

## CHARLES KINGSFORD SMITH 1897 – 1935

Charles Kingsford Smith was born in Brisbane on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1897 to William Charles Smith and Catherine Kingsford, their seventh child. The name Kingsford was not at this time included in the family name.

He and his family moved quite often, even going to Canada for 6 years. It was while they were in Canada that Kingsford was added to the Smith name to solve a mailing problem with two other Smiths in the same street.

When they came back to Australia, in 1907, Charles attended St. Andrews Cathedral School, Sydney. In spite of all the moves he was good at his schoolwork.

After leaving school Charles enrolled as an engineering apprentice at Sydney Technical College and worked in a factory in Sydney.

In 1915, on his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he joined the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF), first in the infantry then in the signal corps. He was trained in motorcycle despatch riding and field telephone operations. Charles desperately wanted to go to war. In May 1915 he was sent to Gallipoli and later France. Both very dangerous situations for a despatch rider.

In France he applied for the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) and was sent to England in 1916 for training. In June 1917 with barely 45 hours flying training he was sent into combat. Later that year he was awarded the Military Cross.

After the war he and another pilot acquired an aeroplane and carried out joy flights around England.

When this enterprise came to an end he went to America in 1920. He returned to Australia in 1921 where in 1923 he married his first wife Thelma Corboy. This marriage lasted only 2 years.

In 1927 he met Charles Ulm and together they flew around Australia in 10 days 5 hours and 15 minutes, a new record for the 7,500 mile trip.

Charles Kingsford Smith created many world records, either alone or with others.

**1928 May 31** in the Southern Cross, Smith (pilot), Ulm (co-pilot), Harry Lyon (navigator) and Jim Warner (wireless-operator) took off from Oakland on San Francisco Bay flew to Honolulu to Fiji and onto Brisbane arriving on June 9<sup>th</sup> to be met by several thousand people. This was the first trans-Pacific flight between America and Australia. Smith and Ulm were awarded the Air Force Cross and were both given honorary commissions in the Royal Australian Air Force.

**1928 August** in the Southern Cross the first non-stop flight across Australia from Melbourne to Perth.

**1928 September** the first flight across the Tasman Sea from Australia to New Zealand.

**1928 October** the first westbound crossing from New Zealand to Australia.

**1929 June - July** Record flight from Australia to England in 12 days 18 hours.

**1930 October** Record solo flight in the Southern Cross Junior from England to Australia. Time taken 9 days 22 hours.

**1932** Knighted.

**1933 January 11<sup>th</sup>** Trip to New Zealand from Gerringong for joyriding tour. Took off from Seven Mile Beach at Gerroa at 2.50am. The flight took 14 hours 10 minutes and landed in New Plymouth. Co-pilot/navigator Bill Taylor, wireless operator John Stannage

**1933 27<sup>th</sup> March** return flight from New Zealand to Sydney.

**1933 October** Record solo flight of 7 days 4 hours 43 minutes from England to Australia.

**1934 October – November** First east bound trans-Pacific flight from Australia to America in Lady Southern Cross, a single engine aircraft.

**1935 November** Final flight – a failed attempt to break the England-Australia record of 2 days 4 hours 38 minutes. The Lady Southern Cross was lost on 8<sup>th</sup> November between India and Malaya. The co-pilot was Tommy Pethybridge. Kingsford Smith was 38 yrs old.

The Southern Cross G-AUSU is now in Brisbane Museum