZY made its first test flight in Australia with Brian Walker again at the controls. The CofA was issued the following day. With the second Dove now in service, Airlines were able to offer a modern operation to the highest standard and now pressed home their attack on the Government over the Kalgoorlie route that they had re-newed after the first Dove entered service the previous June. Airlines claimed sole rights to the Perth-Kalgoorlie-Perth route, and that ANA be restricted to "through" passengers only on their DC-3 service to Adelaide. Airlines were hopeful of a favourable decision because, late in 1947, they had successfully fought an ANA application for a DC-3 service Perth-Narrogin-Albany-Busselton-Perth five days per week. As with the initial Kalgoorlie dispute, the press made great coverage of the issue, but the WA Transport Board refused to issue a licence to ANA after Airlines showed that it rarely filled the Ansons presently on the route, so putting DC-3's on to the route made ANA's motives questionable. However, after several months of discussion, no radical decision was made over the Kalgoorlie route and a unique "combination" service was agreed upon where both Airlines' Doves and ANA DC-3's would share the Perth-Kalgoorlie-Perth timetable, giving two return services per day six days per week. The first flight of this new arrangement took place on August 2, 1948, and it utilised the ANA Douglas on the Adelaide run very effectively for ANA. This combined service was to continue virtually unchanged until December 1952 when ANA withdrew their DC-3 services from WA. By this stage Airlines had reached such amicable relations with its former rival, that it became Western Australian agents for ANA.

Meanwhile, there had been some changes to the aircraft fleet in 1948. The venerable Dragonfly VH-ADG ground-looped and over-turned on take-off from Guildford on December 1, 1947. The aircraft was departing for the southern newspaper run and the pilot escaped unhurt while the dropping agent in the rear of the aircraft, received minor abrasions when buried under newspapers. The DH 90 was written off as uneconomical to rebuild. Anson VH-BIU crashed on June 29, 1948 at Cue, luckily without injury to the pilot or the three passengers. The Anson had left Guildford at 8.00 am for Mt. Magnet-Cue-Big Bell-Meekatharra-Big Bell-Cue-Mt. Magnet-Guildford and, while taking off from Cue Aerodrome on the return journey, the starboard engine failed. Attempting to return to the aerodrome, the port wing struck mulga trees, sheared off, and the aircraft struck the ground in a violent ground-loop, collapsing the undercarriage and coming to rest back on the sealed strip.

Early in the year, two Ansons were sold, along with two of the unconverted RAAF Ansons, and later in 1948, the two Rapides and Tiger Moth were sold:-

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| VH-AGX | sold February 13 to Ralph E. Bower, Perth, who was a part-time pilot for the Company. He left Guildford on February 16 on a very adventurous flight to Singapore where it was sold. It later became RI-004 with the Indonesian rebels and was broken up by the Dutch at Magoewo on December 19, 1948. |
| VH-BFC | was sold on April 9 to Kingsley L. Watson, Perth, who had formed a company named Aerial Surveys (WA) Pty. Ltd and the Anson was flown extensively throughout WA and SA until an accident at Wallaroo, SA on August 31, 1951. Watson also purchased the unconverted R3542 and R3555 in July for use as spares. |
| VH-ARU | sold on September 30 to Robert H. Hickson, a Company pilot. He resold it the following year to Chart Air Aviation Service, Meekatharra. |
| VH-UFF | sold on October 1 to Brown and Dureau Ltd who converted it to a survey aircraft at their Belmont Common, Geelong, V, base. |
| VH-UZY | was sold on October 22 to Connellan Airways, Alice Springs, NT. It was destroyed exactly a year later when it crashed on take-off from Coolibah, NT, on October 22, 1949. |

