



COOTAMUNDRA AERODROME HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Council has acknowledged, over many years, the historical significance of the Cootamundra Aerodrome, as it is the oldest aerodrome outside Sydney.

Council is now to establishing a database of all items of historical significance so they will not be lost. The quantity and quality of items available for display will be displayed at the Cootamundra Historical Museum at the old Railway barracks due to be opened in August 2001

MAIN HISTORICAL POINTS

- Oldest country airport outside Mascot continually licensed**
- Jumping off aerodrome for the 1st Airmail to London**
- 1st to take football team to play another town**
- Visited by the following famous pioneering aviators and aviatrix**
 - Kingsford Smith
 - Amy Johnston
 - James Maclean
 - Scott and Campbell-Black
 - Captain Stutt
 - Captain P G Taylor
 - Ross & Keith Smith
 - Captain E J Jones
 - Bert Hinkler
 - Laris Bonney
 - Parmentier and Moll
 - Arthur Butler

HISTORICAL EVENTS OF COOTAMUNDRA AERODROME

DATE	EVENT
	Oldest country airport outside Mascot continually licensed
	Jumping off aerodrome for the 1st Airmail to London
1896	First known flight at Cootamundra was in a balloon.
1917	First aircraft to land was when a Flying Corpe pilot, a Captain Stutt made a forced landing in his Curtiss Bi-Plane. ¹
1919 5 th April	Two Airco DH-6 aircraft B2802 and B2803 landed, the latter was flown by Captain P G Taylor ... Taylor was to achieve later fame from his exploits with Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith in the "Southern Cross" ²
1919	H C Miller and Flight Lieutenant Steve Oakes surveyed the air route from Melbourne to Sydney for the Defence Department ³
1920	Ross & Keith Smith (brothers) landed at Cootamundra after their epic flight from England to Australia. (Non-stop flight London-Darwin- query as to whether this flight was non-stop from London to Darwin ⁴)
1921	The Commonwealth Government decided that an aerodrome at Cootamundra was essential, in view if the legislation proceeding with the proposed air route from Sydney to Adelaide. Action was taken to purchase 75 acres at Quinlan's Paddock and this course of events made the airfield at Cootamundra one of the earliest rural aerodromes established by the Government ⁵
1924 2 nd January 6 th January	1 st Flight from Adelaide to Sydney flown by Captain Larkin Return flight from Sydney to Adelaide flown by Captain Larkin ⁶
1924	First landplane flight around Australia by Captain E J Jones (survey flight ⁷ landing at Cootamundra, Narromine and on to Charleville ^{8 9}
1928	Bert Hinkler record solo flight England to Australia ¹⁰

¹ *Cootamundra Aerodrome* by Ben Dannecker

² *Cootamundra Aerodrome* by Ben Dannecker

³ *Early Birds* by H C Miller – 1968 (Austin Davis)

⁴ Query from Austin Davis

⁵ *Cootamundra Aerodrome* by Ben Dannecker

⁶ *Airways Call of the Sky* by ? Buddee 1978

⁷ *The World's Great Pioneer Flights* by Oliver Tapper

⁸ *The Worlds Great Pioneer Flights – by Oliver Tapper*

⁹ Austin Davis

¹⁰ Brother Lipman

- First airmail letter to reach Australia from half way around the world was carried by **Charles Kingsford Smith** in the *Southern Cross*, on his record-making journey from California in the USA to Brisbane. The letter was written by non other than former Cootamundra man John James Miller, then living in Vancouver, Canada¹¹
- 1920/30 **Laris Bonney** and others “Barnstormed Cootamundra” early days of Aviation Mid 20’s -30’s
- 1932 **Charles Kingsford-Smith** was here for the Cootamundra show and gave show rides over the town¹²
- Parmentier and Moll** landed in 1934¹³
- 1934 – 10th Dec **Arthur Butler** piloted Butler Air transport dragon Moth DH84 “Cootamundra” on the first regular Air Mail service to England, stopping at Narromine on the same route to Charleville to connect with QANTAS¹⁴
Butler flew 15,000 items of mail (sent from Melbourne and Sydney to Cootamundra) from here to Charleville on the first leg of an epic journey to England via Darwin, Singapore and London, that utilised a number of airlines
- 1935 - 21st June Reports that the Cootamundra Rugby League team will fly to Forbes to play for THE JACK HORE GOLD CUP – Butler Air Transport Companies two Dragon Machines – Cootamundra and Charleville were used Sunday June 23rd 1935
VH-URV Pilot Athur Butler VH-URV Captain A W Gregory
It’s believed that the team made history as being the first to make use of this modern method of travel. The first plane departed a 9:30am, the second at 10:30am.
The team members to fly were – Bill Argett, Jock Hetherington, Jim Winter, Ray Ward, Clem Scrivener, Fred Thompson, Alf Tasker, W Ayres, Charlie Rowe, Leo Sheedy, Noel Walpole and Pat Muffett. “Snowy” Martin refused to fly, and travelled to Forbes by car.
Other passengers were
Mrs Wally Hayden, Brain O’Connor, Ike Hennessy, Eric Nash, “Tax” Ponting, Artheru Young and Keith Starr (Mascot).
Austin Jim Winter is on the left front row. *Photocopy photo on letter 28/3/01*
Forbes won the match 38/17. Cootamundra has previously travelled to Forbes by rail motor and also were beaten.¹⁵
- 1940 Aerodrome was increased in size
- 1940 Royal Australian Air Force took complete control of the Aerodrome during 1940, and increased its area from 187 acres to 332 acres. The first unit to be formed was No 1 Air Observers

¹¹ The NSW Freemason

¹² Cootamundra Local History Society

¹³ Cootamundra Local History Society

¹⁴ Austin Davis

¹⁵ Austin Davis – Cootamundra Herald 21st June 1935

School. RAAF operations ceased during 1946, but it was no until 1957 that surplus RAAF equipment was disposed of.

Observer school during 1942/43/44. Over 100 trained. Some trainees died in a crash north of Cootamundra - Brookfield

The CO for most part was W/C Graham. The aircraft used were Avro Ansons. The famous "Pickaback" landing were 2 Cootamundra Ansons.¹⁶

1948 Prior to Butlers the first services was operated by Curtis Madsen Airways with Lockheed 10 A/C up to the end of 1949 and early 1950.¹⁷

Butler launch "Airline of NSW" later became Ansett Airways following takeover.

Arthur Butler landed in Cootamundra many years prior and walked into Dawson and Heaths Office and requested that they do his bookkeeping. The young lad behind the counter was MacLeonard later managing director of Ampol.¹⁸

1950 to 1955 There were 75 Tiger Moths in the hangers awaiting disposal priced from £20 to £40¹⁹

1955 to 1970 Airland Aerial Ag - **Berry Moody** one of the 1st agricultural services to begin spreading phosphate fertiliser early 1950
In one particular year 1960/61 they spread 37,000 tons of super and sprayed for weed and insect control approximately 210,000 acres – from Braidwood to Hay and in between. They had until to the 1968/1969 drought operated seven aircraft and seven pilots and loader drivers, eight engineering hanger staff and 2 storeman. They pre-hauling engines and airframes for other operators as well as private aircraft owners.²⁰

¹⁶ Beresford R Moody

¹⁷ Beresford R Moody

¹⁸ Beresford R Moody

¹⁹ Beresford R Moody

²⁰ Beresford R Moody

