

The Fairey F111 in Australian service

Disclaimer: this is a work in progress, submitted to Aviation Cultures as such. It is a text-only draft of a possible small publication.

I would really like to co-operate with others in researching and publicising the subject, and particularly the around-Australia flight of 1924. Please contact me if I can help in any way, and comments, criticism and other input will be greatly appreciated.

Some facts need rechecking and in some cases, opinions expressed need further work. These areas are clearly indicated in the text.

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Introduction

The first seaplane to be seen in Australia was the Farman 'hydro-aeroplane' imported by Lebbeus Hordern, whose family owned the huge and successful Anthony Hordern department store. Flown first by the visiting French pilot at Elizabeth Bay on May 8 1915. On the outbreak of war it was donated to the Australian Flying Corps, and was actually the first Australian aircraft to be sent overseas for military purposes – it was sent with the forces which occupied German possessions in and around New Guinea, but was never used.

The Fairey E111s that are the subject of this paper were acquired after the First World War, and though not entirely suited to Australian service, performed some remarkable feats. A Fairey was the first aircraft to fly around Australia and another aircraft made valuable surveys of the Barrier Reef.

Please note that this paper is very much a work in progress. It is planned for completion next year. It aims to arouse interest in the centenary of the round-Australia flight: there are informal expressions of interest in marking the centenary of the flight in 1294. As has happened with the centenary of the Guillaux mail flight and the Smith England-Australia flight of 1919-20 and similar events, there may be an issue of commemorative postage stamps and possibly a tribute flight.

Particularly at this early stage, the account of the major flight relies almost completely on an article by the noted Australian aviation historian Neville Parnell. He wrote a summary of the flight, published in the journal of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia in December 1965, itself based on an article that appeared in *Aircraft* magazine in June 1924. In this paper Parnell's article is reproduced, almost verbatim, with his generous permission, and is printed in *italics* on pages 9

RAAF historian Frank Doak in 1974 produced another valuable account, and his contributions are separately acknowledged.

Other material comes from the websites such as ADF-Serials. At this early stage, full referencing and bibliography is not included, and there may be errors of fact. The paper will have achieved its aims if it arouses interest in the aircraft and particularly in the round-Australia flight of 1924.

The introduction of the Faireys

Britain was an early adopter of seaplanes for war purposes, and the exploits of the Royal Naval Air Service during the early years of the war make exciting reading. Seaplanes conducted antisubmarine warfare and bombing raids and there were also RNAS squadrons of orthodox bombers and fighters. Short seaplanes tended to dominate in the early stages of the war.

Fairey aviation was formed in 1915 by Charles Fairey, a former employee of Short Brothers. Fairey's main early production was a series single-engined seaplanes and 'navalised' landplanes recognisable by the distinctive rudder shape.

The Fairey 111, built in landplane and seaplane versions, first flew late in 1917. It took little part in World War I, though a few fought, just after the war ended, near Archangel as part of the British action against the Bolsheviks. It was about the seventh in a series of similar aircraft, easily recognised by their almost rectangular rudders.

In August 1920 the IIC version was flown with a Rolls-Royce Eagle 375 hp engine.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister W M Hughes, six Fairey 111Cx were purchased for a sum of about £23,000, for the Australian navy, numbered ANA 1 to ANA 6; the first was accepted by Mrs

Hughes on 12 August 1921, and was named 'Mary' in her honour. The six aircraft were packed and shipped to Australia, arriving in November 1921.

The F111 had a nominal crew of three, but for long range only two were carried – pilot and observer.. The third passenger was usually a NCO mechanic, particularly in Australia, where maintenance facilities were few. The aircraft had a top speed of 106 mph, 168 km/hr, and a range of 550 nautical miles, 1000 km. At the instigation of Prime Minister 'Billy' Hughes, six seaplane IIIcs were ordered for the Royal Australian Navy, the first being formally accepted at the Fairey factory by Mrs Mary Hughes, on 12 August 1921. All the aircraft arrived in Australia by ship in early 1921. By then the idea of having a separate naval air group had been abandoned. The RAAF was established as an independent service, with responsibility for all military aircraft and the seaplanes became part of the new force, given the RAAF serials A-10 1 to 6.

The order had been reduced, for reasons of financial stringency, from 12 aircraft; and the same financial problems caused a delay in assembling them. They were taken over by the newly created Royal Australian Air Force and given the type number A10, numbers 1 to 6.

The early RAAF

When the Royal Australian Air Force was formed on Wing Commander Williams was the head of the RAAF and Squadron Leader Stanley Goble was Chief of Air staff, essentially second-in-command. Goble's background was in the Royal Naval Air Service and relations were not always serene. Limited finance was available. Only A10-1 was immediately assembled to become a training aircraft at Point Cook seaplane school. The remaining five were placed in storage but by May-1923 all the aircraft had been assembled. They were first used for a three-month course, training navigators in naval co-operation techniques.

With the arrival of Flying Officer McIntyre, there was more activity. A10-1 was flown to Sydney by Goble and McIntyre, surveying landing points enroute, in November 1923. The same aviators flew A10-2 to Hobart in February 1924. A10-1 and A10-2 (flown by Flying Officer Ernest ('Pard') Mustard, later a famous New Guinea pioneer) were the first of a total of 22 RAAF aircraft that welcomed the British fleet, led by HMS Hood, that visited Melbourne on 17 April 1924.

The aviators

A brief discussion of the main aviators involved with the Faireys.

Stanley Goble

This material comes from the Australian Dictionary of Biography. (it raises many points of interest that need more research for the final version of this paper)

Air Vice Marshall Stanley James Goble (1891-1948), air vice marshal, was born at Croydon, Victoria. His father was a station master, and Stanley worked for the railways until the war broke out. Refused enlistment on minor medical grounds, he paid his own passage to England. He became a junior officer in the Royal Naval Air Service. In 1916 he joined the newly formed 8 Squadron RNAS, flying Sopwith Pup and French Nieuport fighters, was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and was awarded a DSC for bravery. In 1917, flying DH4 bombers, he was awarded a DSO. He finished the war as Major in the newly formed Royal Air Force, with an OBE.

