

# **BENALLA'S FOURTH FAMOUS SON**

## **THE STORY OF ARTHUR BAIRD**

**QANTAS EMPIRE AIRWAYS - ENGINEERING MANAGER  
1921–1949**

***AN EXTRAORDINARY AUSTRALIAN***

**By Barry O'Connor and Beverley 'Chick' Walker  
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# FOREWORD

On a trip to North Queensland in April 2019, I was fortunate to visit the QANTAS Founders Museum in Longreach, which I had last visited in 1988. Browsing through the magnificent exhibition space, I came across a story board for Wilfred Arthur Baird. Upon reading the board, I noticed that this person had been born in Benalla, where I now live. I was aware that Benalla already has three famous sons, these being Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, Captain Hector Waller, and Michael Savage, a former Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Being involved with local history groups and a committee member of the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Benalla Memorial Committee, I had not heard of this person before. The information displayed at the QANTAS Founders Museum suggested that Arthur Baird was one of the first three operational staff of the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service Ltd. I took as many images of the story board as I could and returned to Benalla to investigate the reason why this person was not one of our 'famous' sons.

Upon investigation, and with the assistance of the other volunteer researchers from the Benalla Family Research Group, a picture unfolded of a family who had made a significant contribution to the community within the region. We were very much assisted by a book on the Beard family from Benalla that had been compiled in 2007. The book had been created in the previous year, when a Beard (Baird) family reunion had been held in Tatong on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Included in the book was research by the Benalla Family Research Group, including images and newspaper clippings. Also in the book is an extraordinary body of work completed by Patricia (Trish) Beard (nee Gawne) which is a family tree dating from records back to 1809, and containing the details of family members extending for nine generations.

The following pages contain details of the recent investigations.

Barry O'Connor,  
Benalla Family Research Group,  
19<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Research:

Beverley (Chick) Walker, Barry O'Connor and Pam Herbert, who are all volunteer researchers at the Benalla Family Research Group.

Original research was done by volunteer researcher, Beryl Ilsley of the BFRG in 1992.

Contributions by Linda Beard, Patricia Beard, Leon Beard, John Bromilow and Maureen Matthews of the Beard/Baird family are acknowledged. Much of the information contained within this book comes from family research, records, scrap books and photographs.

Special thanks to Colin Lock, QANTAS Heritage Collection and Museum, Mascot, and Tom Harwood, Curator, QANTAS Founders Museum. Longreach. Qld., for additional information and fact checking.

**QANTAS Chairman and Managing Director,  
Sir Wilmot Hudson Fysh, KBE DFC. said of Arthur Baird on  
the occasion of his retirement in June 1949;**

***“I cannot think of anyone who has done more in laying the  
foundations of Australian Air Transport Engineering, both  
in regard to the work he did himself and what he initiated;  
and also in regard to his choice of staff, the character he  
put into everything he did, and the principles that he  
imparted to others.”***

**W**illiam Beard and his wife Anne Newport Mason, along with their six children, migrated to Melbourne Australia, from Ireland aboard the Lady McDonald on 6th April 1852. William was born in 1809 in County Tyrone, Ireland. Anne was born on 5th January 1810 in County Wicklow, Ireland. They were married in the Cloydah Parish Church, Ireland, on 5th January 1835. Their six children were all born in Milford, County Carlow, Ireland. James born 1836, Robert born 1839, William Alexander (Billy) born 7th July 1842, Isabella born 1843, John born 1845 and George born 1848.<sup>1</sup>

William Beard did not flee the natural catastrophe of the potato famine, like two million other Irishmen and their families. He was a successful farmer, with a small lease holding of 16 acres in Ballygowan, Milford, on an estate owned by the Alexander family (Milford Mills). There were no options for him to increase his holding to support a growing family, so the decision was made to migrate to Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Upon arrival in Australia the gold rush was in full swing, however there was a major project about to commence. The Yan Yean Reservoir project was being planned to ensure a safe and reliable water supply for Melbourne. There were issues with recruiting the required labour force, as many able bodied men had gone off to the gold fields. In an effort to attract suitable labour, the contractors were offering wages well above the average.

From the 'Only Melbourne' website:

*Work began on the reservoir in 1853 to build a massive embankment by clearing a swamp. The lure of the Gold Rush made it difficult to find workers to build the reservoir, but soon a workforce of 400 labourers as well as 100 women and children had moved to the Yan Yean area. A school, shops and pub opened nearby.*

To put the wages on offer into perspective. Labourers were being offered wages between 10 and 12 shillings per day. (\$1.00 to \$1.20). From internet records, the flat rate of weekly pay for an agricultural labourer in 1854 was around \$1-80. There was land being offered in Yan Yean at the equivalent rate of between three and four day's wages, per acre. This attracted the required workforce, and obviously influenced William Beard Snr. to move to Yan Yean, where he purchased freehold land, to place his family in a more secure financial position, with options to expand their holdings. Records suggest that son Robert, also purchased freehold land in Yan Yean. The 78 acres purchased by William Beard Snr. remained in the family for many years.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst we believe that William Snr. may have worked on the reservoir, we have been unable to locate records to confirm this. It is suggested that sons, James and Robert may have also worked on the reservoir.

From the Victorian State Library: *The Yan Yean project was completed in 1857 and at that time was the largest man made reservoir in the world, and Australia's largest dam. The project still remains a major source of Melbourne's water.*

After the completion of the project, William Snr. remained in the area and is on record as being a farmer.<sup>8</sup> It is suggested that son Robert also remained in the area to farm. The Yan Yean area comprises rich volcanic soils and the main agricultural pursuits were dairying, small orchards and market gardening, along with the breeding of livestock.

On 29<sup>th</sup> March 1862 William Beard snr. died of prostate disease, aged 53. His death certificate shows he is buried at Yan Yean. Son, James died in 1863 and is buried with his father.<sup>1</sup>

Reported in the Melbourne Leader newspaper. *William Alexander Beard marries Mary Daniels from Mansfield, at St. John's Church, Latrobe Street, Melbourne on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1865.* The marriage certificate shows Billy as a carrier. The witnesses were Henry Wharton and Isabella Beard.

Both of Mary's parents had died. Her mother Margaret died in Queanbeyan in 1857, and her father Samuel died at Mansfield in 1863. Mary had a younger brother Samuel jnr. born in 1849, and a younger sister Margaret Martha born in 1852. Mary was born in 1847. The estate of her father had not yet been finalised, due to issues with funds to pay the probate duties. Whilst her father's Changue Station was eventually sold in December 1864 for £3,000, there were still issues surrounding the finalising of the estate that would go on for another four years.<sup>8</sup> Probate or death duties, were levied on beneficiaries of estates as income, usually at the highest income tax rate. Most estates did not have sufficient cash resources to pay the high levels of taxes, so property had to be sold to cover the expense. Probate was abolished in 1979.

Whilst all of this was happening, the young couple got on with their lives. William Alexander jnr. was born in 1866 and died at the age of 5 in August 1871. Elizabeth was born in 1868.<sup>1</sup>

As reported in the Argus on 23 July 1869, the finalising of the Daniels estate turned into a nightmare. The original executor of the will, James Higgins died. The court handed the process of finalising the estate to Billy. Then there was the issue of Mary receiving her bequest, as she was now married. Her share was annexed to husband Billy. The law prohibiting married women from owning land was not repealed until 10<sup>th</sup> June 1884.

There were a further five children born in the Mansfield/Doon area. (It became Bonnie Doon in 1891). Margaret Ann born in 1870, Robert born in 1873, Jonothan Samuel (Jack) born in 1875, George born on 23 September 1876 and Isabella Jane born in 1878.<sup>1</sup>

Billy owned the Junction Hotel at Doon from 1870 to 1875. In 1874 Billy entered a partnership with Charles Baldry, in an expanded operation set up as a flour, grist and sawmill. Baldry had been trading as Mansfield Flour Mills since November 1869. They appear to have added a sawmill to the operation. It then traded as the Ford's Creek Mill, until 1<sup>st</sup> May 1875, when Billy took over the whole operation in his own name. Charles Baldry had a number of businesses in Mansfield including a brewery and the Royal Hotel. From 1875 Billy had a butchers shop in Mansfield on the corner of High and Baldry Streets until 1878, when it appears that both the mill and the butchers shop were sold.<sup>1 & 3</sup>.

Just after Isabella Jane is born in 1878, the family moved to Wahgunyah to join Billy's brother George, in a cattle enterprise. Billy was known to be leasing land in the area, as well as retaining 400 acres in Mansfield. They appeared to be operating a 'paddock to plate' business in the region. The butchers shop was in Sanger Street, Corowa, with Billy leasing land to run significant numbers of cattle. Later reports show him moving 336 fat bullocks to market.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst in Wahgunyah there were three more children born, James born in 1881, Mary Frances born 1883, and Lillian May born on 5 April 1885.<sup>1</sup>

The enterprise expanded with a second butcher's shop being opened in Wahgunyah. Later, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1884 the name of the shop changed from G. Beard, to Beard Brothers. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1884, Billy issued instructions for his interest and goodwill in the butchery business to be sold, along with all plant. It did not sell at that time.<sup>2</sup>

Within three months Billy had purchased and refurbished the old Wahgunyah Flour Mill. Advertisements for the new business appeared in the Corowa Free Press from 13<sup>th</sup> February 1885, and thereafter on a regular basis.<sup>2</sup> There are no references to the mill after August 1887.

Billy was involved with the local turf racing club and it was reported on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1886 that he was now the starter and steward at the annual Wahgunyah Racing Club meeting.<sup>2</sup>

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1886 an advertisement appeared in the Corowa Free Press announcing that the Beard Brothers butchery had been sold to Gill and Gale.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst operating the flour mill in 1887, Billy purchased 710 acres freehold and 8 acres of leasehold land at Benalla, in three lots. There was one block of 125 acres, and then a 317 acre block with a house, and a 276 acre block. From the rate records, the blocks were Lot 29,30,33,31,33a,24 & 27. There were two movements of stock reported in March 1888. 336 fat bullocks, half of which went to Newmarket (Melbourne) and the other half to paddocks. On 16<sup>th</sup> March a further 304 bullocks were moved to Benalla.<sup>2</sup> (Copy of property plan shown page 27).

At Benalla two more children were born. Wilfred Arthur was born on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1889 and Beatrice Evelyn born 1892. This brought the total number of children living, to twelve.<sup>1</sup>

Wilfred was not fond of the name, and throughout his life would use the name Arthur. Arthur's father, William Alexander Beard (Billy) was originally baptized with the surname spelling of Baird.<sup>1</sup> It is believed that the spelling was changed by officials when the family came to Australia. 'Billy' was 11 at the time. When Arthur returned to Australia in March 1919 after the war, it is believed that he may have been going through his late father's papers, when he discovered his baptism documents. Arthur reverted to the traditional spelling of the surname 'Baird' around this time.<sup>1</sup>

As well as having 718 acres of land at Benalla, Billy was leasing 1700 acres of Government land south west of the Benalla township, Lot 19, block 3348, in the Lima Boho Parish. The initial lease was from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1888.<sup>3</sup> Reported in the Euroa Advertiser on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1890 was the fact that the lease had been revoked for non-payment of fees.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 1890, Billy's mother Anne died at the age of 80. She is buried in the Benalla Cemetery.

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 1891 the Euroa Advertiser reported that W.A. Beard (Billy) was appointed as a director of the Benalla Butter and Cold Storage Company. Whilst we have been unable to find any collaborative evidence, it is suggested that Billy was contracted to supply logs to the Benalla Sawmill Company. There are entries in the Government Gazette showing Billy winning tenders for bridge and road timbers, rails and telegraph poles.

In 1894, it was Arthur's big day to start school at the Benalla Primary School No.31. This was the first Government school built in Benalla. Arthur's schooling continued in Benalla until he was 16.<sup>1</sup> No school records located, but through the process of elimination and family recollections, he may have attended the North Eastern College, although correspondence schooling was popular at the time for the higher grades.

