

FAREWELL TO THE "Ops." to Crops for R.A.A.F. workhorse

By staff reporter
ANTHONY PAUL

Fit a sedan car
with a gun
and send it into
battle against a
tank . . .

Hopeless? Yes, but the R.A.A.F. did something similar against the Japanese in 1942.

The Air Force, re-arming in the post-Munich "thirties, wanted a fighter capable of matching in battle any known, possible enemy aircraft in the Pacific area. It had to be a simple machine, capable of being built by the newly-established, relatively inexperienced Government aircraft industry. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation was chosen. Now, after nearly 20 years

WIRRAWAY . . . the song has ended

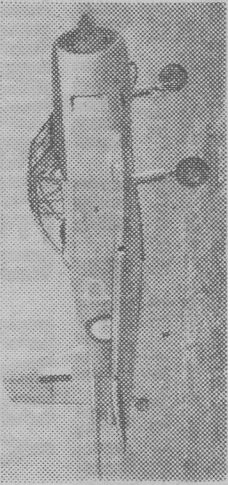
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At Amberley R.A.A.F. base early this morning the last four Wirraways in Queensland will take off on their last flight as service aircraft.

The four aircraft—trainers used by No. 23 (City of Brisbane) Fighter Squadron—will be flown south for conversion to civil use.

The first "Wirra," as it was immediately named by Australian airmen, went into service with the R.A.A.F. in July, 1939.

This aircraft was an Australian-built version of the North American NA-16 Harvard, a 600 h.p. two-seat, gen-



WINJEEEL . . . side-by-side

INTO BATTLE AGAINST THE ZERO AT RABAUL ON JANUARY 20, 1942. THE SEDAN CAR AGAINST THE TANK.

On that day 126 Japanese aircraft bombed and strafed Rabaul's shipping and port installations.

Five Wirraways comprised the port's air defence. In a gallant gesture of defiance they intercepted the attackers.

Magnificent flying by the Australian airmen enabled each Wirraway—outgunned and at least 100 m.p.h. slower than the Zero—to shoot down a Japanese aircraft.

But the final outcome was inevitable—all five Wirraways were overwhelmed.

The R.A.A.F. re-equipped its fighter arm with up-to-date American types, and the

Jap trump

And as far as we knew before the war, the Wirraway—makeshift as it might appear—compared favourably with anything the possible enemy—Japan—could put in the air.

In 1939 Australian intelligence had not learned of the trump card the Japanese Air Force was hiding up its imperial sleeve—the Zero fighter. THE WIRRAWAY WENT

Wirraway was given other duties.

It was used throughout the war as a fighter-bomber, and as an army co-operation, ground-attack, reconnaissance, liaison and personal courier aircraft—and finally as an advanced trainer.

Since the war it has been used exclusively for training.

It is now being replaced by the C.A.C. Winjeel, a 445 h.p. single-engine trainer with side-by-side seating for instructor and pupil—more efficient for flying instruction than the Wirraway's tandem cock-pits.

Two of the new aircraft will be delivered to 23 Squadron on Friday.

New job

And what of "23's" Wirraways? For those old Air Force hands who remember the wartime "Wirra" of the Buna, Gona, and Sanamanda campaigns, who can recall the chatter of her Pratt and Whitney "Wasp" as she struggled over the Owen Stanleys in New Guinea, this is really going to hurt.

Some extra square feet will be added to her wings, structural changes will be made to her fuselage, a new airscrew will be fitted, and she will become—a flying crop-sprayer.

QW PAPER
28-1-59

FAREWELL TO THE Wirraway

"Ops." to Crops for R.A.A.F. workhorse

By staff reporter ANTHONY PAUL

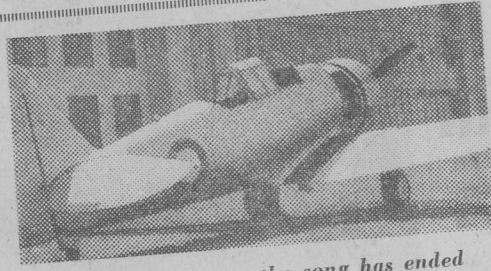
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eral purpose and training monoplane.

Commonwealth Aircraft fixed two forward-firing machine-guns to the Harvard, mounted another machine-gun in the rear cockpit for the observer to use—and the Air Force had its fighter.

