

Cemetery honours aviation pioneer

North Road Cemetery organised a memorial service for the centenary of the death of South Australian aviation pioneer Captain Harry Butler at the end of July.

Captain Butler, who was born in Minlaton on the Yorke Peninsula, was said to be almost as famous as the premier in the years after World War One â?? wowing the people of Adelaide with spins, dives and loop-the-loops in his famous â??Red Devilâ?• Bristol monoplane.



Guests and dignitaries at the service to commemorate Captain Harry Butler



Many guests travelled from Minlaton to attend the service.

North Road Cemetery historian Helen Stein says Butler has largely been forgotten today but he was once one of South Australiaâ??s most famous sons.

He was best known for making the first flight over water in the southern hemisphere, from Adelaide to Minlaton, in 1919.

â??He really was remarkable â?? with his engineer Harry Kauper, he established the stateâ??s first airport at Northfield and our first passenger flight business, offering joy flights at a cost of Â£5 for ten minutes,â?• Mrs Stein says.

â??He also established a second airfield at Hendon, which later became Adelaideâ??s first Commonwealth Government aerodrome.



Synod Operations Manager Raffaele Angelino lays a wreath on behalf of the Diocese on Captain Butlerâ??s grave

â??Itâ??s important to remember these aviation pioneers so that future generations can be inspired to achieve, innovate and test the boundaries just as Harry Butler did 100 years ago.â?•

Born in 1889, Butler grew up on a farm near Minlaton before travelling to England in early 1916 to join the Royal Flying Corps.

He flew missions over France and served as a chief fighting instructor in Scotland, training over 2700 pilots and earning the Air Force Cross.

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Harry Butler flying over King William Street in a picture that is part of an exhibit in his honour at the chapel in North Road Cemetery and below, the man himself in his Royal Flying Corps days and a model of the Red Devil.

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After the war he returned to Adelaide with an Avro biplane and his much-loved â??Red Devilâ?• monoplane (now displayed in Minlatonâ??s main street, itâ??s believed to be the only one of its kind in the world). He sustained serious head injuries after crashing the Avro into a paddock near Minlaton in 1922.

He rarely flew again and died on 30 July 1924 from complications due to injuries sustained in the crash. He was buried with full military honours at North Road Cemetery the following day.

Historian Samantha Battams, co-author of *The Red Devil: The story of South Australian aviation pioneer, Captain Harry Butler, AFC,* who spoke at the service, says Butler inspired tens of thousands of South Australians as he performed aerial shows in support of Peace Loan efforts.

â??Butler played a pivotal role in the advancement of aviation â?? he took the first aerial photography over Adelaide, and won the inaugural South Australian Aerial Derby over the city in 1920. The people of South Australia adored him.â?•

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