

# AMY JOHNSON

- From Kingsbury to Australia

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An illustrated talk by Philip Grant  
of Wembley History Society





**Amy Johnson was born in Hull,  
on 1 July 1903.**

**Her father ran a fish merchants  
business, and she had a  
comfortable, middle-class  
upbringing and a good education.**

**Unlike many girls at that time,  
Amy went to university.  
She studied Economics, French  
and Latin, gaining a degree at  
Sheffield University in 1925.**



**She was meant to go on to be a teacher. Instead, she trained to be  
a secretary, working first in Hull, then moving to London in 1927.**

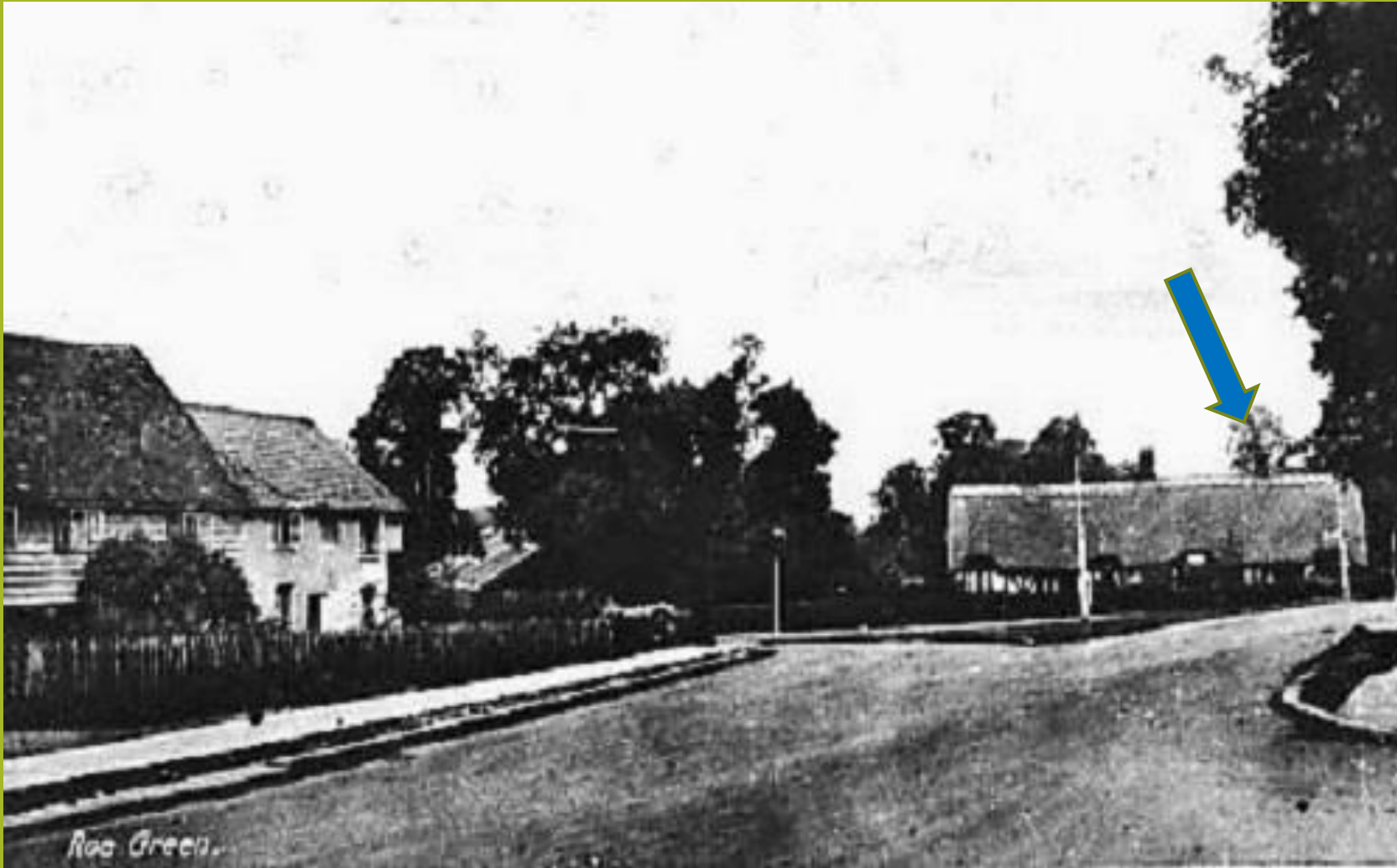


**While exploring the London area in the Spring of 1928, a bus ride brought her to Stag Lane Aerodrome.**

**She sat down to watch the planes, and went home knowing that she wanted to fly!**

**Amy started flying lessons at Stag Lane in September 1928, made her first solo flight in June 1929, and passed the test to get her private pilot's licence the following month.**





