

Media Release

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Australia Post commemorates centenary of domestic air mail

The sky's the limit for aviation enthusiasts and stamp collectors, with Australia Post's latest stamp issue commemorating the centenary of Australia's first domestic air mail flight.

Australia Post Philatelic Manager, Michael Zsolt said the centenary of domestic air mail was an aviation milestone and one that also highlighted the vital role air mail has played to help keep people and communities connected.

"The development of aviation greatly influenced transport and communications in the early 20th century, and in a country such as Australia it helped overcome the tyranny of distance. We are pleased to release this commemorative stamp issue, marking a significant milestone in postal and aviation history," Mr Zsolt said.

This year will mark 100 years since French aviator Maurice Guillaux (1883–1917) made the first air mail flight in Australia. Guillaux left Melbourne on 16 July and arrived in Sydney on 18 July 1914. The flying time was just 9¾ hours, with seven stops en route. On his arrival, Guillaux was welcomed by Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson.

Guillaux's flight was, at the time, the longest air mail flight worldwide. His Bleriot XI monoplane was constructed of wood and canvas held together with wire and glue and powered by an engine of around 50 horse power. The modest cargo included 1,785 souvenir postcards, official letters, a small number of parcels and other items.

A re-enactment of the first domestic air mail flight is planned to take place on 12–14 July 2014. It is being coordinated by the Aviation Historical Society of Australia (NSW).

Jo Muré of the Australia Post Design Studio designed the stamps, which are based on Kevin McKay's watercolour sketches made during the development of the 1964 50th Anniversary of the First Air Mail Service stamp issue. The illustrations are held in the Australia Post National Philatelic Collection.

The Australia Post first domestic air mail flight stamp issue comprises one domestic base-rate stamp (70c) and one international-rate stamp (\$2.60). The prestige booklet accompanying the stamp issue covers the history of Australia's air mail service. This collectable product includes blocks of stamps exclusive to this product as well as the new commemorative air mail stickers.

The stamp issue's associated products include a minisheet, first day cover, stamp pack, maxicard set of two, prestige souvenir cover, and a postal and numismatic cover. The 100th Anniversary of First Air Mail stamp issue is available from 1 July 2014 at participating Australia Post retail outlets, via mail order on 1800 331 794 and online at auspost.com.au/stamps while stocks last.

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