This now left a simplified fleet, at the end of 1948, of two Doves and four Ansons. Only three Ansons were in passenger service, VH-BAU being used for special purposes - up until October 1948 it was operated out of Granite Peaks Station, Wiluna, on dingo baiting duties, then returned to Perth for an experimental fitting of spray gear. On November 16, it gave demonstrations at Guildford of "aerial anti-pest spraying" from a large spray bar fitted under the fuselage. Later that month it was successfully used to spray mosquitos at Lake Monger, Perth. The Company made further experiments in the field of crop-dusting, including laying superphosphate from 100 feet in August 1951, by emptying individual bags of super through the open rear doorway of VH-BAU. When the aerial agriculture industry began in WA in late 1951, Airlines had been the only operator to date to investigate the operation, and the company stated that "it is possible that there is scope for small aircraft such as the Tiger Moth", and this proved to be so very correct - by 1954 there were some fifteen agricultural Tigers based in Perth.

Charles Snook died at his home on September 23, 1948 after a long illness, and he was buried in a quiet ceremony at the Karrakata Cemetery. Business, however, went on and his position of Managing Director was taken over by the then Manager, Mr. James Cameron. Cameron joined the Company shortly after the end of the war, being formerly with De Havillands as Chief Engineer. He remained as Managing Director until the merger with Millers.

A third Dove was added to the fleet in 1949 when the Company's original VH-AQP was purchased for £16,500 from De Havilland in Sydney on September 24. They had been using this aircraft as the Dove demonstrator after its rebuild following the belly-landing. VH-AQP arrived in Perth on September 27, and the timetables were again amended to incorporate the three Doves which now operated on all routes except Rottnest Island. Due to various reasons, the Company's



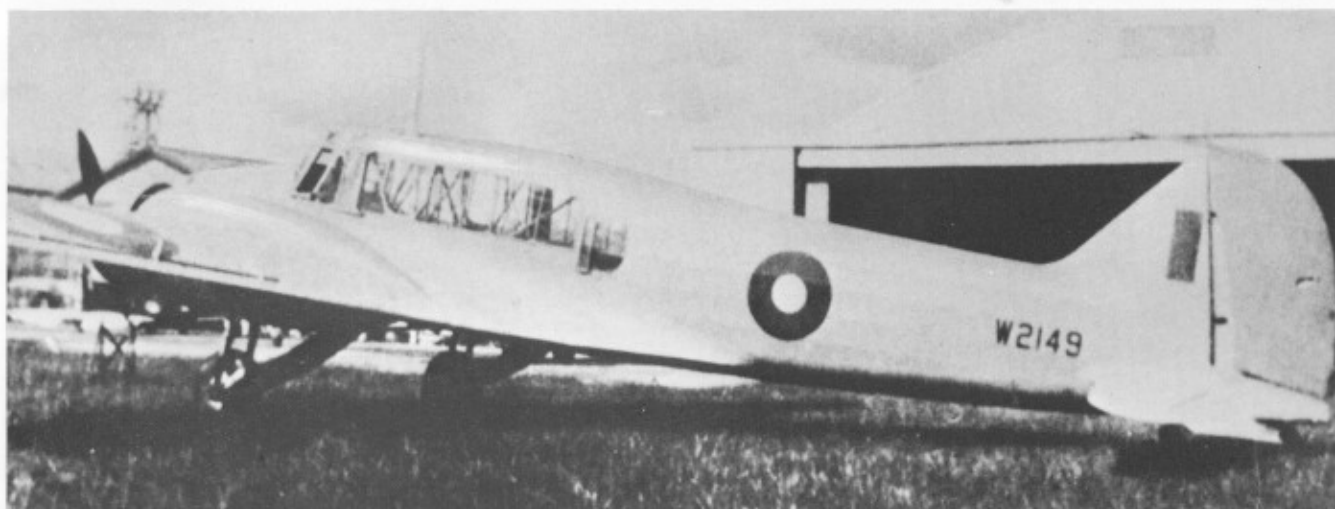
De Havilland Dragonfly VH-ADG Murchison at Maylands, WA, in May 1941.

Air Graphic.



