

HISTORIC EAGLE FARM AERODROME TO CLOSE DOWN

At the end of this month Eagle Farm aerodrome as such will be no more, for the new aerodrome at Rocklea will then be the centre of aviation in Brisbane. To many the change will be accepted with a pang of regret, for Eagle Farm has many historic associations, and has been closely allied with the remarkable developments that have taken place in aviation - particularly from its commercial aspect during the last six years. It has also been the scene of many historic flights, and many world-famous aviators have been seen on the ground.

However, the new ground at Rocklea will have many advantages. First of all it is nearly three times the size of Eagle Farm, is on well drained country, and is no farther from the heart of the city. It lies off the main Ipswich road near Rocklea in close proximity to the new Kyogle line.

All the hangars at Eagle Farm will be shifted to the new ground. Q.A.N.T.A.S. have already erected a new hangar there, large enough to house any machine at present in Australia. Other companies now operating in Brisbane also intend to erect hangars and offices there, and in a short time there should be at least 30 aeroplanes with their headquarters at Rocklea. It is scarcely six years since the Eagle Farm aerodrome was formally placed under the control of the Civil Aviation Department but since that date — April, 1925 — flying, particularly in its commercial aspect, has made remarkable strides in Queensland. Today there are several strong companies operating with Eagle Farm as their headquarters, and almost every part of the State is linked by air with the capital, while the daily service to Sydney forms a permanent connection with the big southern aerial services. Looking back on the early days of flying in this state, and before Eagle Farm came into existence, there was a little band of pioneer aviators whose long vision convinced them that big developments were possible in Queensland. Among the earliest was Arthur Jones, known locally as the Warwick aviator, for it was there that he assembled his biplane, and flew successfully in many parts of Australia. Later he was challenged by an American named Wizard Stone, who was probably the first to bring a speedy monoplane to this State.

However, Stone was an unlucky flyer, crashing in an attempt to land on the Exhibition oval, and also meeting with trouble on the Ascot racecourse. This latter place was mostly used in the early days, for it was the only large cleared space of land near the heart of the city, but wind conditions were not always favourable. Jones was an old war pilot, and is now in Sydney.

When Bird Fell

Later, W. Bird and Percy Snell, both Brisbane pilots, used a flat piece of land at Bulimba. On one occasion Bird was flying with a passenger near the aerodrome when he met with engine trouble. He endeavoured to make a

forced landing on the aerodrome, but it was so packed with people that he had no choice but to land in the river. He pancaked the machine down very skilfully, and, quickly getting out from the pilot's seat, was able to rescue his passenger under the water.

Several other aviators had kept the ball rolling, and Jack Treacy had been using Eagle Farm for two years prior to its being taken over by the department.

There was no shelter for his machine on the ground, and frequently when he arrived there early in the morning he would find that the cows had poked their horns through the wings, and he would have to get busy with dope to fix them up before he could make a flight. At that time Eagle Farm was a grazing area for stock, and it was far from ideal for flying owing to the number of old tree stumps and the rough state of the surface. However, Treacy made many successful flights there.

Area of 88 Acres

After the formation of the Civil Aviation Department negotiations were started for the use of Eagle Farm, and early in 1925 an area of 88 acres was secured.

Before the ground was officially opened in April of that year, the department erected one large hangar and a home for the groundsman, who was sent up from Melbourne to take charge. For two years there was not very much development in the way of flying, except for an occasional machine from the south or one of the Q.A.N.T.A.S. aeroplanes from Longreach. There were then no regular services from Brisbane to other parts, Q.A.N.T.A.S., having its headquarters at Longreach, and concentrating its attention on the western services from Charleville north.

One of the first machines to visit Brisbane was an Avro flown by Captain W. Wilson, who was accompanied by Lieut. C. P. Ulm. Messrs Marconi and Treacy also had an Avro, mostly used for joy flights, and in those days they used to get fancy prices for a short run in the machine, passengers paying from one to five guineas, according to the trip made. Now, it is possible to get a flight at Eagle Farm for as low as five shillings, indicative of the progress that has been made in engine and aircraft design.

