THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by Lainie Anderson, 2016 Churchill Fellow

To research the history and significance of the 1919 Air Race from England to Australia, and the South Australians who won it.

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Signed: Lainie Anderson

9 August 2017
“This achievement ranks with the greatest epics of the air and was in its time as remarkable a journey as that of the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing just 50 years later.”

Brian Riddle, Chief Librarian at Britain’s National Aerospace Library
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KEYWORDS

History
Aviation
Australia
Ross Smith
Vimy

Cambridge University Library | Municipal Library Chania
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The Lyon Aviation History Society | National Library of India, Kolkata
The year was 1919. World War I, in which 60,000 young Australians had lost their lives, was finally over and Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes was in Europe for the Versailles peace talks in Paris.

Flying between England and France for the extended negotiations, Hughes quickly recognised the peacetime potential of aviation in connecting his young, isolated nation to the world, and boosting its defence, transport and communication capabilities.

He also understood the need for peacetime pride and home-grown heroes. And so Hughes had an idea: a £10,000 competition for the first Australian airmen to fly home from England to Australia in 30 days.

Seven crews took up the challenge in planes that were rudimentary and often unreliable: open cockpits; navigation by compass; deafening engines. Airfields in parts of Asia were non-existent.

Of the six Australian teams, four crashed out and two were killed. A courageous French pair got all the way to Burma (modern-day Myanmar) before their tiny plane was beyond repair.

Only one plane made it home in 30 days. It was flown by South Australian brothers Ross and Keith Smith, who were immediately knighted by King George V for their record-breaking feat. Mechanics Wally Shiers (SA) and Jim Bennett (Vic) received commissions for keeping the engines roaring and the plane in the air.
That plane is the magnificent Vickers Vimy which once had pride of place in a purpose-built hangar outside the old Adelaide Airport terminal. But the terminal was relocated down the road in 2005 and the Vimy stayed put. The fragile aircraft remains in its 1950s hangar, unceremoniously surrounded by a long-term car park and largely forgotten by the public.

With the 2019 race centenary approaching, my Churchill Fellowship had four goals:

1. To discover the international significance of the Smith crew's winning flight.
2. To gain some international perspective on the importance of the Vickers Vimy plane.
3. To learn how best to educate and inspire a new generation of South Australians with the story, and the Vickers Vimy as an historical object.
4. To gather original source material for an historical fiction book on the race.

Over seven weeks I visited nine countries: United States, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Greece, India, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. This allowed me to meet with some of the world's eminent aviation historians, science museum educators and local plane enthusiasts to gauge their views on the Smith crew's winning journey. I also gained an insight into current education programs incorporating historic objects such as aircraft, and discovered fresh, fascinating facts to provide depth to the historical fiction book I plan to write ahead of the centenary.

It should be noted that this report deals primarily with the first three goals of my Fellowship (gauging the significance of the race and the plane, and how to share the story with school students and the wider public). As for the fourth goal – to uncover original source materials and new facts about the race – I'd like to think of my planned book as an appendix to this report and will certainly acknowledge my Fellowship and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for their assistance.

On that note, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for supporting my project. Special thanks to the Churchill Fellows Association of South Australia for their ongoing enthusiasm and advice.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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My Fellowship was undertaken between 16 April and 4 June 2017, with the aim of gauging the international significance of the 1919 Air Race from England to Australia, and the South Australian fliers who won it. I travelled to nine countries to talk with aviation historians, museum education program managers and local history groups, while also visiting libraries, museums and city archives to uncover original source material. Using 1919 references, maps and current day local knowledge, I also attempted to rediscover the Smith crew’s original landing sites in key cities and record the details and images for posterity.

Highlights

- Interviewing some of the world’s foremost aviation historians about the race and pioneering flight. They included Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum curator Alex Spencer and Doug Millard from London’s Science Museum (home to the only other surviving original Vickers Vimy).
- Discovering original coverage on the race in 1919 newspapers and aviation periodicals from Britain, France, Italy, US, India, Thailand, Myanmar and Greece.
- Using old photos and books to find key Vimy departure and landing sites in cities including London, Lyon, Pisa, Rome, Suda Bay (on the island of Crete), Delhi, Kolkata, Yangon, Bangkok and Surabaya (Indonesia). In Pisa, I walked through the suburbs to find the site of the old aerodrome outside the historic city walls and discovered an incredible view of the Leaning Tower from the north. The Smith crew would have enjoyed much the same view after landing nearly 100 years ago.
- Unearthing details about Keith Smith’s life and service in the Royal Flying Corps during World War I. Very little has ever been written about Keith because he was notoriously private, and all the focus has been on his popular younger brother (and decorated war pilot) Ross Smith.

Major lessons

- The race remains one of the most significant events in the history of aviation. It was the first step in connecting Australia to an increasingly globalised world after World War I. It helped to forge new air routes for transport, communication and defence in the British Empire. It built Australian pride after a devastating war. In its time, it was as awe-inspiring as man landing on the moon 50 years later.
- As one of only two remaining original Vickers Vimy aircraft in the world, the plane at Adelaide Airport is an aviation artefact of national and global significance. The other surviving Vimy was the first plane flown non-stop across the Atlantic by John Alcock
and Arthur Whitten Brown in early 1919. It’s been a centrepiece of London’s Science Museum ever since.

- The four men were courageous and inspiring pioneers, compared in their day to Christopher Columbus after his discovery of the New World. Three of the four hailed from South Australia: pilot Ross Smith; his older brother and navigator Keith Smith; and mechanic Wally Shiers. The fourth man was Jim Bennett from Victoria.
- The story of the race, the men and the plane is worthy of profound pride and celebration in South Australia.

Summary of key recommendations

- The plane must be moved from its current position at the back of Adelaide Airport, either to a more prominent, public position within the new terminal precinct or into the Adelaide CBD. (It should be noted that Adelaide Airport Ltd is “very keen to explore” a more prominent location for the Vickers Vimy. In May 2017 the company confirmed: “We’re currently undertaking further work on whether it’s technically possible to relocate the Vimy to a more permanent location within the terminals precinct. This design and concept work on a potential new home for the Vimy is taking place concurrent with Adelaide Airport’s terminal expansion planning.”)
- Legal transfer of ownership of the Vickers Vimy should be formalised.
- The South Australian Education Department should investigate ways to incorporate learning on the Vickers Vimy into the national curriculum, making it easy for teachers to engage and inspire students in the story with age-appropriate materials.
- Plans should be made to mark the centenary of the race in South Australia (and possibly even nationally and/or internationally) to foster state pride and celebrate our history of home-grown ingenuity and daring.