De Havilland Dragonfly VH-ADG RMA Port Hedland after its accident at Guildford, WA, on December 1, 1947.

via G. Goodall.



Avro Anson W2149 prior to conversion for civil use as VH-BAU.

via G. Goodall.

ambitious route applications of 1946 were not approved, and now, with the modern high performance Doves, there was little chance of serving low income routes. The Busselton stop on the original Albany run ceased in May 1948 after a survey showed an average loading of 1.7 passengers per trip on the seven passenger Ansons. The Doves were a huge success — they were fast, modern and comfortable. Each carried a hostess and light meals were served on most flights. They soon proved to be more popular on the Kalgoorlie route than the rival ANA DC-3's. In 1950 the airline made a substantial loss, due to expenditure on Doves and poor returns from many routes that the Government subsidy did not completely cover. A study was begun to drop the most uneconomical routes.

Now began a period of quiet consolidation, during which Airlines came to earn the respect of MMA and other airlines. However disaster struck suddenly when, at 3.20 pm on October 15, 1951, the Dove, VH-AQO, crashed fourteen miles west of Kalgoorlie while on descent inbound from Perth on the afternoon service. The pilot, hostess and five passengers were killed instantly and the aircraft destroyed, its wreckage widely scattered in scrub near Kurrawang native mission. The initial DCA investigation found that the port wing had become detached in flight due to the failure of the main spar. While a thorough examination of the wreckage began to determine the reason for the spar failure, a grounding order was issued on all Australian Doves. As the investigation continued, great interest was shown from overseas aviation authorities, and some of the DCA findings were later to be of assistance in the British Comet disaster enquiries. With their remaining two Doves grounded, Airlines urgently required replacement aircraft. Only a year earlier, they had broken up the remaining unconverted RAAF Ansons that had been stored in the hangar at Guildford and had withdrawn VH-VLY and BEH after their CofAs had expired on October 30 and July 10 1950 respectively. Both were broken up for spares at Guildford and the latter's fuselage was still seen in the rear of the hangar in June 1951. It was decided that two Ansons would have to be obtained quickly and an Airlines party flew to the eastern states to find suitable aircraft. They purchased VH-BMQ from Furness Aviation, Parafield. It was test-flown on October 29 after a lengthy period of storage awaiting sale, and departed for Perth the next day. The second Anson was purchased from East West Airlines, Tamworth, NSW on November 5, and VH-EWZ, which had also been for sale for some time, was quickly ferried to Perth. Both aircraft were fitted out as seven passenger airliners already, so required no modification before entering Airlines' service on all routes. In January 1952, the Dove grounding order was lifted and both VH-AQP and VH-AZY returned to service. The latter had been stranded at Kalgoorlie at the time of the grounding. It was dismantled and trucked back to Perth, arriving at Maylands on November 7 for DCA tests, after which it was re-assembled. If the Doves had been restricted for longer, Airlines announced that they would hire DC-3's to cover their services to most ports, probably from ANA.

The Company annual report in June 1952 stated that a new Dove to replace VH-AQO would cost £34,000 so the airline was searching for a used aircraft and hoped to have a third Dove in service before Christmas. Delays in locating a suitable aircraft caused the Ansons to be kept in full service, mainly on the northern routes. Finally, the new Dove arrived at Guildford on February 19, 1953 — VT-CQY had previously been with Airways (India) Ltd. Calcutta, quite a co-incidence in company names! It began full overhaul for Australian CofA immediately after the delivery flight which had been via Calcutta-Burma-Singapore-Sourabaya-Bali-Timor-Darwin-Derby-Port Hedland-Wittenoom-Perth, and it entered service as VH-AWA on April 8. Soon afterwards, the other two Doves were re-registered into the VH-AW block — VH-AQP became VH-AWB on June 8, and VH-AZY became VH-AWD on July 16, 1953. Later in the year, the company showed its faith in the Dove by entering negotiations with Mandated Airlines Ltd, Lae, PNG, for their two aircraft, VH-MAB and VH-MAL which had arrived in Lae on July 28, 1951 on delivery from East African Airways. They were not a success in New Guinea because of poor performance in the Highlands and Airlines was able to secure an extremely attractive deal, purchasing the two aircraft plus a large spares collection for £25,000. The first aircraft was ferried down to Perth at Christmas 1953, the second following in January. VH-MAL was re-registered VH-AWE on March 10, 1954 and entered service, but VH-MAB was stored in the Guildford hangar "awaiting sufficient development in traffic for it to be brought into service". It was de-registered on June 3, 1954 and DCA advised that it would probably be reduced to spares.

