

AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

PARIS-LE BOURGET AIRPORT

PRESS KIT

AMY JOHNSON EXHIBITION

The fate of a heroine

17th May to 31st August 2014

EXPOSITION
AMY JOHNSON
LE DESTIN D'UNE HÉROÏNE

DU 17 MAI AU
31 AOÛT 2014

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CONTENTS

1. THE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM OF PARIS-LE BOURGET
2. SYNOPSIS AND MAP OF THE EXHIBITION
3. AMY JOHNSON
4. BETWEEN-THE-WARS HALL
6. VISITOR INFORMATION AND CONTACT



Amy Johnson on board during the raid England-Australia in 1930, Collection musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / Monde et Caméra, MC 23340

1. THE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

The Air and Space museum is located at the Paris-Le Bourget airport, which is the leading European airport for business aviation, and is one of the oldest and most important Air and Space museum in the world. It was inaugurated in 1919 and presents outstanding historical heritage that includes the three main aeronautical areas: balloon/airship flight, aviation and space navigation. Its collections include more than 400 aircraft, out of which 150 are on display, from the earliest aircraft to the Concorde, such as the Bréguet XIX "Point d'interrogation" or the unforgettable Supermarine Spitfire. Besides aircraft, the collections include engines, propellers, equipment, lots of graphical works of art, toys, miniatures and models, uniforms, pictures and archives.

As a link between past and future, the Air and Space museum of Le Bourget is a living place: there are numerous cultural events, frequent addition of new items to existing collections, activities for the benefit of all public categories, such as the area "Planète Pilote" devoted to children, area hire for corporate events, films and pictures shooting, etc.



Fougas CM-170 Magister of the Patrouille de France, restored in 2013 © Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / A. Fernandes

« The Air and Space museum is a Pantheon

as it is the place where we remember those who built the aviation »

Catherine Maunoury, Museum Director

KEY FIGURES:

230 000 visitors

12 500 m²

5 000 works of art

400 aircraft, 150 of which are on display

112 employees

11 exhibition halls

2. SYNOPSIS AND MAP OF THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition « Amy Johnson » is an original production of the Air and Space museum of Le Bourget.

It shows the work of Pierre Wachs, with a scenario devised by Régis Hautière and Francis Laboutique, which is based on historical material gathered by Emmanuelle Polack on a British pioneer and heroine, Amy Johnson, who is very famous in her native country.

The exhibition, which will be presented in Hall 19-39 of the museum from 17 May to 31 August 2014, shows around forty strip cartoons, unpublished sketches, as well as around sixty objects coming from the rich collections of the museum: pictures from the largest press agencies of that time, newspapers, advertisements, books and board games from the thirties, original aircraft plans, technical items, small-sized aircraft models and newsreel.

Objects and texts highlight the complex personality of Amy Johnson, who was the first woman to make a solo air raid from Britain to Australia in May 1930.

As a ground and then aircraft engineer, she was also interested in car rallies. As a resolute and independent woman looking for elegance, she personified the spirit of the thirties.

Her achievement was celebrated by the newspapers and on newsreel: when she came back to Britain from Australia, one million people were waiting for her in the streets of London.



This unexpected achievement, following which she was nicknamed the “Lindbergh Girl”, was the first of further outstanding air raids.

In July 1932 she married a very famous pilot, James Allan Mollison. Their “flying pair” went on either joint flights or solo endeavours, each of them trying to break the other’s records, before they divorced in 1938.

At the end of 1939 she found a new way to express her courage: Amy Johnson flew target tugs that were used to train British student air gunners. Then she flew Royal Air Force aircraft from manufacturing plants to operational units, within the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA).

On 5 January 1941, while flying an aircraft for the ATA, she disappeared in the Thames Estuary, after all attempts to save her had failed.

Amy Johnson personified both a modern and athletic woman who beat the men’s records, and a refined woman who appeared in fashion magazines of the Thirties. She gave substance to her own legend. Her commitment towards commercial aviation and then to her country promoted her from the level of star woman pilot to that of national heroine and symbol of the role played by women in a country at

war.

Those who like the ninth art (cartoon art), photography and archives will be pleased to discover the many aspects of this great pilot who had such a tragic fate.

A cartoon strip named “Amy Johnson” was published in summer 2013 by Casterman editions.

Curator:

Georgia Santangelo, in charge of the “works of art” department for the Air and Space museum.

External curator:

Emmanuelle Polack, historian

2. SYNOPSIS AND MAP OF THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition is organised in five parts and consists in two opposite trails: the first is based on the cartoon strips, the second one highlights through original collection items the vibrant and outstanding achievements of Amy Johnson.

1. The air raid to Australia in 1930: the “Lindbergh Girl”.

In 1930 Amy Johnson became the first woman to fly solo from Britain to Australia, after a flight of about 20,000 km on board the DH Gipsy Moth G-AAAH named “Jason”.

2. From ground engineering to satin gloves

This section of the exhibition shows the many aspects of Amy Johnson, from her birth to her first flights, as well as her achievements in car rallies and elegance competitions.