Dissemination of report

- *Sunday Mail* newspaper column and follow-up print and broadcast media coverage on the future of the Vickers Vimy. While I was overseas on my Fellowship, I wrote a column for the *Sunday Mail* about my findings to date, including interviews with leading aviation historians in Washington and London who were shocked that the Vickers Vimy wasn’t better celebrated in Australia. (See Appendix A.) The column was followed up on the ABC Radio Adelaide breakfast program and in the South Australian Parliament, where a motion was moved urging greater focus on the future of the plane. (See Appendix B.)
- Half-hour audio podcast on the race and my Fellowship as part of the Heaps Good History podcast series created by *The Advertiser* and showcased on www.adelaidenow.com.au. (To be aired in August 2017.)
- Meetings with, and distribution of the report to, South Australian and national political and community leaders, history and aviation chiefs and influencers. This includes History Trust of South Australia CEO Greg Mackie OAM, who was already on the case of the Vickers Vimy and is now in dialogue with Adelaide Airport Limited to ensure the continued safe keeping of the aircraft and it associated collection objects. The History Trust of South Australia is the custodian of the State History Collection.
• Historical fiction book on the race (based heavily on fact) to coincide with the 2019 centenary.
• Presentations to history and aviation groups and other public speaking opportunities.
• Distribution of report to relevant Australian embassies in countries along the route, ensuring they are aware of the historical significance of the race and can use the centenary to promote cross-country ties.
• Distribution to organisers of the 2019 World Routes conference, which will be held in Adelaide in September 2019 and bring together more than 3,000 delegates from airlines, airports and tourism authorities to discuss new air services.

### FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

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| 4-11 May   | France        | *Palace of Versailles*  
*French National Library*  
*National Museum of Industrial Design*  
Lionel Dufaux, Chargé de collections, responsable des domaines Énergie et Transports |
|            | Lyon          | *Lyon-Bron Airport*  
*The Lyon Aviation History and Aeronautics Documentation Society*  
Pierre Lussignol, vice chair  
Jacques Baillet, president  
Pierre Biard, aviation museum |
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1919 aerodrome site outside city walls |
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*Historical Archive of Crete*  
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Souda Bay landing site  
Chania harbour and historic sites |
|            | Chania        | |
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Wing Commander Banerjee  
*National Museum of India*  
*Nehru Museum (newspaper archives)*  
*Safdarjung Airport (site of the 1919 Royal Air Force base)* |
|            | Delhi         | |
|            | Kolkata       | Victoria Memorial Hall  
National Library of India  
Kolkata Race Course  
The Grand Hotel |
| 26-30 May  | Myanmar       | *Shwedagon Pagoda*  
*Former Royal Air Force parade ground*  
*National Museum of Myanmar*  
*National Library of Myanmar*  
Yangon University Library |
|            | Yangon        | |
| 30 May – 1 June | Thailand     | *National Aviation Museum of the Royal Thai Air Force*  
FS1 Chamnong Sritho, Royal Thai Air Force  
*National Library of Thailand*  
*Don Meung Airport* |
|            | Bangkok       | |
| 1-3 June   | Indonesia     | *Surabaya Public Library*  
*Surabaya Tourist Centre*  
*November the 10th Museum*  
*Former aerodrome sites in Surabaya* |
Introduction
Over the course of my seven-week Fellowship, I endeavoured to answer four simple questions:

1. How does the flight rate in the historical timeline of aviation?
2. Is the Vickers Vimy plane significant as an historical object?
3. How can we engage and inspire future generations with the story and the plane?
4. Is there anything left to learn about the actual story that will help to champion the men and raise awareness about their feat?

During the first weeks of my Fellowship, I interviewed some of the most knowledgeable aviation historians in the world – men who could discuss the Smith crew’s feat within the wider context of pioneering achievements in the early part of the 20th century.

Those first weeks in the United States, England and France were also vital in talking to museum curators and education program managers about how scientific and transport objects such as the Vickers Vimy plane can be used to engage and inspire the school children of today.

The second half of my Fellowship retraced the route, as much as time and safety would allow. The Smith crew touched down in many Middle East countries where travel is presently discouraged by the Australian Government. They also made too many quick stopovers in Asia for me to cover in the time available.

My aim in these final countries was to unearth original source materials and discover any missing facts and historical dimensions surrounding the race, the men and their plane. I also wanted to find their landing locations in the different cities, to record how these sites have changed today. I hoped to gain a small appreciation of what it was like for these young Australian men to land in such exotic locations, where in many cases locals were seeing a plane for the first time.

Here are my findings...

1. How does the flight rate in the historical timeline of aviation?

Dr Alex Spencer is a curator with the Smithsonian Institution’s National Air and Space Museum in Washington. He specialises in British and Commonwealth aviation awards and medals.
and featured the Smith crew's record-breaking flight in his dissertation. Dr Spencer, pictured at the Smithsonian with the Spirit of St Louis, was shocked to learn the Vickers Vimy isn't highly prized in Australia.

"The Smith feat has been overshadowed by flights that took place in the 1930s and '40s but it really is so important because it was demonstrating the practicality of the airplane and bringing aviation out of its infancy.

After World War I, that's where aviation was at – it was becoming a practical machine for transportation and to move people around as well as a weapon of war.

The flight was also significant for the British Empire in terms of finding another way to unify the Empire and increase transportation and defence. The British fleet always had the ability of defending the channel and now you could just fly over that. If you look at the literature in Britain at that time, there was a sense of dread that something bad could happen, that attack could occur from the air. There was a sense of loss of control and protection.

Flights weren't merely to amuse the public and provide fun for the pilots. There was a serious side about getting military planes out to strategic sites to defend the Empire, bringing the colonies closer to the Mother Country, transporting mail and freight and civil servants as quickly and comfortably as possible."

As deputy keeper of technologies and engineering at London’s Science Museum, Doug Millard is responsible for the only other surviving original Vickers Vimy in the world. The plane was flown by John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown in the record-breaking flight across the Atlantic in early 1919, and has been a centrepiece of the Science Museum ever since. Mr Millard, pictured with Alcock's Vimy at the Science Museum, also believes the Smith Crew's flight was "hugely significant".

"It's become a cliché that we talk about a shrinking world and global economies and the speed with which we can communicate, but really, the first flight to Australia underlines how important it is to this day. It's one of the ways in which we first started to join the world up. And it was only 16 years after the very first powered flight by the Wright brothers."
Brian Riddle, Chief Librarian at the National Aerospace Library in Farnborough, England, also believes the Smith crew's feat ranks amongst the greatest epics of endurance flights which marked the 'Golden Age of Aviation' during the interwar years of 1919-1939. Pictured right at the library, Mr Riddle says that in its time the Smith crew’s flight was as remarkable a journey as the 1969 moon landing.