**By September 1929 she had given up her secretarial job in the City, and moved to Roe Green, where she rented a room in the Evans family's home.**

**“Oldways”, at 10  
Elmwood Crescent,  
was similar to this  
house (No. 12,  
photographed  
in 1964).**





**“Johnnie” worked unpaid at Stag Lane, so she could learn about aeroplanes and get her Ground Engineer’s Licence.**





It was cold, hard  
work in the  
maintenance  
hangars, and  
Amy was  
grateful for  
comforts sent  
from Hull by  
her mother.

"Oldways,"  
10, Elmwood Crescent,  
Doe Green, N. W. 9.

Jan. 14th.

Dearest Aunt,

You are a darling to pack me up such a <sup>typical</sup> parcel! I came in from the Aerodrome absolutely tired out, but the contents of the parcel bucked me up as usual! Thanks ever so much. The pillow is beautifully soft, & my head now, for once, really looks worthy. When the slides-down arrives, I shall indeed be well off. It is awfully nice of you to buy me a new one, but I am sorry to have put you to that extra expense. It will, however, be a treat to have it & I appreciate your kindness & thoughtfulness very much indeed.

Thanks also for your letter sent to the Club, & the  
stamps. You do spoil me! How glad I shall be if  
I am ever in the position to give you lots of nice things.  
In the meantime, I'll be as careful as I can, so you  
needn't worry at all. I don't consider flying is  
dangerous if one takes reasonable care, & you may be sure I  
shall not take any unnecessary risks. So you won't  
worry, will you?

**In the same letter, Amy tries to reassure her mother,  
who has a very nervous disposition,  
that she will always be careful when flying:-  
'... you may be sure I shall not take any unnecessary risks.'**

Telephone: Colindale 6367.

LONDON AEROPLANE CLUB,  
STAG LANE AERODROME,  
EDGWARE, MIDDLESEX.

19th January 1933.

Dearest Daddy,

Thank you ever so much for your letter & for spending so much time in giving me help, which is very greatly appreciated, I can tell you. I wish you were on the spot from the beginning because I'd love you really to advise me. The publicity is gradually dying down & by the time I really do go on my trip I shall be 4 years older (as I'll see they put my proper age, if at all) & a brunette. (as my hair is rapidly returning to its former colour)."

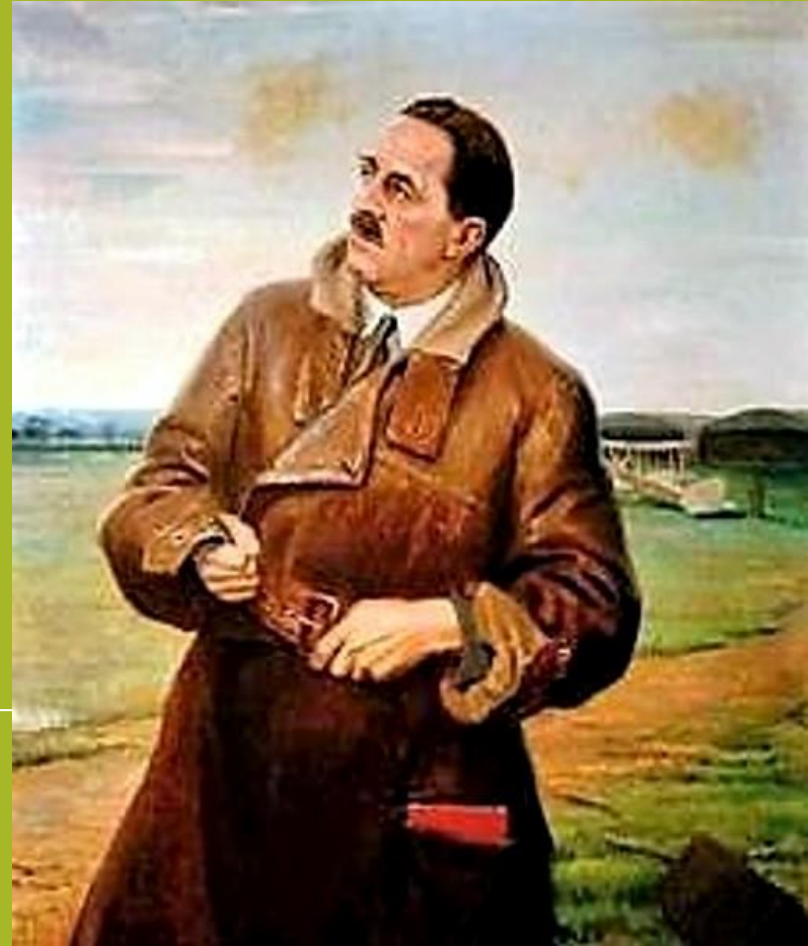
**Amy wanted flying to be her career. She announced that she would fly solo to Australia, aiming to beat Bert Hinkler's record of 15½ days, so that people would take her seriously as a pilot.**

