

# **Darwin to Melbourne**

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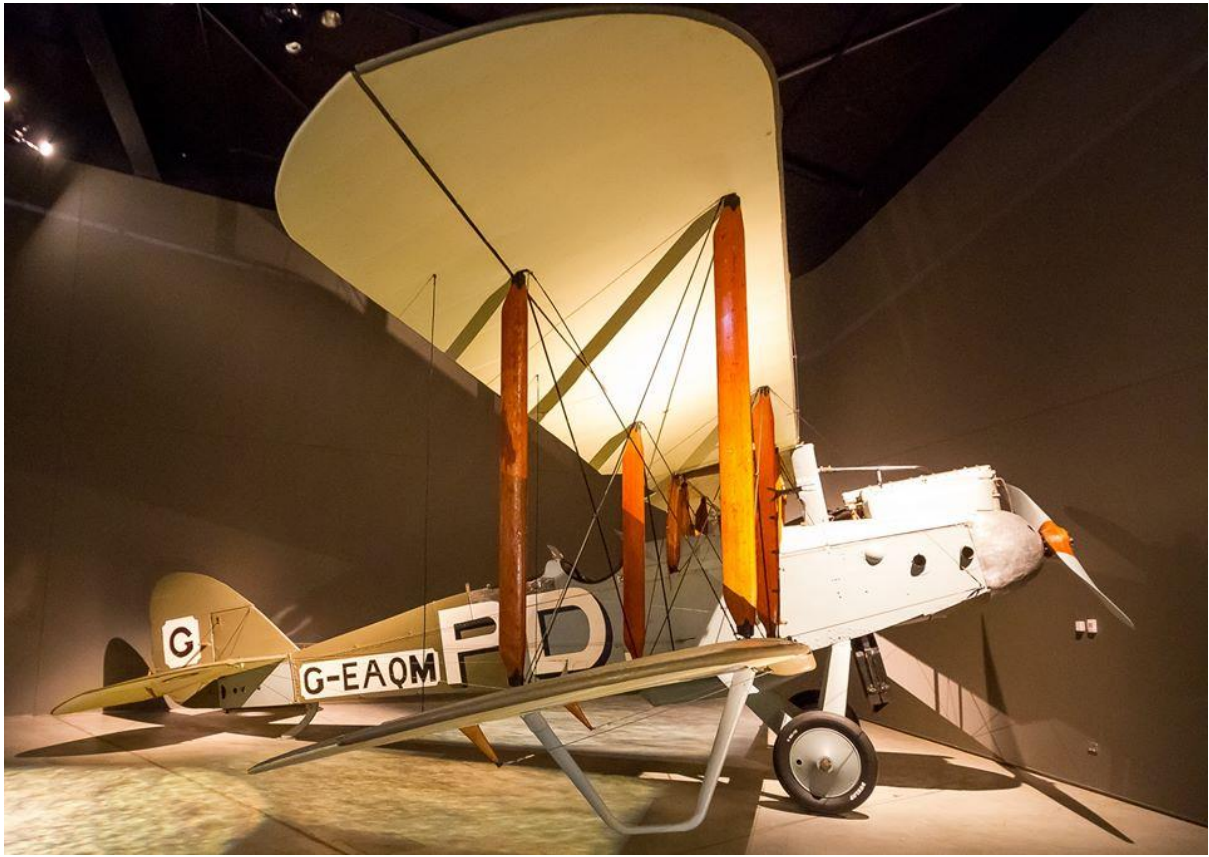
***Flight and Adventures of Parer and  
McIntosh by Air from England to  
Australia***

*BY LIEUT RAYMOND J P PARER*

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*Parer's aircraft, restored to pristine condition, is now in the collection of the Australian War Museum.*

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## Chapter I: The portal of the homeland

Australia! We could hardly believe it. Hope had seemed gone when these low cliffs and beach proved, not another mirage, but real. I took out the camera and at this moment of joy, snapped the dim outline.

Forgotten, for the moment, was the threatened failure of our petrol and the danger that even now we might fail to reach the land. I soon identified the coast as Bathurst Island, with the dividing stretch of water separating it from Melville Island, but now we expected at any moment our petrol failure. I could not understand why it had not run out before, as we had been flying for over seven and a half hours. Of course, the explanation was that we had conserved our supply because all the way we had travelled with the engine throttled back, to save it in every way and had therefore travelled slowly.

I took a course from Bathurst Island to Port Darwin with the thought in my mind all the time that if the petrol suddenly cut off, to turn and glide to Melville Island. I don't think I ever loved Australia so much as at that moment. I found myself so leaning forward on the joy stick as if I were running. I was on tip toes, as if I were helping the 'bus along that way.

The mainland was hidden by a dense blanket of smoke from local bush fires. However, I knew roughly where Darwin was and after about three-quarters of an hour's flying, I shut off the engine and descended through the smoke. There in the dusk of the evening, beneath us, on the shore of the bay, lay a small red town, with rectangular streets dividing it up into equal blocks.

Darwin!

I shouted back: "Look out for landing ground".

Mac replied in like manner: "Follow the cars."

I was still in constant dread of the petrol failing, which would be a very serious matter even now.

There were motor charging up the main street and round corners at great speed. I looked over in the direction they were going and luckily, saw the ground. Circling only once to examine it, we landed with the greatest care. There was a small crowd at one end of the ground and as the PD came to rest, I began to taxi towards them, but the engine stopped dead instantly. I looked at the petrol gauge. Our tanks were absolutely empty.

We had received a telegram in Singapore informing us that on no account were we to enter Port Darwin, without first being examined by the quarantine officials. These two doctors were the first to meet us. When they gave the word, the crowd came. Among them was Mr Staniford Smith, Administrator of the northern Territory. After the first excitement was over, Mr Smith made a speech of welcome and invited all the Darwin people to a garden party that night at Government House.

We saw to the PD and left it in charge of a watchman. As we walked off with the Administrator, I had the feeling of leaving behind a trusty friend in the dear old machine. Feeling “all in” with the strain of the eight and three-quarter hours’ flying and the anxiety. We were driven to Government House and as usual, our appearance was a matter of deep concern to us. Our uniforms, which were new at Singapore, were very much the worse for wear and we had no change, as we carried no luggage whatever. Our topees were absolutely disreputable, battered and shapeless. The Administrator had a big room prepared for us and dinner was ready – it was very welcome.