Whilst Arthur was at school, his father was busy with his many business activities and at this point appears to have purchased a butchers shop from J.T. Ginnivan in Bridge Street, Benalla. It operated until 1<sup>st</sup> October 1901 when it was sold to James Sherwill.<sup>3</sup> The shop was where Bouwmeester's Bakery is today at 71 Bridge Street East.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1901, Billy was granted a lease renewal over 8 acres (adjoining his other holding in Benalla), being part allotments 24 and 27, along the Four Mile Creek easment.<sup>3</sup>

On 4<sup>th</sup> October 1901, Billy listed 710 acres for auction. It did not sell. He also had a number of machines which were to be sold at the time. The machines were retained and Billy continued to contract harvest around the district. In December 1901, Billy had an accident when his hand got caught in a cog wheel of a harvester and he lost the top of his second finger.<sup>3</sup>

Arthur grew up around machinery, which was cutting edge technology at the time. This is perhaps where he developed his interest in things mechanical.

Whilst the 710 acres did not sell, Billy leased it out. In November 1902, he is shown in the Government Gazette as having leased Government land at Toombullup comprising 5,336 acres. At this point in time, Billy had 710 acres near Benalla, which he had just leased out. He still had the 400 acres in Mansfield and had just taken out a lease on 5,336 acres between the two towns. The lease on the Government land was with a grazing licence, however it is suggested that it may have been used for timber harvesting. The Benalla Sawmill Company owned by George Thompson was operating at Toombullup, in April 1905.<sup>3</sup> Many sawmills contracted carriers to harvest and deliver logs to the mill, it is suggested that Billy was one of them. Billy had a serious accident whilst transporting logs in 1906, when a wagon with 5 tons of logs, ran over his leg crushing it and breaking his ankle.<sup>3</sup> Billy's interest in the Toombullup area may have also been due to the recently completed mining surveys.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1905 Billy sold the 400 acres in Mansfield.<sup>3</sup>

In 1905 Arthur had completed his secondary education in Benalla and went to Melbourne to study engineering at the Working Men's College – later the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He is believed to have passed with the highest marks in Mechanical Engineering ever recorded at that time.<sup>1</sup>

In 1906, Billy applied for a mining lease under the name of Benalla Deep Leads Alluvial Mining Company. The application was declined, however it was resubmitted and later in 1906 he started mining in the Benalla area.<sup>3</sup>

In 1909 Arthur completed his engineering studies and gained an apprenticeship with W. Anderson & Sons, heavy engineers in Richmond. After five years, Arthur completed his apprenticeship and qualified as a fitter and turner.<sup>1</sup>

On 17<sup>th</sup> September 1909 the 710 acres in Benalla finally sold. Billy and family moved to Smyth Street, Benalla and retained some of the machinery. It was later reported that farmers at Winton (Victoria) were awaiting his arrival with his machinery to process their crops.<sup>3</sup>

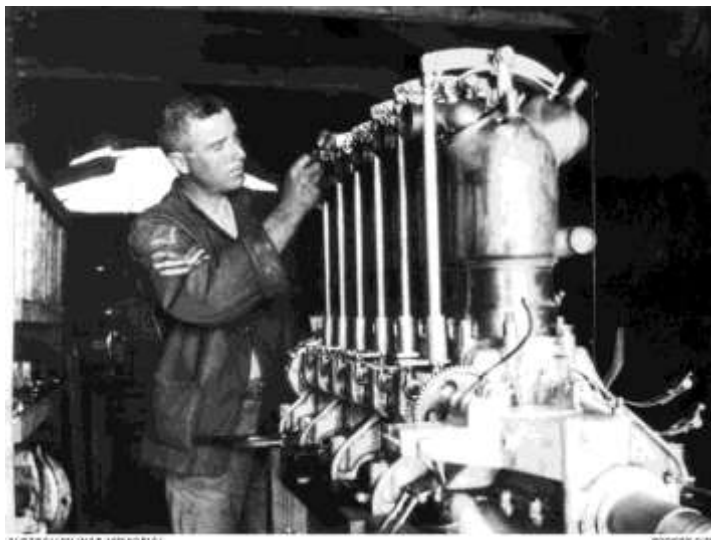
The machinery was kept until at least October 1911 when it was reported that there had been an accident with the traction engine, which had broken down on the road into Benalla and had to be manoeuvred off the road.<sup>3</sup>

In 1915 Arthur joined the Australian Flying Corps at Point Cook for nine months, where he was an instrument fitter and air mechanic.<sup>1</sup> Arthur obviously recognised that air travel was the way of the future.

Billy eventually divested himself of his business interests in Benalla and moved to Melbourne in 1915. In 1916, the address show is 594 Lygon Street, Carlton.

On 22 February 1916, Arthur enlisted at the age of 26 years and 2 months. Allocated service number 108, he was sent to the Middle East on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1916, where he was promoted through the ranks, eventually becoming Flight Sergeant with No.1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps. He would not return to Melbourne until 17<sup>th</sup> April 1919.

**FLIGHT SERGEANT ARTHUR BEARD, CHIEF MECHANIC WITH NO 1 SQUADRON, AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS (AFC) TUNING UP A BEARDMORE ENGINE, MARCH 1918.** Image courtesy of the Australia War Museum.



During his time in the Middle East, Arthur became the Flight Sergeant for pilots Paul McGinness and Wilmot Hudson Fysh, who were also serving in No.1 Squadron of the AFC.

Whilst serving in the Middle East, Arthur was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) for his ability to maintain aero engines in difficult conditions. It was one of only 34 awarded to the 2,694 members of the Australian Flying Corps in WW1. His Army record shows that during his time in the Middle East, he was deployed to a number of areas with both the Australian and British forces, possibly as a 'Mr. Fixit'.

Arthur's philosophy was always, 'near enough is not good enough'.<sup>1</sup>

2nd July, 9.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that, according to the records of this Office at this date, No. 108 Chief Mechanic Wilfred Arthur Beard, 1st Squadron, Australian Flying Corps on:-

16.2.16	Enlisted at Melbourne, Vic.
16.3.16	Embarked at Melbourne per H.M.A.T. "Orsova"
14.4.16	Disembarked at Suez ex "Orsova"
21.4.16	Attached to No. 17 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps
24.8.16	To be Corporal
6.10.16	Detached to Aircraft Park
10.1.17	Rejoined 58th Squadron, Abbasia.
1.9.17	To be Acting Sergeant
22.11.17	Proceeded to 111 Squadron for instructions and temporarily detached
26.11.17	Ceased to be detached to 111th squadron
27.11.17	Proceeded to Aircraft Park and temporarily attached for duty
29.11.17	attached to Aircraft Park Depot, Abbasia on temporary duty.
21.12.17	Rejoined 67th Squadron, A.F.C. from detachment with Aircraft Park.
1.1.18	To be Sergeant.
1.1.18	Awarded Meritorious Service Medal.
1.3.18	To be Flight Sergeant. 1st Squad. A.F.C.
13.12.18	Re-mustered Chief Mechanic (F) Sergeant, 1st Squadron, Australian Flying Corps.
4.3.19	To embark per H.T. "Port Sydney" for Australia.
17.4.19	Disembarked at Melbourne ex "Port Sydney"

Major,  
Officer i/c Base Records.

Arthur was still on active service, when his father died in Carlton on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918.<sup>1</sup>

The following was reported in 'The Independent - Benalla' newspaper on 9<sup>th</sup> August 1918:

*Obituary: Very sincere regret was expressed at the news that Mr Wm. Beard, one of the best-known pioneers of the Benalla district, had expired suddenly in the city. He was about 75 years of age and leaves a widow and grown-up family. At one time the late Mr Beard conducted a butchering business at the eastern section of Bridge Street. He was a man of most generous disposition, and was held in the highest esteem during a 35 years' residence here. Up till more recent years he owned considerable landed property in Benalla West, which he sold to advantage. Of a speculative turn of mind he held large mining interests with fluctuating success. Death has removed a striking figure - one of the good old stock of rapidly-thinning ranks, whose delight was to call a "spade a spade." One of his sons, Arthur, is on active service in the Flying Corps.*

On his return to Australia in 1919, Arthur established a garage business in Carlton, near where his mother and other family members were living. Arthur reverted to the original spelling of the surname 'Baird' around this time, possibly after going through his late father's papers where he would have noted that his father was originally baptised with the surname spelling of 'Baird'.<sup>1</sup>

In Brisbane, at the Gresham Hotel in July 1920, a meeting was held between three men, all of whom could see the great benefits that aviation would bring to the people of outback Queensland. At this meeting were, Wilmot Hudson Fysh and Paul McGinness, both WWI pilots, and Fergus Mc Master a pastoralist and visionary. Mc Master was the finance arm of the trio, preparing a prospectus to raise the money for the new airline.<sup>11</sup>

These three men were the founding fathers of QANTAS.

The Birth of QANTAS was announced on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1920 in Winton (Qld), with the initial registration of the company, Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd.

The men soon realised that they would need support, so Arthur Baird was contacted. Eleven weeks after the announcement of the company registration, Arthur had sold his business in Melbourne, and joined Fysh and McGinness in Sydney on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1921, in time for the handover of the first aircraft, an Avro 504K with a Sunbeam Dyak engine.<sup>11</sup> At this time, Arthur Baird became a shareholder in the new enterprise, putting up £50 of his own money.<sup>1</sup>

Whilst Arthur Baird was not in attendance at the original meeting in Brisbane, and therefore not one of the 'founding fathers', he was most certainly one of the 'foundation' members of the first operational staff, and the first company engineer. In January 1921 there were only three staff members, Wilmot Hudson Fysh and Paul McGinness, both pilots, and Arthur Baird, engineer.

In the month prior to the inaugural mail flight, Paul McGinness surprised both Fysh and Baird by tendering his resignation. This was a blow for the company, as Paul McGinness was the senior pilot with over 500 hours experience. Hudson Fysh had minimal flying hours, as he was generally the observer (gunner) on the flights in Palestine. Fysh was sent for flying training on 26<sup>th</sup> October 1918, 5 days before the Middle East Armistice and qualified for his 'wings' on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1919.<sup>11</sup>

McGinness did appear to have issues with the regimented schedules required for flight times, however he was convinced to remain and pilot the initial mail service.<sup>11</sup>

The initial flight from Charleville to Cloncurry was delayed several times due to mechanical and maintenance issues from September 26<sup>th</sup>, to October 5<sup>th</sup>, and was finally made November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

From the Sydney Morning Herald 7<sup>th</sup> November 1922:

*AERIAL MAIL SERVICE IN THE NORTH. LONGREACH, Monday.*

*At the early hour of 5.15 a.m. on November 2 the Mayor of Charleville and a gathering of townspeople, waved "good-bye" to the first mail aeroplane leaving for the north with Mr. P. McGinness (pilot) and Mr. A. Baird (engineer). The machine headed north, and flying at 5000ft, was soon over Tambo, and there took mails aboard. The run of 60 miles to Blackall was accomplished in 60 minutes. Here a warm welcome awaited the aviators. The concluding day's run of 100 miles to Longreach was soon reeled off, and the machine landed at 10.25. The arrival was celebrated by a large gathering at the aerodrome headed by Mr. Barker, chairman of the shire council. The speakers touched on the wonderful step forward in the progress of the west the opening ceremony marked. Letters from Charleville reached Longreach within 16 hours of the time of posting, instead of the usual six days. At 5 o'clock on the 3<sup>d</sup> the machine was wheeled out of the Longreach hangar, and the mails taken aboard by the pilot, Mr. Hudson Fysh, who was to fly the machine on the second and final stage to Cloncurry, 313 miles north. Travelling by way of Winton and McKinley, Cloncurry was reached within 10 minutes of schedule time and without hitch.*

Paul McGinness left the company at the end of 1922 for Western Australia, to take up a position with the Primary Producer's Bank, and went into farming when the bank failed.<sup>11</sup>

Arthur Baird began pilot training in June 1923 and continued periodically until his Category A (private) licence was issued on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1928. His Category B (commercial) licence was issued in 1929 and he became the 'reserve pilot' in 1930.<sup>11</sup>

Whilst Arthur Baird was working on keeping QANTAS aircraft in the air, now with a staff of eight, he became involved in supporting the first flying doctor service to outback Queensland.

