

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6219

Bonney, Maude Rose

(1897 - 1994)

Born	18971120, Pretoria South Africa
Died	19940224, Gold Coast Queensland Australia
Occupation	Aviator, Pilot

Summary

In 1931, aviatrix Maude 'Lores' Bonney broke the Australian record for the longest one-day flight by a woman and the following year she became the first woman to circumnavigate Australia by air. She was also the first person to fly from Australia to England and the first person to undertake a solo flight from Australia to South Africa.

Details

Maude Rose 'Lores' Rubens was born on November 20, 1897, in Pretoria, South Africa and later settled in Melbourne with her parents. Whilst helping the war effort through the Red Cross during World War I, Lores met Harry Bonney. The pair fell in love, married, and decided to settle in Queensland.

It was Harry's first cousin, airman Bert Hinkler, who sparked Lores's interest in flying. She began taking lessons and soon after Harry bought her a Gipsy Moth biplane, which she named *My Little Ship*.

Lores began breaking aviation records in 1931. Setting off on Christmas Day, Lores flew from Brisbane to Wangaratta, completing the longest one-day solo flight by an Australian female pilot.

Next, Lores's sights were set on becoming the first female pilot to circumnavigate Australia. Despite a failed first attempt, Lores successfully flew from Perth to Brisbane in August-September 1932, flying a totally of 13,000km and being airborne for 95 hours and 27 minutes.

Two records was not enough for Lores and soon she was determined to become the first female to fly solo from Australia to England. Setting off from Archerfield aerodrome on April 10, 1933, Lores's journey was fraught with danger and along the way she crashed her beloved *My Little Ship* twice. Despite many setbacks, Lores landed in Croydon, England, on June 21 1933 after spending 157 hours and 15 minutes airborne.

Despite having crashed her aircraft, the Australian press described Lores as the first female to fly solo from Australia to England. In 1934 she was appointed a Member (MBE) of the Order of the British Empire for her feat. Today, however, Jean Batten is regarded as the first woman to have completed this journey. Lores broke another record in 1937, by becoming the first person to fly solo from Australia to South Africa.

In January 1991 Lores was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) 'in recognition of service to aviation'. Despite her achievements, however, Lores's story sadly remains largely forgotten.

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

Papers of Maude Bonney, circa 1920-circa 1990 [manuscript]

Notebook of Maude Bonney, approximately 1933

Diary of Maude Bonney, 1933

Diary of Maude Bonney, 1937

National Library of Australia

[Biographical cuttings on Lores Bonney, former aviator, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals]

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences

Lores Bonney aviation archive

Author Details

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