

# Woman to fly Hovercraft

An attractive woman who owns a South Australian transport company will operate Australia's first Hovercraft service.

By a special correspondent



Miss Sylvia Birdseye... first in Australia to buy a Hovercraft.

SHE intends to take lessons in flying it in the hope that she can get a public transport licence. She is Miss Sylvia Birdseye, of 11a Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide.

The Hovercraft will begin operating in the Spencer Gulf area next year.

It is a gas-turbine engine British Hovercraft Corporation SRN-6, and it will be acquired by a newly formed company, Birdseye Hover Services Pty. Ltd.

The service will operate across Spencer Gulf connecting towns like Wollaroo and Port Pirie (on the east

coast) and Cowell and Whyalla (on the west coast) and eventually including Port Lincoln.

The Birdseye family's transport tradition began 40 years ago when Miss Birdseye's mother drove horse-hair padded motor charabancs which replaced four-in-hand coaches.

Four years ago, Miss Birdseye inherited the business when her mother, Mrs Sylvia Birdseye, died at 60 after having driven buses 2,000 miles a week for almost 30 years on the Adelaide-Port Lincoln-Streaky Bay run.

As owner-director Miss Birdseye finds that she can run the big bus service more efficiently from her office in Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide, than from behind a steering wheel like her mother.

But having been "brought up on how to run buses", she sometimes makes a quick dash in the middle of the night with a replacement bus and emergency driver to take over passengers from a vehicle which has broken down.

## Pin-up girl

She also finds time for a second job as organiser for the Adelaide Children's Hospital Country Auxiliaries.

This second job involves travelling about 35,000 miles a year to country districts to set up new auxiliaries.

Miss Birdseye modestly claims that she is "not a patch on mum, the really colorful character of the family."

The Port Augusta City Council honored Miss Birdseye's mother by erecting a drinking-fountain and plaque to her memory on the Lincoln Highway just north of the Iron Knob turn-off.

The Whyalla Apex Club planted 100 trees around the site and built a barbecue there.

The original Birdseye Bus Service, which began

running between Adelaide and Mannum in 1920, was the first motorised service in South Australia.

It had been running 20 years when Miss Birdseye's mother began to drive one of the two big Reo charabancs. In 1923 she married one of the service's proprietors, Mr Sydney Birdseye.

Among the exploits which made the late Mrs Birdseye a "pin-up girl of South Australia's west coast" was when a creek between Port Augusta and Whyalla flooded in 1938.

She donned bathers and dashed into the torrent will block and tackle.

When she reached the other side she attached the tackle to a sturdy tree and winched the bus and 16 other vehicles across.

The SRN-6 model, similar to the one bought for Spencer Gulf, is becoming popular for mineral offshore exploration, island mapping and freight carrying. They save time and money by taking short cuts over narrow, shallow waters. They can travel over scrub and saplings up to 8ft high.

The British Services recently completed a year of intensive Hovercraft trials in South-East Asia where the craft was used for carrying troops over shallow water and over swamps and rapids.

The SRN-6 Hovercraft, it is claimed, would be the ideal vehicle for the coral reef areas of Queensland, the swampy areas of New Guinea, Moreton Bay and Port Phillip.

Hovercraft enthusiasts say they would be suitable method of transport in parts of the Northern Territory for P.M.G. and other Government officers.

The direct operating cost of the SRN-6, taking into consideration insurance, amortisation, fuel, oil and maintenance, is 5c per passenger mile.

The Hovercraft has its agricultural uses. Equipped with rear-mounted spray

booms it can be used for weed and pest control. At a speed of 40 knots its minimum turn radius is 160 yards.

Normal braking distance at speeds of 50 knots is 300 yards, but in an emergency this distance can be reduced to just over 100 yards.

Other Hovercraft are expected to be ordered soon for Sydney and Melbourne services.



The SRN-6 in operation in Britain. A similar type will be used for the service across Spencer Gulf, near Adelaide.

## S.A. Man Appointed N.T. Judge



Mr. R. A. Blackburn

CANBERRA, October 14 —Mr. Richard Arthur Blackburn, an Adelaide solicitor, has been appointed Resident Judge of the NT Supreme Court in succession to Mr. Justice Bridge, who died recently. The appointment was announced by the Attorney-General (Mr. Snedden) today.

Mr. Justice Blackburn is 48. He is married and has two children.

Son of the late Brig. A. S. Blackburn, VC, Mr. Justice Blackburn had a brilliant scholastic career at St. Peter's College.

