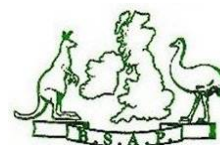


The Bulletin



The British Society of Australian Philately

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2392. C J MELROSE – A SHORT LIFE BUT A MEMORABLE AVIATION HISTORY by John Sims (757).

C J (Jimmy) Melrose was one of several Australian pioneer aviators in the early 1930s, but he was different, if not unique, in several aspects. He was too young to have served in the First World War (he was only 5 years old when the war ended in 1918), he was never short of money, and he died at the age of 22 in 1936. He held several flying records in his short life, and these are described in his biography at Reference A. Jimmy Melrose was never particularly interested in the carriage of mail, and the number of flights on which he carried mail and the total number of covers he carried is small. By my reckoning, he is recorded as carrying mail on only 6 of his flights, and carried a grand total of approximately only 125 covers during his two years of professional flying. The purpose of this short article is to summarise briefly Melrose's achievements, and take a closer look at some of the covers he carried at E404 and E405 in Reference B.



Melrose standing by his DH Puss Moth VH-UQO "My Hildegard".

Melrose left Adelaide on 16 Sep 34 in his single engined Puss Moth VH-UQO en route to England to compete in the 1934 Air Race from England to Australia in October. Reference A records that he left Adelaide with a small bag of unofficial mail, and flew non stop to Alice, 900 miles away, where he stopped the night. On the way he would have over flown Oodnadatta where it is said that he dropped by parachute a bag containing the 4 letters for Oodnadatta (E402). When he arrived at Alice, he would have

delivered the 6 letters shown at E403. So far so good, but on 17 Sep he left Alice at dawn, overflew Newcastle Waters, and landed at Katherine at 2pm. He took off again at 4.30 pm and arrived in Darwin at 6.15pm. This sounds about right, 190 miles in 1 hr 45mins. How then were the 4 covers delivered to Newcastle Waters on 17 Sep (E404) unless they too were dropped by parachute as he overflew that outpost? Newcastle Waters is approximately 230 miles from Katherine, a total of 420 miles from Darwin. Melrose rested in Darwin for 2 days and left at dawn on 20 Sep for Koepang. He may have carried 2 or 3 letters for delivery in India and London, where he arrived unheralded at 7am on 28 Sep. He broke Rubin and Waller's previous record flight time to England, but only unofficially as his flight was, apparently, not properly timed and recorded.

The cover illustrated is one of 6 flown from Adelaide to Darwin, where he arrived at 6.15pm on 17 Sep. The postmark, Darwin 18 Sep is, in fact, an arrival mark. This quite scarce, registered cover, signed by Melrose, has everything you could wish for; and is not, at first sight, entirely what it seems. The typed caption records that it was carried from Adelaide to Darwin, but the cover is addressed to Alberton in South Australia, and the addressee was Nelson Eustis, who was later to become the editor of Reference B, first published in 1937. The typewriter used appears to be the same one used by Mr Eustis on many other of his covers, so there is little doubt that the cover was prepared by Eustis and flown by Melrose from Adelaide. Postage was underpaid

I can not explain the reason for the *Too Late* handstamp, and I would welcome any suggestions for an explanation. On the reverse are 4 more handstamps, the first being Darwin 24 Sep which is probably the date of despatch. The cover was then carried, most likely by air for much of the way, and on a variety of aircraft and trains, to Brisbane 1 Oct, Sydney 2 Oct, Port Adelaide 4 Oct, and finally Alberton (a suburb of Adelaide) also on 4 Oct where the 6d postage due was paid, perhaps by Nelson Eustis himself!

Jimmy Melrose crammed a lot of flying into his short life. Having left school at 18, he qualified as a pilot aged 19 in 1933. He flew round Australia from 7-12 Aug 34; carrying 39 covers, and according to his biographer beat Harry Broadbent's previous record by 45 hours, E396-397a refer. (Broadbent's flight is not listed in the catalogue, possibly because he was not recorded as carrying any mail?). One month later he flew solo, in the same aircraft, from Adelaide to England, as already described, leaving Adelaide with approximately 22 covers. He had intended to carry a male friend as a passenger and companion, but this was disallowed probably because he did not have a commercial "B" licence. (He did not qualify for this until 31 Dec 35). He was one of only 20 entrants to complete the air race, and finished 2nd in the handicap section. He carried 42 covers, recorded at E436- 436a & b. He was the youngest competitor, the only one to fly the race solo, and the only Australian to finish. He returned to England by sea, and after more flying, including an entry in the King's Cup Air Race, he set off in Nov 1935 in a new aircraft – a single engined Percival Gull - in an attempt to beat the England to Australia record flight time. On this flight he carried 12 covers, listed at E564. He abandoned his attempt at the record in Singapore when he volunteered to help in the unsuccessful search for the missing Kingsford Smith whose aircraft had disappeared off the Burmese coast in the Andaman Sea. After his return to Australia, and on a flight from Melbourne to Sydney in fog and rain, he made a forced landing near Goulburn and hit a tree stump. The aircraft was wrecked but he escaped with injuries less than serious. In Jan 1936 he sailed again to England, this time to collect his third new aircraft, a single engined Heston Phoenix with seating for 5 passengers. This he flew back to Australia, arriving in Adelaide on 26 Apr. He is believed to have carried only 2 covers, listed at E597.

Melrose then completed the first of several goodwill flights to the Eastern States as part of the South Australia Centenary celebrations, flying from Adelaide to Sydney on 29 Apr. This was the flight on which he carried his last mail, comprising 6 covers, listed at E601- 602. He then began a one- man air taxi service to "anywhere in Australia at 1/- per mile". It was on one of these flights, near Melbourne on 5 Jul 1936, that his aircraft was seen to break up in mid air and crash, killing Melrose and his passenger. Charles James Melrose was, by all accounts, a very modest and charming young man. He had considerable success and fame in his short life, and there is little doubt that he would have achieved so much more had he not met such an untimely death.