**She did a course in navigation,  
used a typewriter her father  
sent her to seek sponsors  
and apply for visas, and  
obtained maps of the places  
along her planned route.**

**Unfortunately, none of the  
newspapers she thought  
might sponsor her trip  
were willing to offer  
her any money!**



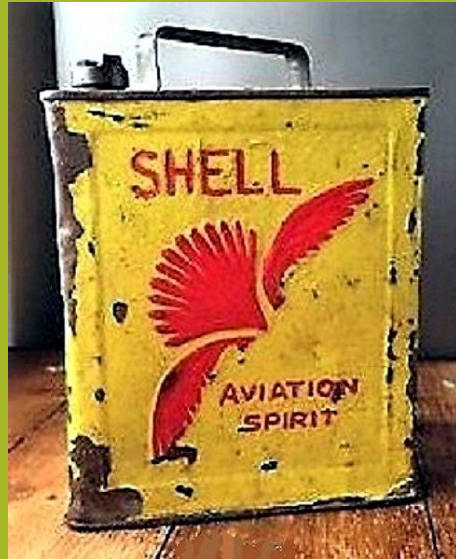
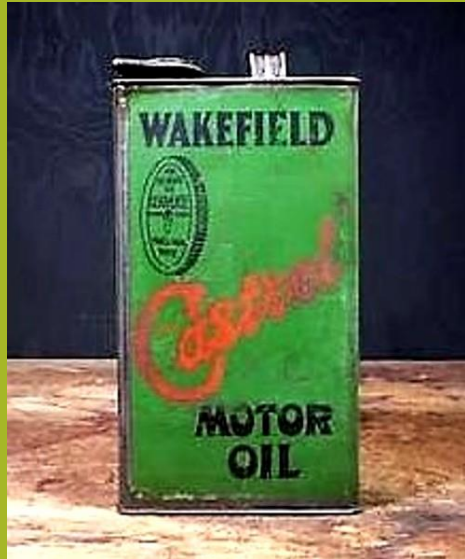
**Amy sought help from  
Sir Sefton Brancker,  
Britain's Director of Civil Aviation,  
who she had met and spoken  
to at meetings of the  
Royal Aeronautical Society.**



**He gave her an introduction  
to someone who might help.**



Because he had been unwell,  
Amy wasn't able to meet  
Lord Wakefield until mid-April.



When she did, he agreed  
to supply his Castrol oil,  
and pay for her fuel,  
all along her route.  
He also gave her £300  
towards the cost of a plane.

**After four months  
of organising  
for her trip,  
Amy was ready  
to set off in  
early May 1930.**



Telegraphic Addresses:- { "ANDREW, HULL."  
"JASON, LOWESTOFT."

ESTABLISHED 1881.

Codes { 5th Edition, A.B.C.  
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ANDREW JOHNSON, KNUDTZON LTD.  
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*Hull.* APRIL 30th 1930

