



BRISTOL F 2B

History

This particular aircraft was one of two built in the early 1980s for the Australian television production of *"A Thousand Skies"*. It was then presented to the Museum of Australian Army Flying by Mr. John Chase.

The aircraft is painted to represent one of the aircraft operated by the Army's No. 1 Squadron in Palestine – the infamous C4623, known as the McCaughey battle plane. It was not unusual at the time for wealthy individuals or whole communities to donate money to purchase an aircraft and these were usually named after the donor.

The C4623 was considered something of a rogue aircraft, always having trouble with plugs, points, wheels, wings and things. Rarely could a job be completed in her and what was worse, it seemed as if she flatly refused to face the enemy.

She was court martialled for 'cowardice in the face of the enemy' and sentenced to six months over the enemy line. A big-hearted pilot took compassion on the 'prisoner' and had the mechanics fit a little gold goddess of luck on top of her radiator. However, she was mean to the end. On the second day of her sentence she was forced to land behind enemy lines after her engine failed. Her crew, Lieutenant Alf Poole and observer Lieutenant Fred Hancock were taken prisoner – but not before they burnt the temperamental hussy.

The Bristol F 2B was designed to operate as a two-seat fighter armed with Vickers and Lewis machine guns; however fragmentation bombs could also be fitted. The Bristol F 2B first flew in September 1916. It was used as a conventional fighter with the rear gun in a defense role. It gained a splendid reputation.

A Temperamental Machine

Some 5100 Bristols were built, and they were manufactured at such a rate that, initially, Rolls Royce was unable to produce enough Falcon engines for the aircraft. Power plants such as Hispano-Suiza, Siddeley Puma and Wolseley Viper were also used. Number 1 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps operated Bristol F 2Bs with great success in Palestine. Some of the Australian training squadrons in England also flew them. Their record by the end of the war in 1918 was second to none.