

WWDHS NEWSLETTER No. 435 Feb 2019 – Mar 2019 ISSN 2207-1016

Next Meetings:

Monday 18 Feb 2019:

Committee Meeting 6.15 p.m.
General Meeting: 7.30 p.m.
Museum of the Riverina, Willans Hill

Monday 18 March 2019:

Committee Meeting @ 6.15pm
General Meeting @ 7.30 pm
Museum of Riverina, Willans Hill

GUEST SPEAKERS

18 February 2019: Graham McKenzie will be talking about Varcoes who came from Cornwall to Hillston via Dandenong, Hindmarsh Island, Mount Gambier and Deniliquin. Museum of Riverina, Willans Hill.

18 March 2019: Sue Weekes (our 2018 Scholarship winner) will be speaking about her research on the original music used at the 'Back to Wagga' weeks, 1920-1970

Wagga Family History: 21 February 2019 George Thomas 'Lobs Hole and Snowy Hydro 2.0'
21 March 1919 Peter Simpfendorfer 'Klemke Trek from Baross Valley to Walla Walla

Wagga Antiques Society: 15 February 2019: Show and Tell, old and vintage photographs
15 March 2019: Brian Barkworth, Fascinating Clocks, Old and New

Museum of the Riverina: Staff are still busy moving their collections at the Botanic Gardens Site on Willans Hill and have agreed to store some of our Society's archival material. The museum will be closed from 29 January 2019 but our meetings will be held there in February, March and probably April.

WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister
and Federal Member for the Riverina

WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 90, WAGGA WAGGA. 2650.

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Committee meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
6:15pm at MOR, Willans Hill site (Feb-March)

General meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
7:30pm at MOR, Willans Hill site. (Feb-March)

Annual Subscriptions: Single: \$20, Couple: \$30.
Corporate: \$50. Due 1st July each year.

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VALE ARTHUR NIXON

Former member of the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society, Henry Arthur Nixon (known as 'Arthur'), was a fourth generation Nixon, a well-known local family which first settled in the Wagga Wagga district in 1844. Born in Wagga Wagga on the 25 October 1922, Arthur was the son of Charles Bardwell Nixon (known as 'Bartle') and Violet Elizabeth Nixon. They lived at 'The Garden' in Old Narrandera Road. Arthur attended the Gurwood Street Public School and then Wagga Wagga High School and helped his parents in their market garden on the river.

During the Second World War, he served in the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in New Guinea and Borneo. In 1944 he married Beatrice, a nurse whom he met on a blind date in 1941, in St John's Church in Wagga on 24 August 1944. They had three children, Malcolm, Sylvia and Jenny.

After the war, Arthur returned to the family home and continued to work on the market garden but later returned to the engineering trade. He worked for Rorrison's, at Monterey Mill in Tumut and Fred White's sawmill in Wagga before he and Beatrice established Nixon's Engineering in their garage in the late 1950s. The business grew rapidly and in 1980 they relocated to a larger workshop in Hammond Avenue where they had forty employees.



Arthur was an enthusiastic member of many clubs and organisations including the historical society. He and Beatrice were regularly rostered on Museum Duty from the early 1970s for many years. Arthur was a Vice President in 1981 and later President for three years. He was awarded Citizen of the Year in 2008 and Walk of Honour in 2015.

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WAGGA PUBLIC SCHOOL



Wagga Wagga Public School in the 1880s. It was built at the corner of Gurwood and Simmons streets in 1872.

Wagga Ballerina, Edna Busse, dies at the age of 100 years

Edna Busse was a student of the Borovansky Ballet Company (later the Australian Ballet Company) and a prominent figure in Australian Ballet until she injured her foot in December 1940. She retired from performing in the 1950s. After conducting a ballet school in Melbourne, she moved to Wagga Wagga in 1968 and established the Wagga Wagga School of Professional Dancing. She was a strong, elegant lady and passionate about dancing and she inspired many of her pupils to love ballet. She taught in Wagga until the 1990s. She was awarded an Order of Australia.



Left: Edna Busse dances with Martin Rubenstein. Right: Edna Busse in Wagga Wagga

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WAGGA PUBLIC SCHOOL GUTTED BY FIRE

Wagga Public School after fire had destroyed several classrooms, offices and a toilet block in January 2019. It began in the historic two-storey building and spread to the attached single storey weatherboard classroom. It caused about \$1 million damage.

Daily Advertiser, 4, 10 January 2019.