“These flight attempts (in many cases being sponsored by fuel and oil companies or aircraft and engine manufacturers) attracted a wide range of pilots, from those simply seeking fame and fortune to others passionately devoted to promoting aviation and pushing its boundaries.

The longest aerial journey that had been achieved up til that time, this [the Smith crew’s] achievement ranks with the greatest epics of the air and was in its time as remarkable a journey as that of the 1969 Apollo 11 Moon landing just 50 years later.

Amelia Earhart, Howard Hughes, Charles A. Lindbergh, Wiley Post, Amy Johnson, Jim Mollison, Sir Alan Cobham, Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith and Francis C. Chichester were among their contemporaries – interwar pilots who became household names as a result of their successful marathon flights.

Worthy to be ranked with the greatest epics in aviation history, the flight of Ross and Keith Smith should not be forgotten and indeed their achievements and the surviving Vickers Vimy aircraft should be used to inform and inspire current and future generations."

Further insights into the significance of the race can be gleaned from the global response to the Smith crew's victorious landing in Darwin on 10 December 1919, and from newspaper and magazine coverage at the time.

On their arrival in Darwin, the crew received dozens of telegrams from across the world and the continent. The following cables, reproduced from Britain's Flight magazine of 18 December 1919, are from some of the era's most influential people:

- **King George V**, who promptly knighted South Australian brothers Ross and Keith Smith: “Delighted at your safe arrival. Your success will bring Australia nearer to the Mother Country, and I warmly congratulate you and your crew.”
- **Lloyd George**, British Prime Minister: "Heartiest congratulations. Your flight shows how inventions of war can advance progress of peace."
• **Winston Churchill**, then Secretary of State for War (and later British Prime Minister): "Well done. Your great flight shows conclusively that the new element has been conquered for the use of man."

• **Billy Hughes**, Australian Prime Minister: “You have ... proved that with relays of machines and men, Europe can be brought within 12 or 15 days of Australia.”

Newspaper reports of the Smith crew’s arrival in Australia also provide an insight into the significance of the achievement.

*The Advertiser*, Thursday 11 December 1919, on the crew’s arrival in Darwin:

“Captain Ross Smith ... and his intrepid party won for themselves world fame by safely reaching Darwin at 3.40pm on Wednesday. The journey was, as his Excellency the Governor termed it when the news of its successful termination was conveyed to him by ‘The Advertiser’, an “amazing and marvellous one,” and it has put the coping stone on Australia’s, and particularly South Australia’s, heroic achievements of the past five years. Not only has the whole of the metropolitan area and the State been stirred as it has rarely been by the magnificent accomplishment, but Australia has, metaphorically, taken off its hats to the gallant Adelaide boys who have braved so many unknown dangers to find a path across the continents of the world, and open the way for un-dreamed of development of the world’s means of transport.”

*The Register* (Adelaide), Wednesday 24 March 1920, on the crew’s long-awaited arrival in Adelaide after lengthy delays on the journey around the eastern states from Darwin:

“The spirit and the joy of youth have been immortalized in the endless deeds of prowess and fame – and the pages of history teem with illustrations. But, to Australia, in the twentieth century, has been accorded a signal honour. This young country has given to the world, in Sir Ross Smith and his brother, Sir Keith Smith, two heroes whose achievements – in linking up the old and the new world in 28 days – will stand as one of the greatest of feats.”

Personal photography was still in its infancy in 1919 and manufacturer Kodak capitalised on media interest in the race to run a £1000 competition among contestants. Awarding the main prize to the Smith crew at a ceremony in March 1920, Kodak MD (Australasia) Mr T Baker said the race had children looking over maps of countries they’d never heard of.

“As explorers, pioneers, they have blazed the trail and they must be classed with the great names of history – Christopher Columbus, Captain Cook, Livingstone, Franklin, and our own Burke and Wills, and last but not least Sir Douglas Mawson. I think I may say that in all the course of modern times, this great flight to Australia has excited more admiration and enthusiasm in the old world than anything else we know of.”

Original 1919 newspapers unearthed during the course of my Fellowship also reveal how captivated the world was about the race.

*The Aerial League Bulletin* (official publication of The Aerial League of the British Empire) in January 1919 hailed the upcoming Air Race from England to Australia as “the greatest competitive flight the world has ever seen”.

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“When it comes it will provide the last and greatest object lesson of the possibility of creating time by annihilating space, and will offer a magnificent stimulus to our imperial and commercial progress in the air.”

An emotional editorial in Bangkok’s *Siam Observer* of 2 December 1919 also points to the awe-inspiring nature of the flight.

“There is something that stirs the blood in this gallant attempt to complete the longest flight the world has ever seen. The voyage of Columbus itself was not more perilous and called for no higher courage, if indeed, it called for so much. This venturing day after day into the unknown, this taking of hourly risks with a high and confident courage, call forth our highest admiration.”

And finally, we can gain a further insight into the significance of the achievement by the grief expressed around the world when pilot Ross Smith and mechanic Jim Bennett died just over two years later, in April 1922, while making preparations for another epic flight to circumnavigate the globe. The pair were on a test flight in their new Vickers Amphibian when disaster struck. Keith Smith was supposed to be in the plane at the time but was running late on a train from London, arriving at Weybridge as the aircraft crashed behind a stand of trees.

Widespread grief was summed up in a message of sympathy from the nation’s Governor-General Lord Forster to Ross Smith’s parents: “Lady Forster and I send you our deepest sympathy. The tragic death of your gallant son is a national loss, which will be mourned throughout the Empire and the world.”

2. Is the Vickers Vimy plane a significant historical object?

Background

The twin-engine Vickers Vimy was designed at the end of World War I as a long-range bomber with the job of attacking targets in central Germany in retaliation against chilling 1917 German raids on London. According to the London Science Museum’s key publication *Milestones of Science and Technology*, a shortage of engines prevented deliveries of Vimy production aircraft to the Royal Air Force until February 1919, after the Armistice. This meant the plane never saw active war service.

There are only two original Vickers Vimy aircraft in existence. Both became famous in post-war races designed to advance the cause of aviation after the war.
The first was flown by John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown in their pioneering non-stop Trans-Atlantic crossing in June 1919. They were vying for a £10,000 prize first offered by London’s *Daily Mail* newspaper in 1913 and revived after the end of the war. The Vimy is almost identical to the plane in Adelaide – in fact some parts of the plane flown by Ross Smith (including a radiator) were taken from Alcock’s aircraft to use in the race to Australia. John Alcock also helped to prepare the Australian crew and plane at the Vickers factory in Weybridge. He suggested the plane be painted dark green to avoid the harsh glare he experienced off the machine while crossing the Atlantic in a light-coloured Vimy.

