



13. Military sites of significance: places and material culture

Archaeological sites, wrecks, material culture and heritage facilities provide great insight into aviation history. The abandoned are brought back to public and scholarly attention through exciting interpretative mechanisms. Our presenters this afternoon detail their investigations of and attempts to preserve significant aviation sites at Canberra, Temora, Werribee and Victoria's Mount Stanley. In doing so, they highlight how new meaning can be drawn from documentary evidence, material culture, and physical remains.

Session Convenor: Kristen Alexander

1. Uncovering the National Capital's original aerodrome and very first air crash

Jane Goffman- National Trust of Australia (ACT)

James Oglethorpe- RAAF 3 Squadron Association

The Griffins' 1918 blueprint for Canberra shows an aerodrome in the Industrial Area on the city's northern fringe, where Dickson now lies. By 1923, Defence negotiated a lease with Edward Shumack, a WWI veteran and descendant of one of Canberra's earliest settler families. The aerodrome officially opened to military and civil aviation in 1924, but the Federal Capital Commission repeatedly refused to grant a lease longer than 25 years, stymying investment. On 11 February 1926 one of two RAAF De Havilland DH9s surveying the Murrumbidgee River crashed, killing the pilot (a former Duntroon cadet from southern Queensland). The photographer was rescued from the burning wreck but died that evening. Both were buried in the district with full military honours but no headstones. Continuing frustration over lease restrictions combined with preparations for the opening of provisional

Parliament House in 1927 caused Defence to transfer the aerodrome to the Campbells' land at Duntroon. Digitising the aerodrome's long lost survey together with wreckage photos, and examining the Inquest report and archived files, has revealed where the landing ground once was, where the crash happened, and where the two young men are buried.

2. The sum of its parts? The material culture of an Empire flying school

Anna Gebels- Heritage, RAAF, Museum, material culture, memories, machines

In March 1946 No. 10 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) was the last of the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) EFTS units in Australia to close. Three auctions were held on site – two for equipment and one for buildings. As closure neared, Commanding Officer Ronald Armstrong Jones elegiacally remarked that: "It is anticipated that in a short time only wide open spaces dotted by upturned foundation blocks and broken flush pans will be the remainder of a once neat and well trimmed Air Force Station". Using archival sources created by the Royal Australian Air Force during the unit's disbandment, this paper reviews the refuse of the school. Its remnants spanned aircraft, buildings and ancillary items, from bolts and thimbles to buttons and bath plugs. What civilian occupations did these wartime aviation objects assume after the auctions, and how were they integrated into Temora and beyond? Which items made their way back into local museum collections as relics to incite reminiscences? In itemising the material culture of 10 EFTS, I ask how it helps us understand the structure, function and meaning of EATS.

3. Werribee Satellite Aerodrome—sustaining a temporary airfield

Roger Beeston (Director)- RBA Architects

Patrick Wilson (Historian)- Conservation Consultants

The heightened awareness of Australia's vulnerability during the Second World War triggered an ambitious national rollout of defensive infrastructure, including an expansion of aviation operations. On the western outskirts of Melbourne, the remnant triangular timber truss hangers of the Werribee Satellite Aerodrome provide a tangible connection—now rare—to the human drama and technical innovation of this period. Yet what follows for a temporary airfield after the last warplane lands? How can obsolete structures and their associated memories and layers of significance be conserved in a meaningful way? RBA Architects + Conservation Consultants have dedicated years to grappling with such issues at the aerodrome. Our investigation has produced not only a deepened understanding of an often overlooked built aviation typology but also pushed the boundaries of what is conventionally achievable for the conservation of defunct wartime material culture. Extractable from this experience are broader lessons for the multidimensional management of the Australia's aviation heritage and a methodology for contemplating their life after.

4. Wrecks as archaeological sites: what can be learned from crashed Second World War aircraft in Australia

Meaghan L. Aitchison (presenter), Leah Byrne, Talia Green, James Kightly, Daniel J. Leahy

Aviation archaeology involves the study of human interaction with flight through the investigation of material remains related to that field of endeavour. While much about Second World War aircraft and aviation operations can be learned from the historical record, some aspects of what has been written still remain fragmentary or contradictory. Through the analysis of aircraft wreckage and associated artefacts, much can be added to our understanding of how aviation played a part during that conflict.

This paper will present the outcome of a recent crowd-funded archaeological survey of the wreck of an American Brewster Buffalo fighter aircraft that crashed in Victoria in July 1942. Despite large portions of the wreck being salvaged over the years, much can still be learned from artefacts remaining at the site regarding the aircraft, its crash, and its involvement in the wider conflict. The survey, conducted in March 2019, identified a significant number of artefacts remaining at the site and has resulted in the wreck being listed on the Victorian Heritage Inventory.