MEMORIES OF WAGGA CHURCHES

By Evelyn Patterson

I recently attended a function at St John's Church and as I sat amid the beautiful flowers and listened to the music, my thoughts went back to my childhood to teens and what Wagga was like when there were the four big Churches. There was the Methodist on the corner at Fitzmaurice and Johnston Street which was pulled down and moved to a new building down the street and is now the empty Commonwealth Bank building, being eaten at the top by cockatoos and galahs.



Wagga Wagga Methodist Church at the corner of Johnston and Fitzmaurice streets, erected by Charles Hardy and opened on 18 March 1877 (on the left). It was later the site of the Commonwealth Bank. The original Wesleyan Chapel, later the Sunday School, built by Hardy and Hodson and opened on 30 April 1865 (on the right).

Then down to St Michael's which was always so Holy. Then all Catholic Churches had to move the altars out from the back wall and whatever seemed to be moved to the left side of the church.

On to St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, all the front inside of the church seemed to be enlarged with the Organ and Choir area opened up.

Then, St John's: my late husband and I were married there. He wouldn't recognise it outside. All the front of the church has been opened up with doors. Then walking down the main aisle which looked to the front of the church, there was beautiful carved wood on top of the altar. I know it covered a small part of the windows, but it didn't seem to worry the parishioners. On the right side of the front was a pipe organ and their seats, where part of the choir sat. I knew this because Reverend Garnsey organised the choir to sing at our wedding.



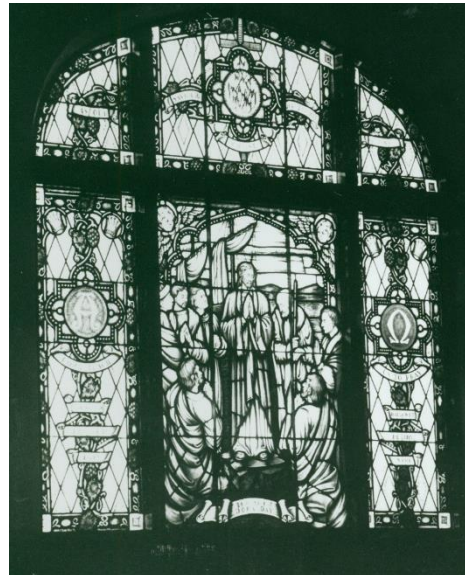
Top: St John's Church. Middle: Margaret Webster, Bob Patterson, Evelyn Patterson (nee Gooch) and Col Patterson on the front steps of St John's. Bottom: Interior of St John's.

The other side, the rest of the choir sat and then there was a beautiful carved wood pulpit dedicated to a Wagga soldier who fell in Belgium in the First World War, which would have been wonderful for the people from the Belgium Embassy when they came to Wagga, with a very graphic display of the First World War at the Wagga Library. I was always taught the word from the pulpit was the truth.

Someone will probably want to remove the windows dedicated to my old teachers, Miss Eileen Day and Miss Dora Day of the Wagga Grammar School as the school hasn't been around for years.



Left: Flo (Florence) Hopwood at the stained glass of the Eileen Day's memorial doors



Right: Dora Day's memorial window at St John's

The wonderful church at Kapooka should be safe from outsiders as each chapel tells its own war story and from above it looks like a dove of peace.

The Kapooka Chapel

Thank you for giving me space to share my memories.



A FATAL CRASH AT WAGGA EXPERIMENT FARM

2 SEPTEMBER 1940

By Sherry Morris

A Service Training School was established at Forest Hill in 1940 during the Second World War during a rush to train pilots under the British Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). This scheme had been introduced by Britain with Canada, Australia and New Zealand to rapidly train air crews for the British Bomber Command to fight the then far superior German Air Force. The British wanted 28,000 aircrew over three years (about 900 every four weeks). To achieve this quota, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) embarked on a rapid and extensive program to establish twenty-eight EATS schools in eastern Australia by the end of 1941, each specialising in specific skill sets required of air crew members.

Forest Hill was chosen as a permanent base because of location, the weather, education and transport facilities as well as costs. The country was suitable for training requirements and afforded reasonable facilities for forced landings. The weather was particularly good; there were no difficulties expected to be experienced in providing normal engineering services and the local council had undertaken to meet the cost of constructing a pipeline for water to the aerodrome and to erect a number of houses for lease to Air Force personnel. In addition, Wagga had educational and other facilities available and a good road and rail link passing the site. The building plans included brick structures for basic requirements, for example, sick quarters, guard room (first building completed), two main hangars, boiler house and emergency power house.