After dinner we did our best to tidy ourselves up to meet the people of Darwin that night. They soon began to arrive in their evening clothes, four hundred of them, the largest crowd that had ever

gathered at Government House, the Administrator told us. Mac and I shook hands with the whole four hundred. Some dear old ladies came of a second helping and I got one kiss, at least, as they could reach me, but could not reach Mac. It was a bit of an ordeal, but worse was to come.

After these first preliminaries were over, the reporters, who had come up to Darwin on purpose to meet us, claimed us and we had to submit to their tender mercies for some time. Then the music struck up for a dance. Shortly Mac and I were engrossed in the whirls of the fox trot and one step. The final effort was a speech by Mac and myself. This went off well enough, I think. Then we retired, glad enough to seek our cots.

The next morning, the Administrator and Mac began to talk of resuming the flight and breaking the Ross Smith record from Darwin to Melbourne. I feared if we pushed off and tried rushing through again that we would meet with misfortune, as we always did when we pushed things too hard. So I expressed a wish to delay for a week if the Administrator would have us. He stated his great willingness to do so and we decided to stay.

As a matter of fact, I was feeling the nervous reaction and strain on top of the malarial trouble, so that I did not feel up to flying. All I was fit for, the whole time I was at Darwin, was to lie on the beach in the sun.

We were almost snowed under with telegrams and cables, people far and near, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Navy, Army, over a thousand clubs, schools and unknown people from everywhere. The one that touched me most, I think, after those from my own folks and my own school, was that from Wesley with its warm and generous congratulations, showing the fine spirit of the public schools.

The second night there was a social evening and welcome from the townspeople of Darwin. we were cheered all the way along from the Administrator's house to the hall and were carried on the shoulders of returned soldiers. It was a good distance, too. I must own I did feel an awful ass.

It was great, once more, to be among white people and they Australians, whom we felt were our own people. We had the feeling of being home immediately. It was the first attempt either Mac or myself had made at a speech of any length.

Mac, who had had a pick-me-up and was in great form, said: "Lieut Parer wants me to tell you something of our travels."

Mac went on to speak for three-quarters of an hour. The people seemed interested, but I knew they wanted a dance to follow. We were alone on the platform, so I scribbled a note saying, "Mac, you have been speaking three-quarters of an hour; the lights go out in Half-an-hour and the ladies want to dance".

I slipped it into his hand. He read it surreptitiously, thinking it was a reminder of something he had omitted. Then to my dismay, he read it out, amidst shouts of laughter and I ducked from the stage covered with confusion. I simply could not face them for another moment.

We turned out our pockets while at Darwin to tot up our finances and found we had a general mixture of all shapes and sizes and values of foreign money, mostly paper. The fact that we had any money at all was due to the generosity of Mr Peter Dawson at Calcutta and the business flights we made there. We had from \$40 to £50 between us. During the week's stay we filled the old 'bus with petrol and oil and made all preparations to leave.

## Chapter II: Joy flights from Darwin to Brisbane

After our week's rest, we climbed into the machine much refreshed and ready for any adventures. The last part of our flight was across the continent of Australia. I had heard such a lot about the Northern Territory, the enormous size and stunted growth of our desert, that I was very anxious to see for myself just what it was like. Our route lay along the telegraph line that ran to Adelaide, due south, until we arrived at Powell Creek. From here, we were to take a compass bearing due east until we met Anthony's Lagoon Station. The Lands Department at Port Darwin had prepared a map for us, which we afterwards found to be most valuable.

We started up our engine early in the morning and left Port Darwin at 7.20 am. Our first landing ground was to be Katherine, on the Katherine river. We crossed the long arm, which is one of the bays of the estuary of Port Darwin and after searching for a while, eventually picked up the telegraph line going south. There was also a railway line running as far as Katherine. This has now been extended to Pine Creek. The telegraph line and railway we found ran through scrub and eucalyptus trees. We had only progressed for half an hour when the ground was completely hidden by mist, which continued for over fifty or sixty miles. We took a compass bearing due south, trusting to being able to pick up the line when visibility showed up.

After passing this locality of ground mist we came out upon the railway and telegraph line well over to our right. We noticed from a thousand feet myriads of what appeared to columns of a reddish colour, which looked like traces of natives' work. These puzzled us until I recalled the ant hills I had read about.

As the visibility grew brighter, to the right and to the left, as far as we could see, there was the same sparsely-treed area of stunted eucalyptus. At intervals this gave way to a dry plain. As we passed along the railway line we saw occasional huts. The people were



attracted to their doors by the sound of the approaching machine and as the day was so fine, we came down to a very low altitude and signalled to all, only too glad to be able to divert them a little from the monotony of their lives. we were feeling so light-hearted ourselves at being over our homeland that we wanted to cheer others in sympathy.

We arrived at Katherine a locality of a few sheds. The landing ground was in a shocking state as we could see from the air. There was no indication as to the direction in which the wind was blowing, so McIntosh wrote a note asking for a fire to be lit and picking out a small knot of people on the ground, dropped it in front of them. we flew round and they soon had the fire going and then we landed at 10am, narrowly escaping a smash on ant hills and fallen tree trunks.

As it was our intention to leave that day, we immediately set to work to fill up. Some ladies brought tea and scones along for us, which we very much appreciated. we started up the engine and were on our way again by noon. The few aborigines who were there had stared in wonder at the machine and spoke of it as the "big fella" Native Companion. We followed the lines south, at times finding it very difficult to locate them.

After seven hours we came over Daley Waters. A small knot of people had collected here, but we happened to be flying at about 2,000 feet. On approaching Newcastle Waters we had descended to two hundred feet. There was only one small log hut. All other signs of habitation were miles away. There was an old man standing outside the hut and although we waved frantically to him, his head just followed our course, but he made no other movement.

