

FOUR ANSONS TO ENGLAND

“35 days to London with 35 stops and 5 forced landings”

By Geoff Goodall

In a “Coals-to-Newcastle” scenario, an early post-war Australian aircraft dealer decided to send four RAAF disposals Avro Ansons to England in 1947 to test the U.K. sales market.

As World War Two came to an end, the Commonwealth Disposals Commission was formed in 1945 to handle the sale of the vast quantity of Australian military equipment. Among its earliest tasks, the Commission devised procedures for the disposal of military aircraft, asking the RAAF to provide lists of aircraft no longer needed. RAAF command considered aircrew training to be a low priority for the immediate post-war air force and many hundreds of Tiger Moths, Ansons and Oxfords were made available to CDC for disposal.

A series of disposals sales were held at RAAF Stations around Australia, offering a variety of aircraft types to civil buyers. The CDC disposals forms identified which types were acceptable to the Department of Civil Aviation for civil use. The Avro Ansons were in this category, resulting in over 200 Ansons being purchased by eager customers planning to use them for airline, passenger and freight charter work. These were all Anson Mk.1s with mainplane and tailplane of wood construction.

Not all went on to civilian careers, when owners failed to raise the finance necessary to commence their planned operations, or the Ansons failed to pass the Department of Civil Aviation inspections for issue of Certificate of Airworthiness – usually due to deteriorated glued-wood joints. Abandoned Ansons, often still in RAAF wartime markings, were a common sight on Australian aerodromes into the 1950s.

However such was the initial popularity of Ansons in the immediate post-war Australian commercial aviation scene, several enterprising companies specialised in the sales and civil conversions of former RAAF Ansons. DCA approvals were gained for modifications such as pointed nose with a baggage hold, individual seat window panels to replace the RAAF glasshouse, and different standards of passenger seating.

Among these was **Aircraft Disposals Co, Mudjee NSW**. This innocuously named company was formed in 1946 as a partnership between Sydney car dealer and pilot Eric E. McIlfree and Edward H. “Tim” Loneragan, of the influential Loneragan family at Mudjee NSW. Tim was General Manager of the family businesses and with four brothers operated the Loneragan General Store in Mudjee, and established an associated finance company to allow store customers to make purchases on time-payments. The family had extensive land holdings in the district, and after the war promoted modern methods for crops and livestock breeding. Other postwar ventures included bakeries with their own flourmills, building the first motels west of the Blue Mountains and importing fine wines. By the early 1950s it was reported that the Loneragan business and agricultural divisions employed over a thousand staff.

Members of the Loneragan family had been keen aviators since the 1920s. Patriarch Tim had owned two DH.60 Moths and an Avro Avian before purchasing Australia’s first high performance Beech Staggerwing, the model C17B VH-UXP. With the outbreak of war, Tim and two brothers (Charles and Bryan) enlisted in the RAAF. Tim hoped for operational flying but because of his age and business

experience found himself a Squadron Leader in charge of aircrew training with Eastern Command. During 1944 the RAAF sent him to the United States to study advances in instrument flying, and to England to attend a course at Empire Central Flying School, during which he won a trophy for aerobatics. On his return he established the RAAF Instrument Flying School at Point Cook. He was awarded the Air Force Cross and returned to civilian life in 1945.

Military disposals

Back at home in

Mudjee, Tim Loneragan added a new line to the family businesses – war

disposals equipment. His prime motivation was US earth-moving machinery and vehicles abandoned when US forces withdrew from New Guinea. Disposal sales in New Guinea were not scheduled until the end of that year and in the meantime Tim was well aware that RAAF Ansons were about to be offered by the Disposals Commission. His pre-war flying friend Eric McIlfree had expanded his McIlfree Motors business in Castlereagh Street, Sydney to providing hire cars under the names U-Drive Pty Ltd, Self Drive Cars Pty Ltd and Airport Drive-Your-Self Pty Ltd. McIlfree was a keen pilot and part-time aircraft dealer, who in 1946 gained a DCA charter licence under the name McIlfree Motors (Air Charter) using Percival Gull VH-ACA.