No 2 Service Flying School was formed on 1 July 1940 and the RAAF Ensign was raised twenty-eight days later. It began with twenty-nine officers and twenty-seven airmen. By 31 July 1940, there were thirty-seven officers and 366 airmen training under EATS under the initial command of Wing Commander F R. W. Scherger DSO AFC. Trainees came to Forest Hill from elementary flying schools and continued their training to Wings Standard on single engine Wirraways and twin-engine Avro Anson aircraft (pictured right).



Within a month of raising the ensign, the first fatal accident occurred (on 30 August) during a solo night flying practice. Leading Aircraftsman, Thomas Tweedle, aged 22, of South Brisbane, had completed two circuits and landings but then crashed on the third circuit. The plane was seen coming down in flames in a paddock three kilometres south-east of the base. The wings were torn off and the cockpit and fuselage were found thirty metres away. Tweedle died instantly.

At 1.45 p.m. on 6 September 1940, three Flying Officers, an instructor and two pupils, left the base on a dual flight test. The instructor was twenty-three-year old John Francis D'Urban

Weston of Brentwood Court, New South Head Road, Edgecliff, New South Wales. John had been educated at Cranbrook School, Edgecliff, and after leaving school he was engaged by the ABC for radio plays. He also acted in several Australian films. In 1936, he played the juvenile male lead in the Australian film, *White Death*, which was produced by Zane Grey, a movie about the capture of a gigantic shark, a ferocious creature called the 'White Death'. Although the movie was criticised, John Weston was described by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as 'a handsome young man who might do well in films under careful guidance'.

John became a cadet at Point Cook in January 1938 and was awarded the Sword of Honour for 'all-round discipline, studies and esteem by fellow cadets and officers'. He was a Flying Officer by June 1939 and passed through Camden Flying Instructors School in April 1940. He was then posted to Wagga Wagga. Flying Officer Weston was on the permanent staff of the RAAF. He had flown 500 hours on Avro Anson aircraft.



Left: Advertisement for *White Death*, the movie in which John Weston played the juvenile male lead. Right: Leading Aircraftsman James Oliver Borain in uniform

Leading Aircraftsman James Oliver Borain (known as 'Oll' to his family), son of Charles Norman Borain and Jean Alexander (Mitchell), was 18 years of age and had lived in Mitchell Street, West Brisbane, Queensland. He attended South Brisbane Intermediate State High School and was educated to Sub Junior Standard. After leaving school in 1935, he attended technical college and worked as a fitter and turner apprentice for Mason and Co in Brisbane for three years. He then served in the Australian Army Service Corps from 1938 until 1940, resigning in order to join the RAAF. He had also learnt to fly with Airworks and held a pilot's license. He had fourteen and a half hours flying experience including seven hours, twenty minutes solo. He was of slight build, 168 centimetres high and weighed 49 kilograms. He had dark complexion, brown eyes and black hair. In April 1940, he enlisted as an air gunner and was posted to the Ballarat Wireless Air Gunners School in Victoria under EATS. He was redrafted as an air crew pilot in May 1940 and passed from the Somers' initial training flying school in Victoria to Archerfield elementary flying training school in Queensland on 27 June 1940. He had 51 Hours, 40 minutes dual and solo flying at Archerfield and had been assessed

as an average pupil pilot. He started his flying training at No 2 Service Flying Training School in Wagga Wagga on 26 August 1940. He had completed eight hours dual and four hours, 45 minutes solo flying in Avro Anson aircraft.

Leading Aircraftsman Leslie Robert Taylor (pictured right), aged 29, had lived in Fifth Avenue, Saint Peters, South Australia. Educated at St Peter's College in Adelaide where he was a prefect, he was a well-known sportsman, a member of Adelaide Rowing Club and of the Amateur Sports Club and had also competed in state squash rackets championships. He worked for Prudential Assurance Company in St Peters. He enlisted as an air crew pilot on 27 May 1940 and passed from Somers to Archerfield at the end of June. He was posted to Wagga on the same date as Borain. At Archerfield Aerodrome he had 56 hours, 25 minutes solo and dual flying. Since being stationed at Wagga, he had nine hours 40 minutes dual and five hours solo flying on an Avro Anson plane.



Both Taylor and Borain had been assessed to be at a satisfactory stage of their training to carry out the exercise which they were doing at the time.

