

## PLANE TURNS UP AFTER 40 YEARS

HOBART. — A RAAF fighter-bomber which crashed in Tasmania's heavily-forested west coast 40 years ago has been found.

The army, supported by two RAAF helicopters, discovered the Hawker Demon about 20 kilometres from Waratah.

Captain Garry Ward said yesterday that the next move was to plan the possible salvage of the aircraft.

In February 1937 two Demons, A1-3 and A1-8, got lost en route from Laverton air base.

The planes were scheduled to land at Wynyard to refuel, but low cloud made them miss the coast. They failed to pick up land until they were over Waratah.

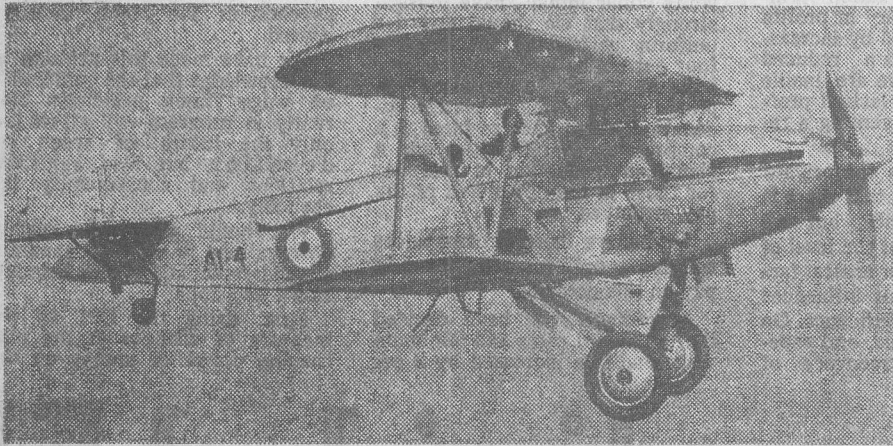
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14-3-77 AGE

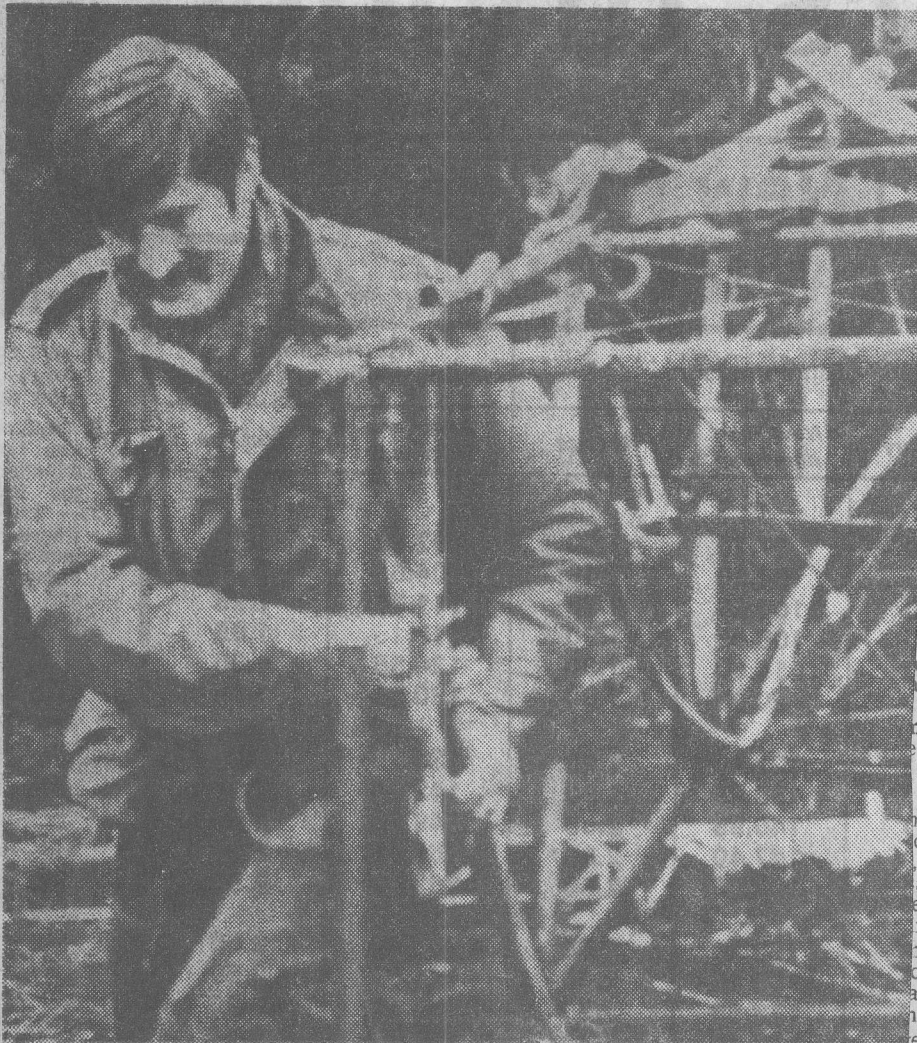
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14-3-77 AGE