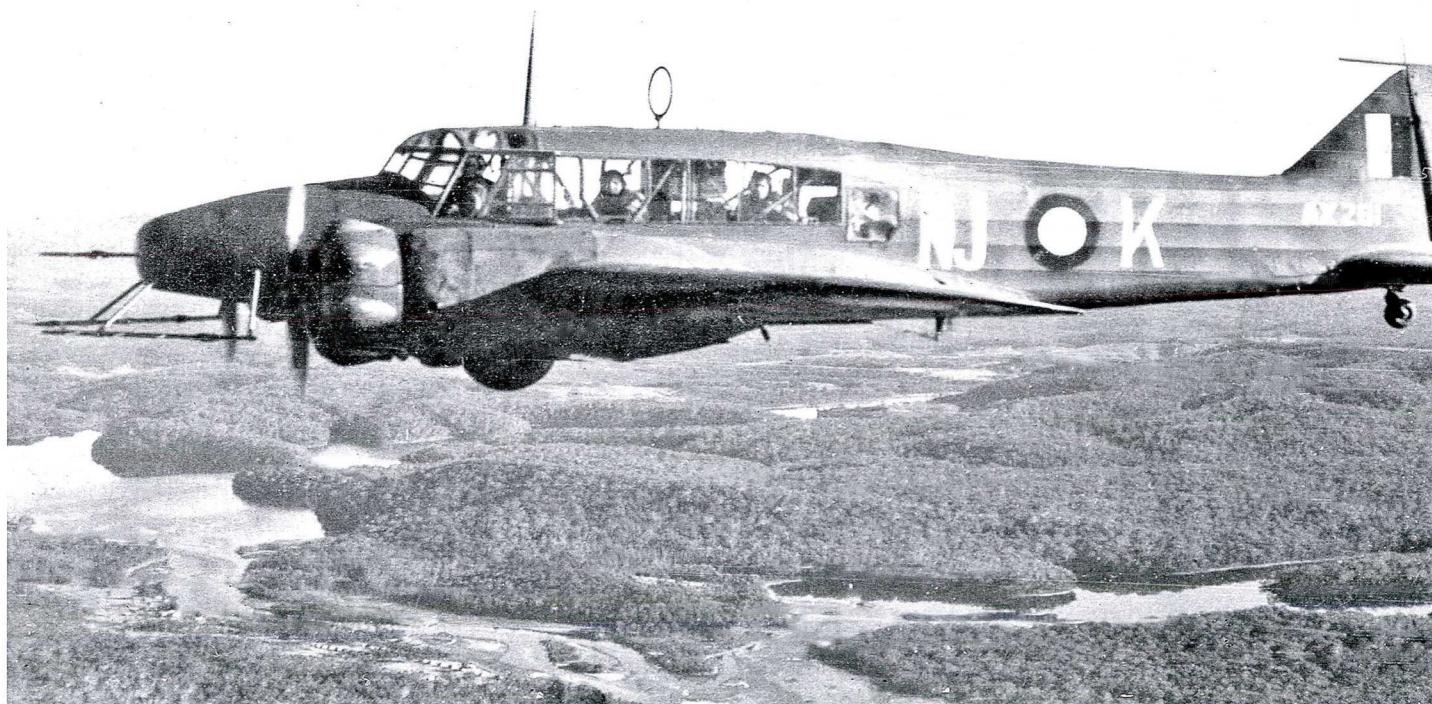
Eric McIlfree and Tim Loneragan discussed the business potential of buying RAAF Ansons in large numbers to reduce the unit price, convert them to civil standards by their own maintenance operation, and then offer them for sale ready for civil use. The pair agreed to form a partnership and in early 1946 registered the name Aircraft Disposals Co, P. O. Box 20, Mudjee (Tim’s address). The first three Ansons were purchased from the CDC on 19 June 1946 in E. H. Loneragan’s name: DG871 at Benalla, R3530 at Nhill and DJ459 at Mallala. Between June and September a further 22 were purchased, which McIlfree himself and hired pilots collected from RAAF stations to ferry to either Mudjee or Sydney.

McIlfree Motors (Air Charter)’s full-time pilot Charles Eather made many of the early Anson deliveries before he left to join the Roy Farrell Import-Export Co, Hong Kong. American Roy Farrell operated two freighter DC-3s between Hong Kong and Sydney. One was painted as VH-ASJ (not taken up, became VR-HDA), the other was NC58093 (to VR-HDB) when the company was reformed as Cathay Pacific Airways.