From the ADB: *When the (Royal) Australian Air Force officially came into existence on 31 March 1921 Goble resigned his R.A.F. commission, was appointed to the Australian Air Force and next November was made second member of the Air Board and director of personnel and training under Williams. It*

quickly became an established practice to ensure that these two officers served as little together as possible. The rivalry continued for many years, with many ramifications outside the scope of this short narrative. Basically, Goble supported naval aviation, including the formation of a Fleet Air Arm, and this was a major point of contention.

In 1935 Goble was seconded to the RAF for two years. Back in Australia he briefly became chief of the RAAF air staff as Air Vice Marshall, but by December 1939 the old rivalries had surfaced. Goble became Australian liaison officer in Canada to the Empire Air Training Scheme and in April 1946 he retired from the Royal Australian Air Force with the rank of air vice marshal and died in 1948.

Ivor McIntyre

Ivor Ewing McIntyre, CBE, AFC & Bar was born in Kent, England, in 1899. He joined the RNAS in 1917, then the RAF when it was created in 1918. He had a distinguished war record, being awarded the Air Force Cross, and after completing a short service commission in the RAF came to Australia in 1923. His early flights are listed elsewhere (page #), and he was the pilot for the round-Australia flight of 1924.

In 1926 he flew, with Chief of Staff Richard Williams, on a 10,000 mile (16,000 km) flight around the Solomon Islands in a de Havilland DH50A seaplane, the first international flight undertaken by a RAAF aircraft. As pilot, he was awarded the Oswald Watt Medal and a bar to his AFC.

He left the RAAF in November 1927 to become a flying instructor for the newly formed South Australian section of the Australian Aero Club. Was killed in a crash a club aircraft while giving an aerobatic display (information from ADB)

'Pard' Mustar

Ernest Andrew ('Pard' Mustar (1893-1971) was the son of a labourer, who had a remarkable career in aviation. After serving on Gallipoli as signaller, in June 1917 he joined 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps, first as observer and later as pilot. Flying with Ross Smith, he was awarded the Order of the Nile and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his brave exploits. He returned to Australia in 1919, and after a brief period of commercial pilot, offering joy-rides to residents of country towns. In 1922 he joined the Royal Australian Air Force as captain. He conducted aerial surveys of Lake Eyre in 1922 and, with the Royal Australian Navy, of the Great Barrier Reef in 1925.

Leaving the air force, he established an amazing record in New Guinea, where the use of aircraft enabled the opening up of the country, particularly in the Wau goldfields. In March 1927, for example, flying a DH37, a flight of 1½ hours carried 600 pounds, which would require the work of fifteen carriers for three weeks. Later, as chief pilot of Guinea Airways he purchased Junkers W34 aircraft that were a vast improvement on the de Havilland aircraft. His career in New Guinea continued until 1934, when he returned to Australia as managing director of Australian Transcontinental Airways. He served with the RAAF in the 1938-45 war retiring as Group Captain.

The Faireys enter service

Only one aircraft was immediately erected, and it was not until mid-1923 that the other aircraft were airworthy. A major training program in fleet cooperation was conducted in this year, but aircraft use was minimal at this stage.

Coincidentally with the arrival of McIntyre, the aircraft use was considerably increased.

On 15 November 1923 Goble, Macintyre and mechanic Gottschalk flew from Point Cook to Sydney, via Eden, in a single day – ten hours, with a three-hour break at Eden. On the return trip the aircraft, flown

by Macintyre, took part in exercises at Jervis Bay for three days before flying on to Point Cook on 30 November. On 1 December the newspapers reported on a return flight by Macintyre from Point Cook to Newcastle. On 4 February 1924 a flight across Bass Strait to Hobart, via St Helens, was hailed as the possible precursor to an air mail service to Tasmania and the establishment of a seaplane base at Hobart.

On 18 March 1924 the Melbourne *Argus* main story was the arrival of the mighty HMS Hood and accompanying vessels on her world tour: in painstaking detail the approach of the fleet was described. It was a huge event, and 23 RAAF aircraft were involved in flights to welcome the fleet. Macintyre and the famed Lieutenant 'Pard' Mustar were the first to greet the fleet outside the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, welcoming them with radio messages. The report noted with approval that all aircraft landed at Point Cook 'without mishap'.

Lieutenant Macintyre flew from Melbourne to Hobart, with Leading Aircraftman Gottschalk 'who had control of the engine' in February 1924. Goble had praised the flight, and a particular feature was the use of radio: they were 'in constant touch with headquarters' and 'when nearing Port Albert, the engine cut out, and within six seconds news of this had been received at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. In case of a disaster or a forced descent to the sea, prompt communication by wireless, of course, is of the utmost importance'. It was hoped that an air mail service could be set up and a RAAF seaplane base could be established near Hobart.