# Wreck flies out — with



A Hawker Demon — as it was 40 years ago.



Soldiers carry the wreck of the Demon fighter fuselage

23-8-77 AGE

the economic indicator point to an early recovery. However, once again the commission was faced with conflicting views on the way for the continued economic recovery.

The arguments and evidence before us were essentially as those presented in the earlier wage cases. The commission commented that the conflicting arguments placed it in a difficult position. It concluded that the material submitted, it was satisfied that simply real income of wage earners would promote recovery. The submission on this occasion reinforce this

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opportunity for reduction. Mr. Hawke said a reduction in wages would not be necessary to release unemployment.

The commission's decision has been critical to the Government's policy of indexation. It is known that it has embraced our policy for the economy."

Mr. Hawke said the commission totally rejected the Government's arguments. It has never been a massive rejection of a Federal Government policy by the commission.

The commission has indicated to the Treasurer, Mr. Hamer, and the nation that it agrees with the decision in last week's Budget. Mr. Hamer said the decision was "fair" to wage earners but would not add to unemployment.

Mr. Hawke said the decision would add to the Govern-

expected to be absorbed into the economy, he said.

But Mr. Charles said the umpire's decision was a sound one.

The Federation spokesman said the decision was a sound one for the Commonwealth.

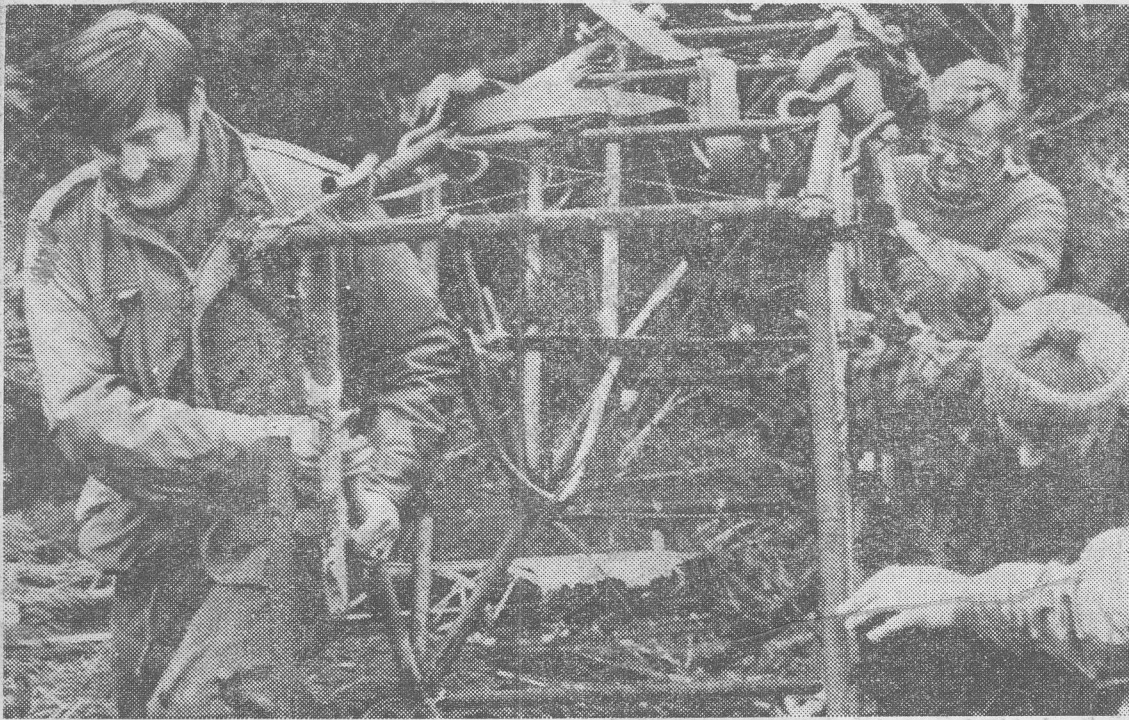
The deputy director of the industry association, Mr. Little, said the decision was again highly significant. It is a step that has to be taken to industrial relations and our situation."