Aircraft Disposals Co handled a total of 42 Ansons, the last being purchased on 13 October 1947, a group of five



Eric McIlfree from a 1947 newspaper.



RAAF Anson AX261 NJ-K during service with 73 Squadron in 1944, fitted with Air Surface Radar aerials for submarine patrols along the NSW coastline. It became VH-ALY, despite flying to England painted as VH-ALX. Photo: Frank Smith Collection.

from RAAF Narrandera. The price per aircraft was £300. Only one was lost during the delivery flights of these marginally airworthy ex-military aircraft, when AX113 made a forced landing in a paddock after departing Benalla. Early sales were promising and civil conversions were carried out under the supervision of Aircraft Disposals Co Chief Engineer G.H. (Harold) Thomas who was employed by McIlree. After a long career in aviation engineering, Harold Thomas was to later establish the Camden Museum of Aviation. In a letter to the author, he wrote: *"The Ansons were converted by New England Airways, Marshall Airways and Airlite Pty Ltd all at Mascot. The conversions were very good. Long range tanks gave 8 hours range, a rear locker, nose locker, electronic starters, spinners and smooth Oxford cowlings replaced the RAAF helmet cowlings for better cooling. They sold complete with CofAs and radio for £3,000."*

In November 1946, Tim Loneragan took one of their converted Ansons VH-AYD for a long flight to New Guinea to inspect military equipment listed by the Commonwealth Disposals Commission for tender. He was not alone, other bidders arriving in chartered aircraft during November: four other Ansons, a Dragon, and two Qantas charters Sydney-Rabaul, a DC-3 and Lockheed 14 VH-ADT with 11 passengers.

Tim left Sydney early on 18 November, refueled at the wartime Higgins Field on Cape York before the over-water leg to Port Moresby. VH-AYD gave little trouble and he visited Finschhafen, Rabaul, Lae and Milne Bay, carrying business associates. This visit was the first of many Anson trips to New Guinea while the Loneragans were involved in large scale salvaging of abandoned equipment and supplies at Milne Bay.

Anson overseas sales

Despite steady domestic Anson sales, Eric McIlree's entrepreneurial spirit led him to investigate foreign sales prospects. He registered McIlree Aircraft Ltd in Singapore, resulting in the delivery VH-BFJ to Saigon, French Indo China, in October 1947, followed by VH-BFK and VH-BFL to Cathay Pacific Airways for use in Burma. Another Anson, VH-BMC,

was sold in India.

However prior to these events, in early 1947 McIlree was convinced their Ansons would find a ready market in Great Britain for conversion to airliners. Despite the limited international communications of that era, his enquiries should have revealed that RAF disposals of the identical Ansons had been under way for over a year and many were flying with British civil registrations. Nevertheless, McIlree arranged for four unsold Aircraft Disposals Co Ansons to be prepared with CofAs and long-range fuel tanks by March 1947. He then spread the word that he would pay former RAAF pilots, navigators, radio operators and mechanics to crew the aircraft to Britain.

By March 1947 the four selected Ansons were ready: VH-AJK ex DJ504 purchased 14.8.46 at RAAF Mallala
VH-AKI ex DJ165 purchased 20.8.46 at RAAF Maryborough.
VH-ALX ex DG696 purchased 16.8.46 at RAAF Tocumwal
VH-ALY ex AX261 purchased 14.8.46 at RAAF Deniliquin

Of these, VH-AKI had been given the airliner conversion with six passenger seats and individual window panels covering the cabin's military glasshouse. The others had minimum work required to gain Australian Certificates of Airworthiness. Each aircraft had the Australian flag painted on the nose and tail, with "SYDNEY AUSTRALIA" on the nose.

Eleven aircrew were hired for the mission and each allocated to an aircraft. Chief Pilot was former RAAF Squadron Leader R. N. D. (Damien) Miller DFC, pre-war civil pilot and wartime Catalina commander who later went on to a long post-war career with Connellan Airways at Alice Springs. Miller liaised with the Department of Civil Aviation to select the route and arrange diplomatic clearances and approvals to land at all places along the way.

