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The Aeroplane,  
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Dear "Aeroplane,"

Although I am not a regular reader of your excellent magazine, you are probably the best bet for getting small mystery solved.

Some 20 years ago we went hiking in the Suikerbos Nature Reserve, close to Heidelberg in Gauteng, South Africa. We wandered slightly off the beaten track and came across, what at first in the distance appeared to be the remains of the tower of a typical windmill driven water pump as is common on farms in South Africa. Getting closer we found it to be made of tubing, well rusted, and to all appearance, the remains of an old aircraft fuselage. This aroused our curiosity as there were no traces of wings and heavier components such as engine or undercarriage. There was no firewall bulkhead or remnants of an engine mount either. That an aircraft had crashed there seemed unlikely as there was no trace of an impact crater .....although a forced landing may have been the reason for finding it at such an unlikely location. It was also not the perfect location for a total strip down by souvenir hunters. It was truly the bare bones of. It did not seem to make sense that anyone would have taken the trouble to dump the remains of an aircraft fuselage there either....it is not very accessible in the first place, and motivation to take all the trouble to bring it there absent.

We photographed the remains and the photo, which I was unable to find for many years, turned up this week. Then that nagging feeling of wanting to know started up again. Being intrigued by what we had found, we were able, with sufficient men on the spot, to remove a portion where rust had weakened the tubing to such a degree that it was no more than short hand work to get it to part from the rest. On what appears to be stainless steel doubling plates (which could explain the extra weakened state of the tubing attached to it) there are some stamps that could be a clue to tell us what it is that we had found. The AW in the ellipse suggests that this may have been Armstrong Whitworth.....but this is merely guessing and perhaps not very likely. (I don't think that the find matches one of their models, but I think that they built aircraft for other companies as well.) They might simply be the initials of the inspector. Perhaps there are readers willing to comment on this find, or have some recollection of rather long ago and can supply more information.

Trolling on the Internet has not really opened up any further perspective on the matter either, which is why I thought of providing you with something to puzzle on. If not interesting there is always an electronic waste basket nearby.

Location of the find was Suikerbos Nature Reserve, Gauteng, South Africa. From Google Earth and memory of the hike the location of the find is / was at, or very close to, the coordinates:

26°28'29.03"S 28°12'26.90"E Who knows.....the remains may still be there.

Click link below to view in Google Maps

<https://maps.google.co.za/maps?q=26%C2%B028'29.03%22S+28%C2%B012'26.90%22E&hl=en&ie=UTF8&sll=-26.474731,28.207472&sspn=0.079749,0.151577&t=h&z=13>

