



# The National Archives

## Press release

5 November 2009

### **MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY 'TAKES FLIGHT'**

This autumn the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) invites you to take a trip with them and celebrate the 90th anniversary of the first non-stop transatlantic flight.

To tie in with this year's Archive Awareness Campaign [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com) theme, *Take Flight*, MOSI is putting on a display of treasures from the archives to tell the story of local hero Jack Alcock.

In June 1919, Captain Jack Alcock and his navigator Lieutenant Arthur Whitten Brown made history by becoming the first people to fly non-stop across the Atlantic Ocean - winning the £10,000 prize from the Daily Mail for the first uninterrupted flight across the ocean. Worth £20,000 in today's money, it had taken 6 years for the prize to be claimed.

Alcock was born in Manchester and was involved with aircraft from the earliest days of their existence. He was awarded his pilot's certificate by the Royal Aero Club in 1912. The same year, he took part in the London to Manchester air race, coming 4th on the outward leg and 2nd on his return.

Before his pioneering flight across the Atlantic, Alcock had been a pilot in World War One. He was stationed on the Greek island of Lemnos, at Murdos. He became a war hero, receiving the Distinguished Service Cross for shooting down two German aircraft on 30 September 1917. The same evening, his engines failed over Gallipoli, and he and his crew became prisoners of war in Turkey. Letters home to friends and family show Alcock's resilience in the face of imprisonment.

After he left the Royal Airforce in 1919, Alcock found fresh challenges as a test pilot for the aircraft manufacturer, Vickers. He met Arthur Whitten Brown, a fellow war pilot and former prisoner of war at Vickers. Together they flew almost 1,900 miles (over 3,000

kilometres) from St John's in Newfoundland, Canada, to Clifden in County Galway, Republic of Ireland.

Despite landing in a peat bog, the two men claimed the prize from the Daily Mail for being the first people to make the crossing without a break. The flight had taken them just over 16 hours. On their return to England, the pair were given a heroes' welcome. They were awarded the prize money by Winston Churchill and knighted by King George V.

Their trip took place only 16 years after the Wright Brothers invented and flew the first successful aeroplane, and 10 years after another local hero, A. V. Roe, made the first all-British flight in his home-built triplane.

Alcock was tragically killed on 18 December 1919. He was flying a Vickers Viking seaplane from Weybridge to the Paris Aircraft Exhibition when he crashed in bad weather at Cottévrard, near Rouen. He is buried in Southern Cemetery in Manchester.

**Jan Hicks, Senior Archivist, MOSI,** said:

“In today's society, we take air travel for granted. People regularly cross the Atlantic in half the time it took Alcock and Brown! MOSI is celebrating Alcock as a local hero because he saw the potential of this new form of transport and achieved great things during his short life.”

**Angela Owusu, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer,** said:

“Throughout the autumn and winter, as part of the Archive Awareness Campaign [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com), archives across the country are hosting special events to celebrate the fantastic wealth of their collections and to highlight the importance of archives as guardians of history. We hope this display will encourage people to visit MOSI to find out more about their local heritage”.

The archive display includes newspaper coverage of the event, photographs of the landing site, flight logs and a map of the route alongside photographs of the celebrations on their return.

– Ends –

For further details, spokespeople or images on Archive Awareness Campaign, please contact **Angela Owusu** on **0208 392 5237** or email

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## Notes to Editors

### The exhibition runs until the end of November.

- **Venue:** Museum of Science & Industry, Liverpool Road, Castlefield, Manchester M3 4FP. Tel: 0161 832 2244.
- MOSI is open 7 days a week (except 24 - 26 Dec & 1 Jan) from 10.00am - 5.00pm. Entry to the permanent galleries is free.
- Archive Awareness Campaign (AAC) [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com) is an ongoing celebration of all kinds of fascinating archive treasures. It celebrates and promotes local and national archives. Throughout the year archives across the country open their doors to showcase history, hold open days and present workshops to help the public discover a piece of their own history.
- This year's AAC theme, which launches on 9<sup>th</sup> November, is *Take Flight*. It lends itself to a wide variety of archival work, in economic and industrial history; the impact of movement of peoples; innovation and ideas; engineering and science.
- Archive Awareness is spearheaded by the National Council on Archives ([www.ncaonline.org.uk](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk)) and funded by The National Archives ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council ([www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)).