

Reverend John Flynn and the Australian Inland Mission

John Flynn: 'Flynn of the Inland'

John Flynn was born in 1880 and educated in Melbourne. Ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1911 he was commissioned by his church to visit the Northern Territory in 1912 and report on its missionary needs. His report, *Northern Territory and Central Australia – A Call to the Church*, was considered by the Presbyterian General Assembly and as a result he was appointed field superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM), a position he held for the next 39 years.

The vast distances of the Territory and the lack of adequate medical facilities concerned Flynn and from 1917 onwards he founded a series of nursing services in remote locations. Taking advantage of the rapid development of aviation in the 1920s, Flynn was instrumental in the formation of the AIM Aerial Medical Service in 1928. The effectiveness of the service was ensured by the invention of the Traeger pedal radio in 1929. With several name changes, the AIM Aerial Medical Service became the Royal Flying Doctor Service in 1954.

Flynn was also concerned with providing shelter for the older population of Central Australia and in 1949 he designed the first cottage to be built at the Old Timers' Settlement in Alice Springs.

John Flynn was awarded an OBE in 1933, and served as Moderator-General of the Presbyterian Church from 1939 until 1942. He died in July 1951 and his ashes were placed in a commemorative grave on Larapinta Drive, a few kilometres west of Alice Springs. A church dedicated to Flynn's memory was completed in Alice Springs in 1956.

A novel by author Ion Idriess, loosely based on Flynn's life, was published in 1932 under the title *Flynn of the Inland*.

Records held by the National Archives relating to John Flynn

A number of records relating to John Flynn, the Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service are held by National Archives' offices in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Darwin. A selection of items held is listed below.

John Flynn and Flynn memorials

Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>NT, Flying Doctor Service – Federal Council commemorative structure to Rev. Dr John Flynn</u>	1944–51	A431, 1951/1271
<u>Very Rev. John Flynn – honour</u>	1950	A463, 1959/3703

Sydney

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>The men who knew Flynn (audiotape)</u>	1933–71	C102, FD24
<u>Flynn, Very Rev. Dr John – founder, Australian Inland Mission (audio tape)</u>	1947	C102, REL6
<u>John Flynn memorial church – laying foundation stone – speech by Prime Minister (audio tape)</u>	1954	C102, REL30

Melbourne

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Rev. John Flynn – memorial church named after the founder of the Flying Doctor Service</u>	1941–60	M914, NT752

Darwin

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Commemorative structure – Rev. Dr John Flynn</u>	1943–59	F1, 1952/1065
<u>Australian Inland Mission requests – reference John Flynn's grave and Old Timers' home, Alice Springs</u>	1955	F1, 1955/1263

Australian Inland Mission and the Royal Flying Doctor Service

Canberra

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Aerial Medical Service. Australian Inland Mission</u>	1929–39	A659, 1939/1/8365
<u>Medical services. Australian Inland Mission. Aerial Medical Service</u>	1929–39	A1928, 652A/4 part 1
<u>Medical services. Australian Inland Mission. Aerial Medical Service</u>	1929–39	A1928, 652A/4 part 2
<u>Subsidy to Australian Inland Mission in respect of Aerial Medical Services</u>	1933	A6006, 1933/07/11
<u>Book of photographs taken during a flight around Australia visiting Flying Doctor bases</u>	1939	A1861, 6923
<u>Australian Inland Mission (Flying Doctor Service) hostel and nursing home, Alice Springs</u>	1939–52	A452, 1952/400

Melbourne

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Flying Doctor Service minutes of meetings, bulletins</u>	1932–40	MP347/1, 132/101/182
<u>Iron and Steel – Australian Inland Mission. Materials required for erection of Old Timers' huts at Alice Springs</u>	1951	MP61/1, 2/176/1701

Brisbane

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Scripts of talks broadcast by the ABC, Brisbane – presentations by V McKenzie (Includes a talk titled 'The Australian Inland Mission')</u>	1945–64	BP257/1, 26

Adelaide

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service accommodation for nurses at Rawlinna</u>	1935–61	B300, 7779, part 1
<u>Hospital at Cook, hostel at Tarcoola, hostel proposed Kingoonya, Flying Doctor Service accommodation for nurses at Rawlinna</u>	1935–61	B300, 7779, part 2

Darwin

Title or description of record	Date range	Series, item number
<u>Flying Doctor. NT medical service</u>	1934–38	F1, 1936/651
<u>Flying Doctor. Barkly Tablelands</u>	1937	F1, 1937/375
<u>Flying Doctor. NT medical service</u>	1937–39	F1, 1939/6
<u>Government aircraft – Flying Doctor</u>	1937–39	F1, 1940/360
<u>Doctor service circulars</u>	1941–53	F742, 1945/289M

Records held in other locations

A collection of the personal papers of John Flynn is held by the National Library of Australia.