

RUN SHEET: DARWIN/ADELAIDE

The Darwin to Adelaide flight was, for we lucky few, a wonderful experience in very many ways.

Day 0: Saturday 7 March: Darwin

Two aircraft flew the section to Cloncurry:

#1, Michael Coates' Pipistrel Virus SW VH-LEC, and #2, Michael Smith's Chaika Sea Bear VH-OMS, a four-seater amphibian made in Samara, Russia, and flown by Michael on its delivery trip from England to Darwin, arriving 10 December 2019, the hundredth anniversary of the arrival of Ross and Keith Smith and crew. Tom Lockley was passenger in this aircraft till Benalla.

The two aircraft were escorted through the RAAF part of Darwin airfield to the Darwin Aviation Museum.

In the evening there was a welcome and barbecue at the museum, with wide attendance including Mrs Janetta Douglas, whose husband was the owner of the Britten-Norman Islander that won the 1969 air race from England to Australia.

Day 1: Sunday 8 March: Darwin to Daly Waters

0900-1100 gathering at Darwin Aviation Museum.

Official farewell: The event manager was Darwin Aviation Museum, assisted by NT Tourism. Brief formal proceedings at 10 am run by Darwin Aviation Museum with support from NT Major Events. About 50 enthusiasts attended.



For the take-off the event aircraft were escorted by a Harvard T6, VH-VFM, flown by Nick Belfield. The aircraft flew over Emkaytee airfield, home of the Top End Flying Club, and then returned to base.

Flight from Darwin / Emkaytee to Daly Waters (distance 283 NM). Overnight Daly Waters Inn, driven to and from airfield by hotel staff.

Day 2: Monday 9 March: Daly Waters to Cloncurry - Full route 555 NM - stopping en route at Anthony Lagoon, Brunette Downs and Avon Downs.

Take off Daly Waters 0700; arrival Anthony Lagoon about 0900; Brunette Downs about 1100; Avon Downs 1500. These three places were very

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important in the journey of the Smiths and are part of the huge AACo organisation. We were met by enormously capable young people who were delighted to show us around the stations, explaining their current operations and highlighting the historical remains dating from 1919.



Brunette Downs



The Pipistrel attracts attention, Brunette Downs

Overnight Cloncurry. Met by local people who transported the crews to accommodation at Gidgee Inn Motel and joined us for an evening meal.

Louise Humble joined the group in her Jabiru 24-7918 and flew the whole journey to Aldinga.

Day 3: Tuesday 10 March: Cloncurry to Longreach

Cloncurry's main contact Gail Wipaki. Visited *Cloncurry Unearthed Tourist Centre* and *John Flynn Place Museum*. **Anthony Coleiro joined the Sea Bear as co-pilot until Richmond.**

Take off for Longreach 1100, arrival early afternoon and visit to *QANTAS Founders Museum* hosted by Nicole Kuttner. Dinner at Albert Park Motor Inn with local people.

In this Longreach hangar QANTAS built its own aircraft during 1926-29.



Day 4: Wednesday 11 March: Longreach to Charleville - 235 NM



Aircraft at Longreach: the seaplanes

0830 Group aircraft photo in front of QANTAS hangar.

Charleville activities: Visit to the site of the original landing at Glengarry. There was only a small monument there and it is a long way from the main town, but interesting. We had a tour of the hotel itself, which has hosted Wrigley and Murphy, the Smiths, Amy Johnson and others. QANTAS was inaugurated in one of the rooms. Dinner with historical society members and other interested people at the historic Coronas Hotel, our accommodation place.

Thanks for the help of Gabrielle Wheeler and all other supporters of the Historic House museum who joined us for the evening meal and provided transport to and from the airfield.

Day 5: Thursday 12 March: Charleville to Caboolture - 368 NM

Start 0900, take-off farewelled by representatives of Murweh Shire and the Historic House Museum.

Early start was desirable because of weather conditions. The arrival at Caboolture was made difficult by rain and wind. The *Sea Bear*, David and Jan Maddern's *Jabiru* and David Geers in his *Searey* reached Caboolture. Louise Humble diverted to Kingaroy and Michael Coates stayed overnight at his home airfield on the Gold Coast. All arrived at Caboolture by lunchtime Friday 13.