The around-Australia flight

The best summary of the preparations and problems of the flight comes directly from the work of RAAF historian Frank Doak, in 1974:

The plan

In best bureaucratic tradition, the aims of the flight were set out. *The Defence Minister, Mr Bowden, had sanctioned the flight for the following reasons:*

- *for defence reasons, a seaplane route to Thursday Island*
- *collect information as a preliminary to a survey of the Great Barrier Reef*
- *test the performance of the Fairey 111D in the tropics, with a special eye to power, lift and speed*
- *report on the life of aircraft fabric, glued components and floats under tropical conditions*
- *'Show the Flag in northern Australia.*

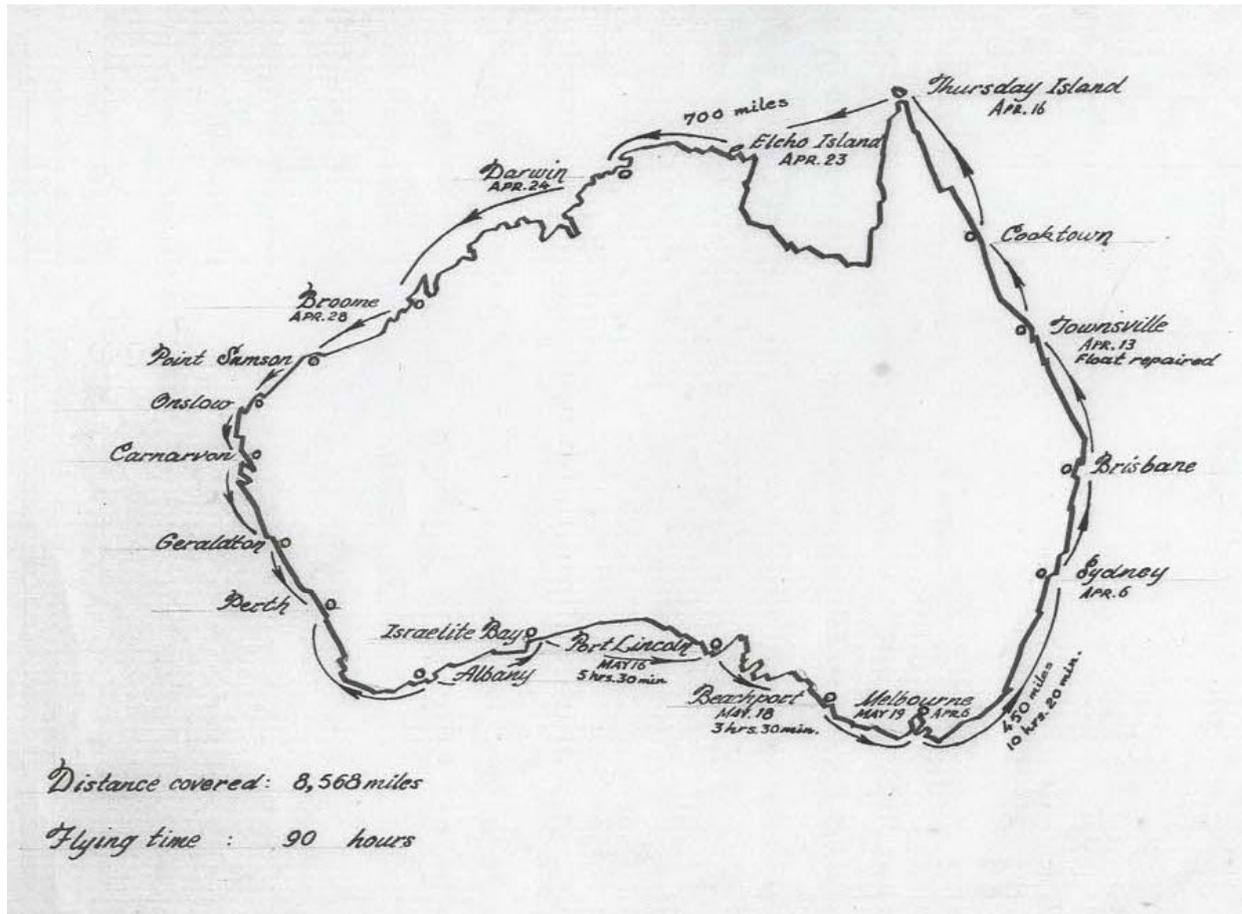
Preparations:

Thirty-seven dumps of fuel, oil and distilled water had been pre-positioned for the flight by the Vacuum Oil Co. In all, 4000 gallons of 'Plume' aviation spirit, 150 gallons of 'Castrol' oil and 350 gallons of distilled water were placed in dumps right around the coastline. This called for initiative and trains, ships and even pearling Daggars were used for the task. As it transpired the seaplaine required only 24 of the dumps.

Goble and McIntyre avoided land as much as possible, knowing full well that water to land on would mean the difference between safety and disaster in the event of engine failure.

Day to day problems

For Goble and McIntyre their day's work seemed never-ending.



They frequently landed in areas wrongly charted - tortuous rivers devoid of navigation marks, mooring posts or lights - and hidden coral and rocks made sea landings and taxiing a nightmare.

After anchoring the seaplane at the end of an exhausting day's flying they frequently had to start a whole new work shift on the ground (or, to be more precise, in the water).

Goble and McIntyre had the back-breaking job in remote areas of humping eight-epllon drums of fuel and water out to the machine -sometimes over long distances, across rocks and reefs, sandbanks and mudflats.

After this energy-sapping job they often worked waist deep in water filling tanks and radiators drip by drip through chamois leather to filter out dirt.

They floundered around baling out leaky floats and caulking and patching them before settling down to a meal and sleep.

Their meals mostly consisted of hard rations carried all the way from their starting point, RAAF Base Point Cook, Victoria. Their 'rest' consisted of taking turns to guard the aircraft at night, floating her in and out as the tide ebbed and flowed, all the while worried about submerged rocks. 'Rest' was usually a beach infested with mosquitoes and sandflies,

The 'Eagle' engine

(references to be finalised – material from the Rolls Royce Aero Engine Instruction Book Eagle and Falcon, December 2017 included).

Neville Parnell in his article praises the Rolls Royce Eagle engine for its reliability, but by modern standards there were great problems. Grenfell Price, in his book *The story of Ross and Keith Smith* describes some of them. Basically, the engine was expected to last only about a hundred hours before complete rebuilding. Daily maintenance was a major operation – for example magnetos were to be removed and cleaned, and for frosty nights it was recommended that not only the coolant water but also the engine oil should be drained, then heated before refilling the engine. As will be seen from the narrative, removing and replacing engine valves was a common operation. Spark plugs had a very short life. In flight, the air-fuel mixture required constant attention.

