



Civil Aviation Historical Society & Airways Museum

Civil Aviation Historical Society Inc. A0036253R

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Media Release

New Exhibition Opening at the CAHS & Airways Museum

This year is the 80th anniversary of the commencement of Australian participation in the far-sighted and ambitious Empire Air Mail Scheme. To mark the occasion, on Saturday 17 November the Civil Aviation Historical Society will open a new photographic exhibition titled ***Australia and the Empire Air Mail Scheme***. There will be films and guest speakers on the day, and the exhibition will run for one year. As well as the CAHS and private collections, the exhibition will draw on images from the Qantas Heritage Collection.

The Empire Air Mail Scheme was intended to improve communications throughout the British Empire using a fleet of large, ultra-modern, four-engine flying boats (aircraft with floating hulls). Although the Short S.23 Empire flying boats are primarily remembered today for their luxurious passenger accommodation, their principal job was carrying the mail at greatly reduced rates.

The Australian Government contracted Qantas Empire Airways to operate Australia's only international air service, commencing in August 1938. Although Qantas nominally owned six Empire flying boats, the aircraft were exchanged with Britain's Imperial Airways and operated all the way to England and back. Qantas crews operated the aircraft on Australia's section of the route, between Sydney's Rose Bay water aerodrome and Singapore. There, Imperial Airways crews took over for the remainder of the 9½-day journey.



Research Partners, Heritage of the Air Project

An Australian Research Council funded project investigating how aviation has changed Australian society over the last 100 years

In Australia, the Department of Civil Aviation took on the essential support job of establishing and operating a series of flying boat bases up the east coast and across to Darwin. The two bases in the Gulf of Carpentaria, at Karumba and Groote Eylandt, were particularly remote in those days and required resupply by monthly ship. These bases were virtually small, self-contained towns, with their all-male staff including radio operators, meteorologists, boat-hands and refuellers.

More information: www.airwaysmuseum.com

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Note: Images are available on request.