First Big Advance

The first big advance so far as commercial flying was concerned was started by Messrs D. G. Brims and Sons, of Milton. They secured a DH.9 and an Avro, which were later purchased by a newspaper company for the transport of newspapers between Brisbane and Toowoomba at the end of 1926. Another Avro was purchased from Mr. Edgar Percival in Sydney, and later this

machine crashed on the Toowoomba trip early in the following year, a passenger losing his life.

This unfortunate occurrence brought about a discontinuance of the service, which was beginning to make good progress so far as passenger carrying was concerned, while it had reduced the fares very considerably. It had also proved a great success for joy flights at Eagle Farm, and as many as 270 passengers were carried in one week-end.

However, in spite of the accident, much had been done to popularise flying, and the use of such pilots as Ron Adair, I. Welby, Edgar Percival and later Captain Charles Mathieson had inspired the public with much confidence. Captain Mathieson had previously been chief instructor at Point Cook, and he is still in Brisbane actively associated with aviation. George Boehm was the chief engineer to the company, and he is now building the all-Australian aircraft in Sydney — the Genairco. Mr. Adair stayed in Brisbane with Mr. Marconi making many fine flights, after which he promoted and organised a company which had been carrying on very successfully for the last two years, known as Aircrafts Ltd.

Captain Mathieson went to New Guinea, and later to America, to select suitable types of machines for the carriage of passengers and freights from the coast to the New Guinea goldfields. On one occasion in Queensland Captain Mathieson was flying back from Toowoomba with two passengers over very bad country near Pine mountain. Owing to engine trouble he had to make a forced landing in a paddock, which from the air scarcely looked the size of a pocket handkerchief. However, he effected a perfect landing, and while the machine was in the paddock a new engine was installed. He successfully rose from the paddock, but had only been in the air 10 minutes when the engine seized and he had to make another forced landing. The position was even worse than on the first occasion, but he managed to get down without damage to himself or his aeroplane. It was impossible to fly out, and the machine had to be dismantled and brought back to Brisbane.

The machines, (sic) owned by the company previously mentioned, were afterwards sold to a firm in New Guinea, and was used to carry gold and stores between the aerodrome on the coast there and Eadie Creek.

Formation of Aero Club

With interest in flying being constantly stirred up by the activities of the earlier aviators, it was only natural that many young men should be looking forward to an opportunity to equip themselves for this new form of transport. A little band of enthusiasts, including a number of experienced pilots, formed the aero club while Q.A.N.T.A.S. was running the Brisbane Flying School. This firm purchased two Moths, which were then quite unique in the State, and they were tested out for practical flying purposes at Eagle Farm, on March 15, 1927.

The pilots were Messrs. L. J. Brain and Hudson Fysh and after the first trial flight the writer of this article (no byline - Ed) was taken up by Mr. Brain for half an hour, checks being taken on air speeds, altitudes, etc., for record purposes.

Prior to this little had been heard of Mr. Brain, who had previously completed his course as a pilot at Point Cook, whence he was appointed to the western circuit of the company, with which he is still connected. He had, however, made one momentous flight across the desert of Australia, taking a man named Stark into Central Australia on a prospecting tour. Later Mr. Brain was to make himself famous by his finding of the wreckage of the machine in which Keith Anderson and Hitchcock lost their lives, and by another discovery of a smashed machine on the coast of North Australia, when Moir and Owen arrived. When the Queensland section of the Australian Aero Club was firmly established, the original machines that Q.A.N.T.A.S. had used in the flying school for instructional purposes were taken over by the Civil Aviation Department and made available on loan to the Aero Club. These Moths were fitted with dual controls, and a portable telephone between pilot and pupil, and many fine young pilots learned their first lesson in flying on these machines. One of the machines GAUFR, is still in active commission, and the other GAUFL, crashed some time ago in the Brisbane River when the pilot and a passenger were circling the Albatross to say farewell to their naval friends. The crash resulted in the death of the passenger. Mr. Brain was for a long time the instructor of flying for the school but more latterly that office was filled by Mr. C. W. A. Scott. The latter was an English pilot, who was also engaged by Q.A.N.T.A.S. in the handling of their big machines on the mail runs. Mr. Scott left a fortnight ago for England by the Bendigo, and intends to make an attempt on the solo flight record put up by Air Commodore Kingsford Smith, his objective being eight and a half days from Croydon to Darwin. Mr. Brain is again acting as instructor.

