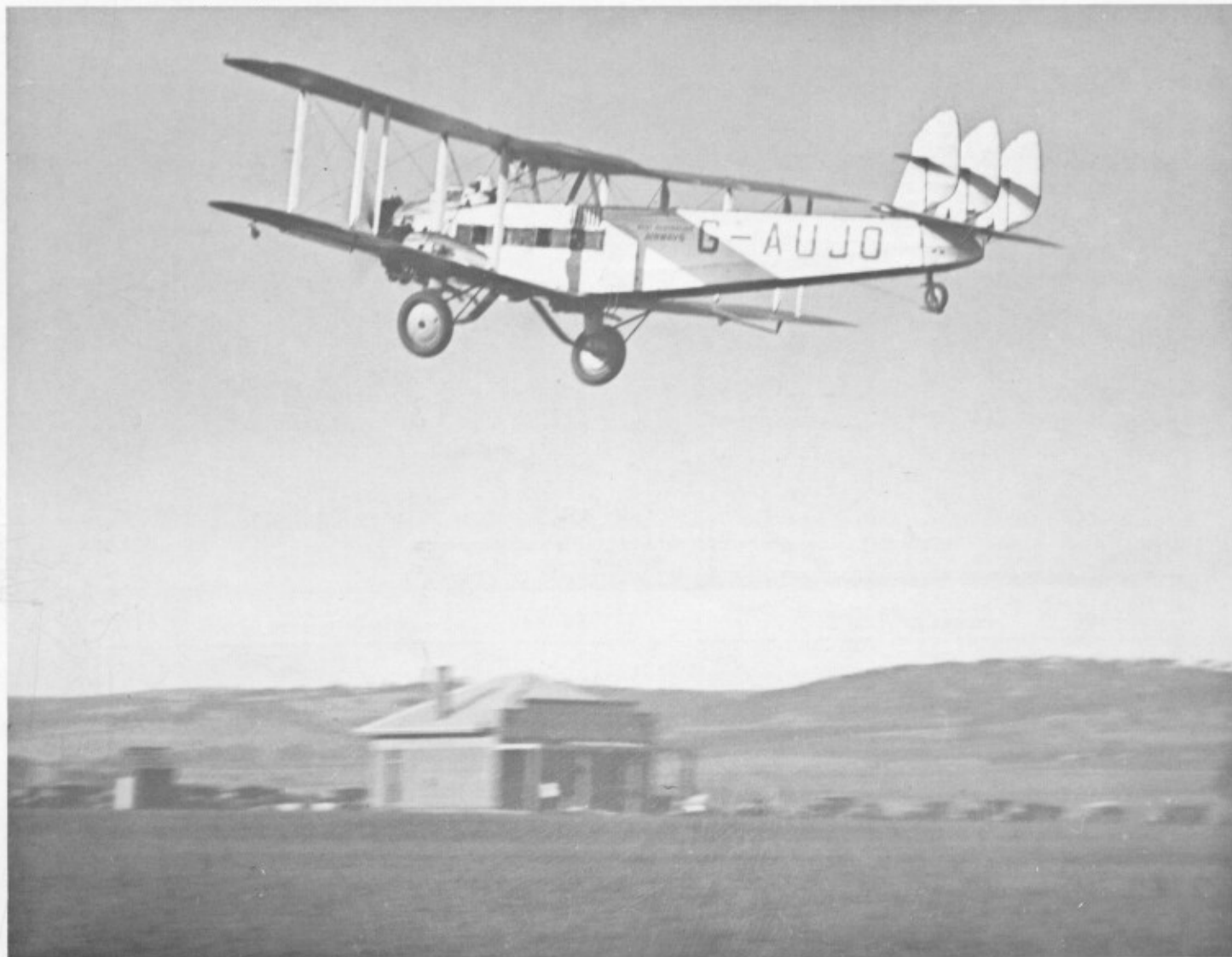




AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA JOURNAL

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De Havilland DH 66 Hercules G-AUJO *City of Perth* departing from Parafield, SA

via N.M. Parnell

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN AIRWAYS LTD. by G. Goodall

Monday, December 5 1921, dawned fine and clear over Geraldton, WA, and shortly before 9.00 am three Bristol biplanes took off from a farmer's paddock and flew north, commencing the first subsidised airline service in Australia and the Southern Hemisphere. This was the beginning of Western Australian Airways Ltd.,* the company which opened up air travel in WA, joined the previously isolated state to the rest of Australia by regular efficient air travel, and earned the respect of the aviation industry throughout the world. WAA's 15 years of operation bridged the gap from the most primitive of beginnings to the established airline organisation expected by the late 1930's. Even now, WAA is thought of as "Norman Brearley's airline" — Major Norman Brearley, recently knighted by the Queen in recognition of his services to both Aviation and Australia, built and operated the airline throughout its existence. The story of WAA is really the story of Norman Brearley.

Born at Geelong, V, on December 22, 1890, Norman Brearley moved to Perth with his family in 1906, and continued his education at the Perth Technical College. On leaving school, he completed a five-year apprenticeship with the local firm of Hoskins & Co. Ltd. as a fitter and turner.

In late December 1910, a sales mission from the British & Colonial Aeroplane Company Limited, later the Bristol Aeroplane Company Limited, arrived in Perth on the first stop of a tour through Australia and New Zealand. The mission comprised pilots J.J. Hammond and L.F. McDonald, two mechanics, a manager and a Bristol Boxkite aeroplane. The aeroplane was assembled at the Belmont Racecourse, a few miles from the city, and in the early evening of Tuesday, January 3, 1911, it took off with Hammond at the controls and flew over the racecourse and nearby Swan River. Over the following week a number of flights were made to great public excitement, for this was the first heavier-than-air flight attempted in WA. Among the crowds that flocked daily to see the aviators was Norman Brearley, who was very impressed with the possibilities of the aeroplane.

However, the chance for him to follow up his interest in flying did not come until war broke out in Europe, when he worked his passage to England on a ship as a junior-engineer, and quickly enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps on arrival. In May 1916, he gained his wings and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Posted to France, he served with the RFC as a fighter pilot on DH 2's until shot down in combat on November 9 that year, suffering wounds that made him unfit for further active aerial service. While on convalescent leave back in Perth he married Violet Claremont Stubbs on July 5, 1917, and on his return to England he concentrated on his special interest of flying instruction. In August he was appointed Flight Commander at the School of Special Flying, Gosport, teaching and grading flying instructors. In June 1918, he was promoted to Commandant of the Midland Area Flying Instructors School, where he remained until the Armistice. Before leaving the RAF, he purchased two Avro 504K biplanes from the Aircraft Disposals Board, plus one spare engine. Brearley chose two aircraft that were in excellent condition, and had them converted to 504J standard by his own ground-staff at RAF Station Lilbourne prior to their crating for shipment to Australia.