Alcock and Brown’s Vimy and twin engines were gifted to the Science Museum by Vickers Ltd and Rolls Royce just a fortnight after coming to a stop nose-first in an Irish bog at the end of the Atlantic flight. A new aviation section was created around the plane in 1919 and it’s been a centrepiece ever since. The plane is also now featured in the museum’s key publication *Milestones of Science and Technology*, which lists 112 major developments in science, technology and medicine that have helped to shape the modern world.

The only other original Vimy in the world made history as the first aircraft to fly from England to Australia. Its civil aviation registration number G-EAOU was jokingly construed by the crew to mean “God ‘Elp All Of Us” and still adorns the fuselage as it did in 1919.

Ross Smith’s Vimy was gifted to the Australian Government at the end of the race and displayed for many years at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. In the 1950s, however, it was mothballed because Vimy planes had never seen active war service. When Keith Smith heard about the plane’s fate, he began a campaign to have the Vimy relocated to SA, with $30,000 raised in public donations to fund a hangar designed at the (then) new Adelaide Airport.

Disaster almost struck when the Vimy was on route to Adelaide, with the upper wing, propellers, one engine cowling and radiators destroyed in a fire on one of two semi-trailers transporting the plane from Canberra. The fuselage was untouched and the plane was fully repaired ahead of its official unveiling in its Adelaide Airport hangar in 1958. As of August 2017, the plane remains housed in the same location – now out the back of Adelaide Airport and surrounded by car parks. A Smith Brothers Walking Trail links the new terminal to the Vimy hangar, featuring a series of bronze plaques laid into the pavement and highlighting key details of the journey.

**Expert views**

The *National Air and Space Museum* in Washington holds in trust over 60,000 artefacts. The museum is best known for its collection of rare and historically significant aircraft and spacecraft, including the 1903 Wright Flyer, the Spirit of St Louis and the Apollo 11 Command Module Columbia.

Dr Alex Spencer is a curator at the museum and a specialist in British and Commonwealth aviation history. When I asked him about the significance of the Vickers Vimy in the history of flight, he was unequivocal.
“I consider it one of the most important artefacts of aviation history. Your Vimy should be as iconic to Australia as the Spirit of Saint Louis is to America. It’s that important. I would consider it a crown jewel of Australian artefacts, representing one of the very earliest events in Australian aviation – and as a milestone for Australian aviation. To still have the actual object around is amazing – you’re talking about an object that is nearly 100 years old. To have an object of that age, size and scale is unbelievable.”

London’s Science Museum was founded as an education institution in 1857, with the aim of training up apprentices for industry. Over the years the museum has accumulated an increasing number of objects, with its vast collection now numbering 200,000 items.

Deputy Keeper of Technologies and Engineering Doug Millard says Alcock and Brown’s Vickers Vimy is one of the Science Museum’s most celebrated objects.

“The Vickers Vimy is undoubtedly one of the most iconic treasures at the Science Museum. We are privileged to have a number of very historically significant aircraft on display, but this is one of the most significant and also one of the most spectacular. It’s almost 100 years old, it looks terrific and it looks almost as if it wouldn’t fly – but it crossed the Atlantic, which shows how brave the aviators were.”

Mr Millard believes the Smith crew’s Vimy should have similar significance in Australia.

“As we become a more technologically-connected world with computers and the internet and all of this virtual presence, the significance of objects, the material culture, seems to grow. As we move through our own story of technology, the original artefacts have something which cannot be reproduced. There is something special about being in the presence of an historic object, whether it’s the Vickers Vimy or the Apollo 10 spacecraft – the actual ‘thing’ pulls on all of our senses and what it means to be human.”

The rarity and significance of South Australia’s Vickers Vimy is further reinforced by the fact that two of Britain’s most respected aircraft museums feature replicas of the plane in their collections.

The first is Brooklands Museum in Weybridge. Brooklands became famous as the original home of motor racing in Britain, but was also the headquarters of Vickers Ltd during WWI and when Ross Smith and his crew were preparing for their epic flight.

The reproduction plane at Brooklands (housed in the ‘Vimy Pavilion’) was commissioned by US aviation buff Peter McMillan in the early 1990s to re-enact the Vimy’s three record-breaking flights of 1919-20. In commemoration of their 75th anniversary, the plane was flown from England to Australia, England to South Africa, and across the Atlantic from Newfoundland to Ireland. The plane was donated to the Brooklands Museum Trust in 2006 and is now showcased beside other iconic British planes including Concorde, Sopwith Camel, Hawker and many Vickers types.

Brooklands also houses a significant collection of Vickers archival material and photographs on the 1919 Air Race from England to Australia, and an evocative exhibition housed in the
original 1907 motor racing clubhouse features a prominent display of the Smith brothers’ memorabilia.

The Royal Air Force Museum London is home to a second replica Vimy, built by the Vintage Aircraft and Flying Association to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Alcock and Brown’s 1919 Trans-Atlantic flight. The plane, equipped with two original Rolls-Royce Eagle engines recovered from Dutch canal barges, was flown a number of times in 1969 before it was extensively damaged by fire. It was rebuilt as a static exhibit for viewing at the museum’s London site in 1972. It is currently in storage.

**So where to house such a valuable object for the next 100 years?**

Dr Spencer from Washington’s National Air and Space Museum says the international significance of the Vickers Vimy lends itself to a prominent location in central Adelaide or even Canberra. He questions the long-term benefit of locating the plane at Adelaide Airport.

“Historic airplanes in airports are decoration – people aren't there to learn their story. Ideally the plane should be taken on by a museum because it raises the level of the object to that kind of important, iconic, three-dimensional, visible item that you can use to tell the story and highlight it in a way that's been lost. I personally think the National Museum of Australia in Canberra should be looking to take it on because it deserves that kind of status in Australian history. It's a national artefact.”

Dr Spencer is also a strong advocate for hanging historic planes so they can be showcased in their glory.

“Hanging old planes is no big deal. We do it all the time – once you figure out how to safely attach the cables there's no problem. In fact, that's what airplanes are meant to do.”

He points to the example of a DC-3 in the National Air and Space Museum as an example of a much heavier and larger historic plane than the Vimy being successfully hung. The DC-3 has a 29m wingspan, compared to the Vimy at only 21m.

Mr Millard from London’s Science Museum says it’s paramount the plane is accessible to the public, and “whether that's a museum or somewhere else is less important”.

“The two main points are that it should be accessible and that it should be safe and sound. It

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“The Vickers Vimy was more than a plane. Like Smithy’s Southern Cross, it was a national treasure, a link with pioneers who forged the basis for Australia’s present high standing in aviation.”