The Australian Faireys soldiered on with the Eagle, but by the mid-1920s elsewhere the Napier Lion engine was being used. It was more modern and also a better fit: the later Faireys continued service in the RAF until the mid-1930s and compared to the IID, with its bulging engine protrusions on each side, was quite an elegant aircraft.

Diary of the flight

The *italics* material is almost verbatim from the article by Neville Parnell, as outlined in the introduction.

The aircraft was prepared under McIntyre's supervision. *An auxiliary petrol tank with a capacity of 40 gallons was fitted on a stretcher in the W/T (centre) cockpit, and this necessitated the removal of the radio. An additional radiator was fitted under the fuselage aft of the engine. The petrol capacity, with the extra tank, was increased to 14? gallons and the water, for cooling, from nine to 12 gallons. The floats were lined with Biturine, and then the outside of the floats had three coats of marine paint and one coat of marine varnish applied.*

Saturday, 6 April 2024: Departure from Point Cook

After being delayed a day by heavy seas off Point Cook, the flight started at 6.00 a.m. on Sunday, 6th April, 1924, With W/C Goble, in command, as the navigator and F/O McIntyre as the pilot. Three-quarters of an hour later they had to force-land at Corner Inlet, north of Wilson's Promontory, to repair the auxiliary fuel tank. Taking off again ten minutes later, they ran into a 30 knot gale accompanied by heavy rain'. McIntyre had to descend from 2,500 feet to 250 feet and continue at that height all the way to Eden, NSW., which was reached at 11.40 a.m. It was originally intended to fly direct to Sydney but the Fairey had used more fuel than had been anticipated. On landing, one of the floats was slightly damaged by the waves. Fuel was taken on and they left Eden At 1.26 pm for Sydney.

During the flight the compass exploded, showering McIntyre with glass and alcohol. The last 90 miles were flown within 100 feet of the sea, through blinding rain, and several times the plane nearly collided with the cliffs near Buli'. However, a safe landing was made at Rose Bay at 4.00 pm The compass was taken to the RAAF Experimental Section at Randwick to be repaired.

Sunday, 7 April 2024 – Sydney to Port Stephens

Rain continued, and takeoff was delayed until 1248, still in bad weather. Ten minutes after takeoff the compass burst again. Passing Newcastle, they flew at 500 feet, in a 50 knot gale from the east. Heavy rain forced them down to 50 feet where the sea was only just visible, and the flying conditions were making the Fairey almost uncontrollable. McIntyre endeavoured to make Port Stephens, but being shrouded in mist and rain and with islands in the vicinity, a landing there was too risky. A short break in the weather gave them a glimpse of the Myall River, where they immediately put down. The gale blew all night. It took several lines, anchors and an all-night watch to keep the aircraft on the river. The float which had been-damaged at Eden began to leak slightly.

Tuesday, 9 April 2024 – Port Stephens to Southport, Queensland

After putting a patch and red lead on the float, McIntyre and Goble left the Myall River at 1243. *Rain was still coming down heavily and the altitude all the way to Southport, Qld., varied between 100 and 500 feet, but a safe landing was made at 1720.*

Wednesday, 10 April 2024- Southport to Gladstone

After another night of heavy rain, Southport was cleared just before noon and a fairly pleasant flight was made to Gladstone, which was reached at 1545. Coral in the harbour and mud and legs in the river forced McIntyre to land at Facing Island some ten miles away. The petrol was brought over in a launch by Captain Payne, the marine pilot at Gladstone. For four hours (2000 to 0200 the next morning) the crew worked up to their necks in water straining the fuel through chamois leather. Sleep was absolutely impossible due to sandflies and mosquitoes, so they floated the Fairey outside the reef and made a bonfire on the beach with some empty cases and half a gallon of the taxpayers' petrol.

Thursday, 11 April 2024 – Gladstone to Townsville.

They departed from Gladstone at 0637 with good visibility and no rain, bound for Townsville. Touchdown there was at 1150, and as they taxied to the beach they were escorted by a large shark, about 14 feet long which circled the aircraft. It was discovered that a compass being sent from Melbourne would not arrive until the 13th, so pending its arrival the Fairey was taxied up the river and hoisted onto the Burns Philp wharf, and the time was spent in patching up the floats and coating the seams with carbon expanding paint. McIntyre was suffering from the unwanted attentions of the mosquitoes and sandflies; his knees and ankles were swollen to twice their normal size and for several days after leaving Gladstone he could not don his boots. He also had a septic finger which had to be surgically treated before leaving Townsville.*

Saturday, 13 April 2024 – Townsville to Cooktown

The compass arrived, was fitted, and a start was made for Cooktown at 0730 on the 14th. The weather was fair but the air was rather bumpy. While making a circuit of Cairns harbour, the Fairey lost 500 feet in the turbulence, and the antics of a herd of goats which stampeded at the sound of the aircraft were clearly visible from the air. Cooktown was reached at 1030. A strong wind was blowing over the hills and made the air extremely turbulent, but a safe landing was made on the Endeavour River.

McIntyre's finger had to be lanced again – by a woman doctor, to his embarrassment. Heavy rain fell that night and a gale blew, making it necessary for Goble to stand watch over the aircraft. McIntyre, who spent the night in bed, said later that he had 'a clear recollection of Goble in a pair of shorts and very little else, sheltering under a woman's umbrella in three inches of rain.' Similar conditions – heavy rain and low cloud – persisted next day.