"This funding of wages will be responsible to ensure the decision is turned into a massive rejection of the commission's guidance for the economy."

The president of the Australian Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Hamer, said the direct conflict between the Budget and the decision would frustrate the Government's attempt to control inflation.

"The next step must be to free ourselves from the built-in inflation."

# Out of the bush . . .



THE RAAF lifted the wreckage of a vintage plane from its crash site in western Tasmania yesterday.

The Hawker Demon A1-8 had lain for 40 years near Waratah, a mining town.

Above, the remains of the plane's fuselage are carried to a clearing so it can be picked up by helicopter.

The plane crashed on Mt. Cleveland in 1937.

The pilot and his observer escaped with minor injuries.

It will be flown to Melbourne for restoration and will be exhibited at the RAAF museum at Point Cook.

23-8-77 'SUN'

## 'Impact' on history of flying

Gerald Buscombe crash-landed a Hawker Demon fighter plane 40 years ago, and carved a place in Australian aviation history for his aircraft.

The plane is now a heap of rusted broken metal, but it is the last of 64 Demons used by the RAAF before World War II.

On Monday, the RAAF recovered the wreckage of the fighter from forest near Waratah on the north-west coast of Tasmania and yesterday tracked down Mr. Buscombe.

He is 63, retired and lives in Sydney. But he still remembers the crash clearly and plans to visit the Point Cook aviation museum where the Demon will be rebuilt.

In February, 1973, Mr. Buscombe, then a pilot officer, hit a mountain in thick cloud and virtually bounced off again.

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24-8-77 'AGE'



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24-8-77 'AGE'

# Gerry Buscombe's Demon gets an honourable retirement

By JOHN PIERMONT

GERRY BUSCOMBE was flying by the seat of his pants. He was lost in cloud above the notoriously dense north-west hinterland of Tasmania. He was guessing, but if he was right he was approaching Mount Cleveland.

He was right. Before he could climb, the Hawker Demon A1-8 struck with gut-tearing impact and part of the wing and landing gear went careering down the mountain.

Co-pilot RAAF Sergeant Bill Gould watched in restrained horror as Gerry Buscombe fought with the controls. They went down.

In late August this year a search party found the burnt-out Demon. Bush and forest were beginning to smother it. Like ants, the searchers began taking the remains back to civilisation, piece by piece.

And in Sydney Gerry

Buscombe picked up the phone to hear an incredulous public relations officer calling him from an RAAF office in Canberra.

The call sent Gerry looking for his scrapbook that told about his amazing escape from the plunging aircraft — 40 years ago.

The plane, the last Demon in the world, is being restored at Point Cook's RAAF Museum.

Now aged 63, Gerry Buscombe still counts his lucky stars he's alive.

"We were saved by a bushfire," he said with irony.

