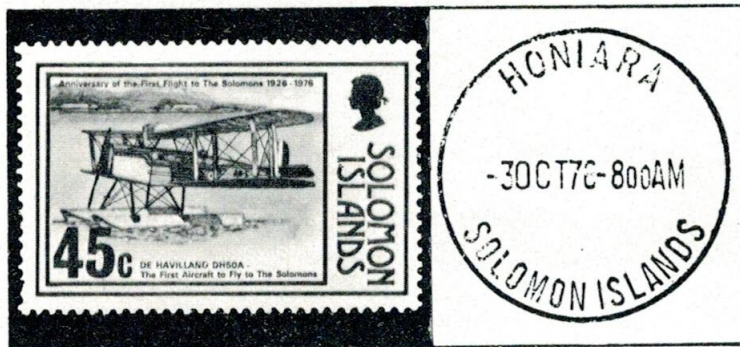




Solomon Islands



At Honiara on 3rd October, 1976, the mail was backstamped with a normal date stamp and over 600 locally-lodged articles added to the despatch, but no special postmarker was used on these items. However, the arrival of Williams' machine in 1926 marked the first visit of an aeroplane to the territory and the Solomon Islands issued a 45c stamp on 13th September, 1976, to commemorate this occasion. The stamp was one of a set of four on aviation themes related to the Solomon Islands.

New Hebrides



Oval postmarkers with inscriptions in French and in English were provided at Port Vila.

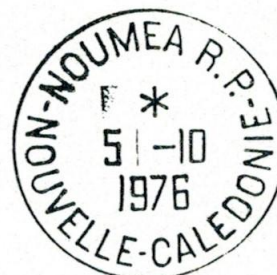
At first these rubber postmarkers were also used to backstamp the mail carried so far, but it soon became evident that this operation was too slow for the stopover time available and steel date stamps were then used on the remainder of the covers.

**50e ANNIVERSAIRE
DE LA PREMIERE LIAISON AERIEENNE
AUSTRALIE - ILES DU PACIFIQUE
1926 - 1976**

*Vol commémoratif Nouméa - Norfolk
Lord Howe - Sydney du 6 octobre 1976*

New Caledonia

A rectangular cachet was applied to mail lodged at Noumea. The postmarker employed was the normal one and there was no backstamping except on articles for local delivery.



Norfolk Island

A diamond-shaped postmarker was used at Norfolk Island on the articles despatched there on 7th October, 1976. The design elements included a front view of the DH50A and two Norfolk Island



Fifty years later: Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, (second from left) chief pilot on the 1926 R.A.A.F. survey flight to the Pacific, hands over the philatelic mail to the co-pilot of the re-enactment flight, Captain Noble Buckley (right).



Captain Anthony Schwerdt, first pilot on the re-enactment flight loads part of the philatelic mail into the luggage compartment in the starboard engine nacelle.



A cover carried on the 1926 flight.

one of the two Supermarine Seagull III flying boats assisting in the survey of the Great Barrier Reef.

The first contact with Papua was reached at Daru on 11th October after a ninety minute flight from Thursday Island. Next day the aircraft landed at Port Moresby after a refuelling stop at Kiaruku (Yule Island).

Over the next 25 days stops were made at Samarai, Baniara, Morobe, Lindenhafen, Rabaul, Namtanai, Feni Islands, Nissan, Buka, Kieta (Bougainville), Shortland Islands in the Solomons group, Gizo, Manutoo Lagoon, until the survey reached its furthest point, Tulagi in the Solomon Islands.

Here, because of delays encountered along the route and more engine trouble, the aviators decided it would be wiser to abandon the rest of the projected survey flight and return to Point Cook the way they had come before the onset of the north-west monsoon season. The original engine taken off at Sydney, and now repaired, was despatched to Tulagi aboard the S.S. *Mataram* arriving there on 21st November.