Tuesday, 16 April 2024 – Cooktown to Thursday Island

At 0730. on the 16th, the rain cleared slightly and they took off for Thursday Island. In Princess Charlotte Bay they passed the steamship 'Eastern' which greeted the fliers with several blasts on the ship's whistle. From this point the conditions deteriorated; all the way to Cape Sidmouth they flew through heavy rain. Goble could hardly see McIntyre in the front cockpit, and the Fairey was becoming very difficult to control; once the wheel was wrenched from McIntyre's hands. They force landed on the open sea and after discussion decided to try to climb over the clouds, but this proved hopeless as the clouds were a solid mass. They then headed out to sea and flew a compass course up the Coast. Reconnaissance of the coast was negligible as it was sighted only a few times. On arrival at Thursday Island they found a big squall hanging almost over the town, and had to dive around it to make a landing.

Arrangements had been made by the mechanic, Corporal Gurr, with a local pearler, Mr Hocking, to use his boat slipway for repairs. For the next five days the rain fell continuously. The enforced halt gave the crew a chance to have the machine overhauled and to have it patched up generally. The floats were found to be leaking again, and would have to be replaced. This necessitated lifting the 2½ ton aircraft to slip the new floats underneath. As there were no cranes or derricks on the island, two special sheerlegs, 50 ft. long and eight inches square, were erected. It took days to get them into position; then the aircraft was lifted by block and tackle and the new floats fitted. It was impossible to swing the new compass in the pilot's cockpit and to correct the deviations as there were no turntables available and the tides were too strong. As Goble had the master compass, he tied a pair of string reins to McIntyre's arms and guided him from the rear cockpit.

Tuesday, 23 April 2024 – Thursday Island to Elcho Island

Thursday Island was put astern at 0640 on the 23rd, 17 days after leaving Melbourne, and the Fairey was no longer in pristine condition. With the guns, ammunition, drinking water and extra spares, it was considerably above the manufacturer's maximum allowable weight. As for the weather, it was noted that while a strong surface wind was blowing, the clouds higher up were moving in the opposite direction.

At about 0830 the engine started misfiring; two valves were sticking badly and considerable vibration was experienced. An hour and 4 quarter after leaving Thursday Island, the wind changed to the south, making a reduction in speed and a change in course necessary. At 0920 the wind veered to SSW and then at 1040 to SE. Visibility was hazy and the sea had an eight-foot swell. McIntyre was answering well to the reins and the flight was continued at 500 feet all the way across the Gulf of Carpentaria. When land was sighted it was found that they were only 12 miles off course after a flight over 410 miles of open sea -- surely a rare feat for those days. They headed for Elcho Island where touchdown was made at 1150.

It was impossible to go on to Darwin without adjusting the valves and faulty carburation, and this work was carried on until late at night. Some of the more adventurous aborigines came down and watched them. They ran the engine up in the darkness; it was still coughing and spitting badly, and one native who seemed to know a lot about seaplanes remarked 'My crikey, mine tinkit dis feller gotten bad bellyache.' But when Goble climbed up to the cockpit and fired a red Verey light into the sky, the natives took to the bush with wild screeching and were not seen again.

The beach was soft, sandy and well sheltered from the SE winds.

The First Nations 1919, 1924, 1965 – and 2024?

VERY MUCH A DRAFT> NOT TO BE QUOTED 3/2021

When McGuinness and Fysh travelled from Normanton to Darwin surveying for the Smith flight in 1919 they were regaled with tales of early fights with the Aborigines 'whose love of spearing cattle got them into trouble with the station people'. The Wollgorang Station homestead was 'spear proof with its heavy wooden doors loopholed' so that guns could be fired on any attackers. They were equipped with a .303 service rifle and ammunition. A J Cotton, father of famed aviator Sydney Cotton, was manager of Brunette Downs station, and warned 'the Blacks are bad, too – and Murdering Tommy is out in the Turn-off Lagoon area'.

It is clear that Fysh and McGuinness were in no danger, and would certainly not have completed their journey without being helped by groups of Aboriginal people pushing their Model T out of many impossible situations.

Goble and Macintyre were 'weighed down' with firearms, and their attitude is clear from the account of the journey, notably in Thursday Island, Elcho Island and Mission Bay.

The attitudes of 1914 are a century old. We cannot blame the people of the past for their attitudes and actions: they were products of their time, just as we are of ours. Future generations will doubtless look back on us, with similar criticisms.

The modern Elcho Island is famous as the home of the late Aboriginal folk musician Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and other notable musicians. It was the inspiration for the famous song 'My Island Home'. Its dance troupe has achieved great recognition, and it is a thriving arts centre.

Galiwin'ku (the modern preferred name) is a traditional Aboriginal community with restricted access; permission to visit is required by law and can be made through the Northern Land Council directly or via the Galiwin'ku Council. There is a population of around 2,200 people, of whom only about 70 are non-Aboriginal. The most commonly spoken language is Djambarrpuyngu but at least twelve other languages still survive. Shepherdson College, the main school, is recognised world-wide for its work in intercultural education.

This beautiful island is the inspiration for the famous song *My Island Home*.

Wednesday, 24 April 2024 – Elcho Island to Darwin

At 1020 they left Elcho Island for Darwin and carried out a climb test of the Fairey IID with a full load. The aircraft reached 4,500 feet in under 15 minutes, but as the wind was dead against them at that height they dropped back to 2,000 feet. Many native fires were seen along the way and alligators were observed diving into the rivers as the aircraft passed overhead. After reaching Cape Cockburn, the course was altered across Van Diemen's Gulf to Goulburn Island where landfall was made at 2.30 pm. On landing at Darwin they shook hands with each other; Goble said later 'because we both had the gust up vertically, and we were frightened the engine might conk out. At Darwin the seaplane was hoisted onto the wharf with a railway crane, and all through the 25th the carburettors and magnetos were overhauled. By 8 pm on the 26th, after they had been tested and adjusted, the aircraft was ready for the next stage.

