



Media Release

10 February 2014

Flying Doctor History Comes Home

Two recently acquired pieces of early Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) history will be inducted at a special ceremony at the Bruce Langford Visitor Centre on Wednesday, 12 February. The award-winning museum already houses many artefacts relating to the history of the Service.

The writing desk, used by RFDS founder, Reverend John Flynn during his service at the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), and a DVD containing an interview with Flynn's successor, Reverend Fred McKay, will be displayed. Local Historical Society member and actor, Don Mudie, will dress as Flynn and perform a cameo to explain the historical significance of the desk.

"Flynn's desk has a special significance for the RFDS as it is the anvil upon which our founder forged the idea of Australian Inland Mission Aerial Medical Service, later re-named the Flying Doctor Service," said Susan Williams, Business Manager - Tourism at the RFDS Bruce Langford Visitor Centre.

"It was a revolutionary idea in its time. The launch of the Service in 1928 was Flynn's genius response to the "tyranny of distance" in Australia. First World War technology, aviation and the world's first pedal-powered radio, were combined to connect doctors with patients across vast distances and provide vital medical care for Australia's Outback pioneers."

"The desk will be reunited with other Flynn artefacts already in our possession to make a new exhibit that will help us tell the RFDS story to future generations."

The desk was kindly gifted by Reverend Dr Aubrey McNaught, a retired Minister of the Uniting and Presbyterian Churches in Grafton. About to move to a retirement village and aware of the historical significance of the desk he had used for nearly 40 years, he felt it entirely fitting that it should go "home" to the organisation that Flynn founded.

The provenance of the desk is well-established. In the 1970's McNaught's wife worked for the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), the organisation which Flynn worked for. She bought it when AIM moved office in the late 70's and the desk and other furniture was about to be disposed of."

A gentleman who had worked for the AIM with Flynn assured Mrs McNaught that the great man had used it for many years. Judging by the ink stains still visible inside the desk, Flynn was a prodigious writer.

The desk also came with original appeal letters from the AIM, sent out on the occasion of the AIM's 50th anniversary in 1962 sporting a special edition five penny AIM stamp.

The second item is a taped interview with Flynn's successor, Rev Fred McKay, shot in the

early 1990's was only re-discovered during an archive search for last year's RFDS 85th anniversary celebrations.

"Fred McKay, like Flynn before him, was a great orator. The interview is about 25 minutes long and offers a fascinating insight into the formation of the RFDS, the realities of life in the bush, the character of founder John Flynn and how he recruited McKay," said Ms Williams.

"The desk, letters and the interview are going to a good home. Our museum at Broken Hill is currently ranked the most popular local tourist attraction on review website Trip Advisor. We hope that locals as well as tourists will come and visit us."

The Bruce Langford Visitor Centre is open 7 days a week, Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm, Saturday-Sunday and public holidays 10am - 3pm.

What: Induction of RFDS historical artefacts.

Where: Bruce Langford Visitor Centre, RFDS Base, Airport Rd, Broken Hill.

Who: Susan Williams, RFDS SE, Don Mudie, member of Broken Hill Historical Society and actor and visiting medical students from Monash University.

When: 9am start.

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Media Enquiries, interview requests or images to accompany the release:

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ABOUT THE ROYAL FLYING DOCTOR SERVICE

The not-for-profit Royal Flying Doctor Service has been taking the finest care to the furthest corners of Australia since 1928. The service provides 24 hour emergency cover to 90% of the Australian continent, via a modern fleet of specially equipped aircraft. No patient is more than two hours away from the Flying Doctor's help. In the past year, the South Eastern Section flew the equivalent of 6.5 round trips to the moon as it conducted over 4,700 clinics, took over 5,000 telehealth calls, had over 54,000 patient contacts and transported almost 8,600 patients.