Major Norman Brearley, DSO, MC, AFC, ex RFC and RAF, arrived at Fremantle on Sunday, July 13, 1919, on-board the *ss Nestor*. The aircraft arrived onboard the *ss Port Napier* some days later and were immediately assembled at the Belmont Racecourse. A small hangar and workshop was erected on the course for this purpose, and he had two mechanics to help him, H.P. Hansen and Mr. Critchley, ex AFC, both of whom he praised highly at the time. On Saturday, August 2, in the presence of 20,000 people, Brearley took off from the WA Cricket Association grounds in the city for his first public flight over Perth. His first passenger was the Mayor of Perth, Alderman W.F. Lathlain, who enjoyed his flight immensely, but on landing the Avro hit power lines and was slightly damaged. Brearley rushed to Belmont Racecourse by car and flew the second Avro across to the cricket ground and put on a stunting flight for the crowd. The aerobatics included a double loop, Immelman turns, a tail slide, stalls, rolls and finally, from about 2,500 feet, a spinning nose-dive to 500 feet. Several passengers were then taken up until he again hit the power lines on take-off, but was able to land safely.

Two days later he made his first commercial flight when leaflets for Charles Moore & Company, the draper (now a large chain store), were dropped over the city and suburbs. Then followed a barnstorming programme in the best traditions of that era ... Brearley and his Avros did exhibitions, joy-riding, taxi-flights, aerobatics from country centres throughout WA ... Over the following 16 months there were hectic tours through the mining centres of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and the wheat-belt towns of Northam and York, down to the south-west to Bunbury, flying from the beach at Albany, visiting the agricultural shows at most towns, and north to the sheep stations — the joy-riding and displays were done everywhere! Standard rates were £5 for ten minutes but variations occurred from town to town. Takings were high — over the period September 20 — 26 1919, in the Northam district, 60 passengers made their first flight, most at £5 each but in some cases £10 was charged. From September 29

* The company name Western Australian Airways Ltd., was changed to West Australian Airways Ltd., in the late 1920's. However magazine references generally recorded the company as W.A. Airways and this probably accounts for the variation of titles in current reference books.

he stayed five days at York and carried 50 passengers. Farmers there were vying amongst themselves for an altitude record and paid up to £20 to reach 8,000 feet. When the two aircraft were modified late in 1919 to carry two passengers in the rear cockpit, the rate for two was £7.10. 0.

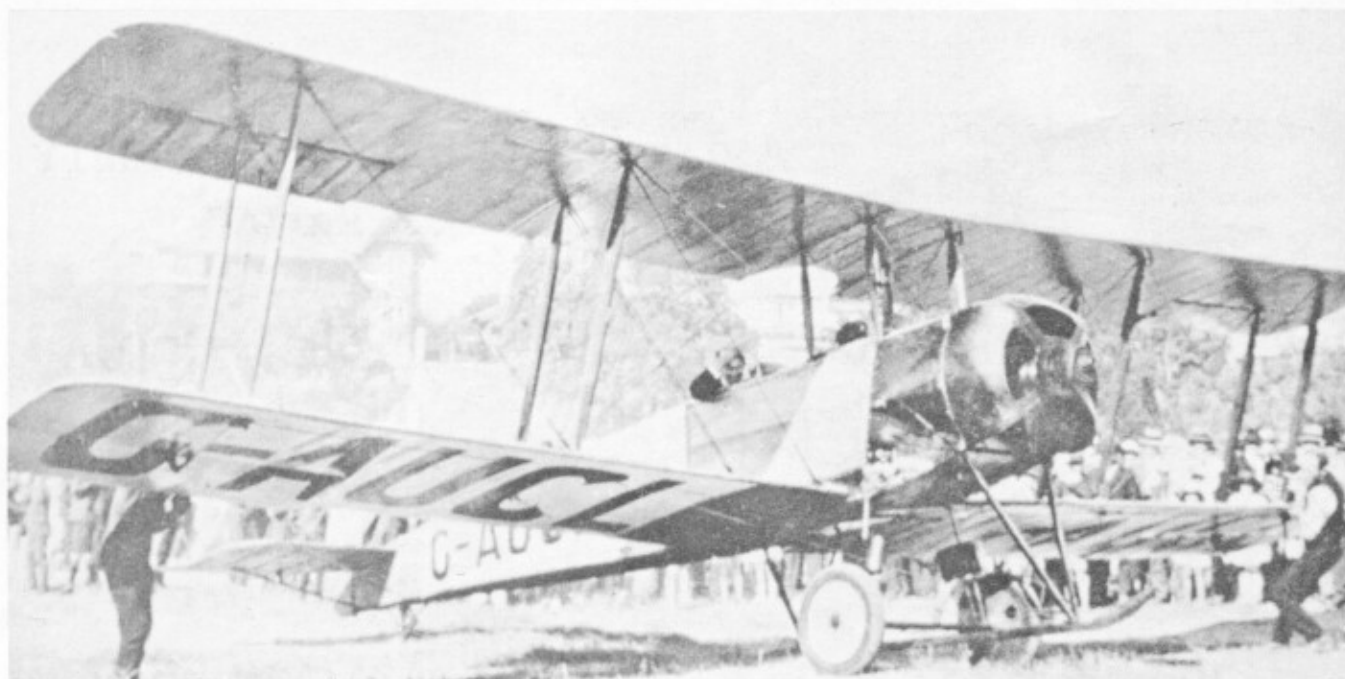
However, Brearley knew that the barnstorming days were limited, and during 1920, he submitted to the Federal Government, a detailed scheme for a mail and passenger service to the north-west of WA, which was passed over at the time because it was then envisaged that all air-mail would be carried by the Australian Air Force. However, following the passing of the Navigation Act and the appointment of Lt.-Col. H.C. Brinsmead as Controller of Civil Aviation of the Department of Defence, it was decided to call tenders for a trial aerial mail service in Australia. Brearley was aware of the trend in Government thinking and from the beginning of 1921 devoted all his energy to preparing and planning for a regular service to the north-west. He sold his two Avro 504J's on January 21 to John McIntosh, who had achieved fame the previous year by flying a DH 9 from England to Australia with Ray Parer in a most adventurous journey, taking a total of 7 months to reach Darwin! McIntosh was a Scotsman who had settled in WA prior to the war, and after crashing the DH 9 with Parer while en route to Melbourne from Darwin, had set out from Melbourne in a motor-cycle and side-car to drive overland to Perth. The newspapers followed his journey with interest, and he reached Perth on December 14, 1920. Although he was not a qualified pilot, he had learnt to fly on the trip out with Parer, and took further tuition from Brearley before buying the pair of Avros from him. McIntosh then continued the barnstorming that Brearley had abandoned but it was short-lived. On March 28 while on a joy-ride tour of the Mullewa railway line, McIntosh and a passenger were killed while the other passenger was seriously injured when the Avro crashed near Pithara, 180 miles north of Perth. The passengers had been seen drinking in the cockpit shortly before take-off. This was the first fatal aviation crash in WA.

On May 17, 1921, the Federal Government called for tenders for an air-mail service between Geraldton and Derby, a distance of 1,260 miles. The route to be flown was along the main coastal ports: Geraldton—Carnarvon—Onslow—Roebourne—Port Hedland—Broome—Derby. The southern terminal was to be Geraldton and not Perth because of the existing railway line from Perth to Geraldton, and the government's policy not to allow aircraft services to compete with existing transport services. The mail would be carried by rail to Geraldton for loading on aircraft for each trip north. Two tenders were received — one from Brearley and one from Simpson & Tregilles Aircraft & Transport Co. Ltd., Perth. Brearley's tender was recommended by Brinsmead and accepted by the Department of Defence on August 2, 1921. This caused an immediate outcry from the unsuccessful tenderer since they only required a £16,000 Government subsidy, while Brearley had required the maximum subsidy of £25,000 (4/- per air mile, based on one trip in each direction for 52 weeks). The Government replied that the three aircraft in the Simpson & Tregilles tender were insufficient to operate the run and that Brearley's tender of six Bristol Tourer biplanes had potential to the Government as war machines. This company, trading as Air Transport Ltd., which had been formed for the north-west service, now reverted to joy-rides and air taxi work with an assortment of aircraft carrying on spasmodically until late 1926 when they ceased operations.