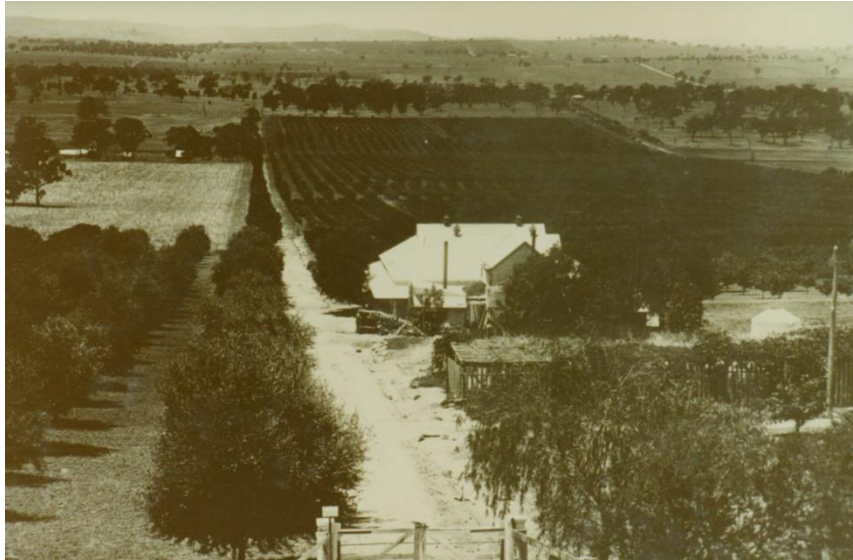
The three officers were flying an Avro Anson R3540 called 'Faithful Annie', a general reconnaissance bomber with a wingspan of 17.22 metres, a maximum speed of 302 kilometres per hour and a range of 1315 kilometres. The machine was fitted with dual controls and with parachutes, one being supplied to each occupant. Before departure, the maintenance crew examined the engines and found that they were functioning perfectly. They left the aerodrome at 1.45 p.m. with Weston, the instructor, in the front seat on the starboard side, Borain in the other front seat and Taylor in the rear seat.

As the plane flew over the town of Wagga Wagga, people were attracted from their homes and places of business by the screaming noise of the engine and saw that it was at a height of only about a hundred metres and evident it was losing height. Detective Cloke heard it pass over North Wagga and said it sounded as though it was in a dive. As it approached the Wagga Experiment Farm about six kilometres from town, it was seen by several men who were working at the Farm Orchard including Athol Price. It then nose-dived into a paddock adjoining the orchard. Some witnesses mistakenly thought they saw the wings or portions of the wings fall. After the crash, portions of the machine were strewn about for about 400 metres around the two engines which were buried a metre into the ground. Some thought they saw flames around the plane just before it crashed and others claimed it broke in two before it crashed.

Harold James Cann, relieving orchardist at Wagga Experiment Farm, later testified at the Inquest that he was working on the orchard when he heard the roar of an aeroplane engine above him and a little towards the east. He added:

The machine in my opinion when I first saw it would have been between 300 and 500 feet [91-150 metres]. It was coming down almost vertically in a nose dive. The engines were racing. When I first saw it, I did not notice any pieces leaving the machine but a very short time afterwards I noticed pieces starting to come off the machine. I was unable to say what portion of the machine came away first. I realised that the machine was in difficulties and would ultimately crash and I ran toward the paddock adjoining the avenue through the orchard where I thought the machine would land.

I did not see the wings leave the machine and I could not see any of the occupants when I was about 150 yards [137 metres] from the paddock where the machine did land. Some pepper trees obscured my view of the machine for some time. I was the first person to reach the scene of the accident and saw that the machine was badly wrecked. I could see that the occupants were beyond aid and I ordered other persons in the vicinity not to touch anything and on no account to strike matches as there was a strong smell of petrol.



The Orchard at Wagga Experiment Farm

He stated that as he watched the plane diving towards the farm, he noticed that the nearer the earth the plane came, the greater was the roar of the engines. He later saw portions of wreckage from the plane, strewn about the orchard. It included fabric from the wings. Wreckage was strewn in the paddock adjoining the orchard over a distance of approximately 400 metres.

George William Smith, a poultry instructor employed at the Wagga Experiment Farm, about 2.15 pm was instructing in the poultry section on the farm. He stated:

I heard an aeroplane flying overhead. I looked straight up. I noticed that a plane was flying in an easterly direction. Almost immediately I saw a white puff of smoke leave the port engine. It was rather a ball of smoke. The machine was then flying on an even keel. The machine flew for about 200 or 300 yards in this position. It was then at a normal height to what I have seen other planes flying over this area. While I was watching the machine, it took a turn with the right wing down. The engines were racing at a terrific speed. I would say at full throttle. Before it disappeared behind the hills, I noticed particles of what appeared to be aluminium leaving the machine. Then the machine disappeared over the hill out of my sight. As the machine went out of my sight it was going earthwards at a terrific speed and I in company with others ran over the hill and saw the wreckage of the machine in a paddock adjacent to the orchard.