My dear Amy

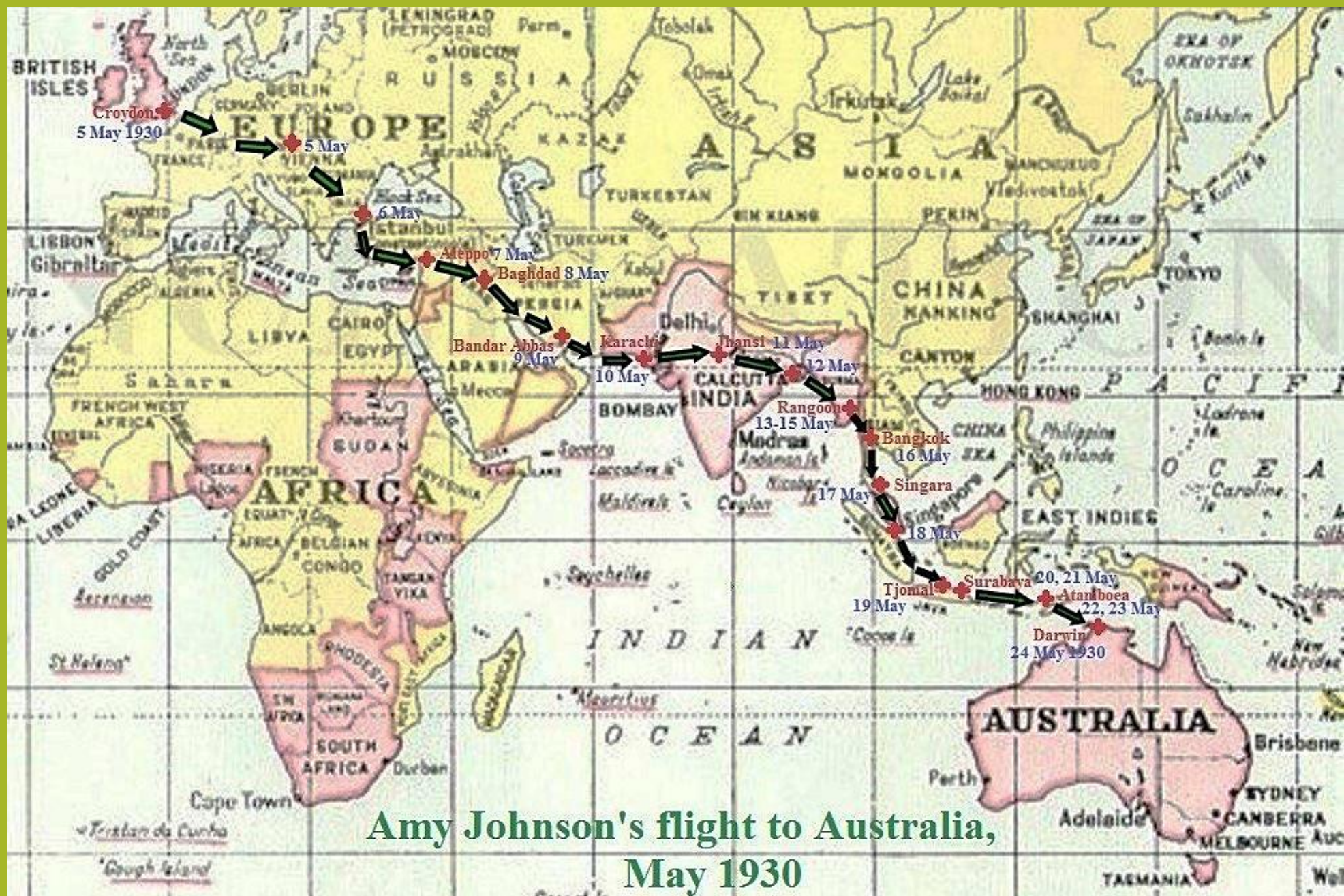
I thank you for your letter of 29th inst and have carefully noted contents. I confirm my telegram to the effect that I will guarantee payment or return of the Parachute and have sent a wire to Irvins to that effect and have written them confirming same; enclos herewith copy of my letter so that should be all in order. In regard to the Insurance I confirm my wire that considering the limited benefits you receive I dont think its worth the amount they are charging, therefore I have advised you not to Insure on those terms, as I prefer to take the risk ~~of~~ for as much as they will cover. I am glad you are having a parachute and hope it arrives in time. Mother will also be very pleased.

Amy had only managed to buy a second-hand DH Gipsy Moth plane two weeks before her flight. She named it "Jason", after the trade mark of her father's business.



# Amy took off from Croydon Airport on the morning of Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1930.





**Amy Johnson's flight to Australia,  
May 1930**



**About ten hours later, she landed in Vienna.**

**The next day,  
Amy flew on to  
Constantinople,  
which was  
renamed Istanbul  
that year (1930).**



Constantinople. L'entrée du port et la Mosquée de Tophane



**Delays in Turkey  
over her visa  
meant that she  
was late taking off  
on the third day  
of her flight, so  
she only reached  
Aleppo that night.**

**She reached Baghdad a day later than planned, and only after an emergency landing in the desert during a sand storm!**





**After two more, very hot, days flying, with an overnight stop at Bander Abbas, Amy arrived in Karachi. She had broken the record for a solo flight from England to India.**

**Strong headwinds meant that she could not reach her next planned stop at Allahabad in daylight, so she landed on the parade ground of an army base at Jhansi.**







**On Day 8 of her flight (12<sup>th</sup> May), Amy landed at Allahabad to refuel, then followed the River Ganges to her next stop in Calcutta (Kolkata).**

**Amy with “Jason”  
in Calcutta.**





**Torrential rain meant that Amy could not find the racecourse where she was due to land in Rangoon (Yangon) the next day.**