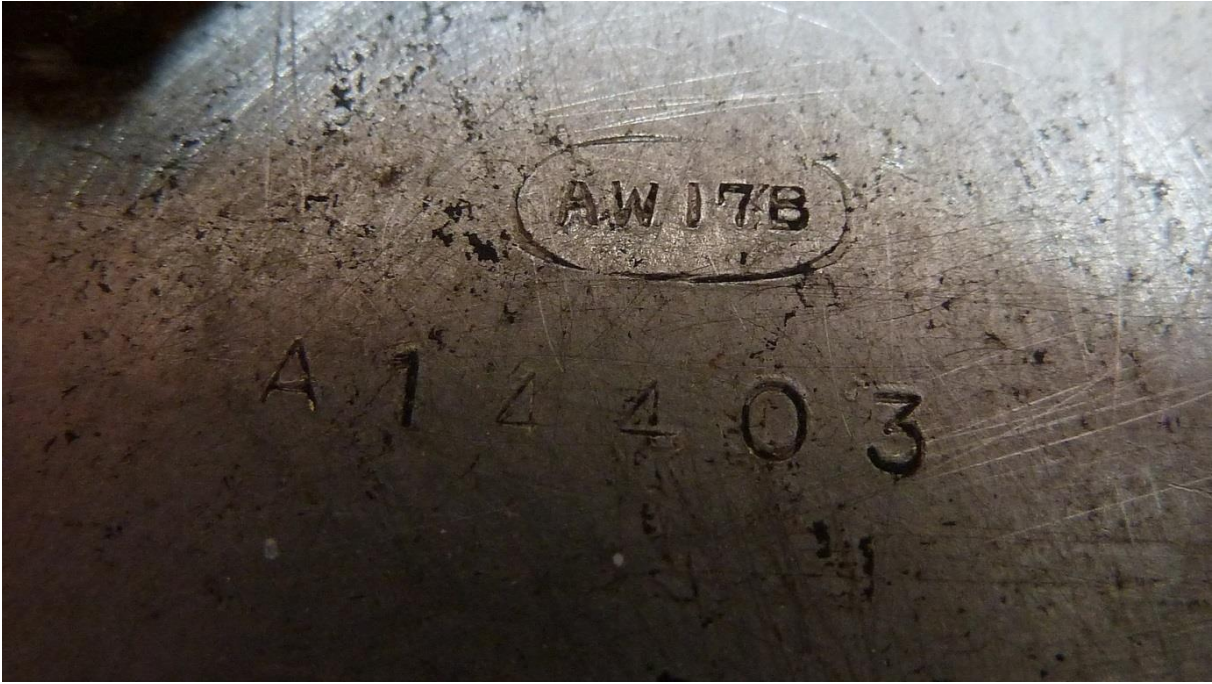
-26.474731, 28.207472



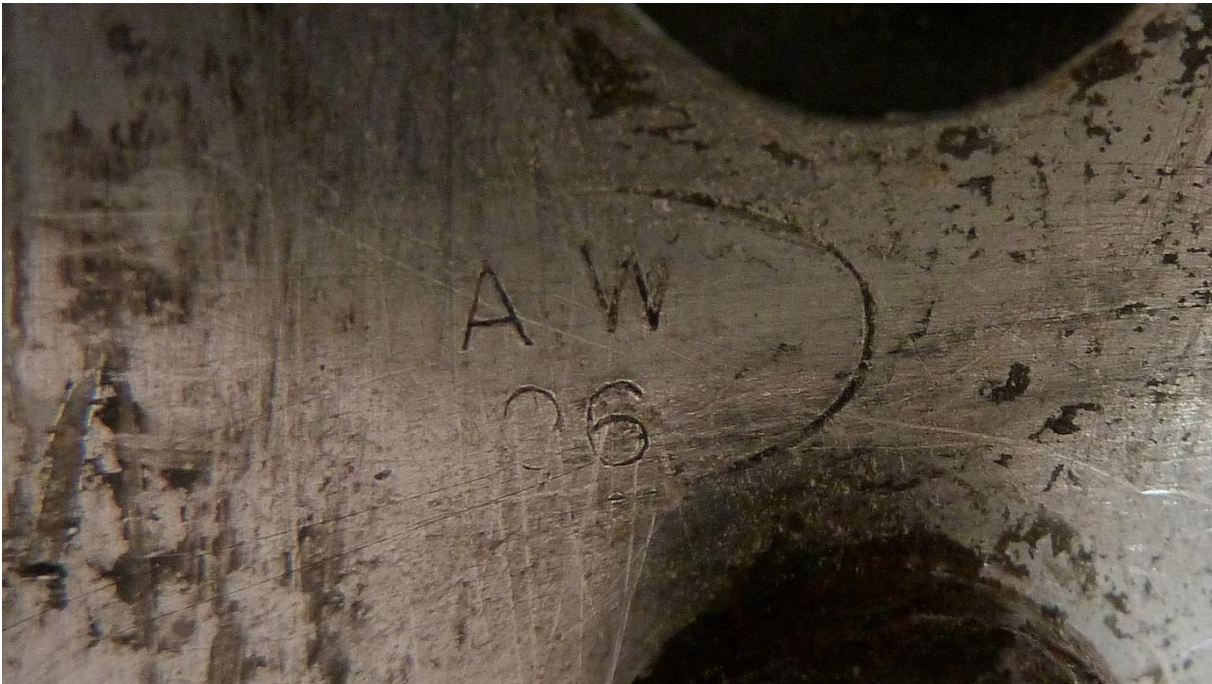
What we found without any further parts or indication of how the frame arrived at this location in an open veldt, more or less at the top a flattish hill. There are no really nearby roads.



Portion of frame, showing what appears to be the wing attachment lug. The doubling plates appear to be of stainless steel (not an Al Alloy in any case) We were unable to tell if the frame was of a mono or a biplane. This node is from the lower left hand side, the lug therefore being of a low or lower wing. Bracing wire remnants in small lugs attached to this frame node (not visible in this photo ) suggest that it was a biplane.



The largest of the two stamps in the doubling plate



The smaller of the two stamps in the doubling plate