From the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre:

*In 1906 Frederick Archibald Hope (Dr. Archibald) Michod took up a position with the Longreach Hospital. After a change in the constitution of the Longreach Hospital called for the appointment of a resident doctor, he established his own private hospital and built up an extensive practice. During his years at Longreach, Dr Michod became Queensland's first 'flying doctor'. He used his own aircraft for mercy flights in preference to the long trips by car over unformed roads. He would attend patients at Jundah, Winton, Aramac, Muttaborra and adjacent towns.*

*Dr. Michod invested money in QANTAS, becoming one of its original directors in 1920. In 1923, Fergus McMaster resigned from the Qantas Board to give his full attention to his own business affairs. Dr Michod then became Chairman of Directors of Qantas, a position which he held from 1923 to 1926, retiring from the board in Longreach only to undertake further duty on an Advisory Board in Brisbane when he took up residence in the capital.*

Dr. Michod's early flights took place in 1921. As reported in the Daily Standard, "A flight from Longreach to Barcaldine by a Longreach doctor to perform an urgent operation."

In collaboration with Dr. Michod, Arthur Baird developed a special tripod type device to lift patients into and out of aircraft, so they could be flown to and from Longreach for specialist medical attention.<sup>11</sup>.

From the Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette. 21<sup>st</sup> May 1925:

*Another example of "Qantas" efficiency:* In the same month a Longreach doctor ordered the immediate removal of a woman patient to Toowoomba Hospital. Owing to a leg complaint, the patient could be moved only in a certain position. The aid of "Qantas" was solicited. A block and tackle was rigged, at the aerodrome, a special seat made, and, when the patient arrived, she was swung clean out of the car straight into the cockpit of the plane. The lifting gear was taken aboard, and the plane sped to its destination, where, without the slightest discomfort, the patient was swung into the waiting ambulance.

After a number of years of planning, in 1927 the formal establishment of an Aerial Medical Service was underway.

From the Flight Safety Australia website:

*In 1917, the Reverend John Flynn, founder and head of the Presbyterian Church's Australian Inland Mission, received an unusually interesting letter. It was from a trainee pilot in the Australian Flying Corps, Clifford Peel, who had been a medical student before enlisting during World War I. Combining his medical training with his experience in the young field of aviation Peel suggested how aircraft could be used to carry out the mission's work. He went into detail, covering aircraft type, range, speed and costs. He even suggested Oodnadatta, Cloncurry and Katherine as potential bases. Peel never lived to see the aerial medical service he suggested; his RE-8 two-seater disappeared on a patrol over France in 1918. But his letter started the Reverend Flynn on a quest to found the flying doctor service. In the course of doing this he met other young returned military aviators, including Hudson Fysh, who ran the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service. In 1927, Qantas and the Aerial Medical Service signed a lease agreement and on 17 May 1928, the first flying doctor flight took off, using a Qantas de Havilland 50 biplane, leased for two shillings (20c) a mile. (The pilot was Arthur Affleck). The service made 50 flights and treated 225 people that year. The ethos of the aviation start-up went well with the experimental medical service, which benefited from Qantas's immediately established culture of safety management. Fysh told Flynn 'We must make a list of all the risks that might be encountered in having flying doctors serve the inland and make sure that not one of them happens.'*



*Through Qantas, the AMS was lucky to have the services of its remarkable chief engineer, Arthur Baird, who oversaw the construction and maintenance of early Qantas aircraft. The Australian airline and the flying doctor followed their own paths over the years, but to this day a senior Qantas executive sits on the board of the RFDS.*

Under Arthur Baird's direction, the first aircraft to be built for QANTAS at Longreach, seven de Havilland DH50s, and a DH9, were constructed in the Longreach workshop between August 1926 and August 1929, under license from de Havilland.<sup>11</sup> There were possibly two sound practical reasons underlying this program.

The first being that Hudson-Fysh had calculated that building their own aircraft would save £50 rather than importing them from England. The construction of the aircraft could also absorb the idle time when the staff were not maintaining their existing aircraft.<sup>11</sup>

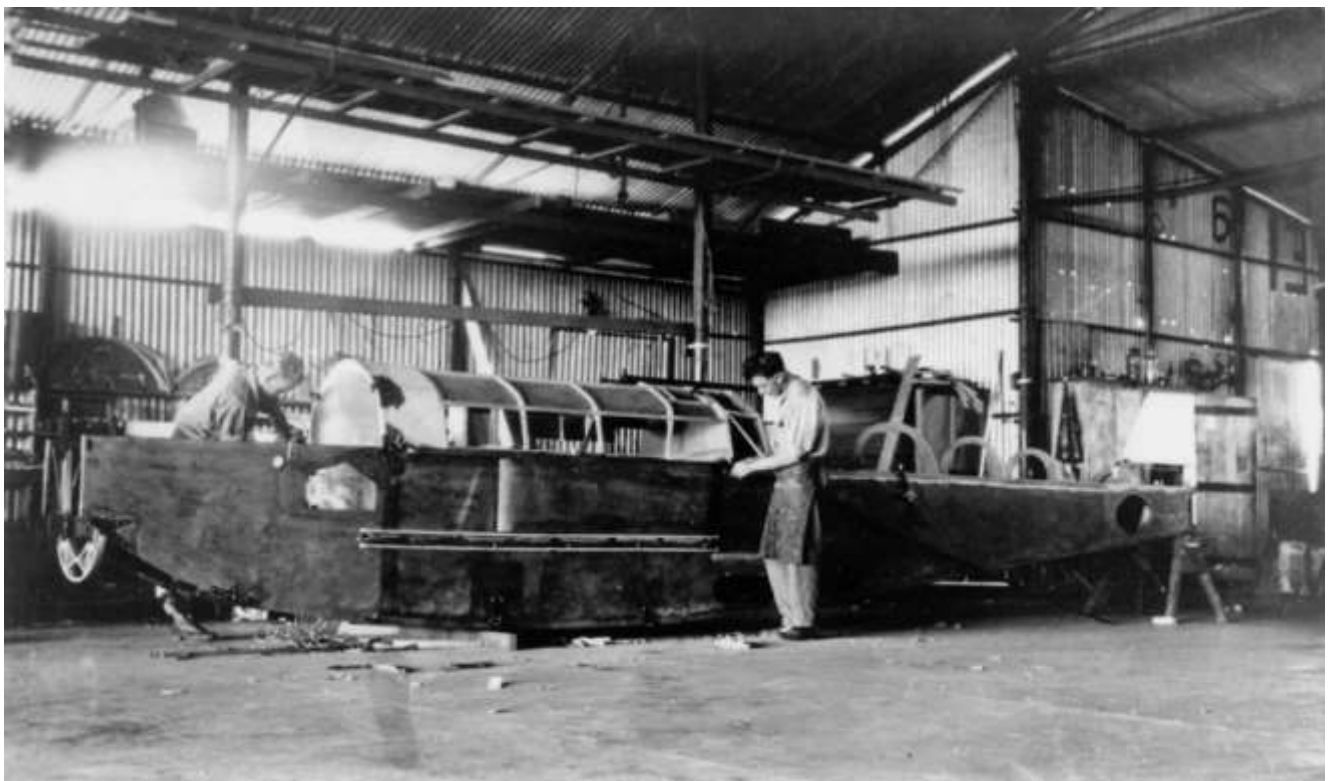
The second possible reason for the construction of the aircraft in Longreach is as follows:

As reported in the Aviation History Australia website, under the Arthur Baird listing:

*The crushing heat of the outback tested the wooden frames of the aircraft which warped and shrank, and it tested engines which strained and often failed to climb through the thin air. Throttles would stay on full, which caused even more heating and made radiators boil. Installing larger radiators became the standard activity.*

Arthur would have experienced similar problems with the English built aircraft, which he maintained in Middle East during the war. It is suggested that by manufacturing the planes in Longreach, it would allow the timber to 'season' before construction and avoid the distortion in frames and wings that had been experienced in the Middle East. Arthur is believed to have carefully selected the timbers and did much of the machining to avoid waste. The cooling capacity of the engine radiators was increased and header tanks added to conserve water. The first aircraft was completed on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1926.<sup>10</sup>

In 1931 QANTAS became a sales agent for private owners and were still assembling aircraft under Arthur Baird's supervision as late as 1936.<sup>11</sup>



Mechanics working on the fuselage of a DH 50, in the Qantas hangar Longreach. circa.1926-28. Image courtesy of the State Library of Queensland.

QANTAS was not the only company in the world to build their own aircraft. From BAE Systems website: There were only 38, DH50 variants built. 17 at the de Havilland, Stag Lane factory, QANTAS built 7, Western Australian Airways, Perth built 3, Larkin Aircraft, Melbourne built 1, SABCA, Brussels built 3, and Aero Vodochody, Prague built 7.<sup>11</sup>

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1927, The Daily Telegraph reported:

*RAPID FLIGHT Charleville to Melbourne in 8 ¼ Hours. MELBOURNE, Wednesday.*

*Yesterday morning Capt. G. Matthews, with two passengers, left Charleville Queensland, in one of the fastest commercial planes in Australia. He arrived at Essendon this morning, having covered the distance of 840 miles in 8 ¼ hours. It was a great feat. Two stops were made during the flight. The first was at Barrington, on the N.S.W. border, and the other at Hay, where the party spent the night. The two passengers were Dr. Watson Brown and Mr.*

*A. Baird, aerodrome manager of the Queensland aerial services.*

During the early days of operations, Arthur set up a Talbot truck with basic tools which could go to downed aircraft and get them operational, if possible, or bring the damaged machine back to the Longreach workshop for repairs.<sup>5</sup>

He was one of the first bosses in Australia to introduce music to a workplace when he began bringing his gramophone and records into the hangar to keep his team happy.<sup>6</sup>

In 1930 Arthur set up and staffed the Qantas maintenance base at Archerfield in Queensland. Both Hudson Fysh and Arthur Baird formally moved to Brisbane in 1931. Darwin and Singapore facilities were established in December 1934, in preparation for the first overseas service between Brisbane and Singapore. Arthur supervised the construction of the flying boat depot at Rose Bay in 1938. Perth was established mid-1943, during WW II.<sup>11</sup>



Arthur Baird trained as a pilot at Longreach. He is seen here at the controls of a DH85 Fox Moth. Circa 1934.<sup>1</sup> QANTAS owned a number of Fox Moth's over the years. Many were used as air ambulances. The logged history of two of the aircraft, with Baird references are shown on pages 33 and 34.

