



## 1. Plane Stories: Encounters with Objects

Material culture plays a fundamental and vibrant role in the field of memory studies.

'Material memories' and personal recollections are typically intertwined and interpenetrate. This session aims to articulate some of the ways that such entanglements between an object and an individual operate in daily life and on special occasions; and can thereby contribute diverse perspectives on understanding and experiences of Heritage of the Air.

Session Convenors: Steve Brown, Annie Clarke, Sally Brockwell, and Ursula Frederick

### 1. Maurice Guillaux, a Bleriot XI and the first aerial mail

*Paul Ashton- University of Technology Sydney*

Today Maurice Guillaux's Bleriot XI hangs from a ceiling in the Powerhouse Museum. It seems largely ignored. It flew the first aerial mail run from Melbourne to Sydney in 1914, just before the outbreak of WWI. It was also full of other significant objects. This paper looks at how this object could be presented to Children in creative non-fiction.

### 2. Kingsford-Smith, Charles Ulm and Colonial Jealousy

*Sally Brockwell- University of Canberra*

Despite the stunning success of the first trans-Pacific flight by these Australian aviators in 1928, not everybody was impressed nor convinced that it was the forerunner of regular flights between Australia and the US. C.S. Grey, the British editor of the Australian magazine "Aircraft", wrote a damning with faint praise report of the pioneering flight, revealing that the British were not so happy with this Australian achievement. Intriguingly, there were some hand-written notes on the photocopy describing the piece as "xenophobic, Anglophile nonsense" that indicated "the hold the UK industry had pre-WWII in Australian aviation affairs".

### 3. The Empire Air Mail Scheme in One Object

*Phil Vabre- Civil Aviation Historical Society*

A single airmail letter from the author's collection, posted in 1938 from England to Karumba, Queensland and then forwarded on to Sydney, encapsulates the essence of the radical late-1930s Empire Air Mail Scheme.

This one, surviving object has a great deal to tell us about many aspects of the Scheme itself and also the broader nature of the British Empire. By following its long journey, we can glimpse the nature of communications throughout the British Empire in the 1930s. We can begin to understand the nature and origin of the Empire Air Mail Scheme and the ultra-modern flying boats employed on it. We can peer into the tension between Empire loyalty and Australian national identity. We can see some of the problems of the operation of the longest air route in the world, including the need to establish very remote bases to support the Scheme's flying boats. We even know the identities and some details of the lives of some of the people who handled this letter, notably the postmaster at Karumba who was doing that job in his spare time when he applied the datestamps to the letter.

The power of even trivial objects to provide insight into the world that was, when viewed with knowledge and curiosity, cannot be overlooked.

### 4. Ode to Todd Road

*Helen Lardner- Helen Lardner- HLCD Pty Ltd*

Todd Road for most people means industrial Melbourne and boring Westgate Freeway exit signs. But Todd Road is a secret pleasure. During WWII, Australia's emerging aircraft industry centred on Mascot in NSW and Fishermans Bend in Victoria. Planes like the Beaufort Bomber, the Beaufighter and the Wirraway were wheeled out of the hanger and took their first flight on the Fishermans Bend runway.

Now I speed down that runway, the wind in my hair, thinking of the lift-off it gave Australia's manufacturing industry. How much richer would all our lives be if the excitement of the past was more strongly illuminated in everyday experiences?

### 5. Waste not

*Valerie Dennis- National Trust of Australia (Queensland)*

Last April a pair of Southern Boobook owls began roosting on the DH98 Mosquito canopy in the old shed. They stayed until August. The canopy came from a farm near Oakey on Queensland's Darling Downs, a present from a vintage aircraft restorer friend who jestingly thought my partner and I might like to rebuild one. One lifetime would not be enough.

Two hundred and twelve of these 'Wooden Wonders' were built in Australia at Bankstown, Sydney. Capable of nearly 650 kilometres per hour, they were delivered for use to No. 1 Photo Reconnaissance Unit, No. 1 Squadron and No. 87 Squadron.

Following the Second World War, what remained of the Australian production of this wood light bomber and reconnaissance aircraft was sold for scrap or converted to components. How this piece made it to the Oakey farmer's yard is not known. Perhaps the owner thought the aluminum and Perspex cover might have been useful, an easy dog kennel.

Today only 30 DH Mosquito aircraft survive worldwide; only four of the survivors are airworthy. A few years ago we airmailed the trim mechanism we also had to a restorer in New Zealand to help with the reconstruction of one of these survivors. The canopy is for the birds.

## 6. The collective weight of the Southern Cloud

*Peter Hobbins- Honorary Associate, Department of History, The University of Sydney*

On 1 July 2019, the Commonwealth of Australia finally legislated to protect historic aircraft wrecks over 75 years old – if they are underwater. Yet most Australian aviation accidents have occurred over land. While terrestrial wreckage was usually cleared away, relics from significant disasters still remain, such as the Douglas DC-3 airliner Lutana, which crashed in northern NSW in 1948. In this presentation, I meditate upon a hefty artefact removed from the impact site of the Avro Ten airliner, Southern Cloud. Disappearing on a flight from Sydney to Melbourne in 1931, its remains were only discovered near Cooma in 1958. While I purchased this item on eBay, museums around Australia also hold remnants of the Southern Cloud. Souvenir hunters gathering such fragments in 1958 were described as 'ghouls'. Yet their distributed trophies – gradually making their way into formal collections – echo the frenetic spirit of 1931. Then, airminded citizens were convinced that they 'saw' or 'heard' the vanished airliner at over a hundred locations. In pondering the best repository for my own 'ghoulish' vestige of the Southern Cloud, I ask whether such artefacts facilitate a form of collective commemoration. What role, therefore, might they play in a participatory heritage of the air?