When Brearley learnt that his tender had been accepted, he immediately formed Western Australian Airways Ltd., and a prospectus was issued in anticipation of a capital of £50,000 being fully subscribed. However, the paid shares fell short of the amount required to purchase the six Bristols which were needed for the service. In his attempts to raise the urgently required capital Brearley travelled to Melbourne where he was able to obtain the financing he needed from Mr. H.V. McKay of the Sunshine Harvester Company. The Bristol Tourer had been chosen by Brearley as the aircraft for the service as there was virtually no other British type available. It was basically a Bristol Fighter modified into a coupe carrying two passengers in the enclosed section, and the pilot in the open cockpit. It was filled with a powerful 240 hp Siddeley Puma engine. Brearley had written to Bristols advising them he would require six machines if his tender was successful, and when it was accepted, he cabled Bristols to despatch the aircraft to Fremantle. All this was done without any discussion of payment, giving Brearley more time to obtain his financing!

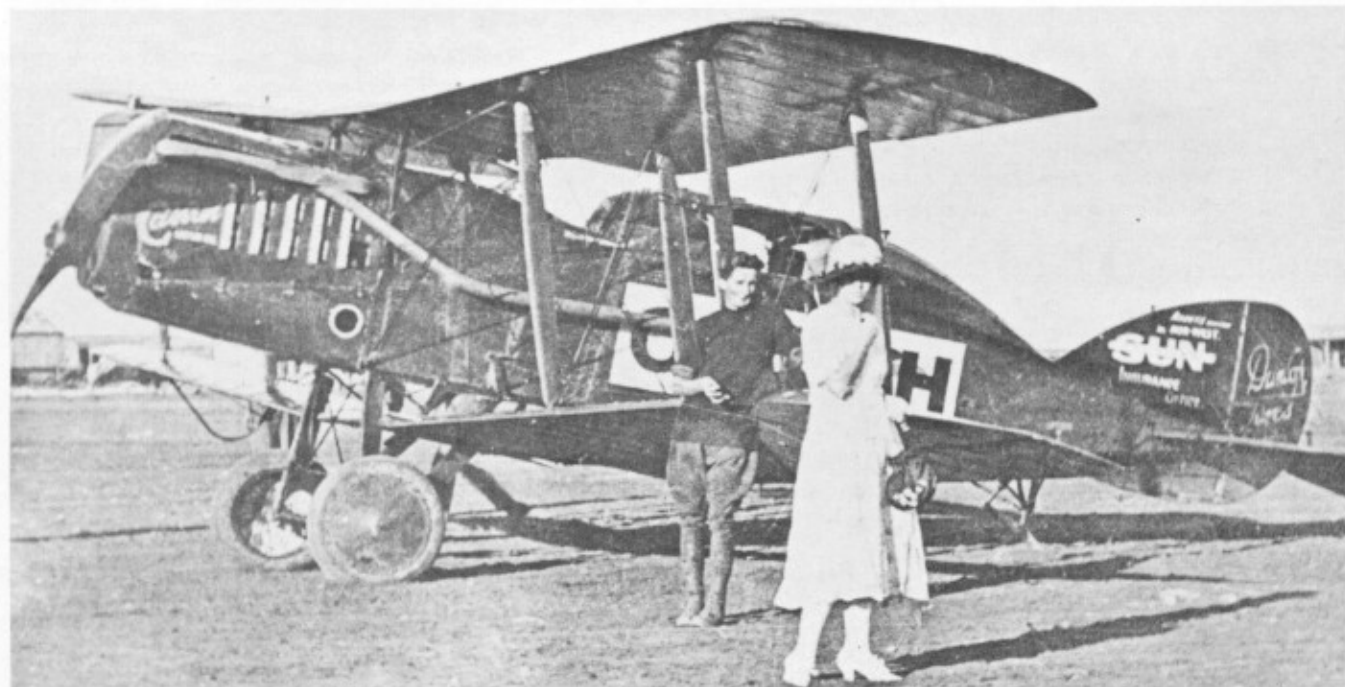
Meanwhile the Government had sent a RAAF party to survey the route for aerodrome sites and these were chosen at Geraldton, Hamelin Pool, Carnarvon, Winning Pool, Onslow, Roebourne, Port Hedland, Wallal, Broome and Derby. In addition emergency landing grounds were recommended over the worst stretches. Brinsmead then set about acquiring the sites and having them prepared. The tender stated that the service would begin on December 5, 1921, and as the date approached preparations were under way — the aircraft were on their way to Perth by sea and hangars were being built. A very large galvanised-iron shed on the outskirts of Perth at Blackboy Hill was purchased and its materials used to build a hangar capable of housing the six Bristols on an area of land on the Esplanade, Perth, which was to be the airline's home for the next three years. A hangar to house four machines was built at Geraldton, at Carnarvon and Port Hedland hangars were assembled for two aircraft each, while Onslow and Broome had single-aircraft sheds.

While this was going on, Brearley was at RAAF Station Point Cooke, V, testing prospective pilots for the service. Ten pilots had been chosen from replies to press advertisements and these men took a refresher course under Brearley's supervision



Avro 504J G-AUCL flown by Major Brearley, joyriding from the Esplanade Aerodrome in 1923.

via M.W. Prime



Bristol Tourer G—AUDH in the standard colour scheme/markings when the services commenced.

via J. Hopton

| RECORD OF FLIGHTS | | | | | | |
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| Date | Aircraft | | Journey | Time in Air | | Remarks |
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| 23-24 May 1945 10:45 12:0 | DH50 | 14-172 | Winnipeg - Waskana | | | As passengers with 194-8 |
| 25 May 1945 10:45 12:0 | DH50 | 14-172 | Waskana - Waskana | 4 | 0 | Next Waskana on passenger. |
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| RECORD OF FLIGHTS <i>Australia</i> | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Date | Aircraft | | Journey | Time in Air Hrs. Min. | Remarks |
| | Type | Reg. No. | | | |
| 19th | | | Brought forward ... | | 1200 |
| 2 Aug. { 20 1st | DH60 | VH-VFH | Perth local flying circle | 1 15 | 60 passengers |
| Total Time Flown with W.A. Airways | | | 1328 | 05 | |
| <div style="position: relative; height: 100px;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 0; left: 0; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> WEST AUSTRALIAN AIRWAYS LTD. <i>W.A. Airways</i> <i>Perth</i> </div> </div> | | | | | |
| Aug. { 20 2nd | DH50 | VH-VFH | Perth local flying circle | 1 0 | |
| | | | Carried forward ... | | |

at Point Cooke by courtesy of the Air Force. He chose five pilots from this group and they travelled to Perth to begin the service: Charles Kingsford-Smith, Bob Fawcett, Arthur Blake, Val Abbott, and Len Taplin. On November 20, the six Tourers: G-AUDF, G-AUDG, G-AUDH, G-AUDI, G-AUDJ, G-AUDK, were landed at Fremantle and taken to the Esplanade aerodrome for assembly. Also included was a spare fuselage, c/n 6113, supplied by Bristols. G-AUDF had been registered in England by Bristols as G-EAXK, receiving its British CofA on June 21 that year as a 'Bristol 28 Coupe Tourer', but was sent with the Australian order as the home market showed little probability of a ready sale.

