



## RAAF Fairey IIID Seaplane Flights to Tasmania 1924 to 1926

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In the 1920s, flying boats were considered to be the most likely way to develop a regular airmail and passenger service between Tasmania and the mainland. Surveys of the coastline were undertaken to identify suitable landing sites that could be used in emergencies and for fuel depots.

Captain Andrew Lang undertook the first survey flight in 1921 when he flew the Cutis Seagull seaplane from Sydney to Launceston via the Furneaux Islands (and return). Later, the RAAF undertook survey flights around Australia with the Fairey IIID seaplanes.

### The Seaplanes

The Fairy III biplanes were introduced at the end of World War 1 by Fairey Aviation Co Ltd in the UK, with over 900 being built into the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

The "D" variant (used by the RAAF) was configured as a seaplane with floats and had three seats. It used a 375 hp (280 kW) Rolls-Royce Eagle V-12 engine. Its wingspan was 14.05 m (46ft); Length 11.28 m (37ft); Height 3.44 m (11ft). Its maximum speed was 171 km/h (106 mph).<sup>2</sup>

Six seaplanes were manufactured in 1921 for the RAAF. After shipped to Australia, the unassembled machines were stored at RAAF Base Point Cook in southwest Melbourne and assembled over the next two years. They were assigned Aerial Serial Numbers A10-1 to A10-6. The aircraft were no longer in use by 1927 and the final aircraft scrapped in 1929.

### Three Visits to Tasmania

The Fairey seaplanes came to Tasmania on three occasions, in 1924, 1925 and lastly in 1926. The first two visits undertook coastal air routes surveys, while the last visit was an Air Force promotional flight.

Three individual planes visited, A10-2 in 1924, then both A10-5 and A10-6 in 1925 and 1926. Flight Lieutenant Ivor McIntyre was a pilot on all three visits.

### Australia Air Survey of 1924 and the First Tasmanian Trip

In 1924, a survey of the Australian coastline was undertaken using the Fairey Seaplanes. This included a circumnavigation flight around the Australian mainland by pilot Flight Lieutenant Ivor Ewing McIntyre and Wing Commander Stanley James Goble (the Chief of the RAAF) as observer, using Seaplane A10-3. They departed Point Cook on 06 April 1924 and flew an anti-clockwise circumnavigation of the Continent, arrived back on 19 May 1924. The flight took 44 days, with over 90 flying hours, stopping at 24 towns and covered 13,800 km.