At Powell's Creek we turned east. from here to Anthony's Lagoon I intended to take a compass course. The country in this locality is a mixture of dry watercourse beds and scrub. We came down low over places and found that some of them were quite suitable for landing

on. The next sign of habitation was to be Peacock's boring plant according to the map. When we arrived at Burnette Downs station, we heard all about Peacock's efforts to establish a boring plant. The previous year all his men had left him as they could not bear the monotony of the life. This year his daughters had accompanied him to this distant locality. It is the farthest north any white woman has lived. As we covered this country we kept a keen look out for the boring plant and at length sighted the hut. we had a little lunch with us and as Anthony's lagoon was not far away, I wrote a note to Mac suggesting that he should drop it over. This he did and we saw an aboriginal run over and pick it up. We found afterwards that they were very short of rations and this little addition proved most acceptable. Since writing the above, I have received a letter from Miss Lucy Peacock saying that the packet arrived intact, nothing being broken and they very carefully divided the contents, one lad having a sausage roll most carefully done up in a cardboard box, wedding cake fashion, taking it home as a souvenir.

We neared Anthony's Lagoon and as we came over the top, thousands of water fowl, big pelicans and wild ducks rose from the swamp and scattered in all directions. We landed here, picking out a fairly good spot. It was nearly dark by now, but we could see in landing, one of our tyres had been punctured. This was caused, I think, when leaving the bad ground at Katherine river. There was no one in sight and we had a walk of about half a mile to the hut. ON arrival we were met by two tall young men, who said they were police. We told them who we were and asked them if they could lend us some blankets. They had none, but had an old tent fly which they face us to use for our bed. we borrowed a hurricane lamp and returned to the machine. we fixed up a shelter with the tent fly under the wing of the PD. The two police had asked us to join them at supper, at the same time apologising for the shortage of tea and sugar. So having fixed things up, we went back to the hut. while we

were having the meal, two pet foals came up to the table and joined the company. They seemed quite at home and were accustomed to taking scraps from the plates at every meal.

We slept well that night under the machine and next morning looked about for some petrol. All that these chaps could let us have was one drum. They told us that Burnette Downs was only fifty miles away and that there we could obtain as much as we needed. We took their petrol and then examined our front tyre. I was for filling it with straw, but McIntosh considered it would be better for us to push off. As there was no straw to be had anywhere within reasonable distance, we left with it as it was.

We hoped to be able to repair it at Burnette Downs. I followed a scarcely perceptible cattle track to the station, which was a large place, almost like a small township. we searched in vain for any good landing ground and at length decided to land on the road in front of the main house. I tried to keep her on the good wheel as she touched the ground for there were several trees in the vicinity. As she slowed up the punctured tyre came to the ground and I could not prevent the 'bus from sleeving into a tree. At first, I thought the damage was serious, but luckily only the front spar was broken through.

We were met by Mr Russell, the manager and he offered us the hospitality of the station and every assistance to repair the damage. I immediately set to work, but Mac explained that the chief mechanic of the station would fix up the damage and advised me to take a rest. he was very solicitous for me in this way at all times. I lay down for an hour, then Mac called me to come and have something to eat. After this, we sat in the sun for a while and then went along to see how the mechanic was getting along. He is noted everywhere for his ingenuity and resource, but he had made the big mistake of trying to repair an aeroplane as he would a cart. We soon undid all his work and cut out two strong fish plates of pine from a packing case and

bolted them on to the spar, cut them to shape and then bound them with galvanised wire. Mac then cut out a strip of steel, which he nailed on to the wing, to take the place of the broken ribs. In the meantime the mechanic had repaired the damaged tyre for us.

From Burnette Downs our next objective was Avondown station. We were instructed to follow the tracks. Most of the country along here was plain, suitable for landing in cases of necessity. The instructions and maps from Burnette to Avondown were very vague, especially as the stock routes seem to branch out in all directions. We got as far as Rankin River all right, but after that we seemed to go off the course. We flew round, going to find some signs of habitation, where we could enquire the direction. I suddenly spotted a camel train. I flew over to it and Mac wrote a note asking the driver, who had about fifteen camels in his care, to trace an arrow in the sand, pointing in the direction of Avondowns. He tied this to a flag and dropped it just in front of the man. He apparently did not see it as he rode past it without picking it up. The camels threatened to stampede and Mac, exasperated at the driver's inattention, sang out to me: "Fly over and scare them, Joe. He must be blind."

We then made back to the Rankin River and followed its dry course until we sighted a windmill, but there was no sign of man about. I thought I saw a hut in the distance, made over towards it and found I was not mistaken. A very old man, who appeared thin and small, was standing outside. There happened to be a good piece of ground near, so I landed. Instead of advancing to meet us, he went back into his hut.

As we got out and stopped the engine, Mac asked: "Do you know where you are?"

"No, I don't, but I think this is Rankin's River".

"The old man up there seems to be friendly," Mac added.

So we walked towards his hut, he came to the door and started to jabber in an unknown lingo. He looked like a cross between a Dane and Chinese. Although his hut was very rude, with stone floor and log walls, everything was spotlessly clean. We noticed some fowls outside. He asked us by signs if he would make tea for us and pointed to some eggs. So as we were hungry, we accepted and had a cup of tea, black bread and an egg each. We did not like depriving him of the eggs and would not have accepted them had it not been that he seemed to have plenty.

When we had finished, we took him outside to try and make him understand that we wanted the direction of Avondowns. It reminded me of a similar incident with the Arab in the desert, when we were anxious to find Baghdad. He seemed to understand the word Avondowns and pointed in a certain direction, but when he was asked again, he pointed thirty degrees south of this. He was always within this radius when pointing to it.

We climbed into the 'bus and flew in the direction he indicated, first of all taking the compass bearing of that direction. We followed it along and eventually it brought us to Avondowns. Mr Lloyd, the manager, with Mrs Lloyd and Miss Lloyd, mad us very comfortable. Fortunately our petrol had arrived here. At the previous two stoppages we had had difficulty in obtaining supplies.

We left Avondowns next morning, our destination being Cloncurry, which had a happy sound to me as it was a railway town connected up with Melbourne by line, a link with home.

