

# THE LITERARY DIGEST

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## HARRY HAWKER, THE BRITISHER WHO TOOK CHANCES LIKE A YANK

**I**F HAWKER AND GRIEVE, the daring Britishers who made the first attempt in history to fly the Atlantic without a stop, had perished, their memories would have been cherished as "incomparable adventurers." "But to be able to cherish both the adventure and the living men who dared to perform it, how much better that is!" cries the *New York Times*. The final dramatic touch was added to their spectacular attempt when it was discovered, after practically everybody had given up hope, that they had been rescued in mid-ocean. Such popular jubilation, such screaming head-lines on even conservative papers, both here and in England, have been evoked only by the greatest victories of the Allied armies. "What can ever stir our pulses again?" asked a dozen editorial writers on the day the armistice was signed, and Hawker and Grieve have furnished an answer.

If the man who tried it hadn't happened to be a Britisher of Australian birth the English newspapers might have frowned on Harry Hawker's attempt to fly the Atlantic as a typical wild Yankee trick. Nerve, skill, physical stamina, readiness to take a ten-to-one chance with life itself as the forfeit in case of failure, these are proverbial American attributes, as contrasted with English steadiness and thoroughness. It was another jolt for the believers in national psychology that, while the Americans were methodically preparing to leave as little as possible to chance in their bid for the great honor of being first to cross the Atlantic on wings, Hawker and his navigator, Commander Grieve, were at work on what an English press representative characterized as "elaborate preparations for a double suicide." Hawker's farewell announcement that he was bound to beat the Yankees — some of the newspapers reported that he said "damned Yankees" — had a fine swagger that was appreciated here, perhaps, more than it was in England and Canada, where boasting is considered too American to be good form.

The American press, without exception, have been kind to Hawker and his venture. He has been recognized as a gallant daredevil, despite a certain amount of talk of the scientific and "cool-headed" nature of his venture, a man who would have been at home on our own Western frontier, in the days when we had one. The *New York World* said of him on the day when he started on his great flight:

Harry G. Hawker's career as a pilot, covering nine years, has revealed an ability to draw a line between sheer recklessness and prudent daring which has been at once the amazement and despair of his fellow flying men. Perhaps the secret of it is that what would be recklessness in another has in his case simply been good craftsmanship because of his consummate skill and wonderful nerve and physical vitality. His record as an aviator is one of astonishing and almost uninterrupted success.

Hawker was a lad in Australia, his native land, when flying was in its infancy in England. His natural tastes turned him to motor-engines, and his love of adventure carried him to England in company with a half-dozen other young Australians. Two at least of his companions gained distinction in the land of their adoption. These were Lieut.-Col. Harry Burstled and Major Eric Harrison, who became aviation officers.

The boys brought their savings in their pockets and, once in the motherland, sought employment as mechanics. Hawker speedily found a berth with T. O. M. Sopwith, then just starting as a builder of airplanes. Hawker proved himself a skilful mechanic and a lad of intelligence, and Sopwith, needing pilots, taught him to fly.

His development thenceforth was rapid. Having found his wings, he began to gain advertising for his employer and himself by going after the prizes which were beginning to be offered. On October 24, 1912, in a Sopwith biplane patterned after the American Wright machine and powered with a 40-horse-power A. B. C. motor, he won the Michelin Cup by setting a new endurance record of eight hours and twenty-three minutes in the air.

On May 31 following, in a Sopwith with an 80-horse-power Gnome engine, he established a British altitude record of 11,450 feet. Two weeks later, with a passenger, he soared to 12,900 feet. On the same day, he took up two passengers to 10,600 feet, and on July 27, three, to 8,400 feet. All of these were new British records.

The big cash prize of the moment was that of \$25,000 offered



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by the *London Daily Mail* for a seaplane flight around Great Britain to be completed within seventy-two hours. Twice Hawker started after this money. The first time he failed through illness, and the second his machine went wrong after he had skirted the north coast and worked down as far as Dublin.