Queenslanders Become Pilots

A lot of fine young pilots have been turned out from this school in the last three years, and among them may be mentioned Jules Moxon, Donald Cameron, Tom Young, W. Crowther, W. A. Cameron, Cyril Brett, Keith Virtue, A. S. Cameron, Jack Moran, Cyril Broom, and several others. Most of them are now engaged in commercial flying and they have shown that the Queenslanders make a very cool and capable aviator. That they have become first-class pilots is proved by the fact that several of them are today handling big machines. Tom Young is now with Sky Travels, and is successfully handling the big Junker (sic) monoplane which is running on a service between Brisbane and St. George and Goondiwindi. Keith Virtue now has his headquarters at Lismore where a company is operating a service on the Northern Rivers linking-up with Brisbane. That company has a fleet of four machines, including a Ryan monoplane.

This machine has a history, as its first pilot was the late Keith Anderson. Later, Wally Shiers and the late Dave Smith made an attempt to fly to England in this machine, but they crashed in Siam and that ended the big flight. This Northern Rivers company also owns a Puss Moth, a Gipsy Moth and a Genairco all-Australian-built aeroplane, and Keith Virtue has shown his versatility as a pilot by handling all these types of aircraft.

Cyril Brett is now a pilot with the Queensland Air Navigation Co., flying the Moths as a rule, but he also acts as pilot of the big three-engined machines on the Northern run. W.A. Crowther is with Maryborough Airways, and is doing a lot of flying in that district.

Don Cameron is with Aircraft Pty. Ltd. and has certainly developed into a first-class pilot. He handles the Hawk Moth, one of the latest types in Brisbane and frequently does the run between the capital and Toowoomba. He also pilots the American Waco, both these machines being powered with Wright engines. Jack Moran and Jules Moxon have formed a company under the name of Air Schools and Taxis, and they have the services of K. M. Frew as instructor and chief pilot. They have a number of pupils in training and are using a Moth for instructional work. Captain C. C Mathieson is also running a successful flying school at Eagle Farm, using a Moth machine, and negotiations are in progress for the purchase of one or two more machines of this type. He has over 20 pupils in training at the present time.

The Aero Club has since added to its original fleet the department having given it another Moth. The club has also purchased a Moth, while it also has a DH9 for advanced training.

At the present time there are three large hangars at Eagle Farm aerodrome one of these being the Civil Aviation Department hangar; next to it is the one used by Q.A.N.T.A.S., while farther over is a hangar more recently constructed for the Queensland Air Navigation Company. The Australian National Airways has no hangar at Eagle Farm, the big machines being left in the open field close to the office and petrol station.

Many Companies Operating

The Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services is the oldest commercial flying company in the State, but it is only comparatively recently that its headquarters have been shifted from Longreach to Brisbane. The company has several different types of machines in the fleet, from Moths up to the big De Havilland aeroplanes for the long passenger services. The latter link up Brisbane with the west, and then extend from Charleville through Longreach to the far north-west of Camooweal.

The company has a wonderful record of safe trips, and only one serious accident has occurred in the millions of miles flown in passenger-carrying and taxi work. In Brisbane machines are kept for local passenger work, and for any description of taxi trips. The company is agent for the Puss Moth and De Havilland machines.

