

# Lost without Trace.

## BE2a 272

By Paul R. Hare



**I**t seems remarkable that within three months of the outbreak of war the RFC in France could completely lose track of not just one, but over a dozen of the comparatively small complement of aeroplanes then in its charge but none-the-less this appears to have happened.

This is the story of one of them,

BE2a 272 was built by the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough and was initially fitted with 70hp Renault engine No. 42006/WDI25. Following final inspection by the AID, it was taken on charge by the RFC on 26 March 1913, and was assigned to 3 Squadron, which was stationed at Larkhill on Salisbury Plain, the same day. However, 272 appears to have remained at Farnborough for a while as, on 31 March, Lts Joubert de la Ferte and Fox flew to Brooklands in BEs 205 and

272, returning to Farnborough after only a short stay.

272 reached Larkhill on Thursday 3 April when Lt Fox flew it, with a passenger, from Farnborough, making a detour around Southampton on the way.

272 was flown by Major Robert Brooke-Popham, the Squadron CO, on 9 April, but heavy snow from 11 April onwards prevented there being much flying until the weather improved.

At this time the squadron had too few aircraft to allot a specific machine to each pilot and, although 272 was flown regularly by Lt E.V. Anderson, many others flew it too. Thus, on Tuesday 22 April, for example, when the weather was fine and spring-like, Lt Anderson made a total of four flights, taking up both AM Powell and AM Smith as passengers, but 272 was

*272 as built, with its original long top wing. During July 1913 these were replaced with new wings of equal span as was done to all early production BE2as.*