**Instead, she landed on a football pitch, damaging her plane when she hit a goal post, and ended up in a ditch!**

**After two days  
repairing “Jason”,  
with help from staff  
and students at the  
Technical Institute  
and local people,  
Amy flew on to  
Bangkok.**





**What should have been a single day's flight to Singapore took two days, when Amy had to land on a beach at Singara because of engine problems and bad weather.**

**A storm when she was flying across the Java Sea on 19<sup>th</sup> May (Day 15) meant that Amy had to make another unscheduled overnight stop on her way to Surabaya, in eastern Java.**





**Amy flew past the airfield at Atamboea in failing light, and landed in a rough field near a native village, causing a panic that she was “missing”.**

FLOWERS THAT BLOOM IN THE SPRING (Page 4) AND LATER (Page 12)

# DAILY SKETCH

INCORPORATING THE DAILY GRAPHIC

No. 6,584 SATURDAY, MAY 24, 1930 ONE PENNY

EMPIRE  
DAY  
NUMBER

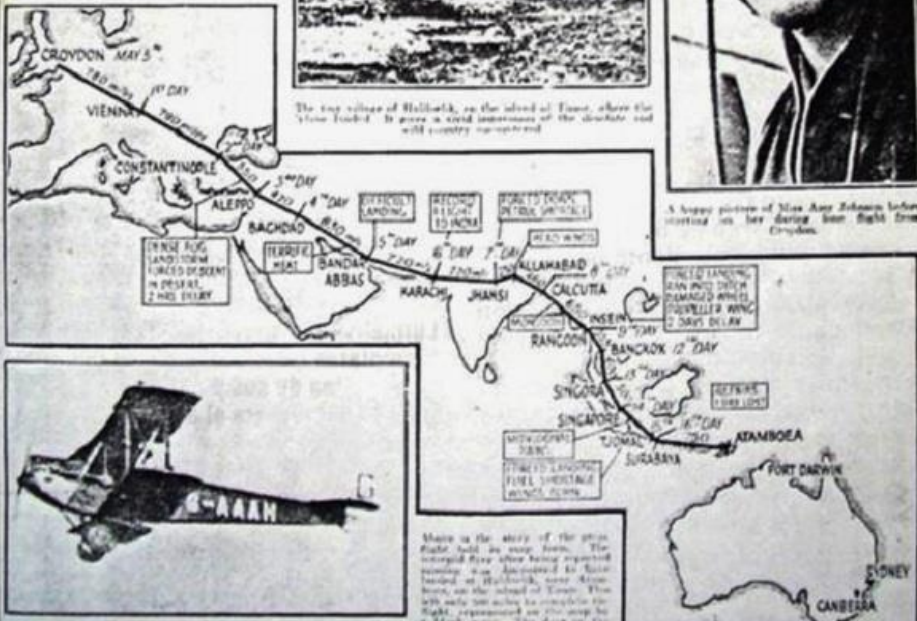
## LAST LAP OF ENGLISH GIRL'S WONDER FLIGHT



The tiny village of Halibek, on the island of Timor, where the plane landed. It gave a vivid impression of the desolate and wild country surrounding it.



A happy picture of Miss Amy Johnson before starting on her daring lone flight from Croydon.



The plane that has made aviation history now in flight. Miss Amy Johnson, the 33-year-old Yorkshire girl, has become England's heroine of the air. She left Croydon on May 5 on an endeavor to reach Major Duff's base after a record of 192 days for a solo flight to Australia. Her last leg was one of 500 miles from Port Darwin, her destination.

