

= Aubrey Koch =

Albert Aubrey (Aub) Koch , MBE (2 October 1904 ? 21 June 1975) was a pioneering Australian military and civil pilot . He trained at Point Cook in 1926 , and following graduation accepted a Short Service Commission in the Royal Air Force (RAF) as there were no places available in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) at the time . After four years service in Egypt and Palestine , he returned to Australia and was commissioned into the Citizen Air Force , flying with No. 1 Squadron at Laverton , where he gained flying instructor qualifications . Soon after , he was employed by Guinea Airways as an aircraft captain , and spent five years in Papua and New Guinea (PNG) , gaining fame as the rescuer of the Archbold expedition . Koch was transferred to the RAAF Active Reserve upon going to PNG . He joined Qantas a year before World War II broke out , employed predominantly on the Singapore route . He was unfortunate to be the captain of the only Qantas aircraft known to be shot down during that war , when the Short Empire flying boat Corio was lost off Timor (Circe disappeared in 1942 , possibly also shot down , and Corinna was destroyed by enemy action on the water at Broome , Western Australia) . Post war he was recruited by Lester Brain at the formation of Trans Australia Airlines (TAA) , specifically to be Senior Pilot DC4 Skymaster . At 45 , he retired from active flying to become Inspector of Safety and Accidents , TAA .

= = Early career = =

Aubrey Koch was born at Ulverstone , Tasmania on 2 October 1904 , the son of R. W. Koch , later the Building Surveyor of Hobart , and Elinor (Burton) Koch . He was educated at Clemes College Hobart , and began an Engineering Degree at the University of Tasmania . He was a keen rower , and was in the bow for the 1925 winning crew in the inter @-@ varsity eights in Brisbane . Aviation called , however , and he entered RAAF Point Cook for pilot training in 1926 , graduating at the end of the year . He was one of six graduates from his course selected for a Short Service Commission in the RAF .

Koch was initially sent to England for training and assessment , where he flew the Avro 504 , the Armstrong Whitworth Siskin , and the Bristol Fighter . He then accepted a posting to the Middle East , and was attached to No. 208 Army Cooperation Squadron , RAF , at Heliopolis , Egypt . There he was operational on the Bristol Fighter , and in August and September 1929 was involved in the suppression of the Hebron riots . Whilst on leave in Australia in 1929 , Koch met with Lieutenant Colonel Horace Brinsmead , Controller of Civil Aviation , who advised him to gain experience on larger aircraft . However , his application for posting to a twin @-@ engine squadron was refused . In May 1930 , the Squadron re @-@ equipped with Armstrong Whitworth Atlas . Koch was also allowed to convert to the Vickers Vimy at No. 216 Squadron , and flew as second pilot on Vickers Victoria aircraft . He returned to Australia at the end of 1930 , arriving in Melbourne on 15 December . In Egypt , Koch had continued his interest in rifle shooting and photography .

Employment in public transport aviation was difficult to find in 1931 , but Koch was able to continue flying with the Citizen Air Force at No. 1 Squadron , Laverton . He flew as second pilot without pay for Australian National Airways in 1931 , to gain experience , and was lucky not to be aboard the ill @-@ fated Southern Cloud , when family commitments prevented him taking his position . In mid @-@ 1933 he was appointed instructor with the Australian Aero Club , based at Essendon Aerodrome . In November 1933 , he was recruited by Guinea Airways as an aircraft captain , and was to spend the next five years in Papua and New Guinea . He flew the Junkers W 34 , the Junkers G 31 , and the Ford Tri @-@ Motor during this time , gaining much experience with sea operations when the W34 was float equipped . He gained some fame from his efforts to deliver supplies to the second (1936 ? 37) Archbold Expedition . The expedition had become isolated when its own aircraft was accidentally destroyed in Port Moresby harbour , and was thought to be camped in the Blucher Mountains near the headwaters of the Strickland River , low on supplies and without fuel for its generators . Koch , operating out of Mt Hagen in a Ford fitted with long range tanks , found the party and resupplied it by parachute with food and gasoline . Among his many photographs taken during this period are several of the last known days of Amelia Earhart at Lae

aerodrome . He married Clarice Grant on 1 June 1933 , in Melbourne ; the couple were to have a daughter and two sons .

