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His life began with tragedy.

His workplace was some of the
harshest conditions on the
planet.

His life's calling was to share the
Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He ministered to the isolated,
the sick and the dying.

He became one of Australia's
greatest ever leaders.

This is the story of John Flynn.

Begin



John Flynn: An Interactive Biography

Birth

John Flynn was born in the gold mining town of Moliagul near Bendigo, Victoria, November 25th 1880.

It was a home where Jesus Christ was Lord. Tragically, Flynn's mother died when he was just two years old.

Flynn would be separated from his immediate family.



Father, Mother
Eugene, John, Rosetta



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Childhood & Youth

Flynn spent much of his childhood with relatives. He lived in what are now called the Western Suburbs of Melbourne. In his teen years he came to know Christ as his personal Saviour.

He completed secondary school in 1898 and felt a call to full-time ministry. The tragic start to his life was no hindrance.



Rosetta, Eugene, John



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Education

Flynn was a teacher from 1898 to 1902. But it dawned on him that sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a man's highest calling.

He joined the Home Mission of The Presbyterian Church and studied divinity. He graduated in 1910.

A year later he was ordained as a minister.



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Early Career

As a home missionary, Flynn travelled tirelessly throughout Victoria. He shared the Gospel and taught the Bible to young and old.

He was skilled in first aid and he was generous when someone was in need.

This experience was laying the foundation for Flynn's greatest mission - taking the Gospel to the people of the inland.



Like those Flynn ministered to



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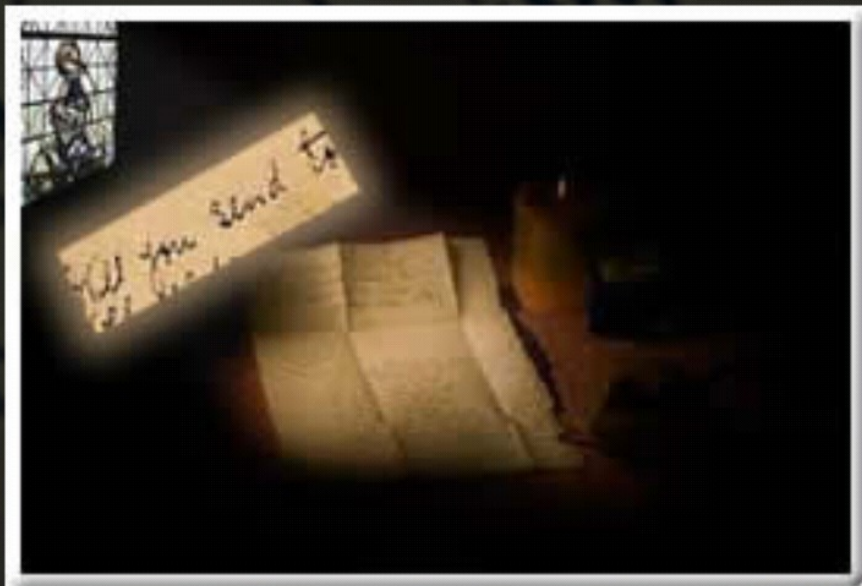


Call of the Inland

It was a letter from the Northern Territory in 1909 that showed Flynn the great need of the people of inland Australia.

The letter contained a desperate request for a missionary to be sent.

John Flynn was about to begin his life's work.



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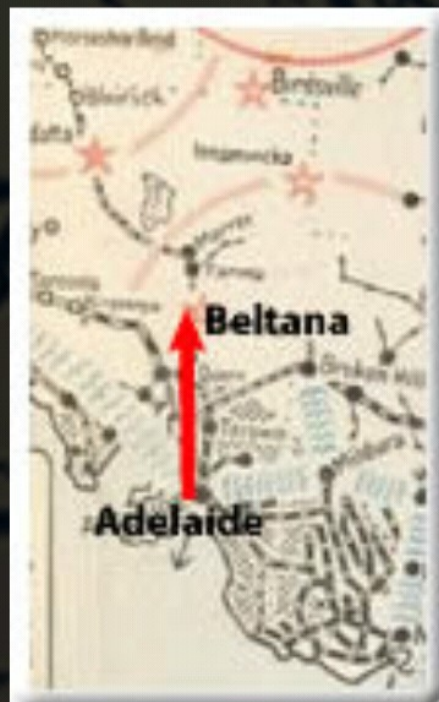
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Leadership

Two thirds of the continent was without a minister, nurse or doctor. Already a visionary leader, Flynn immediately saw this need could and should be met.