With the fitting of the replacement engine

the trio left the Solomon Islands two days later for Rabaul, but the bad weather had set in and local rain storms forced them to detour via Gizo, Kieta and Soraken. They were buffeted by storms during practically the whole of their journey down the New Guinea coast and the aviators experienced several dangerous forced landings in bays and streams.

The R.A.A.F.'s first overseas flight terminated at Point Cook on 7th December, 1926. The distance covered had been 16 000 km in a flying time of 126 hours and 4 minutes.

The flight commander is the only living survivor of the adventure. Now, Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O., he lives an active life in retirement in Melbourne and he graciously consented to hand the commemorative mail over before the departure of the 50th anniversary re-enactment flight on 27th September, 1976.

Ivor McIntyre was killed in a civil flying accident in 1928. Leslie Trist left the R.A.A.F. and returned to New Guinea to fly for Guinea Airways. He was killed in 1931 on a flight from Lae to Wau when his Junker W34

aircraft hit the side of a cloud-enshrouded mountain west of the Wompit Valley. A lake and a mountain in Papua New Guinea are named after him.



Papua New Guinea's Stamps

The R.A.A.F.'s first overseas flight was an important achievement in its day and it had a great influence on the places visited. At Samarai and at a number of other stops it was the first time that the inhabitants had seen an aeroplane, twelve uncharted rivers were sighted in New Britain and the DH50A was the first aircraft to visit the Solomon Islands.

Understandably, a number of countries on the originally-projected survey route issued postage stamps or provided special postmarkers on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the flight. The first country to do so was Papua New Guinea with the issue of two stamps on 18th August, 1976.

The re-enactment flight which left Melbourne on 27th September, 1976, and the different postmarkers applied to mail collected during the course of that flight will be described in the March edition of Philatelic Bulletin.

The denominations of the two Papua New Guinea stamps were 10t and 60t and they were issued in conjunction with 7t and 15t stamps celebrating 50 years of Scouting in Papua New Guinea. The four stamps were presented together in the souvenir stamp folder.

Technical details of the issue are:

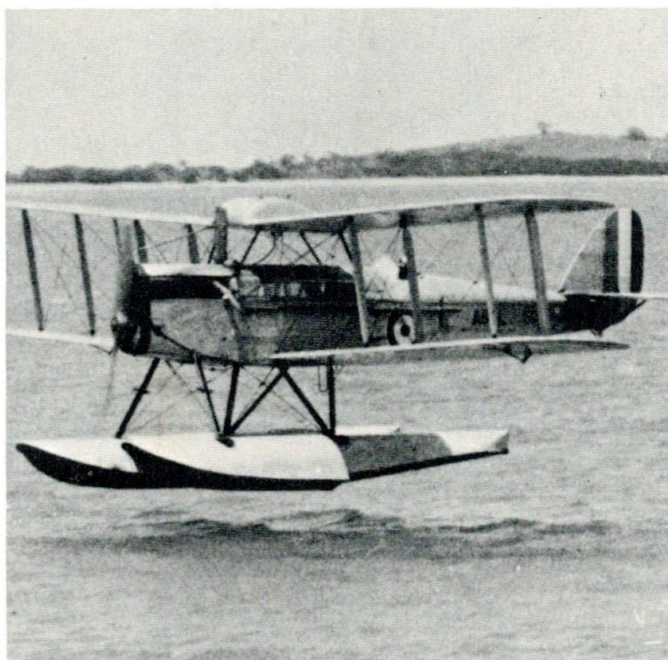
Stamp size 36 mm x 25.7 mm

Sheet content	50
Printing technique	Multicolour photo-gravure
Printer	Helio . Courvoisier S.A. of Switzerland
Paper	unwatermarked granite
Designer	Richard Bates

The 10t stamp shows the DH50A with a map of the survey area in the background and the 60t stamp depicts the aircraft at its moorings with a native sightseer in a canoe, nearby.