Saturday, 27 April 2024 – Darwin to Mission Bay

The seaplane was lowered into the water and at 10.10 am they took off for Broome. Visibility was good. Cape Londonderry was reached at 1.20 pm (328 miles in 3 hr. 10 min., an average of 103 mph) and Mission Bay at 1.45 pm where a landing was made in a choppy sea., The guns were loaded as they were not sure whether the natives were friendly. However, they were met by the Father Superior of the Spanish Mission and all was well. He plied them with biscuits and wine, and they were feeling rather heady as they returned to refuel the plane. By 6 pm it was completed and. the missionaries provided kangaroo tail dinner and the natives staged a special corroboree,

Goble and McIntyre stayed in the Fairey overnight to ensure floating off with the tide, but although they had anchored some 200 yards from the day—time high water mark the night tide was too low, and the natives had to be hurriedly called from their beds to help push the seaplane into deeper water. McIntyre used the engine to assist the natives as they pushed and pulled the aircraft around.

Sunday, 28 April 2024 – Mission Bay to Broome

The port float was strained and was leaking badly. Bound for Broome, they took off at 10.00 am in a choppy sea .with one float half full of water. The engine was running very well, and Broome was reached at 2.45 pm The harbour was very exposed, and with a tide of 36 feet was not of much use as a seaplane base.

Monday, 29 April 2024 – Broome to Carnarvon

Here they picked up Leading Aircraftsman Gottschalk, who was to prove invaluable later. The three left Broome at 8.10 am on the 29th in a very rough sea, and arrived at Port Hedland at 11.20 .am With the floats taking in water, they decided to stay there the rest of the day because the next sheltered harbour was Carnarvon, two stages further on. Onslow, the next stop, had an open beach. Leaving Port Hedland at 8.42 am the next day, they reached Onslow at 11.30 am and beached the Fairey IID on the sandy shore for refuelling. There were supposed to be no rocks in the area, but as the tide went out it was found that the floats were rubbing on jagged rocks. Refuelling was immediately stopped and the plane was moved half a mile down the beach. With full tanks, they left for Carnarvon at 2.25 pm

They reached Carnarvon at 5.55 pm; the Gascoyne River was very narrow and full of sandbanks due to low tide, so McIntyre had to land on Sharks Bay and taxi up the river. On the way they were met by a launch wien members of the local sailing club. The secretary, whose first thought was for refreshment, held up a bottle of whisky in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other and yelled ‘What are you going to have?’ However, as they were stuck on a sandbank at this time and still three miles from the beaching place, the seaplane crew decided to wait until they were safely on the beach,

At daylight on the 30th, they were ready to leave for Fremantle hut the engine had dropped from 1,650 rpm to 1,500 rpm, insufficient to lift the heavy seaplane off the water. An examination disclosed that two valves were burnt out; it was impossible to take them out without stripping the engine arid Gottschalk decided to try to grind them in the cylinders. This took two days, but after testing the engine, it still did not develop enough power and. required a top overhaul.

Sunday, 5 May 2024

Two mechanics with a spare engine left Perth on Monday, 5th May, by train to Mullewa and then by truck to Carnarvon,

Wednesday, 8 May 2024

The mechanics arrived in Carnarvon at 8 pm. 8th Mayo Mr. Faulkner of the North West Department got a small crane on to a bridge against which the seaplane was moored; work began at daylight on the

9th and by 3 pm, the engine was fitted, tested, and ready for the air. Considering the lack of facilities, Gottschalk did an excellent job. He, Goble and McIntyre were ready to go on the 10th, but the night tide did not arrive and the Fairey was left high and dry. Another night had to be spent at Carnarvon.

Saturday, 11 May 2024 – Carnarvon to Perth

At 9.10 am they lifted off at last, in fair conditions. There had been no rain at Carnarvon for many months and Goble assured people there that wherever the seaplane went they always got rain. The jest soon came true, for 70 miles south they ran into a NW monsoon and continued the remaining 220 miles to Geraldton between 100 and 500 feet in blinding rain. They landed in a rough sea at 10.25 am. Local residents gave them hot coffee and biscuits, and the Mayor waded out up to his neck in his best Sunday suit to lend a hand. Children were rather enthusiastic; McIntyre caught three of them doing acrobatic stunts on the elevator wires. He promptly pulled them off and put them ashore.

After leaving at 1.25 p.m, the petrol was switched from the main tank to the auxiliary tank, Forty minutes later, flying downwind in the rain at 2,000 feet, the engine suddenly cut out. Frantic pumping by both Goble and McIntyre got pressure in the main tank and the engine started just before the plane reached the water. A landing was made in the open sea, and it was found that someone (the children?) had removed the binding wire from the drain cock on the auxiliary tank and the petrol had emptied into the sea. Taking off again was rather a hair-raising affair. The lower wings were awash and Gottschalk's 14 stone weight did not help, but McIntyre managed to lift the plane off. They landed on the Swan River, Perth, at 2.15 pm..

Sunday, 12 May 2024 – Perth to Albany

After an overnight stop they left at 10.15 am for Albany; they had a fairly good run and landed in Princess Royal Harbour, a 'beautifully sheltered spot for seaplanes,' Here they were met 'by hordes of uncontrollable children, who swarmed all over the machine as soon as it was beached, yelling and screaming at the tops of their voices. After the experience at Geraldton police protection was hurriedly sought

Monday, 13 May 2024 – Albany - aborted flight

On the 13th a start was made for Israelite Bay at 11.42 am. Weather forecasts had indicated SW winds but these turned to a strong NE wind, and in 52 minutes they had covered only 32 miles. It was decided to return to Albany and the same 32 miles were quickly covered in 18 minutes. On the following day a depression in the weather arrived and the Fairey III D had to be moved to a more sheltered spot. At this stage the main worry was that there had to be an off-shore wind at Israelite Bay; with an on-shore wind the seaplane might get caught in the surf and break up.