He remembers every moment of the crash vividly — and the days when the biplane ruled the air.

Gerry's was one of two Demons flying from Laverton, Victoria, to Hobart, to take part in an Army exercise in the year Britain went to war with Hitler.

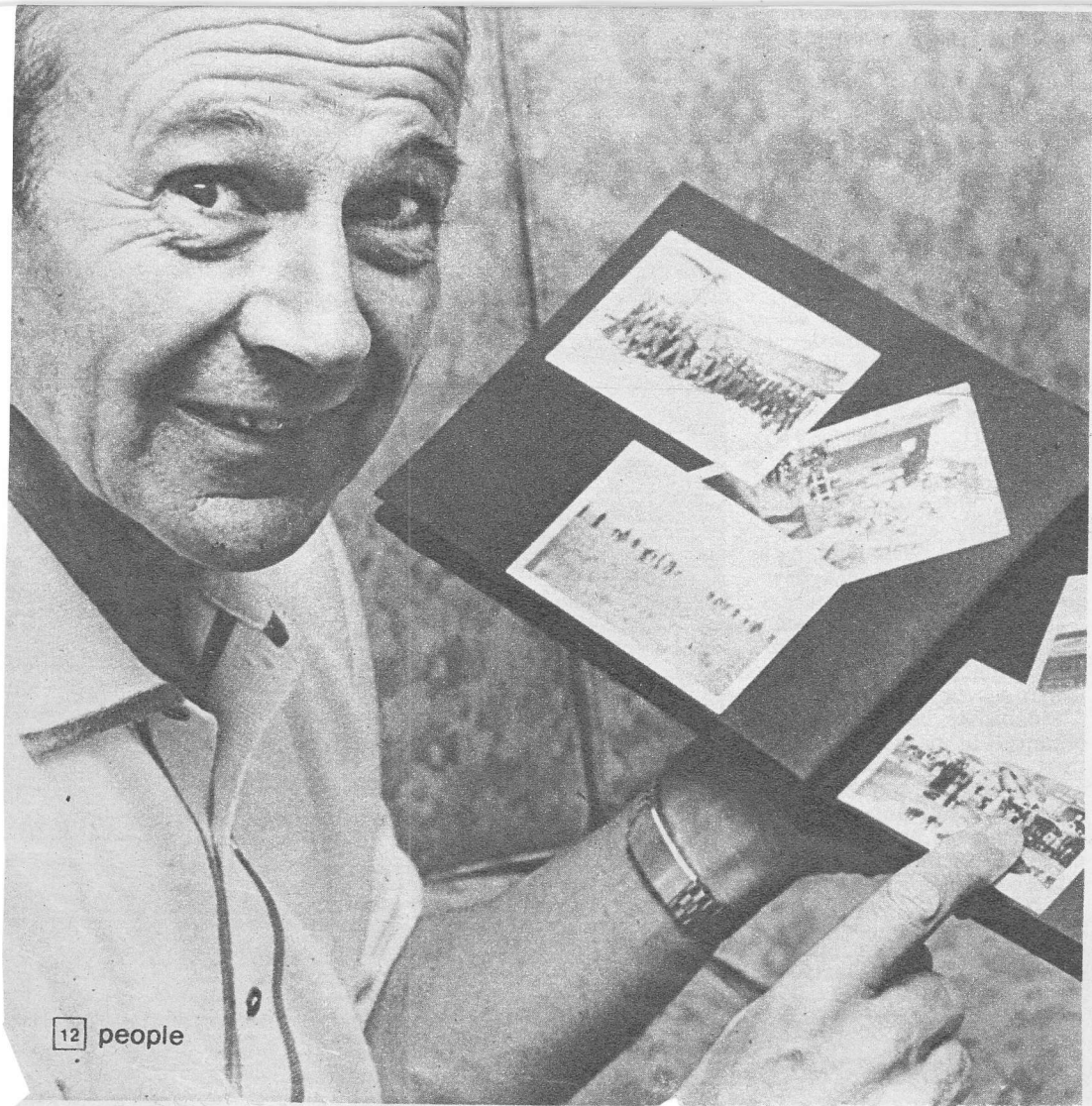
Neither plane made it. The

other, flown by Don Aston-Shorter, had to crash-land on a roadway outside nearby Waratah.