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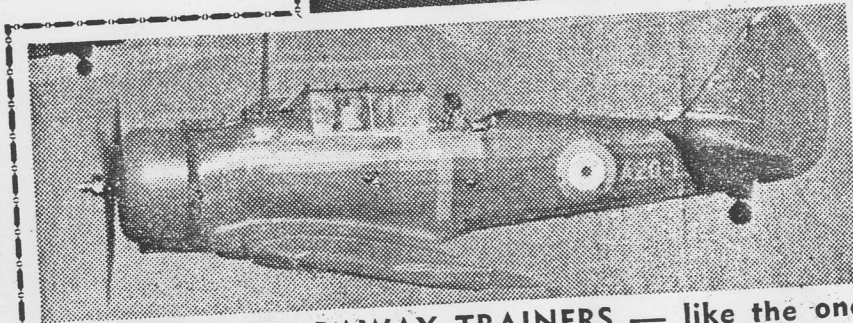
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QUD PAPER
28.1.59

FAREWELL TODAY TO WIRRAWAY



NINETEEN WIRRAWAY TRAINERS — like the one above — will fly over the city between 12.30 and 1 p.m. today to mark the end of their 19 years' service with the RAAF.

The last RAAF cadets to train on Wirraways will get their wings at Point Cook on December 10.

In future, cadets will do their basic training in Winjeels and their advanced training in dual Vampire jets at Pearce, WA.

The Wirraways will be disposed of by the Department of Air.

Wirraways, although outdated by then, were used as fighters against Japanese Zeros when New Guinea was invaded in World War II.

THE AGE, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1958



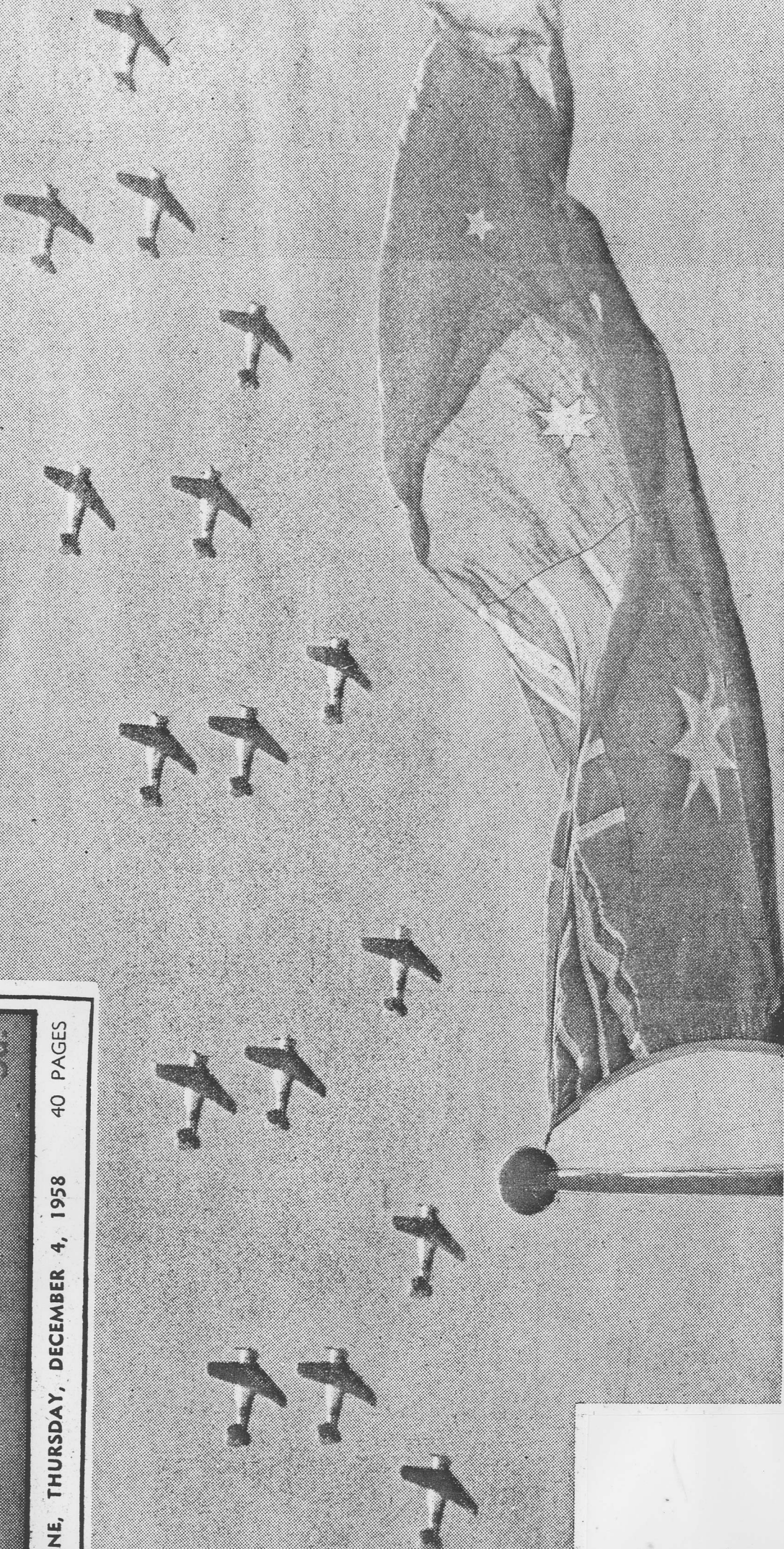
THE WIRRAWAY TRAINER, which made its exit from the R.A.A.F. yesterday after 19 years' service, is well remembered by two of the men first associated with it. Group Captain G. D. Marshall (left), one of the first R.A.A.F. pilots to test the aircraft, and Squadron Leader D. Paul, one of the first engine fitters, both took part in the farewell fly-past.

