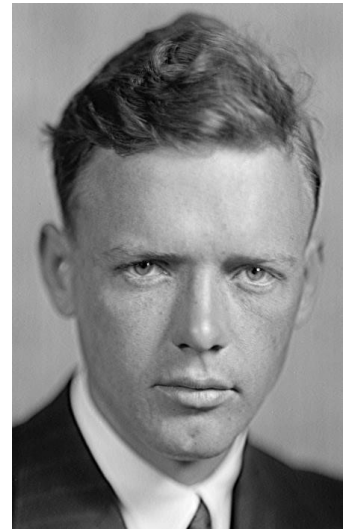


Today is the anniversary of not one, but two, non-stop flights across the Atlantic from America to Europe. The first was done by CHARLES LINDBERGH (pronounced 'Lind - burg'), who landed in Paris on May 21 1927, having flown there from New York in his plane 'THE SPIRIT OF ST LOUIS'. He became the first man ever to fly non-stop across the Atlantic and became world famous for what he had done. Here is some footage on YouTube of a ticker tape parade that was held in his honour in New York on June 13 1927:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gvq0vwLaeko>

(It's called a ticker tape parade because as the person being honoured travelled down the road, shredded paper would be thrown from the windows of the buildings along the road.) You can see just how crazy the crowds were to get a glimpse of Lindbergh - and all just because he had flown from New York to Paris! When the Romans held a parade in honour of a general or leader who had scored a huge victory, they used to have someone stand behind the general or leader whispering to him, 'Remember you are only a man', so that they wouldn't get a big head because of the parade, and start getting ideas about making themselves ruler of Rome. I wonder if having this parade went to Lindbergh's head - before his flight to Paris, he was a lowly pilot working for the US Air Mail. Afterwards, he started getting involved in politics and opposed America's getting involved in World War II.



So that's what happened on May 21 1927, but then five years later on May 21 1932, a plane landed in a field in Northern Ireland, and a 35 year old woman got out of the pilot's cockpit. Someone who was working in the field said, 'Have you come far?' and she said, 'From America'. The woman was AMELIA EARHART (pronounced 'Amee - lee - ah Air - hart') and she became first woman to fly non-stop across the Atlantic - she had deliberately timed her flight so she would arrive in Northern Ireland on the same day that Charles Lindbergh had arrived in Paris, five years before. There was no ticker tape parade for Amelia Earhart, but she still became world-famous for her achievement, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross by the United States Congress (their equivalent of our Parliament), and the Legion of Honour by the French government.



Sadly, neither Lindbergh nor Earhart had a happy ending to their lives. On March 1 1932, Charles Lindbergh's baby boy disappeared from the Lindbergh house. A ladder was found leading up to the window of the Lindbergh baby's bedroom, and a ransom note demanding \$50,000 for the baby's return was found in the baby's cot. The money was paid but the baby was never returned - instead it was later found dead in the grounds of the Lindbergh house on May 12. When the ransom money was paid, a record was made of the serial numbers on the notes, and a German immigrant called RICHARD HAUPTMANN (pronounced 'Howpt - man') was caught spending some of those notes. He was put on trial for the kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby, and was found guilty and executed on April



3 1936. But ever since people have argued that Hauptmann was innocent. A very interesting book that I read on the case argued that Lindbergh himself staged the kidnapping as a joke - he was always playing stupid pranks with the baby, like dangling it out of the window - but as he was going down the ladder outside the baby's bedroom window with the baby in his arms, he accidentally dropped the baby, and the baby was killed. Lindbergh then buried the baby in the grounds of his house, went back to the house and went along with the story that the baby had been kidnapped - and then allowed an innocent man to go to his death to cover up what he had himself done. Lindbergh was not a nice man, so I think this story is pretty believable. He died in 1974.

As for Amelia Earhart, after having set loads of records for non-stop flights and speed records for flying in planes, she decided she wanted to be the first woman to fly around the world (not non-stop of course - the plane that can fly around the world non-stop hasn't been invented yet, and why would you want to fly around the world non-stop anyway, and just arrive back where you started?). She set out with her co-pilot, Fred Noonan, on June 1 1937. The plan was to fly East - down to South America, across the Atlantic, and then over Africa and India, then down to Australia and then across the Pacific to get back to the United States. By June 29 1937, they had completed all but the Pacific leg of the journey - 22,000 miles done, 7,000 miles to go. On July 2 1937, Earhart and Noonan started off on the last leg of their journey, aiming to fly to a small uninhabited island in the Pacific called Howland Island - from there they would fly to Hawaii, and then from there to California. But they never arrived on Howland Island - their plane disappeared, with the last radio signals from the plane indicating that Earhart and Noonan thought they were on course to land on Howland Island, but were still some miles away from it. Nobody really knows what happened to the plane. It may be that they ran out of the gas and the plane crashed into the Pacific before they could land it. But the grimmest theory is that Earhart and Noonan managed to land the plane on another island, but were unable to get off the island, and they simply starved to death there. Whatever happened, it was a sad ending for the greatest female pilot of all time, and a much nicer person than Charles Lindbergh.