As we passed over Camoweal, McIntosh dropped a note of greeting. There were some people out in the streets waiting to see the machine pass over. It was a long flight to Cloncurry and we hadn't long left Camoweal when I noticed one of the magnetos had cut out. I saw a wide plain ahead, so went towards it and landed. we fixed up the magneto. As it was early, Mac and I thought we would have the

lunch which Mr Lloyd had kindly prepared for us. It was a beautiful day and we enjoyed the rest. After lunch, the next thing I knew was that Mac was waking me up and telling me it was half-past three and there was a crowd of people waiting for us at Cloncurry. Often since we have laughed over it.

We hastily got the engine going again and left this deserted region. They had wired ahead to Cloncurry from Avondowns just what time we had left. The telegraph stations on the way had followed us on our progress. We made all haste to Cloncurry now and after circling, landed, but not before I had taken a snap at 4,000 feet.

An enthusiastic crowd met us, though many had gone home, tired of waiting. They took us by car to the hotel. A dance had been arranged for that night and we had been placed in a sweep to the extent of about half the tickets. We gave short accounts of some of our adventures and had the experience of again shaking hands with the principal citizens.

We left next morning, our destination being Longreach. This part of the flight from Cloncurry to Longreach was mostly over straight and long plains, which would make good landing grounds. We passed over Winton at an altitude of 4,000 feet and followed different lines of stock tracks, rivers, telegraph lines and roads to the landing of Longreach. Occasionally we passed large herds of cattle with stock drivers.

It was here that Mac and I had our lunch in the air. As usual Mac, to save washing up, threw our receptacles overboard. We met a stock rider in Sydney afterwards who had picked up a small basket he had seen fall from our machine between Winton and Longreach.

I had received a telegram at Cloncurry that my mother was at Longreach awaiting my arrival there. I had also had a telegram asking that I should land, if possible, on my cousin's station there, Gifford Park, so as we approached Longreach. I kept a good look out, but

could not locate it. There were a large number of people at the landing ground and as I flew over the crowd, I looked down, but could not discern anyone I knew, as everybody was waving. we landed safely and were immediately among friends.

i then met my mother after the years of absence and two brothers who were on my cousin's station. We stayed here for three days and during that time we were given a reception by the townspeople and a purse of sovereigns.

We had the choice of two routes now. One, Rockhampton to Brisbane, the other, through Charleville to Brisbane. I preferred to go through Rockhampton on account of the coastal flying.

An incident on the way to Rockhampton where we were to land, caused us a little excitement. We were flying along and each deeply occupied with his own thoughts and interests, when suddenly we were jolted out of our day dreams by the engine suddenly stopping. I looked to everything. We were flying at 3,000 feet and could scarcely believe that anything had gone wrong. We searched hurriedly round for a good landing ground. About two miles away, I saw a dry lagoon bed and as it was the only possible ground, glided towards it and landed safely. Then we discovered that Mac had been waving his flag and had unconsciously switched off the engine from his cabin. We had a good laugh at this and thought that now we were down we would delay a while.

We saw a cavalcade going past of six horses in tandem, drawing a light four-wheeler. With it were four or five horsemen. They were driving a mob of horses ahead of them. Mac went over and asked them where we were and they told us Pine-creek, not far from Emerald. We left and flying high, passed over Emerald, Mt Morgan mine field and came out over Rockhampton, where we came down on the racecourse. which had been specially prepared for our landing. My mother, who was on her way back to Sydney, met us here again

and also a large crowd of the principal citizens, headed by the Mayor, who conducted us to the hotel. He expressed his regret at our not being fit enough to attend a reception that night and mentioned that the leading citizens were presenting us with a testimonial.

Petrol arrangements had not been made here, but we managed to obtain sufficient for our needs. The next landing was to be Brisbane. We left early next morning for Brisbane, passing some beautiful scenery on the way. It happened to be a glorious day without a cloud in the sky. Of course the poor old PD was now feeling the effects of exposure and I was constantly fearing a serious breakage. As we flew down the coast, part of the fabric of one of our top planes collapsed. It was quite rotten. The long days of intense heat followed by wet nights during our six weeks' stay at Moulmein had rotted the fabric.

There was a glorious beach, stretching for miles along this coast. To provide interest and as we were now light-hearted, I flew for a long time just a few feet off the surface of the beach or above the breakers. Happening to look down when just over the water, I saw an enormous fish sunning itself on the surface of the breakers. I pointed quickly down to Mac, from about a hundred feet up. He got out his revolver and as he could not hit it as I circled, I motioned to him to snap it with the camera. I believe it was a sun fish. It appeared to be bigger than a whale. We had only gone some three miles and were flying about a thousand feet, when looking down, I caught sight of the biggest shark I have ever seen, swimming slowly towards the sunfish. At that time we were flying well out from shore. Mac pointed over to the land indicating it was a better place than over the water in these circumstances.

Bundaberg, in Queensland, is a beautiful sight from the air. At the time we passed all the river flats, they were chequered with various shades of green. The town itself looked a model city. We passed Maryborough in the distance and very soon the great landmark, the island of Morton, showed us we were approaching Brisbane. As we



neared this city, we sighted another plane in the air and its pilot pointed down to a certain spot where we should land, but as I had been told of another place, I waited for confirmation, which he supplied by landing. We landed also.

We were welcomed to Brisbane by the Mayor, representatives of the Government and men interested in flying, who had their machines on this ground at Lytton.

We were driven up to Brisbane and received an invitation from State Parliament House to lunch with the members the following day. Every courtesy was extended to us and we were given all facilities and the use of a State car. We met here, Captain Thornton, who had given us such assistance in securing our machine. We all had dinner together that night and talked over the times we had had in London and Glasgow before leaving and of all that had happened since.

On our way down from Rockhampton, we had landed at Nambour, as Thornton had wired us at Port Darwin that he was staying there. The residents presented each of us with a cigarette case and we left in three hours, as we found Thornton was not there, having gone to Brisbane.

We managed to make a small return to him by throwing out over Nambour some leaflets about his business. We also took some letters from Brisbane and dropped them at Brunswick heads for his friend's there.

Next morning, Mac and I drove to the principal business places and secured clean clothes. We also developed some films and bought a fresh and bought a fresh stock for the next journey. We then went to Parliament House and during lunch we learnt that the State Parliament had decided to make us a grant of £100 in recognition of our flight.