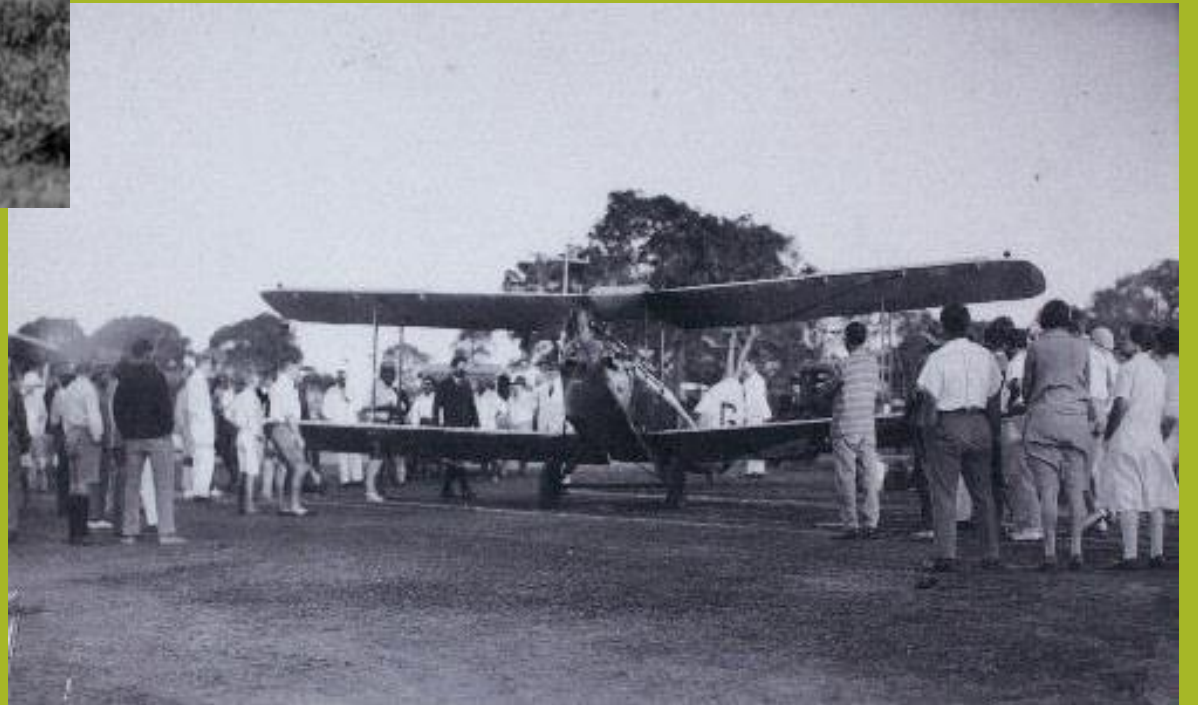
When this newspaper was being printed in England, Amy was flying 500 miles across the Timor Sea and approaching Darwin.







**At around 3.30pm on 24<sup>th</sup> May,  
Amy landed at Darwin airfield,  
to complete her flight to  
Australia in 19½ days.**





**Amy was physically and mentally exhausted, and her face was badly sunburned, but she had achieved something amazing.**



**The young woman  
from Hull, who  
learned her  
aircraft skills  
in Kingsbury,  
had become a  
celebrity!**

**Amy is seen here with the film actress, Anna Neagle, at the opening of the 1931 speed boat racing season on the Welsh Harp Reservoir.**



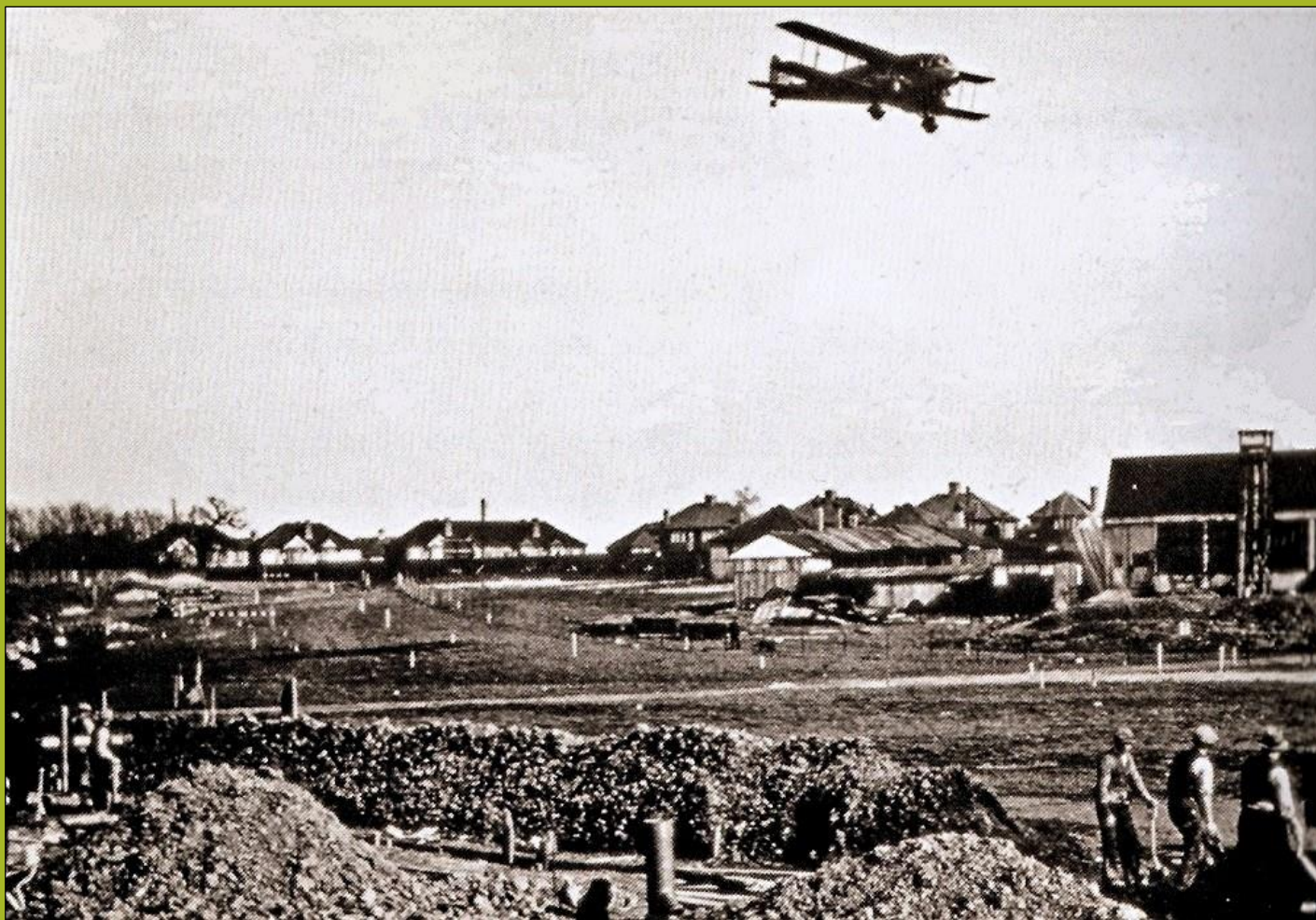
**Ten years later, Anna Neagle starred in a film about Amy's life.**