He added that the occupants were beyond aid. The aluminium he saw fall were the thin pieces of plyboard fabric of the wings, painted aluminium. George Smith is pictured above at his cottage on Pine Gully Road with his wife Dot, and daughters, Janifer and Jill.

Mathew William Tilden, a labourer employed at the Experiment Farm said that when he first heard the plane he was working at the piggery section at the Farm. He reported:

When I first saw the plane, it was flying perfectly straight in a southerly direction. The engines were functioning perfectly. Then I saw it take a turn to the left, and the left wing came down. It kept on coming down with its wing still down for a short time and then the nose of the machine suddenly dipped and the engines commenced to roar. The plane continued down toward the ground at a terrific speed, the engines still roaring, and when about halfway down it appeared to me as if the pilot was endeavouring to pull the plane out of a dive. The machine flattened out very slightly, then the nose dipped again and shortly after this the machine commenced to fall to pieces in the air. It appeared to me as if the portion of the fuselage under the plane broke away first. I did not notice the wings break away. Then the plane disappeared out of sight and I heard it crash in the paddock.

The police station and the RAAF flying training school were informed at 2.30 p.m. Members of staff of the RAAF flying school at Wagga were quickly on the scene and a guard was placed over the machine. Deputy Coroner and Mayor of Wagga Wagga, Hugh Oates, accompanied by Detective Cloke and Constables Johnson and Bullen, went to the scene of the accident, viewed the bodies of the three men and examined the site. It was with the utmost difficulty that the police were then able to extricate the bodies from the tangled mass, with great assistance from ambulance officers and M Rava. Each man had suffered shocking injuries. They were almost unrecognisable. Their deaths had been instantaneous.

The bodies were initially taken to the Wagga morgue and later transported to their homes. Weston's body was transferred to Edgecliff, New South Wales, Borain's to Mt Thompson Crematorium, Brisbane, Queensland, and Taylor's to St Peter's, South Australia.

The funeral of Flying Officer John Weston left St Mark's Church, Darling Point, for Rookwood Cemetery, headed by the RAAF band. The coffin was covered with a Union Jack and on it was his Officer's Cap and the Sword of Honour awarded to him when he graduated at Point Cook. It was carried by RAAF men and placed on a trailer drawn by a RAAF tender on which it was conveyed to the crematorium. Six officers of the RAAF acted as pallbearers. A firing party fired three volleys at the crematorium. The chief mourner was his mother, Marion Elizabeth Weston. His ashes were later scattered from a plane over the sea.

LAC Borain's body reached the Funeral Parlour of Cannon and Cripps in Adelaide Street, Brisbane, on 9 September 1940. The coffin was covered by the Union Jack and his goggles and helmet rested on top. The coffin was borne by a RAAF tender of the No 23 Squadron, Archerfield. Hundreds gathered in Adelaide Street and along George Street as the funeral party moved off with ten Air Force men, comprising the bearer party marching beside the tender. On its arrival at Mount Thompson Crematorium, it was joined by a RAAF escort party and a firing party which fired three volleys.

LAC Taylor's funeral was more low-key. It left the residence of his mother, Mrs H E L Taylor, in St Peters, Adelaide, for the North Road Cemetery on Monday, 9 September 1940.



*Sounding of the Last Post, LAC Borain,
Telegraph, Brisbane, 10 September
1940*

*RAAF Preliminary Report of the
Accident at Wagga Experiment Farm,
7 September 1940. National Archives
of Australia, NAA A9845/68/Avro
Anson Accidents, 1940-1945*

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
PRELIMINARY REPORT (EXTERNAL) OF FLYING ACCIDENT OR FORCED LANDING

Serial No.: 68
Period : 1940/41.

The Secretary,
Department of Air.

Herewith are preliminary details of a flying accident.