In early 1953 two Ansons were sold to Yaringa Pastoral Company of Carnarvon and Geraldton — VH-BAU was sold on April 17, and VH-BMQ whose CofA had expired was sold to them for spares, being ferried across to Maylands. After several years of private operation by Yaringa's manager. A. Kopke, VH-BAU was abandoned in the open at Maylands next to VH-BMQ and by 1956 both were derelict. Now that the Dove VH-AWE had entered service, Airlines advertised their two remaining Ansons for sale early in 1954:—

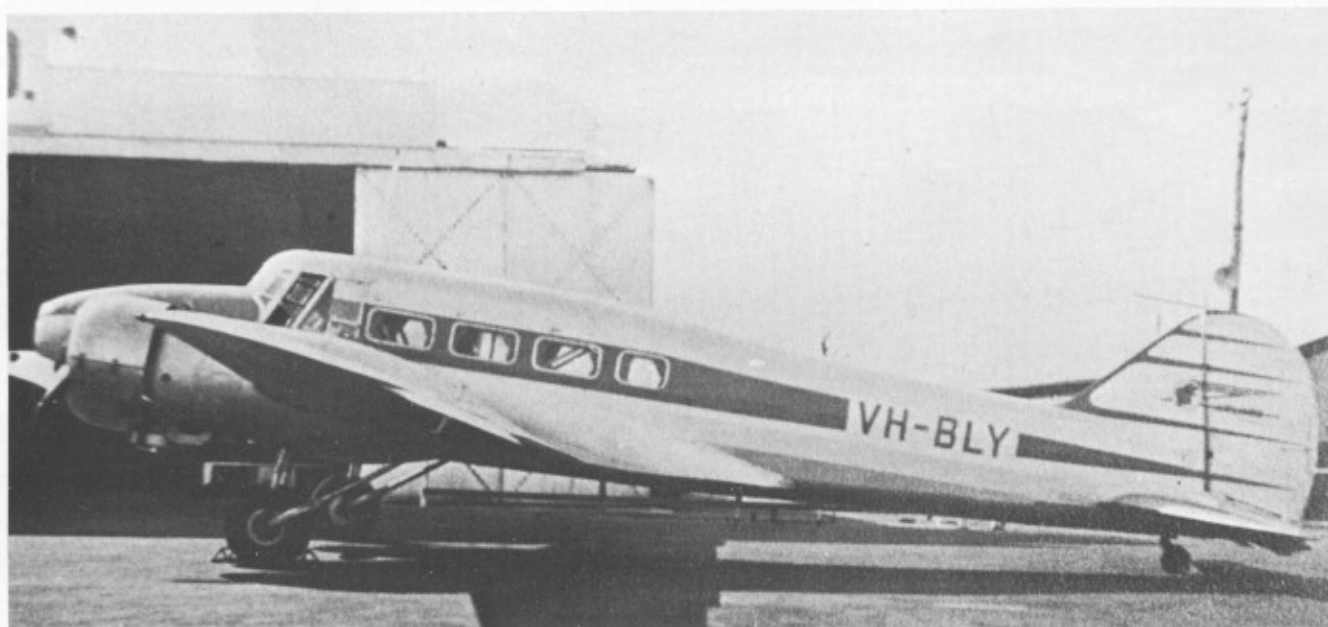
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|--------|---|
| VH-EWZ | sold on March 16, 1954 to Ove Otto Odgaard, Perth, who was the Danish Consul for WA and also principal of WA Boring Co. The Anson was used to fly large drilling equipment components to the north-west and also on private operations. After mandatory grounding, VH-EWZ was burnt at Perth Airport on August 14, 1962. |
| VH-BXV | This was the venerable VH-AXV, re-registered due to confliction with international callsigns by DCA order, and repainted as VH-BXV on December 7, 1948. Sold March 12, 1954 to Keith Reynolds, Carnarvon, who used the Anson to fly freshly shot beef from Carnarvon to Onslow, Roebourne and Wittenoom. Later sold to Westralian Oil Ltd, Perth, and went derelict at Cunderdin in 1957. |