Showing great initiative, Flynn was the first to volunteer as a missionary to the inland. First stop - Beltana 560km north of Adelaide.



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The Missionary Work

Flynn's work took him from Beltana deep into the desolate outback. His parish was the size of the British Isles.

Relentlessly he travelled teaching people of their spiritual need.

Flynn's commitment to the Lord's work, shown though his love for the people of the inland, was extraordinary.



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First AIM Hospital

Within a year Flynn opened the first Australian Inland Mission (AIM) hospital in Oodnadatta on the outskirts of the Simpson desert.

His capacity for great works was becoming apparent.

Listen to a re-enactment of Flynn's opening speech;

[Link to Audio](#)



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Widening the Scope

God had gifted Flynn with a strategic mind. Flynn honoured God by using it for God's work.

In 1912 he produced a report "Northern Territory and Central Australia: A Call to the Church."

Flynn had developed a strategy to reach the people of the vast north-west. Flynn's influence upon the Nation of Australia was growing.

NORTHERN TERRITORY AND CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

A CALL TO THE CHURCH

BY
REV. JOHN FLYNN

*Published by authority of the Home Mission
Board, General Assembly of Australia*

SYDNEY:
ANGUS & ROBERTSON LTD.
89 CASTLEREAGH STREET.

[Link to Book](#)



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New Frontiers

In 1913, under Flynn's leadership, a mission started with one Christian nurse, one padre, a nursing hostel and five camels.

The padre's patrols took him as far as 4000 kilometres by camel, packhorse or buggy. Flynn often joined the arduous patrols.

Through all this trial, Flynn left no doubt where his strength came from;

[Link to Audio](#)



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Joining Flynn's Vision

Dozens of dedicated Christian nurses would follow Flynn's lead.

In the most extreme of conditions these nurses met the needs of the people. Flynn paid due homage to them with the words;

[Link to Audio](#)



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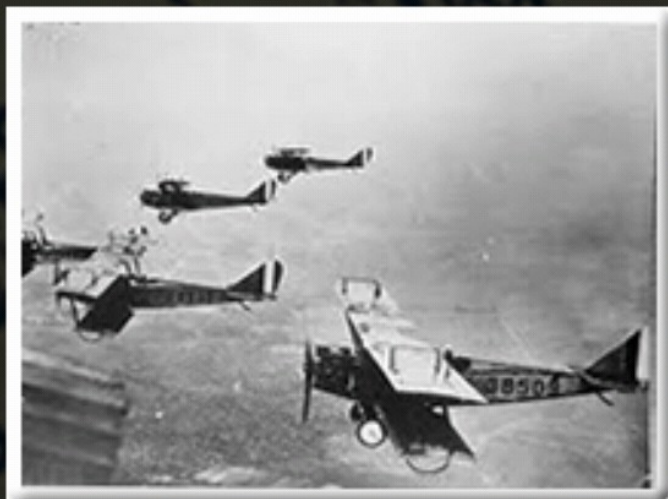


More Could Be Done

Flynn and his growing team were meeting much of the need of the people of the inland.

Yet Flynn was still troubled. The need was far greater than his team could handle. More was needed.

World War I erupted in 1914. One new weapon was called "the airplane". Could Flynn turn this weapon of destruction into a vehicle of mercy?



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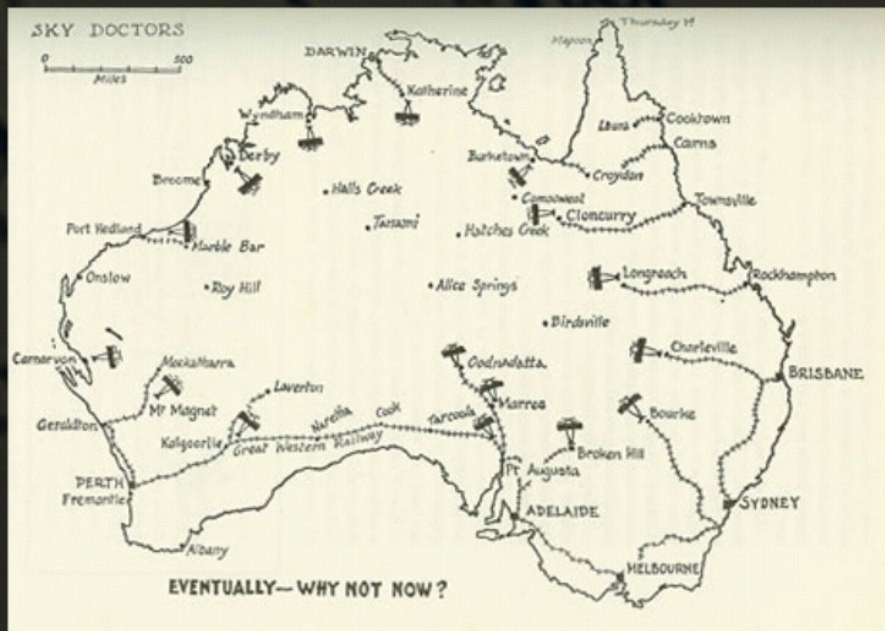


An Idea Takes Shape

Flynn's idea was to use the airplane to reach the people of the inland with medical help.