VH-ALX: Lead aircraft: Damien Miller (Chief pilot), Geoff Liggins (pilot), Kevin Dickson (W/T Operator), Jim Crombie (Chief Engineer)

VH-AKI: Eric McIlree (pilot) Cecil Light, and "Windy"

VH-AJK: Stuart Cassell (pilot), Jack Brooks (pilot)

VH-ALY: Trevor Dennet (pilot) and Ron Simmons



VH-AKI at Essendon Aerodrome in March 1947, only weeks before departure for England, already painted with the Australian flag on nose and tail. It is parked at the hangar of Victorian and Interstate Airlines, which specialised in Anson civil conversions. VH-AKI was the only Anson of the four fitted with the individual passenger windows panel replacing the military glasshouse

Geoff Liggins flew RAF Stirling bombers during the war, including dropping paratroops during D Day. Stuart Cassell flew Hurricanes in the Middle East and later Dakota transports. Youngest was 20 year-old Kevin A. Dickson, who had gained aircraft wireless experience in RAAF at the end of the war. He recalls being thrilled when McIlree offered him £10 per week as wireless operator for the one-way flight to London, but needed his parent's permission to obtain a passport.

Four Ansons to London

Eric McIlree arranged optimistic press coverage in the weeks leading up to departure. The *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 April 1947 reported "Mr. Eric McIlree, a Castlereagh Street businessman said the object of the flight is to deliver the aircraft for sale in England, where, it is stated, planes of this type are in demand for conversion to civil airliners. The next flight is scheduled for June this year when 15 aircraft will fly to England in formation."

The enterprising McIlree also placed advertisements in Sydney newspapers to entice paying passengers in VH-AKI: "Five seats available for a magnificent tour of half the world, possible by no other means. Crewed by experienced pilot, wireless operator, navigator and engineer RAAF veterans." The advertisement listed the exotic places en route, further details by telephoning Aircraft Disposals Co.

In a briefing to the assembled crews prior to departing Australia, McIlree assured them that they could expect to find flying jobs in England should they wish. However each member was expected to purchase a new British motorcar in his name, to be shipped back to Australia. Whether this was actually done, how it was financed or for what ulterior motive is lost to time. However it is known that in Australia at that period a six month delay for a new car delivery was normal - and McIlree was a car dealer.

The four Ansons left Sydney on Thursday 20 March 1947. The group had a long slow trip across Australia, with overnight stops at Charleville, Cloncurry, Daly Waters and Wyndham. To avoid the long detour to Darwin, which was the official Customs entry/departure port, they cleared Customs outbound at Wyndham, where the town policeman acted as an agent. At 0730 on 24 March they departed Wyndham for a short hop to the abandoned wartime airfield at Truscott

where fuel was topped up for the Timor Sea crossing. Forming up into a loose formation, they flew from Truscott to Koepang on Timor in 5 hours flying time. The group then crossed the many islands of the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia) to the capital Batavia (now Jakarta) and on to Singapore.

