

Airport History

83 years of history

Sydney Airport's aviation history began in 1919 when flying enthusiast, WB Love, chose the cow pastures at Mascot as the site to establish an aircraft manufacturing facility.

That year Love leased 400 acres from the Kensington Racing Club for the price of £300 a year.

In January 1920 the site officially was declared an aerodrome, and today Sydney Airport is one of the oldest continuously operating airports in the world.

1921

The site was licensed for aircraft operations. A requirement for the approval was a surface smooth enough to allow a Model-T Ford to be driven at 20 mph with the driver still comfortably seated.

The major determining factor in the Government's choice of Mascot as the airport's site was its proximity to the city.

1924

The first hangar was erected and regular air services between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide were inaugurated.

1928

Bert Hinkler completed his solo flight from England to Australia, landing at Mascot on 10 March in his Avro Avian biplane.

1930

The first gravel runways were constructed in the same year Amy Johnson landed at Mascot following her flight from England.

1935

Mascot Aerodrome declared an international airport.

1936

Airport officially named Charles Kingsford Smith Aerodrome the year following his disappearance.

1938

Approval was granted by Government to build a terminal to cater for the comfort and convenience of passengers.

1941

Runways are sealed for the first time.

1946

A massive \$10 million development of the airport commenced, including the construction of two runways.

1947

Construction of an international terminal commenced. Pan Am makes first scheduled flight to Sydney as air traffic increases significantly following the war.

1952

Sydney Airport acknowledged as the busiest in the world outside the United States, exceeding even Heathrow.

1963

North/south runway extended into Botany Bay to cater for new jet aircraft such as the B707 and DC8. Jet curfew introduced between 11pm and 6am.

1966

Construction of a new international terminal commenced.

1968

With the imminent introduction of the B747 and Concorde, a further extension of the north/south runway and taxiway system was commenced.

1970

New international terminal officially opened.

1988

The Federal Airports Corporation formed and took ownership, management and operation of Sydney Airport.

1989

Approval to construct parallel 3rd runway and staged development of Badgery's Creek subject to satisfactory completion of EIS.

1992

Extension to international terminal opened and work commenced on parallel runway.

1994

Parallel runway opened.

1996

New control tower opened and construction of airport rail link commenced.

1997

Redevelopment of international terminal approved, enabling Sydney Airport to meet demand into the next decade and to prepare for the Olympic Games.

1998

Sydney Airports Corporation Limited (SACL) formed and Federal Airports Corporation dissolved.

2000

\$2 billion upgrade and expansion of the international and domestic terminals and related transport infrastructure completed in time for Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

2001

Australian aviation industry hit with double crisis of New York terrorism attack and the collapse of Australia's second major domestic carrier, Ansett.

2002

SACL agrees to buy former Ansett domestic terminal from Ansett Administrators. Sydney Airports Corporation then sold by Federal Government to private consortium of Australian and international shareholders.



History Behind the Name

Sir Charles Kingsford Smith – the name behind Sydney Airport

Sir Charles Kingsford Smith – skilled pilot and energetic adventurer – was one of the world's leading pioneer aviators. Better known to his fellow Australians simply by his nickname Smithy, he was born in Brisbane on 9 February, 1897.

The thought of conquering time and distance by air was a passion from an early age and following service as an infantryman in Gallipoli, Smithy joined the Royal Flying Corps.

In 1928, while in the USA, he purchased a Fokker Tri-Motor and named the aircraft Southern Cross in honour of Australia. Soon after he set out on a record-breaking flight that would capture the imagination of the world.

On 31 May Smithy took off with a crew of four to fly from the USA to Australia. After flying 83 hours and 42 minutes, refuelling at tiny islands along the way, Smithy and his crew arrived in Brisbane having created the first air link between Australia and the United States.

The spanning of the ocean was acclaimed as the most brilliant feat of aviation and navigation the world has witnessed.

Kingsford-Smith was knighted in 1932 for services to aviation and later was appointed honorary Air Commodore of the Royal Australian Air Force.

After a lifetime of accolades for record-breaking flights and heroic feats, Smithy was lost attempting a world record flight from England to Australia in November 1935.

Some months later a wheel was salvaged off the coast of Burma.

Sydney's Kingsford Smith Airport was so named to honour an Australian pioneer of the skies and one of the world's greatest aviators.