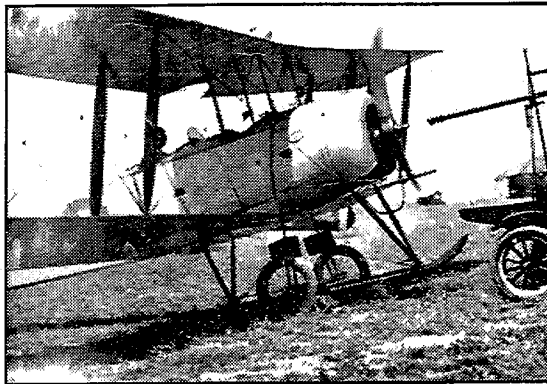


A3-4



Flight of fancy: The timber and fabric Avro 504K.

Historic plane returns home

FOR an aeroplane it was a slowcoach, with a top speed of only 145kmh.

It was made of wood and fabric, its wings held in place by steel cables.

It was so primitive that speed was controlled by switching the engine on and off in flight.

Pilots had to be on guard at all times — the big rotary engine tried to turn the fuselage instead of the propeller.

Then there was the personal problem associated with flying the Avro 504K, first training plane of the Royal Australian Air Force, when the service evolved from the Australian Flying Corps in 1921.

As the engine was lubricated with castor oil, the fumes of which constantly swept across the open cockpit, it was said air force pilots never suffered from constipation.

But it was a robust machine, one of the early fliers recalling: "It

By **DEREK BALLANTINE**

was a thing which came together like a work of art comes together. The more pilots demanded from it, the more it gave."

Of 61 Avro 504Ks that flew in Australia, only one remains.

And it returns home to Victoria today to share the stage with performers at the RAAF's 75th anniversary concert at Melbourne Park.

The biplane, retired from service in the late 1920s, is coming by truck from the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, where it revives memories of the pioneering days of military aviation.

● The RAAF concert, last event of the 75th anniversary year, features RAAF bands, trumpet maestro James Morrison, guitarist Tommy Emmanuel, Silvie Paladino (of *Miss Saigon*) and other artists. Bookings through Bass on 11500.

SUNDAY HERALD SUN 1.12.96

Pictures of A3-4 preserved, photos and colour details 1986-99 with 1996 newspaper article