(a) AIRCRAFT:	Type: Number:	Anson R.3540
(b) UNIT:		No. 2 S.F.T.S., WAGGA.
(c) LOCALITY:	Place: Date: Time:	WAGGA Experimental Farm. 6.9.40. 1415 hours.
(d) PILOT:	Rank: Name: Condition:	Flying Officer J. F. D. WESTON Killed.
(e) CREW:	Rank: Name: Condition:	No. 404011 L.A.C. No. 407084 L.A.C. BORAIN, J. O. TAYLOR, L. R. Killed. Killed.
(f) NATURE OF ACCIDENT:		Aircraft broke up in air.
(g) PROBABLE CAUSE:		Steep dive leading to partial collapse of structure, and followed by uncontrollable spiral to ground. Collapse of main structure occurred near ground.
(h) EXTENT OF DAMAGE:	Airframe: Engine:	Completely wrecked. Completely wrecked.
(i) Has Minister for Air been informed by unit?		Yes.

Date: 7.9.40.

Copies for information to -
Minister for Air.
C.A.S., A.M.O.E., A.M.P.
Secretary, Air Board, D.M.S. (Air), File (D.T.), D.T.S.
I.A.A. D.Production. O.I/c.R.

Group Captain,
DIRECTOR OF TRAINING.

Inquest

The Inquest was held in October 1940 by the Deputy Coroner, Hugh Oates, assisted by Sergeant Hill and Flying Officer Fowler who was present to watch the interest of the RAAF. Detective Cloke testified that he heard the plane going over North Wagga and making a noise as though in a dive, and about attending the crash and assisting in removing the bodies from the wreckage. Dr Henry David Phipps gave evidence about the injuries sustained by each man. He identified the bodies of Weston and Taylor while Borain was identified by leading aircraftsman, Martin Edward Ryan, by the unusual ring taken from Borain's finger which had an aeroplane inscribed on the signet and a photograph of his mother inside the ring.

Sydney Richard Spence, flight mechanic testified that both engines had been functioning perfectly and Desmond Arthur McGraw, flight fitter, that the machine's airframe controls were functioning satisfactorily.

The eye witnesses, Harold Cann, George Smith and Mat Tilden, gave their accounts of the crash. Malcolm Seymour Walker, engineer at the RAAF School at Wagga, said that he was present at the crash. He reported that the wings, which were stoutly constructed, did not leave the machine but when the plane hit the ground the forces of the impact turned them over and they splintered into unrecognisable small parts. The pieces that witnesses had seen leave the plane, he said, were pieces of fabric from the wing tips or portions of aluminium painted fabric from the fuselage. He also gave other technical details concerning this type of aircraft.

Deputy Coroner Hugh Oates (pictured right) returned an open finding but said he was satisfied that the machine was airworthy when the flight began. Announcing his finding, Oates expressed sympathy for all relatives of the three men who had met their deaths in such a terrible disaster. He also thanked the police and RAAF officers for their assistance and, in particular, thanked Superintendent Loth and M. Rava together with other members of the public for their help at the crash.



The deaths were registered as 'caused by the effects of injuries sustained when an aeroplane in which they were flying crashed, no evidence to show whether accidentally or otherwise'.

Sources

National Archives of Australia, NAA, A9845/68/Avro Arson Accidents, 1940-1945.

Newspapers including: *Age*, Melbourne, 5 October 1940; *Argus*, Melbourne, 5 October 1940; *Cootamundra Herald*, 2, 9 September 1940; *Daily Advertiser*, 10 September 1940 re cremation of Weston; *Daily Mercury*, Queensland, 7 September 1940; *Courier Mail*, Brisbane, 9 September 1940; *Daily News*, Perth, 7 September 1940; *Daily Telegraph*, 7 September 1940; *Kalgoolie Miner*, Western Australia, 7 September 1940; *Newcastle Morning Herald*, 7 September 1940; *Singleton Argus* 9 September 1940; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 October 1940, 9 November 1936; *News*, Adelaide, 7 September 1940; *Tumut and Adelong Times*, 10 September 1940, 8 October 1940; *Warwick Daily News*, Queensland, 7 September 1940; *West Australian*, Perth, 7 September 1940.

MEMORIAL TO THREE MEN WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN A PLANE CRASH WAGGA EXPERIMENT FARM (NOW ON THE SITE OF CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY)



Above: Details about the plane and the accident



Left: Plaque on a rock, honouring the pilot and crew who were killed instantly when the Avro Anson from No 2 Service Flying Training, RAAF, Forest Hill, crashed during a training flight in a paddock on the Wagga Experiment Farm to the east of this Memorial Site on 6 September 1940

Right: The plaque listing the names and details of the men killed in the crash: Flying Officer Weston, LAC Borain and LAC Taylor, 6 September 1940

