

## **MS-177, Amy Johnson Papers**

**Collection Number:** MS-177

**Title:** Amy Johnson Papers

**Dates:** 1930-1958

**Creator:** Johnson, Amy, 1903-1941

**Summary/Abstract:** Johnson, an English aviator, became an instant celebrity after piloting her de Havilland Gypsy Moth from London to Australia in 1930, a long distant flight no woman had ever attempted. Her papers include the manuscript of her unpublished biography, written by her sister, as well as correspondence, personal papers, and photographs.

**Quantity/Physical Description:** 0.5 linear feet

**Language(s):** English

**Repository:**

Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435-0001, (937) 775-2092.

**Restrictions on Access:** There are no restrictions on accessing material in this collection.

**Restrictions on Use:**

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**Preferred Citation:**

MS-177, Amy Johnson Papers, Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

**Acquisition:** The Amy Johnson Papers was accessioned by Wright State University Archives and Special Collections on July 24, 1987. The materials were purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, a rare book dealer in Valley Stream, New York.

**Custodial History:** Mr. Apfelbaum purchased the collection at a general auction held in London.

**Other Finding Aid:** The finding aid is also available on the Wright State University, Special Collections and Archives' website at

[http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection\\_guides/guide\\_files/ms177.pdf](http://www.libraries.wright.edu/special/collection_guides/guide_files/ms177.pdf).

**Processing Information:** Finding aid reformatted in September, 2014.

**Processed by:** Tanya L. Zanish, Spring, 1988

**Arrangement:** The collection is arranged into 3 series:

Series I: Manuscripts

Series II: Correspondence

Series III: Miscellaneous

**Biographical Note:**

Amy Johnson was born in 1903 in Hull, England, where her father was a fish merchant. She entered Sheffield University where she earned a B.S. in 1926. After working as a secretary for three years, she became a member of the London Aeroplane Club, located at Stag Lane. Not only did she obtain her pilot's license in 1928, but with the teaching of Jack Humphries, became the first woman in England to earn an aircraft engineer's license.

In 1929 she decided to make a reputation for herself by attempting a long distance flight no woman had ever tried before. She chose to fly to Australia so she would not have to pilot over a large expanse of ocean. She had trouble finding financial backing, but finally persuaded Lord Wakefield to front half of the expense for her craft, a DeHavilland Gipsy Moth named "Jason"; her father paid for the other half. After 85 hours of solo flight and a previous cross country flight record of 147 miles, she left for Australia in May 1930. Her trip took 19 ½ days and she became an instant celebrity. She continued making record flights, including a failed attempt to Peking in 1931, and with Jack Humphries as a co-pilot, set a speed record from London to Tokyo in ten days.

In 1932, she married Jim Mollison, who was a leading British Flyer and had set numerous records of his own. He flew England to Capetown, South Africa in 4 days and made the first solo Europe to America crossing a month after the wedding. Ironically, Amy then beat his Capetown record in '32. They decided to attempt a long distance around the world flight, but due to fuel loss, crashed in Connecticut. They later tried to win the Australia-England Trophy Race in 1934, but had to withdraw due to mechanical difficulty. By 1938, they were divorced; Amy began to write articles about flying and gave up the pursuit of long distance flights.

With the advent of World War II, Amy joined the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). While flying from Blackpool to Oxford, Amy Johnson overshot her destination by 100 miles. She ditched in the Thames Estuary after running out of fuel, and although a Convoy Thrawler tried to rescue her, she drowned on January 5, 1941.

**Scope and Content**

The papers within the Amy Johnson Collection are organized into three series. Series I, Manuscripts, has several book manuscripts written by Amy Johnson's sister, Betty Falconer-Stewart. Manuscript 1, "My Sister, Amy", is dated Feb. 19, 1943 and runs 1-215 pages. Manuscript 2, a serial article called "Britain Did It First", is dated Apr. 27, 1951 and runs 20 pages. Manuscript 3 is dated May 11, 1953, runs for 14 chapters, and Manuscript 4, no date, runs

for 1-245 pages. All of these manuscripts are variations on the same work, Manuscript 1. There is also a grouping of various rewritten chapters and notes. All of these manuscripts are incomplete. There are also two articles written by Amy Johnson contained in this series: "What Next" (August 1938) and "4,000 Miles in a Car" (October 1938)

Series 2, Correspondence, has personal letters from Amy to her parents (1930-1936). It also contains all of Mrs. Falconer-Stewart's correspondence regarding research on Amy's friends, background, and personality (1949), as well as her contact with a London editor, Peter Cattle, in reference to publication of her book (1942-1958). All of these items are arranged chronologically.

Series 3, Miscellaneous, contains such varied items as Mrs. Falconer-Stewart's 1941 marriage certificate and a fan request for Jim Mollison's autograph. The Johnson Family photographs are also in this series, being separated into three dateless categories: 1) Amy Johnson/Aviation Related 2) Family Photographs and 3) Photographs taken during Amy's trip to the United States.

## **Subject Terms:**

### **Persons/Families**

Johnson, Amy, 1903-1941

Falconer-Stewart, Betty

### **Subjects (General)**

Women air pilots – Great Britain.

### **Material Types**

Correspondence

Manuscripts for publication

Photographs

## **Collection Inventory**

### **Series I: Manuscripts**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
		Manuscripts by Betty Johnson Falconer-Stewart	
1	1	Manuscript 1 "My Sister, Amy"	Feb. 19, 1943
	2	Manuscript 1 "My Sister, Amy"	Feb. 19, 1943
	3	Manuscript 2 "Britain Did It First"	Apr. 27, 1951
4-5		Manuscript 3	May 11, 1953
	6	Manuscript 4	Undated
	7	Misc. Chapters and Notes	

2	1	Manuscripts by Amy Johnson "What Next" and "4,000 miles in a Car"	Aug. & Oct. 1938
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**Series II: Correspondence**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	2	Letters from Amy	1930-1936
	3	Research by Betty Falconer-Stewart	1949
	4	Letters to Editor from B.F.S.	1942-1958

**Series III: Miscellaneous**

<u>Box</u>	<u>File</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Date</u>
2	5	Miscellaneous	
	6	Photographs	
		1. Aviation Photographs	
		2. Family Photographs	
		3. Trip to the United States	