He graduated with first-class honors in the school of English language and literature at the University of Adelaide in 1939 and was awarded the Rhodes Scholarship for SA in 1940.

## War Service

During World War II he saw service with the 9th Division in the Middle East and New Guinea, rising to the rank of captain.

In 1946 he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where he received the honors degree of Bachelor of Civil Law in 1949.

In July, 1949, he was elected to an Eldon Law Scholarship and was later called to the Bar in England.

Mr. Justice Blackburn returned to Adelaide in 1950 and became the youngest professor when, at 31, he was appointed to the Bonython Chair of Law.

He resigned in 1957 to enter private practice with Finlayson and Co.

While at the university he was appointed Commanding Officer of the Adelaide University Regiment with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

In July, 1962, he was made colonel and appointed Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn. Royal SA Regiment, and in the 1965 New Year Honors was made an OBE (Military Division).

Registered in Australia for transmission by post as a newspaper

# The News

Telephones: 2088, 2089, 2700 8 cents

DARWIN, MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1966 Vol. 15, No. 180.



• The Northern Territory's new Supreme Court judge, Mr Justice Richard Arthur Blackburn, and Mrs Blackburn, pictured at Government House just before luncheon today. Mr Justice Blackburn and his wife arrived at the weekend following the Judge's swearing-in ceremony at Canberra on Friday. Tomorrow morning he will officially take his place on the Supreme Court bench and is expected to preside at brief hearings this week. They will return to Adelaide for a few weeks to make final arrangements before coming to Darwin where Mr Justice Blackburn will be the resident NT Supreme Court Judge. He has taken over from Mr Justice Bridge who died suddenly in Sydney while on vacation two months ago.

# "Flying grannie" beats Russians

NEW YORK, Monday.—Mrs Jerrie Mock, the 40-year-old flying grandmother, landed at Columbus, Ohio, last night after shattering a 28-year-old endurance record.

Mrs Mock, the first woman to fly solo around the world in 1964, flew 4,550 miles non-stop from Honolulu to Columbus, breaking the 3,671-mile endurance record set by three Russian women in 1938.

She accomplished the 31-hour flight on three ham sandwiches and a vacuum flask of water. She had 450 gallons of extra fuel in the passenger compartment of her six-seater Cessna.

Mrs Mock broke the women's distance record about 200 miles west of Kansas City, but stayed in the air for about another five hours.

Reunited with her husband and family at Columbus she was asked why she did it. She said: "I was going through a record book and found the records set by these Russian women. I began to wonder why some one hadn't put more gasoline in an airplane and set out to better the 1938 record. I thought I should."

(A.A.P.-Reuter)

Ade Corvide

# She's In Charge Of Seven Male Pilots

A 22-year-old NZ woman with about 4,000 flying hours to her credit has been appointed as the first woman chief flying instructor in SA at the Ross Aviation Flying School at Parafield.

She is Miss Helen Fitton, who began flying seven years ago. Her appointment puts her in charge of seven male flying instructors.

Miss Fitton has a lively personality and curly auburn hair. She became interested in planes and flying at the age of three. Her first flying was done in NZ and she came to SA because she wanted to travel.

"I found that I liked SA so much that I stayed," she said yesterday.

Miss Fitton's new appointment involves much ground work, but at present the school has a new course in progress and all instructors are in the air for several hours each day.

Part of her job is to arrange the courses and meet prospective clients.

"At present we have farmers, business men and an opal digger enrolled to learn to fly, but more than 50 p.c. of our students are young people," she said.

"I spend between 20 and 25 hours a week in the air, sometimes with students and sometimes visiting the dozen or so country centres where there are schools," she said.

Miss Fitton averages about 50 hours work each week, but loves flying so

much that she doesn't consider the time she spends in the air as work. It costs about \$720 to obtain a full private pilot's licence, and Miss Fitton considers that, as a hobby, flying is no more expensive than photography or skiing.

Once fully trained, a pilot could hire a plane and fly almost anywhere in the Commonwealth, she said.

The hiring fee for a plane with a good air speed was \$24 for each hour of actual flying.

## Third Page For Women



Miss Helen Fitton at the controls of a Cessna 172 at Parafield aerodrome yesterday.

A person hiring a plane to fly to Melbourne would be charged only for the time the plane was in the air, but pilots were expected to log at least three hours flying each day that the plane was out on hire, Miss Fitton said.

Through her job, Miss Fitton has visited every State in Australia except Queensland, and she is hoping that she will have the opportunity to travel there and perhaps to New Guinea in the course of her job.