References:

- A. The Jimmy Melrose Story by Eric Gunton. 1990. ISBN 0 646 00274 0
- B. The Australian Air Mail Catalogue, edited by Nelson Eustis and Tom Frommer. Eighth edition 2008. ISBN 978 0 9804791 0 2

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Secretary's Open Letter

Now it is all over and we can get on with normal life – not the World Cup, but London 2010. After taking a deep breath and doing my best to catch up with all sorts of backlogged items, the reality is back to life that is never normal, usually interesting, sometimes fun, and usually busy.

The first priority was to settle on a location for the 2011 Convention, aided in this case by the wisdom of Queens Moat Houses who have now appointed a new Central Marketing Manager. She has been very helpful, and we have settled on the Reading Moat House, who have offered what is an excellent deal. The location is not central to Reading, but there is good access from motorways and trains. There is also easy access to the local station and the Reading Park and Ride, for those who wish to go in to Reading to The Oracle Centre and/or John Lewis. We are hoping for a good turnout as there is no competing Bank Holiday weekend.

Now that London 2010 is over we can turn our sights to the (not so distant) prospect of Autumn Stampex 2012, and for those of us thinking of going, to The Melbourne Show in 2013 to celebrate the centenary of the Kangaroo and map issue. Those who are actual or potential exhibitors should be thinking of getting their exhibits ready so that they can be tried, tested and improved in good time to qualify for both 2012 and 2013.

Earlier than that, all members (well, definitely those who are fairly local) are encouraged by Colin Mount to make the effort to attend Hampex on 16th October at Wickham. We are asked to bring along one-frame or two-frame displays so that we can make a bit of an event of it. Besides, we need to give Colin something to write up! It is a good event, so make the effort and be there.

The summer lull will soon be over and we shall be back with London meetings, Stampex, Philatex and before you know it will be Christmas! Enjoy!

PGER 14/7/10

AUSTRALIAN PHILATELY IN PRINT #4, 2010.

A list of articles found in Journals & Bulletins held by the Librarian (Periodicals).

THE AUSTRALIAN AEROPHILATELIST, No.96, January-March 2010.

Editorial – Why is it so?

Letter from Ken Sanford USA – Crash cover from QANTAS crash at Mauritius in 1960 went for \$A406.98 on ebay.

Letter from Ted Thomasson. – Cachet on 1938 cover from Melbourne to England “ALL LETTERS

FROM E&S AFRICA, EGYPT, / PALESTINE, INDIA, BURMA, MALAYA, / HONG KONG, AUSTRALIA, N. ZEALAND / NOW GO BY AIR // 1 ½^D / FOR EACH / HALF / OUNCE.

Letter from John D Steward re newspaper article “Flying dynamo lies in obscurity” by Adrian Ballantyne (ie. Pioneer Aviator Gertrude Josephine McKenzie 1904-1960)

100th anniversary First Australian Powered Aeroplane Flight 1910 -2010, by Chris R Lloyd.

Centenary of powered flight special Australia Post flight postcard, by John Bodnar.

Antarctica Flight 2010, by Chris R Lloyd.

A 1931 airmail cover takes a week to go the 550km from Pinnaroo to Kyancutta, by Ted Thomasson.

Major-General Geoffrey Salmond – A Man of Vision, by Ed Wolf.

Aviation Related Humour, by John Bodnar.

A nice cover, just a pity it’s the wrong plane, by Ted Thomasson.

London police autogyro on Portland postcard, by Ted Thomasson.

Book Review: “The Airmails of East Africa to 1952, by William Colley”

THE COURIER, No.49, June 2010

A New Look for the Courier.

One-Frame Exhibition Hobart, November 2010.

Blue Tier Junction – an update, by Malcolm Groom.

Tasmania rare inland packet 1870s, by Randall Askeland.

“Newtown” manuscript cancel on a 4d Courier – a recent discovery, by Ross Ewington.

Tasmanian Second Allocation Numerals and Obliterators – a study, Pt.1, by John Hardinge.

Not Known by Postman, Launceston, Tas., by Colin Salt.

The Halfpenny on One Penny surcharge of 1889, by Neil M Russell FRPSL FBSAP.

From the Archives.

TPS Bulletin Board.

The Chief Office Date Stamp and the Tasmanian Money Order System, by Peter Allan.

GIBBONS STAMP MONTHLY, June 2010 and July 2010.

No Australian content.

THE QUEENSLAND STAMP COLLECTOR, Vol.27, No.1, Issue 105, February-April 2010

Editorial, QPC News, APF News, Club Scene, Dairy Dates and On the Calendar.

Talk Queensland (The Countess of Blue Mountain), by Col McNee.

50 years ago, by Jeff Gunston.

Registered Post, by Joan Orr.

THE QUEENSLAND STAMP COLLECTOR, Vol.27, No.2, Issue 106, May-July 2010

Editorial, QPC News, APF News, Club Scene, Dairy Dates and On the Calendar.

Talk Queensland, by Col McNee.

50 years ago, by Jeff Gunston.

Canberra Stampshow 2010.

Registered Post, by Joan Orr.

Australia Post Regulations: G8.3.7 – Philatelic postmarking

Stamp identifier.

STAMP MAGAZINE, February 2010.

Commonwealth Classics – New South Wales’ “Sydney Views” of 1850, by John Winchester.

STAMP MAGAZINE, March 2010.

Coconut Plantation, Christmas Island, Charles & Francis Kiddle