Hats off to the WIRRAWAY!

The Herald

3d.

NE, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1958 40 PAGES



FLAG ON THE HERALD roof streams
out as veteran RAAF Wirraways fly past

SALUTE BY OLD-TIMERS

Many men in the streets raised their hats today as 19 Wirraways—one for each year of service—made a farewell flight over the city that gave them birth.

The Wirraways — Australian-built RAAF trainers that fought Japanese Zero fighters during the Pacific war — will end their RAAF career next Wednesday.

They have been replaced by Australian Winjeel basic trainers and Vampire jet trainers.

Today — except for civil airliners — the Wirraways had the lunchtime sky to themselves.

By special permission of the Department of Civil Aviation, they flew at 1500 ft.

Up St. Kilda-rd. they went, round the city area and finally above the line of Bourke-st.

Out in front was a solitary Wirraway, flown by the Air Officer Commanding Pt. Cook, Air Commodore W. H. ("Bull") Garling.

Then, in threes, flew 18 others.

Many of the pilots had long memories of the Wirraways' 19 years of service.

They included the commandant of the RAAF College, Group Captain D. W. Colquhoun, and Group Captain I. F. Rose, of the RAAF Staff College.

Group Captain J. Marshall, a RAAF technical officer was formerly a test pilot.

Squadron Leader H. D. Parnell, now a technical officer, flew in one plane as passenger.

He first flew in a Wirraway as a passenger with the present Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Frederick Scherger, who in 1939 made the first delivery flight of a Wirraway from CAC to the RAAF.

Parnell was then Sir Frederick's mechanic.

Other planes were flown by RAAF College cadets.

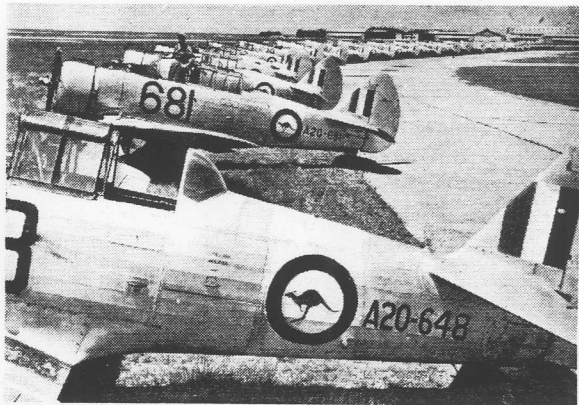
4.12.58 : HERALD



END OF AN ERA as two of Queensland's last Wirraway trainer planes, descendants of the R.A.A.F.'s first World War II fighters, taxied past a line of new supersonic Sabre jet fighters at Amberley Air Force Station yesterday on their last service flight to a southern base. They will be converted to civil use as crop-dusting aircraft.

OLD PAPER

FINAL PARADE.—Nineteen Commonwealth Wirraways at R.A.A.F. Point Cook before the recent flypast over Melbourne to mark the trainer's withdrawal from regular service. Operated by the R.A.A.F. for 19 years, the Wirraway has been replaced by the D.H. Vampire T.33 and T.35.



19.12.58: THE AEROPLANE, P. 912

On guard

COAST-WATCHERS of the future were over the Heads yesterday, learning their job — the pupils, young R.A.A.F. trainee pilots from Point Cook; the instructors, veterans from 77 Squadron in Korea. The aircraft, Wirraways. In the distance of this picture stretch the back beaches of Portsea. The ship is the Nellore, Japan-bound. Soon Australia will have, among other aircraft, 40 Neptunes, the deadly enemies of the submarine.