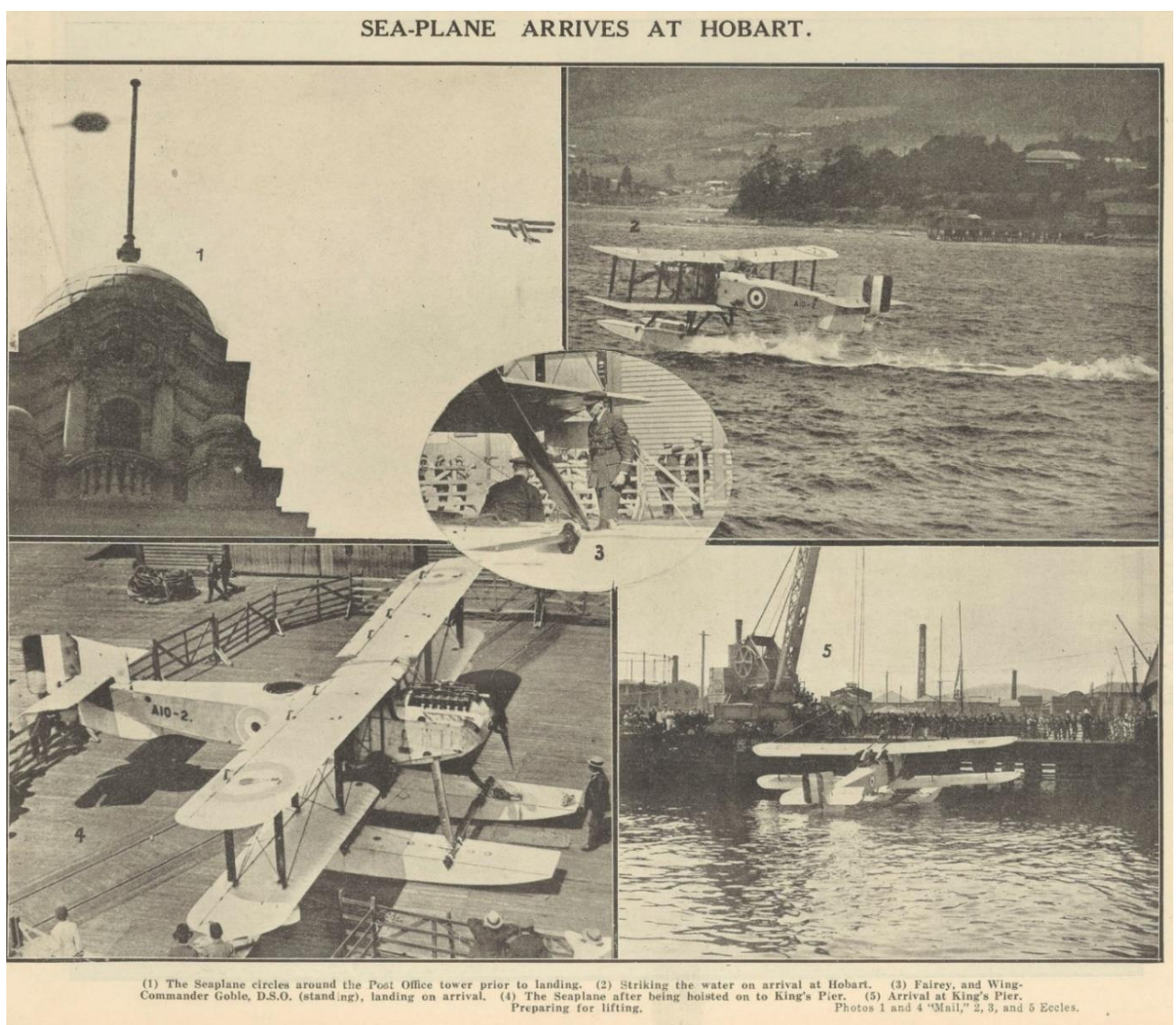


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Two months prior to the circumnavigation flight, McIntyre and Goble undertook a survey flight of the eastern coastline of Tasmania in A10-2, accompanied by mechanic Corporal Gottschaff. This was the first flight by a seaplane across Bass Strait.

They attempted the flight from Point Cook on 02 February 1924, but as the prevailing southerly wind were so strong, the flight across Bass Strait was delayed till the following day.<sup>3</sup> Leaving Point Cook at 6 a.m., flying across the Furneaux Islands and along the east coast of Tasmania, they landed at St. Helens.<sup>4</sup> After taking on petrol, they continued on to Hobart, arriving at one o'clock.<sup>5</sup> Their plane was then lifted on to the King's Pier.<sup>6</sup>



**Seaplane at Hobart (Illustrated Tasmanian Mail, 07 February 1924, Page 41)<sup>6</sup>**

**Image 3: WGCDR Goble, 4: On Kings Warf, 5: Being raised onto Kings Pier**



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The seaplane gave demonstration flights at the Hobart Regatta the following day:<sup>7</sup> During the following week they joined the Navy Fleet exercise held at Port Arthur. They returned to Point Cook on 11 February 1924, following the same route home, stopping at Port Albert, (Gippsland, Victoria) for lunch and petrol.<sup>8</sup>

#### Furneaux Island Survey - 1925

Another survey flight was undertaken in 1925 to investigate suitable emergency landing grounds and fuel depots in the Furneaux Islands.<sup>9</sup> The two Fairey seaplanes used were A10-5, piloted by Flight Lieutenant George Hempel with Captain Edgar Johnston of Civilian Air Authority as Observer; and A10-6, which was piloted by Flight Lieutenant McIntyre with their mechanic, Lieutenant Miles.<sup>12</sup>

They departed Point Cook on 13 October 1925 but had to stop at Stony Point Naval Base at Western Port to repair a leaking oil pipe. They continued their journey the following day. They passed over Wilson's Promontory, they hit rain squalls and after suddenly dropping about 200 feet, Captain Johnson lost his suitcase.<sup>10</sup>

They used Franklin Sound at Lady Barron as their base, the same sheltered landing spot used by Captain Lang in his survey with the Seagull Flying Boat in 1921.



Fairey III D Seaplanes at Lady Barron, (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, QVM:1988:P:0507)





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They surveyed many of the islands in the Furneaux Group, the southern-most being Clark Island.<sup>11</sup>

They were expected to be there only for a day or two, but bad weather forced them to stay for five days. The two seaplanes departed from Lady Barron and returned to Point Cook on 19 October 1925. The return journey, which was expected to take about 3 hours, but it actually took 6 ¼ hours due to strong head winds.<sup>12</sup>

#### RAAF Promotional Trip – 1926

This trip was planned to bring Squadron Leaders' Drummond and Cole to Tasmania so they could then tour the state interviewing the 14 Tasmanians who had applied to join the RAAF.<sup>13</sup> They then planned to return to Point Cook the following day, while Drummond and Cole would return by ship at a later time.