After lunch, we returned to the machine and examined the wing fabric, which had collapsed on the way, helped to its end by the pencils of those who had written their names on it, as owing to its worn state, some had pierced right through. There was no dope, so we used varnish to secure the fresh fabric, but as the whole top plane was rotten by exposure, I did not think this would last very long. Also the three-ply fuselage and the upholstery and wood work were so badly perished in parts that I feared at any moment during the flight the fuselage might collapse.

We did her up as well as we could and left the following morning for Sydney, once again saying au revoir to my people.

## Chapter III: Fetes, feasts and the fatal crash

We set off in high spirits, for we felt we were at last nearing our goal and that it was really in sight after all our set-backs.

It was a beautiful day, but there was a strong head wind blowing and I feared that our petrol supply would not carry us as far as Sydney. We had been flying about two hours, when the repairs we had made to the top plane suddenly collapsed again. I looked behind and saw a beach. As the tear was extending all along the plane, I shut off the engine and glided down to it as slowly as possible and landed safely.

We made another repair with the varnish and fabric we were carrying and left again after an hour's delay, having meanwhile given a horseman a telegram to send to Sydney.

We got into the air all right, but the wind had become stronger. When just over Newcastle, I calculated it would be better to land, because our petrol supply was just about run out. We circled over the town and in the vicinity, but could not find any place suitable for landing. All the beaches had rides on them. There was only one place where the ground looked hard and this was the beach of Walsh Island. Everywhere else it appeared boggy. We circled about three times, examining the ground carefully and then landed.

Just as we were coming to rest, the left wheel ran through some soft sand and try as I would, I could not prevent her from turning into the water. She ran into the soft mud and into the water, about three feet deep.

We jumped out and our first concern was whether the tide was coming in or going out. We saw it was coming in fast, so we got a move on in the hope of finding assistance or planks that would assist us in pulling the machine in. We both went over the big ship building yards, but everybody had gone, as it was past six o'clock. After a lot of searching, we found the caretaker and explained the whole matter. He said he would send down some men straight away.

Then we hurried off to find some boards which we could put under the wheels. We found a couple of very long boards, about twelve inches wide and when we dragged them to the beach we were pleased to see some helpers had turned up.

We took off our coats and boots and in a short time there were eight or nine men helping us to pull the machine out. It took up about an hour and a half, as she had sunk very deeply, but she was none the worse for her slight immersion.

By now a small crowd had collected. The news had spread that Parer and McIntosh had landed on Walsh Island. The mechanics amongst them were greatly interested in the two motor radiators which we had substituted at Moulmein for our single one. The general crowd seemed greatly interested in the dilapidated condition of the whole machine.

The manager in charge of the shipbuilding yards, then took us to his house, the only one on the island. He and his wife made us very comfortable and welcome. We each had a hot bath and appreciated the warmth of a large radiator while dinner was being prepared.

In the meantime our host was being considerably worried by innumerable reporters who had come out to Walsh Island to interview us. He told them all we were in bed and could not see them that night. The reporters were not inclined to leave and to convince them, the manager told us that he would persuade them that we were really in bed. Accordingly he went to the telephone and as they could hear every word he was saying he carried on an imaginary conversation with a reporter in the city and one remark was, "Oh, you can't, they are both asleep."

Mac who had forgotten the reporters were outside, gave the show away by saying, "Oh, that's a beauty. You won't go to heaven."

The pressmen, hearing his voice, stood upon no ceremony, but simply opened the door and walked in.

Then we had to take each one in turn and talk to them, as we were having our dinner. That night we slept well in comfortable beds, which we had learned to appreciate thoroughly. The manager had telephoned to Sydney, the Hawkesbury river and the aerodrome at three o'clock next day, which was Sunday. He was then good enough to fill our machine with petrol and gave us every assistance on leaving.

It was a beautiful flight from Newcastle to Sydney. The Hawkesbury river and the many little coves and harbours fringed with fine white beaches and pretty houses making a charming picture from the air. At this stage, we noticed three machines in the air and concluded they were an escort that had come out to meet us. We crossed over Manly, noticing many people on the beach, numbers of them waving to us and made direct for Sydney.

The escorting machines had not sighted us in time, or had mistaken us for one of their own and were rather late in arriving back. We reached Mascot about five minutes after schedule time and at once caught sight of the enormous crowd awaiting us. There were lines and lines of cars and vehicles of all descriptions. I turned to Mac and pointed down, feeling a little nervous the coming ordeal of public reception. We circled once to view the ground and landed on a very good aerodrome.

I had to dodge photographers as the machine was coming to a stand. They seemed to be all over the place and I was afraid of running them down. They reminded me of the ant hills on the Katharine; they were dotted everywhere. As the machine stopped they closed in on us and we were snapped in every conceivable position, from the moment we started getting out until we were safe away. We barely

had time to breathe before we felt their persuasive hands and heard, "One moment longer, please."

I looked over at the crowd and saw a little boy break through the cordon of police, followed immediately by another, then came dozens. This was the signal for the whole crowd to break through. The police were pushed aside and were carried on by the human wave. I stared in awe at the approaching avalanche of humanity, with my mouth wide open, I am sure. Mac smiled at the general rush. He was more in his element. The winner of the race, as far as I was concerned, happened to be my brother, Vincent, who was first to greet me. He put a sheltering arm around Mac and myself, but it was of no avail.

The crowd rushed in on us and the machine. I did not mind what they did to us, but Mac and I had our eyes on the old 'bus, which we feared they would damage. In two minutes we were both hoisted up on the shoulders of a cheering crowd and carried towards a large marquee that had been erected for the reception by the Mayor of Mascot. Tables were laid for some hundreds.

When at last we reached the sanctuary of the marquee, after a somewhat adventurous and bumpy journey and touched earth once more, I asked, "How did you get on Mac?"

"All right, except for my shoe laces, which have vanished and a few buttons and badges which have gone."

"I have been luckier," I was assuring him.

When he said, "Hello! What's wrong with the tail of your coat?"

Everybody was greatly amused to see that some ambitious souvenir hunter had cut off a flap of the tail, a perfectly good tunic being ruined. I happened to be carrying various articles, including a railway map, which I had been flying by and a handkerchief, which were

souvenir, but fortunately, I had no cap or that would have gone with the rest.