With the Ansons now completely retired, in 1954 a contemporary report stated "the Airline's operations and maintenance aspects have been greatly streamlined and simplified". With four Doves in operation and a fifth kept in reserve,



Avro Anson VH-BEH after conversion for civil use.

via G. Goodall.



Avro Anson VH-BLY showing the last colour scheme used by the Company on its aircraft.

via G. Goodall.



De Havilland Dove VH-AQP at Maylands, WA, following the wheels up landing on May 17, 1947. Later in its life this aircraft, as well as the other Doves, were painted in a colour scheme similar to the Anson VH-BLY. The Company title was painted above the cabin windows in script, and the registration was marked across the fin and rudder.

via G. Goodall.

Airlines (WA) Ltd was no longer a simple bush airline. By this stage a much greater degree of co-operation with MMA had resulted in Airlines carrying out most of MMA's charter work since Millers were very busy on their own routes and the "Air Beef" scheme at Wyndham. Earlier, there had been constant rivalry and at times poor relations between the two airlines due to disputes over routes. Millers were granted the Port Hedland station service that Airlines had proposed while Airlines had successfully won several routes from MMA. In early 1955 the gold-mine at Big Bell closed down, depriving Airlines of one of their most profitable ports, and the last service through there was on March 8. However, traffic indications on other routes were good, and the fifth Dove was readied to enter service. It was re-added to the register as VH-AWF on April 21.

But Airlines' active story was nearly over — on July 1, 1955, after months of rumour, it was announced that Airlines (WA) Ltd and MacRobertson Miller Aviation Co. Ltd. had agreed to a merger to form a new name — MacRobertson Miller Airlines Ltd, and this new operating company would take over all the routes and facilities of Airlines (WA) Ltd., as well as the five Dove aircraft. The name Airlines would now almost fade from the WA aviation scene, even though the Company still owned the Doves that were operated by MMA, and the Company remained a subsidiary of MacRobertson Miller Airlines Ltd, until 1969 when finally liquidated and the remaining assets transferred to MMA.

At the time of the merger, the acquisition of the five Doves gave MMA an impressive fleet of fifteen aircraft:— five DC-3's, five Ansons and five Doves. Two of the latter were immediately put up for sale, and the remaining three entered service with MMA on their station services out of Port Hedland and Derby, on which they gave long and faithful service for many years.

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|--------|-----------|----------------|----------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| VH-AWA | c/n 04104 | ex VT-CQY | 4.11.55 | Re-registered VH-MMN | Nullagine |
| VH-AWB | 04012 | VH-AQP | 16.12.55 | Sold to Southern Airlines as VH-GVF | |
| VH-AWD | 04091 | VH-AZY | 4.11.55 | Re-registered VH-MMO | Ord |
| VH-AWE | 04120 | VH-MAL, VP-KEJ | 19. 8.55 | Sold to Southern Airlines as VH-GVE | |
| VH-AWF | 04119 | VH-MAB, VP-KDG | 4.11.55 | Re-registered VH-MMP | Pallinup |

The merger with Airlines (WA) Ltd. left MMA as the sole internal airline in Western Australia, a position it has jealously guarded ever since

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