Aircrafts Pty. Ltd., also has its headquarters at Eagle Farm, and has had a successful run in the field of aviation. For the last two years the company has been carrying on general taxi work and local passenger carrying.

There are probably few companies in the world which have equalled the record put up by Australian National Airways, the company for which Kingsford Smith was largely responsible, and with which he is still connected as joint managing director with Charles Ulm. Except for a slight hold-up on the initial passenger carrying trip from Brisbane to Sydney, the service has been, maintained in a remarkably efficient manner. The fleet comprises three-engined Avro 10's, which are Fokker machines built by Avro under licence, and they are capable of carrying 10 passengers. All the machines have typical aerial names, such as the (Southern) Moon, Star, Cloud, Sun, and Sky, while, of course, the original Smith machine, the Southern Cross, is famous the world over. The chief pilot is Mr. T. W. Shortridge, and others who handle these machines from the pilot's cockpit are Messrs. G. U. Allen, J. A. Mollison, P. W. L. Bloss, E. J. Stevens, R.F.C., R.A., and D. Pentland (the famous Jerry Pentland, of War Birds) who has a string of decorations, Eric Chaseling, and Charles Ulm. The average time of the trip between Brisbane and Sydney is 4¾ hours, and this links up with a similar service to Melbourne.

The Queensland Air Navigation Co. was the outcome of enthusiastic organisation by Jack Treacy, who, in spite of rebuffs in all quarters, persisted with his scheme to link Brisbane with the northern coastal towns. This might be termed the Star line, for the machines are mostly named after some town, such as the Star of Townsville. The early days were difficult ones, but more recently the service has been most efficient.

The fleet comprises two three-engined Avro 10's. The company also runs a flying school in Brisbane and another in Townsville. The pilots include Messrs. George M'Causland, H. J. Branch, and Cyril Brett, while Mr. Jack Treacy is chief pilot and technical adviser.

Sky Travels is the most recent company operating at Eagle Farm, having been sponsored by Mr. Tom Bishop, a pioneer of the motor industry. The company owns three machines: a Junker F13, a three-seater Simmons Spartan, and a Cirrus Moth. The chief pilot is Mr. Tom Young, and the other pilot is Mr. K. Foxcroft Jones. The company also runs a flying school, and has a number of pupils in training.

First Lady Pilot

It is interesting to note that Mr. Bishop's daughter is the well-known lady pilot, Mrs. Reis, who was amongst the first lot of pupils to be trained in Brisbane, and was the first woman to gain her certificate. Since that time she has done quite a considerable amount of cross country flying. On only one occasion has she ever had the slightest trouble, and that was in landing on the St. George racecourse, when she struck a post on the ground. The machine tipped over,

but the plucky pilot escaped unhurt. This is recognised as a difficult ground on which to make a landing.

Several other ladies have also gained their flying certificates, including Dr. Christina Rivett and Mrs. Nesbitt, and at the present time Captain Mathieson has three ladies undergoing instruction.

Some Famous Flights

Amongst the early oversea flyers to come to Brisbane were Ray Parer and M'Intosh (the latter has since been killed), whose remarkable achievement in an old machine was never properly recognised. They landed at Lytton, for at that time Eagle Farm was not used by pilots for landing. Keith and Ross Smith, in their historic flight from England, did not fly to Brisbane, and officially Charleville was recognised as the completion of their flight, and a cairn of empty petrol tins for long marked the place where they landed.

Bert Hinkler created history for Queensland with his wonderful solo flight from England to Australia, and his epic performance was especially pleasing in that he was born in this state. He was followed by Captain Lancaster and Mrs. Miller, and this lady pilot is now flying in America, and is having some hair-breadth adventures there.