Gerry and Don joined the RAAF in 1935 and went through the same cadet course. By the time the war was looming in Europe they were both valuable instructors of fighter pilots.

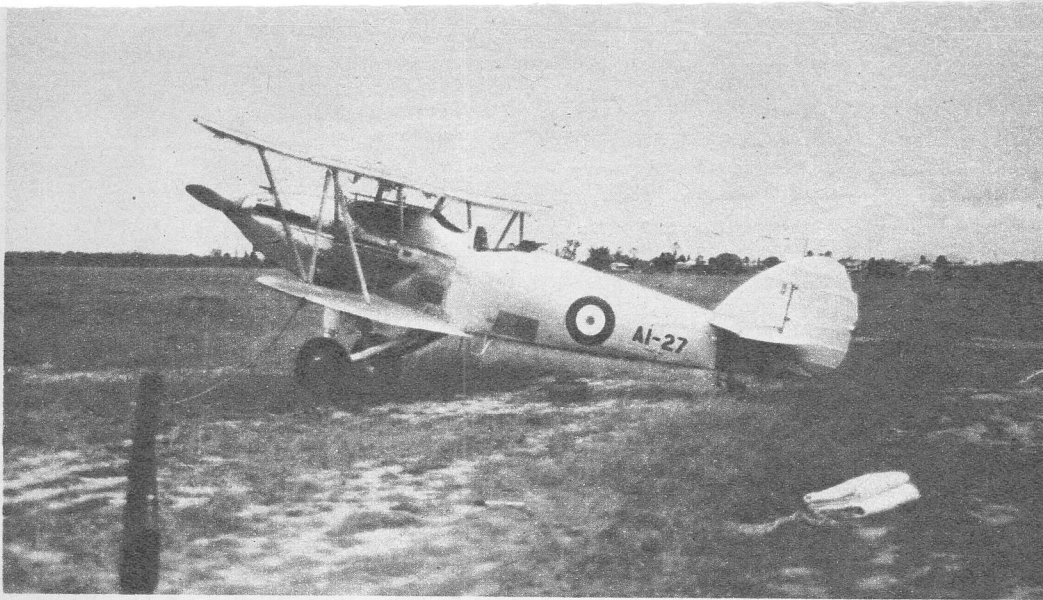
Gerry and Don were looking forward to the Hobart exercise. Hitler was making a lot of noise in Europe and it seemed only a matter of time before top Australian fliers would be needed to defend the British Empire. And it was vital that the Army, too, had a taste of air power.

The flight to Hobart was routine until their scheduled fuelling stop at Wynyard. There the weather was so dirty Gerry was forced to fly on, separated by interminable cloud from his flight commander in the other aeroplane.



12 people

1977



A Hawker Demon A1-8 biplane in full flying order during the plane's heyday in the 1930s.

Suddenly it seemed better to be sitting in a trench. With no radar yet invented, Gerry's mind raced to match time, speed and direction to give him his bearings.

"I was thinking about climbing when we hit Cleveland," he said. "We lost part of the lower port wing and our landing gear. But that wasn't the worst part.

"A tree branch had speared into the water-cooled radiator. The water drained immediately and the engine began to overheat.

"'Strap yourself in!' I shouted to Sergeant Bill Gould in the rear cockpit. 'Not likely,' he said. It would have meant him sitting and facing the tail. 'If we're going to crash I want to see just as much as you,' he said.

"We dropped down through the cloud and then we saw it, a sea of heavily wooded mountains. If there is a Tasmanian tiger to be found, this is where you'll find it.

"I guess I was too busy with the controls to feel frightened. If Bill was scared he didn't say anything, he just watched the ground coming up.

