

Australian Aviators - Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith



Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith were famous Australian aviators. Sir Keith Smith was born in Adelaide in 1890 and became a pilot when he joined the Royal Flying Corps in Britain in 1914. His brother Sir Ross Smith was born in Semaphore, Adelaide, South Australia in 1892. During World War I, Ross Smith served in the Australian Light Horse, landing at Gallipoli on the 13th of May 1915, and in 1916 he transferred to the Australian

Flying Corps. During his extensive war service, he was twice awarded the Military Cross, received the Distinguished Flying Cross three times, as well as the Air Force Cross. He and his brother, Sir Keith Macpherson Smith, were the first pilots to fly from England to Australia, in 1919.

During their November 1919 flight, they were accompanied by Sergeant James Mallett (Jim) Bennett and Sergeant Wally Shiers flying from Hounslow Heath Aerodrome, in England, on-board a Vickers Vimy aircraft, eventually landing in Darwin, Australia, on the 10th of December, taking less than 28-days, with actual flying time of 135-hours. In reaching Darwin, the Smith brothers and crew members had covered 18,250km at an average speed of just 137km/h, compared with around 800km/h of today's passenger planes. The four men shared the £10,000 (pounds) prize money put forward by the Australian government.

Additionally, Sir Ross Smith was pilot for T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and fought in aerial combat missions in the Middle East. He is mentioned several times in Lawrence's book, 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom'. Sadly, Ross Smith along with Lieutenant Bennett were killed while testing a Vickers Viking amphibian aircraft which crashed soon after taking off from Brooklands in the U.K., on the 13th of April 1922. After the war and their historic record-breaking flight Sir Keith Smith became the Vickers manufacturing company's representative in Australia and subsequently a director of several airlines and other public companies. Sir Keith Smith died in 1955.

Answer the following questions in full sentences.

- 1) In which Adelaide suburb was Ross Smith born?
- 2) What type of aircraft did the brothers use to fly from England to Australia?
- 3) According to the text, Ross Smith was pilot for who?
- 4) In which year did they fly from England to Australia?
- 5) Sir Ross and Sir Keith Smith were famous Australian what?
- 6) What amount of prize money did they win?
- 7) Where did Sir Ross Smith land on the 13th of May 1915?
- 8) Approximately, how fast does a modern passenger plane fly?
- 9) What did Sir Keith Smith do after the war?
- 10) Who were the 2-additional crew members who flew with the Smith brothers?
- 11) In your book make a list of what equipment and food you would need if you were to fly a small aircraft on a long journey. Draw some of the objects and colour your pictures with colour pencils (no textas).