On Saturday, December 3 all was ready, and the service was officially opened by the Governor of WA in a ceremony on the Esplanade, and the Vice-Regal party was flown over Perth. Next morning three of the Bristols took off from the Esplanade, formed a formation over Perth and set course for Geraldton. They were flown by Len Taplin, Bob Fawcett, and Norman Brearley, and had several passengers and mechanics on board. On arrival at Geraldton after an uneventful flight they landed in a paddock known as 'Gould's Field' because the selected aerodrome site had been found to be grossly unsafe when inspected the previous week. Gould's Field was later bought by the Government to become Geraldton's first airport, the original Government site being abandoned.

Early the following morning, December 5, 1921, the three Bristols taxied across the paddock, and took-off and headed north for the first leg of the new service. The purpose of the initial run was to stop off at each mail centre for a day to complete arrangements and then on the trip south from Derby, each aircraft would drop off at its allotted zone.

On the three aircraft were:—
G-AUDG Len Taplin — J. Trestrail (mechanic)
G-AUDI Bob Fawcett — E.W. Broad (mechanic)
G-AUDX Norman Brearley — M.P. Durack (MLA) and G. Jacoby (press)

Mr. Durack owned the land on which the Esplanade hangar had been built and had been an advocate of the service from the start. He was to have flown in Fawcett's aircraft, but just before they taxied Brearley asked him to inspect a part of the hangar with him. Fawcett was then waved off with just the mechanic on board.

After flying for 45 minutes in loose formation, Taplin's aircraft developed engine trouble and force-landed on a narrow flat near the Murchison River, 100 miles north of Geraldton. The Bristol received only slight damage in the landing, and Taplin signalled Fawcett, who was circling overhead, "*Wait Ten Minutes*", whereupon he climbed and continued circling. Brearley landed in a cleared paddock 1½ miles away and set out on foot to Taplin's downed aircraft — meanwhile, Fawcett descended and made a low pass over the scrub and lost control, diving into the ground from 50 feet. The Bristol G-AUDI was destroyed and Fawcett and Broad died almost immediately. They were buried nearby at Murchison House Station and that evening a sunset burial service was read. Brearley was determined that this set-back would not ruin the service, but was persuaded by Durack to return to Perth and not fly again until the Government improved the state of the aerodromes they had undertaken to build en route. On their return to Perth, they were greeted by a great public and press outcry and Brearley angrily spoke out on the state of the aerodromes.

Lt.-Col. Brinsmead arrived in his personal Tourer G-AUCA on December 8 after being delayed in South Australia, and had long talks with Brearley. On December 16 Brearley flew north to deliver the mail and give joy-rides, reaching Derby two days later. All the aerodromes en route were inspected and a new site selected for Port Hedland on the town's racecourse. Brinsmead made orders for the aerodromes to be improved, and came to Brearley's defence in the controversy that followed the airline's tragic beginning. Brearley waited in Perth until the airfields were worked on, and although this was a difficult period, he received much encouragement from Brinsmead.

The Geraldton—Port Hedland section was resumed on February 21, 1922, and the full service back into operation on March 3. Up to now there had been two accidents, Brearley had force-landed on a beach 50 miles south of Broome due to oil trouble on his flight back from Derby in December, and the Bristol had to be dismantled and returned to Perth on the coastal boat *ss Bamba*. On the day before the full service resumed, Len Taplin crashed on landing at Geraldton but neither he nor his two passengers were hurt. The north-west service now became a regular run and quickly proved very popular. Reasons for this were not hard to find, as the aerial trip took three days to travel Perth—Derby (including the first leg to Geraldton by train), compared with the previous monthly coastal ship service which took up to two weeks to reach Derby, and roads were virtually impassable north of Carnarvon.

The original contract for one year's operation was renewed on December 17, 1922, and hopes were high for the following year's service. The contract specified that space be reserved on each flight for 100 lb. of mail, all other space being available to WAA for passengers and freight, and they were finding little trouble filling that space. These hopes were dashed on January 30 when the Bristol carrying Capt. S. Harper of the Civil Aviation Branch on an inspection of the service, hit the race-course fence on take-off from Port Hedland. Harper was killed, although the pilot Walter Cochrane was not hurt, and the Bristol was repaired. However, WAA continued on, and by June of that year had flown 160,000 miles and was keeping remarkably good schedules. The main difficulties being encountered were willy-willys (rotating wind squalls) and storms which disrupted all

telegraphic communications, the only means of communications to the north-west. This brought WAA's operations to a standstill on occasions. Also the mail-train from Perth was often late, and in July 1923, Brearley went to Melbourne to endeavour to have the service extended to Perth. The Minister for Defence (Mr. E.K. Bowden) indicated that he would attempt to settle the problem and have the service extended.

Meanwhile the Commonwealth Government had purchased the Maylands Peninsula on the Swan River, only two miles from the heart of Perth, for a proposed new site for an aerodrome. The area had been recommended by Brearley and in early December 1923 Capt. E.C. Johnson, the Superintendent of Aerodromes, arrived in Perth to supervise work on the new field. An area of 131 acres was being used and in anticipation of the north-west service being extended to Perth, WAA immediately moved their hangars from the old Esplanade site, where all their servicing had been done to date, to the new Maylands aerodrome.

The hoped-for approval now came, and in the late afternoon of January 15, 1924, the first service flew into Maylands from Derby, with Keith Anderson as pilot. The airline settled into a firmly established operation, with Bristols leaving Maylands at 6.00 am each Thursday, reaching Derby 2.15 pm on Saturday; leaving Derby 3.30 pm the same day and reaching Maylands 4.00 pm the following Tuesday. The fare Perth-Derby was £33 and as well as passengers and mails, an increasing amount of freight was now being carried. The increased mail frequency in the north due to the airline was reflected in the number of letters being carried - from 500 per month in 1922 to 20,000 per month in 1924!

In June 1924 Major Brearley travelled to England to inspect airline trends and held discussions with the de Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd. The outcome was the purchase of two DH 50A biplanes, G-AUEL and G-AUEM, and the rights to build both the DH 50 design and the new DH 60 Moth under licence in Australia. Here, Brearley met James Woods and was impressed with his ability and signed him on as a pilot with WAA. Woods was later to become Operations Manager with the Company, and went on to a very active part in Western Australia's aviation with MacRobertson-Miller Aviation and his own companies.

While Brearley was in England, a further fatal accident occurred. On July 15, the Bristol Tourer G-AUDH crashed into the Port Hedland creek soon after take-off on a charter flight to show a local land-owner, Mr. Keith McKay, his cattle station. The pilot Len Taplin and mechanic escaped unhurt, but McKay, who had been drinking, was trapped in the wreckage and drowned. A further difficulty handled was a pilot's strike where higher wages were being demanded. With typical directness, he sacked those concerned and brought across new pilots from the eastern states, including his own brother Stanley Brearley, who had been in the RAAF, and by coincidence had been in the Air Force party that surveyed the original route in 1921.