The News, Adelaide, 5 November 1957
(on news the Vimy had been partly destroyed by fire)
should be housed in an optimum environment for its survival because this is something that we would want to survive for centuries and there’s no reason why it shouldn’t, so that future generations can also enjoy it. The further into the future, the more significant it will become.”

3. How can we engage and inspire future generations with the story and the plane?

Mark Kornmann, Associate Director with the Office of Education and Public Engagement at the National Air and Space Museum, says artefacts and objects are crucial in engaging kids about history at the Smithsonian. “The fact that they’re real is what excites kids and makes them curious,” he says.

The Smithsonian’s primary target audience for school-based education programs is middle school children aged 11-14 years, with new technology used to reach children across the United States through live broadcasts and interactive video conferences in front of engaging objects such as the Spirit of St Louis or a toilet on a real space capsule.

The Smithsonian attracts 8.5 million visitors a year and the average age is 50-60. Mr Kornmann says NASM’s education team is therefore constantly developing new programs to attract and inspire younger audiences (over and above that key school-aged target market). Recent initiatives include:

- Ticketed evening events such as ‘Yuri Night’ for people aged 25-35, with Russian beer and food and speakers highlighting the achievements of Yuri Gagarin as the first human to journey into outer space in 1961. (“The people behind major historic events can be key to making stories relevant,” Mr Kornmann says.)
- Gala music events.
- Virtual reality exhibits such as simulating a walk on Mars.
- Live, 15-minute Facebook videos relating to issues of the day or key anniversaries that can quickly attract thousands of views.
- Engaging with school children in Belgium to write letters relating to the centenary of WWI.
- Attracting mentors/volunteers working with young adults for special talks that relate to lived experiences on identity and social responsibility.
- Storytime sessions for mums and pre-schoolers.

Mr Kornmann says he is willing to workshop ideas with Australian educators via video conference, and suggests a series of steps to introduce the Vickers Vimy story into Australian schools:

1. Bring together a focus group of Year 5-8 teachers (with various subject specialties) and introduce them to the story before asking where they believe the plane, the men and the race might resonate best with students.
2. Identify facts and angles of most value within the curriculum and design a simple program or structure around this to be tested by students (what’s engaging/boring).
3. Match the information to two or three year levels. Examples might include asking children to write about their own experiences on a plane and explain how the Smith
crew’s experience would be different; or creating a school drama production mapping the journey and key events that occurred. (“It’s important not to label objects such as this as relating only to history or science. Be open to how teachers and children might want to engage with the story.”)

4. Implement across schools while continuously testing what is and isn’t working.

London’s Science Museum is the most visited, booked attraction for schools in the UK (and possibly all of Europe), attracting 460,000 education-based visitors last year. UK primary schools account for two thirds of all students, with the remaining third split 50/50 between UK and overseas secondary school students. At peak times a new school group is moved through the museum’s state-of-the-art and interactive Wonderlab every five minutes.

Former Head of Learning Operations Dr Kenny Webster says unique historic objects such as aircraft can be difficult to fit into a curriculum which is heavily focused on more modern science themes such as electricity, energy, light, sound, forces, space and technology.

The Science Museum’s education team seeks to make historic objects more relevant by featuring them on specially designed science trails with identified learning outcomes and curriculum linkages. These include the Fantastic Forces Trail, where students must find six objects in the museum and answer a series of science questions about them. For example, students are asked to find the Supermarine Seaplane, which in 1931 became the fastest vehicle on the planet after setting a world record speed of 407.5mph. They are then asked to consider what forces would have been acting on the plane while it was in the air and on the water; what features make it aerodynamic and which of the surrounding aircraft in the Flight Gallery is the most aerodynamic.

With a 45-minute ‘Flight’ activity sheet, educators can engage children aged five and above with Flight Gallery exhibits including the Vickers Vimy, a Spitfire and Amy Johnson’s aircraft Jason (in which she became the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia in 1930). Children are asked to record the materials used on early and modern aircraft; the shape of wings and propellers; systems used to control planes; clothing used as planes travelled higher and faster; and to explore the achievements of pioneers such as the Wright brothers, Amy Johnson and John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown.

Brooklands Museum also has a strong education focus, particularly in the key area of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). Curator Andrew Lewis says comprehensive resources have been developed for the 30,000 students who visit annually, with activities available for students from early years through to higher education. For example, education options for upper primary students include:

- **Amazing man and his amazing machines**: students learn about male and female engineers who created some of the most iconic vehicles at Brooklands, linking to curriculum areas of History, Design and Technology.
- **Museum Researcher**: students research the history of British motorsport and aviation, their technologies and engineering development, linking to curriculum areas of Science, Design & Technology, History, English, Business Studies, Leisure and Tourism.
• The Brooklands Press: students explore the museum’s archive materials and write a newspaper article or produce a TV news article using iPads, linking to curriculum areas of Media Studies, Information and Communication Technology and English.

Mr Lewis says a $13m redevelopment of the Weybridge race track will include the new Brooklands Aircraft Factory – a hands-on centre for learning where students and adults can learn real-life aircraft preservation skills such as woodwork, painting and corrosion work.

Britain’s Royal Aeronautical Society has an active education program aimed at introducing young people to the world of aerospace and aviation and inspiring them about past and future achievements. The society’s primary school outreach program is called Cool Aeronautics, with the education team running free themed aviation talks at key locations including the Yorkshire Air Museum, RAF Museum Hendon and Heathrow Airport. The Falcon Initiative is aimed at inspiring and motivating students aged 13-18 into further STEM studies by funding selected schools to build fully functional flight simulators. The society organises leading aviation experts to speak in schools and also runs an annual event highlighting aviation career pathways for secondary students.

France’s Musée des Arts et Métiers (literally meaning ‘arts and trades’ museum) is Europe’s oldest science museum, founded in 1794 to educate workers as they were up-skilled out of poverty and peasant life. Housed in a former Benedictine priory, it became a museum in 1819 and is today home to many fascinating aviation and scientific treasures including the famous monoplane in which Louis Bleriot first crossed the English Channel in 1909.

The museum’s Collections Manager responsible for Energy and Transport, Lionel Dufaux, undertook a PhD which found that scientific objects have been used effectively as learning tools since as far back as the 1800s. Dr Dufaux, right, says half the museum’s 300,000 annual visitors are school students and the education team is committed to ensuring they leave inspired and motivated by the objects on display. A key program is a collaboration of secondary students in the creation of a virtual plane – modelling the design of the Bleriot XI, which was so fragile it was nicknamed the ‘dragonfly’ – capable of crossing the Atlantic.
4. Is there anything new to learn?

The final goal of my Fellowship was to uncover original source materials and new facts about the race. However, my aim is to include these new details in a planned work of historical fiction (or ‘faction’ as it will be heavily based on fact) to coincide with the race centenary in 2019. This book will serve as an appendix to this report and will acknowledge my Fellowship and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for their generous assistance.