"Then I noticed a clearing on the side of a hill. A fire had ripped through only days before. You wouldn't want to try and land a plane there, but we had no option.

"The Demon was going down into a gully. At the last moment I pulled her nose up and reduced her to stalling speed. We hit the scorched earth at about 45 mph.

"We kept careening up the slope and I desperately threw the plane on her side. Basic training, an extremely good instructor — these were things that probably saved our lives. But I don't discount luck. If it wasn't for that bushfire a few days earlier we would have been mangled in tree trunks and maybe never found.

"The sort of things Bill and I said to each other as we sat beside the wreck were inane. 'How y'going?' 'All right,

spent the night in a miner's hut and were rescued the next day with only a few bruises to show.

"We were surprised to see the party led by Don Aston-Shorter. I learnt a few days later that he himself had had to crash-land on a roadway near Waratah."

Gerry Buscombe was ordered to return to the site a few days later to salvage everything possible. He collected a few primitive flying instruments and then proceeded to pour petrol over the plane.

"If another plane crashed in the area we didn't want a search party going to our wreck," he said. "So I burnt the Demon. I was sad. It wasn't the Demon's fault it was there. It hadn't let me down."

Gerry went back to his Number 3 Squadron flying Demons for the next 18 months. With the world at war he had more to concern himself about than his Tasmanian shave with death.

He graduated to Avro Ansons and Fairey Battles, putting new pilots into action in England, the Middle East and the Australian theatre. Later he flew Catalinas out of Cairns and Darwin.

In 1946 he became a civil flying instructor with the Department of Civil Aviation and then an air traffic controller, until a heart condition forced him into early retirement.

"Being retired now gives you time to think," said Gerry. "I'm delighted that the Demon hasn't been lost forever, that she'll be restored so people will remember what she looked like. She was a beautiful thing to fly.

"When they have finished restoring her in a couple of years I will go to Point and pay my respects to an old girl."

Only this time Gerry will be flying by the seat

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Only this time Gerry will be flying by the seat of his pants. There will be no drone of a biplane. He'll be back in the armchair of a jet airliner, pampered by a hostess, maybe the world's best. World War One is still in his ears:

"This is I

# Airman meets up with a Demon from the past

By ROSEMARY MULLALY

When RAAF Hawker Demon A1-8 crashed in 1937, Pilot Officer Gerry Buscombe and Sergeant Harold Gould were stranded in low Tasmanian hills for two days while rescue planes searched through thick fog and heavy rain to find them.

The men were eventually rescued and taken to safety. But the wreckage of A1-8 was incinerated and abandoned about 16 kilometres west of Waratah.

Yesterday Mr Buscombe, now retired, was back at the RAAF base at Point Cook to see his old biplane restored to its original fighting form.

It is exactly 50 years since the plane went down on the way to an air pageant, and 10 years since army reserve soldiers recovered its remains. Mr Buscombe said he could not describe his emotions at seeing the Demon again.

After encountering bad fog over Bass Strait the plane had clipped a tree, and while the pilot struggled to recover height, Sergeant Gould's parachute fell out. Left with no choice, Mr Buscombe crashed the aircraft — one of the last biplanes used by the RAAF.

The recovery and repair of the plane was made restoration project of the year by 'Aus-

tralian Aviation' last year, and the Hawker Demon is now on display in the RAAF museum at Point Cook.

At the same ceremony yesterday, peacetime hero Group Captain William McAloney, GC, OBE, presented an historic Albert Medal to the museum.

The Albert Medal, which was replaced by the George Cross in 1971, was created in 1866 for people who endangered their lives saving others.

In 1937 Group Captain McAloney, who said he had served the RAAF for "only 33 years", dived into the wreckage of a burning plane to rescue the pilot. He had seen the plane crash at Hamilton and had leaped from his own craft, while it was still moving, to help his mates.

"I couldn't watch two men incinerate. They were my friends. We were in the same squadron," he said yesterday.

