

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT IVOR EWING MCINTYRE CBE AFC



Ivor McIntyre, 1920s
National Library of Australia. E.A. Crome
Collection

Ivor McIntyre was a Scot, but he was born in England at Herne Bay, Kent, on 6 October 1899.

He joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1917 and saw action as a Flight Sub-Lieutenant. He then transferred to the Royal Air Force after its creation as an independent service through the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service in April 1918.

He was awarded an Air Force Cross as a Lieutenant in 1919, and granted a Short Service commission in the RAF on 12 December 1919 as a Flying Officer.

By 1924 he had joined the Royal Australian Air Force and was the first man, with Wing Commander Stanley (Jimmy) Goble to circumnavigate Australia by air. This is acknowledged as one of the most important flights in Australian aviation

history.

They left Point Cook on 6 April 1924 in a single-engined Fairey IID seaplane and flew 13,600 kilometres in 44 days on an anti-clockwise route via Sydney, Southport, Townsville, Thursday Island, across the Gulf of Carpentaria to Darwin, Broome, Carnarvon, Perth, Albany, and Port Lincoln and back to Victoria, landing at St Kilda Beach.

They had had many problems enroute including illness, engine trouble, fuel leaks and tropical storms, but were feted on arrival at St Kilda Beach by a crowd of 10,000 people and the acclaim of the nation. Prime Minister Stanley Bruce called the flight "one of the most wonderful accomplishments in the history of aviation" and his Government awarded Goble £500 and McIntyre £250. They were awarded the Britannia Trophy by the British Royal Aero Club and both were appointed Companions of the Order of the British Empire in the King's Birthday Honours. McIntyre was awarded the 1924 Oswald Watt medal for the flight.



Flight Lieutenant Ivor McIntyre, Flt Sgt Les Trist & Group Captain Richard Williams
during Pacific Islands flight 1926 in DH50A A8-1
[Public domain]

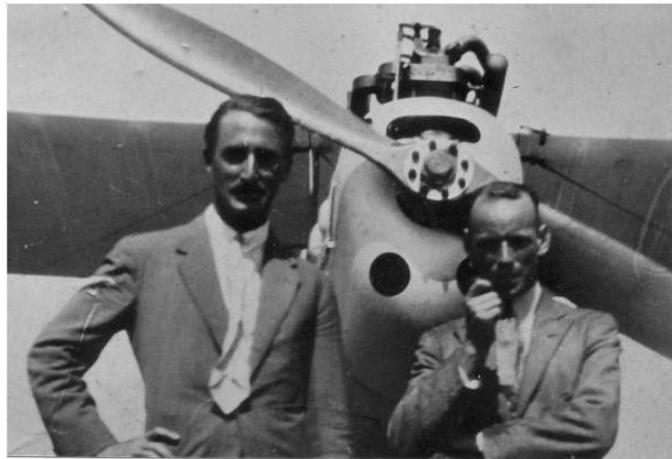
In 1926, as a Flight Lieutenant, McIntyre was selected to be lead pilot with Flight Sergeant Les Trist on another epic RAAF flight. The flight was commanded by Group Captain Richard Williams and was the first international flight operated by the RAAF. Its purpose was to study the South Pacific “as a possible theatre of operations”, and comprised a 16,000 kilometres round-trip to the Solomon Islands in a de Havilland DH50A between 25 September and 7 December 1926.

McIntyre was awarded a Bar to his Air Force Cross, and later the 1926 Oswald Watt medal for the flight.

Group Captain Williams, Chief of the Air Staff at the time, was appointed a CBE. There was speculation that he had undertaken the flight as part of his rivalry with Jimmy Goble for the leadership of the RAAF and to counter the acclaim that Goble had received for his 1924 flight with McIntyre.

The Commonwealth Government’s decision to subsidise state sections of the Australian Aero Club in 1926 led to the incorporation of the Australian Aero Club (South Australian Section) Ltd on 14 January 1927. The employment of a pilot instructor was one of its first priorities and it advertised the position in the Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney press on 21 February 1927.