I must have looked rather a picture when landing, for I arrived with my head wrapped in a scarf, as I had lost the flying cap I started with from Darwin. I had sent ahead, asking my brother to secure me a cap and he had rushed round Sydney trying to buy one, without success. Finally, in desperation, he explained at Farmer's that it was for Lt Parer and they offered to make one especially. The girls kindly worked overtime to finish it and it was there to meet me with a nice note inside from those who had worked upon it.

In the marquee, the Mayor, Sir Ross Smith and Sir Keith Smith, Captain Nigel Love, the Governor's ADC and various public men were introduced to us. I also met here many of my relations, including my father who had come to welcome us.

After a few speeches, the Mayor of Mascot presented us with an illuminated address, which was beautifully done on parchment, bound with leather. As soon as we could, we found our car and were driven to the Hotel Australia, where we were the guests of the State while in Sydney. At Singapore, Port Darwin and Brisbane I had received telegrams from my old college St Stanislaus, at Bathurst, asking me if I would land there. I had to advise the principal definitely one way or another and was pleased to find we would be able to comply with the request.

Daily, during our stay in Sydney, we were entertained lavishly by several prominent people and many societies, among the latter being the Millions Club, St Stanislaus' Old Boys Association and the Aero Club. Mac, who was the only one at the Aero dinner who had not his wings, probably felt a little bit out of it.

Mac opened his speech, which was a huge success, with the statement: "I know I am not a flying man, but I am going to be. I know nothing of flying and less of navigation."

Then, feeling he had put himself right with the members, he launched in a humorous fashion about our trip and had his listeners shouting with laughter.

The Governor, Sir William Davidson, invited us to dine with him, Dame Margaret Davidson, the Premier and Miss Cameron also being present.

The mail each morning brought us a great number of letters, telegrams (which were mostly congratulatory upon the success of our trip), and autograph books from all parts of the States. We experienced here, for the first time, at the Aero Club dinner, some of the trouble met with by Sir Ross Smith in the autographing of menus. After every dinner, there would be a pile of cards, about a foot high, more or less, to be signed.

I noticed when approaching Sydney on the last flight, that one of our magnetos had been going trouble, so I took off the make and break and took it to a magneto expert to have it cleaned and adjusted. On the day we left, it was fixed on to the machine.

Captain Jones had flown up from Melbourne and Port Augusta with eh Prince's mails and he was now in Sydney waiting to return. He had received a wire from the Defence Department, Melbourne, giving him permission to escort us to Melbourne. We had decided to visit Bathurst and he was to fly with us and attend the dinner which was to be given us at the college. All preparations had been made there for a great welcome.

We left Sydney, Captain Jones in his much more powerful machine getting well ahead of us and flying very high. We noticed, also another machine that had come along with us. It was to carry a cinematograph photographer who was to film us as we were passing over Bathurst.



We had only gone as far as Richmond when the magnetos completely cut out. I landed on the aerodrome that happened to be there. Captain Jones and the pilot of the other machine, seeing us land, came down also. We soon fixed up the magneto with the help of a spare make and break belonging to the Defence Department and our selves and the other plane left the ground. Captain Jones did not follow us as his engine was running very badly.

We crossed over the Blue Mountains at Katoomba, Mt Victoria and Lithgow noting glorious views of deep chasms and sheer cliffs rising to hundreds of feet. It was in this locality that the cinema man began snapping us. We came over the Bathurst plains and towards Kelso. During my school days, at the big college on the hill, I had often gazed out and visioned a machine flying over these parts. Consequently I was looking forward with great keenness to seeing these familiar grounds from the air. We came over Bathurst at 2,000 feet, the engine running badly. I picked out the old college and saw it was gaily decked with flags and streamers, also that flags were flying on the principal buildings of the town.

We searched for quite fifteen minutes for the landing place and at length discovered a small ground with a crowd at one end. They evidently expected us to land here. A small machine came up to meet us. He circled and landed on this ground as an indication we were to do the same. I came down very slowly and narrowly averted smashing into the fence at the end.

The college boys were there in force and handled Mac and I severely in their enthusiasm to shoulder us. We found our way to the cars and were driven to the Town Hall, where many were waiting to receive us. The Mayor made a speech, to which we responded. We were then driven to the college and we came up the drive to the music of the school songs, sung by boys waiting at the entrance to the hall. As we left the car we became the target for a battery of amateur photographers. We were led to the dining hall, where the Mayor of

Bathurst and all the prominent citizens and college teachers, most of whom I had known when at school, were assembled for dinner.

Later we went into the quad and large hall, where pictures were to be shown, a number of them dealing with our flight from England. These picture slides had been made by the boys from photographs that had been published in the papers and from sketches. They showed the route we had taken from England, having it marked with all the varying phases of our good and bad luck in the different countries. They finished up with full-sized photographs of Mac and myself. When this was over, a presentation was made to us of two college crests worked in gold and silver.

Then the head prefect came along. I had been expecting him for some time. He whispered something in my ear, when Fr Low, the principal, caught sight of him. He looked over to me and winked, holding up one finger. He guessed that the boys had sent a deputy along to me, to ask that I should try and secure a week's holiday. Father Low was well versed in the ways of boys, hence his masonic sign that he could only grant one day. Anyway, Mac and I asked for three and after a great deal of argument and compromise, we got them two.

We crawled into bed that night thoroughly done up as a result of the constant entertaining and rushing in Sydney. The last few weeks had begun to have its effects.

As Mac said to me that night: "All these dinners and speechyfyings are worse for the nerves than any other hardships we have gone through."

Our undoing and cause of our final crash was due to the fact that we slept until eleven o'clock next morning. As soon as I was aroused, I jumped out of bed and hurried down to the machine and filled her up. All the boys, Mac and the teachers, came down about one o'clock. We left the ground as soon as we had the engine run up. I

was apprehensive that we might not be able to rise above the fence and the big line of trees at the end of the field. We just cleared them.

Captain Jones had got his machine going and while I was working on my machine that morning, he passed over and dropped a note saying he was going on to Cootamundra, as this ground was too small. We decided to meet him there. We turned along the line and followed it toward Cootamundra, the engine running much worse than it was, even the previous day. I feared we might have to come down at any moment.

