



● LETTER TO EDITOR

Bulldog "Bites"

Sir,—Whilst recently browsing through early records of my father's career in civil aviation, I came across the photograph shown above. On the back was inscribed:

"3 Bristol Bulldog fighters and 2 Wapiti 2 place general purpose".

The appearance of such aircraft in such desolate terrain caused me to inquire of the purpose of the mission and the following tale unfolded.

The location shown is Brunette Downs cattle station in the Northern Territory and the aircraft comprised a RAAF squadron on exercise from Melbourne to Darwin sometime between 1930-1933, the squadron commander being a Sqn Ldr Johnnie Summers.

Behind the refuelling shed can be seen portion of a de Havilland 50 of Australian Aerial Services, a subsidiary of the then Larkin Aircraft Company of Melbourne. This aircraft operated the airmail contract from Cammoweal to Daly Waters, the service being an extension of the Qantas mail service from Brisbane to Cammoweal.

The DH50, flown by Alf Ashley, had just arrived at Brunette from Daly Waters as the Bulldogs were preparing for departure. The serenity of

the scene as depicted in the photograph was not to remain. Sgt pilot Deprose started his Bulldog engine without wheel chocks and in his haste to enter the cockpit his foot struck the throttle causing his Bulldog to bark ferociously. The story goes that Brunette Downs, famous for its yearly race meetings, had long since thought that there was little new to be seen on its flat plains until the day Sgt pilot Deprose, one leg in and one leg out, spurred his Bulldog. Looking for the most docile opposition, the Bulldog lined up on the DH50 and as it growled past it chewed the outer struts off the DH50's starboard wings. The impact caused the Bulldog to violently slew around, while at the same time the jockey regained control, thus bringing the Bulldog to rest with its fiery breath a couple of feet from the nose of the DH50.

When the shouting and the tumult died, the chivalry of the RAAF shone forth for Johnnie Summers organized that Flt Lt White fly Alf Ashley, his mechanic and the mail to Cammoweal in a Wapiti, while the remainder of the squadron continued its journey.

— Sqn Ldr P. ASHLEY,
No 5 ACS, Tindal, NT.

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A12 Bristol Bulldog article about expedition to Brunette Downs mentioning Squadron Leader Johnnie Summers, a DH-50 of Australian Aviation Services, a subsidiary of the Larkin Aircraft Company describing a crash at the site. Also mentioned Alf Ashley and Flight Lieutenant White. Letter by Squadron Leader P Ashley, 5 ACS, Tindal.