

# 15,000 HOURS FLYING

## Air Veteran's Unremembered Record

A R.A.F. squadron, usually careful to celebrate anything from a birthday to a promotion, has missed an event. A pilot whose name is famous in the aeronautical world has completed 15,000 hours' flying, and no party was held.

As far as is known no one even paid particular attention to drinking his health or wishing him good luck for the "next 15,000." The reason is that the pilot himself, Squadron-Leader Robert McIntosh, A.F.C., did not notice his extraordinary achievement. The W.A.A.F. girl who keeps the "books" drew his attention, a few days later, to the number of hours entered. She thought the figure most unusual. It is—15,000 hours is possibly a British record, although Squadron-Leader McIntosh himself makes no claim.

### FLOWN ALL TYPES

In just over a quarter of a century's flying, Squadron-Leader McIntosh, now in his 48th year, has piloted more than 100 types of aircraft, from the last war's Renaults of 70 h.p. with pusher airscrews and scissor controls, to the latest 4,800 h.p. Stirlings.

His first hour's flying was in a Maurice Farman "Shorthorn," and his 15,000th was spent in a twin-engined Oxford, teaching a sergeant-pilot how to fly blind.

Once an apprentice in the Mercantile Marine, Robert McIntosh flew Bristol fighters as his first operational aircraft in the last war. He finished the war in a Handley-Page night bomber which dropped its bombs at the touch of a release like a motor-bike brake. Then he joined the "Peace Conference Flight," and became chief pilot for Handley-Page, opening for them the Paris-Basle-Zurich route. When his firm amalgamated with Imperial Airways McIntosh was appointed a Senior Commander.

"Mac," as he is known in flying circles everywhere, won a European reputation as a commercial pilot, but had no great luck on long distance record flights. In 1927 he was forced back from Mid-Atlantic and landed after being nearly 15 hours in the air. Then, with the late Bert Hinkler, he attempted the great circle route to Delhi over the Khyber Pass. But snows were exceptionally early and he had to fly blind from 4.15 one afternoon to 8.15 the next morning. At the shores of the

Caspian Sea the fliers were compelled to return, landing near Lwow after being 27 hours in the air. They were immediately jailed as suspects by the local police, and for two and a half days England believed that Robert McIntosh was lost.

### RECORDS

For Imperial Airways he broke the Berlin to London record by covering 600 miles in four and a half hours. Once when returning from a flight with the Hon. Mrs. Westenra to Capetown, he took the Congo route home and made the first British crossing of the Sahara.

For two years he was personal pilot to Major Andrew P. Holt, the financier; and from 1936 until 1939 McIntosh helped in the business of running an air navigation school for Airwork Limited. At the beginning of the war he was "called up" to fly Blenheims and Beauforts for Coastal Command.

Later came the chance to join night fighters, and for a few weeks Squadron-Leader McIntosh believed he would realise his ambition of flying again on operations. He was disappointed; instead he was chosen to be an instructor. He has been instructing ever since, to the delight of his group captain. Last year he was awarded the Air Force Cross.

His job for many months now has been to go out every day and evening fit for flying to instruct operational pilots in the use of a beam which enables them to land without seeing the aerodrome. The windows of his cockpit are made of blue glass and in addition the pupil pilot wears brown-tinted glasses and a visor. He can see nothing but his instruments. The pupil flies until he strikes the beam, learns the automatic signals which tell him where he is in relation to it and at what heights he should be at various points along the beam until he touches down.

Squadron-Leader McIntosh holds one of the very few "Double Master" licences for land and water aircraft. His "B" licence is No. 314.

Opposite his war medals McIntosh wears the ribbon of the Bronze Medal of the Royal Humane Society. It is typical of his gameness, and of his whole career, that he won the medal when he was 16 and a bar to it when he was 46.