Lieutenant Peel of the Australian Flying Corps wrote a letter to Flynn. He supported Flynn's idea.

But Lt Peel also saw a major problem. How could pilots communicate with people on the ground across countless thousands of kilometres?



*Early map showing
Flynn's vision*



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The Pedal Radio

Under Flynn's guidance, a brilliant young scientist developed a pedal radio.

The ingenious design allowed two-way radio conversations in the outback for the first time.

The components of Flynn's vision of a "Flying Doctor" were being "supplied by God as they became necessary".



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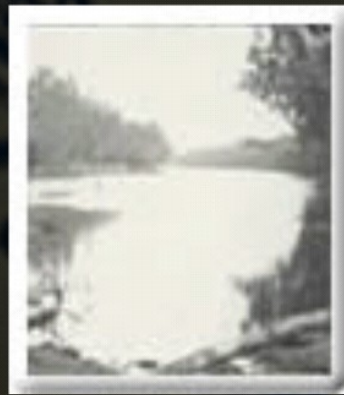


Commitment and Patience

Flynn demonstrated great commitment to his cause. It would be a full ten years before the first flight of the flying doctor.

It was the patience of Godly character. Large sums of money were needed.

Flynn's ability to communicate his vision saw the funds raised. But without an airplane, the idea remained grounded.



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The Vision Launched

Through a fledgling company called QANTAS, an airplane was finally leased.

The first flight was in Queensland from Cloncurry to Julia Creek - a distance of around 140km. The Aerial Medical Service, then part of the Australian Inland Mission, was launched.

Could the first pilot and doctor imagine the future that lay ahead?



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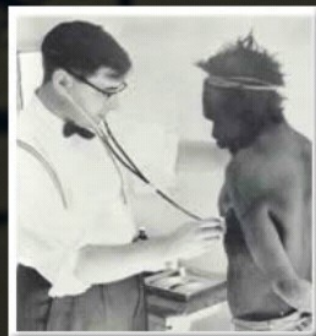


The Mantle of Safety

In that first year almost 32,000 kilometres were covered. Of 255 patients treated, many lives were saved.

Now the Royal Flying Doctor service treats around 272,000 patients each year.

Motivated to serve "Christ and continent", Flynn's vision of a "mantle of safety" for inland Australia is now a reality.



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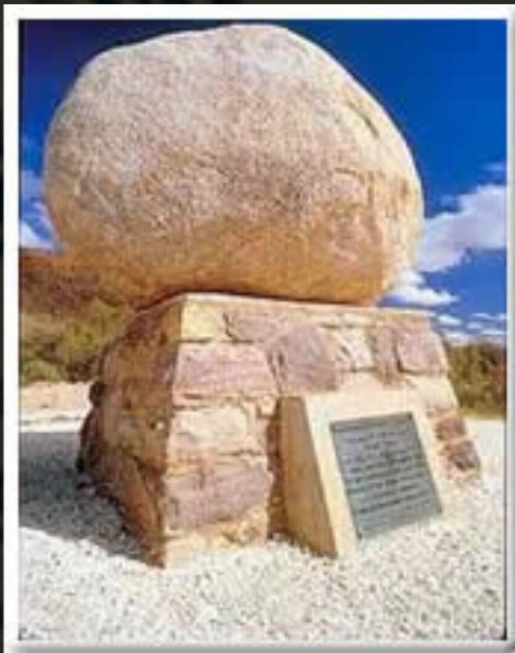


Remembering Flynn

Flynn was a man of vision, focus and perseverance.

But all this alone would not have resulted in Flynn's great work which includes the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Ultimately it was Flynn's trust in his Saviour, Jesus Christ and his commitment to obey the Word of God that leaves Australia with Flynn's great legacy.