McIntyre is not recorded as an initial applicant and the Club’s committee was fairly well advanced in the selection and engagement of Flying Officer W.E. Gardner when it brought the process to a halt because of a bitter and lengthy dispute with the Civil Aviation Branch about the engine types on the two de Havilland DH60 Cirrus Moths that the Government was to loan to the Club. By November 1927 it was resolved but Gardner withdrew his application and the position instead was awarded to McIntyre on 7 November 1927. The Club had commenced flying at Albert Park aerodrome on 5 September with Horrie Miller acting as a temporary pilot instructor, but McIntyre became the Club’s first permanent instructor, commencing duties immediately at Parafield aerodrome that had opened on 1 October 1927.



Fred Haig and Ivor McIntyre (Right) 1928
Courtesy Schas Schaedel

By January 1928 McIntyre was into the swing of things. The Committee had asked him “to visit any places of interest for stunting and to arouse public interest” and members were being urged to visit the aerodrome to take short flights and to receive instruction from him. He was working such long hours in getting flight operations organised that the Committee resolved to close the aerodrome on public holidays to give him, and the ground engineer, some rest, and to award him a bonus of the greater of 5% of weekend passenger flight earnings or £1.

He seems to have been possessed of a dry sense of humour because when the Committee approved a flight to Clare to drum up membership with passenger flights, instead of refusing, McIntyre’s response was that the Clare landing ground was classed as red, the worst classification for landing purposes, and that the Committee should keep that in mind in the event of an accident. The Committee then quickly resolved to invite Clare members to visit the aerodrome at Parafield, view the aircraft and take short flights there instead. The following week when the Committee was

informed that the Clare members felt let down by this response, the members were informed that McIntyre would try to locate a suitable landing ground for a future visit. Instead, Sextus Sutcliffe, a pilot member of the Committee, was dispatched to do the inspection. Ivor McIntyre was evidently not a man to be pushed around by Committee members.

By February 1928 he had three students at the solo stage and five others in various stages of instruction, passenger flights were increasing and the Committee was urging the Civil Aviation Branch to authorise a pilot committee member to hold licence examinations.

This rapid progress was sadly interrupted by McIntyre's death on 12 March 1928. He had been on duty at the aerodrome the previous day and had taken off in one of the Club's Moths, G-AUAP, to perform aerobatics. After doing a roll he went into a spiral dive from which he failed to recover. He was taken unconscious from the wreckage to North Adelaide Private Hospital where he was operated on but died the next day at 3:15pm.

The press¹ reported extensively on the accident on 12 and 13 March. Initially it was reported that McIntyre took off at 4:30pm on a solo stunt flight after having made several other flights with passengers earlier that afternoon. He performed a number of aerobatic movements including loops, then entered a power-off dive from 1,000 feet. At about 200 feet he attempted to re-start the engine, which *"made a sputter and then cut out"*. The aircraft then *"continued its dive to the ground, and struck head first, about 120 yards from the hangar"*. The next day The Register reported his death on Monday afternoon after two operations. It also reported that *"he appeared to have miscalculated his distance from the ground, with the result that before he could flatten the machine out it struck the earth with terrible force, nose first."*

This seems very unlikely given his experience and accomplishments, but Frederick Haig, another pilot Committee member who went on to achieve considerable prominence in the evolving aviation industry, lent support to the report when later quoted as saying: *"McIntyre was a very good pilot but he had the disconcerting habit of stunting near the ground, and no matter how many times we Committee members warned him he continued to do it. One of his favourite tricks was to spin down and pull out at the very last moment with his wingtip almost touching the ground, and he and I had many discussions about the chances he was taking. He always maintained that a Moth would come out of a spin immediately which was not correct, and I tried to tell him time and time again and even demonstrated to him, which he couldn't or wouldn't see, that there was a period during the spin of a Moth when it would not recover immediately. Due to the rotation of the airscrew there was an effect on the period of the spin, with a certain portion of the rotation when the Moth hesitates before coming out. Unfortunately the day came when it happened. McIntyre spun down from 500 feet, the wing touched the ground as he straightened out and the Moth crashed badly, inflicting terrible injuries from which he died on the way to hospital."*²

How true this is we don't know and obviously Haig got some of it wrong. We know, for instance, that McIntyre did not die on the way to hospital and survived to be operated on in North Adelaide Private Hospital before dying the next day. I prefer to accept the version commonly circulated around the Club that he had been the victim of structural failure of a wing-spar, perhaps as a result of the rolls he had been performing.

