

Chief Trustee

The WW1 Aviation Trust has now been operating for 12 years. Over that period, we have sought to educate current and future generations in the sacrifice and bravery of all the aviators who fought and died for their country in the Great War. We continue to do so. We now have refined our focus to three main targets – Air Shows, weekly Primary School Visits, and the Poetry Plane. This year we have limited the Air Shows to those at our home base, Stow Maries Wings and Wheels in May and their Air Show in August. The latter was tragically cut short by an incident during the event. We understand that the pilot is recovering in hospital.

We completed 25 school day-long visits during the academic year just ended. [The Poetry Plane was a great success at the 110th Commemorations of the Somme in July.](#) Congratulations to all the 2000+ children from around the world whose poems we dropped. The pathos and appreciation of the sacrifice of WW1 reflected in their poems was remarkable. Over 7000 children have now written poems dropped by the Poetry Plane. They are now the torch bearers of the next generation – Lest We Forget.



Air Shows

The Albatros took part in both Stow Maries Shows this summer. Its black livery and prominent edelweiss logo generated much interest as it always does. The Be2 has been a hangar queen for too long waiting for the a new splined shaft to be delivered and fitted. It is now getting closer to flying again. We plan to get it airborne before the end of this summer. With this as a backdrop, the Albatros flew its noisy routine at the Wings and Wheels with the 380hp MB engine bellowing out. It was supposed to be a 3-ship with Richard Vary's DR1 and the N17 but the latter failed to start. For the Air Show in August, the same two aircraft were joined by David Bremner's Bristol Scout – arguably the first fighter aircraft of the war in 1915. The advances in technology in the 2 years between the Scout and the other 2 aircraft were very evident

Essex School Visits

The visits to Essex Primary schools are a source of great pride to the Trust because the response from the children is magical. Clearly, it is a welcome and exciting break from the School routine. It is not every day that you get a chance to fly a WW1 fighter at school and shoot at other planes or any of the other 5 missions. None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of the Twins and the Quizmasters who entertain the children waiting for the their turn in the simulator.

AIRSIDE

Airside 2 - 2026



The children get to write poems for the Poetry Plane under the guidance of their teachers using lesson plans, videos and a slideshow provided by the Trust. The seeded paper with the memorial flowers embedded is provided by the Trust for these School visits. In 2026 we have had several schools linking with their antipodean counterparts to transcribe their poems onto the seeded paper as the export rules down under preclude the export of the completed poems.

[If you would like to register for a free school visit in Essex, please complete the online form.](#) There is also a tick box to join the Poetry Plane – a global act of remembrance. If you don't get a school visit, your school can always join the Poetry Plane to write poems. The link will provide all you need including a link to get the poem paper.

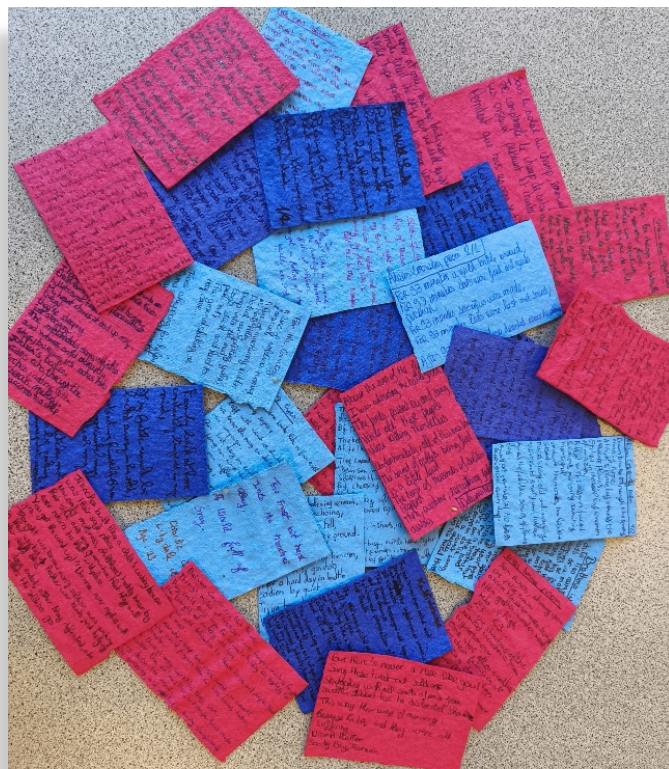


AIRSIDE

[The Poetry Plane](#) (For English Voiceover, Open in YouTube)