While retracing the Smith crew’s route through Europe and Asia, it was also my intention to confirm exactly where they departed and/or landed in each city and record the site’s use today. I thought it was important to record the sites for the sake of posterity. The exercise also provided a fascinating insight into the history of aviation in each of these cities, and in many cases shone the spotlight on another crucial legacy of this race: introducing the concept and potential of flight to communities that had never before seen a plane.

As you can see from the map above (published in Flight magazine in 1919) the Smith crew made 24 overnight stops en route to Australia: Lyons, Pisa, Rome, Taranto, Souda Bay, Cairo, Damascus, Ramadie, Basra, Bandar Abbas, Karachi, Delhi, Allahabad, Calcutta, Akyab, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singora, Singapore, Kalidjati, Surabaya, Bima, Atamboea and Darwin.

During my Fellowship I visited 10 key Air Race locations: the British departure site at Hounslow and landing sites in Lyons (Lyon), Pisa, Rome, Souda Bay, Delhi, Calcutta (Kolkata), Rangoon (Yangon), Bangkok and Surabaya. Here is a pictorial record of landing sites I rediscovered along the route, as well as historic photos taken at the time of the race...
The 1919 Air Race rules, overseen by Britain’s Royal Aero Club, stipulated that “the start will be from Hounslow Aerodrome or Calshot Seaplane Station”.

Hounslow had been a strategic military site for hundreds of years due to its proximity to London, and was developed into an aircraft defence and training base during WWI. Immediately after the war, Hounslow became England’s sole passenger terminal, but its role was short-lived and it closed in favour of Croydon Airport in 1920.

The Smith crew departed Hounslow just after 9am on 12 November 1919, despite the weather forecast being Class V, or “totally unfit for flying”. Ross Smith wrote in his diary that he was a “silly ass” for embarking on the flight to Lyons, which he always maintained was the worst stage of the race due to the weather.

Today Hounslow Heath is an 80ha public nature reserve within the sprawling suburban Borough of Hounslow, just a few kilometres from Heathrow Airport.

Then
The Smith crew in flying gear with a handful of supporters before their departure from Hounslow Aerodrome. Photo originally published in 14,000 miles through the air, by Sir Ross Macpherson Smith

Now
A small, neglected plaque beside the heath says: “From here the first British international airline operated and the first flight from Europe to Australia was made”.

LONDON – HOUNSLOW HEATH
Lyon aerodrome was established before WWI as France’s first private airfield, according to Pierre Lussignol of the Lyon Aviation History and Aeronautics Documentation Society.

When the Germans invaded Belgium and marched on Paris, the aerodrome (450km south of the capital) was taken over by the government and became the despatch point for all air squadrons during the war. Lyon (sometimes called Lyons) also became a major hub for aircraft manufacturing. It remained a strategic airfield for the Allies up until early in WW2, when it was occupied by the Nazis.

The Smith crew landed in dense snow on the original Lyon airstrip on day one of their journey to Australia. Smith wrote later: “We were so stiff with cold when we climbed out of the machine that we could hardly walk. But what did it matter? Our spirits ran high…”

Today the site is home to an expansive wheat field surrounded by wild poppies, not far from the current main tarmac of the Lyon-Bron Airport. The Lyon Aviation History and Aeronautics Documentation Society is committed to keeping the region’s rich aviation history alive.
The original Pisa aerodrome was one of many stations on the first Royal Air Force route from England to Egypt, so Ross Smith decided to land there for the second night of their journey.

According to Smith’s account in *14,000 miles through the air*, 30 Italian mechanics tried to dig the Vickers Vimy out of the mud after a deluge of overnight rain, but the plane was so hopelessly bogged that the crew decided to give up and stay a second night. They covered over the engines and went sightseeing. Smith wrote: “Sergeant Shiers had never seen this Tower before and his first remark was: ‘Well, I reckon the architect who designed the damn thing must have had a bit too much Johnny Walker!’”

Today the landing site, north of the old city, is farmland with views of the Leaning Tower and the Pisa Baptistery.
Centocelle, to the east of central Rome, was designed in 1908 as Italy’s first airfield and used extensively for air operations throughout WWI. Wilber Wright flew at the aerodrome in 1909, while in early 1919 T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) was lucky to survive a crash here which killed two others. Coincidentally, Ross Smith had occasionally served as personal pilot to Lawrence during the war.

After flying over Rome for the first time, Smith wrote: “In spite of the fatigue induced by our strenuous experiences of the day and our eagerness to get down to earth, I could not help being stirred by the beauty of the historic city. The sun was peering through the space between the clouds and the distant mountain tops and, slanting across the city, gave it an appearance of majestic splendour.”

In Rome I met with Australia’s Ambassador to Italy, Dr Greg French, who is keen to celebrate the race centenary in Italy in 2019. Clearly there is scope to do this, even simply via social media, in all countries along the route.

Today the former Centocelle airfield is a vast public park within Rome’s sprawling south-eastern suburbs.

**Now**

**Then**
The British established a naval base at Souda Bay on the island of Crete in the late 1800s (the photo right shows pre-war international military exercises). During WWI the Air Ministry decided it was a good location from which to detect German U-boats by air, and later as a staging post for planes flying south to Cairo.

Souda Bay (and the nearby historic port of Chania visited by the Smith crew on their spare afternoon on the island) lie on the northern coast of Crete. To fly south (and down over the Mediterranean and on to Cairo) meant a dangerous journey over craggy mountains running the length of the island. Ross Smith was advised to follow a goat track through the mountains and cleared the crest “only a few feet above the rock”.

Today the former airfield is covered with market gardens and housing.

**Then**

*Photo courtesy of the Historical Archive of Crete.*

**Now**

*Another team in the 1919 Air Race, led by famous South Australian Hubert Wilkins, was forced out of the competition after crashing at Souda Bay. Photo courtesy SA Aviation Museum Library.*
Delhi’s original airfield was established during the British Raj within the military compound south of New Delhi.

In the photo right taken by the Smith crew, you can see the airstrip in the background behind the fortified barracks, and Safdarjung’s Tomb (built for Prime Minister Safdarjung in the 1700s) in the foreground.

The airfield was renamed Safdarjung in 1947 when India gained independence from Britain. After 9/11 it was decided to use the airport as an emergency getaway for the President and the PM, and today it is used only to transfer politicians and other VIPs by helicopter to the Indira Gandhi International Airport. The chopper fleet is visible in my photo below, with Safdarjung’s Tomb in the background.
On the flight from Delhi to Calcutta, Keith Smith took what’s believed to be the first aerial photograph of the Taj Mahal. Originally published in 14,000 miles through the air, by Sir Ross Macpherson Smith.

