



WOMEN IN AVIATION AND SPACE HISTORY

News / Personalities



AMY JOHNSON

In 1930, Amy Johnson became the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia and did so with very little flying experience. She had only received her license in 1929, learning to fly at the London Aeroplane Club at Stag Lane, but she was an impressive secretary-turned-pilot who earned an aircraft ground engineer's license as well.

Flying a Gipsy Moth named *Jason*, Johnson made the England to Australia trip in May 1930 in 19 1/2 days, and continued to make many impressive cross-country flights from England around Europe and to Moscow and Tokyo. In 1931 she married fellow British aviator James Mollison and promptly broke his record for the England to South Africa flight. In 1936, she reclaimed the record again, flying 22,530 kilometers (14,000 miles) in 12 days.

Johnson and Mollison flew the Atlantic together in July 1933, but crashed on landing at Bridgeport, Connecticut. Both received only minor injuries and so ordered another plane for a west-to-east flight to England, but it crashed on take-off. Johnson and Mollison made it as far as India during the 1934 MacRobertson Race from England to Australia; soon after, they divorced.

During World War II, Johnson flew for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), ferrying aircraft around England. She was killed in January 1941 when she bailed out of her crippled twin engine aircraft and drowned in the Thames River. Johnson's popularity in England was equal to the Earhart phenomenon in the United States, and a song, *Amy, Wonderful Amy* was written in her honor.

27 MARCH 2016

SOURCE: AIRANDSPACE

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