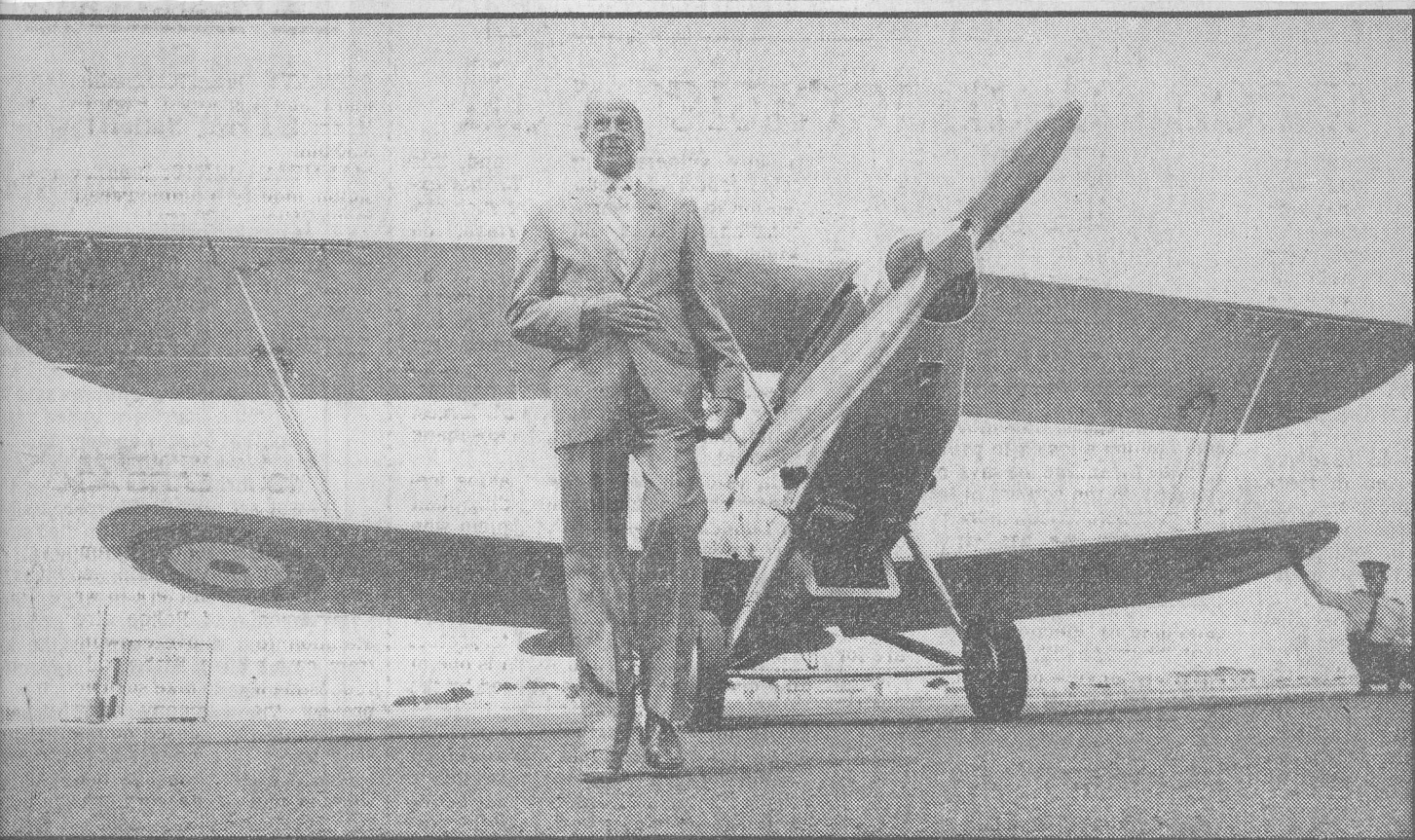
While he was trying to rescue the aircraft's crew, a fuel tank exploded, and Aircraftman McAloney lost consciousness. He was in hospital for two months.