## 7. Remembrance of Flights Past: vicarious reality and virtual indigestion

*Don Wallace- Member of ICOMOS and Associate at GML Heritage*

Nowadays all that may be taken to remember a flight is a screen grab of an electronic boarding pass—airline ephemera is now indeed ephemeral. Past and current ephemera will be explored with an emphasis on meal service and the menus themselves.

The airline menu allows the passenger to relive their flight experience but also allows the intangible transfer of an untaken journey to be experienced by others into the future.

Using a 1966 heirloom menu, the 33 courses of the first-class meal service on the eight-stop BOAC 'Kangaroo Route' from London to Nadi via Australia will be vicariously—and speedily—condensed on the screen. The audience ('passengers') will be provided with facsimile menus to take with them (number subject to printing price and copyright – may be extract or reformatted content). 'Passengers' will be 'served' an after-dinner mint at the end.

## 8. The Flying Binoculars

*Jane Lennon- Australia ICOMOS*

Having abandoned my ambition to be a pilot due to not mastering aerobatics, I then became an avid observer from the air. My father would not allow me to take my beloved Pentax binoculars on our helicopter flight from Coolangatta to Melbourne in 1967 because they weighed too much and I flew in a bikini and shirt to reduce weight. The rush of adrenalin as the chopper soared off the edge of the Scenic Rim and out to the plains is still a vivid memory.

My binoculars played a major role in searching for sites known in the historic literature but dots in the vast landscapes of the Northern Territory. Late afternoon flights above the tree tops looking through the slanted sunlight for the glint of metal bolts on creekside gum trees; these were where Aboriginal men were chained before being marched off to distant prisons. Tamarind trees, tell-tale signifiers along the blue coastline of Coburg Peninsula of Macassan cooking ovens. Mining machinery overgrown by strangling blackberries or lantana depending on sites in the south of the continent or north can be seen through the trusty binoculars from a chopper...ah, the tales these binoculars could tell.

## 9. Crossing the Equator: heritage of the air

*Suzanne Bravery- Making museums matter*

Lowered air fares in the early 1970s enabled and encouraged greater civilian use of planes instead of ships to cross hemispheres for holidays of discovery and adventure. A key component of the Australian transitory migration was crossing the Equator. For many families, this was their first experience of leaving the southern hemisphere to travel to countries learnt of in school or through family oral history. New experiences started on the plane with flight staff dressing as Neptune, highlighting the change in time and space from one part of the world to another. In terms of memory, why was celebrating this crossing so important and how has crossing this invisible line been celebrated since?

## 10. Memories of Fokkers: Adjacent way

*Wendy Somerville- University of Canberra*

Memories are slippery buggers. No matter how we wrangle and herd, they slip through the cracks to become the things they want to show. Sometimes they want us to yearn for then, or to imagine a different now. My story of two Fokkers is entangled in memory only. Nothing tactile here. One Fokker Friendship I wanted to fly in. It was the only plane I could name. The other Fokker was famous and handed down to her children from my mother's memories.

## 11. AirUK teaspoon: theft, speed, modernity

*Steve Brown- The University of Sydney; University of Canberra*

On 15 November 2009, while digging at the side of my then house, a bent metal teaspoon appeared. It was not until I washed the spoon that I noticed a stylised Union Jack flag and 'AirUK' etched into the handle. AirUK, I subsequently found out, was an airline that operated from 1980 until 1997, after which it was acquired by Dutch flag carrier KLM and rather awkwardly renamed 'KLMuk'. AirUK's flight network served the British Isles and continental Europe: the carrier never flew to Australia.

So how did an airline teaspoon, presumably taken by a light-fingered passenger or unruly flight attendant, end up bent and discarded at the side of a house in suburban Arncliffe? I don't expect to ever know the real circumstance or events that led to this situation. But the spoon illustrates the movement and dispersal of things around the globe and the ways in which local places are materially connected into a globalised world: the spoon is a marker of global connectivity. In this presentation I will consider how the themes of global connectivity, accumulation, and a sense of speed in the late-modern period are evident in the life history of the *AirUK* teaspoon.

## 12. A Year of Aviation Illustration & Design

*James Kightly- Freelance Aviation Journalist*

What do you find out when you publish an aviation illustration, artwork or design every day for a year? At the start of 2019, I decided to explore the various aspects of aviation art and illustration in a 'post a day' blog. While I had plenty of material, and was comfortable with the art and aviation aspects of the topic, I was surprised at how much the posts had to encompass social history to a remarkable degree. I'll be presenting a selection of the surprises that came up, some caused by a closer look at an old friend, others completely new to me – and I hope you. There really IS a lot more to the culture in aviation.