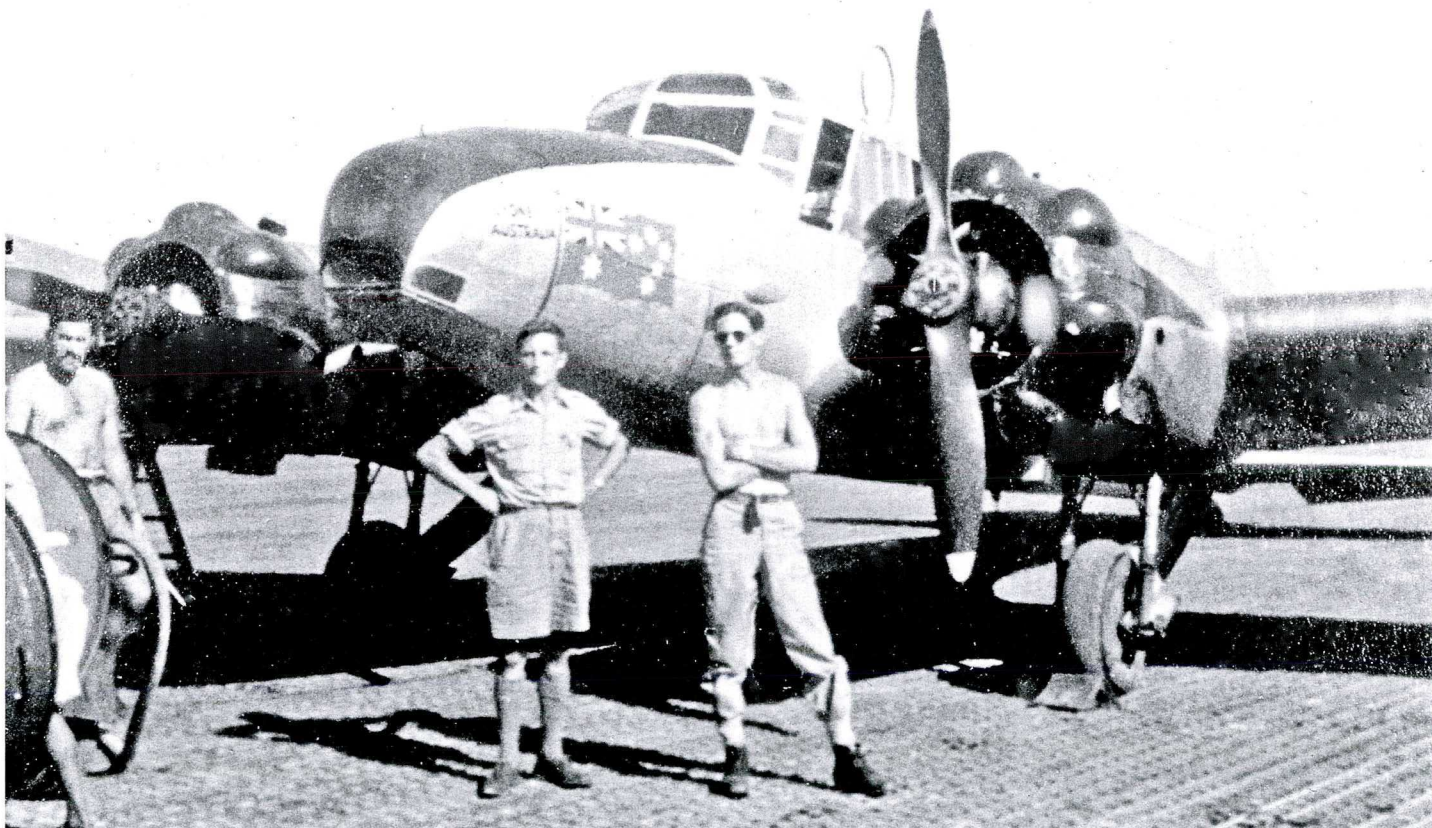
Each Anson was carrying an inflatable dinghy and rescue survival equipment which McIlree had acquired from DCA. A Deputy Crown Solicitor file held in National Archives of Australia records action taken against E. E. McIlree in 1949 to obtain payment for these items.

At Singapore, Eric McIlree learnt of a potential buyer and quickly finalized the sale of VH-AJK to Mr. Earl A. Wild of Katong, Singapore. It was registered VR-SCI on 23 April 1947, then only three months later sold to Airways (Burma) Ltd at Rangoon to become XY-ABD. This company had just been set up by Australian pilot Captain R. R. Cobley, allegedly to fly services between Bassein, Henzada, Akyab and Moulmein - however that was a cover for contract flying in support of Dr. Soekarno's Indonesian independence rebels fighting Dutch forces in nearby Netherlands East Indies.

[Airways (Burma) Ltd were to acquire a second Australian Anson in July 1947 when former RAF Wellington pilot Mr. J. W. Roll refueled at Rangoon while flying his Anson VH-BBO from Brisbane to Glasgow, carrying his wife, two children and aircraft engineer Mr. V. B. Murray. At Rangoon Mr. Roll was surprised to be offered £3,000 (Australian) cash for his Anson "as is". Having paid only £300 to purchase it as unconverted RAAF W2062 from W. T. Dwyer Airlines, Melbourne, two months earlier, the offer was too good to refuse. VH-BBO became XY-ABG, but Airways (Burma) Ltd quickly ran into financial difficulties and Cobley left the country. He continued flying for Indonesian independence forces and was killed in December 1948 when he attempted a single-engine takeoff in his Catalina VH-BDP from a river in Java while under fire from Dutch troops.]