The rigging was in a shocking condition. I pointed out to Mac that the steel fitting that holds the wing to the main fuselage of the machine was moving up and down independently of the rest of the machine. This was on the right wing, the wing that had always received the shocks of any smash we had had. We got as far as Cootamundra, flying high and we looked about for Captain Jones, but as we could not see him or his 'bus at the moment, we decided to try and reach Albury, where we knew where the landing ground was situated.

As we progressed over Wagga, races were in progress. I met a bookmaker afterwards who happened to have been there and he told me that our machine had done him and his friends a good turn. The principal race was being run at the moment and an old stager named "Wallmark", of about eighteen years, who had been racing all his life, was in his usual position, well to the rear and carrying about the usual odds of thirty to one. Just as our machine passed over, the old fellow was so startled that he was suddenly galvanised into fresh life. With a flash of restored youth, he spurred up the straight, passed every horse and finished lengths in front. The jockey had great trouble to persuade him to stop even after the race was won.

It was now getting dusk and the engine had started to miss-fire. I passed a note round to Mac and pointed to the sun, asking him whether we could reach Albury before dark. He pointed up to the

moon, which was full and straight above us, so I decided, if we could not land at Albury in sunlight, we would land in the moonlight.

The only trouble now was the engine. To make matters worse, another magneto cut out just before we reached Culcarirn. I had to decide quickly, so picking what looked like good earth.

She ran along, but as soon as she touched, I knew that the ground was too soft. It was too late then to open up the engine again. The wheels sank about six inches and she turned completely over. Petrol poured down on us out of the tanks, so the first thing I thought of was fire. I dropped out on to my head as quickly as possible and turned round to see if Mac was all right. He was in his seat, helpless, feet up, head down, the safety belt preventing him from dropping out. I loosened the safety catch, when he and bottles, cushions, ropes and all the impedimenta which gathers in the bottom of a machine, fell out into the mud.

We looked at the 'bus and at the first glance, saw it was hopeless. Although by now we ought to have been accustomed to disappointment, this last failure, at the eleventh hour, seemed the worst of any to face. But we did not utterly despair, because on other occasions what had at first seemed hopeless we had afterwards repaired. A car pulled up. Its driver had seen us from the road.

I said to Mac: "What shall we do?"

He advised, "Take the wings off her and taxi her down to Melbourne along the road."

We could have done this, but our propellor was broken. We got together our few belongings and made our way over to the car, as the owner had offered to drive us to Culcairn.

The fields in this vicinity were very treacherous and on the drive I could see that there was only one, that which was opposite the one

we had chosen, on which we could have landed in safety. When we arrived at Culcairn Hotel, we rang up the different papers and I, my relatives, to explain everything. It was a coincidence that Ross Smith also had to land at Culcairn through engine trouble and there have been several others since. We had heard that Captain Jones had passed over in his machine. He had seen us fly over Cootamundra and had immediately taken to the air and followed. As we sat in from of the fire, after dinner, we tried to take matters a philosophical spirit, but we went to bed with a felling of great heaviness in our hearts. We had crashed on account of such a small detail.

Next morning, Captain Jones rang up, asking where we were and what had happened. He suggested that Major Anderson had an aeroplane at Cootamundra and that I should obtain permission of the Defence Department to fly it to Melbourne in place of our own. We had heard of all the preparation at Flemington and did not wish to disappoint the people. Consequently we rang up Colonel Williams and he told us that Major Anderson would fly the machine to Culcairn and that we could get in there and fly to Melbourne. We communicated at once with Major Anderson and asked him to fly his machine over to Gerogery, where Captain Jones' machine had landed. Mr Rees, a relative who lives at Albury, had driven over in his car. We explained our plans to him and he suggested it would be very much better if our machine were down at Flemington also when we arrived.

We agreed to this, so while I went to Gerogery to see about the other machine, he and Mac and some mechanics from Albury who had kindly arrived to help, took the machine to pieces, strapped it behind a car and through the kind help of many of the residents, got it into Albury that night by about 2am. The Railway Commissioners had decided to despatch the machine to Melbourne on a truck by fast passenger train. Many willing hands soon transferred it from behind the car and safely strapped it down to the railway truck.

In the meantime, Mac and I had gone out to Gerogery to wait for the arrival of Major Anderson. He was soon visible, flying at a great speed in the Defence Department PEHGH, but in landing, struck a soft patch and went over on his nose, smashing the propellor and damaging his radiator. We were very sorry for his mishap and wired Colonel Williams at Headquarters for permission to fly Captain Jones' machine. This was granted. Mac and I, in the presence of many friends and some relatives from Albury, left the ground behind. The GH, instead of travelling at seventy miles an hour, like our old machine, covering one hundred and twenty miles.

We left with feelings of gratitude for those people at Culcairn who had so willingly given us every assistance and who, besides paying the cost of the transference of the machine to Albury, later also presented us each with a beautiful illuminated address.

With a strong wind behind us, we made great speed to Melbourne. The plans were that we should land at Point Cook aerodrome without the public hearing of it and that next morning we should fly over to Flemington and make the official landing.

As I had often visioned in my mind and wondered whether it would ever come true, my first sight of Melbourne on my return was from the air. Although I was greatly excited, I could not help feeling depressed that it was not with our old PD beneath us. I had often spoken to Mac about Melbourne in terms of admiration and now turned round to him and pointed down to the city.

No city that we had seen looked better from the air, on account of the regular formation of the streets and the Yarra running through the city, into Hobson's Bay. It is really beautiful and impressive from above.

Thence to Point Cook, the place where I had first handled a full-sized aeroplane. There also, I had first flown alone and secured my Flying certificate in the old Graham Whyte kites, before leaving Australia. I

could not help comparing the machine I was now flying with those old things, which travelled about fifty to sixty miles an hour.

We landed at Point Cook and were met by the officers of the flying school. They advised us to stay there for the night. We had resolved to do this for fear that either of us be recognised in the city, but a telephone message had come from Melbourne saying that a car was on its way out to Point Cook for us. I decided to go into Melbourne in order to see to the arrangement for the transfer of the old machine to Flemington, particularly as Colonel Williams had asked me to examine the landing ground there, which he thought might be a little small for the large military machine. Mac preferred to stay at the school. I drove up to town that night, intending to return the following day in time to fly the machine to Flemington for the official landing.