By the end of 1924, the first two DH 50's were on the run, and there had been changes in the Bristol Tourer fleet. A new aircraft was assembled from the spare frame supplied by Bristols, plus spares and components built by the company, and it was added to the register as G-AUDX in March 1925. (Some sources have quoted that this aircraft was built from wreckage of Lt.-Col. Brinsmead's Tourer G-AUCA which crashed at Bourke, NSW, but this has no basis in fact.) Also the wreckage of G-AUDH was salvaged and taken back to Maylands where it was completely rebuilt, and the new aircraft was re-registered as G-AUDZ. Early the next year, another Bristol Tourer was lost, when G-AUDF was gutted by fire after its fabric caught alight during engine start-up on the aerodrome at Onslow on January 25, 1925. Due to quick work by the pilot, the mails were dragged from the aircraft and saved.

In 1925, the WAA services were so established that insurance companies were allowing passengers to fly without extra premiums!

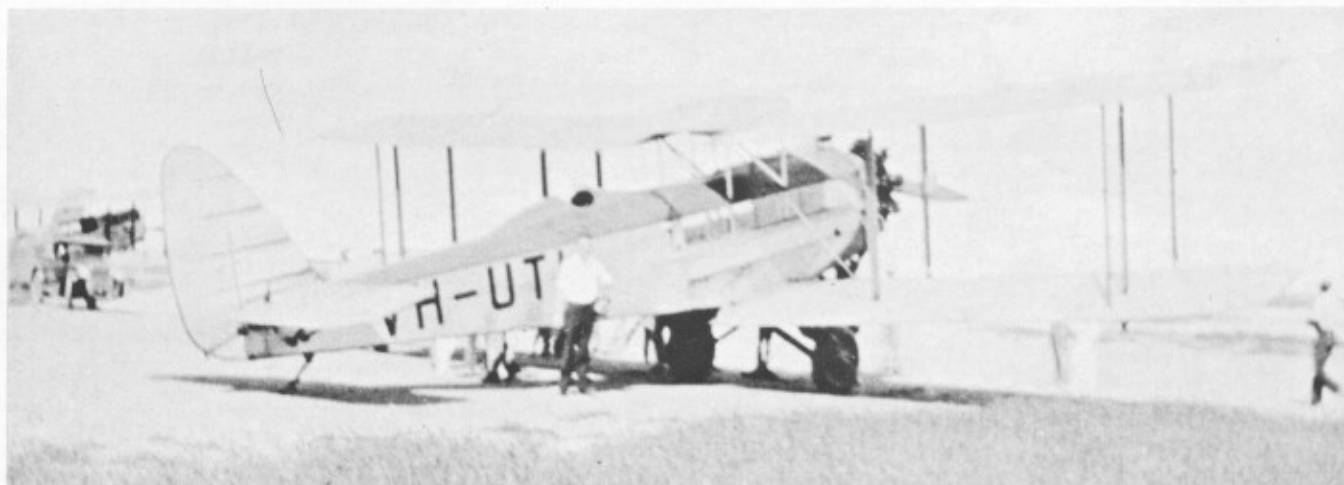
During 1926, work was underway at the Maylands workshops on the first of three DH 50's to be constructed for use on the north-west route. Two, G-AUFD and G-AUFE, were completed and test flown by the end of the year and the third, G-AUFN, was finished the following year. Meanwhile another DH 50 had been purchased to supplement the original pair. It was the prototype DH 50, G-EBFN, which first flew in August 1923, and was used by the De Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd's subsidiary, Aeroplane Hire Service, with the name of *Galatea*. It was sold to Northern Airlines in April 1925, and struck off the British register on February 23, 1926, on sale to WAA as G-AUEY.

The only other aircraft owned by the company up to this stage was an Avro 504J, G-AUCL, which was one of Brearley's original pair of Avros, purchased from McIntosh's estate after his death at Pithara. It was added to the register on June 28, 1921, along with the Bristol Tourers, and was used as a spare aircraft on numerous tasks. Brearley tested new pilots in it on several occasions and it was often seen joy-riding from the Esplanade in the early 20's. The Avro was struck off the register on June 27, 1931, after its CoFA had been allowed to lapse and Brearley presented the aircraft to the Perth Technical College as an instructional airframe. The College has no knowledge of the aircraft's fate.



Bristol Tourer G-AUDG with a metal coffin slung amidships about 1923. Note modified rudder.

via J. Hopton



De Havilland DH 61 Giant Moth VH-UTL at Port Hedland in 1933.

via G. Goodall



Vickers Viastra VH-UOM in front of the company hangar at Maylands.

via M.W. Prime

In 1927, a new side to the company's operation was begun with a flying training organisation being established. The Royal Aero Club of WA Inc. was first constituted in 1919 as the WA Section, Australian Aero Club, and Major Brearley was the president from early 1920. The Club was formed in name only, doing no training and owning no aircraft. Lt.-Col. Brinsmead of the Civil Aviation Branch favoured flying clubs as adjuncts to established operating companies and in 1927 WAA was given a two-year contract by the Branch to operate a flying school. Brearley undertook to build up the Aero Club so that it would be able to take over this flying school. The WA Section, Australian Aero Club, thus, had its first general meeting at the Savoy Hotel in Perth on April 13, 1927, at which Brearley was re-elected President. On the following Monday the new WAA Flying School commenced flying, using the name "Perth Flying School". Initially there were 33 pupils and two instructors, Stanley Brearley and Charles Nesbitt. Three DH 60 Moths were used by the School:— G-AUFI, G-AUFG, G-AUGO, all registered in WAA's name. The latter aircraft, G-AUGO, was obtained to replace G-AUFI which crashed in East Perth on July 18, 1927, killing the student pilot. With the pair of Moths, the School operated successfully with Stanley Brearley in charge, and using pilots from the north-west run as instructors. When the two-year contract expired, it was renewed for a further year because the Aero Club was not ready for the take-over, being mainly occupied by preparations for the October 1929 Centenary Air Race from Sydney to Perth. (See AHSA Journal June 1965). At the beginning of 1930, the Aero Club was ready to commence operations itself, and the two Moths were transferred to the Department of Defence for immediate re-issue to the Aero Club, who began flying with them from Maylands in March 1930. Over the three years that WAA operated the Perth Flying School, a total of 50 pupils were trained to Private Pilot Licence standard, the first to qualify being on May 31, 1927. The only major accident was the loss of G-AUFI soon after operations commenced. WAA continued to be closely connected with the Aero Club, and carried out all the maintenance on their Moths.

Meanwhile, WAA had been going through a major transition. Firstly, during 1927/1928, the Bristol Tourers were gradually withdrawn from service and replaced by DH 50's. These aircraft had given wonderful service and were quoted by the Civil Aviation Branch as achieving 97% regularity, an extremely impressive figure. They had carried over 3,000 passengers and flown over a half million miles — Brearley describes them as a "marvellous" machine. Secondly, WAA was preparing for the Perth-Adelaide service. The Prime Minister, Mr. S.M. Bruce, was impressed with European air services he had seen while attending the Imperial Conference in 1926 and in the following year made extra funds available for civil aviation in Australia. The Civil Aviation Branch drew up proposals for air services Sydney-Brisbane, Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne, and Adelaide-Perth. After numerous delays, the tender for the Adelaide-Perth service closed on June 12, 1928.