Three Ansons continue to London

Meanwhile the other three Ansons continued the flight to London. They encountered many problems en route due lack of range, aircraft faults and lack of airport facilities for non-airline transit aircraft. Engine troubles resulted in forced landings. Radio operator Kevin Dickson's logbook records



Refuelling the Ansons at Bahrain in the Persian Gulf on 14 April 1947. Far left is chief pilot Damien Miller, centre is engineer Jim Comrie and radio operator Kevin Dickson on right. Photo: via Kevin Dickson.

some of the problems encountered by VH-ALX's pilots Damien Miller and Geoff Liggins:

25.3.47 Depart Soembawa Besar for Den Pasar, engine failure, return Soembawa Besar.

29.3.47 Depart Batavia, weather very bad, emergency-landing Muntok on Bangkai Island

2.4.47 Test flight Singapore (Kallang) after engine repair

16.4.47 Depart Nicosia, Cyprus, engine trouble, return Nicosia.

Depart Nicosia but same engine problem, return Nicosia again.

17.4.47 Emergency landing Calato (Rhodes) same engine again

While Jim Crombie worked on the recurring Cheetah engine problem at Rhodes in the Mediterranean, Kevin Dickson was able to have a look around the airfield. He wrote in his diary; "The Germans had occupied Rhodes Island during the war and used it as a base to refuel their U-Boats. They had dug into a mountain and installed fuel tanks with pipelines to carry fuel under the water to the submarines without them surfacing. There were many wrecked German and Italian aircraft around the strip, such as Heinkels, Focke-Wulf and Dorniers. I souvenired a nameplate out of a four-engined German aircraft. "

Morale was high as the three Ansons passed through Athens, Rome and France, before crossing the English Channel on 24 April 1947 to land at Croydon Aerodrome, London. One of the crew recorded "35 days with 35 stops and 5 forced landings".

Eric McIlree later said that the seven Anson pilots had obtained flying jobs in England within 48 hours of their arrival, two of them with British South American Airlines, flying Lancastrians to Brazil. McIlree himself got to work to sell the three Ansons, which by now had run up considerable costs for Aircraft Disposals Co. The harsh reality was that there was no

demand for additional Avro Ansons. The British civil market was already flush with RAF disposals Mk. 1 Ansons.

His first step was to have them registered with British markings. During checks at Croydon by a British Ministry of Aviation aircraft inspector, it became clear that the civil registrations painted on two aircraft did not match the DCA registration certificates. In the haste to get the Ansons ready, registrations VH-ALX and VH-ALY were inadvertently painted on the wrong aircraft. While not affecting their airworthiness, it was not a good start for McIlree's dealings with British aviation officialdom. British aviation historian A. J. Jackson wrote in a letter to the author in April 1977: "When they arrived at Croydon, only VH-AKI was correctly painted. You could read DG696 under the dope on VH-ALY and AX261 on VH-ALX."

British Certificates of Registration were issued in the first week of May 1947. McIlree had managed to sell the passenger version VH-AKI, but the other two were registered in his name:

G-AJSC ex VH-ALY, AX261: 5.5.47 E. E. McIlree, Bank of NSW, 29 Threadneedle St, London

G-AJSD ex VH-AKI, DJ165: 6.5.47 British and Continental (Air Charter and Freight) Ltd, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex

G-AJSE ex VH-ALX, DG696: 5.5.47: E. E. McIlree, Bank of NSW, 29 Threadneedle St, London

British and Continental (Air Charter and Freight) Ltd also operated with the shorter name British and Continental Airways. This small company had been founded the previous year with a Percival Proctor and Vega Gull based at Southend Aerodrome, available for passenger and freight charter. Reports from the time show that most of their flying was on pleasure flights, taking visitors to the beach on joy-rides. In



VH-AKL after sale in England to British and Continental Airways. Seen at its Southend base during 1947. Photo: A.J. Jackson.



The sad sight of G-AJSD three years later, retired and derelict at Southend. Photo: A.J. Jackson.

