

# May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1928: The Royal Flying Doctor Service was launched.

- The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia (RFDS) is one of the largest and most comprehensive aeromedical organisations in the world.
- It provides emergency and primary health care services for those living in rural, remote and regional areas of Australia



# Started by Presbyterian Minister John Flynn, A.K.A. “Flynn of the inland”.

- John Flynn, OBE, DD, was born at Moliagul, Victoria on 25/11/1880.
- He was cared for in Sydney by his mother’s sister after his mother died during childbirth.
- When he was five, he was reunited with his family at Snake Gully, near Ballarat.

- Portrait of Flynn in his early 20s.



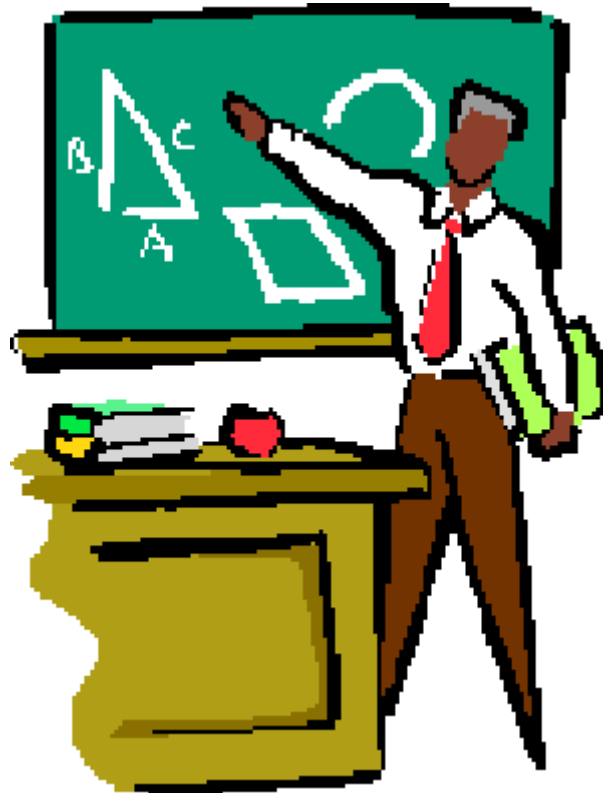
# Early experiences greatly influenced his life.

- The Flynn family later moved to Sunshine, at the time a rural area, but now one of Melbourne's western suburbs.
- The direction that his life was to take was influenced by tales about Australia's vast outback, told by his father's business partners, when they returned from an unsuccessful venture to the far north of the country.



# A brief stint of school teaching.

- Graduating from secondary school in 1898 John began school teaching (qualifications?).



# Ormond College.

- In 1903, he joined the ministry and studied theology at Ormond College, at the University of Melbourne.
- Initially he financed his studies working at Church Home Missionary Centres around Victoria and in 1907 commenced a four year course in divinity at Melbourne University.



# Finding his vocation.

- Flynn graduated in 1910 and was ordained as a Minister of the Presbyterian Church on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1911.
- Because he had worked in rural and remote areas the Presbyterian Church sent him to look at the needs of Outback people.
- His report to the Presbyterian Assembly in 1912 resulted in the establishment of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), of which he was appointed Superintendent.
- Australian Inland Mission Hospital Museum at Lake Grace, Western Australia.



# The idea for the service was suggested by Lieutenant Clifford Peel.

- In 1917, he received an inspirational letter from Lieutenant Clifford Peel, a Victorian medical student with an interest in aviation.
- The young airman and war hero suggested the use of aviation to bring medical help to the Outback.
- Shot down in France, he died at just 24 years of age and never knew that his letter became a blueprint for the creation of the Flying Doctor Service.
- Australian Flying Corps with Sopwith Camels in the background.



# A wealthy supporter.

- For the next ten years, Flynn campaigned for an aerial medical service.
- His vision was to provide a 'mantle of safety' for the people of the bush, and his vision became a reality when his long time supporter, H V McKay, left a large bequest for 'an aerial experiment' which enabled Flynn to get the Flying Doctor Service airborne.
- HV McKay Harvester on display at the Campaspe Run Rural Discovery Centre, Elmore, Victoria, Australia





# QANTAS to the rescue.

- At this time, Flynn also met Hudson Fysh, a founder of QANTAS.
- In 1927, QANTAS and the Aerial Medical Service signed an agreement to operate an aerial ambulance from Cloncurry, Queensland.