Tuesday, 14 May 2024 – Albany to Israelite Bay

Although conditions at Albany were unfavourable, a start was made at 10.48 a.m. A moderate flight was made to Mary Ann Haven, where heavy rain forced them down to 100 feet. Visibility was 'nearly non-existent and the sea very rough. On landing at Esperance Bay the harbour was much too rough and the beach too exposed, so there was no alternative but to continue to Israelite Bay. Although the aircraft was making an airspeed of over 100 mph, the last 20 miles took 42' minutes. It was impossible to see either water or coast, so they circled a group of islands in the Eastern Group, gradually climbing, until a break appeared in the direction of Israelite Bay. They immediately put the nose down and sped in for a landing, just making the beach before the break in the weather disappeared.

Israelite Bay was a telegraph repeating station, with a total population of four people, who did everything possible to help.

Wednesday, 15 May 2024 – Israelite Bay to Ceduna (Murat Bay)

The wind held from the west all night and they were able to get away at 9.27 am Melbourne time. The wind was then from the SW, the sky overcast, and very heavy seas were running. Most of the coastline there is sheer cliff so they stood well out to sea, making directly for Eyre, from where a sandy beach extended to Eucla. They had been flying between 800 and 1,000 feet between Israelite Bay and Eyre, but to avoid the clouds they climbed to 3,000 feet on reaching the coast. The airspeed immediately dropped, so they descended into the cloud again to get the benefit of the wind.

Eucla was reached at 10.35 am Residents had telegraphed Goble and McIntyre to land there, but as the surf on the beach was too rough, they flew around for a few minutes and dropped a letter 'with a streamer (a strip torn from the tail of McIntyre's shirt) explaining why they could not land. -

From Eucla the sand gave way to cliffs again, so they stood out to sea and steered a course to Cape Adieu, through clouds and drizzle. Fowler's Bay was reached at 12.41 pm It was intended to land there to refuel, but because of the exposed harbour they carried on to Ceduna (Murat Bay) where emergency supplies had been laid down. They arrived there at 1.30 pm.

Thursday, 16 May 2024

Having made such a good passage across the Great Australian Bight, it was felt that the previous day's rough spin was more than offset. Murat and-Denial Bays were full of rocks, particularly at low tide, and residents there saw more flying than at any other place visited. McIntyre kept flying. from one part of the bay to another trying to find a safe place to beach the seaplane. It was eventually anchored on a mud bank half a mile from the shore. The airmen were cold, wet to the necks, and their teeth chattered; they thought they might get a small nip at the local hotel -- but it was ten minutes past six, and under South Australian licensing laws nothing could be bought... but a good Samaritan slipped-them something 'off the hip,'

Friday, 17 May 2024 – Ceduna to Port Lincoln

Mr. Betts (agent for Vacuum Oil), Mr. Norman (schoolmaster) and Mr. Reid (manager of Betts and Co.) helped the refuelling, carrying petrol half a mile over the mudbank. The Fairey took off at 11.45 am, and after three-quarters of an hour ran into drizzling rain.

Rain and sea mist continued all the way to Port Lincoln, where the landing was made at 2.25 pm They stayed overnight at the local hotel, relishing the hot baths which were provided.

Saturday, 18 May 2024 – Port Lincoln to Beachport

They left Port Lincoln at 11.06 am and had a good passage to Beachport, arriving at 2.35 pm A bad rain squall was experienced off Kingston en route. They were met by Flight Lieutenant Harman and a mechanic from Point Cook, who refuelled and checked the seaplane.

Sunday, 19 May 2024 – Beachport to St Kilda

The next day Goble and McIntyre left Beachport on the last stage of the flight to Melbourne. A fresh NE wind was blowing on the ground, but although the sky was clouded over they were able to climb to 5,000 feet where a NW wind helped the aircraft along. They had excellent visibility and the smoothest trip of the whole flight. Good time was being made so they spent a few minutes circling Portland, Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Lorne. Approaching the entrance to Port Phillip Bay, a steamer coming out gave them a reception by blowing its whistle; they answered by running up their ensign and dipping the seaplane's wings. At Point Cook, another Fairey III D in charge of Squadron Leader . Murray Jones, CO of Point Cook, and 15 other aircraft formed up with them and escorted the seaplane to St. Kilda Esplanade, where approximately 10,000 people had lined the foreshore.

Goble and McIntyre were surprised by the crowds; they had not realised the interest being taken in the flight. After making a few wide sweeps McIntyre landed the Fairey IID and taxied up to the beach, where a barrier was hastily erected around the seaplane. The crew went by launch to the end of the pier where the official welcome ceremony took place. There is an excellent film of the event in the National Film and Sound Archives (NFSA id 19493).

The Minister for Defence, Mr. Bowden, made the first speech, congratulating the flyers on their achievement. Other dignitaries present were Senator Pearce, Minister for Home Territories; Sir Harry Chauvel, representing the Army; Rear. Admiral Hall Thompson of the Navy; Colonel Brinsmead of the Civil Aviation Department; Colonel Thomas, Defence Department; and Major Coleman and Squadron Leader McBain of the Air Board. After introductions were completed, the flyers were chaired along the pier by fellow officers and friends to the shore end, where the Mayor and Councillors of St. Kilda met the procession.

After the flight

So ended the first flight around Australia. Most of the flight was made in heavy rain and bad visibility. Each day after landing there was about seven hours' work bailing water from the floats, adjusting magnetos and valve springs, straining petrol through chamois, checking the oil and 'radiator... all this in addition to the irksome watches which had to be kept to ensure that the machine did not get damaged. Both Goble and McIntyre were tired by the time they got into the air, but despite these obstacles, made a great contribution to Australian aviation history.