In the early years, Arthur was recorded as the pilot, flying mail, special charter flights, and sometimes patients for the

Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade.<sup>11</sup> When he moved to Brisbane, Arthur took every opportunity to fly the mail out to Longreach, where he would catch up with friends and maybe play a round of golf or two.<sup>7</sup>

By 1934, Arthur is believed to have logged over 2,500 flying hours, which was double those of Wilmot Hudson Fysh, who was mostly tied up with administrative tasks.<sup>9</sup>

From the Daily Telegraph 5<sup>th</sup> February 1934: *AIR AMBULANCE IN 2200 MILES FLIGHT. BRISBANE, Sunday.*

*An aerial ambulance flight of 2200 miles in two days was completed today by W. A. Baird, in the Qantas plane Atalanta. Baird left Brisbane for Mount Isa at 5 a.m. yesterday to bring to Brisbane Mrs. A. Ely, who is seriously ill. He was accompanied by her sister, Nurse E. Horn. The Atalanta reached Mount Isa at 6 p.m., and at 6 a.m. today left for Brisbane, arriving, 12 hours later. Baird and the Atalanta have figured in several feats of aerial transport of sick people. Baird is looking forward to the arrival from England in two weeks of a new de Havilland Fox Moth machine, to be fitted with special stretcher accommodation, and kept by Qantas in Brisbane, to meet emergency air ambulance calls.*

Arthur Baird arrived at Archerfield one morning in his 1934 Dodge ute. In the ute were a large number of aircraft parts. Amongst the parts were airframe components and cables, along with a crankshaft from a Gypsy engine and a log book. The logbook revealed that the crankshaft came from a Gypsy engine which had belonged to Bert Hinkler of Bundaberg. Arthur explained to the staff that they were going to build a Gypsy Moth. They did not have many parts in the store, but managed to salvage two damaged engines and other components from recent crashes. After many hours of work, airworthy VH-UIC was handed over to Harry Mills of the Queensland Air University as a training aircraft.<sup>10</sup> *Images and the only records located, shown on page 36.*

From the Sydney Morning Herald 9<sup>th</sup> September 1935: *ALL-RED ROUTE. Flying Boats for Empire Service. QANTAS ENGINEER'S PREDICTION. BRISBANE, Sunday.*

*Mr. W. A. Baird, chief engineer for Qantas Empire Airways, Ltd., who returned to Brisbane by mail plane on Saturday after a visit to Britain, expressed the opinion that, by 1937, flying-boats would be in use along the entire length of the air mail route between England and Australia. He said that the flying-boats being constructed by Imperial Airways were the biggest things yet attempted, and that the development of an all-red route by sea was inevitable. Imperial Airways had plans in hand for the institution of a flying-boat service as far as Singapore, and later, no doubt, flying-boats would be adopted on the Singapore-Australian section of the route. The service would thus be diverted along the north and eastern coast of Australia, serving coastal cities and towns as far as Melbourne, and perhaps as far as Adelaide. On the journey to and from England, Mr. Baird said, he had an opportunity of judging the superiority of flying-boats over land craft on the section between Alexandria (Egypt) and Brindisi (Italy).*

*They were infinitely more desirable than land machines for the transport of passengers and heavy mails. In addition, they had command of unrestricted landing areas, and it was important to an Empire aerial organisation that all landing places should be under British control. At present 'planes operating Empire aerial services landed on foreign territories, and international complications were likely to arise in consequence. Officers of Imperial Airways, Mr. Baird added, had mapped a practicable flying-boat route, and British aircraft manufacturers were producing flying-boats that would place Britain and her dominions in a position independent of the rest of the world in the operation of the Imperial air mail.*

On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1938 QANTAS headquarters moved to Sydney. Arthur Baird moved to Rose Bay on 10<sup>th</sup> June and the first flying boat service from Sydney to England began on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1938.<sup>11</sup>



November 1938, a Catalina on the hanger apron in front of the new maintenance facility being constructed for the Short S.23 Empire Class Flying Boats. Image courtesy Ben Dannecker collection.

In 1939 Arthur was supervising the construction of the new Rose Bay facility. It was not without its controversy. From the Sydney Morning Herald 21<sup>st</sup> January 1939 (abridged):

*MINISTER DECLINES TO COMMENT - The Federal Assistant Minister Mr Harrison who is acting for the Minister for Civil Aviation Mr Thorby declined last night to comment on the statement that the position of the hangar at Rose Bay is unsatisfactory in relation to the slipway. The beaching gear and equipment at the slipway at Rose Bay were tested yesterday for the first time. A motor tractor was used to haul a flying boat on to the slipway but it was taken no farther. We did all we wanted to do on this occasion said the Qantas Airways works manager Mr W.A. Baird last night. "We were only trying out the beaching gear. I do not think the tractor we used would have taken the boat farther."*

What actually occurred was that the tractor (possibly the one above), was attempting to tow the larger Short S.23 flying boat backwards up the wooden slipway to the concrete hanger apron. The tractor was fitted with special rubber pads to protect the slipway and the concrete apron. Just as the tractor reached the concrete apron at the top of the slipway, it hit a patch of water, the rubber pads lost traction, and everything began to slide backwards down the slipway. Arthur Baird, who had been directing the operation, was standing with George Roberts, one of the engineering staff, watching this very first test of the slipway. Arthur who was usually unflappable, turned to George and said, "Keep an eye on this George. We're going to see something interesting here in a moment." And see something interesting they did! As the flying boat gathered momentum back down the slipway and completely out of control, the tractor driver jumped for his life. The machine was drawn down the slipway at increasing speed, to eventually disappear completely into the bay.

Whilst the smaller tractor could comfortably handle the much lighter Catalina aircraft at around 9.5 tonne unladen, it was concluded that the movement of the larger 16 tonne aircraft had exceeded all the known laws of friction, momentum, traction and gravity. There was an investigation launched, however the conclusion was that a larger and heavier tractor was required. Later tests with the larger heavier machine were successful.<sup>10</sup>



📷 The original founders of Qantas in 1939 (from left) Hudson Fysh, Fergus McMaster, W.A. Baird and P.J. McGinness.

This photograph courtesy of Pauline Cottrill, taken in 1939 on the rooftop of Shell House, Margaret Street, Sydney, Qantas' headquarters. It was reproduced by the Daily Telegraph in May 2019 as part of an article by Troy Lennon on the history of QANTAS.

With the fall of Singapore and the bombing of Darwin in February 1942 during WWII, a vital airmail link between Australia and England had been cut. After losing three planes to enemy fire, the airline started an alternate service over the Indian Ocean to Ceylon, avoiding refuelling in Singapore. At the Rose Bay workshops, Arthur Baird supervised the modification of five (officially obsolete) Catalina aircraft for the 28 hour non-stop flights between Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Perth. Depending on wind conditions, the flight could take up to 32 hours. To increase the range of the aircraft to the 3,600 miles (3,100 nautical miles/5,766kms) that would be required, they were stripped of all non-essential equipment and additional fuel capacity was added to give them almost 2400 US gal / 2,000 imperial gallon capacity, up from the standard 1750 US gal / 1450 imp gal. This service primarily carried airmail, and up to only three passengers, due to weight restrictions created by the huge fuel load. The flights operated in radio silence, relying on the stars for navigation, so as not to give away the planes' position. The flights connected with BOAC flights from Ceylon to London, thus keeping the vital mail link between Australia and Britain open during the war.<sup>5</sup> Flights continued until July 1945 with 271 crossings being achieved.<sup>10</sup>



A 1944 Catalina has been restored in the image of one of the original five modified aircraft. 'Antares Star' was restored at a cost of over \$1 million. It is on display at the QANTAS Founders Museum, Longreach.

The tail of the original aircraft can be seen in the image below.



The 'Double Sunrise' Catalinas being serviced on the ramp at Nedlands on the Swan River, with Vega Star in the foreground.

Pilot Russel Tapp commanded the first of these flights. Passengers received a certificate of membership to '*The Rare and Secret Order of the Double Sunrise*', as the sun rose twice during the flight. These flights still hold the record for the longest duration, non-stop, scheduled passenger flights in the world.<sup>4</sup> See image next page.

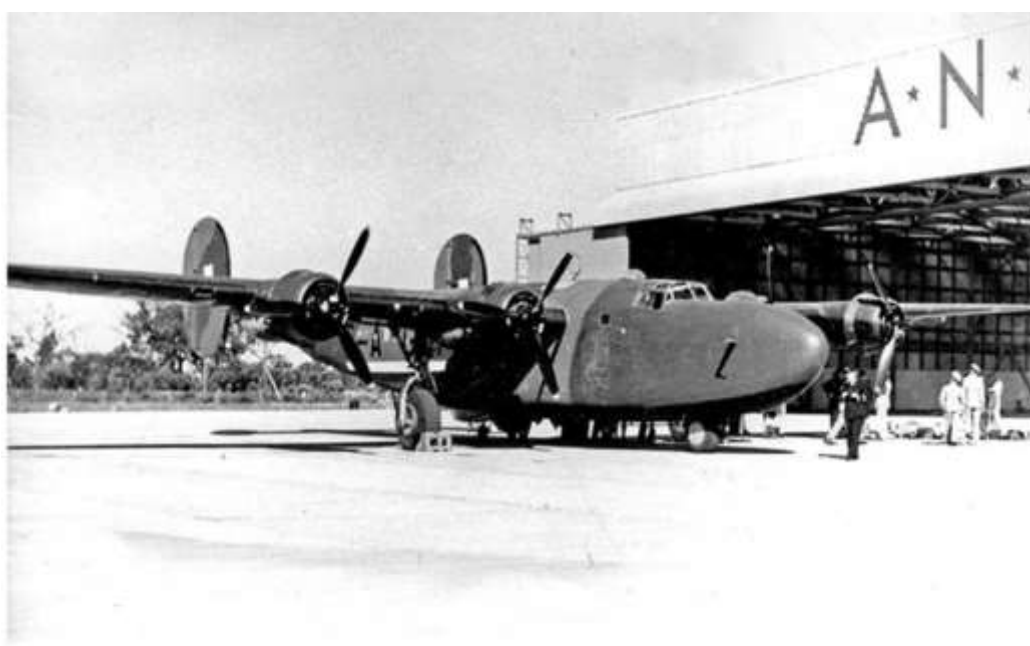


The Double Sunrise certificate earned by Hudson Fysh in August 1943 when he flew home on the Catalina service after a visit to Britain. The flight took 32 hours, the longest ever recorded for the crossing.

*Both images from an article written by Jim Eames  
for the Sydney Morning Herald on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017.*

As the fleet changed, so did the challenges, however Arthur remained Engineering Manager at QANTAS until his retirement in June 1949. He is credited with training over 400 apprentices during his 28 years with the company. The W.A. Baird Shield was presented annually from 1949 until 2000, to the top apprentice each year, as a way to encourage the striving for excellence, which Arthur always saw as crucial to the airline's successful operations.<sup>11</sup>

Many apprentices will remember Arthur's saying, "Do you know what you are doing son??"



*Qantas Liberator G-AGKT at Guildford Aerodrome, Perth in late 1944. The ANA hangar had just been built and was still at Perth Airport used by Ansett Air Freight until the 1990s.*

*Photo: Qantas*

From the Longreach Leader 1<sup>st</sup> July 1949, upon Arthur's retirement (corrected):

#### **MR. ARTHUR BAIRD RETIRES FROM QANTAS.**

*The announcement that Mr. Arthur Baird is retiring from Qantas at the end of June is of more than passing interest for many friends, he made in Longreach and Central Queensland generally while he was with the Company from its inception in Winton and Longreach in 1921. He retires as Qantas Engineering Manager he was appointed to on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1948. The period of over 28 years in which he has been associated with Qantas engineering side, is believed to be, a long service record.*

*Born in Victoria, Mr. Baird served his engineering apprenticeship in Melbourne as a youth. Immediately upon the completion of his apprenticeship in February 1915, he was accepted as a member of the instrumental staff (mechanical) at the formation of the Central Flying School at Point Cook. Later he transferred to the A.I.F. and subsequently early in 1916 went on service with No. 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps in which he served throughout the whole of the campaign in Egypt and Palestine. At the formation of the Squadron (Overseas) Mr. Baird was originally Sergeant in Charge Headquarters Workshops. He was later promoted to Flight Sergeant in charge "B" Flight, No. 1 Squadron, A.F.C. In Palestine he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.*

*He returned from service, in 1919 to the Central Flying School at Laverton where he remained for a short period until he obtained his discharge for the purpose of competing in the first England-Australia flight. Unfortunately the financial backing, required for such an enterprise, miscarried, (when the sponsor Sir Samuel McCaughey died suddenly).*

*Arthur opened an engineering business in Melbourne, which he carried on until the birth of the idea for opening air services in Queensland. He joined P. J. McGinnis and Hudson Fysh and went with them to Longreach when they flew up in the first two planes owned by Qantas. BE2E and an Avro.*

#### **FIRST QANTAS PLANE TO BE BUILT AT LONGREACH.**

*Under his direction the first aircraft to be built in Longreach were constructed by Qantas in their workshops. The first one was completed on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1926 In all, four D.H.50's fitted with Siddeley Puma engines, and three D.H.50J's (shown right) with Bristol Jupiter engines were built. Mr. Baird also modified a DH.9C at Longreach to overcome a loading difficulty.*



*This plane was completed and tested in February 1927. Mr. Baird played a large part in the development of the Flying Doctor Service for it was by him that the aircraft used was modified most satisfactorily to meet the special requirements.*

(continued over)

## PILOT TOO

For some years, Mr. Baird *periodically* piloted aircraft on the air service between Brisbane and Camooweal as well as carrying out a great number of initial development flights of aircraft modified or built under his instructions. The building of hangers by Qantas was supervised by Mr. Baird and many of the airports with which he was associated became prominent during the war. When the necessity arose for an alternative route to England, Mr. Baird (along with Capt. Bill Crowther)<sup>11</sup> had the task early in 1943, of setting up and staffing the base in Western Australia. His was also the work of supervising the modification of the aircraft for the 3,600 mile non-stop ocean journey.

