

# First Wirraway In Successful Test

27-3-39

Australia's first Australian-made warplane—Wirraway No. 1—made its first flight today, and came through satisfactorily.

Much faster than any plane in the Royal Australian Air Force, and, on specification, the fastest plane in the country, the Wirraway proved by its flight today that the Commonwealth, even besieged, need not lack the most modern weapons of war.

With the Fishermen's Bend factory siren screeching, and watched eagerly by the hundreds of men who had helped to build the plane, the test pilot (Flight-Lieut. H. Boss-Walker), in his shirt sleeves, climbed in and taxied to the south end of the testing ground.

When he opened the throttle the Wirraway started fast up the field, had its tail up in a few yards, and, although the pilot obviously was holding it down intentionally, was into the air in only 400 yards.

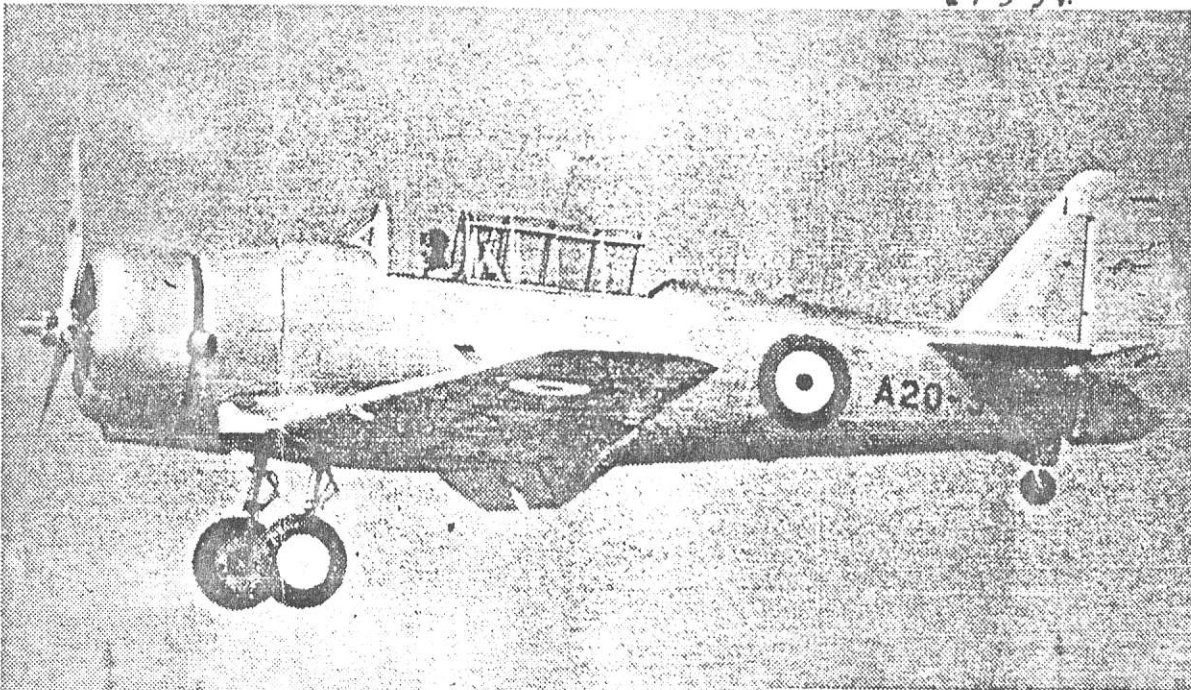
With the first test of 15 minutes—simply a preliminary flight—satisfactorily passed, the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation is confident that the plane will come as well through the rigorous trials that await it before it is accepted by the Royal Australian Air Force.

The Minister for Defence (Mr. Street), the directors of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and several senior technical officers of the Royal Australian Air Force watched the test.

Wing-Commander L. J. Wackett, general manager of the Corporation, was on the roof with other executives, and the airborne Wirraway vindicated his judgment.

## WIRRAWAY IN THE AIR

27-3-39



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★ THE FIRST WIRRAWAY of the 100 of this type to be built for the R.A.A.F. by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, landing after the first test flight at Fishermen's Bend today. The wing flaps can be seen in the lowered position.

# GENTLY BY PILOT ON ITS FIRST FLIGHT

27-3-39

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Treating Wirraway No. 1 with the respect due to a plane that had never before left the ground, Flight-Lieut. Boss-Walker, in the preliminary test today, climbed gently toward the city, turned and flew around the port and over Footscray, keeping the engine well throttled back.

He raised and lowered the wheels of the retractable undercarriage several times, then lowered his flaps and approached over the river for a model landing.

When Wirraway No. 1 had taxied back to the hangar door and the engine had been stopped, the visitors inspected it closely, and had pointed out to them the many ways in which it is a great improvement on the NA33, the American model.

Factory executives showed them the altered engine cowling and air scoop, and the slight change in the cowling ahead of the pilot, necessitated by installing two guns.

What interested Air Force officials was the changed layout inside, providing for every military function possible in such a comparatively small plane.

## GUNNER'S SWIVEL SEAT

A demonstrator sat in the back seat, showed how the gunner could swivel it round to any desired position, or could move comfortably from it to the prone bombing position where doors open under the fuselage to give him a perfect view.

The officers particularly admired the neatness of the instrument panel, the arrangement for mounting the radio apparatus without wasting space, and the interior arrangement of the bomb racks, leaving no protrusions to interfere with the plane's performance once its half-ton or so of bombs has been dropped.

From the outside, the plane looks almost an exact sister-ship to the NA33, with the same trim workmanlike general appearance, the slightly tubby fuselage characteristic of American fighters, and equal perfection of detail work such as riveting.