- Sir Hudson Fysh:



This is possibly a plane similar to “Victory” (photo from 1931)

- When the first pilot (Arthur Affleck) took off from Cloncurry on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1928, he was flying a single engine, fabric covered, cabin bi-plane capable of carrying a pilot and four passengers at a cruising speed of just under 80 miles per hour.
- He had with him the very first flying doctor, Dr Kenyon St Vincent Welch.
- 'Victory', was greeted at the Julia Creek airstrip by more than 100 people.
- The distance travelled was 85 miles.



# De Havilland DH.83 Fox Moth ZK-AGM (rebuilt in the U.K.)

- 'Victory' went on to fly 110,000 miles in the service of the Flying Doctor until 1934 when it was replaced by QANTAS with a DH83 Fox Moth.



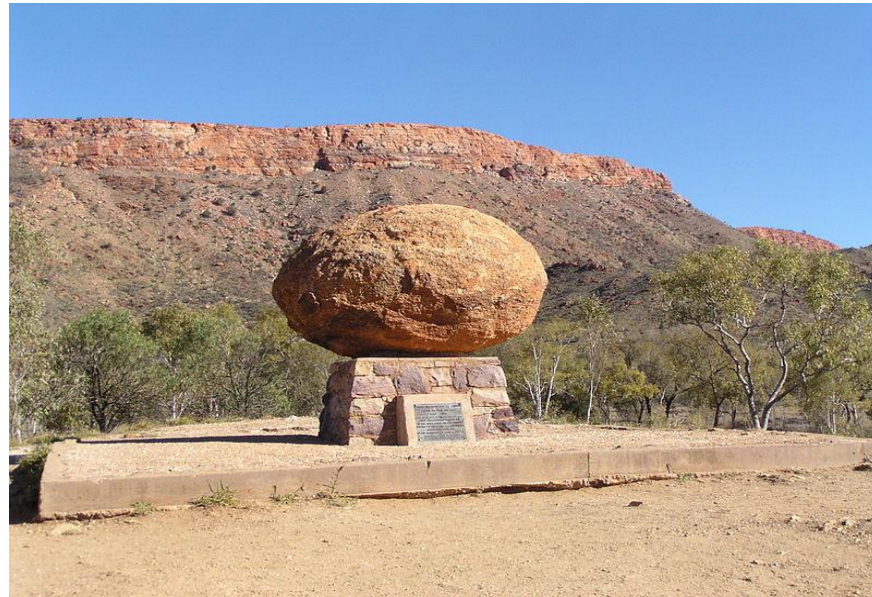
# A constant reminder.

- The Australian \$20 note features the Rev John Flynn (1880-1951), founder of the Aerial Medical Service (which changed its name to the Flying Doctor Service in 1942 and the Royal Flying Doctor Service in 1955).



# Flynn's grave, near Alice Springs involved a desecration of the Devil's Marbles.

- The Northern Territory Department of Public Works had taken the rock from a site sacred to its traditional owners, but after many years of negotiations the rock was returned to its original location in 1998.
- It was replaced with one acceptable to the Aboriginal people, both of the original rock's home and the people on whose land his grave lies.



# A driving hazard in Central Australia.

- A sign on the Eyre Highway indicating that an RFDS emergency airstrip is ahead.
- There are four such strips on the highway.



# A similar dedication.

- Robin Elizabeth Miller (born 7<sup>th</sup> December 1940 – 7<sup>th</sup> December 1975), known as "The Sugarbird Lady", was an Australian aviator and nurse.
- The name "The Sugarbird Lady" was given to her by outback Aboriginal children during her work combatting polio.
- She died of cancer at the age of 35.
- Memorial to The Sugar Bird Lady at Jandakot Airport, Perth, unveiled in 1978. (Replica Mooney Super 21)



# Husband also dedicated.

- After travelling to remote communities, she would treat children with the Sabin vaccine in sugar lumps (first flight 1967).
- She later flew with the Royal Flying Doctor Service.
- In 1973 she married Harold Dicks, the director of the Royal Flying Doctor Service, and became Robin Miller Dicks.
- Part of the memorial at Jandakot Airport.