On July 2, 1928, it was announced that WAA had been awarded the contract for the east-west mail service, against some twenty other companies. The contract provided for weekly flights in each direction — the aircraft to leave Perth, as soon as possible after the arrival of the mail steamer from England, and reach Adelaide in sufficient time to catch the east-bound train from Adelaide to Melbourne which left there at 4.30 pm the following day. For the return trip, the aircraft was to leave Parafield on the morning preceding the departure of the mail steamer from Fremantle, so as to arrive in Perth in time to allow loading of the mails. As well as improving the mail service to the eastern states from England (the existing mail carriage was by train Perth-Adelaide-Melbourne, taking from Tuesday morning to the following Monday to reach Melbourne); the service would link Perth with the eastern capitals which had long been a weak-link in national and Empire communications.

Brearley had specified four DH 66 Hercules tri-motor biplanes in his tender. A new share-issue was made to secure the capital outlay of £100,000 for the four new aeroplanes plus spares, and the order placed with de Havilland. The Hercules went through their acceptance trials at Stag Lane, England in March 1929, and then shipped to Perth. The first Hercules assembled at Maylands was G-AUJO, and it was test-flown on May 3, being followed on May 23 by G-AUJP, and later G-AUJQ and G-AUJR. For the new Adelaide service, hangars were built at Kalgoorlie, Forrest, and Ceduna, and a 18-room hostel was built at the aerodrome at Forrest for the overnight stopping place for both directions of the service.

The first service began on June 2, 1929, when Major Brearley departed in G-AUJO "City of Perth", but bad weather forced him to return to Parafield and he was not able to resume the flight until June 4 when he took off for Ceduna with 5 passengers and 834 lb of mail. On the same day, to make up lost time Nesbitt left Maylands in a DH 50 carrying half of the west-east mail to Kalgoorlie. Then he returned to Maylands to pick up the other half, plus new mail just arrived on the mail boat "Maloja", arriving back at Kalgoorlie the next day. Brearley arrived at Kalgoorlie in the Hercules at 10.30 am that morning and the east-bound mail was immediately loaded on board. The DH 66 departed back to Parafield carrying a total of 1,145 lbs of mail. The trans-continental service was very popular, the air fare each direction was £18 compared with the railway's fare of £12. The new route soon gained the highest load-factor of the subsidised airlines in Australia.

Brearley was most anxious to have night-flying along the route, to allow for the short days in the winter months and when the mail boat from England arrived late. During a visit to America to study their established night flying procedures, he saw their rotating-beacon system of night-navigation, and flew a United Airlines aircraft on a night run. On his return, he arranged with the Commonwealth Government to install 24" Sperry-type revolving beacons on 53 foot high towers at positions

approximately fifty miles apart along the route segment Perth—Cook, SA, where most of the night flying was envisaged. The extremely powerful beacons were maintained by the airline, and proved very effective, being seen by pilots up to seventy miles away. Earlier, Brearley had experimented with airfield lighting when he and his brother Stanley flew the DH 60 Moth G—AUGO from Maylands on the night of April 24, 1928, testing landing lights on the Moth, and flood-lighting on to the landing strip. Brearley found it a very satisfactory experiment. Also in 1928, WAA turned to aerial survey work. They were approached by the Public Works Department to carry out a photographic survey of the Darling Ranges near Perth to obtain a relief map from which the PWD could study contours to select new railway routes and water conservation areas. To carry out this work, a subsidiary company was formed, named Air Surveys Ltd. and a special camera to operate at 8,000 feet was imported. The camera was fitted to a DH 50 modified to carry two pilots, one to fly the aircraft while the other computed the navigational details to steer the aircraft along parallel tracks. Following the success of this initial contract, the company did several more big jobs for the large mining companies.

When Brearley ordered the DH 66 Hercules from de Havillands in 1928, he specified that the aircraft were to be fitted with a tailwheel and brakes, the existing aircraft built for Imperial Airways having just a tailskid. To supervise the design work on this, and accept the aircraft, he travelled to England in early 1929, and spent some time at the de Havilland factory. The main undercarriage section was completely re-designed to include the brake-system, and a very large pivoting tailwheel was fitted. These were essential for the Australian operations, although Brearley recalls much trouble in convincing de Havillands of this.

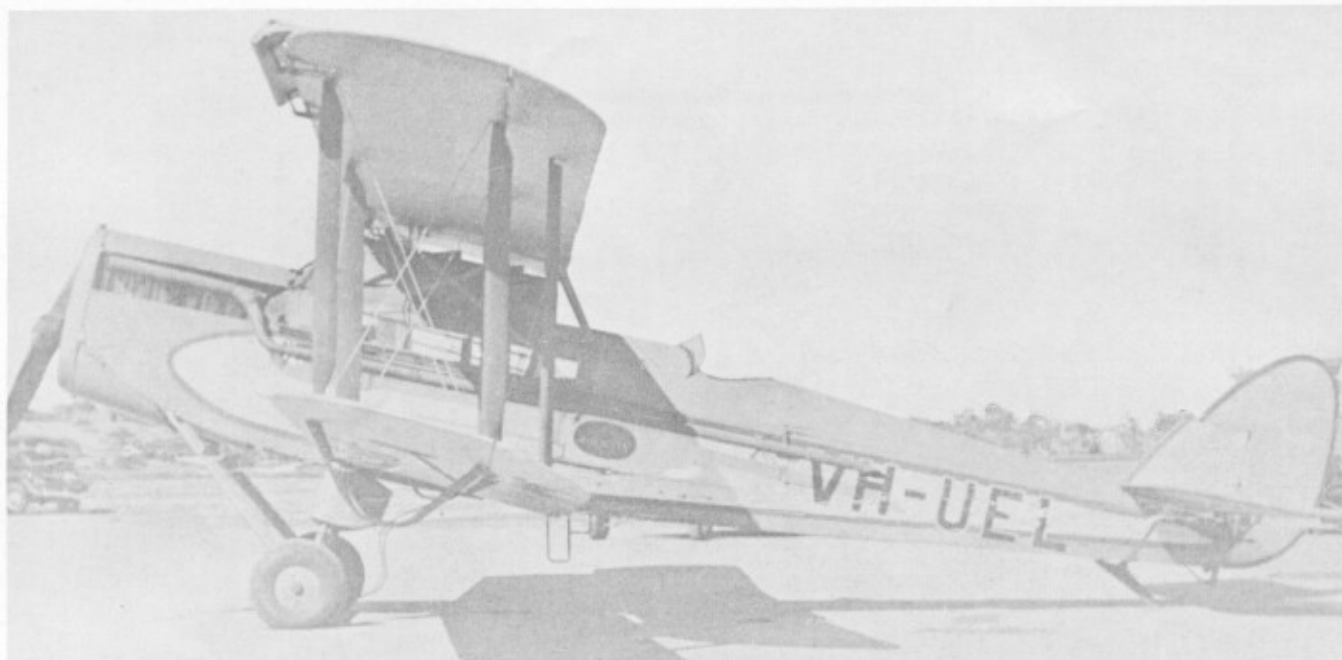
While at their works, he saw Alan Cobham's record breaking DH 50, G—EBFO (see AHSA Journal Jan/Feb 1970) at the back of a hangar, engineless and dusty. It had been retired after its epic series of long distance proving flights for Imperial Airways. Brearley purchased it, and with a Nimbus engine fitted, had it shipped to Fremantle. As soon as this new DH 50, G—AUMC, was made airworthy at Maylands, it set off for Sydney to take part in the Centenary Air Race flown by WAA pilot Bert Heath. He was first to cross the line at the Ascot Racecourse, Perth, at 3.02 pm on October 5, 1929, much to the delight of the large crowd present, but came ninth on handicap. After this pleasant diversion, G—AUMC was put to work on the north-west service to replace G—AUFD which was written off in a crash at Gerladton on May 11.

