

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM**

### **SIGNIFICANT AVIATION EVENTS PROFILES**

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#### **ROBERT GRAHAM CAREY FLIGHT TO GAWLER AND THE RE-ENACTMENTS**

##### **ORIGINAL FLIGHT 1917**

The main reason for the flight to Gawler was that Graham Carey had been invited by the Gawler Red Cross Carnival, which had been organized to raise funds for providing comforts for World War I soldiers. The Secretaries of the Carnival were Mr E.A Smith and Miss D.H. Ey. An attempt to fly to Gawler by Graham Carey was made On 3 November 1917 but the aircraft crashed at Islington.

After repairing his aircraft, Carey flew to Gawler on 23 November 1917 in his Bleriot monoplane, complete with a Le Gnome, 7 cylinder, 50 H.P. rotary engine, from a paddock at Enfield (on what is now Regency Road) to the Gawler Racecourse. He carried 100 souvenir postcards at 2/6 (25 cents) and 10 letters, including one from the Mayor of Adelaide to the Mayor of Gawler.



*Picture from the book – 'Message in the Clouds' by Des Martin & Bertha Carey, Published EF Martin 2004*

Despite rain and bad weather Carey arrived at the Gawler Racecourse about 3.30pm without incident but, finding no PMG official present, had to hand the mailbags to an off-duty junior telegraph messenger named Walter Nelsen to take to the Post Office.

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The aircraft was on display at the Gawler Racecourse and did some joy flights before returning to Adelaide on Monday 26 November 1917 with some more airmail, which primarily consisted of souvenir cards.

##### **CAREY'S FLYING BACKGROUND**

Carey's 50 hp Gnome-engined Bleriot XI was the same monoplane in which Maurice Guillaux carried the first airmail from Melbourne to Sydney on 16 July 1914.

Shortly thereafter Guillaux returned to France to volunteer for WWI and left the machine on a Sydney wharf, crated and ready for shipment after him. The badly damaged Bleriot, however, remained unclaimed and attracting demurrage fees.

Or it did, until 1915 when a Ballarat garage proprietor named Robert Graham Carey fortuitously heard about this deserted and famous aircraft and purchased it. In need of extensive repairs, the battered Bleriot was transported in its wooden crate by ship from

Sydney to Melbourne, then overland to Ballarat. There, Carey induced Edwin T. Prosser, who held R Ae C Certificate No 526, to teach him how to fly.

Once he had mastered the Bleriot, Carey proceeded to fly to places mostly handy to Ballarat such as Bacchus Marsh, and occasionally landed on vacant ground at Port Melbourne. He had also become well known to the staff and members of the Central Flying School at Point Cook. Through them he had completed the theoretical and technical course and in just 25 minutes passed with distinction the written examination for an aviator's certificate of competence.

On November 23, 1916, forty-two-year-old Robert Graham Carey flew his Bleriot monoplane to Point Cook via Bacchus Marsh to undergo his flying test. His two Central Flying School examiners had the power invested in them by the Royal Aero Club of Great Britain to pass student pilots for the Australian Flying Corps and also for civilian operations. The result was a foregone conclusion. RGC flew home the proud possessor of the Australian Aero Club Aviator's Certificate No. 34 as granted to him on that date, signed by Lieutenant Eric Harrison. This was the first pilot's certificate issued to a civilian in Australia; furthermore, Carey was the first Australian born pilot to obtain an official commercial flying permit.

## RE-ENACTMENT FLIGHTS

### 1957 – 23 November



*VH-ANN DC-3 Guinea Airways  
Captain Nobby Buckley [J Hopton]*



*The 1957 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

### 1967- 23 November



*VH-AVE PA23-250 Avis Rent A Plane  
Pilot - Captain Nobby Buckley [J Smith]*



*The 1967 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

**1977 – 23 November**



*VH-BTJ PA34-200 Pilot – N Buckley [J Smith]*



*The 1977 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

**1992 – 23 November**



*A65-95 Douglas C-47 RAAF - SQNLDR M Stallbaum & FLTLT G Roberts [J Smith]*



*The 1992 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

**1997 – 23 November**



*A2-766 BELL UH-1H RAAF – MAJ D Fawcett and PO Carolyn Breedman (J Smith)*



*The 1997 Flight Cover [M Walker]*

**2007 – 23 November**



*VH-ABS Auster J1B – Pilot Mick Wright – passenger Parafield/Gawler NK Daw, Gawler/Parafield C Lloyd [NK Daw]*



*The 2007 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

**2017 – 23 November**



*VH-ABS Auster J1B – from left pilot M Wright, D King (AusPost), pilot M Michell & S Peglar [NK Daw]*



*The 2017 Flight Cover [NK Daw]*

CREDITS: A Message from the Clouds – R G Carey history, South Australian Aviation Museum, South Australian Air Journal, The Bunyip, Australian Airmail Society. Own notes.

**N K Daw**  
**History Group Member**  
**South Australian Aviation Museum**

**January 2020**