I was well wrapped up in a civilian coat and as I drove up through Footscray into the city, Melbourne looked very good to me after the variety of other cities I had recently been through. I drove out to my home first and whilst there a man came to the door and said he wanted to see Mr Parer. He was asked which Mr Parer and he answered "Lieutenant Parer." He would not give his name or state his business, so he had to be told that I was not in, but he did not leave the locality.

The newspapers had been expressly asked to refrain from mentioning that we had arrived in Melbourne that night. All the papers knew of it and each one coveted the special news, yet only one published it, which was not fair to the others, to say the least. Next morning, I was greatly surprised to see a long account of our tip to Melbourne the day before. This had the effect of reducing the gate money at Flemington by an enormous amount, so that it just paid the expense of the reception committee with none to spare.

That morning there were intermittent showers and bad weather generally. I drove to the railway siding at Spencer Street and saw “the old ‘bus” sticking up on a truck. She looked a pathetic sight.

There was a small knot of railway men collected around it in the drizzling rain. I felt as a man must feel when he has kicked a faithful dog. I went over the machine and saw just what had happened to her since she had been sent down. The undercarriage had been cut by knives, all the securing nuts of the magneto and the high-tension wires had been screwed off and a lot of the fabric had been cut. When I protested, I was told by an officer that as soon as the machine began to be “souvenired”, a guard had been placed over it, but since then more damage had been done, probably by the guards themselves. I turned away from it feeling thoroughly fed up. They promised to have it down at Flemington and rigged in time for our landing. I was greatly surprised by and much appreciated the hearty cheer from the men standing round as I walked away. My feelings almost overwhelmed me.

From there I drove to Flemington with Colonel Williams and examined the ground and went down to Point Cook, ready to leave at the right time. Three machines were to escort us to Flemington and it was advertised there was going to be a general aerial display of all different types of machines in the air. Captain Stutt was flying a German Fokker biplane: there was also SE5 Bristol Scout, Maurice Farman and DH9. Our machine was to be distinguished from the others by three long white streamers.

We reached Flemington on time. We could see from the air that the crowds was very much smaller than what it had been in Sydney. We were met on the course by Colonel Williams, Captain Nelson, Mr Clayton, representing the Soldier’s Fathers’ Association and officials of the RSSLA. They led us to the platform, where Mr Hughes and Mr Donald MacKinnon were standing. Here, Mr Hughes, Mr MacKinnon



and ourselves made speeches. We were then taken to the hall, where our health was drunk to musical honour.

Mac and I shook hands with many people and some ladies honoured us with kisses. One of Mac's asides to me was: "how do you feel? I could stand this all day."

I was still looking into the sparkling wine and wondering how many more would be safe, when my arm was touched and I was told that Mac and Mr Hughes had gone down to the old PD and that I was wanted there.

When I arrived, Mac had extracted our precious bottle of whisky from the safe resting place, the hole we had screwed it into at Hounslow. We had not even looked at it since. It had survived so many perils and disasters and now for the first time it was screwed out. It was the greatest curiosity that I myself once more looked on their bottle.

It was in Mr Hughes' hands when I saw it, all stained and bearing marks of its journey and I felt I would like to have examined it thoroughly for myself, to see if the bottle was scored or marked in any way, or if only the label had suffered.

After this we were driven in Captain Nelson's car to Menzie's Hotel, where rooms had been booked by the "Herald". We had one big room between us and if the arrival in Melbourne had been with the old 'bus, we could have enjoyed the entertainments the following weeks thoroughly.

## Chapter IV: Conclusion

It was a continuous round of entertainment, public and private. The members of the Ministry entertained us and Mr Hughes presented us, on behalf of the Government, with a cheque for £1,000. Mac made a great hit with his jocular speeches everywhere. A big citizens' welcome and a dinner by the British Empire League where among the chief welcomes. Also we received many gifts, a notable one being gold sleeve links to each of us from Mrs Watson, the mother of the late Basil Watson, a flying man. They represent England and Australia linked together and are replicas of those she gave to Sir Ross Smith and Sir Keith Smith. My old college, Xavier's gave us a big welcome at which the boys sang verses specially written in our honour and set to the music of the school songs.

There was much discussion as to what was to be done with the poor battered PD. Mr Dawson had placed the machine entirely at our disposal. If we accomplished the journey, to sell or place in a museum as we liked. We had often talked over the matter and on one occasion, on our way out, Mac said he would take £500 for his share or by my share for the same.

When all the festivities in Melbourne were over, he was anxious to leave for Perth and wanted to have a settling of all affairs. We had been approached by many syndicates, firms and individuals who wished to acquire the machine and send it around Australia for exhibition purposes. Also the Museum authorities were considering whether they would buy it.

At this stage Mac, who could not wait in Melbourne any longer, came to me about buying his share. We were both anxious to acquire it and it looked as if it would be a very good speculation, as there were many suggestions for making capital out of it. He had previously refused to sell me his share for the £500 and I had put what money I had into another investment. Mac, now offered his

share to me for this and I wished to buy it, but found later I could not have the money available in the time he could allow. He therefore agreed to buy my share for the same price. He gave it to a civilian firm to put into order for flying and it is still lying at Glenroy aerodrome restored and ready for use.

Mac left for Western Australia and I heard later he had purchased Major Brearly's two Avro aeroplanes and all accessories. It was while flying one of these machines that the crash occurred which caused his death and that of one of his passengers. It is thought he got into a spin and was not able to recover. This occurred on Easter Monday, 1921. It had always been my intention to send the MSS of this book to Mac to go over before it was published, to see if there was anything he would like added, or anything he would wish cut out, but it was not ready in time.

Much of this book was written before his death. I thought it better to continue to speak of him in the latter part in the way I had started. It made it easier to tell the various adventures and his part in them, than it would be had I spoken of him in the past tense. His death came as a great blow. It took me some time to realise he had gone and it is only since his death that I have fully realised what a fine chap he was. I never expect to find so intimate a friend again as I had in Mac during this trip.

These were the last three chapters of the  
full version of Parer's story of the flight.

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