



BRISTOL BOXKITE

The Bristol Boxkite, also known as the Bristol Bi-Plane “BB”, was a direct copy of the 1909 Henri Farman Boxkite.

History

The Australian Government ordered the first military Boxkite from London on 6 December 1912 as an elementary trainer.

Delivered in 1913 on the SS *Norseman*, the Boxkite arrived in Sydney in March, and was then shipped to Melbourne, where the fabric-covered wings were found to have suffered from mildew.

Following repair, serial number CFS3 made history on 1 March 1914 as the first military aircraft to fly at Central Flying School (CFS), Point Cook, Victoria. The following 4 years of rigorous service saw CFS3 damaged and rebuilt many times. Retirement under the official term of ‘fair wear and tear’ in late 1917 saw barely an original part existing on her framework.

On 17 June 1914 an order was placed for a second Boxkite. However, with the war raging in Europe, the demand for planes far outweighed supply and orders were confined to those from the war department. Faced with this dilemma, CFS constructed its own aircraft.

With her maiden flight on 10 August 1915, CFS8 made Australian aviation history as the first official military aircraft built in Australia.

The aircraft continued to be operated in the training role until wrecked beyond repair in an accident on 3 October 1916.

What a Way to Learn!

Pilot training consisted of flight within the aerodrome at altitudes of 50 to 200 feet. The pupil sat behind his instructor and reached his arms around to place his hand on the instructor's grasp of the control stick. Seats were not fixed in place; their position varied depending on the length of the pilot's legs, and the position of the rudder bar (with which the student had no contact). When considered safe, the pilot and student's positions were exchanged before the student was sent solo. Solo flights consisted of a take off and climb to approximately 50 feet, then landing straight ahead. There were no turning procedures. Once sent solo, the student received no further training.