

1912

HISTORY

SA^{EXTRA}URDAY

ON THIS DAY

1360 A freak hailstorm kills over 1000 English troops camped outside the town of Chartres during the Hundred Years War.

1598 King Henry IV of France issues the Edict of Nantes, designed to promote peace between Catholics and the country's Huguenot minority.

1814 Highway robber Francis Barry and bullock duffers Richard Dowling and Angelo Le Rosse are executed in Sydney. The first two appear resigned to their fate.

1912 Francis Birtles, Syd Ferguson and a terrier, Rex, complete the first crossing of Australia by motor car from the west across the Nullarbor Plain when they arrive in Martin Place, Sydney, in a 10hp Brush car. They took 28 days. Birtles is also known as a long-distance cyclist.

1945 In the first NSW robbery in which a machine gun is used, three men with a Thompson gun and automatic pistols rob five Cockatoo Island dockyard staff of a £12,000 payroll at a Drummoyne wharf.

1964 Sidney Poitier becomes the first black man to win an Academy Award, for best actor for his performance in *Lilies of the Field*.

1975 Christian militiamen in Beirut kill 22 Palestinians on a bus. This attack is generally accepted as the start of the Lebanese Civil War.

1997 Golfer Tiger Woods, 21, becomes the youngest person to win the Masters and the first African-American and Asian-American champion.

1998 Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep, gives natural birth in Scotland to a healthy lamb, Bonnie.

2008 Prime minister Kevin Rudd announces the appointment of Australia's first woman governor-general, Quentin Bryce.

2015 Thelma Coyne Long a great of Australian tennis, winner of the Australian Championships in 1952 and 1954, dies at the age of 96.



Flying corps veteran turned Sydney paddock into airport

The real estate agent received an unusual request. The customer wanted to know if there was any site suitable for an aerodrome. It was 1919, a century ago this year, and World War I veteran, pilot and pioneer aviator Nigel Love wanted a decent sized stretch of flat land from which he could takeoff and land his aircraft. He also needed room for hangars, aircraft workshops and other facilities for the airline he was creating.

The agent gave it some thought and told Love he was in luck. An abattoir was closing down out at Mascot. It was surrounded by paddocks that should be suitable for landing planes.

Love drove out to investigate and was impressed by what he saw.

The land was perfectly flat "so much so" Love later said "that it appeared to me to be reclaimed land by the process of pumping from the adjoining Cooks River". The grass had been so neatly grazed by cattle that "it left nothing to be desired and above all, as far as I was concerned, needed no money spending on it to make it serviceable to land aircraft".

Love negotiated a lease, formed the Australian Aircraft and Engineering Company (AA & E Co), ordered aircraft and began building his aerodrome. By November he was ready to start taking passengers. On November 19, Love took off from his grassy airstrip with a passenger, freelance photographer Billy Marshall, aboard his Avro 504K.

It was the first passenger flight out of Mascot aerodrome, just over Sydney so that Marshall could get some aerial photos, but it was the beginning of something much bigger.

On April 14, 1920, 99 years ago tomorrow, Love took his first paying passenger from Sydney to Melbourne. By then his paddocks had become Mascot Aerodrome, later Sydney Airport, which celebrates its centenary this year.

Love didn't start his company and his aerodrome with any particularly grandiose plans, and his runways were



Nigel Love (above, right) built the first hangars at Mascot (top) before taking freelance photographer Billy Marshall (above, left) up in his Avro 504K on November 19, 1919.

later taken over by the government. But the development of Sydney Airport owed a big part to his passion for aviation, his drive and determination to take flying beyond a mere novelty and make it a successful industry in Australia.

He was born Nigel Borland Love on January 16, 1892, in South Kurrajong. His father John Love was a

businessman who owned his own import business. After graduating from Sydney Boy's High, Nigel looked set to follow his father into the business, but World War I altered the course of his life.

In 1915 he signed up for the Australian Imperial Force. At first he decided he wanted to be in the field artillery, but needed to train to ride a horse, which he did. However, he then felt that the infantry was a better fit for him and reported to a camp at Liverpool, where he was posted to the Fifth Reinforcements of the 18th Battalion. In 1916 he successfully applied for the State Aviation School, to train as a pilot in the Australian Flying Corps. He quickly developed a passion for aviation, gaining his wings in 1917, and was posted to No. 3 Squadron in France.

His squadron conducted aerial reconnaissance and worked with the

artillery to guide their fire toward enemy positions. For a time the squadron was posted in the area of the Somme, where Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, menaced Allied airmen. But in April 1918 the Red Baron was shot down, and it was members of Love's squadron who retrieved Richthofen's body and his plane.

In June 1918, Love contracted Spanish flu and was sent to England to recuperate. After his recovery he spent time as an AFC flying instructor and also ferried aircraft for the Royal Air Force from factories and repair shops to RAF bases.

After the Armistice he felt he needed to look to his future and decided it lay in the skies. He negotiated with aviation company A.V. Roe & Co Ltd, manufacturers of Avro aircraft, to be their sole agent in Australia, to sell and manufacture their machines (which included the sale of the first aircraft to Qantas). He signed a three-year agreement with Avro, partnering with Avro executive Harry Broadsmith (who was then sent to Australia) and No. 3 Squadron comrade Walter Warnerford.

In July 1919, he returned home and officially formed the AA & E Co. After finding the suitable place at Mascot to set up operations he negotiated a lease

with the owners, the Kensington Racing Club (KRC). He then began erecting the hangars and other buildings he would need on the site. The company's first Avro aircraft arrived in crates aboard SS Commonwealth in November, and finally Love could get down to the business of getting ready to fly.

His trip with photographer Marshall in November 1919 showed the possibilities of an air service. He also looked out for opportunities to promote his landing field.

When he heard that Ross and Keith Smith, the first people to fly from England to Australia, were headed for Sydney he extended an invitation for them to land at his airport. They arrived in February 1920 to great fanfare, gaining some much needed publicity for Love's aerodrome.

To keep money coming in Love sold joy flights and charters mostly over Sydney. On April 14, 1920, wealthy businessman John Gibson became AA & E's first fare-paying passenger, chartering the plane for a trip to Melbourne. Because of foul weather along the way, with storms and heavy rain, the plane had to stop five times, taking two days to make the journey. The cost of the flight was a staggering £25 an hour.

The company folded after the withdrawal of government support in 1923 and the land was compulsorily acquired by the government from the KRC. But the airport that Love had established lived on.

In 1924, Love married Phyllis Davey, the daughter of Edwin Davey, owner of Edwin Davey & Sons, flour-millers. They would have four children together. Love was given a job in his father-in-law's company and in 1940 took over as managing director.

He maintained his love of aviation and his expertise was called on in World War II when he was commissioned wing commander in the Royal Australian Air Force, in charge of the Air Training Corps. After the war he returned to the flour-milling industry, with great success. He retired in 1962 and set up cattle farms.

He died in 1979.