Captain Harry Butler

Captain 'Harry' Butler had an amazing life that spanned from growing up in Minlaton to joining the Royal Flying Corps, becoming a fighter pilot in France, an aviation instructor in England to flying the first mail delivery over the sea from Adelaide, South Australia to Minlaton, Yorke Peninsula.

Born November 9th, 1889 in Yorketown, Henry John Butler grew up on a small farm at Koolywurtie, near Minlaton. Even as a child, Harry was determined to fly and used to catch the chickens so he could measure their wingspan and weigh them to learn more about flying.

Harry used all of his savings and borrowed money so he could go to England to join the Royal Flying Corps. In early 1916, he enlisted as an Air Mechanic and by July he was a fighter pilot flying in France. Captain Harry Butler became a talented instructor passing on his passion for flying to over 2,000 students.

After the war, Harry returned to South Australia and risked life and limb, performing endless stunts to try and capture people's imagination and lift the awareness of aviation and its possibilities for the future.

Harry's greatest achievement came on August 6th, 1919 when he finally arrived home to Minlaton on the first mail delivery across the sea from Adelaide. He set off in his 'Red Devil' Bristol Monoplane facing gale force winds blowing at 110 km per hour with an 18 kg mailbag of letters on board for delivery to Minlaton, 100 km away. Harry arrived in Minlaton to a crowd of over 6,000 people, some who had never seen a plane flying before.

Harry continued to thrill many crowds with his aviation displays and was responsible for the first aerial photograph ever taken and published in South Australia over the suburbs of Adelaide.