"It really is a marvellous job, because you can fly almost anywhere whenever you like, except Woomera, for which you need a special permit," she said.

# YOUNG PILOT



DIANE WATSON, of Granville, who will sit for her commercial pilot's licence test tomorrow.

# Her studies keep her up in the air

ATTRACTIVE young Sydney girl, Diane Watson, spends most of her time up in the clouds — literally.

For Diane—a competent pilot—is happiest when she's 5000 feet above the ground.

At the moment Diane is spending every available minute aloft—but it's not just for pleasure.

Tomorrow she will go for her commercial pilot's licence, and if she's successful it will mean a new life for this pretty 25-year-old.

"It all began six years ago when I was living in Narromine," Diane explained.

"My landlady's son-in-law had a plane and took me up for a ride.

"I really got the bug and immediately enrolled in the flying school."

Flying seems to run in her family.

Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Watson, of Granville, were enthusiastic glider pilots, and were naturally delighted when their daughter announced she had taken to the air.

But flying lessons were rather expensive (\$8 per hour), particularly on a stenographer's wage in a country town, so Diane was forced to give them up after six months.

She didn't fly for the next two years but saved madly and came home to Sydney where she joined the Royal Aero Club of New South Wales and enrolled for more lessons.

A little more than a year ago, after more lessons and with another six hours' flying time logged in her records, she obtained her private pilot's licence.

Last year she won the Royal Aero Club's award for the most promising pilot in the restricted licence group, and she also holds a scholarship awarded by the Department of Civil Aviation.

"The Government gives 30 scholarships annually to young pilots to help promote flying in Australia," Diane said.

"They pay about two-thirds of the cost of hiring your aircraft and with the present rate at \$14 per hour it keeps the young people flying."

## Theoretical

Diane began studying for her commercial pilot's licence in June last year.

So far she has successfully passed the theoretical side of the test—exams in meteorology, engines, airframes, navigation and principles of flight.

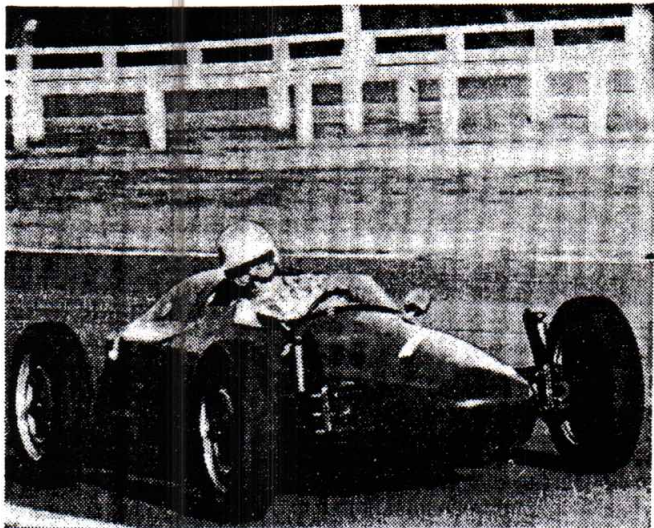
The practical exam, which she will do tomorrow, is a five-hour cross country flight with a Department of Civil Aviation examiner.

If she passes this test, she hopes to get her instructor's rating which means another 50 hours flying time and a further flight test.

"I'd like to become a permanent flying instructor and to get a job flying cross-country trips," she said.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Monday, Aug. 1, 1966

DAILY MIRROR, FRIDAY, JULY 22, 1966



A Formula Vee corners at Warwick Farm.

# Feeling like Fangio

MRS SHIRLEY HARRIS, wife of Bankstown Air Traffic Controller Jim Harris, and (on her own admission) 44 years in this life, went burning around the short circuit at Warwick Farm at the weekend.

"I'm safer in my Mini," she said, after her first run in an open wheel racing car, looking at the little monster with love-hate.

Her first lap times were around the 75-second mark, which is funereal seeing that the track measures only 0.9 miles.

Geoff Sykes, general secretary of the Australian Automobile Racing Club, gave her a pointer or two and out she went again, Pirellis squealing.

A couple more slow laps then Mrs Harris cut loose to shave ten seconds off her time. "Fast girl," said Mr Harris.

The occasion might have been called a quiet afternoon with the Vees. Geoff Sykes was spreading the gospel of the Formula Vee racing car to a group of flying people.

There was winemaker Stewart Savage, of Griffith, who owns two Tiger Moths; Bankstown air-

craft designer Bill Smith, and his son Graham; commercial pilot Phil Brown, who is used to taking off at many, many knots but who declared the Vee felt like 150 m.p.h. in the straight.

