



The sterling silver model
Fairey 111D before restoration

A piece of Australian aviation history: The Fairey 111D The story of its restoration at W J Sanders

For a silversmith there is nothing more satisfying than restoring a truly historic piece of silver. When CMDR David Goble RANR visited W J Sanders in 2011 with the most magnificent silver model of a vintage aeroplane work ceased immediately. The scale model Fairey 111D was a masterpiece of craftsmanship and skill drawing the admiration of the team of skilled artisans.

HISTORY of the Fairey 111D

The Fairey 111D is the first aircraft to circumnavigate the Australian coastline and was originally ordered for service in the Royal Australian Navy in the early 1920s. Seaplanes were commonly used for survey, reconnaissance and pioneered flights along the Australian coastline.

In April 1924, Flying Officer Ivor McIntyre and Wing Commander (later Air Vice-Marshal) Stanley Goble left Point Cook in the RAAF Fairey 111D, the aim of the flight to show the usefulness of seaplanes and to complete the first aerial circumnavigation of Australia.

During the journey, McIntyre and Goble experienced many difficulties including barely missing cliff edges at Bulli; the compass had exploded and one of the floats had been damaged. They also experienced engine trouble and were delayed because of bad weather. Forty-four days later, the two men landed safely in St Kilda, Melbourne where they were welcomed by the Governor of Victoria, the Earl of Stradbroke and a cheering crowd. Prime Minister Mr Stanley Bruce (1883-1967) said that McIntyre and Goble's journey had 'demonstrated the great possibilities of air flight not only for the defence of Australia but also for rapid communication with its widely separated and outlying settlements.'

Wing Commander S J Goble and Flight Lieutenant I E McIntyre were subsequently awarded the prestigious Britannia Trophy in 1924 for 'A flight round Australia taking 44 days and covering 8,568 miles in 90 hours flight time in a Fairey 111D.'

HISTORY of the silver model

It was no surprise that the W J Sanders silversmiths were impressed by the intricate workmanship of the replica after they discovered the Mappin & Webb's mark and the stamp signifying the London assay office hidden under the RAAF insignia on the wing. Mappin & Webb, founded in 1810 originally in Sheffield, became one of the United Kingdom's most prestigious silversmiths and in 1897 they were granted a Royal Warrant.

From information obtained from a 30 year old newspaper clipping, we discovered that two sterling silver replica models of the Fairey 111D were made, presented to Goble and McIntyre shortly after their landing. Many years later the replica awarded to McIntyre ended up in the hands of London antique dealer John Bourdon-Smith.

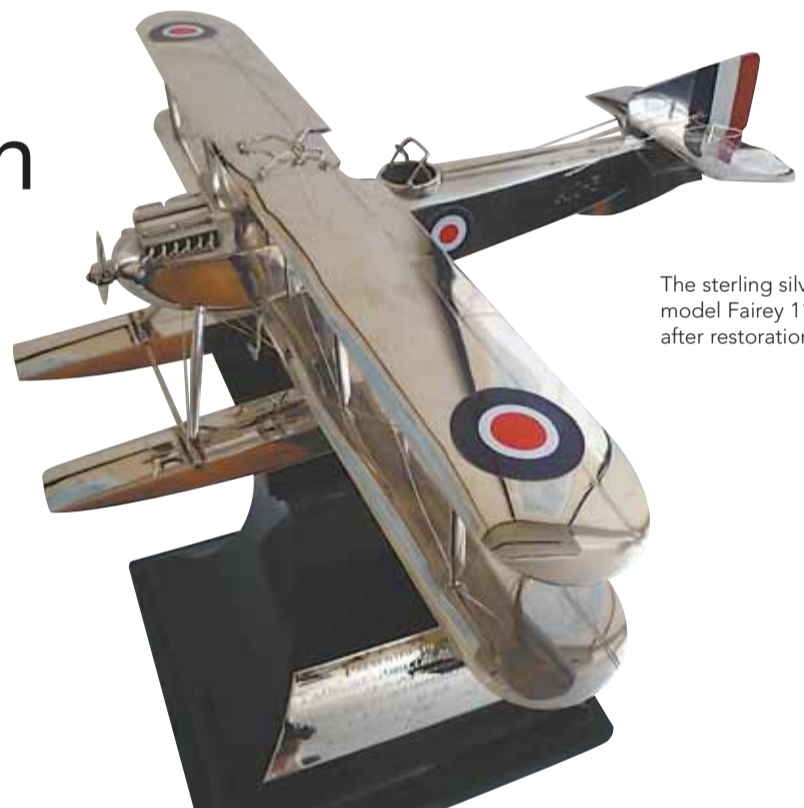
In 1988, Bourdon-Smith visited Melbourne where he decided to put it up for sale in the hope an enthusiastic aviator would buy it and give it to the nation. Unfortunately this did not happen, and it was later sold. The current owner of McIntyre's silver replica is unknown.

Meanwhile in 2011, the silver model seaplane presented to Goble and now in the care of grandson CMDR David Goble RANR was in need of repair and restoration. He brought the model to W J Sanders & Co hoping it could be restored to the way he remembered it when he was a young boy. He reminisced, recalling a time when he used to want to play with it but was not allowed, told that it was not a toy.

THE RESTORATION process

Step 1. Firstly, the seaplane needed to be taken completely apart. The propeller, inside housing, all strut wires and engraving plates were disassembled in preparation for cleaning.

Step 2. All the components were chemically cleaned. The procedure involves soaking the items in a chemical solution to soften the dirt. Following this, the parts were scratch brushed.



The sterling silver
model Fairey 111D
after restoration

A brush made of very fine brass is used to flick off the now softened dirt.

Step 3. Silver solder the attachment for the base and machine hand polish all the silver parts. A very labour intensive task that took over six hours to complete. The machine hand-polishing with soft brushes removed all scuff marks returning the model's original silver patina. Wax was applied after polishing.

Step 4. Make replacement silver wire struts. The original wires, some of which had become detached, were quite brittle and most could not be re-used. In order to do this, seven metres of 0.2 mm thick sterling silver twisted rope was made.

Accurately re-rigging the wires was one of the most difficult tasks for the silversmith as no existing photograph of the replica seaplane was clear enough to determine exactly how each wire sat. Eventually, thanks to internet research, some close-up shots of a Fairey 111D in an aeronautical museum supplied us with the answers.

Step 5. The Air Force badges were very faded and impossible to re-use. These were recreated in-house and the tail of the seaplane was then repainted, matched to the original colour.

Step 6. The wooden plinth, also in bad state of disrepair was stripped back, sanded and then repainted with high gloss black paint. New felt was affixed to the base.

Step 7. Finally, each piece was painstakingly reassembled and placed on the plinth. The seaplane was given a final light buff and was now ready to be collected.

The fully restored seaplane was picked up and then taken on a visit to the home of the recipient's eldest son, Commodore John Goble RAN (Rtd) who was favourably impressed with the W J Sanders craftsmanship. 'It is better now than I remember it,' he said.

The model Fairey 111D seaplane is now in the hands of the Chief of Air Force, having been presented to him at the RAAF history conference held in Canberra on 4 November. It will be placed on public display at the RAAF museum in Point Cook, Victoria as a permanent loan item from the Goble family.



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