## ENGLISH VISITS

As Qantas' works manager, Mr Baird made two trips to England on behalf of the Company, including a trip just prior to the inauguration of the Empire flying boat service in order to observe the handling and servicing technicalities of the then new type of aircraft. He was appointed engineering manager on 29th January 1948.

His ground engineer's licence is No. 25 in all categories, covering all types of engines and land planes, and he holds Air Ministry, Licence (British), No. 4387 covering flying boats, in categories "A" "B," "C" and "D." He also holds Commonwealth "A" pilot's licence No. 130 which was extended to "B" class pilot's licence No. 177. He has to his credit some thousands of hours flying as an air mail pilot with this organisation. Mr. Baird served for some years on the Metal Trades Employers' Association.

## LEARNT GOLF AT LONGREACH

A member of a prominent golf club, Mr. Baird is a keen player of that sport and has presented a trophy for competitive play among his Mascot staff in whom he shows an interest in their personal development. (The trophy was a reproduction of a propeller tip, which Arthur acquired when he had a mishap with a DH50J in May 1930).<sup>11</sup>

This is particularly the case with the Q.E.A. apprentices in whose training Mr. Baird has been interested since Qantas' first apprentice joined the company in 1927. He was a keen member of the Longreach Golf Club. (There are reports in the same newspaper, that Arthur was also a keen cricketer and trap shooter).

Mr. Baird has seen many changes in aircraft design since he first serviced the old Qantas B.E.2E and Avro. From these planes to the D.H 86's used in 1934 between Brisbane and Singapore was quite a step, but possibly no bigger than from the D.H.86's and the Empire Flying boats introduced in 1938. Now, Constellations are on the Australia-England route and Q.E.A. has also Lancastrians, Liberators, DC 4's, DC 3's, Catalina's and DC 84's.



After returning from a short trip to Broken Hill, Arthur died suddenly at his home in Darling Point on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1954. Arthur never married. He was cremated and his ashes are in the niche wall at the Northern Suburbs Memorial Gardens, North Ryde. His entire estate was left to his sister Beatrice Evelyn (Eve) Baird.<sup>1</sup>

From the Longreach Leader 14<sup>th</sup> May 1954, following Arthur's passing (corrected):

### ARTHUR BAIRD – AVIATION PIONEER

*When Mr. Wilfred Arthur Baird died in Sydney on Friday night at the age of 65, there passed on one of the original contributors to commercial aviation in Australia. He was one of the three airmen who staffed Qantas, or to give it its full title-Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services. The other two were Mr. (now Sir) Hudson Fysh and the late Mr. P.J. McGuinness. This company was started in Western Queensland with first headquarters at Winton, then at Longreach, where subsequently big workshops were established under the direction and management of Mr. Baird.*

*It was in 1921 that Messrs. Fysh, McGuinness and Baird flew into Longreach in an old British Flying Force B.E.2.E. Realising that the Western Queensland country, because of its vast plains and few mountainous stretches, offered the safest flying country in the world. Raising the finance for the new venture was largely under the control of the late Sir Fergus McMaster, and he was the guiding hand of Qantas and later Qantas Empire Airways Ltd., for many years.*

### BUILT FIRST QANTAS PLANE IN LONGREACH

*The late Mr. Baird was responsible for the building of the first commercial aircraft to be built in Longreach, which was constructed at the Longreach Qantas Workshops under charter from de Havilland, in 1926-27. Later another similar plane was constructed at Longreach, thus creating an historic milestone in Australian aviation annals.*

*Before the 1914-18 War Mr. Baird joined the Australia Flying Corps at Laverton. His experience as an engineer in the Australian Flying Corps in that war, mostly gained in the Middle East, assured his ability to carry out the work needed when Qantas was formed, plus his constant study of the engineering problems associated with the new industry. He also later became a qualified pilot with the infant Qantas, flying on the route between Charleville and Longreach and Cloncurry, but his principal interest and work was in the engineering sections.*

*Mr. Baird played a large part in the establishment of the Queensland Flying Doctor, Service for Rev. John Flynn, modifying the first aircraft in this service to meet the special conditions of inland aerial ambulance and mercy work.*

*Another notable achievement by Mr. Baird was in modifying Qantas planes for the 3600 mile alternative non-stop ocean flight from Western Australia to Colombo, when Japan attacked Singapore.*

*When Qantas moved their headquarters from Longreach to Brisbane, and later to Sydney, Mr. Baird was appointed workshops manager and remained with the company till his retirement a few years ago.*

*During his residence in Longreach the late Mr. Baird fostered a respect and regard for aviation in all its forms and encouraged young men into flying wherever possible. He was a keen and active member of the Longreach Golf Club and took an interest in trap shooting.*

*He shunned any limelight, and was slow of speech: But when he did have anything to say, it was worth listening to and taking cognisance of.*

Arthur was inducted into the Australian Aviation Hall of Fame in 2013 with the following citation:



**Wilfred Arthur Baird**

**1889 – 1954**

*The person responsible for establishing the 'excellence' of Qantas engineering was Arthur Baird, but Baird wasn't his original name.*

*Born Wilfred Arthur Beard in Benalla, Victoria in 1889, he had a remarkable aptitude for machinery and was reputed to have achieved the highest marks ever for a Mechanical Engineering student when he graduated from the Working Man's College – later the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology – in 1909.*

*He completed a five-year apprenticeship with engineering firm W. Anderson and Son in Richmond, Melbourne. When he enlisted in February 1916, Beard had been an instructor fitter and air mechanic at Point Cook for nine months. He was sent overseas as acting Corporal with No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps a month later. Beard established a reputation that saw him loaned to Royal Flying Corps units to resolve their mechanical problems. He was promoted to Corporal, Sergeant and, in March 1918, Flight Sergeant.*

*Beard was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for valuable field service in 1918. Returning to Australia, he was discharged in June 1919 and started a garage business in Melbourne. When former No. 1 Squadron pilots Paul McGinness and Hudson Fysh took delivery of the first Qantas aircraft in January 1921, Beard joined them and the airline became his life's work.*

*As Chief Mechanic and Aerodrome Manager he recruited and led a team of expert aircraft mechanics at Longreach in western Queensland.*

*During the early 1920s he reverted to the original Scottish spelling of his name to Baird. He was one of the first bosses in Australia to introduce music to a workplace when he began bringing his gramophone and records into the hangar to keep his team happy. For three years from 1926, Baird oversaw the construction of seven DH-50 airliners and a DH-9.*

*Qantas flew these aircraft and on the day after it qualified for its Certificate of Airworthiness, the first DH-50 'Iris' gained fame by carrying the Governor-General and his wife, Lord John and Lady Ethel Stonehaven, on a tour to the Northern Territory. Baird was in charge of engineering activities at Archerfield and Rose Bay where he was intimately involved with the introduction of Empire flying boats to Qantas service.*

*He later supervised the conversion work required to enable Qantas to operate five Catalina flying boats on the world's longest-duration scheduled service, known as the 'Double Sunrise' flights between Perth and Ceylon during World War II. As Qantas Engineering Manager, Baird took a close interest in training apprentices and instilling in them the famous Qantas safety culture. The Arthur Baird Trophy was presented to the top apprentice each year as a way to encourage the striving for excellence which he always saw as crucial to the airline's successful operations.*

*Arthur Baird retired in June 1949, but continued as an adviser with an office at Rose Bay until his death at his Vaucluse home on 7 May 1954. This citation was written by Tom Harwood.<sup>11</sup>*



The Arthur Baird Memorial Working Group selection from the four entries submitted for the memorial design. Submitted by Alex Sanson, Metaform, Taradale. Victoria,  
*“The form of my proposed sculpture is based on the De Havilland DH-50 aircraft. Qantas under Arthur Baird’s engineering direction was one of the few airlines to have ever built and operated its own aircraft and Arthur supervised the assembly of 7 these aircraft for Qantas in the 1920s.”*

Qantas were invited to participate in the memorial project, however declined to do so. The memorial project has been suspended pending the procurement of suitable funding.

#### References:

1. Numerous contributions from family members, much of this from research done for family reunions in 1987 and again in 2006. The Baird Family history book held at the Benalla Family Research Group, was compiled in 2007 and contains images and details of the Beard (Baird) family. Included in the book is an extensive family tree compiled by Patricia. M. Beard.(nee Gawne).
2. Trove images from Corowa Free Press.
3. Trove images from Benalla Standard and North Eastern Ensign.
4. Wikipedia.
5. QANTAS Founders Museum, Longreach. Qld. website.
6. Australian Aviation Hall of Fame.
7. Trove images from Longreach Leader.
8. Trove images from the Argus newspaper.
9. QANTAS by George – Paul Barnes.
10. A Tradition of Integrity – Bruce Leonard.
11. Tom Harwood. Curator QANTAS Founders Museum Longreach.

## NOTES:

1. There are a number of books and historic documents stating that Arthur was taught to fly, and became an instructor, in the Australia Flying Corps at Laverton. There are no records to support this statement. Arthur joined the AFC at Point Cook, after he completed his apprenticeship with W. Anderson and Sons. He was at Point Cook for only nine months prior to enlisting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1916. At that time he was sent to the AIF facility at Laverton to have his injections and medical check. He was appointed to HQ, No.1 Squadron at Laverton, by Lt. Col. E.H. Reynolds. Military records show him as an air mechanic and a fitter and turner. Construction of the Laverton airfield was not completed until 1925. Arthur's actual pilot training is detailed on page 9.
2. Arthur embarked on 16<sup>th</sup> March 1916, arriving in Suez on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1916. He initially held the rank of Private, but was promoted to Corporal on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1916. He was later promoted to Flight Sergeant on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1917. He left the Middle East on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1919, returning to Australia on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1919. Following a medical assessment, he was declared fit and discharged on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1919. For his service, Arthur received the Meritorious Service Medal. He also received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.
3. Arthur Baird learnt to fly at Longreach as detailed in Page 9. There are numerous records showing him as the pilot of the regular mail flights between Brisbane and Camooweal, and many of the initial Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade flights. He was credited with having logged thousands of flying hours and had three reported incidents, in February 1930 in a DH50 at Corona, near Broken Hill, May 1930 in a DH50J at Winton (Qld) and in December 1932 in a DH61 at Tambo.<sup>11</sup> In later years he was called upon as an air crash investigator.
4. The materials used to construct the aircraft at Longreach from 1926, were engines, instruments and other metal components imported from England. Spruce and Oregon timber was imported from Canada. Maple for the propellers and the special three-ply wooden sheet used around the cabin came from Brisbane. Irish linen was used to cover the frame and wings. The aircraft were hand built under licence, to de Havilland supplied drawings, which cost £50.
5. The five Catalina aircraft used during WW2, were sourced through Britain from the United States under 'lend lease'. At that time they were officially 'obsolete'. Before being put into service, they were taken to the Rose Bay workshop facility for modification of the fuel tanks for aircraft stability and added range. The engines were changed out for the more reliable Australian built Pratt & Whitney 'Wasp' engine. Capt. Bill Crowther set up the maintenance facilities on the Swan River. The aircraft were handed back in late 1945 and scuttled off Rottneest Island.<sup>11</sup>
6. Before Quality Assurance and ISO certification, Arthur Baird had a very simple, but effective, form of quality control. After servicing an aircraft, Arthur would say to the staff who completed the service, 'hop in', whilst he took the aircraft for a test flight.<sup>1</sup>
7. There were five KBE's and numerous OBE's and MBE's awarded to QANTAS board members and executive staff, some of whom Arthur had trained. Arthur received a gold watch upon his retirement.