The Fairey IID was presented to the Australian War Memorial Museum a few months later, to be preserved, but when the Museum moved from Melbourne to Canberra there was not enough room for the aircraft. It was left crated at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. There is no record of it after 1928, but an aileron was found underneath the Sergeants' Mess at Laverton later, and placed in the RAAF Museum at Point Cook.

The Barrier Reef survey

This material comes from <https://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-geranium>

HMS Geranium was a sloop built for minesweeping and convoy protection in 1915. After service with the Royal Navy during the war, it was sent to Australia to clear mines dropped by German commerce raiders, and in 1920 was recommissioned as a survey vessel. From the website:

In June 1924 HMAS Geranium was equipped to carry a Fairey seaplane, Welded storage tanks for aircraft and motor boat fuel were fitted on the stern and additional accommodation was built on the upper deck for the RAAF personnel and for scientists embarking during the survey. A Fairey IID was dispatched to Sydney, from Point Cook in Victoria, for trials of the ship's deck and securing arrangements.

It was found, however, that the aircraft, when stored on deck, affected the ship's stability and the decision was made to fly the aircraft to Townsville once Geranium had arrived there.. This region was of particular interest for the Australian Government as detailed knowledge of the Reef was sparse and there were significant shipping routes that required regular survey to allow for safe navigation. Additionally the Great Barrier Reef Committee had been formed in 1922 with funding allocated by the Federal Government for research and conservation of the reef. The eastern (outer) limit had been generally delineated and the inner navigable channel had been surveyed to varying standards of reliability. Between the inner channel and the outer edge lay unknown waters with a few poorly

surveyed channels. Existence of other channels through the Reef was suspected and the activities of Japanese nationals, in the local pearling fleet, indicated that knowledge regarding channels through the reef may have been communicated to the Japanese Government.

The RAAF detachment did not sail north on board Geranium and instead embarked as passengers in the SS Canberra which arrived in Townsville on 1 August 1924. The Fairey IID aircraft (A10-2) departed RAAF Base Point Cook on 1 August flown by Flight Lieutenant Ivor McIntyre with Corporal (Mechanic) George Gottschalk to assist. After refuelling at Sydney, Southport and Gladstone, the aircraft reached Townsville on 4 August where Geranium was waiting. Townsville was also to become the ship's main coaling base for the survey period. On arrival McIntyre handed the aircraft over to Flight Lieutenant Ernest Mustard, DFC (who later changed his surname to Mustar) and Flying Officer Thomas Swinbourne who would operate the aircraft for the next four months.

Geranium's next period at sea was from 5 to 15 August and, although she did not embark the aircraft, Mustard twice flew the aircraft out and alighted alongside Geranium to report reef locations. Aircraft fuelling arrangements were successfully tested and the seaplane and RAAF personnel were finally embarked during 15-18 August at Townsville and thereafter operated from Geranium.

The aircraft served several purposes. The first was to carry out reconnaissance over parts of the Great Barrier Reef to gain a general idea of the reef layout and water depth for surveying purposes and to ensure the safety of the ship. In this role the aircraft was an immediate and unqualified success - Geranium's Commanding Officer reported that a seaplane was essential for ship safety when working inside the Barrier Reef where the possibility of finding a reef by striking it was a permanent concern (as Bennett knew all too well from his experiences in the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1923). The aircraft was good for locating winding passages but the photographs conveyed little information about depths which all had to be sounded by lead line or sounding machine.

Secondly aerial photography was of some use to hydrographers. A photographic height of 10,000 feet (3050 metres) was selected to ascertain if vertical photographs could be joined to form a chart. The reefs in this area however were too far apart for this plan to be workable, but aerial photographs proved useful in preparing charts of individual reefs because submerged parts of the reef were visible in prints. Over the next four months Geranium and the RAAF detachment surveyed 19 reefs from Maori Reef (near Cairns in the north through to Ellison Reef, near Mission Beach, in the south). This was an area of over 2000 square kilometres surveyed although only half of this was done completely. Some of the new features discovered were named after the aircrew including Mustard Patches, Swinbourne Patches and Raaf Shoals and these features still appear on charts to this day.

End of service

Co-operation tasks were carried out with naval units and during 1925 – 1927 Fairey IID aircraft would operate from Eden to provide support to RAN warships conducting exercises off the east coast.

The Fairey IID was popular with their aircrew but they were quite difficult to maintain and when used in tropical and sub-tropical areas their performance was significantly degraded. They were designed for use in colder climates. By the end of 1925 three of the six had crashed or were damaged beyond repair. They were converted to spare parts to keep the other three aircraft operational. Due to a lack of spare parts, funding and qualified maintenance personnel the remaining three aircraft were un-serviceable by late 1927 and were disposed of in 1929.

Also in 1925 the first of the Walrus Seagulls arrived.

It is interesting that the Faireys were succeeded by the Supermarine Seagull / Walrus aircraft which actually had a lesser performance and were certainly less streamlined. But they were rugged, and with their Bristol Pegasus engines, far more reliable. It is also notable that the first two Seagull amphibians to arrive were sent to continue the Barrier Reef surveys in late 1925. When McIntyre and Williams made the Solomon Islands survey flight in 1926 they used DH50 A8-1, not a Fairey. (information from ADF-serials).

It is said that the Fairey aircraft specifications were used in designing HMAS Albatross, a seaplane carrier built at Cockatoo Island, Sydney, during the late 1920s. They did capture the imagination of the public, and form an important part of our aviation history.

It is sad that only one Fairey 111 survives – named, 'Santa Cruz', it was the first aircraft to fly the South Atlantic, and is on display at the Museu de Marinha, in Lisbon, Portugal. In Australia we only have a few parts of these interesting aircraft.

But we do have the written record of the remarkable around-Australia flight, and it would be wonderful to see it marked by celebratory activities.