

YOUR VIRTUAL DISCOVERY VISIT – 64 TO THE HERITAGE STORIES OF ROTTNEST ISLAND



*Virtual Visits were initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic when Rottneest Island was closed to the public due to lockdown and quarantine from March to June 2020. Virtual Visits have continued to enable a further enjoyment of stories introduced at the Wadjemup Museum, the Chapman Archives or sites around the Island.
Enjoy, reflect and share.*

TAKE OFFS AND LANDINGS



Most Guides are aware that the record for landings at Rottneest Airport is held by the legendary Jimmy Woods who made some 12,000 crossings to the Island in his Avro Ansons VH- WAC, *The Islander* and VH- WAB, William De Vlamingh. Parts of the Jimmy Woods story are featured at the Airport building but unfortunately few visitors arriving by ferry venture to the venue, and it is not included on any RVGA regular tours.



The flying career of Jimmy Woods as recorded in his personal logbook encompassed at least some 22,000 hours. The numbers above translated equate Rottneest crossings to 20 circuits of the globe at the equator and spending 2 ½ years continuously in the air. Woods Airways commenced operations with twice-weekly flights in April 1948, He kept costs to a minimum by performing almost all the work himself - from transporting customers from Perth to the airport, to unloading their baggage at Rottneest. The route was believed to be the shortest in the world. In 1961 the Department of Civil Aviation ruled that wooden aircraft such as the Anson no longer met the required safety standards. The final flight was on 31 December 1961. Woods Airlines was only one milestone in an extraordinary life. Keith Eddington, in his article, reminds us of one notable series of exploits in 1942 when Jimmy

Woods air-lifted survivors of the Japanese bombing at Broome and later rescued the passengers and crew of a beached Dutch Navy plane. For this he was appointed chevalier to the Order of Orange-Nassau.



A quick visual check ensures pilots that they have arrived at the intended destination

There are many other aviation stories linked to Rottneest Island beginning with the first flight in 1930 (See Virtual Visit 3). Crowds gathered whenever landings occurred, and these events were widely reported. Tracking through Trove reveals the excitement and public interest in aviation as it developed in Western Australia.

Another means of identification and tracking stories is through the aircraft registration number which can provide details of ownership, configuration and use as well as mishaps and prangs. A neighbour or friend who is an aviation nerd can help with identification of aircraft type as can a visit to the Aviation Heritage Museum in Bull Creek.



<https://aviationmuseumwa.org.au/>

DH 60G Gipsy Moth - VH-UJH



VH-UJH on Rottnest 1938

Before becoming a club aircraft in Perth and later Kalgoorlie, this DH60G Gipsy Moth was piloted by Ms Irene Dean-Williams, a flying instructor at the West Australian Aero Club on a record breaking East to West trans-Australian solo flight. It was later requisitioned for wartime service in the RAAF as A7-77.



This picture of Miss Irene Dean-Williams was probably taken at Tammin, WA on 1 May 1932 where she had just landed in her Moth

The Moth was a two-seat biplane of wooden construction, it had a plywood covered fuselage and fabric covered surfaces, a standard tailplane with a single tailplane and fin. A useful feature of the design was its folding wings which allowed owners to hangar the aircraft in much smaller spaces. In 1928 when the new de Havilland Gipsy I engine was available a company DH.60 Moth G-EBQH was re-engined as the prototype of the DH.60G Gipsy Moth. Although replaced in production by the DH.82 Tiger Moth, the Gipsy Moth remained the mainstay of the British flying scene up to the start of WWII.

DH90 Dragonfly VH-ADG



In 1946, WA Airlines managed by Captain Snook began a regular air service to Rottnest using a De Havilland DH90 Dragonfly.

The De Havilland Aircraft DH90 Dragonfly was twin-engine luxury touring aircraft built during the 1930's. It was a scaled down and streamlined version of the DH89 Dragon Rapide, for wealthy private owners. The prototype DH90 Dragonfly flew for the first time on 12 August 1935, and a total of 67 aircraft were built. Dragonfly DH-ADG had an interesting career in peace and war before Rottnest service and its subsequent demise at Guildford Airport in 1948 after over 11,000 flying hours.

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2012/03/01/capt-jimmy-woods-and-his-connection-with-broome-s-first-air-raid/>

<https://www.goodall.com.au/australian-aviation/dh90/dh90dragonfly.html>

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/2020/10/21/newspaper-article-past-fliers-back-together/>

<https://archives.rvga.asn.au/1994/01/01/sir-norman-brearley-oration-1994/>

https://www.alanblencowe.com/FSX_FlightHistory/Aircraft_of_WA.htm

<http://www.edcoatescollection.com/ac1/austmz/VH-WAB.html>

<http://www.edcoatescollection.com/ac1/austu/austu/VH-UJH.html>

Aviation services remain an attraction on Rottnest, be it transport, sightseeing or sky diving.



<https://rottnestisland.com/byair>

<https://skydivegeronimo.com.au/>