He received the Albert Medal, and when it was replaced in 1971 with the George Cross (the peacetime equivalent of the Victoria Cross) his was also replaced. The original medal is now on display at Point Cook.



Picture: JOHN LAMB  
years ago.

A1-8



Picture: JOHN LAMB

Former RAAF pilot Mr Gerry Buscombe meets up again with the Hawker Demon biplane he crashed in Tasmania 50 years ago.

4.2.87 AGE.

# Air D

When RAAF pilot Gerry Buscombe was shot down in 1937, his Hawker Demon biplane was the largest of its kind in the world. It was a two-engine aircraft with a wingspan of 28 metres and a maximum speed of 250 km/h. The plane was used for reconnaissance and transport.

The plane was shot down in the Tasmanian rain forest. The wreckage was not found until 1987, 50 years after the crash.

Yesterday, Gerry Buscombe returned to Tasmania to see his old biplane in its original form. The plane is now on display at the Tasmanian Aviation Museum.

It is exactly the same as the one that was shot down on 14 February 1937. The plane is in excellent condition and is a real sight to behold. Gerry Buscombe describes the crash as a "miraculous escape".

After the crash, Gerry was rescued by a local farmer. He was taken to a hospital and then to a military hospital in Hobart. He was discharged after a few weeks and returned to Australia. He later joined the RAAF and served in the Second World War.

The rescue was a real triumph for the RAAF. It was the first time that a pilot had been rescued after a crash in the Tasmanian rain forest.

The rescue was a real triumph for the RAAF.



● Pilot Officer Buscombe

● The restored Hawker Demon, which was donated to the Point Cook RAAF museum yesterday.

## Memories, as a plane comes home

A RESTORED Hawker Demon biplane evoked memories of heroism and danger when it was donated to the Point Cook RAAF museum yesterday.

Among former Demon pilots at the ceremony was an airman awarded the Albert Medal for rescuing a pilot from a blazing

Hawker Demon. Also present was the man who crashed the A1-8 in Tasmania.

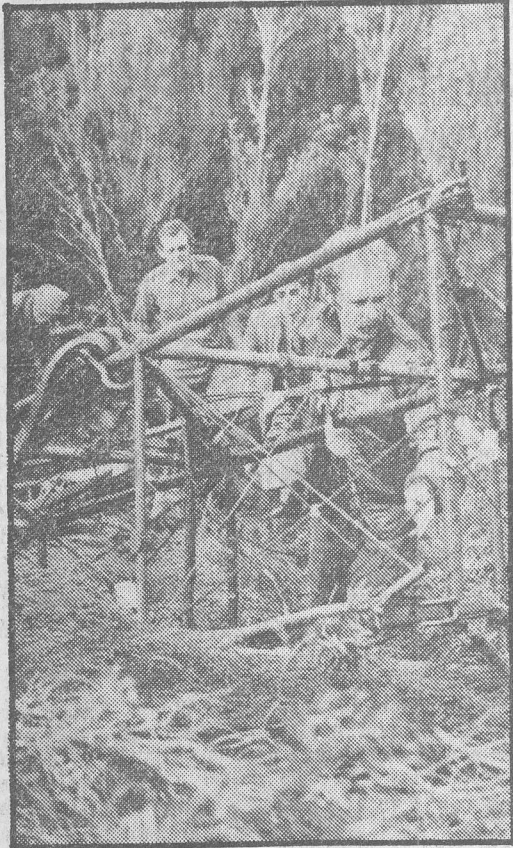
Retired Group Capt William McAloney, 76, dragged a pilot from the blazing Hawker Demon wreckage at Hamilton in 1937.

Mr Gerry Buscombe, 72, from

Sydney, was forced to crash Hawker Demon A1-8 in thick fog near Waratah.

Wing Cdr Ron Gretton, his father, Ern, ex-RAAF pilot Mr Jack McDonald and many other volunteers took seven years to restore the 1930s plane.

4-2-87 SUN



Only a frame remained when army reserve soldiers recovered the biplane from the crash site 10 years ago.

4.2.87 AGE