Accommodation at Caboolture Sundowner Motel, close to airfield. Cars were provided by TAVAS.

Activities in Caboolture were organised by David Geers of Caboolture aero Club and Andrew Carter of TAVAS.

Arriving aircraft were welcomed at the TAVAS hangar and aviators were transported to accommodation. Dinner at the Sundowner Motel.

Day 6: Friday 13 March: Caboolture Maintenance on *Sea Bear*.

Brief visit to Queensland Aircraft Museum by Tom Lockley, Anthony Coleiro and Louise Humble.

Tour of the TAVAS aircraft collection led by Andrew Carter at 1500 allowed for delays in aircraft arriving as described above and was an amazing revelation.



Evening 1800: The Social Committee held a Centenary Dinner at the Caboolture Aero Club; talk from Michael Smith, 70 people attending, tickets sold out.

Day 7: Saturday 14 March: Caboolture to Narromine - 637 NM (including landing at Bourke)

Departure 0630, departure from Caboolture at 0530 so as to pass through the Dividing Range before anticipated bad weather.



Louise arrives at Bourke.

Large crowd for extended lunch at Nancy Bird Terminal, Bourke airport, enjoying Bourke hospitality. Lunch catered by CWA, major historic display organised by staff of Shire Council and Back O' Bourke.

Bourke to Narromine: approx 180 nm. Arrival about 5 pm. Accommodation etc organised by Beryl Hartley. Kelly McCutcheon, Narromine shire, helped with publicity and the event has been covered by 2DU.

Dinner at the Narromine Aero Club

Day 8: Sunday 15 March: Narromine

Event at Narromine. Talks by Michael Neimes, curator of the Narromine museum and Michael Smith. Visit to Vimy landing monument on the site at the golf course.

At this stage the effects of the Coronavirus were beginning to be felt and from here on there were considerable alterations to plans.



Wright Flyer replica, Narromine museum

Day 9: Monday 16 March: Narromine to Rylstone

Narromine to Shellharbour was planned, but weather forced an overnight stop at Rylstone.

Day 10: Tuesday 17 March: Rylstone to Shellharbour (HARS)

Arrival at Richmond 1400 because of morning RAAF exercise activity. Aircraft were met on tarmac by Judy Rainsford and RAAF representatives and departed.

Flight over Sydney by V1 route. *Sea Bear* flew over Sydney Harbour and made a landing approach at Rose Bay. John Daley with Brett Thomson joined the flight from here to Adelaide in *Buccaneer* VH-TZT, and were hosts at HARS.

Day 11: Wednesday 18 March: Shellharbour to Cootamundra - 200 nm all up, via Temora Aviation Museum.

Here the majority of aircraft were actually on the tarmac. Welcome by Murray Kear, CEO, Peter Harper, Manager, Andrew Bishop, Chief Engineer and others. Community welcome and evening meal by Cootamundra History Group who provided transport etc with visits to Museum and Arts Centre.

Cootamundra has considerable connections with the Smith and Murphy flights: the 1919 Premier, William Holman, flew to Cootamundra with the Smith crew. He was a strong supporter of the State Aviation School at Richmond. He later used aircraft to campaign in the next election, which he comprehensively lost.

Group meal at Central Hotel, accommodation at the Southern Comfort Motel.

Covid restrictions were impacting our activities. Point Cook museum was closed. Checks made on future activities; most places were keen to go ahead with less formal activities that enabled 'social distance'.

Day 12: Thursday 19 March: Cootamundra to Benalla - 250 NM total.

Aircraft landed at Henty, on a private airstrip about 3km west of the township, to be welcomed by the local history group who are keen to recognise the Vimy's forced landing at Henty on 24 February 1920.

At least 40 people attended, with good discussions of local history; the Coordinators, John Ebsworth, Historical Society, and Trevor Haines, ALA owner.

Benalla, which has another wonderful aviation museum, welcomed us as usual, with lunch and a visit to the museum at 1200.