## SUMMARY:

Arthur Baird obviously inherited a work ethic and an interest in machines from his parents during his formative years. His intuitive and meticulous approach to his work, most certainly established the foundation upon which the impeccable safety record of QANTAS has been built. His strict standards are still followed today. 'Near enough is not good enough' was his philosophy.

Arthur served his country with distinction during the First World War, solving many problems associated with British built aircraft operating in the extreme conditions of the Middle East, for both the Australian and British forces. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his service. *A copy of the original citation sent to his father in Melbourne, is shown on page 29.* Arthur attained the rank of Flight Sergeant, and spent 40 months in the service.

He was a key member of the QANTAS initial crew of 1921, not only as an engineer, but also as an accomplished pilot in later years. He is credited with having flown some thousands of hours for the fledgling company. He provided the support structure for the airline's operations for many years, and supervised the construction and operation of airport maintenance facilities in Longreach, Brisbane, Sydney, Singapore, Darwin, and by necessity, along with Capt. Bill Crowther, in Perth during WWII.

He supervised the construction of the first eight commercial aircraft in Longreach for QANTAS, and the assembly of other aircraft at other QANTAS workshops up until 1936.

In 1921, he modified aircraft for Longreach Dr. Archbold Michod, Queensland's first flying doctor. Later in 1927, Arthur led the team which modified the first imported QANTAS de Havilland DH50 to provide the aircraft chartered by the Australian Inland Mission Aerial Medical Service. In the first year, the service made 50 flights and treated 225 people. In 1942 the Flying Doctor Service took over the role, with the 'Royal' being added in 1955. Arthur was the pilot on some of the early Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade flights from Brisbane.

He modified five Catalina aircraft to fly non-stop over vast distances during WW II, thus ensuring that a vital mail link between Australia and England remained open. These are still the longest duration (28 to 32 hrs), non-stop, scheduled passenger flights ever made.

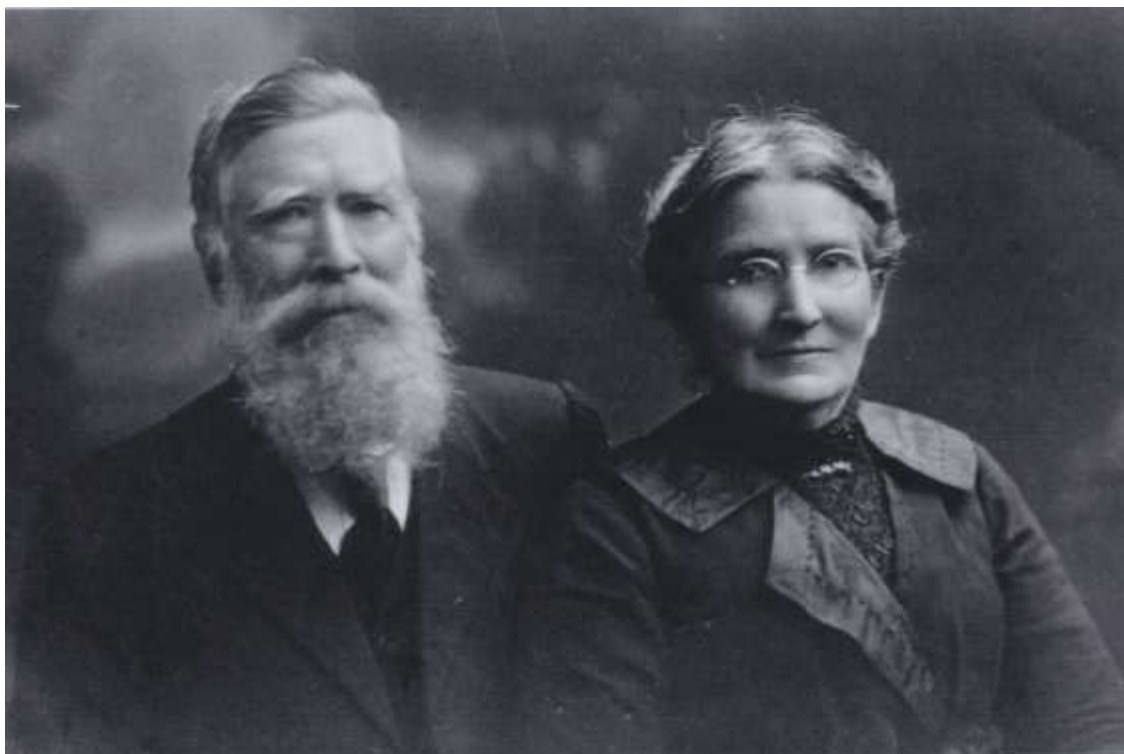
Aviation History Australia credits Arthur with training over 400 apprentices during his 28 years with QANTAS. The airline's maintenance staff now numbers in excess of 3,300.

Arthur was a shy man and shunned the limelight, however he appears to have been an inspiration to many in the aviation industry, and it is suggested that the significant contribution made by this exceptional man should be recognised.

It would have been most satisfying if we were able co-ordinate the acknowledgement of this extraordinary Australian, with the centenary of the founding of QANTAS in 2020, however Covid 19 restrictions cancelled many plans for the centenary celebrations.

Barry O'Connor and Beverley (Chick) Walker,  
Benalla Family Research Group. 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## Additional Images



Arthur's parents, William Alexander (Billy) and Mary Beard on their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary May 1915 in Carlton. Photo from the Beard Family History book at BFRG.



Beard Family Reunion at the Benalla Show 26<sup>th</sup> October 1950. Arthur rear left. Image from Benalla Ensign.

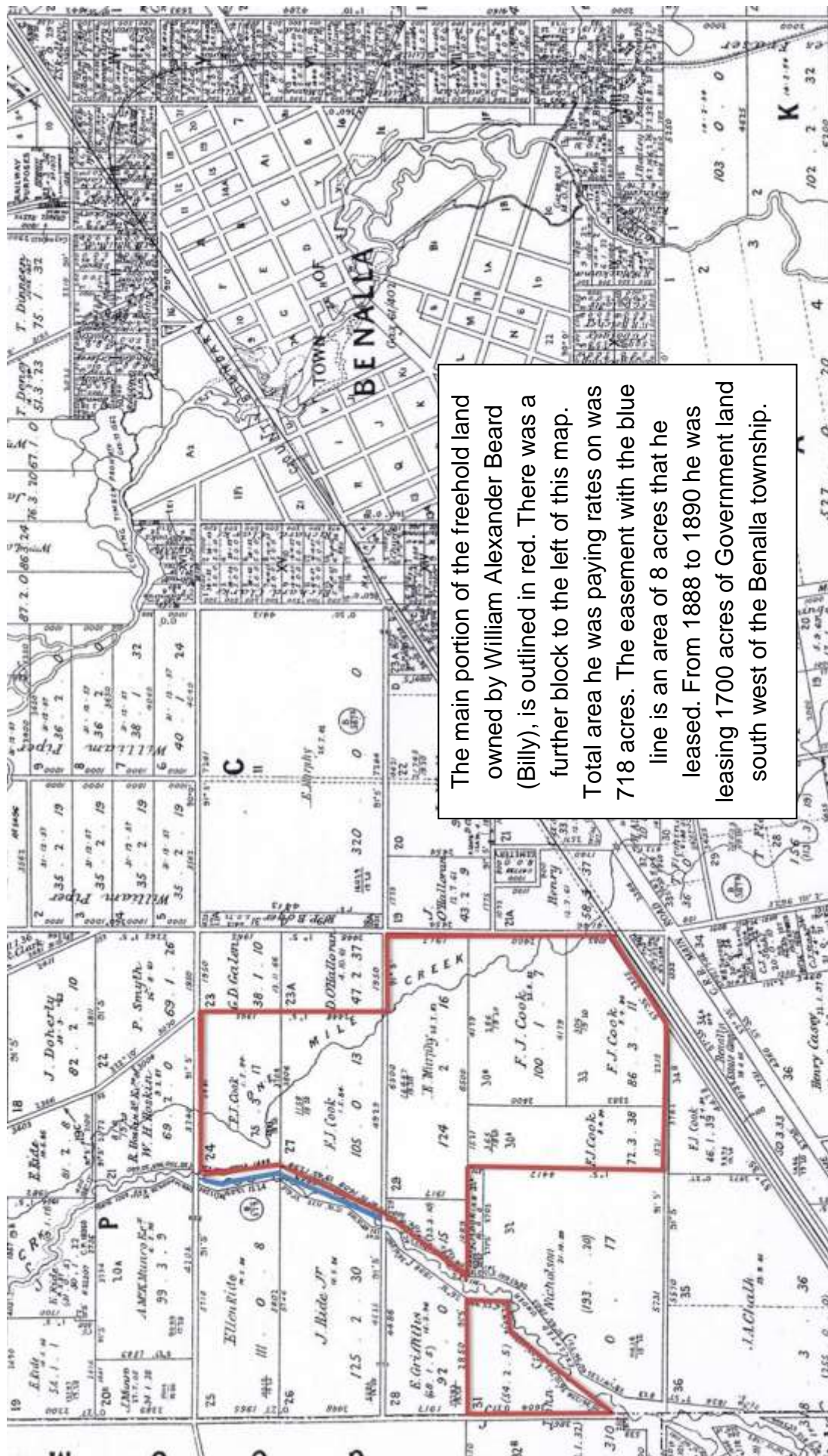
## The BEARD Family - about 1903



**Back row from left:** 1 James (Jim) Beard (aged 22), 2 Mary Frances (Molly) Beard (aged 20), 3 Jonathon Samuel (Jack) Beard (husband of Henrietta Beard) (aged 28), 4 Isabella Jane (Bella) Beard (aged 25), 5 George Beard (aged 27), 6 Margaret Annie (Anne) Beard (aged 33), 7 John Thomas (Jack) Ginnivan (husband of Elizabeth Beard) (aged 29), 8 Lillian May (Lili) Beard (aged 18), 9 Robert (Bob) Beard (aged 30)

**Middle row from left:** 10 Wilfred Arthur Baird (aged 14), 11 Henrietta Bertha (nee Trevelton) Beard (wife of Jonathon Beard) (aged 28) nursing 12 daughter Mary Irene Beard (aged 2), 13 William Alexander Beard 2nd (husband of Mary Beard Snr) (aged 63), 14 Mary (nee Daniels) Beard Snr (wife of William Beard 2nd) (aged 58), 15 Elizabeth (nee Beard) Ginnivan (wife of John Ginnivan) (aged 35), 16 Beatrice Evelyn (Ev) Baird (aged 11) **Centre front row:** 17 Ella May Ginnivan (daughter of John & Elizabeth Ginnivan) (aged 3)

Photo most likely taken about 1903 at the family home in Benalla, House name was maybe "Springfield" or "Woodlands", located probably in Cemetery Road, Benalla, Victoria.



The main portion of the freehold land owned by William Alexander Beard (Billy), is outlined in red. There was a further block to the left of this map. Total area he was paying rates on was 718 acres. The easement with the blue line is an area of 8 acres that he leased. From 1888 to 1890 he was leasing 1700 acres of Government land south west of the Benalla township.

AUSTRALIAN



MILITARY FORCES.

# **AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE**

## **Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.**

No. 108

Name Beard, Wilfred Arthur.

Unit 1st A.F.C.

Joined on 22-2-16

Head Qtrs. A.F.C.

### **Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.**

1. What is your Name? ...
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? ...
3. Are you a natural born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) ...
4. What is your Age? ...
5. What is your Trade or Calling? ...
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? ...
7. Are you married? ...
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address to be stated) ...
9. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? ...
10. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces, with Ignominy, or as Incurable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? ...
11. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge ...
12. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? ...
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? ...
14. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)—Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach eight shillings per day? ...
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? ...