Following the revaluation of Papua New Guinea's Kina the stamps will cost 10c and 63c in Australian currency. A souvenir stamp folder will cost \$1.12, Australian.

The stamps and souvenir stamp folder are available from Australia Post philatelic centres, by counter sales only, until 18th February, 1977, providing stocks last. Clients in Australia should forward mail orders and remittances to the P.N.G. Philatelic Bureau, Australian Marketing Division, P.O. Box 404, Crows Nest, N.S.W., 2065, and New Zealand clients should send their orders and remittances to the Philatelic Bureau, P.O. Box 160, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. All remittances to the Philatelic Bureau, Port Moresby, should be by bank draft in Papua New Guinea currency otherwise the amount will be reduced by 50t (52c Australian).



The R.A.A.F. De Havilland DH50A floatplane serialised A8-1 which flew to the Pacific islands in 1926. The pilot sat in a cockpit while the other two crew members were accommodated in a small cabin ahead of the cockpit. The span of the top wing measured 13.04 m and the length of the aircraft was 9.07 m. Loaded weight was 1905 kg and top speed was 172.8 km.p.h. Normal range of the float plane version was 580 km.



C.J. Dennis's original home at Toolangi

R.A.A.F.'s First Overseas Flight Remembered II — The re-enactment.

A special postmarker was used on 7,508 articles flown out of Melbourne on 27th September, 1976, in a Piper Navajo Chieftain aircraft chartered by the Australian Air-Mail Society.

The purpose of the flight was to re-enact the first flight by an R.A.A.F. machine to an overseas country fifty years ago. Australia Post's facility for a commemorative mail to celebrate this event was restricted to covers addressed to places along the re-enactment route and return covers to Australian addresses. No registered articles were accepted. At various stops, the postal administrations of other countries and territories despatched commemorative mails aboard the aircraft and provided special postmarks and backstamps.



Landings of the re-enactment flight were made at Sydney, Brisbane, Horne Island, Daru, Port Moresby, Kieta, Honiara, Port Vila, Noumea, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, Sydney and Melbourne. Port Vila and Noumea were scheduled stops on the original flight, but various misfortunes along the way prevented the flight extending further east than the Solomon Islands and the airmen returned to Australia via New Guinea. Norfolk and Lord Howe islands were necessary stops for the re-enactment aircraft because of its relatively short range and had no direct connection with the 1926 flight.

Australia Post's postmark was a 43.5 mm wide oval design featuring a portrait of Gp. Capt. Richard Williams, commander of the original flight, and his aeroplane a De Havilland DH50A floatplane. All postmarks and date stamps are illustrated here at actual size.

Papua New Guinea

A circular postmark showing a profile outline of the DH50A was used on mail items despatched at Daru on 29th September, 1976. This town had a historical significance in the re-enactment as it was here that the R.A.A.F. floatplane made its first landing after leaving Australia in 1926. A similar postmark was used in Port Moresby later the same day to postmark mail originating there and to backstamp all transit mail.

Mail was also accepted at Kieta two days later. A normal postmarking service was given to these articles.

The stamp issues are available, for counter sales only, from Australia Post philatelic sales centres. Mail orders from both Australian and overseas clients should be forwarded to the Officer-in-Charge, Philatelic Bureau, Republic of Nauru, Central Pacific, together with details of your requirements. Remittance should be by money order or bank draft.

R.A.A.F.'s First Overseas Flight Remembered

I — The original flight.

In 1926 the Australian Government announced that a Royal Australian Air Force aeroplane under the command of the Chief of Air Staff, Group Captain R. Williams, would visit British possessions in the south-west Pacific. It was to be the first overseas flight by the R.A.A.F. and it would encompass Papua, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, New Caledonia, Fiji and Western Samoa.

In the event only portion of the projected route was completed, but the flight is of interest to aerophilatelists because a bag of mail carried included illustrated covers. This was the first time that specially-printed covers (as distinct from postcards) were carried on an Australian air mail flight. In addition to philatelic mail taken on the full course of the flight and returned to Australia, some mail was delivered to territories along the route and small quantities of mail were also accepted at these places. In all, probably no more than 50 mail articles were carried.