3. Solo and duo

As an aviatrix recognised for her international achievements, Amy Johnson shared her love of aircraft with her husband James Mollison, a famous rally pilot of that time. Together, they wrote some of the greatest pages in the history of epic joint flights, until they attempted to fly over the Atlantic Ocean in 1933. Their relationship ended in a divorce few years later.



4. Patriotic commitment

In 1940, as Britain was fully into the war effort and Europe was devastated, Amy Johnson joined the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) where she delivered military aircraft from factories to RAF air bases.

5. Last flight and posterity

During a routine delivery flight, Amy's aircraft had an engine failure. She was reported lost in the Thames. Amy's body was never recovered.

History will retain the image of an extraordinary pioneering aviatrix and a committed woman.

3. AMY JOHNSON

Biography of Amy Johnson (1903-1941)

"I have an immense belief in the future of flying"



Amy Johnson in 1930, Collection musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / Monde et Caméra, MC 23341

The most famous of British airwomen, Amy Johnson, was born on 1st July 1903 in Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire. Her parents, John William Johnson and Amy Hodge, had married the previous year, and Amy was the oldest of the couple's four daughters.

She was a bright child. At the Boulevard Secondary School where she studied, some saw her as having "rebellious" tendencies. She later entered the University of Sheffield, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in 1920.

After university, she returned to Hull and worked for a short time as a secretary in Bow Alley Lane. At that time she developed a great passion for aviation. She is said to have made her first flight in 1926, for 5 shillings in an aircraft operated by the Surrey Flying Services from Endike Lane airport.

In a letter to her lover, Amy wrote: "...Mollie (editor's note: one of her sisters) and I went into the aircraft. Both of us liked it very much, but I would have preferred some aerobatics."

At that time, she was not sure of her future professional career: her new job in the Morison advertising agency seemed to open new horizons in this area and encouraged her to leave Hull for London, at the beginning of 1927, to find new opportunities.

The first weeks she spent in London were not auspicious. As she couldn't find a job in advertising, she accepted to work as an apprentice saleswoman in the Peter Jones department store, in a position without great prospects at that time.

A friend of her family, Vernon Wood, introduced her to one of the associates of the Crocker's solicitor agency: she stayed there two years as a typist and then as Mr Wood's personal secretary.

At the end of the 20's, flying was becoming a quite popular sport, and, in September 1928, Amy began to learn to fly at her own expense, as a member of the London Aeroplane Club based at the De Havilland Stag Lane airport, near Edgware.

After her first flying lessons, she wrote a letter to her family, in which she expressed her "immense belief in the future of flying."

3. AMY JOHNSON

From that moment, flying became her prime objective. After she gained a pilot's "A" licence in July 1929, she left her job to become a full-time ground engineer at Stag Lane, to prepare the examination for the ground engineer's "C" licence delivered by the British administration. She was the first woman in the UK, to successfully pass this examination in December 1929. She remained some time the only woman worldwide to have obtained such a licence.

With funds from her father, always one of her strongest supporters, and from Lord Wakefield, an oil magnate, she purchased a second-hand De Havilland DH 60 Gipsy Moth biplane she named "Jason", after her father's business trade mark.

Motivated by the dream to lead the way for women in the sky and to prove that they can be as good as men in aeronautics, she attempted to beat the record, held by the Australian pilot Bert Hinkler since 1928, of the air rally between England and Australia.

When she took off from Croydon airport, south of London, in the early hours of 5 May 1930, nobody in the general public knew her.

The flight proved to be very difficult: the first day she reached Vienna but was on the brink of passing out, as a result of nausea caused by petrol fumes leaking from the tanks. In spite of everything she continued her endeavour, and the international press began to make this young British woman appear on their front pages, as she was keeping the public in suspense by braving the elements, over mountains, oceans and deserts, and successfully defying, alone, sandstorms and the monsoon during her transcontinental air raid.

When she landed at Port Darwin on 24 May 1930 after her 16,000 km trip, she had become a national heroine, as radio and press had covered the event as and when information on the trip was provided.

At her triumphant arrival, thousands of congratulation messages awaited her, including one from King George V and Queen Mary. When she returned home, one million people greeted her in the streets of London. Her popularity was huge.

Her aircraft for this flight can be still be seen in the Flight Gallery of the Science Museum in London.

In recognition of this achievement she received the Harmon Trophy, and also became Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE).

In 1931 she attempted a long-distance flight to Tokyo, but a crash in Poland forced her to abandon the project. In July of the same year she set the record for light aircraft on a flight from England to Japan.

In 1932 she married James Allan Mollison, also a record-breaking pilot. The newspapers called them "the flying pair". The couple became for several years British idols and were often on the front pages of not only the popular press but also the international newspapers of that time. They flew either together or as solo pilots, while breaking their respective records in a spirit of friendly competition.

3. AMY JOHNSON

In 1932 Amy Johnson broke her husband's solo record for the flight from London to Cape Town, South Africa.

In 1933 the couple made an attempt at a nonstop flight from Britain to New-York. However, their aircraft ran out of fuel and crash-landed in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Both were injured. After recuperating, the pair was feted by New York society and received a ticker tape parade down Wall Street.