1. Beard Wilfred Arthur
2. In the Parish of ... in or near the Town of Benalla in the County of Victoria
3. Natural Born British Subject.
4. 26 years. 2 months.
5. An Mechanic
6. W. Anderson Son Richmond (5 years)
7. Single
8. Mr. William A. Beard  
594 Lygon St.  
Carlton Victoria
9. No
10. No
11. Yes. 9 months Inst Staff A.I.S.
12. Yes.
13. No.
14. —
15. Yes.

I, Wilfred Arthur Beard, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife.\*† wife and children.

Date 16-2-16.

Wilfred Arthur Beard  
Signature of person enlisted.

WJM/MCE

38165

BASE RECORDS OFFICE, A. I. F.,  
10th September, 1918.

Dear Sir,

I have much pleasure in forwarding hereunder  
copy of extract from Fourth Supplement No. 30624 to the  
London Gazette dated 9th April, 1918, relating to the  
conspicuous services rendered by your son, No. 108 ,  
Flight-Sergeant W.A. Beard, <sup>squadron</sup> 1st Australian Flying Corps.

x x x x

AWARDED THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL  
-----

" HIS MAJESTY THE KING has been graciously pleased  
to approve of the above-mentioned reward for distinguished  
services in the field in connection with military operations  
culminating in the capture of Jerusalem. Dated 1st January  
1918 :-

No. 108 Flight-Sergeant W.A. BEARD. "

x x x x

The above has been promulgated in Commonwealth of  
Australia Gazette, No. 157 dated 30th August, 1918.

Yours faithfully,

Captain.

for Officer i/c Base Records.

Mr. W.A. Beard,  
594 Lygon Street,  
CARLTON. Vic.



Queensland and Northern Territories Aerial Services, Ltd., first aircraft, an Avro 504K, G-AUBG.



Believed to be the second aircraft converted, and the first used for air ambulance service in May 1928. DH-50 G-AUER "Victory". The first aircraft converted was a repurposed Bristol Fighter G-AUEB.<sup>11</sup> The Australian Inland Mission was not ready to commence services, so the Bristol aircraft was sold to Mr. Frewin from Brisbane on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1927.

*Image from QANTAS Founders Museum.*



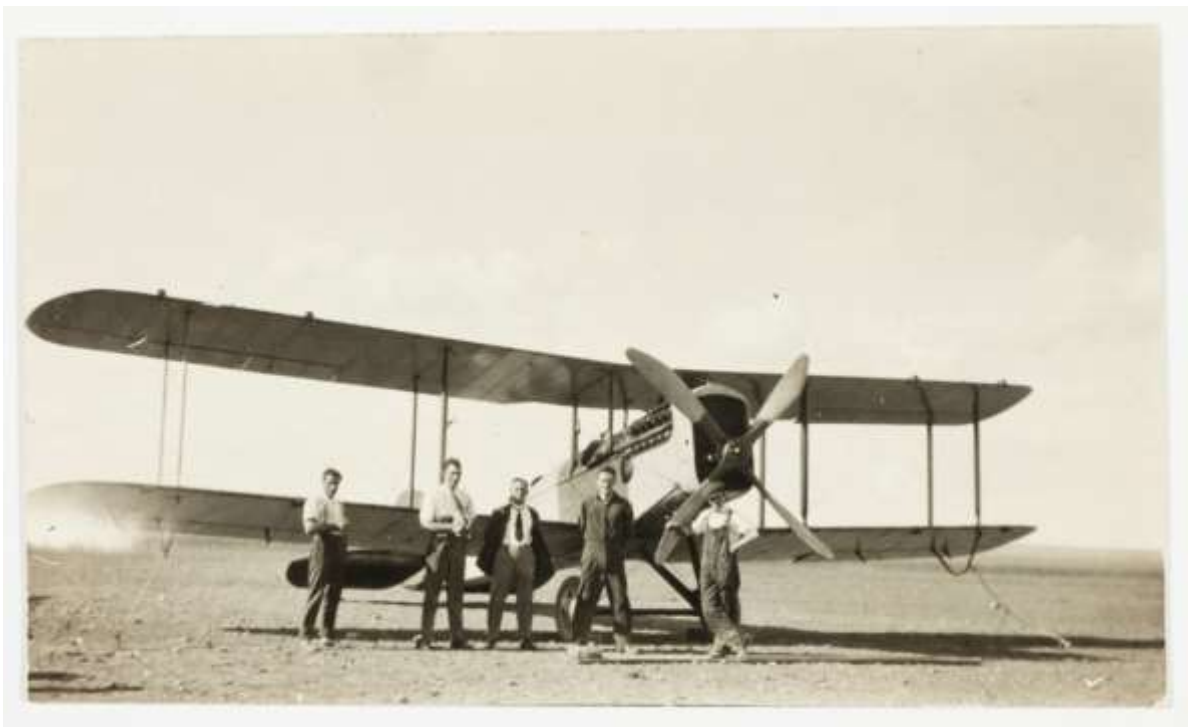
Arthur Baird (on wheel) and George Davidson repair a DH4 at Longreach.

*Image from the Sir Hudson Fysh Collection.*



Arthur Baird and Claude Mc Gilivray with a DH4 at Cloncurry.

*Image from the Sir Hudson Fysh Collection.*



Hudson Fysh (tall person second from left) with Arthur Baird (left) with a DH4.  
*Image from the Sir Hudson Fysh collection.*



Russel Tapp, famous QANTAS pilot right, and Arthur Baird left.  
 Russel Tapp commanded the first 'Double Sunrise' flight from Perth to Colombo.  
*Image QANTAS Founders museum collection courtesy of Tony Martin.*

c/n  
4084

**Fox Moth VH-URI**



12.33	Built at Stag Lane, Edgeware, Middlesex.
14.12.33	First flight Stag Lane
15.12.33	British CofA issued VH-URI: <a href="#">De Havilland Aircraft Pty Ltd, Sydney NSW</a>
12.33	Shipped to Australia
13.2.34	Australian Registration application: <a href="#">Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd</a>
2.34	Assembled at Archerfield Aerodrome, Brisbane by Qantas Ltd. Airframe time: 1 hr 15 mins
15.2.34	Test flown Archerfield after assembly, pilot Qantas Works Manager W.A.Baird
22.2.34	Registered <b>VH-URI</b> <a href="#">Qantas Ltd, Brisbane Qld</a>
22.2.34	Australian CofA issued. 3 passenger cabin
15.3.34	Flew Archerfield-Lismore on a charter, pilot Hudson Fysh
10.12.34	Change of owner's name: <a href="#">Qantas Empire Airways Ltd, Brisbane-Archerfield Qld</a>
31.3.35	Testflown Cloncurry Qld after annual CofA renewal overhaul by QEA. Airframe time: 294 hrs
8.1.36	Crashed on takeoff Wandoola Station Qld, a scheduled stop on the Cloncurry to Normanton air service. Struck stumps on takeoff from a boggy surface. Pilot E.C.Sims and two passengers were uninjured.
5.5.37	Testflown Archerfield Qld after annual CofA renewal overhaul by QEA, pilot W.A.Baird. Airframe time: 1328 hrs
22.4.38	Testflown Cloncurry Qld after annual CofA renewal overhaul. Airframe time: 1717 hrs
27.1.39	Forced landing Cowmungin Island at the mouth of the Mitchell River, Queensland due weather and low fuel, pilot D.A.Tennent. At the end of the landing run a wheel struck a ditch and the aircraft overturned. Posted missing, large aerial search, pilot and passengers located after 7 days. Aircraft repaired on site and flown out.
26.4.39	Testflown Archerfield Qld after annual CofA renewal overhaul by QEA
25.4.40	Testflown Cloncurry Qld after annual CofA renewal overhaul. Airframe time: 2205 hrs
6.5.42	Forced landing near Normanton Qld due magneto failure, no airframe damage. Pilot H.G.Mills, operating Cloncurry-Normanton Mail Service
10.3.43	Forced landing 80 miles north of Cloncurry Qld due broken oil line
2.2.44	CofA renewed at Archerfield
3.10.45	CofA renewed at Archerfield
23.1.46	Undercarriage collapsed on takeoff Wandoola Station Qld. Operated in Queensland for <a href="#">Flying Doctor Service of Australia</a>
18.10.46	CofA renewed at Archerfield
9.47	QEA write to DCA requesting approval to carry children under age 5 sitting on parent's knee in the cabin of VH-URI while operating on the Normanton mail service. DCA approved subject to not exceeding Maximum All Up Weight quoted on CofA.
6.11.47	CofA renewed at Archerfield
18.11.48	CofA renewed at Archerfield
29.6.50	CofA renewed at Archerfield
	Transferred to QEA New Guinea Internal Division
23.11.50	Overturned in high grass after engine failed on takeoff Boana, New Guinea. Pilot Nick Carter and one passenger minor injuries.
29.8.51	CofA renewed at Lae after repair
30.4.52	Change of ownership: <a href="#">Norman R. Wilde, Wau, New Guinea</a>
9.12.52	Damaged in taxiing accident at Wau, pilot F.M.Wilde (owner N.R.Wilde)
57	Reportedly operated on charter by Jack Gray (Jack Gray killed in crash of his Tiger Moth VH-AQS at Arona Gap 1.6.57)
26.6.58	Civil Register Change of ownership: <a href="#">Miss J. K. Gray, Goroka, New Guinea</a> (Jack Gray's daughter)
	<b>Retired in hangar at Goroka, became derelict</b>
	Reportedly taken over by <a href="#">Territory Airlines</a> . Dennis Buchanan of TAL states he purchased VH-URI on 1.1.58
.58	Donated to Goroka Pre-School playground by Dennis Buchanan of TAL
13.11.58	Struck-off Register

Images on pages 33 & 34 courtesy of the Geoff Goodall collection.

c/n  
4096

**Fox Moth VH-USL**

34	Built at Stag Lane, Edgeware, Middlesex.
30.8.34	Civil Aviation Branch allocated registration VH-USL to De Havilland Aircraft Pty Ltd, Sydney for a DH.83 to be imported
.34	Shipped to Australia
26.10.34	Press announcement by Arnhem Land Gold Development that they had ordered a new Fox Moth from De Havilland Aircraft Pty Ltd, Sydney. The company is currently using a DH.60.
28.12.34	Registered <b>VH-USL Arnhem Land Gold Development (NL), Sydney NSW</b>
28.12.34	Australian CofA issued
1.35	Shipped to Darwin on board the coastal steamer <i>Marella</i> . The aircraft will carry supplies to the Arnhem Land Gold Development mine, flown by pilot Ronald Cropley. The company Moth which Cropley previously flew will now be flown by pilot L. Stanborough of Sydney.
26.1.35	Flown Darwin to Bathurst Island and return by Cropley to collect milk from the aboriginal mission on the island
3.35	Unserviceable at Darwin NT due to a leaking oil tank, which the De Havilland company in Sydney does not hold a replacement. Arnhem Land Gold Development pilot Ronald Cropley is using a smaller aircraft to carry Wet Season supplies to the company's mine.
30.4.35	Flew Darwin to Arnhem Land Gold Development gold line then on to Pine Creek, pilot Cropley with two policemen as passengers.
1.5.35	Cropley departed Darwin in VH-USL for Sydney for a 6 week holiday.
28.6.35	<b>Change of ownership: Qantas Empire Airways Ltd, Brisbane Qld</b>
1.7.35	<b>Flown Sydney-Brisbane by Arthur Baird of Qantas. To be fitted out for ambulance work and expected to take up residence at Longreach Qld later that month.</b>
6.8.35	Delivered Archerfield-Longreach by QEA pilot Alfred L. Ashley who will be in charge of the aircraft at Longreach. He is an experienced ground engineer and will also maintain the aircraft. It will be used for charter and for the flying doctor contract, replacing a DH.60 Moth previously based at Longreach and ferried to Brisbane by Ashley on 2.8.35
12.37	Based Cloncurry Qld for flying doctor contract
31.12.37	Flew Winton-Longreach-Winton, pilot A. L. Ashley
1.1.38	<b>Blown over and wrecked by dust storm, Winton Qld.</b> Aircraft was tied down on the aerodrome when torn away by a violent wind and dust storm and blown a distance where it ended up upside down with most airframe woodwork smashed. The wreckage was stored in the town waiting instructions from Qantas head office.
1.1.38	Struck-off Register



VH-USL at Mascot soon after assembly by De Havilland Aircraft Pty Ltd.