During 1930, Brearley was looking for a faster aircraft for the Adelaide service, and decided upon the new Vickers Type 198 Viastra. The German Junkers company had sent its representative, Herr Scholl, to Australia to interest Brearley in the new 40-passenger Junkers designs, but the Government air-mail contract specified British or Australian aircraft only. Two Viastras were ordered, and they were painted in Australian markings at the factory before being test flown from Brooklands prior to shipment. The first Viastra, VH—UOO, arrived at Fremantle on February 16, 1931, and was assembled at Maylands under Vickers supervision. It departed from Maylands on its inaugural flight to Adelaide on March 2 flown by Norman Brearley. Among the passengers invited were press men, who were enthusiastic about the new aeroplane's time of 11 hours flying-time to Adelaide, compared with the Hercules average of 15 hours. Also, smoking in flight was permitted and there was a toilet at the rear of the passenger cabin. The second Viastra, VH—UOM, was put on to the run later that year. Meanwhile, Imperial Airways had negotiated with WAA to purchase two of their Hercules to replace some of the Imperial DH 66's lost on their Asian routes, and subsequently VH—UJR and VH—UJQ were sold to them.

The north-west service was continuing smoothly with the DH 50's making their weekly trips between Perth and Derby. By June 1930, the service had carried a total of 7,360 passengers, 1,751,303 letters, and 316,722 lbs of freight. The run was extended one port further, to Wyndham and the first aircraft on the new Perth—Wyndham run left Maylands on July 13, 1930. It was still a weekly run in each direction, but now departing Maylands early Wednesday morning returning the following Monday afternoon. A new type was now introduced, the DH 61 Giant Moth. A nine-passenger biplane, they had much greater payload than the smaller DH 50's and became the workhorses of the northern run. They were, VH—UTL, purchased from MacRobertson—Miller Aviation Co. Pty. Ltd., Adelaide, and VH—UQJ, which had been imported from England, being formerly operated by National Flying Services Ltd., as G—AAAN. It was unloaded at Fremantle from the ss *Mooltan* on February 1, 1932, and was soon assembled.

Back on the Adelaide service things were not progressing so well. The Viastras were having continual problems with their geared-drive engines. The direct drive version of the Jupiter had given excellent service in the Hercules and although Vickers were sympathetic to the problem, they could offer no solution. On the morning of October 11, 1933, the Viastra VH—UOM was climbing out of Maylands for the east, when the port motor seized causing the wooden prop to shatter and slice through the fuselage. Its pilot, Harry "Cannonball" Baker, made a forced landing, without damage, in a cabbage patch in the suburb of Redcliffe. The passengers were immediately dispatched for Adelaide by Hercules and the Viastra was taken back to Maylands by road where it was abandoned in the hangar. The Viastra languished in the hangar until June 1939 when it was broken up by scrap merchants.

Just before the Viastra incident, a new type had been imported for use on both the Adelaide and the Wyndham routes. This was a brand-new DH 84 Dragon VH—URE, which arrived at Fremantle on July 21, 1933. The Dragon had been



De Havilland DH 50 VH-UEL at Maylands in an unusual colour scheme.

via J. Hopton



De Havilland DH 66 Hercules G-AUJQ loading passengers at Maylands.

via M.W. Prime



De Havilland DH 84 Dragon VH-URE at Port Hedland in 1934. Colour scheme is dark blue/silver.

via M.W. Prime

fitted with an extra window in the rear of each side of the fuselage for the benefit of passengers when the aircraft was used for joy-riding, as its normal eight passenger seats could be quickly converted to eleven seats. VH-URE did its first service up the coast in late August flown by Brearley who described it as "the nicest machine I have ever flown. The convenience of being able to converse with passengers during flight made a wonderful difference". A second Dragon was ordered soon after, VH-URO, which was to be used on the Adelaide run. It was fitted with six passenger seats initially and no toilet when it entered service on April 24. VH-URE was badly damaged on April 25, when it hit the aerodrome fence on take-off at Geraldton. The four passengers and pilot, Stanley Brearley, were unhurt and the former were transferred to DH 61 VH-UQJ next day to continue north. However a few minutes out of Geraldton the Giant Moth's cabin filled with smoke and it made a forced landing in a paddock. The luckless passengers eventually headed north by DH 50 and the Dragon's wreckage was trucked back to Maylands for a lengthy rebuild. VH-URE was back in service in August 1934, and VH-URO continued on the Adelaide service until December 28 that year when sold to W.R. Carpenter & Co. Ltd. of Sydney for use in their New Guinea operation. It was flown to Sydney for modifications by de Havillands before being ferried to New Guinea.

1934 was the year that began the end of WAA. Early in the year it was decided by the Government to extend the Wyndham route to Daly Waters, NT, where it would join up with the new Empire Air Mail Scheme. Qantas Empire Airways Ltd. were to carry mail from Sydney to Singapore where it would be carried on to England by Imperial Airways. A subsidiary route from Charleville Q. to Cootamundra NSW, would handle the Melbourne and Adelaide mails, while the extended north-west route would cater for the Western Australian mails. Commencement of these services to carry overseas air-mail naturally involved termination of the existing contracts, and tenders were called for the necessary new services. To the surprise of the Australian, and indeed, the world aviation industry, the Commonwealth Government awarded the contract for the WA services not to the well-established WAA, but to MacRobertson-Miller Aviation Co. Pty. Ltd. of Parafield who had tendered for a lower subsidy than WAA. MMA had been carrying out a small operation from Parafield for several years, serving South Australian country centres. While they prepared to move to Perth to take over the north-west service, a rather bewildered WAA organisation was clearing out their offices and hangars along this route. MMA commenced the run in October 1934.

Throughout the 12 years that WAA had operated this service they had earned a wonderful reputation with the residents of the north, and the world's airlines. At first glance it is difficult to understand the Government's decision, however, behind the scenes it was known that some members of the Civil Aviation Branch were not happy with Brearley's operations - there had been a number of incidents and confrontations over the years, mainly disputes over the modification of aircraft and flying of allegedly unairworthy aeroplanes. Poor communications between Perth and the east, and the economics of keeping the airline operating had caused Brearley to make a number of modifications to his aircraft first, and refer the details to the Branch afterwards rather than submit details for approval first, with the subsequent lengthy delays. From the very beginning the Company had made necessary conversions to its aircraft, ranging from redesigned rudders for the Bristol Tourers when it was found the controls were too heavy for long flights; to fitting extra fuel tanks and seats to later types. Whatever the reasons for the Government's action, on September 26, 1934, a heavily-laden DH 61 Giant Moth left Wyndham for the south on the last WAA coastal service. The pilot was Arthur Affleck, and as well as a full load of passengers, mail and freight, four spare propellers were carried, lashed to the wings. When that tired group climbed from their aeroplane on arrival at Maylands, an era was ended....