It must have been a terrible blow to the Club so early in its life. The aircraft was not insured, McIntyre was not subject to the Workmen's Compensation Act and he had no next of kin in Adelaide thus placing the responsibility for his funeral and burial on the Club.

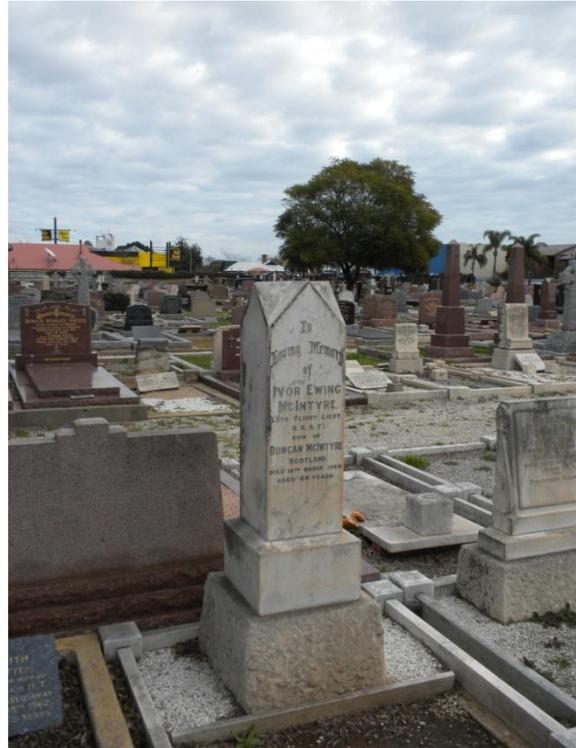
¹ *The Register*, Monday March 12, 1928, p9 and Tuesday March 13, 1928, p9

² Chas Schaedel, email to the author April 24, 2010

He was buried at North Road Cemetery in Adelaide on 14 March. He had no relatives in Australia and the Club made all arrangements. Jimmy Goble, his partner of the epic 1924 round-Australia flight came from Melbourne by train for the funeral, and the Club's remaining Moth circled overhead during the service. He was 28 years old. It was obviously a very moving occasion. *The Bulletin* reported: "A note of inexpressible sadness was added to the funeral of the late Flight-Lieutenant Ivor Ewing McIntyre by the attendance of a solitary 'plane that circled overhead, the droning of the engine being audible throughout the churchyard during the whole of the service." Then it printed a poem to mark the occasion:

*"Earth to earth"....And a 'plane grieves by
Like a mateless bird, in a windy sky!
"Ashes to ashes"....and the lonely 'plane
Goes mourning under the clouds again!
What would he wish but the whir of wings
For requiem? Hark how the engine sings.
Sings, and sorrows, and sorrows again,
A desolate bird that is crying in vain
For her mate, her mate!....They have put him away
To the whir of wings on a windy day,
A passion of wings and an engine's drone
Crying aloft that his flight is flown!
"Earth to earth....and a brooding 'plane
Circles, and seeks for her mate in vain.
S.A. Madge R.C.³*

A year later, on 18 March 1929, the Committee placed a monument over his grave and formed the I.E. McIntyre Memorial Fund to pay for maintenance of the grave and to buy articles for the Club House to perpetuate McIntyre's memory. The grave is still in good order at North Road Cemetery.



Ivor Ewing McIntyre's grave, North Road Cemetery
26 July 2009 M. Milln

In 1994 Jimmy Goble and Ivor McIntyre were commemorated on a postage stamp by Australia Post as part of a series depicting Australia's greatest aviators.

Mike Milln⁴
History Group Member
South Australian Aviation Museum Inc
November 2012

³ *The Bulletin*, 29/3/28

⁴ Mike Milln is author of *Wing Tips – The story of the Royal Aero Club of South Australia – Book 1: 1919-1941*, 2011 Avonmore Books, from which this article is largely derived.