

# John Weston

## Aviation Pioneer



Cover Picture: Pen sketch of the Gnome seven cylinder rotary air-cooled aeroplane engine. This particular engine, badly scorched by the fire that destroyed John Weston's workshops at Brandfort in 1913, was donated to the Museum by him in 1928. Being the oldest aero engine of its kind in South Africa it has been proclaimed a National Monument.

Voorblad: 'n Inktekening van die Gnome, sewe silinder-rotasie-lugverkoelde enjin. Hierdie besondere enjin is in 1913 beskadig deur die brand wat John Weston se werkswinkels te Brandfort vernietig het. Aangesien dit die oudste vliegtuigenjin van sy soort in Suid-Afrika is, is dit verklaar tot 'n Nasionale Gedenkwaardigheid.

ONE hundred years ago on June 17th, 1873, there was born in an oxwagon at Forth Marshall, Natal, Maximilian John Ludwick Weston, a man destined to become the true grandfather of aviation in South Africa.

After training and working overseas, Weston in 1907, while residing near Hoopstad in the Orange Free State, started to construct an aeroplane. He completed this aeroplane at Brandfort in 1909. Finding that it was underpowered he took it with him to France in 1910 where it was modified and fitted with a revolutionary seven-cylinder rotary air-cooled engine of the Gnome type. In 1911 he returned to South Africa and on June 18th, with his Weston-Farman aeroplane, gave a flying demonstration at Kimberley.

He purchased three Bristols and in an effort to make South Africa air conscious while obtaining support for his scheme to establish a permanent training school for pilots, he gave demonstration flights at various centres. Although he received very little support both from the private sector and the Government his pioneering effort earned him the title "grandfather of aviation in South Africa". He later partook in the South West Africa campaign and the first World War, was awarded the honorary title of Rear-Admiral, became a caravanist of world repute and in 1950, was murdered on his farm near Bergville in Natal.



John Weston in his thirties. A comprehensive account of the life and work of this colourful character, as well as that of his contemporaries is shortly to be published as a Memoir of the Museum.



Die eerste beheerde enjinaangedrewe vlug in die Vrystaat het in Bloemfontein plaasgevind op 13 September 1911 toe John Weston sy Bristol-dubbeldekker die lug ingestuur het vanaf die ou resiesbaan, waar die voorstad Universitas vandag geleë is.

## Rotskuns - Welbedachtdam



Ten einde te voorkom dat hierdie heel besondere rotstekening van 'n leeu onder die water van die Welbedachtdam in die Caledonrivier verdwyn, gaan dit eersdaags met die toestemming van die Raad vir Nasionale Gedenkwaardighede deur die firma Roberts Construction uitgehaal word vir veilige bewaring in die Nasionale Museum.