1948 freight charters were being negotiated, a bigger aircraft was needed and the Australian Ansons were available at Croydon.

G-AJSD was issued with a British Certificate of Airworthiness in remarkably short time on 9 May 1947. The Australian flag and markings on the nose were sprayed over, but the other modest paint trim on the engine nacelles and nose was retained, with "British and Continental Airways" painted above the windows. It was rushed into service the day after the CofA was issued, departing Southend on 10 May 1947 on a charter to Cape Town, South Africa. Over the next 18 months, it flew other long-distance charters to the Middle East and Africa, but by the end of 1948 the company had ceased operations. Their single Anson G-AJSD was parked outside at Southend and quickly became derelict in the weather.

A Percival Proctor diversion

While in London, McIlree was looking for a near-new Percival Proctor 5 to purchase for re-sale back in Australia.

RAF disposals Proctors were in demand in Australia, but so far only two of the newer post-war civil production Proctor 5s had yet been imported. On 10 May 1947 he signed the purchase documents for Proctor 5 G-AGTB from Marshalls Flying School at Cambridge.



G-AJSE, formerly VH-ALX made this embarrassing forced landing in Italy in April 1948 during a clandestine delivery flight to the Israeli Air Force. The Australian flags were still painted on the nose and tail.



The Percival Proctor Mk. V G-AGTB which Eric McIlree purchased in England at the end of the Anson ferry flight. Seen here at Camden, NSW, later in 1947. Photo: Geoff Goodall collection.

Seemingly unconcerned about the two unsold Ansons, which he left in the hands of a British agent, Eric set off on a tour of Europe in the Proctor, accompanied by former RAF pilot Jack Brooks, one of the pilots on the Anson flight from Australia. They caused a minor stir when poor weather in Germany forced an unplanned landing at Grosenbrode, close to the Russian zone. They were briefly held by British military until their identities could be verified.

McIlree returned to Australia by airline via the United States, engaging Brooks to ferry the Proctor to Australia. When he arrived back in Sydney in early June, a newspaper carried the headline "Australian Held as Russian Spy":

"A well-known Sydney businessman Mr. Eric McIlree, who recently flew one of three Avro Ansons to England for resale, was arrested as a suspected Russian spy. Mr. McIlree and Jack Brooks, former member of the RAF, were on a private flying tour of Europe when they were arrested. 'We got a little lost while flying in the mist from Hamburg to Copenhagen and decided to land at the next aerodrome we saw. We knew we were near the Russian occupied zone. Finally we saw a landing field and on coming down for a closer inspection saw a British Army car so decided to land. A British officer asked us if we were RAF or Americans, then arrested us as suspected Russian spies.' Mr. McIlree said they had been detained for only an hour then released."

Jack Brooks delivered the Proctor G-AGTB to Australia apparently without incident. In Sydney it retained its British registration while McIlree listed it for sale. In December 1947 McIlree was involved in the delivery of three of his Ansons to Hong Kong. A letter to DCA from U-Drive Pty Ltd, Sydney, at that time stated that their Mr. McIlree was presently in the Far East where he hoped to find a purchaser for G-AGTB, in which case it would be delivered from Sydney. He would prefer to keep the British registration because it is more readily recognised at airports in the Far East.

The Proctor was not sold, and it became VH-BCM in December 1948, registered to U-Drive Pty Ltd. McIlree did

continue to use it, but after a particularly hot summer when he found that its takeoff performance was inadequate he replaced it with the B.A. Eagle VH-UUY.

The Israeli Connection

Meanwhile, back in England the two unsold Australian Ansons had come to the attention of a British gentleman named Mr. H. Fredkins. He was acting for the embryo Jewish nation of Israel, at that time attempting to establish a homeland in British-controlled Palestine against massive Arab resistance. There was a world-wide embargo on exporting arms and equipment, including aircraft to the Israeli cause. This, of course, generated a clandestine market for any aircraft that could be used for combat or transport by the Israelis.

Mr. Fredkins purchased G-AJSC and G-AJSE but neglected to advise the Ministry. By December 1947 he had obtained six British civil-registered Ansons, reportedly funded by wealthy Dutchman Bernard Van Lear through Israeli purchasing agent Emanuel Tzur. The Australian pair both received British CofAs on 25 February 1948, on paper still owned by Eric McIlree. In April 1948 four Ansons quietly departed England for Tel Aviv, flown by volunteer pilots. However the British security services were monitoring the situation, and steps were taken to have them intercepted on the delivery flight.

