WING SNAPS OFF BRISTOL BULLDOG 4000ft. UP

Pilot Jumps And Lands Unhurt At Laverton; Machine Wrecked

FIRST PARACHUTE ESCAPE

WHILE Pilot Officer W. G. Rae was in the middle of an outside loop, almost upside down, 4000ft. above the Geelong Road, near Laverton, yesterday afternoon, one of the wings of his Bristol Bulldog fighting plane snapped off and he was forced to release his parachute to escape. He landed unhurt.

THE machine, which was smashed to pieces, was one of eight Bristol Bulldog fighters which recently arrived for the Air Force from England. They cost £3500 each and had been tested thoroughly at Point Cooke during the past fortnight.

THIS is the first time in the history of flying in Australia that a parachute has been used by an airman to save himself when his machine has failed in mid-air.

THE use of parachutes in the Australian Air Force was introduced about three years ago. Their use has been compulsory during the past two years, and pilots are given thorough practical instruction in handling them.

Pilot Officer Rae left the ground at Point Cooke yesterday afternoon about 4.15 to do some practice flying. He reached a height of about 4000ft.

Heard Something Snap

HE was flying practically upside down in an outside loop when he heard something snap in the machine. His attempt to right the plane was unsuccessful, and he realised that there was only one hope of escape.

He then unstrapped his safety belt, took hold of the parachute and let himself fall, landing safely on the ground about two miles from Point Cooke towards Laverton.

Observers from the ground said that they saw the wing of the plane leave the machine about the same time as the pilot did. The machine itself crashed not far from Flying Officer Rae.

Pilot Officer Rae, who is an Australian, and has been in the Air Force for several years,
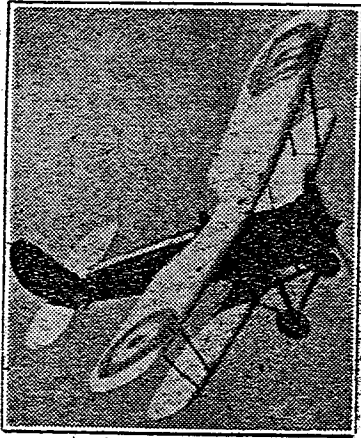
Now Qualified

Pilot Officer Rae has now qualified for membership of the Caterpillar Club, a world organisation of airmen who have escaped in parachutes when their machines have become disabled in the air. It was originally formed in America.

landed about 200 yards from the Geelong Road at Laverton, in soft ground.

As there was little wind at the time, he did not drift far away from the machine, but was not injured. He did not even suffer from shock. Last night he was in perfect health. He is the first Australian flyer to escape from a plane by parachute in an emergency.

The Bulldog was damaged beyond repair after its crash, the nose, which contained the engine, being buried 18 inches deep in the ground.

A Bristol Bulldog Plane.

Air Board's Report To Minister

CANBERRA, Thursday. — The report from the Air Board on the smash received by the Minister for Defence (Mr. Green) stated:—

"A Bristol Bulldog single-seater fighter, piloted by Pilot Officer W. G. Rae, was involved in a flying accident between Point Cooke and Laverton, about 3.45 p.m. today.

"The pilot reports that when flying at a height of about 4000 feet he attempted an outside loop while the machine was flying on its back. In the course of this manoeuvre, Pilot Officer Rae states that he heard a loud crack, and something appeared to snap in the wing, and the machine went into an inverted spin. As he was unable to regain sufficient control to restore the machine to its normal flying position, he loosened his safety belt. When clear of the machine, he released his parachute and alighted safely."

HOO-RAE!

Pilot's Quick Thinking

AVERTS HORRIBLE DEATH

MELBOURNE, Friday.

The 400 feet parachute drop by which Pilot-Officer William Gordon Rae, of the Royal Australian Air Force, saved his life when the wing of a Bristol Bulldog 'plane broke near Laverton yesterday, was the first he had made.

Some of the men at Point Cook have had practice in parachute jumping, but Rae, who is 25 and joined the Air Force in June, 1928, is not one of them.

Rae, who is a handsome young Western Australian, jumped from the 'plane when he was doing a loop. The machine was on its back when he heard a wing snap. Rae was upside down. Quick as a flash the young pilot, who has an excellent record, did the right thing. One flick of his hand swept away the safety belt enabling him to fall head foremost from his seat. Another flick as soon as he was clear of the plane, travelling downward at a terrific speed, brought the parachute into action.

Rae was educated at the Guildford Grammar School, Perth, and before he joined the Air Force as a cadet, he was an assistant surveyor. He was one of the Royal Air Force men who visited Western Australia for the Centenary Pageant.

Senior officers of the Air Force to-day described Rae as first-class pilot. He has had experience with all types of air force machines, except seaplanes, and it was because of his exceptional aptitude and versatility that he was chosen to fly one of the eight Bristol Bulldog fighting 'planes when they were put into commission on May 1.

WA PAPER 5.30

POINT COOKE CRASH.

Cause of Mishap Sought.

MELBOURNE, May 16.—The Air Force Board of Inquiry and the Air Accidents Investigation Committee are both seeking the cause of the accident that happened at Point Cooke aerodrome yesterday, when a Bristol Bulldog 'plane crashed during aerobatics, and Pilot Officer William Gordon Rae escaped by a parachute descent.

The Bristol Bulldog fighting machines, which cost £3,750 each, and were assembled at the Laverton air depot, are the fastest and most agile in the service. Almost every day since the Bulldog 'plane had been allotted to him, Pilot Officer Rae had made a flight in it. The fault which developed in the 'plane has caused considerable surprise, as this type of machine was regarded as suitable for the most strenuous tests in aerobatics.

Pilot Officer Rae, who is 25 years of age, joined the Air Force in 1928. He is a West Australian, and a nephew of the West Australian Premier (Sir James Mitchell).

WA PAPER 5.30