Thousands turned out in Calcutta to greet the Smith crew, now more than half way through their journey to Australia. The Statesman newspaper reported that “Calcutta’s one million inhabitants were given a full view as they flew around the city, circling”. The short race-course “airstrip” and a flock of hawks almost caused disaster on departure the following morning, when a bird flew into a propeller and Ross Smith only narrowly missed crashing the machine into tree-tops. The race-course is still in use today, with the grand Victoria Memorial building as a backdrop.

Now

The 1919 photo above shows the Victoria Memorial building (erected by British expats in honour of the late Queen Victoria) on the far top right, almost complete but still under scaffolding.

Photo: State Library of South Australia (PRG18 7-10).
The Smith crew finally caught up with their French competitor Etienne Poulet in Akyab, eastern Burma. News spread that both planes would fly from Akyab to Rangoon the following day, and thousands were waiting on the British military parade ground (cum race-course) when the Vickers Vimy arrived.

It was the first plane ever seen in the city. Ross Smith later wrote in *14,000 miles through the air*: “I had no difficulty in locating the landing ground – the race-course, a green patch framed by a compact ring of cheering humanity.” Ross Smith also told reporters in Rangoon that he’d spotted the city 40 miles away in a sea of forest, helped by the towering Shwedagon Pagoda that had been fortified by the British during Imperial rule and still serves as a backdrop to the landing site today. The former parade ground/race-course is now a public park in central Yangon.

*Photo courtesy SA Aviation Museum Library*
Well before WWI, the Thai Royal Family recognised the importance of aviation for defence, transportation and fostering nationalism. In 1912 three young officers were sent to France for flight training before returning home to become the founding fathers of the Royal Thai Air Force. By 1919, when the Smith crew arrived, airmail services had begun and the ‘Army Air Division’ was well advanced and equipped. Ross Smith told local reporters the Don Muang aerodrome was the best since England “and expressed himself as delighted with the arrangements made and the very efficient administration”.

Four aircraft formed a military escort for 50 miles when the Vimy flew out of Bangkok. Don Muang remains one of the city’s two international airports.

*British and Thai officials with the Vickers Vimy at Don Muang aerodrome in 1919 and (below) a photo of the aerodrome around that time. Photos courtesy of the Royal Thai Air Force Museum.*
Modern-day Surabaya was part of the Dutch East Indies in 1919 and the Governor-General, His Excellency Count Von Limburg Stirum, gave orders that the Smith crew were to be guests of his government while passing through the region. The Surabaya landing ground was a stretch of land recently reclaimed from the sea, with a “layer of liquid mud” underneath a hard crust. This made for one of the most remarkable scenes of the month-long journey, when hundreds of locals removed bamboo matting from the walls of their homes to lay a 300m path for the Vimy. It was Keith Smith’s idea and it worked, with the crew safely on their way after their second runway attempt on the mats. In the century since that day, Surabaya has been at the centre of dramatic upheaval in Indonesia: the city was occupied by the Japanese in WW2 and later became a flashpoint in the four-year struggle for independence against the Dutch. As a result, little is known about the Vimy’s original landing site. Two aerodromes existed before the current Juanda International Airport opened as a naval air base in the 1960s, but Surabaya historians believe it’s possible neither of those airports was built on the reclaimed land which proved so hazardous to the Vimy. With the help of a guide, I found some historic harbour buildings resembling those in the background of a 1919 photograph of the plane. The nearby land is today a military base.
Conclusion

The 1919 Air Race from England to Australia has been confirmed as one of the most significant events in the history of aviation.

It was the first step in connecting Australia to an increasingly globalised planet after World War I. It helped to forge new air routes for transport, communication and defence in the British Empire. It built Australian pride after a devastating war.

In its time, it was as awe-inspiring as man landing on the moon 50 years later.

As one of the two remaining Vickers Vimy planes in the world, the aircraft at Adelaide Airport is an aviation artefact of national and global significance. In fact, one expert believes the plane should be as significant to Australia as the Spirit of St Louis is to America. The Vimy’s sister plane, made famous by Alcock and Brown in their record-breaking flight across the Atlantic, has been a centrepiece of London’s renowned Science Museum since 1919.

The four men, three of whom were from South Australia in brothers Ross and Keith Smith and mechanic Wally Shiers, were pioneers in their field and likened in their day to Christopher Columbus and Captain Cook. The fourth man was Jim Bennett from Victoria.

The story of the race, the men and the plane is worthy of profound pride and celebration in South Australia. Other parts of the world cherish their history. It’s time we did too.

Recommendations

1. The plane should be moved from its current position at the back of Adelaide Airport, either to a more prominent, public position within the new terminal precinct or into the Adelaide CBD. (It should be noted that Adelaide Airport Ltd is “very keen to explore” a more prominent location for the Vickers Vimy. In May 2017 the company confirmed: “We're currently undertaking further work on whether it's technically possible to relocate the Vimy to a more permanent location within the terminals precinct. This design and concept work on a potential new home for the Vimy is taking place concurrent with Adelaide Airport's terminal expansion planning.”)
2. Legal transfer of ownership of the Vickers Vimy should be formalised.
3. The South Australian Education Department should investigate ways to incorporate learning on the Vickers Vimy into the curriculum, making it easy for teachers to engage and inspire students in the story with age-appropriate materials.
4. Plans should be made to mark the centenary of the race in South Australia (and possibly even nationally and/or internationally) to foster state pride and celebrate our history of home-grown ingenuity and daring.
5. The Adelaide landing site, now part of the Lightsview suburban development northeast of the CBD, should be given greater prominence. One of two pine trees planted to mark the landing site can still be seen from adjacent Hampstead Rd.

**Dissemination of report**

- *Sunday Mail* newspaper column and follow-up print and broadcast media coverage on the future of the Vickers Vimy. While I was overseas on my Fellowship, I wrote a column for the *Sunday Mail* about my findings to date, including interviews with leading aviation historians in Washington and London who were shocked that the Vickers Vimy wasn't better celebrated in Australia. (See Appendix A.) The column was followed up on the ABC Radio Adelaide breakfast program and in the South Australian Parliament, where Member for Finniss Michael Pengilly urged greater focus on the future of the plane. (See Appendix B.)
- Forty-minute audio podcast on the race and my Fellowship as part of the Heaps Good History podcast series created by *The Advertiser* and showcased on www.adelaidenow.com.au. (To be aired in August 2017.)
- Meetings with, and distribution of the report to, South Australian and national political and community leaders, history and aviation chiefs and influencers. This includes History Trust of South Australia CEO Greg Mackie OAM, who was already on the case of the Vickers Vimy and is now in dialogue with Adelaide Airport Limited to ensure the continued safe keeping of the aircraft and it associated collection objects. The History Trust of South Australia is the custodian of the State History Collection.
- Historical fiction book on the race (based heavily on fact) to coincide with the 2019 centenary.
- Presentations to history and aviation groups and other public speaking opportunities.
- Distribution of report to relevant Australian embassies in countries along the route, ensuring they are aware of the historical significance of the race and can use the centenary to promote cross-country ties, particularly during the 2019 centenary.
- Distribution to organisers of the 2019 World Routes conference, which will be held in Adelaide in September 2019 and bring together more than 3,000 delegates from airlines, airports and tourism authorities to discuss new air services.