Production of the Wirraway is believed to be a record. The first part was made only 11 months ago, and erection of the factory began only two years ago. Nowhere else in the world, so far as is known, has a company reached production of both airframes and engines so quickly.

Inside the airframe factory, five of the other 99 Wirraways are nearly complete, and several 550 horse-power Pratt and Whitney Wasp engines, largely built in Australia already have been tested.

## FASTER PRODUCTION

Extensions now being made to both airframe and engine factory will allow an accelerated rate of production.

Directors of the company who watched the test today were the chairman (Mr. H. G. Darling), Sir Colin Fraser, Sir Lennon Raws, Messrs. Essington Lewis, M. L. Baillieu, Arnold Johnson and L. J. Hartnett.

The plane was flown a second time this afternoon.

"An amazing achievement," was the enthusiastic comment of Mr. Street after he had seen the machine in the air. "I feel intense pride and gratification at the excellent evidence that Australia has again proved that her workmanship is equal to the best," added Mr. Street.

"The machine flew for the first time and answered all tests with complete satisfaction. At the factory they will show you a photograph taken in February, 1937. The factory site was then bare sand. Now—only two years later—they have the machine flying.

"Within that time they have erected the factory, made modifications of the machine, made arrangements with the North American company, and now have machines on the production line and one of them working.

"The order for 100 Wirraways will be delivered on schedule within 12 months. I suppose this is one of the quickest production jobs of its kind ever done—two years from site to flight."

27.3.39

## Wirraway Makes Good Impression In Test Flight

IN the presence of the Minister for Defence (Brigadier Street) and the directors of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, Wirraway No. 1, the first all-Australian-made warplane, took to the air at Fishermen's Bend yesterday.

Piloted by the company's test pilot (Flight-Lieut. Boss-Walker), the Wirraway climbed easily after a run-off of 400 yards and circled the factory amid the cheers of 1000 employees as it set out on its first test flight.

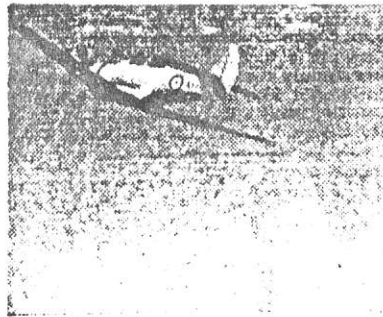
As is usual on a first flight, the plane stayed in the air for little more than a quarter of an hour. Flight-Lieut. Boss-Walker reported that it had behaved splendidly. He indulged only in straight flying and a few gentle turns to test the main controls.

OTHER rigorous trials await the Wirraway before it is officially handed over to the Royal Australian Air Force, but Air Force officers who were present have no doubt that she will pass all with flying colors. The plane will not be delivered for some weeks.

FIVE other Wirraways of the 100 ordered by the Government are almost completed and a first batch of four or five may be handed over together in a formal ceremony.

"Within that time they have erected the factory, made modifications to the design of the machine, made arrangements with the North American company for its production and now have machines on the production line and one of them working. It is a world record."

Mr. Street added that the Wirraway was excellent evidence that Australia had proved again that her workmanship was equal to the best.



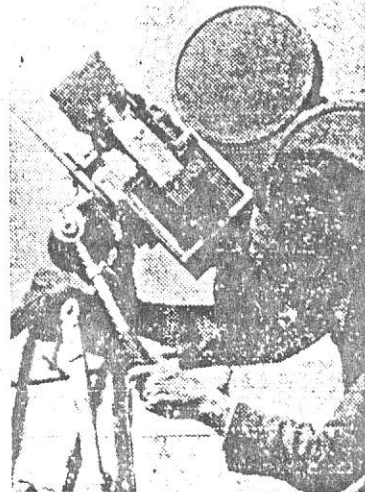
A NEWSREEL CAMERA MAN making pictures of the first all-Australian war plane, the Wirraway No. 1, during the test flight at Fishermen's Bend yesterday.

Extensive additions being made to the factory will allow a greatly accelerated rate of production during the next few months and the full order will be delivered before the end of the year—well ahead of schedule.

Expressing his satisfaction with the corporation's achievement, Mr. Street said further big orders awaited it when all the Wirraways were completed.

## Progress In Two Years

"IT is an amazing achievement," said Mr. Street. "At the factory they will show you a photograph taken in February, 1937. The factory site was then bare sand. Now—only two years later—they have the machine flying.





FLIGHT-LIEUT. BOSS WALKER, test pilot for the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, inspecting the tail of Wirraway No. 1, first Australian-built fighting machine, at Fishermen's Bend yesterday. Test flights were made again yesterday and are likely to continue for some weeks.

29.3.39

## WIRRAWAY STILL BEING TESTED

4-4-39

### First Delivery When Six are Ready

ROYAL Australian Air Force inspectors have not yet completed their check of Wirraway No. 1 at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's factory at Fishermen's Bend.

When this has been done, the machine will be put through severe air tests with full military equipment.

It is not expected that first deliveries will be made to the Air Force until a batch of six Wirraways is ready. This would form an operational unit and any smaller number would not be effective for training purposes.

The first flight for the new planes probably will be stationed at Laverton.

4.4.39

## Wirraway<sup>31-3-39</sup> No. 1 Now Being Armed

Wirraway No. 1 will soon emerge again from the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's factory, fully armed and ready for military use.

The preliminary flight tests last week were undertaken without military equipment, as they were solely to enable the technical staff to examine the plane's flying characteristics.

Because the service equipment, including three machine-guns, will always be part of the plane's load when in use with the Royal Australian Air Force, later tests will be undertaken with this gear in position.

Tests will probably be resumed toward the end of next week, but it is unlikely that the official handing-over ceremony will take place for about a month. By then the second plane may be in the air.

31.3.39