



THE RACING BUS!

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DOUGLAS DC-2 UIVER IN THE 1934 MACROBERTSON AIR RACE

The 1934 MacRobertson Trophy Air Race, in which aviators and their machines competed over a course of more than 12,000 miles between the UK and Australia, was famously won by the highly specialised D.H.88 Comet. However, as **JAMES D. KIGHTLY** relates, the runner-up, KLM's DC-2 *Uiver*, also established a significant milestone for civil aviation

"No British liner, no British service machine in regular use in any RAF squadron at the present time, is fast enough to have finished the race within a thousand miles of the American machine. It is almost incredible, but it is true."

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MAIN PICTURE *The heroes return! A huge crowd turned out to greet Douglas DC-2 PH-AJU, named Uiver, on its arrival back at Schiphol, Amsterdam's airport, after its epic flight from the UK to Australia in October 1934. ABOVE RIGHT Sir Macpherson Robertson gazes at the race trophy, the most evident element of his financial largesse to promote Melbourne's Centennial.*

MAIN PICTURE UIVER MEMORIAL
COMMUNITY TRUST



JAMES D. KIGHTLY COLLECTION

IN OCTOBER 1934 aviators from around the world flew in an air race from the UK to Australia. It was called the MacRobertson Trophy Air Race, and became known as "the great air race". The winner was the specially built de Havilland D.H.88 Comet, but second place was taken by a standard airliner. It seems difficult today to appreciate the achievement of KLM's Douglas DC-2 PH-AJU in the race. Despite flying a longer route, the DC-2 came second only to a dedicated racing aircraft, newly designed and built specifically for the job. It is comparable to a new bus coming second at the 24 Hours of Le Mans, having also called at the regular bus stops. Race sponsor Sir Macpherson Robertson said at the time: "This is just the result I wanted — to show that a transport 'plane could reach Australia in four days".

THE GREAT RACE

Among a number of other events to celebrate the centenary of the city of Melbourne, Victoria, in 1934, the local "confectionery king", Sir Macpherson Robertson, donated an enormous sum to fund a range of projects, including an air race from Britain to Melbourne with a generous prize of A£15,000 (around £11,250). Formally named The MacRobertson Centenary Air Race, it ran from RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk (the airfield was then under construction) to Melbourne's Flemington Racecourse. There were two classes; one purely for speed, and a handicap formula. Crews could compete in both classes but could only win one of the prizes. Speed-race competitors had to make stops at designated "Control Points" between Mildenhall and Melbourne; handicap race competitors would also land at a number of listed "Checking Points" (see panel on page 43).

