

Skyways & Byways: Qantas Advertising Art

Text panels from a Qantas Founders Outback Museum travelling exhibition

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Qantas Skyways

Prior to the establishment of international air routes by Qantas, Australians were limited to holidaying at home, or by taking long sea voyages to holiday destinations. By sea, Europe was more than a month away, so for many this form of travel was out of the question.

From about 1935, Qantas Empire Airways (QEA) was providing 'skyways' to Europe, by flying its passengers to London by Flying Boat. In the 1940s Qantas introduced the 'Kangaroo Route' service between Sydney to London, flying passengers to Singapore where they were then flown to London with Imperial Airways (later British Overseas Airways Corporation - BOAC).

QEA services expanded throughout the 1940s and 1950s, with the first modern passenger service to London leaving Sydney on 1 December 1947 on the Constellation *Charles Kingsford Smith*. The Constellations reigned until 1959 when the Boeing 707-138 'V-Jets' took over.

The post-WWII period was a time of prosperity for Australians. As industry expanded so did commercialism. Airfares became cheaper with Qantas providing a special tourist-class fare on its Super Constellation aircraft.

By the 1950s the routes of the British Empire had long been established and were becoming well travelled. Qantas was flying from Australia to many international destinations and bringing Australia closer to the rest of the world. More and more people were flying for pleasure and were looking for new destinations. The high-flying elite became known as 'The jet set' and popular travel came to dominate the future of Qantas as more and more Australians used its services.

Qantas Byways

The 'Kangaroo Route' between Sydney and London took numerous days and as aircraft did not fly at night, passengers spent nights at various stops such as Marseilles, Augusta, Athens, Castel Benito, Cairo, Basra, Bahrain, Karachi, Calcutta, Rangoon, Bangkok, Singapore, Surabaya, Darwin, Townsville and Auckland.

With the introduction of the Qantas Super Constellation in 1954, new routes were established to the USA, Canada, Asia and Africa. In 1957 Qantas launched its new round-the-world service, travelling east to Fiji, Honolulu, San Francisco, New York and London and west to Jakarta, Singapore, Bangkok, Calcutta, Karachi, Bahrain, Athens and Rome.

Many of these 'byways' were desirable holiday spots and became the subjects of travel posters commissioned by Qantas to advertise their air services to potential holiday-makers. Although

Qantas advertised its services from the 1920s onwards, the most creative and colourful advertising art was produced from the 1950s.

Stereotypical animals and iconography were portrayed in these posters to advertise international destinations to Australians - a bulldog personified Britain, a Poodle and the Eiffel Tower characterised Europe. Images of cricketers, gum trees, a beach girl carrying her surfboard and the Sydney Harbour Bridge were portrayed in Qantas posters to advertise Australia for overseas visitors.

The Art of Advertising

The poster has always been one of the most effective means of marketing for tourism, in its ability to conjure up the essence of a place with a colourful, eye-catching design. Many travel advertising posters were designed by talented commercial artists and were mass-produced for display on bill boards and travel agent offices.

While travel advertising of the 1930s and 1940s emphasised grandeur in the symbols used to advertise the destination, the 1950s saw the rise of advertising art that promoted the exotic through the presentation of foreign destinations. It was a period of innovation and experimentation in graphic art and there was a new-found appreciation of commercial design.

Specialist graphic artists dominated the field of poster production. Artists who migrated to Australia post WWII introduced modernism to Australian commercial art. They made use of the latest innovations in printing, typesetting and photo technology.

Qantas commissioned many graphic artists to design advertising posters, including Gert Sellheim (who designed the flying kangaroo symbol), Walter Jardine, Harry John Weston, Roy Dalgarno, Hayes, Aldo Casomati, Frank Wootton, Arthur Nichol, Maullson, and Rhys Williams.

Harry Rogers designed a series of posters for Qantas in the 1950s and 1960s, which was considered by Qantas to be a highly successful advertising campaign. Examples of these can be seen in many collections and make use of the bold, simple design and vivid colours typical of the period.

This exhibition includes examples of Qantas advertising posters by Harry Rogers and lesser-known artists, from the collection of the Qantas Founders Outback Museum, Longreach, Queensland.