Another historic flight was that of Kingsford Smith when he conquered the Pacific with the Southern Cross— a feat that has never yet been attempted by any other pilot. Kingsford Smith was also a native of Queensland, and since that time has created a new time record in a solo flight from England in an Avro Avian machine fitted with a Gipsy engine.

Miss Amy Johnson, the English pilot reached Brisbane after her solo flight and made a sensational landing at Eagle Farm after a most strenuous trip from the old land. Major di Pinedo, the famous Italian aviator, also came to Brisbane, but as he was piloting a machine which only landed on the water, he came to rest on the Brisbane river. More recent pilots who have been seen at Eagle Farm are Lieutenant C. W. Hill, who put up such a marvellous flight in a standard Gipsy Moth from England, only to crash in the last stages of a very fast flight, and Captain Froude Matthews, in a Puss Moth, who is making another attempt to break the record between Darwin and England. Major H. De Havilland, another old time war pilot, has often flown to Brisbane from the south and has taken part in several aerial Derbies at Eagle Farm. As a rule he brings along a new machine, which is always a centre of interest to the pilots and the flying enthusiasts.

The Royal Air Force Wapitis, the all purpose war machines, have also made several visits to Brisbane, while the supermarines of the Royal Air Force, which have made coastal surveys and visits to the far east, have also called at Brisbane, and landed on the river.

Reference has also been made to the flying accomplishments of Mr. Lester Brain, but another old Q.A.N.T.A.S. pilot with a fine record is Captain Percy

Moody. He learned his flying in the hard old days when machines were not comparable with those of today, and that knowledge and experience stood him well on the western route and in long passenger-carrying flights between Brisbane and Charleville. For a time he was engaged in carrying passengers and stores from the New Guinea coast to the goldfields, and bringing back cargoes of gold. He also visited America, and is now engaged flying privately.

An Historic Machine

Always an object of interest at Eagle Farm aerodrome is a BE2E biplane which was built in 1915, but is still going strong. It was one of the machines brought out in the first place by Messrs. Bird and Snell, and was purchased from them by Mr. Darcy Jonkin, of Meteor Downs. Later it was sold to Mr. A. J. Driver, and has recently been secured by Fleming Aerial Services of Sydney. This machine was beaten by scarcely more than a length for second place in the first aerial derby held in Brisbane, Jack Treacy being the pilot. He also flew the machine to Bundaberg at the time of Bert Hinkler's arrival. His passenger was Captain Reg Plant and they were the bearers of messages of congratulation from the United Service Club to the famous Queensland flier.

The old machine's career was checked by a fence at the aerodrome, the crash breaking her propellor and undercarriage, and she was dismantled for a time. She has since been reconditioned and is flying quite well again. This is the type of machine which shot down the first Zeppelin in England, and many of its kind did most valuable work for Britain and her allies in war days.

The Man in Charge

But there is no more familiar figure at Eagle Farm aerodrome than that of Mr. Andrew Lauchlan, whose official position is groundsman, and who keeps a complete record of every flight made by machines from the ground, the arrival of aeroplanes from other parts and their departures. "Andy", as he is popularly known, has a wonderful memory for machines, and has been closely associated with the Australian Air Force since the war. He saw service with the infantry on the other side, and joined the air force on his return. He holds a ground engineer's certificate, and hopes before long to qualify as a pilot. He has done a lot of flying with departmental machines, and has been with the department in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, coming here six years ago to take charge at Eagle Farm.

Lauchlan will take charge at Rocklea when the aerodrome is opened there, and is of the opinion that this will be one of the finest aerodromes in the southern hemisphere. With an area of 220 acres, which is nearly three times the size of Eagle Farm, there will be ample room for the largest type of machine to land. The country is naturally drained, and the soil is so good that he does not think it will be necessary to construct concrete runways.