WAA now concentrated on the Adelaide service, while MMA settled in on its north-west run with its new fleet of Dragons. The contract for the Adelaide service expired on March 1, 1934, and the route was no longer subsidised by the Government, but Brearley was able to continue by entering into a contract with the Post-Master General's Department for the carriage of mail at poundage rates. However, when the Empire Air Mail Scheme opened at the end of the year, the volume of Perth-Adelaide air-mail fell off heavily and WAA was unable to cover its costs purely from passenger fares and the postal contracts. Hence in February 1935, after consultations with the Commonwealth Government, Brearley was able to have the route returned to the subsidised category. The service continued with the Dragon VH-URE as the main aircraft. Some of the older aircraft were spaced along the route as back-up aircraft, with the remainder of the fleet stored at Maylands awaiting disposal. The two Giant Moths VH-UQJ and VH-UTL, were sold to Guinea Airways on June 21, 1935, and were dismantled and shipped to New Guinea.

In July 1935, a DH 89 Dragon Rapide VH-UUO was purchased for the Adelaide service to become main aircraft, with the Dragon as back-up. This Rapide had been flown in the Centenary Air Race from England to Melbourne in 1934, as ZK-ACO, Race Number "60", and after a short time in New Zealand returned to Melbourne for resale. As 1936 began, the Rapide was still busily engaged on its weekly trips between Adelaide and Perth, but over in Melbourne discussions were being held between the heads of three large shipping companies to form a new Australia-wide airline (Australian National Airways Pty. Ltd.).

Holymans Airways Pty. Ltd. which had operated between Melbourne and Tasmania for several years, as a subsidiary of the shipping line William Holyman & Sons Pty. Ltd. was to be merged with Adelaide Airways Ltd. This company had been

formed by the Adelaide Steamship Co. Ltd. and Orient Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. and was flying between Adelaide and Melbourne, Broken Hill and SA country centres. To extend the route coverage of the proposed new airline, it was decided that an offer would be made to WAA to take-over their Perth-Adelaide operation. With the combined capital of these large firms, Brearley could not refuse the offer which was made through Adelaide Airways Ltd., and on July 1, 1936, the assets and services of WAA were taken over. On the same date ANA was formally incorporated.

Thus ANA began its services with routes stretching between Sydney and Perth and south to Tasmania, and soon had its new Douglas DC-2s on the long Adelaide-Perth sector. The WAA aircraft were absorbed into ANA's fleet or resold. The two DH 66 Hercules had been sold to E.J. Stephens, Wau, New Guinea, in April 1936. Norman Brearley departed Maylands at 9.00 am on April 1 in VH-UJP on its delivery flight. VH-UJO was delayed, being at Forrest in unairworthy condition, and was finally ferried to Sydney then to Wau in late 1937 by James Woods (now with MMA).

And so ended West Australian Airways Ltd. — the first regular airline in Australia, and the last of the pioneer services to survive in its original form.

Western Australian Airways Ltd./West Australian Airways Ltd. — Fleet List

| Reg. | Type | c/n | Date on | Date off | Disposal |
|---|--------------------|--------|----------|----------|--|
| | Avro 504J | | | 21. 1.21 | Sold to J. McIntosh |
| G-AUCL | Avro 504J | | 28. 6.21 | 27. 6.31 | To Perth Technical College |
| G-AUDF | Bristol Tourer | 6108 | 23.11.21 | | DBF 25. 1.25 at Onslow. ex G-EAXK |
| G-AUDG | Bristol Tourer | 6111 | 28. 6.21 | | To Wilson Air Service, Sydney |
| G-AUDH | Bristol Tourer | 6115 | 28. 6.21 | | CR 15. 7.24 at Port Hedland |
| G-AUDI | Bristol Tourer | 6116 | 28. 6.21 | | CR 5.12.21 at Murchison River |
| G-AUDJ | Bristol Tourer | 6118 | 28. 6.21 | | To C. Kingsford-Smith & K. Anderson, Sydney |
| G-AUDK | Bristol Tourer | 6119 | 28. 6.21 | | To C. Kingsford-Smith & K. Anderson, Sydney |
| The registration date is the official Civil Aviation Branch date and for G-AUDG to G-AUDK is obviously back-dated since the aircraft were not even ordered in June. | | | | | |
| G-AUDX | Bristol Tourer | 6113 | 1. 3.23 | | To F.T. O'Dea, Sydney |
| G-AUDZ | Bristol Tourer | 6115 | 12.11.24 | | To F.T. O'Dea, Sydney |
| G-AUEL | De Havilland 50A | 127 | 28.10.24 | 1. 7.36 | To ANA |
| G-AUEM | De Havilland 50A | 128 | 28.10.24 | 1. 7.36 | To ANA |
| G-AUFD | De Havilland 50 | 1(WAA) | 1.12.26 | | CR 11. 5.29 at Geraldton |
| G-AUFE | De Havilland 50 | 2(WAA) | 22.12.26 | 1. 7.36 | To ANA |
| G-AUFN | De Havilland 50 | 3(WAA) | 8. 7.27 | 7. 7.33 | Withdrawn from service |
| G-AUEY | De Havilland 50A | 73 | 10. 4.26 | 9. 4.35 | CofA expired, to ANA, ex G-EBFN |
| G-AUFI | De Havilland 60 | | 15. 2.27 | | CR 18. 7.27 at East Perth |
| G-AUFG | De Havilland 60 | | 13. 4.27 | 3. 3.30 | To Department of Defence |
| G-AUGO | De Havilland 60X | 424 | 13. 9.27 | 3. 3.30 | To Department of Defence |
| G-AUJO | De Havilland 66 | 344 | 28. 5.29 | 4. 4.36 | To E.J. Stephens, New Guinea, "City of Perth" |
| G-AUJP | De Havilland 66 | 345 | 27. 5.29 | 4. 4.36 | To E.J. Stephens, New Guinea, "City of Adelaide" |
| G-AUJQ | De Havilland 66 | 346 | 29. 5.29 | 26. 5.31 | To Imperial Airways as G-ABMT |
| G-AUJR | De Havilland 66 | 347 | 21. 6.29 | 19. 6.30 | To Imperial Airways as G-ABCP |
| G-AUMC | De Havilland 50J | 74 | 18. 9.29 | 9. 9.34 | CofA lapsed, ex G-EBFO |
| VH-UOO | Vickers Vialtra II | 1 | 18. 2.31 | 17. 2.36 | CofA expired, to ANA and sold |
| VH-UOM | Vickers Vialtra II | 2 | 8.10.31 | | CR 11.10.33 at Redcliffe. Broken up 1939 |
| VH-UTL | De Havilland 61 | 326 | 7. 5.31 | 21. 6.35 | To Guinea Airways, ex G-EBTL |
| VH-UGJ | De Havilland 61 | 331 | 25. 2.32 | 21. 6.35 | To Guinea Airways, ex G-AAAN |
| VH-URE | De Havilland 84 | 6029 | 29. 8.33 | 1. 7.36 | To ANA as Yannana |
| VH-URO | De Havilland 84 | 6068 | 21. 4.34 | 28.12.34 | To W.R. Carpenter & Co., New Guinea |
| VH-UUO | De Havilland 89 | 6259 | 7. 7.35 | 1. 7.36 | To ANA as Malonga ex ZK-ACO |

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