In 1934 the Mollisons flew to India in record time, as part of the Britain to Australia MacRobertson Air Race.

In May 1936 Amy Johnson regained her Britain to South Africa flight record by breaking the record previously set by Tommy Rose, on a round flight in a Percival Gull Six fitted with a 200 HP Gipsy Six engine. She flew in a suit especially designed for her by Elsa Schiaparelli and explained to the journalists that she had taken along a tennis racket as well as an evening dress, and that she had powdered her nose in mid-flight!

The marriage was going wrong: in 1938 Amy divorced Mollison and reverted to her maiden name. At the time she was publishing a magazine, the Lady Driver, and became an experienced car driver and engineer while participating in many women's car rallies.

During these ten years of celebrity, she embodied both the modern and athletic woman able to beat the men's records and a refined woman appearing in fashion and art magazines. However she met great difficulties in finding a job as pilot suited to her level.

Apart from a short period in 1934 when she worked as an airline pilot for Hillmans Airways, she had to wait until 1939 before she at last gained professional status as a pilot which she had been targeting for so long: from June 1939 onwards she worked for the Solent Air Ferry Service.



James Mollison in 1936, Collection musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / Monde et Caméra, MC 27625



Raid board game , inv 11360

3. AMY JOHNSON

The same year she published an autobiography, "Sky roads of the world", a study of the main air routes and the future of aviation.

At the end of 1939 she found a new way to express her courage: Amy Johnson was flying target tugs for the purpose of training student air gunners. On 20 May 1940 she was formally accepted to join the newly formed Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) and rose to First Officer. Her job was to transport Royal Air Force aircraft from aircraft manufacturer plants and operational units.

On 5 January 1941, while routinely flying an Airspeed Oxford for the ATA from Blackpool to RAF Killington near Oxford, she went off course in adverse weather conditions. Reportedly out of fuel, she parachuted out of her aircraft, which crashed into the Thames Estuary. She drowned and her body was never recovered, as every attempt to save her failed. There is still some mystery about the accident.

Being the first member of the Air Transport Auxiliary to die in service, Amy Johnson's tragic end changed her status from air race icon to national heroine and a symbol of the role taken by women in a nation at war. In 1942, a film about Amy Johnson's life, "They Flew Alone", was made by director-producer Herbert Wilcox. It was intended to be a propaganda film honouring Amy Johnson as a heroine at the height of the war years.



4. BETWEEN-THE-WARS HALL

In this hall, which was fully renovated in 2013, aerobatic, record airplanes and early airliners are displayed. This unique collection illustrates the development of civil aviation from 1919 to 1939. Over this period, after major technological advances made during WWI, aeroplanes were not only becoming transport aircraft but also technical and prestige assets for countries at the time.

For her epic flight from UK to Australia and many other record breaking flights, Amy Johnson is a typical example of these attempts « to blaze a trail in the air ».



Between-the-wars Hall © Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / V. Pandellé

Famous airplanes are displayed here:

The best known, « Point d'Interrogation » (“Question mark”), the Bréguet 19 T.F « Super Bidon » (super tank) is one of the most important pieces in the museum. On board this aeroplane, Coste and Bellonte were the first crew to fly from Paris to New York in 1930. This record westbound flight across the Atlantic Ocean took more than 37 hours.

The legendary Dewoitine-530, flown by Marcel Doret, is an aerobatic aeroplane built in France, last production of Dewoitine D-27 and D-53 fighters. This aeroplane was displayed during air shows until WWII broke out and was flown again after the war.



Bréguet 19 T.F, called *Point d'interrogation*
© Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace - Le Bourget / V. Pandellé

Also displayed in this hall, the Junker F 13 is the first all-metal transport aircraft. Developed from late WWI fighters, this type is the first monoplane designed for airlines. In spite of restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, the F13 was ordered by many airlines and also built under licence in the USA. As early as 1920, she was used by the US Post Office for flights connecting New York to Chicago and San Francisco.

A few final words about the Farman, first airliner in commercial service on the London-Paris route in 1919, or the Caudron C-635 Simoun, inspiring Saint Exupéry for *Le Petit Prince*.

5. VISITOR INFORMATION AND CONTACT



Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace (Air and Space museum)

Museum opening hours: 10am – 6pm from 1st April to 30th September, 10am – 5pm from 1st October to 31st March.

The museum is closed every Monday and also on 25th December and 1st January.

How to get here:

★ **By road :**

On A1, exit 5, follow « Aéroport du Bourget » signs.

★ **By rail :**

RER B, get off at « le Bourget », then take bus number 152.

★ **By Bus**

-Number 350 from Gare de l'Est, Gare du Nord or Porte de la Chapelle.

-Number 152 from « Porte de la Villette », get off at « Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace »

★ **By tube**

Take line number 4, get off at « La Courneuve », then take a number 152 bus.

Press contact :

Pascale Nizet

+33 1 49 92 70 16 - +33 6 03 74 18 42

pascale.nizet(at)museeairespace.fr

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Interviews of Catherine Maunoury on request .