One of the problems at Eagle Farm has always been its drainage, for it is old tea-tree, swampy country, which got very boggy after a long spell of wet weather. However, Eagle Farm has a fine record for its freedom from accidents, and there has never been a fatality on the ground. This reflects great credit on the various instructors and pilots, and it is his opinion that these aviators are as safe and efficient flyers as could be found in any part of the world.

The Inventive Side

Although Q.A.N.T.A.S. has been building machines at Longreach for several years, little has been done in this direction in Brisbane. However, among what might be termed the younger school of flyers, the inventive faculties are at work. Mr. L. W. Fordham who is a pupil of the Aero Club, and is now the Shell representative in the Gympie district, is constructing a machine of his own design, having purchased a Cirrus engine. Mr. Fordham is a master mariner and was on a patrol ship during the war, these being better known as the mysterious Q boats. He was also in the Royal Flying Corps for a time. He was the skipper of the Government of India salvage ship and has had a lot of diving experience.

A company which is now being registered in Brisbane is Aircrafts of Australia, and connected with this is Mr. G. N. Wickner, an engineer graduate of Sydney University. Mr. Wickner is constructing an aeroplane of special design, a high-wing monoplane type. He has also built a number of gliders and was the first to make a flight in a glider at Eagle Farm. He is now undergoing the instructional course in flying so as to get his pilot's certificate.

To wind up the activities of Eagle Farm aerodrome, the Flying Corps Association, which is composed of members of the air force during the war, intends to hold an aerial pageant at Eagle Farm on January 31. It is expected that Air Commodore Kingsford Smith as well as other well-known pilots, will take part in the various events as well as the local flyers. A Queen of the Air carnival and art union will be associated with the pageant, the object being to build up the provident fund of the association. The first prize in the art union will be a pilot's certificate, entitling the winner to a course of instruction to equip him as such.

The Sunday Mail, Brisbane, January 11, 1931

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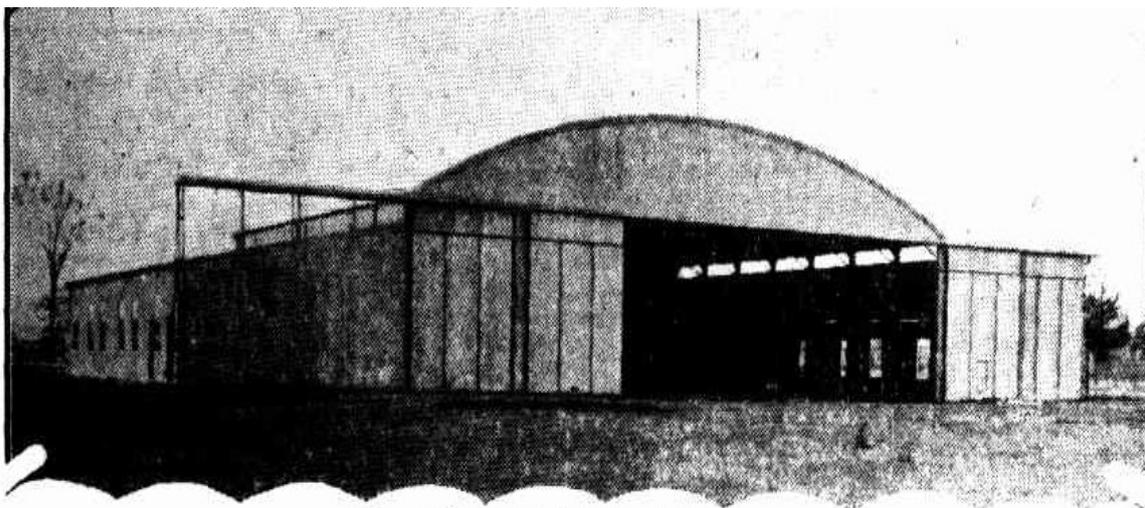
The Complete Page



Two of the more significant images are shown below.



Short telegraph poles which had to be erected to allow of a clear passage for aeroplanes.



The newly-erected hangar at Rocklea