



10. Conserving and collecting aviation heritage

The Centenary of Civil Aviation in 2021 will focus public interest on the contribution of aviation to Australian society and on vulnerable civil aviation heritage. Globally, aviation has been a key component in the cultural imaginary of modernity and is accepted as part of the texture of the fabric of contemporary life, and as agent and consequence of economic development and globalization. This session explores how and why communities and organisations are conserving and collecting aviation heritage, what is being collected and conserved, and what narratives and values these objects and places convey.

Session Convenor: Tracy Ireland

1. *Aranui*: the final journey

Steven Fox- *Museum of Transport and Technology, Auckland, NZ*

In March this year, *Aranui*, the world's last remaining Short Solent Mk IV flying boat was installed into the Sir Keith Park Aviation Display Hall at the Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT), completing a project that has been running for several decades. This also marked another major milestone for MOTAT, having its entire aircraft collection under permanent cover for the first time.

RMS *Aranui* was the pride of the T.E.A.L. (later Air New Zealand) fleet flying the trans-Tasman and Pacific Islands route from Wellington and Auckland. Donated to MOTAT in 1964 why did it take 55 years to finally bring it inside? The final journey of the *Aranui* to its permanent resting place, whilst physically only some 85 metres, in many ways mirrored the development of the collecting institution that took responsibility for it.

This is a story of the power of individuals to protect heritage collections, well intended but failed acts of restoration, passion, frustration, vandalism, unwelcome tenants, disappointment, conservation, interpretation and finally delight. The final, albeit geographically short, journey of the *Aranui* is something to behold!

2. From Go to Whoa: Taking the journey from acquisition to display

Andrew Pearce - Endangered Heritage Pty Ltd

John White - Endangered Heritage Pty Ltd

When an aircraft goes on display, museum visitors only see the finished product. Reaching this endpoint may require hundreds of hours of manual labour, but also extensive research and a rigorous decision making process.

Many times museum aircraft do not arrive in a ready to display condition. All will need some work, and may have suffered damage due to neglect, mishap, combat operations, previous restoration or modification. They may be structurally or chemically unstable and they often have many diverse periods of historical operation, making the selection of any particular configuration or appearance more complicated. Often it is found that manufacturers documentation, accepted fact and even eyewitness accounts of the aircraft conflict with the physical evidence present on the airframe.

Custodians of historical aircraft have budgetary and logistical constraints. Purchasing, housing, moving, dismantling, treating, refurbishing, reassembling and displaying an item such as an aircraft all bring significant costs. As complex multi element objects, aircraft frequently have "inherent vice" and a finite lifespan, no matter what treatment is undertaken.

Andrew Pearce (Conservator) and John White (Curator) discuss the broad range of competing factors and the decisions involved in bringing aircraft from potential acquisition through to exhibition launch.

3. From Aero Clubs to Aviation Companies

Jennifer Wilson- Queensland Museum Network

Material in Queensland Museum's Thomas Macleod Aviation collection highlights the aviation interests of a number of Queenslanders before and during the First World War. Diaries, letters, logbooks, photographs and memorabilia tell the stories of their experiences as they created aircraft, partnerships and associations in pursuit of their ambitions. These stories provide a significant overview of the development of aviation in Queensland from 1910 to 1919 and their links to wider Australian and international aviation events.

4. Out of Africa – the ruin of the Southern Cross Minor

Jessica Western and Tracy Ireland- University of Canberra

In 1962 the wreck of a small plane, the Southern Cross Minor, and the body of its pilot, were discovered in the Sahara where they had crashed in 1933 by a patrol of the French Foreign

Legion. In 1975 Mr Ted Wixtead, a librarian at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane, Australia, took part in a successful mission to recover the plane's remains, which are now to be found deep in a storage facility for the museum's permanent collection. Despite this remarkable provenance, the museum's catalogue tersely describes this object as 'box frame aeroplane in exceptional state of wreckage', offering no further details. The remains have never been restored and the skeletonised, twisted form still carries a perceptible tang and texture of Saharan sand.

As part of the 'Heritage of the Air' project at the University of Canberra, we are experimenting with object biography and material histories to explore the cultural impact of aviation and as a way to complicate the dominant, nationalistic narratives of aviation as a technological triumph driven by pioneering, heroic men. Approaching the Minor archaeologically as a ruin, and through object biography, we explore these material traces as the result of both remembering and forgetting, entropy and residuality, intentionality and accident, social and environmental processes. With the poetic narrative of Michael Ondaatje's postcolonial novel *The English Patient* (as well as the visual memory of Minghella's remarkable film) as an inescapable influence, we explore the unruly, persistent materiality of the Minor, its unpredictable vibrancy and more-than-human entanglements.

5. Conserving the Qantas Hangar

Andrew Ladlay Andrew Ladlay Architect

Nicole Kuttner- Qantas Founders Museum

Built in Longreach in 1922, the Qantas Hangar survives as a marker of the airline's humble beginnings in the Australian outback. The building and its immediate site is included in the Queensland Heritage Register and the National Heritage List.

The Qantas Hangar is of cultural heritage significance as it demonstrates the earliest days of the major international airline Qantas and provides a tangible link with pioneering air services in Australia. The hangar is also significant as one of the earliest sites of aircraft assembly in Australia.

The Qantas Hangar is also important for its association with the Royal Flying Doctor Service founded by Rev John Flynn in 1928, and for its association with Hudson Fysh, Paul J McGinness and Fergus McMaster, the central figures in the formation of Qantas, and Arthur Baird, whose engineering skills were devoted to making the airline a success.

This paper looks at the Conservation Management Plan prepared by Andrew Ladlay Architect in 2016, the challenges and issues associated with conserving the place, and the subsequent implementation of CMP policies and recommendations by the Qantas Founders Museum.