= = World War II = =

Koch finally achieved his ambition of joining what was then known as Qantas Empire Airways (QEA) with an appointment on 4 July 1938 . The Singapore service commenced on 2 August 1938 (the westbound service was " officially " opened on 4 August) . In the arcane language of QEA , he was promoted from " Extra Mate " to " Senior Mate " in October 1940 . This allowed him to fly as relief Captain on the Singapore service . He was soon promoted to " Master " , and in June 1943 to " Extra Master " . QEA was intimately involved in the war effort almost from its beginning , and in late 1940 was contracted to fly 19 PBY5 Catalinas from Honolulu to Australia on behalf of the RAAF . By a convenience , the crews were regarded as civilians (to meet American diplomatic niceties) for this operation , but on other RAAF contracts , particularly to combat zones , they were seen as serving in the RAAF Reserve . Brain , Koch and P. G .Taylor flew the final delivery flight of the Catalina ferry , arriving in Sydney on 24 October 1941 , for the first time via Suva , Fiji . This crew determined to commemorate their mission by flying the first Airmail delivery between Fiji and Australia , and to that end they had a large number of " First Day Covers " (but without Airmail stamps) endorsed by the Suva Post Office prior to departure , and by the Sydney Post Office on arrival (some examples of what became collector 's items are held by the Qantas Museum) . They also transported 200 pounds weight of ordinary mail on behalf of the Fiji postal authorities . This plan led to a serious contretemps with Pan American , which had the contract to convey the air mail from Fiji but was not due to start operations until 9 November 1941 .

Koch returned to the East Indies operation , and on 30 January 1942 , when in command of Corio , he was shot down off Timor by seven Japanese Zeros whilst carrying out a relief flight to Surabaya , Dutch East Indies . Of the eighteen people on board , five survived . Koch was wounded by gunfire in the left leg and left arm , and broke his right leg in the subsequent crash landing . Despite the injuries , he swam about five miles to the shore where he was looked after by local people , until the Dutch Navy found the survivors some days later , and rescued them with a Dornier flying boat . Some three weeks later , he was in Darwin hospital on the day of the first Japanese raid on Darwin . By good fortune , the QEA flying boat Camilla survived the raid , and Koch was flown to Sydney for treatment .

He was unfortunate again on 22 April 1943 when , in command of Camilla on an RAAF contract involving the transport of military personnel to Port Moresby , he found himself unable to proceed due to bad weather , and was forced to attempt a night landing on the open ocean when off the coast of New Guinea . Due largely to the inexperience of his co @-@ pilot , the aircraft broke up on landing , and 13 out of the 31 people on board did not survive . Koch spent about 18 hours in the sea before being rescued at the chance passage of a local steamer . A. B. Corbett , the Director @-@ General of Civil Aviation , recommended to his Minister that in view of the circumstances no Court of Inquiry be held ? in effect Koch was exonerated .

= = Post @-@ war career = =

In 1946 , the Australian Government determined to nationalise commercial air operations in the belief that air transport was primarily a public service , but was prevented from doing so by a High Court decision . It therefore formed a government airline to compete with the private carriers , which was to be administered by the Australian National Airways Commission , and would operate as Trans Australia Airlines (TAA) . Lester Brain was headhunted from Qantas and was appointed General Manager of the new airline . One of his first appointments was that of Captain Aubrey Koch to be Senior Pilot DC4 Skymaster . Koch remained in this role for four years , retiring from active flying in September 1950 with in excess of 17 @,@ 000 flying hours , due to disabilities developed from his war injuries , and taking up the role of Inspector of Air Safety . In June 1955 he was appointed a Member of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire , the

citation being : " In recognition of Captain Koch 's long and distinguished service to civil aviation in Australia . " He finally retired in June 1961 , and settled at Mt Eliza , Victoria , where he died on 21 June 1975 .