The purpose of the flight was to gain experience in handling aircraft in tropical conditions and to make an aerial survey of the region. It was a logical extension of the R.A.A.F.'s around Australia survey flight in 1924. The aircraft used on the flight was a De Havilland DH50A purchased in England four months earlier. Aircraft of this type had been demonstrated by Sir Alan Cobham and operated successfully by Western Australian Airways and QANTAS. In 1924 a DH50A was used by the Controller of Civil Aviation for the first landplane flight around Australia.

In view of the lack of suitable landing fields along the route and the amount of water to be overflowed it was decided to fit the aircraft with twin floats for the Pacific flight. The following year it was reconverted to landplane configuration and flown on a

reconnaissance flight around Australia by Williams.

Apart from Group Captain Williams the other members of the crew were Flight Lieutenant Ivor Ewing McIntyre (co-pilot) and Flight Sergeant Leslie Joseph Trist (mechanic). It was often Trist's unenviable task when the floatplane landed to swim ashore with the tow line, knowing that sharks or crocodiles could be present.

Philatelic Bulletin readers will recall that McIntyre was the pilot on the R.A.A.F.'s around Australia seaplane flight in 1924 and he also arranged landing facilities during the visit of the Marquis de Pinedo in 1925.

The flight commenced from Point Cook, Victoria, on 25th September, 1926, and followed the eastern coast of Australia in a similar fashion to the 1924 flight. Unforeseen delays were caused by the need to replace the damaged 240 hp Siddeley Puma engine in Sydney and the fitting of a new propeller at Southport.

Flying near Bowen the DH50A was met by



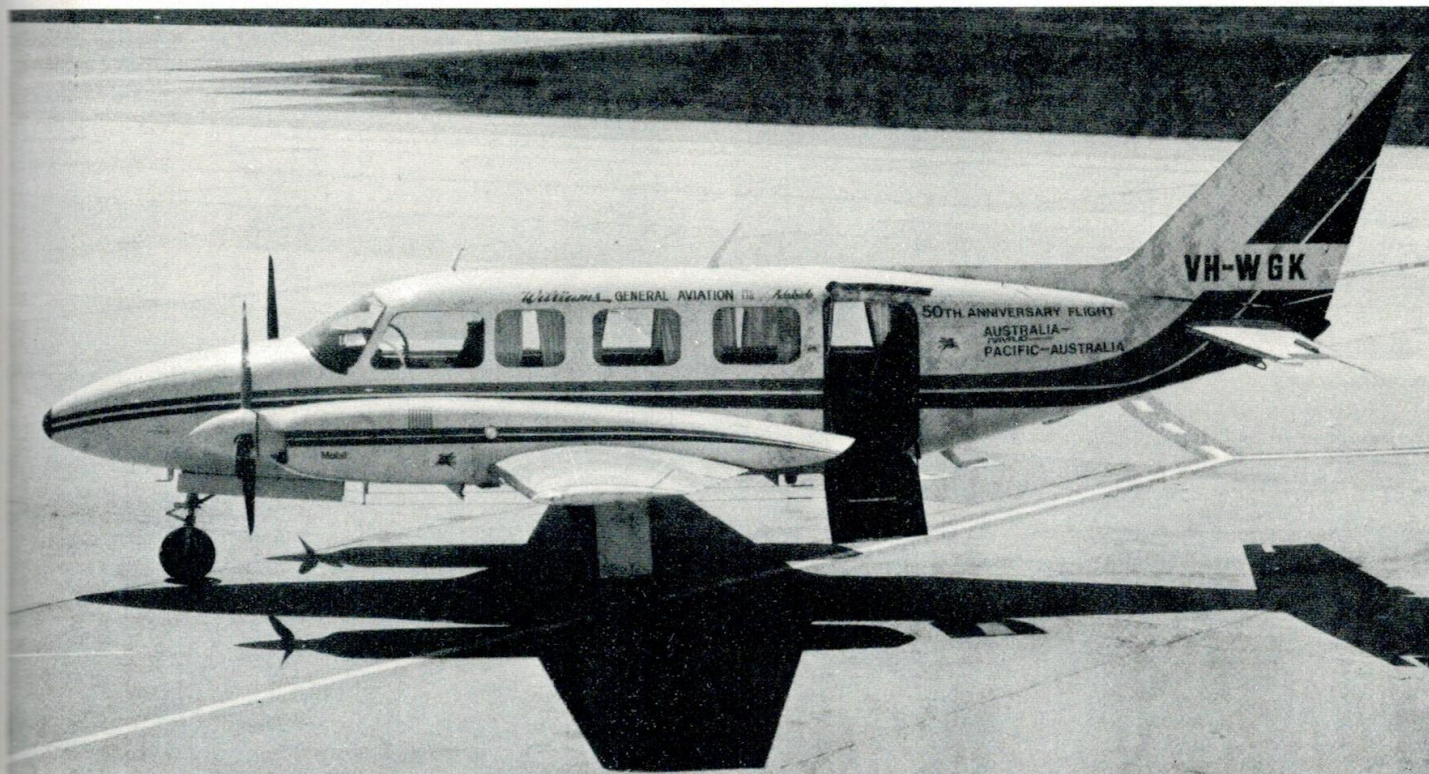
Gp. Capt. R. Williams, Flt. Sgt. L. Trist and Flt. Lt. I. McIntyre.

