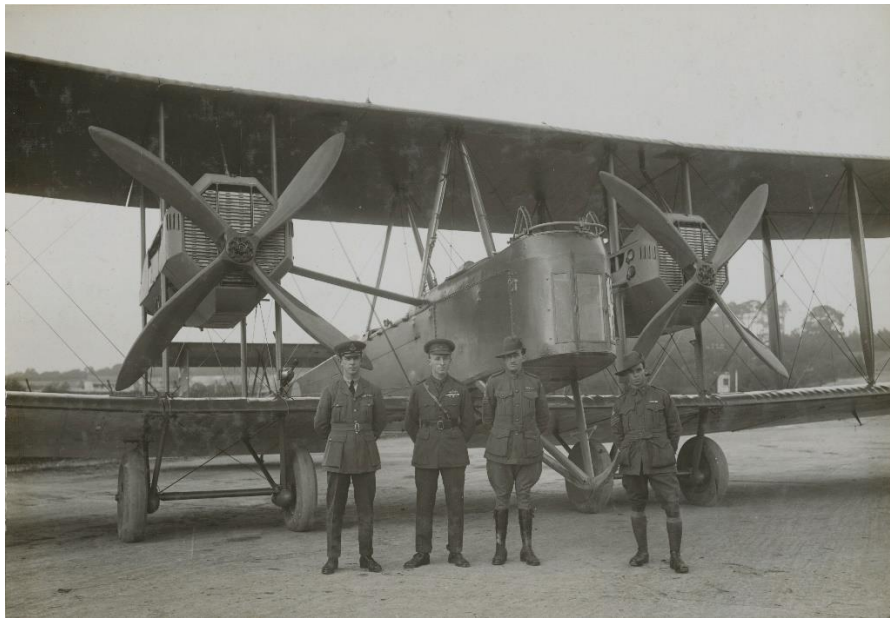


## MEDIA RELEASE

22 March 2019



*Vickers Vimy and crew*  
State Library of South Australia: PRG 18/9/1/3A

### ***Pioneer aviators Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith's personal papers now online***

The personal papers of South Australian pioneer aviators Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith, held by the State Library of South Australia, have been digitised and are now available on the Digital Collections website - [bit.ly/smith-brothers](http://bit.ly/smith-brothers).

The Smith brothers were famous for winning the 1919 Great Air Race – the first ever flight between England and Australia. Together with engineers Walter Shiers (South Australian) and James Bennett (Victorian) they flew across the world in only 28 days and their flight is one of the world's great pioneering aviation feats.

In 2019, the centenary year of the prize-winning flight, we celebrate them and their significant achievement which paved the way for postal and commercial flights to Australia. As part of the commemorations the State Library has launched a new website which provides free access to the personal papers of Ross and Keith Smith. Many of the records were kindly donated to the Library by the Smith family and reveal the experiences and personalities of the brothers.

**Geoff Strempel**, Director State Library of South Australia, says “The story of the Great Air Race, the men and the plane has strong South Australian connections with global importance. It is with great pride that the Library has been able to make this internationally significant collection available online and provide world-wide access. The website is the result of many hours of hard work involving staff across the Library and ensures the preservation of the original records.”

The featured collection provides access to personal records and information related to the air race, including photographs, newspaper cuttings, correspondence and the diary of Ross Smith, flying records, service records, papers about the England to Australia flight and maps. Also included is other material relating to the brothers from throughout the State Library collection.

Key items include the log book for the Vickers Vimy biplane kept during the prize-winning flight, albums of photographs taken during the flight, Sir Ross and Sir Keith’s pilot licenses, letters written by the brothers to their parents throughout the flight and a letter from Dame Nellie Melba congratulating the brothers on the successful flight.

The website provides easy access for individuals and institutions to explore more about the brothers and their extraordinary achievement. It also allows members of the public to contribute to the knowledge of the flight by tagging photographs and pinning them to a map as well as sharing their stories. All material can be downloaded for free and more records will be released on the website throughout 2019.

By releasing and sharing this collection, others can now use it to explore and plan their own celebrations, learn or read for interest.

It also demonstrates the role the State Library can play in international events by collecting, preserving and making accessible significant collections.

The State Library is proud to be a part of the celebrations of the Epic Flight Centenary 2019. During this year of commemoration, a series of events coordinated by the History Trust of South Australia will be held throughout South Australia, including an exhibition at the State Library, ***Heroes of the skies: The Smith Brothers and the Great Air Race of 1919***, opening in November 2019.

For more information about the Epic Flight Centenary visit - [epicflightcentenary.com.au/](http://epicflightcentenary.com.au/)

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