The same two seaplanes which had visited the Furneaux Islands six months before were used. A10-5 was piloted by Lieutenant Jonathan H Ross RAN and A10-6 was piloted by Flight Lieutenant McIntyre.

They departed Point Cook on 26 January 1926, flew along the Coast to Wilson's Promontory, then across the Furneaux Islands, along the northwest coast to the Tamar River, and then down to Launceston.<sup>14</sup> The 300-mile trip was done in a quick flight time of 3 ¼ hours, which was aided by a good tail wind. They landed on the Tamar near Home Reach at Launceston and were anchored near the Rowing Club.



At Home Reach, Tamar River, Launceston (Weekly Courier, 04 February 1926, Page 25)<sup>15</sup>



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That evening, McIntyre and Ross were contacted by the Hobart Regatta Committee asking if they would fly to Hobart and be part of the Regatta which was to be held in a few days' time. They were happy to attend, if permission was given by the Air Board.<sup>16</sup> Permission was eventually given, after a request from the Premier of Tasmania was sent to the Prime Minister.<sup>17,18</sup>

On 29 January 1926 the two seaplanes commenced their flight to Hobart.<sup>19</sup> After take-off from Launceston, A10-6 suffered a broken oil feeder line and they both landed at Beauty Point where repairs were undertaken.

After the delay at Beauty Point, they then flew to Hobart via the east coast the following day. The seaplanes landed at Sandy Bay at about 3 p.m. after a 3½ hour trip.<sup>14</sup> They attended Hobart Regatta on 02 February 1926.

They depart Hobart on 06 February 1926 and flew to St. Helens, where they encountered strong headwinds.<sup>20</sup> They stayed overnight, then departed the following morning and returned to Point Cook, briefly stopping at Whitemark on Flinders Island.<sup>21,22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairey\\_III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairey_III)

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.airforce.gov.au/sites/default/files/minisite/static/7522/RAAFmuseum/research/aircraft/series1/A10.htm>

<sup>3</sup> The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.) Sat 2 Feb 1924 Page 8

<sup>4</sup> Daily Telegraph (Launceston, Tas.) Tue 5 Feb 1924 Page 3

<sup>5</sup> The Register (Adelaide, SA) Mon 4 Feb 1924 Page 13

<sup>6</sup> [https://stors.tas.gov.au/ILLUSTRATEDTASMAIL\\$init=1404315-2-1-78-6](https://stors.tas.gov.au/ILLUSTRATEDTASMAIL$init=1404315-2-1-78-6)

<sup>7</sup> World (Hobart, Tas.) Wed 6 Feb 1924 Page 5

<sup>8</sup> The Age (Melbourne, Vic.) Tue 12 Feb 1924 Page 10

<sup>9</sup> Examiner (Launceston, Tas.) Tue 20 Oct 1925 Page 5

<sup>10</sup> The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.) Sat 24 Oct 1925 Page 9

<sup>11</sup> Daily Telegraph (Launceston, Tas.) Wed 21 Oct 1925 Page 2

<sup>12</sup> Examiner (Launceston, Tas.) Sat 24 Oct 1925 Page 15

<sup>13</sup> Examiner (Launceston, Tas.) Wed 27 Jan 1926 Page 4

<sup>14</sup> The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.) Mon 1 Feb 1926 Page 5

<sup>15</sup> [https://stors.tas.gov.au/weeklycourierinserts\\$init=WC1926020402](https://stors.tas.gov.au/weeklycourierinserts$init=WC1926020402)

<sup>16</sup> The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.) Thu 28 Jan 1926 Page 9

<sup>17</sup> Examiner (Launceston, Tas.) Fri 29 Jan 1926 Page 6

<sup>18</sup> The Mercury (Hobart, Tas.) Fri 29 Jan 1926 Page 4

<sup>19</sup> Examiner (Launceston, Tas.) Sat 30 Jan 1926 Page 13

<sup>20</sup> Advocate (Burnie, Tas.) Sat 6 Feb 1926 Page 5

<sup>21</sup> The Age (Melbourne, Vic.) Mon 8 Feb 1926 Page 9

<sup>22</sup> Daily Telegraph (Launceston, Tas.) Wed 10 Feb 1926 Page 5