**Eighteen again**

And there was DATA. This DATA man was the wrong side of 40 years and thinning on top but he donned a crash helmet, let in the clutch, and suddenly he was eighteen again.

There was a bad moment coming off the Causeway when the fence came too close, but it missed.

When he came back to earth and the pits they said he had done his best lap in 57 seconds.

The Formula Vee is the poor man's Repco-Brabham and the A.A.R.C. owns two for its members to get the feel of open wheel against sports car racing.

If you were filthy rich, you might import a Repco-Brabham for about \$15,000, spend a fortune to tune it and another fortune on tyres.

Otherwise you could have a Formula Vee.

Since all the machinery is common or garden VW, you need only one wrecked Volkswagen, plus \$500 for a racing chassis and glass-fibre body. And you could run it on a pittance.

A Vee will do about 25 m.p.g.

A set of tyres will last hundreds of laps.

And it will make a beginner feel like Fangio, Clark and Brabham rolled into one.



The talk was of flying when SHEILA SCOTT and Mrs. CHARLES WALTON met for lunch in London.

# A plan to save historic plane

From ROSLYN OWEN, in London.

AN Australian airwoman has launched a fund to help the English woman pilot Sheila Scott keep the plane in which she made her recent historic round-the-world flight.

In London from Sydney to receive her OBE award, Mrs. Charles Walton (Nancy Bird) founded her appeal after attending a lunch party given by Miss Scott last week.

Before leaving on her flight, Miss Scott announced that she would almost certainly have to sell the plane, a single-seater Piper Comanche, on her return to pay for her expenses.

"Since Miss Scott completed the flight, there has been much talk and little action towards helping her keep her plane," Mrs. Walton said.

"This was the most outstanding flight ever made by a British woman pilot."

"It called for a high degree of personal courage, equalled only by one other airwoman—the late Mrs. Joan Merriam Smith."

(Mrs. Smith was the US housewife who made headlines when she flew solo around the world in a small plane in 1964.)

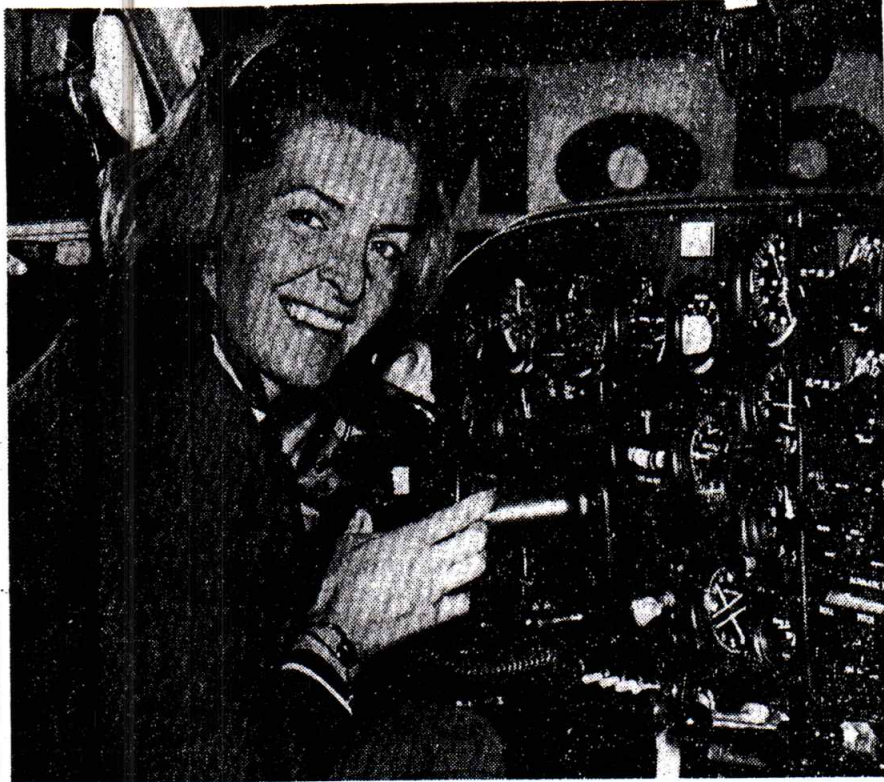
Mrs. Walton plans to get a "practical appreciation fund" going among British women pilots in all countries.

She started the appeal with her own personal donation.