Photo: Ed Coates Collection



Arthur Baird shown centre.<sup>9</sup>

*In 1931, Britain's Imperial Airways mounted two experimental air mail flights to Australia. In April, Qantas flew Australian mail to Darwin to connect with the service, using the DH61 Apollo, piloted by Russell Tapp (third from left). Hudson Fysh is at far left. He piloted the second run to Darwin and back in May. This got mail to London in 16 days, half the time it took by sea.*



*Qantas Empire Airways' first DH.90 Dragonfly VH-UXB displays the design's elegant de Havilland lines. This picture was taken in October 1936 immediately after assembly by Qantas at Brisbane. Image from the Geoff Goodall collection.*

## VH-UIC de Havilland D.H.60G Gipsy Moth

(c/m 849)

Originally imported in January of 1929 for a private owner as G-AUIC, this Moth was registered VH-UIC at the end of that year when it was acquired by Australian National Airways, Ltd (not the same ANA that was incorporated in 1936). The Moth then had many different



owners in NSW in the 1930s and was registered in Queensland in 1938 to Mrs. A. Findlay, when the shot at the foot of the page, from the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland collection, was taken at Archerfield outside Qantas' training hangar, circa 1938. The winged badge on the rudder suggests it may have been loaned to Qantas for training. Whatever, it crashed at Sherwood, Qld on 25 March 1939 and the remains were sold to Airflite Pty Ltd of Mascot who had it repaired and flying again by the end of 1939. In August 1940 it was impressed into service with the RAAF, becoming A17-115, although did not survive the war.

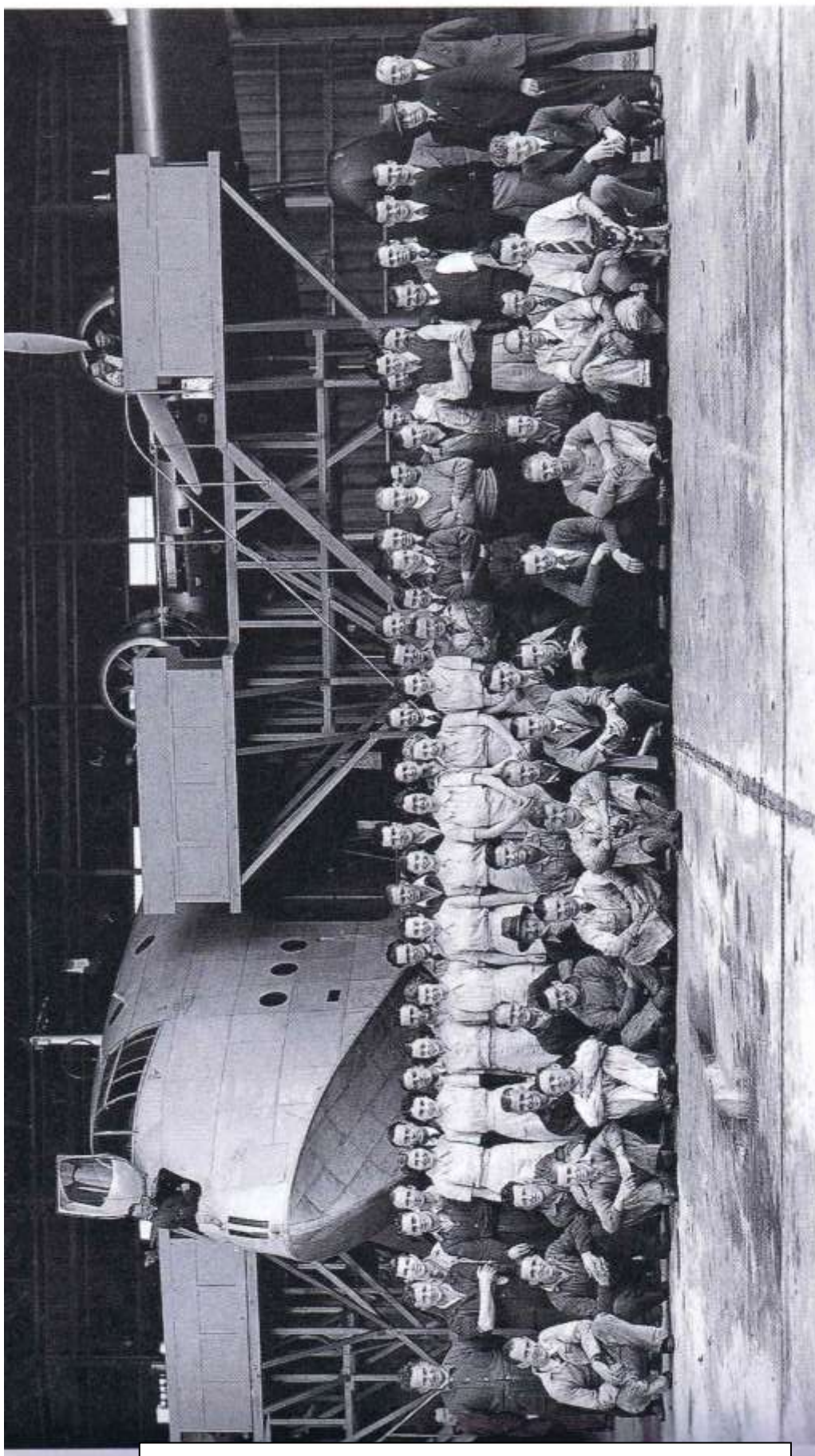


Brisbane Flying School was established by Qantas in 1927. VH-UIC arrived on the register as G-AUIC in January 1929 but by the end of the year it had adopted the VH-prefix. It arrived in Brisbane in 1938 after a string of NSW-based owners. Crashed in 1939 and shipped south to Sydney for repairs. Soon after returning to the air, -UIC was impressed by the RAAF as \*A7-115. Became an instructional airframe.

*Photo from: State Library of Queensland*

*A7-115	D.H.60G Gipsy Moth	849	Previously G-AUIC and VH-UIC. Became Instructional Moth 11.
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*There is some confusion about the actual registration of the 'new rebuilt' aircraft, as it was originally recorded as VH-ULC. From descriptions on the internet it could have been registered VH-UIC. It is not determined which of the 'donor' aircraft, 'donated' the registration number.*



*Arthur Baird's Rose Bay team in 1940, in front of a beached flying boat with maintenance platforms in position. George is 13 from right, standing up. Baird is second from right (with hat).*

Image from 'Qantas by George' written by Paul Byrnes



Coee over Brisbane, was built as an S.23 Empire Flying Boat by Short Brothers and sold to Qantas Empire Airways in April 1938 registered as VH-ABF. The airliner was later sold to BOAC in July 1942 and re-registered in the UK as G-AFBL.

Image courtesy State Library Qld.

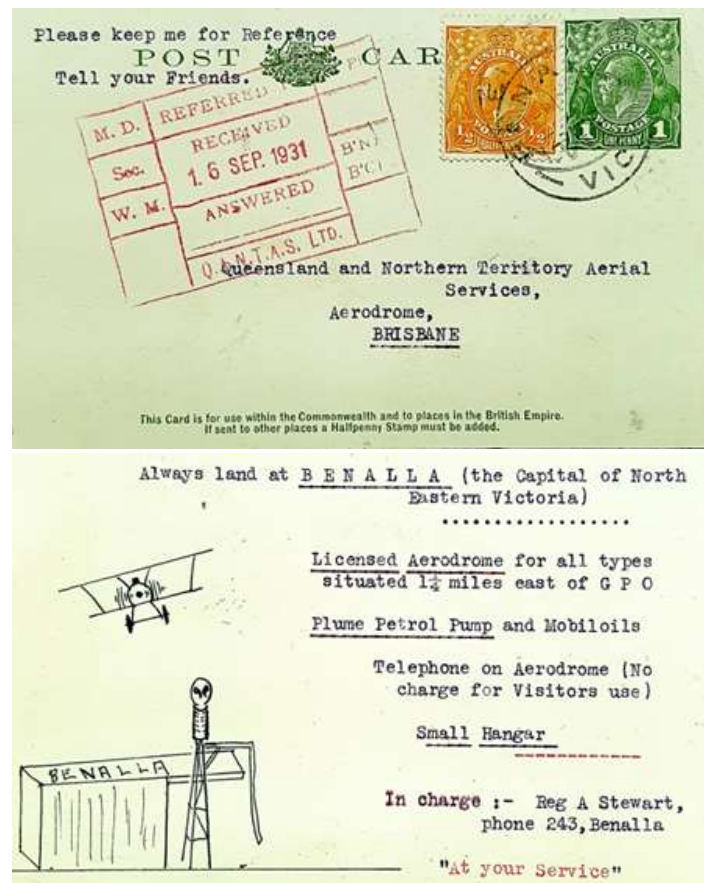


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

SUK14118

Double Sunrise Flight Catalina No.2 '*Altair Star*' G-AGFM, the other aircraft on the ramp in Perth (Page 16), here moored at Lake Koggala, Ceylon. 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1945.

Photo: Australian War Memorial



Sir Wilmot Hudson Fysh was born on 7 January 1895 at Launceston, Tasmania. At the outbreak of WW1 he enlisted as a trooper in the 3rd Regiment of the 1st Australian Light Horse Brigade. Serving on Gallipoli and in Egypt and Palestine he was commissioned lieutenant in 1916 in the brigade's machine-gun squadron before transferring to the Australian Flying Corps as an observer. He won the Distinguished Flying Cross, and graduated as a scout pilot at Heliopolis on 28 February 1919.

After his return to Australia Hudson Fysh, with Paul McGinness, another ex-service airman, along with Arthur Baird, an engineer, became the first staff members of the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service in January 1921. Hudson Fysh being the General Manager and Managing Director. The airline operated out of Longreach until 1930 when Arthur Baird set up a new maintenance operation in Brisbane. Both Wilmot Hudson Fysh and Arthur Baird moved to Brisbane in 1931.

The above postcard was sent from the fuel agent in Benalla to the QANTAS head office in Brisbane and received on 16th September 1931. The original document was located amongst the papers of Sir Wilmot Hudson Fysh, held in the Queensland State Library, on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020 by researcher and former QANTAS engineer Colin Lock.

What is interesting is that Sir Wilmot Hudson Fysh kept the postcard. It may have been because of his knowledge that Arthur Baird was born in Benalla?

Barry O'Connor.



## **BENALLA FAMILY RESEARCH GROUP INC.**

Formerly the Benalla & District Family History Group Inc.

The Group specialises in family history research for Benalla and District residents and for those who no longer live here. Local history is high on the list of research carried out by the Group and many histories have been prepared for local organisations.

The Group was formed in 1981 to encourage and advance the study of family history in the area. The group met at Mrs Latch's home until late 1982 when the move was made to St Andrews Primary Church Hall.

The Benalla Family Research Group Inc. welcome visitors, researchers and new members to the Group.

**OPENING HOURS:** Our Research Room at 9 Church Street, Benalla is open every Tuesday and Wednesday (including Public Holidays) from 10.00 am - 4.00 pm. We are no longer open on the first Saturday of the Month, except by appointment with at least three days' notice. We are open during other times by appointment if necessary.

**The Benalla Family Research Group is run entirely by volunteers and donations are always gratefully received. Account name: Benalla Family Research Group Inc.**

**BSB: 633 000 Acct: 187 739 248**

ABN 3435719671

**PRESIDENT:** Bill Willett      **SECRETARY:** Jane Rushworth

Email the group: [secretery@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org](mailto:secretery@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org)

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