Early this year Hawker was credited with an altitude flight of nearly 30,000 feet, beating his 1916 record of 28,500 feet. This record, however, has not been authenticated.

During the war Hawker was a testing-pilot for Sopwith, whose planes shared with the Bristol machines supremacy on the British front. As a test pilot it was his duty to take up battle-planes for their final try-out before they were turned over to the Government. He received \$125 for each flight, and it was not unusual for him to make twelve a day. For the last three years he has been the highest-paid airman in the world, his income during that time being reported to have been upward of \$100,000 a year. He lives on a comfortable scale at Kingston-on-Thames, where he has a wife and six months' old daughter. He owns three Rolls-Royce cars, in itself an evidence of prosperity. The *World* correspondent at St. John's wrote of Hawker some time ago:

"Here he has given no evidence of great income. He dresses almost indifferently, sometimes wearing a lounge-suit whose most striking detail is trousers with extreme peg-tops, sometimes wearing khaki riding-breeches, with gray golf stockings. He seldom appears without a cap whose vizor is drawn far forward and makes him still more boyish in appearance. He doesn't look a bit more than his thirty-one years at any time.

"His relaxations while in St. John's have been boyish. Almost nightly he took part in what his party called 'rag'—some bit of good horse-play. One night, after a scuffle, the bed of Capt. Michael H. Fenn, business manager of the transatlantic expedition, was filled with crumbled dog-biscuit. Another night the party invaded the room of Lieut. Lawrence Clement, meteorological officer, and snowballed him till he cried for mercy.

"On still other nights he went to motion-picture shows. The last picture he saw was one by Theda Bara, whom he thought a very bad actress. He and others of the party have received not a little social attention and have often gone out for tea."

Com. Mackenzie Grieve, R.N., Hawker's navigator, has had far less of the limelight in his life than Hawker, yet in his line of endeavor he is a man of attainments. He is twenty-eight years old, a wireless expert and a meteorologist, as well as flier. For a time during the war he commanded the cruiser *Campania*, mother ship of the British air-squadron with the Grand Fleet.

The airplane in which Hawker and Grieve set forth to blaze a new trail to Europe was not any too well suited to the purpose for which it was intended, finest product of British ingenuity and workmanship tho it was. The cause of its drop into the sea when it had traveled a little more than half the distance from Newfoundland to Ireland is ascribed by Hawker to trouble in the water-filter, in the feed-pipe from the radiator to the water-pump, "the filter being blocked with refuse, such as solder and the like, shaking loose in the radiator." This appreciative description of the plane, and of its engine, appeared on the day following the start of the flight:

The Sopwith biplane which Harry Hawker drove is in its essentials the same with which other daring British aviators fought Germans in the skies of northern France for four years. For the purposes of Hawker's undertaking it underwent certain changes calculated to promote the success of the flight.

It has a top-wing span of 46 feet and its over-all length is 31 feet. It has a single twelve-cylinder Rolls-Royce motor whose horse-power is variously rated at from 360 to 375.

The following calculations by a gasoline-motor engineer show what was expected of the Sopwith's engine on its flight:

The blade-tips of each propeller to travel 12,000 miles.

The piston in each cylinder to travel 440 miles, or for the twelve cylinders 5,280 miles.

The engine to make 2,160,000 revolutions.

The valves to operate 25,920,000 times.

The pump forcing water through the radiator to lift 30,400 gallons.

The actual work performed by the engine to represent approximately 4,500,000 foot-tons, enough energy to raise the steamship *Olympic*, of 45,000 tons, 100 feet into the air.

The Rolls-Royce engine has, perhaps, no peer for downright reliability and service in the whole catalog of airplane engines. It is common report among American as well as British military aviators that a Rolls-Royce never stalled over the battle-line. It is an extremely costly piece of mechanism, largely hand-tooled,