“I consider it one of the most important artefacts of aviation history. Your Vimy should be as iconic to Australia as the Spirit of Saint Louis is to America.”

Dr Alex Spencer, Curator, Washington’s National Air and Space Museum
A: *Sunday Mail* column detailing the views of international aviation historians about the significance of the 1919 Air Race and the Vickers Vimy housed at Adelaide Airport.

B: Overview of ABC Radio Adelaide interview with Member for Finniss Michael Pengilly about importance of bipartisan support in the South Australian parliament for the Vickers Vimy. With *Sunday Mail* column ‘sidebar’ backing Mr Pengilly’s proposal.

C: *Sunday Mail* column calling for new state history museum where the achievements of prominent South Australians, including Ross and Keith Smith, can be remembered and celebrated.

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Lainie Anderson column, *Sunday Mail*, 5 February 2017

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Lainie Anderson column, *Sunday Mail*, 4 December 2016
APPENDIX A: MEDIA COVERAGE

The shame of a hidden chapter of our history

Y ou knew the TV program Antigone, featuring the British series where fortunes impact daily, objects brought into the light by hopeful owners, sometimes discovering a long-neglected item is worth a fortune.

That’s how it felt those first two weeks of my Churchill Fellowship, trying to grasp the true significance of the Vickers Vimy plane hidden away at the back of Adelaide Airport.

On the other side of the world, aviation historians are shocked that the plane—the winner of the 1919 air race from London to Australia—is not celebrated Down Under.

Last week at the Smithsonian in Washington, I spoke with Alex Spencer, one of the world’s leading aviation curators. He was incredulous. “I consider it one of the most important artifacts of aviation history.”

“The flight was incredibly significant, helping to bring aviation out of its infancy, demonstrating the practicalities of the airplane and the British Empire after World War I.”

“Your Vimy should be as iconic to Australia as the Spirit of Saint Louis is to America.”

The Spirit of Saint Louis was Charles Lindbergh in the first non-stop solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927. It’s now a centerpiece of the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum and seen by 8.5 million visitors a year.

Our Vimy was flown eight years earlier by brothers Ross and Keith Smith. They travelled halfway around the globe, with open cockpits and only basic navigation. Four other planes took part in the 1919 race to Australia— all four crashed and two crews were killed.

Yet our plane remains in its 1919 purpose-built hangar beside the Adelaide Airport’s long-term carpark, at bed time seen by a few thousand people annually if they walk behind some protecting the plane from sunlight. At Britain’s National Airspace Library, chief librarian Brian Noble believes the flight “made the greatest impact of the air and was, in its time, as remarkable a journey as that of the 1969 Apollo 11 moon landing in 50 years later.”

London’s Science Museum is home to the only other original Vickers Vimy in the world. It was flown across the Atlantic by John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown in 1919 and has been championed as an iconic exhibit ever since.

Science Museum deputy keeper of technology and engineering Doug Millard says the two Vimys are “hugely significant” because of their role in the history of science and technology.

“They became a choice to a drinking world, but that first flight to Australia really was one of the ways in which we first started to join the world,” Mr Millard says.

“And it was only 15 years after the very first powered flight by the Wright brothers.”

So what should we do with a plane that’s clearly significant but not yet prioritised in Adelaide Airport Limited’s expansion plans? (Airport chiefs say they’re currently exploring whether it’s technically possible to relocate the plane into the evolving terminals precinct and a final site will be dependent on broader infrastructure plans.)

Mr Millard says the plane should be accessible but also “safe and quiet.”

“It should be housed in an optimum environment for its survival—there’s no reason why it shouldn’t survive for centuries.”

The Smithsonian’s Alex Spencer says the Vimys’ significance lends itself to the National Museum of Australia in Canberra but believes moving the plane to the SA Museum would also raise its status and help share a story that’s been largely forgotten.

I agree. And, in doing so, we’d improve a new generation of kids to attempt the impossible.

In Australia, there’s a tendency to downplay and even dismiss our achievements of the past—to think they can’t possibly be as worthy as anything that happened in other parts of the world. Well, those other parts of the world are busy cherishing their own history.

It’s time we did, too.

As the 2017 centenary of the epic EAP Air Race approaches, let’s bring our Vickers Vimy plane into the light. It’s the priceless treasure we don’t know we have.
APPENDIX B: MEDIA COVERAGE

ABC Radio Adelaide interview, 11 May 2017:

**Interview with Michael Pengilly, Liberal Finniss MP, about t...**

**ABC Radio Adelaide, Adelaide** hosted by **Matthew Abraham and David Bevan**

11 May 2017 7:38 AM

Interview with Michael Pengilly, Liberal Finniss MP, about the Vickers Vimy. Bevan says Lainie Anderson wrote a piece for the Sunday Mail on the Vickers Vimy, a historic plane that was on display at Adelaide Airport, in which she revealed experts overseas have said they cannot believe the way Australians treat it. He says this plane has worldwide significance. Bevan and Abraham both agree the Adelaide Airport’s terminal is good. Pengilly confirms the plane is still in the same spot just that the infrastructure has moved away from it. He says he spoke to Steven Marshall about the issue and jokes he would like to see the Premier and Leon Bignell to set-up the open cockpit and fly the plane. He understands the plane is very fragile and he has put-up a motion asking the Parliament to turn its attention to this. He says the plane can be shipped to a better location. He says he is not sure whether the Adelaide Port or the federal government owns the plane. He suggests the plane to be put inside the SA Museum because it has to be protected from the sunlight.

Lainie Anderson column, *Sunday Mail*, 18 June 2017:

**AND ANOTHER THING ...**

Kudos to Liberal MP for Finniss Michael Pengilly for raising the issue of the Vickers Vimy in State Parliament and formally moving a motion that encourages bipartisan support to secure the future of the historic plane. As the winner of the 1919 air race from England to Australia, it’s one of the most significant aviation objects on the planet and deserves greater prominence than being stuck out the back of the airport.
APPENDIX C: MEDIA COVERAGE

Our great achievements need a place of honour

Lainie Anderson column, Sunday Mail, 6 August 2017