"There must be women everywhere, even non-pilots, who would like to show some small appreciation of what Miss Scott has done," Mrs. Walton said.

"Throughout her long journey, she was an ideal ambassador for Britain."

# Storms ahead — but she's happy



**WEATHERBOUND** — but still smiling. The British aviatix flying round the world in a light plane, Miss Sheila Scott, pictured at Mascot, Sydney, yesterday. She had planned to fly to New Zealand, but was grounded by bad weather over the Tasman Sea. Miss Scott, 38, who describes her trip as "frightening but exciting," will not discuss the records she is trying to break. "I'm sure it would be unlucky," she said. Last week she said she might have to sell her plane to pay for the flight, which has cost \$50,000 so far.

### Round-world flight

LONDON: The world's longest solo flight attempted in a single engine plane was completed when a tiny aircraft taxied slowly across the runway at London airport.

Out stepped its pilot, Sheila Scott, 38, a former actress and model.

Her 33 days flight, covering more than 28,000 miles was a round-the-world-air speed record for women.

Miss Scott said she averaged three or four hours sleep a night.

She kept herself awake during flight by playing tape recorded music, drinking black coffee and studying a spanish language course.—AAP-Reuters.

## Flying for the record

LONDON, Monday (UPI). — Still tired and shaken after her epic round-the-world solo flight, Sheila Scott announced tonight she was planning two more record attempts.

These are the world speed record for light sporting aircraft (now held by an American woman) and a round-the-world solo flight by a British-built plane.

The 38-year-old actress-model today became the first British pilot to fly solo round the world, and made the longest flight by a single-engine light aircraft.

She flew in a Piper Comanche, but hopes next year that a British-built Beagle light aircraft will be available to win the round-the-world distinction.

## SOLO RECORDS RECOGNISED

LONDON, Sat. — The Royal Aero Club last night confirmed that British flyer and ex-actress Sheila Scott broke two world records on her round-the-world solo flight.

They are the round-the-world air speed record for women, and the class C1C record, which relates to the weight of aircraft.

The club confirmed that she flew the 29,055.14 statute miles of her round-the-world trip in a record time of 33 days 3 minutes at an average speed of 36.38 statute miles an hour.

The International Flying Association in Paris will finally ratify these figures.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 26.6.66



AUSTRIAN 3.6.66

## NOW FOR SOME COFFEE

"ALL I WANT is some coffee and plenty of sleep," Miss Sheila Scott, the British aviatix, said at Sydney Airport last night. Miss Scott, pictured after her arrival, refused to discuss the records she is trying to set in her solo flight around the world in a single-engine Piper Comanche. "I'm sure it would be unlucky," she said. Miss Scott told reporters in Brisbane earlier she would have to sell her aircraft to pay for the flight. "It has cost me nearly \$50,000," she said.

### Air medal

LONDON: Ex-actress Sheila Scott yesterday received the Silver Medal of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators for her record-breaking solo flight around the world.

Miss Scott, 38, arrived back in London on Monday in her single-engine plane after a flight that took her 33 days at an average speed of just over 36 miles an hour, including time spent on the ground.

Miss Scott was the third woman—the other two were Americans—to complete a solo flight around the world.

Her average speed bettered the previous record set by Californian housewife Mrs. Jerry Mock.—UPI.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH, JULY 3, 1966

## CHAMPAGNE GIRL

Round-the-world flyer Sheila Scott was dining out in Chelsea after her marathon flight. A bottle of champagne arrived at her table with the message: "Congratulations. You have more guts than most of the young men in this country with longer hair than you have."

## Woman claims longest flight

LOS ANGELES, Wed. — Glowing with joy, Mrs. Joan Merriam Smith today completed her trouble-scoured 27,750-mile solo flight around the world in a six-year-old light plane.

TWO U.S. Coastguard planes escorted her over the last 100 miles because the right engine of her Piper Apache was overheating and running rough.

She had to shut the engine down briefly approaching the California coast but both were working when she landed at Oakland at 9.12 a.m.

Red-eyed and obviously exhausted, Mrs. Smith took time to dedicate her flight to the memory of Amelia Earhart, who died in 1937 in a similar attempt.

Then she promptly claimed that she had made the longest solo flight around the world — by a man or woman.

She claimed also that she was the first woman to fly solo around the world, in a truer sense than the global flight completed on April 17 by Mrs. Jerrie Mock, of Columbus, Ohio.

Mrs. Smith said she had flown around the world at its greatest circumference — the Equator.

Mrs. Mock flew 4000 fewer miles along a more northerly route.

