

# TO SINGAPORE and BACK BY AIR

Gannet Plane, supplied by Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd., registers fine performance.

SELECTED by the Cabinet to represent the Commonwealth of Australia at the official opening of the King George V graving dock at Singapore in February last, Air Vice Marshal R. Williams, Chief of the Air Staff of the R.A.A.F. elected to travel by air in order to save time.

Included in his programme also were official calls upon the Naval and Military authorities of the Netherlands Indies and certain inspections of defence works within the Commonwealth. As considerable delays at certain places visited would have occurred had the normal civil air services been used, it was decided that an R.A.A.F. aircraft and crew would be employed.

A "Gannet" was considered the most suitable aircraft available for the flight, so a new machine was delivered by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty. Ltd. on Friday, February 4. Preparations were completed on the following day, and on Sunday, February 6, the party, consisting of the Chief of the Air Staff, pilot, fitter, and wireless operator, took off from Laverton.

The route followed was to Brisbane, and thence along that used by Imperial Airways. After leaving Darwin stops for refuelling were made at Koepang, Rambang, Sourabaya, Batavia, and Palembang. At all these places, as well as at Singapore, a lively interest in the aircraft was

By  
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At right:  
Air Vice-Marshal R. Williams (second from left) photographed with Sergeant Taylor (left), Squadron-Leader A. L. Walters, and Sergeant Connolly on their return from Singapore.



displayed, particularly as it was known to be of Australian design and manufacture. Although headwinds were met throughout a great part of the outward flight, Singapore was reached in time for Air Vice Marshal R. Williams to commence his programme as planned. Only routine inspections of the aircraft and engines were necessary to prepare for the flight home.

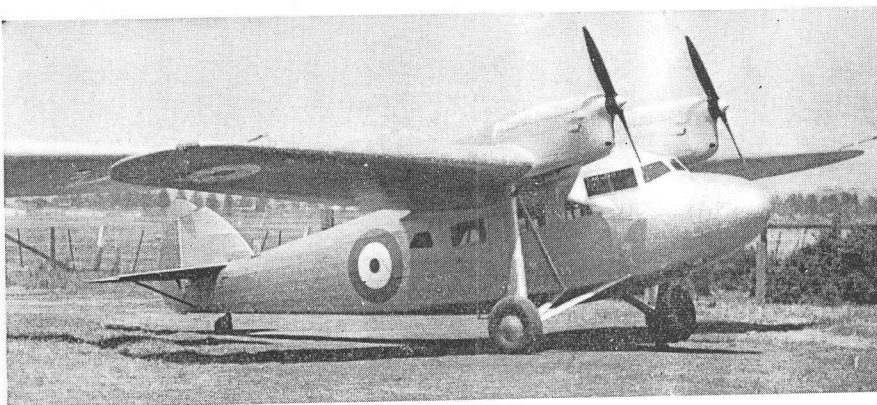
Whilst at Singapore notification of a meeting of the Council of Defence in Melbourne on Friday, February 25, received by the Air Vice Marshal, caused him to alter his schedule. The date of return to Laverton was originally Monday, February 28.

Leaving Singapore early on the morning of the 16th, it was possible to pay the necessary calls at Batavia, Bandoeng, and Sourabaya, and arrive

at Koepang on the evening of the 18th. On the return flight, although favoured by following winds, the advantage of longer daylight hours had been lost. In order to save more time the C.A.S. decided at this stage to make direct for Derby rather than to Darwin and then overland. By doing this, and lengthening the daily stages slightly, Perth was reached on Sunday 20th. With plenty of time in hand a twenty-four hour stop was made at Pearce, the new R.A.A.F. station in Western Australia. Leaving there on Monday afternoon, the flight ended at Laverton shortly before noon two days later.

Of the seventeen and a half days away, six had been used by the Air Vice Marshal on his official duties, so that the 11,000 miles were covered at the average daily rate of 1000 miles. If the flight was remarkable in any way, it was for its lack of untoward incident, and its demonstration of the capabilities of an Australian-built aircraft. Although overloaded throughout, no difficulties in handling the "Gannet" were experienced at any time.

On his arrival at Laverton, five days ahead of his original schedule, Air Vice Marshal Williams expressed his satisfaction with the behaviour of the aircraft and engines during the trip. He was enthusiastically supported in this view by the R.A.A.F. crew who had accompanied him on the flight.



The Australian Gannet Plane.