The symbology of children's words of sacrifice and hope which we drop in Northern France to become flowers where the fallen lie seems to captivate everybody. In 2026, over 50 schools in 27 countries contributed – from Tasmania to Pennsylvania, from Invercargill to Chelmsford. We challenge everyone involved this year to encourage a new school to join the Poetry Plane 2027. There are opportunities to twin with schools in Australia and New Zealand as they cannot export their poems on seeded paper. Five French schools transcribed the poems from the antipodes onto the paper so that they could be dropped with the rest last July. If your school would like to help with transcription, please contact info@ww1aviationheritagetrust.co.uk

Organising the drops was made much easier this year by having a French pilot join us with his Stampe aircraft. He is great fun and a welcome addition to our Team. We were able to refine our poem-dropping technique so that despite a 20-knot wind the poems were on target by the time we did the last drop. The poems drifted slowly to the ground in a twinkling cloud of multi-coloured poem papers to a spontaneous round of applause



Lochnagar - 1 July 2026

Lochnagar Crater has been on private British ownership for 47 years. It is the last remaining crater detonated at the start of the Battle of the Somme - that dreadful day when so many were killed, injured or missing. Every anniversary since, the rocket is fired and the whistles blown to mark the time that men went over the top at 0728 hrs. This year was particularly poignant as it was the 110th Commemoration. It was the third year that we have dropped poems. After the speeches, the pipe band and the 2-minutes silence, it was the turn of the Poetry Plane. Making four passes to check the location, the wind with a streamer, and then made two more passes to drop 200 of your poems in each pass. At the end of the Ceremony, they formed a ring of remembrance around the Crater with everyone holding hands.



Thiepval - 1 Jul 26

The Thiepval Memorial is massive and dominates the landscape north of Albert. It was completed in 1932. The British and French Governments wanted to ensure that Memorial represented the scale of the gratitude of both Nations for all the sacrifice. The ground around Thiepval was fought over 3 times in separate Battles which account for the names of the 72000 missing without graves inscribed on the pillars of the Memorial. It was another warm day with the Commemoration starting at midday with HRH Princess Anne as the Guest of Honour.

The wind was not as strong as previous occasions, and we managed to get the streamer and most of the poems to land in the clearing in the sight of those attending. Those who did not manage to get to a dropped poem were presented with one by the Poetry Plane Team on the ground including one very important person





Le Quesnoy - 2 Jul 2026

The liberation of Le Quesnoy was carried out one week before the end of WW1 by the New Zealand Division with the key assault formation the 4th Battalion of the 3rd NZ (Rifle) Brigade. The action is notable because it involved scaling ramparts with a ladder and entering the town with no preceding bombardment to protect the inhabitants and the history of the town fortified by Vauban in the 17th Century. About 140 Kiwi soldiers died in the fighting to liberate the town 7 days before the Armistice was declared. Appropriately, the Memorial is a sculpture of the soldiers scaling a single ladder where it happened.

The links between the Town and New Zealand are very strong. There is a Museum (Te Aradhana) and the streets have a second name e.g. @Rue de All Blacks. There is a garden next to the Memorial and the target for the poems drops. We do this drop because our own strong links with New Zealand - our planes were built there. On the day of the drop, the wind and visibility were against us but as often happens the weather brightened at the last minute to allow the drops to proceed. In truth, the children watching had great fun chasing after the poems that we had hidden around the clearing for just this purpose.

Le Hamel

The Battle of Le Hamel was intriguing on many levels. At the operational level, it was the first time that infantry, artillery, tanks and aeroplanes were joined into one plan. General Monash was an engineer who built bridges before the War. He saw the logistics of war as very similar to those required to build a bridge. Everything had to be delivered at the right time, in the right order and everyone involved had to understand his plan. It is still the template for integrated military operations today. Part of his plan involved aeroplanes delivering small arms ammunition on the objective once it was achieved - the first aerial delivery by parachute. It was also the first battle in WW1 that American soldiers joined.

The Commemoration was to set to start at 2100 when the tanks started moving to the start line and last 93 minutes just as the Battle had done. We dropped our poems at the start emulating a further use of aeroplanes in the Battle to make a noise to mask the sound of the tanks moving to the start line at their stately 5 mph.

[If you would like to register for the Poetry Plane, please complete the online form.](#)