G-AJSC and G-AJSE are reported to have left England on 10 April 1948, several days after the first four. Both still had the Australian flag on the nose and tail from their previous delivery flight from Australia to London. Some histories of the Israeli air force state that this was a ploy to clear British Customs for an alleged flight to Australia then divert to Israel enroute. On that same day, the first four Ansons reached the Mediterranean island of Rhodes where they were impounded by the Greek military on behalf of the British Government.

The two ex-Australian Ansons were crossing Italy when G-AJSE suffered power troubles and made a gear-up forced

landing on a cultivated farm field at Pavia, some distance from Milan. A photograph of the event indicates it suffered very little damage, however when police arrived it was found to be carrying guns and munitions. G-AJSE is said to have been sold to an Italian company who repaired it, but only one Anson ever received an Italian civil registration and has no connection to this aircraft.

Little accurate detail of these events has been located, but it appears that G-AJSC continued to Athens where it was impounded. Diplomatic negotiations went on until January 1949 when a compromise was found, allowing the five Ansons to be flown on to Tel Aviv to join other Ansons with the Chel Ha'Avir (Israeli Air Force), used for transport and training duties.

By that time Israel was clandestinely receiving large numbers of aircraft of a variety of types from all over the world, including Beaufighters and Mosquitos flown from Britain under various ruses. Australians were also engaged in the smuggling of aircraft to Israel, during 1948-1949 ferrying Douglas DC-5 VH-ARD, former RAAF Lockheed Hudsons VH-BIH, BFQ, BIA, BLB and Lodestar VH-BFZ to Israel, where all joined the air force. The bomb bay doors of the Hudsons, sealed as part of the civil conversions, were made operational. Some of the Australian ferry pilots stayed on in Israel to fly for the air force as mercenaries. In addition, RAAF disposals Beaufighters at Werribee Vic were acquired and dismantled by a Sydney aviation company to be shipped to Israel, but their export was blocked by the Australian Government.

And what of Eric McIlree?

With the majority of their 42 RAAF disposals Ansons sold, the business partnership between McIlree and the Loneragan family in Mudgee was concluded. Eric continued to buy and sell aircraft while building up his car business, especially the then-new concept of car rentals. He had purchased the entire RAAF disposals inventory of Walrus and Seagull seaplanes which were gathered at Camden with the remaining Ansons.

In 1951 McIlree founded Amphibious Airways at Rabaul, New Britain. The aim was to compete with slow coastal shipping to carry native contract workers between plantations in New Guinea and New Britain, using Walrus and Anson aircraft. The venture got off to a poor start with the first two Walrus quickly damaged at Rabaul and McIlree's

pilot licence temporarily suspended by DCA for flying one of his Ansons on a native workers' charter while holding only a Private Licence. In a letter to the author in 1972, Eric McIlree wrote: *"Amphibious Airways operated for about eight months, ceasing because of the lack of good local management. We carried many natives between New Guinea and New Britain as plantation workers."*

McIlree's motor and car rental businesses expanded and operated under various names until 1955 when he opened the first Australian office of the successful American chain Avis Rent-a-Car. He negotiated with DCA to provide rental cars at airports and within a year had 100 FJ Holdens at main airports. Under his leadership, Avis Australia grew to 240 locations. Eric pursued other ventures, including developing the Dunk island resort on the Great Barrier Reef. He promoted Avis with flamboyant advertising campaigns. In 1966 he launched Avis Rent-a-Plane offering Piper singles and twins for short and long-term rental, as well as Avis Air Charter.

Eric Edward McIlree, one of Australia's great business entrepreneurs, died in Sydney in September 1973.

Author's note:

My special thanks to Captain Charles "Chic" Eather, who, as a senior Captain with Cathay Pacific Airways and later in retirement, supported my research into this and other aviation history subjects. Charles helped put the pieces together so that the story of the Eric McIlree Anson flight to London can be told.

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Typical of the many Ansons used in the early days of the Israeli Air Force.