planes. A circular date stamp was used to backstamp the mail which arrived the previous day.

Lord Howe Island

Before reaching the Australian mainland, the re-enactment aircraft landed at Lord Howe Island and off-loaded a small amount of mail and accepted a local despatch of 253 articles from the Australia Post office there. The normal office date stamp was used to postmark these articles. No backstamps were applied to transit mail on Lord Howe Island.

Below: the re-enactment aircraft, a Piper Navajo Chieftain. The inscription (carried on the port side of the fuselage only) reads — 50th Anniversary Flight Australia — Pacific — Australia



STATISTICS OF PHILATELIC MAIL CARRIED ON RE-ENACTMENT FLIGHT

Outward Mail postmarked in Melbourne

Inward Mail backstamped in Melbourne

Office of Destination	Number of Items		Office of Origin	Number of Items	
	Letters	Aerogrammes		Letters	Aerogrammes
Daru	22	201	Daru	19	—
Port Moresby	134	20	Port Moresby	574	12
Kieta	1	—	Kieta	24	—
Honiara	605	7	Honiara	620	54
Port Vila	537	6	Port Vila	2,244	100
Noumea	26	6	Noumea	1,150	46
Norfolk Island	41	2	Norfolk Island	3,100	35
Lord Howe Island	2	4	Lord Howe Island	153	100
Melbourne (return covers)	5,545	349			
	6,913	595		7,884	347
Total		7,508			8,231

The following figures relating to mail carried only between intermediate stops are approximations calculated on the weight of each despatch.

Daru to Port Moresby 2,888, Kieta —, Honiara 3, Port Vila —, Noumea —, Norfolk Is. 105, Lord Howe Is. 8.

Port Moresby to Kieta 100, Honiara 100, Port Vila —, Noumea —, Norfolk Is. —, Lord Howe Is. —.

Kieta to Honiara 107, Port Vila —, Noumea —, Norfolk Is. —, Lord Howe Is. 9.

Honiara to Port Vila 115, Noumea —, Norfolk Is. 18, Lord Howe Is. 67.

Port Vila to Noumea 110, Norfolk Is. 515, Lord Howe Is. 53.

Noumea to Norfolk Is. 204, Lord Howe Is. 88, Norfolk Is. to Lord Howe Is. 126.