Amy made a number of long distance and record-breaking flights during the 1930's, some with fellow aviator Jim Mollison, who she married in 1932.



They flew one of Geoffrey De Havilland's new racing aeroplanes, the DH88 Comet, in 1934. After making the first non-stop flight to Baghdad, and breaking the record for a flight to India, they had to give up because of engine damage.





**When De Havilland moved their main works to Hatfield, and sold off much of Stag Lane Aerodrome for a Queensbury housing estate, one of the main roads across it was called Mollison Way.**

**Amy finally took a job as a commercial pilot in May 1939.**



**She joined the Air Transport Auxiliary in 1940, one of a number of women pilots ferrying planes for the RAF.**





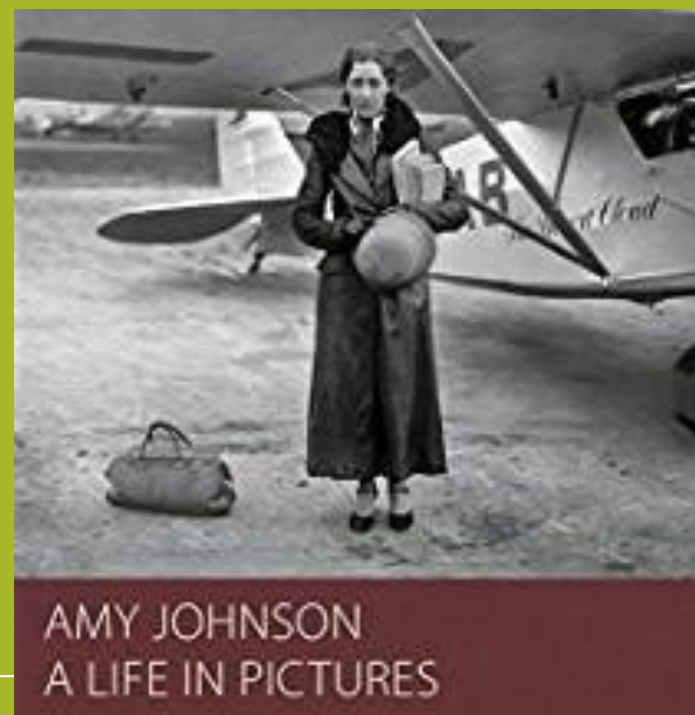
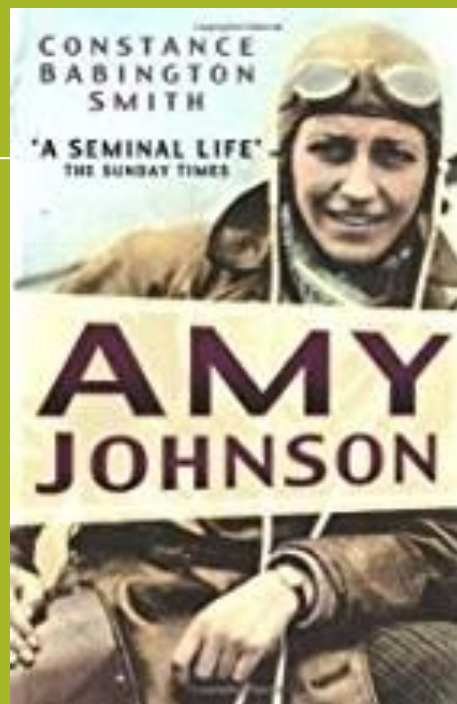
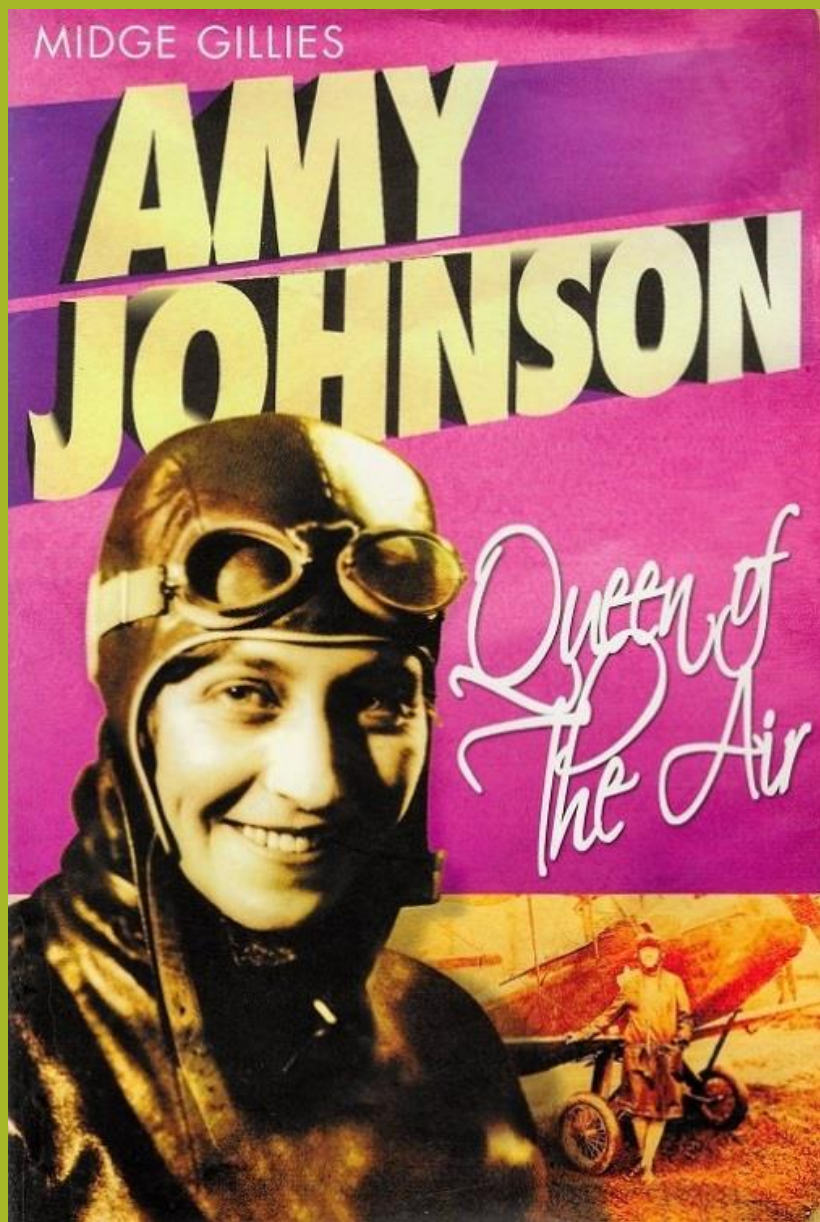
**On a flight to deliver an Airspeed Oxford plane, in bad weather, she baled out over the Thames Estuary, and died, aged just 37½, on 5 January 1941.**



**Sadly, the house where Amy had lived in Roe Green (by then re-addressed as 3 Hay Lane) also suffered a tragic end. It burned down on Guy Fawkes night 1964, after fireworks set its thatch on fire.**



**The flats at Kenwood Court were built on the site.**



**There are several books about Amy Johnson, some of which you can borrow from Brent Libraries.**



You can visit places linked with Amy's story in the Stag Lane area of Kingsbury ...



**... and you can still see Amy's plane "Jason"  
at the Science Museum.**

# THE END

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**I hope you've enjoyed my talk, and that Amy's story will inspire you to follow your dreams.**

**She showed that, despite the obstacles which may be put in your way, with determination and hard work you can succeed!**