

X-RAY BRAVO ALPHA

The Discovery

In 2002, a small news item in *Aeroplane*, the UK aviation magazine, made mention of the existence of Qantas' very first 707, standing apparently abandoned at Southend Airport in Essex, England.

Later, having undergone a lengthy gestation period, the article gave birth to a discussion on the subject around a desk at Sydney Airport between **Bob Wade, Robert Phillips** and **Peter Elliott**, which led to Peter uttering the immortal words:

"We should go and get that."

And so the 707 Restoration Project was born.



THE 707 PRESERVATION COMMITTEE A Qantas Foundation Memorial Ltd sub-committee was formed to research the state of the aeroplane, its ownership, the logistics of recovering an ageing aircraft and how to fund it, among a myriad other questions.

This original sub-committee comprised **David Gregor, Peter Elliott, Ken Cannane, Murray Warfield, Norman King, Tracey Smiley, Bob Small, Dick Hodder, Ron Cuskelly, Phil Stacy, Richard Burn, Julian Green** and **Tom Coe**. **John Argyle** was to join later in the role of Chairman with **Karen Glass** replacing departing Curator Smiley. **Dr Ronald Yates AM**, the grandfather of the -138 and a former Professional Engineer who retired in 1986 as Qantas' Chief Executive Officer accepted our invitation to become Patron of the project.

THE FIRST LOOK In December 2005, an expeditionary team traveled to Southend to complete a preliminary inspection of the 707 to determine whether recovery would be possible.

They returned with a report that indicated that Boeing 707-138B, registration mark HZ-123, as it was at the time, was in reasonable shape with nothing that could be described as a show stopper to prevent its repatriation to Australia.

THE ACQUISITION Finding such an historically important 707 intact, sound and restorable was a minor miracle; acquiring it required a much greater one. What would outwardly appear to be a simple matter of striking a deal was not to be. To achieve ownership of our 707 involved intense corporate negotiation, with eventually the Australian Government at Prime Ministerial level being called upon to underscore the resolve of QFM Ltd to secure the aeroplane. Eventually, after months of meetings and reams of correspondence, at a ceremony at Australia House in The Strand, London on 19 July 2006, QFM Chairman **Captain Warwick Tainton** formalised the transfer of ownership to QFM Ltd and the 707 was ours.

THE ENGINEERS In June 2006, the first wave of volunteer engineers, weighed down with several hundred kilograms of tool boxes and equipment, set off for a rendezvous with an aeroplane and a place in history.

First to arrive in the UK during the brilliant summer of 2006 were **Peter Elliott, Denis Martin, Robert Phillips, Ben Hunter, Alan Chong, Bob Hagon, Paul Wilkinson** and **Bob Hodsdon**. This group was accompanied by **Ken Cannane** and **Frank Bowden**, taking the airworthiness roles. Following over the next few months were **Bob Horn, Roy Finney, Norman King, Ross Downes, Paul Hockey, Norm MacKay, Dave Short, Peter Asplin, Bill Hill** and **Ernie Wearne**. A Boeing Australia-funded team comprising **Nick Pinder, Chris Westwood, Ross Remilton, Brett Godby** and **Fab Romanin** also made a significant contribution.

After arrival at London Heathrow, all were to head east towards the Thames Estuary, to make their temporary home among the tiny warren of rooms of the renowned Erlsmere Hotel, in Westcliff-on-Sea, close to the airport and Southend's famous pier.

Examination of the maintenance records by the two airworthiness certifiers Cannane and Bowden was the first step in determining just how much work was going to be required to restore this aeroplane, unflown for 6 years, to airworthy condition.

Although the 707 was somewhat sad cosmetically, intense scrutiny of the records revealed the maintenance history to be sound. The aeroplane had recently been through a major maintenance check and many components were reasonably fresh. We had a good basis on which to commence the next stage - in depth inspection.

24 June 2006 First of the volunteer engineers arrives in the UK

28 June 2006 Purchase Contract signed

29 June 2006 Restoration work commences

03 July 2006 HZ-123 is towed to the ATC Lasham Ltd hardstand



BOEING
707