Day 13: Friday 20 March: flying group dispersed: Benalla to Point Cook, Horsham

The Point Cook Museum was closed and a brief visit was made by participants to the **Point Cook Flying Club, and to Laverton RAAF base.** There were no opportunities for public participation, which was not a happy situation as Victoria, particularly AHSA Victoria, was a strong supporter since this event was first proposed over two years ago.

Weather caused problems. The light aircraft pilots were worried about the weather over the Kilmore Gap and also the landings at Little River, so Louise Humble and Michael Coates with Tom Lockley as passenger did not go to Point Cook and flew to Horsham for overnight, disappointing for the aviators.

Michael Smith in the *Sea Bear*, with John Daley and Brett Thomson in the *Buccaneer*, reached Point Cook at 9.30 and were taken to Laverton RAAF base to see the various Smith flight exhibits in the Combined Officers and Staff Mess (COSM). These included the original propeller of the Vimy. They then joined members of the Point Cook Flying Club for lunch.

Day 14: Saturday 21 March: to Gawler

(approx. 400 NM) flight to Adelaide (Gawler) staging at Nhill, another historic centre.

#2 Michael Smith Sea Bear Southern Sun, and
#9 John Daley, Lake Buccaneer VH-TZT departed Little River airstrips.

#1 Michael Coates, #3 Louise Humble departed from Horsham:

Mark Carr flying from Benalla to join at Nhill and Ben Ippolito flying from Point Cook did not fly because of non-Covid flu-like illness.

Nhill visit: Arranged by Jennifer Goldsworthy. The Nhill Aviation Historical Centre were very supportive. Aircraft landings were greeted by about 30 people, (despite no 'advertising') with refreshments, a barbecue, and access to their wonderful museum. Michael Smith spoke about his journeys and Tom Lockley spoke about the Australian section of the Smith flight.

The flight of the Vimy over Nhill was recognised by Michael Coates in his *Pipistrel* and the resulting message will form part of the archives of the museum.

Martin Walker, President of the Organising Committee of *Aeropex 2019* and a leading aviation philatelist organised a display at Gawler airport for the afternoon. The display was spread widely around a hangar, in deference to the Corona virus. Michael Smith handed over to Martin Walker material carried for *Aeropex*.

Rob Moore of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots arranged an evening meal with local aviators as the meal and visit to the South Australian Aviation Museum was cancelled. Members of the Gliding Club and others generously provided transport to and from the accommodation in Elizabeth, some 20 minutes away.

Day 15: Sunday 22 March: Gawler to Aldinga:

Flying over Adelaide: from the mighty Jabiru.



Gawler departure about 1100; thanks to skies denuded by Corona Virus restrictions almost all aircraft flying to Aldinga flew over the city.

The four basic aircraft were joined by:

- Flying from Parafield via city route: Pipistrel ALPHA Electro.
- Others: Bradley Leksas, flying Roko Aero Stratus 24-7357.
- Chantal Didenko and Rod Curtin, Jabiru 24-7693, also Geoffrey Schuster flying inland route in Jabiru 19-8399.



Pilots at Aldinga.

Brief formalities were conducted about 12.30 and Michael Smith outlined the flight and Tom Lockley spoke to thank all concerned. The whole event was conducted with awareness of social distance by the Aldinga people, notably Patrick Normoyle and John Ellis with the assistance of Lainie Anderson and support from the *History Trust of South Australia*.

This concluded the celebration of the transcontinental flight as far as AHSA is concerned. Plans for a celebration on Monday, the anniversary, were cancelled.

Monday 23rd March: Adelaide

From Michael Smith: *This was the 100th anniversary of the Vickers Vimy landing in Adelaide, so I visited the Vimy behind a glass cased hangar to pay homage, just the two of us alone to ponder the achievement and the state of the world then and today.*

As I departed to fly over the landing location, a RAAF P8 Poseidon conducted a city orbit and flew ahead marking the centenary. A crowd of 7 people watched from below.

Despite the Corona virus concerns the highlights of this event celebrated the Vickers Vimy flight from Darwin to Adelaide 100 years ago, thanks to literally hundreds of wonderful people.

Thank you all!

Tom Lockley



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Adelaide flight
8-23 March 2020**