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Air Ambulance
"Victory" Used in
the first ever
Flying Doctors flight

Generator that
powered the early
Pedal Radios

Rev. John Flynn

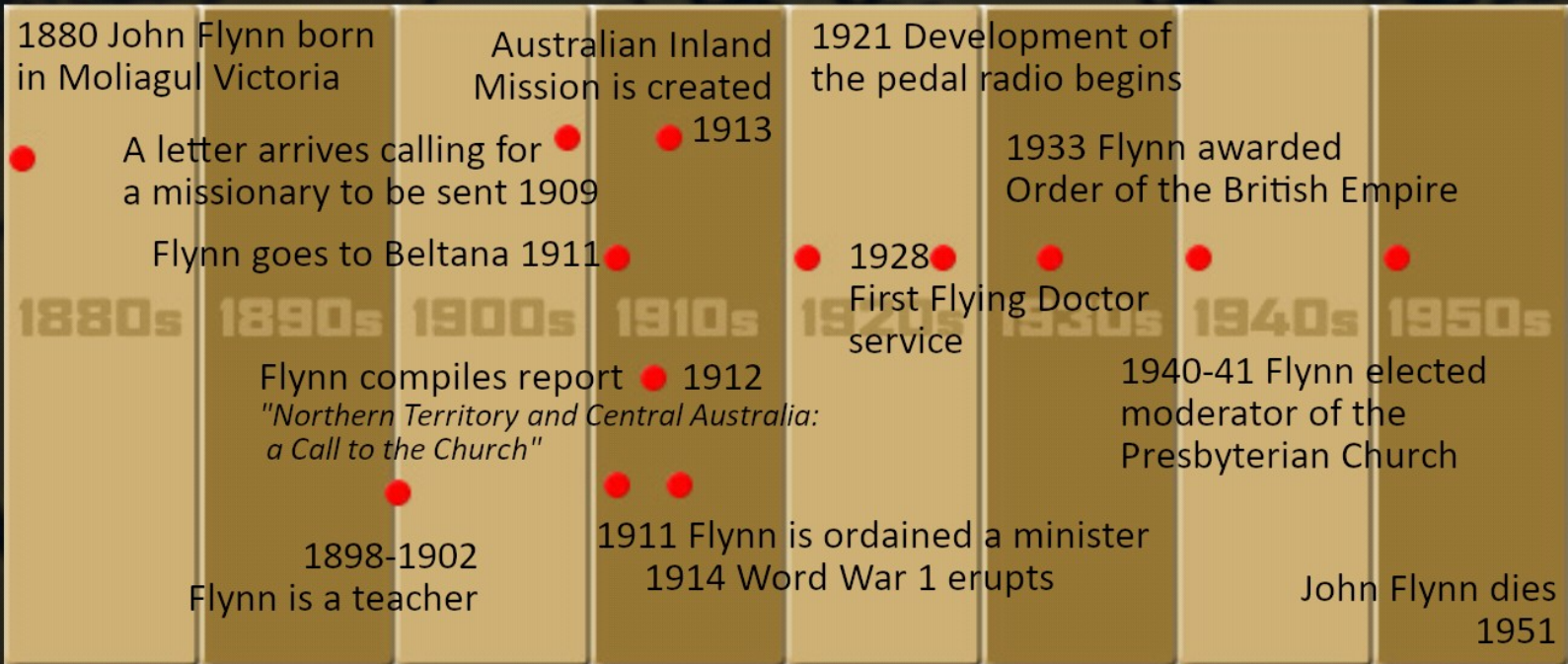
A Padre on camel
patrol

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Flynn's Christian Nurses: Page 1 of 2

It was an adventurous life for the early nurses. They had to travel through floods, dust storms, thunderstorms and heatwaves of up to 50 degrees. They had to learn to ride a horse and cross rivers by hanging onto the horse's tail; camp out in the bush on a diet of stale bread and dried beef and make splints from tree branches.



From: National Library of Australia



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Flynn's Christian Nurses: Page 2 of 2

The first bungalow-style hostels could house six patients, but the Aborigines preferred lying in the yard on the dirt to the clean sheets of the ward. But conditions among the whites were sometimes no better as some of the white bushmen had not had a bath for years.

Sometimes, the nurse had to treat leprosy or yaws (a type of infection) or perform operations under the direction of a doctor hundreds of miles away. She also had to know how to bake bread, milk a goat or teach a Sunday School lesson.



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Video: The Inlanders

Watch a video clip about the Australian Inland Mission and John Flynn. You will gain more insight into Flynn's work. You will also see the pedal radio in use. The button below will take you to a web page where you can play the video. The video is 1 min 52 secs.

[Link to Video](#)



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