

AIRLINES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (ASA)

CONVAIR 440 OPERATIONS 1960 – 1972

Nigel K Daw looks back on a gentler era of air travel when a fleet of two Convair 440s supplemented the airline's DC-3s operating passenger services radiating from Adelaide.

It is not my intention to give a history of the Convair piston airliner but some details are useful to provide a background of the type. After early development of the Consolidated Vultee Model 110 airliner, American Airlines requested a larger, more powerful aircraft and from that was born the Convair 240. That aircraft was used by Trans Australia Airlines from 1949 until 1959.

A further development was the Convair 340 in 1951 and in 1955 the Convair 440. Convair 340s first came to Australia with Ansett Airways in 1954 and Convair 440s in 1956 with the RAAF and also with Ansett Airways.

A background history of Airlines of SA has been previously published in 'Props and Mags'¹ so will not be repeated.



CV-440 VH-BZH Essendon 24 Dec 1960 (J Hopton)

The Airlines of South Australia name was registered in December 1959 when it was announced the fleet would be upgraded with two Convair 440s (VH-BZH and VH-BZN with 52 seats) to be in service early after the airline was officially to commence operations on January 18 1960. The existing fleet included five DC-3s and an Auster. A third Convair 440 (VH-BZF) acquired in 1962 to replace VH-BZH.

¹ Props & Mags, SAAM's monthly newsletter, *Airlines of SA Douglas DC-3 Operations 1960-71*, Nigel Daw, Oct 2017. See also Dean Robinson's *Convair 240, 340 & 440 Aircraft in Australian Civil Aviation*, published in Props & Mags in Apr 2015. Both articles are available on SAAM's website at <http://www.saam.org.au/history/>

The airline's base was Adelaide, the capital city of South Australia. Being Ansett Transport Industries Pty Ltd's South Australian subsidiary, routes were restricted to SA other than Broken Hill in NSW.



CV-440 VH-BZN Adelaide 17 Oct 1971 (NK Daw)

The initial routes were:

Adelaide/Port Lincoln

Adelaide/Port Lincoln/Minnipa/Ceduna

Adelaide/Cowell/Cleve/Kimba

Adelaide/Radium Hill/Broken Hill

Adelaide/Kangaroo Island

Adelaide/Port Pirie/Whyalla

Adelaide/Renmark/Mildura

Services Adelaide/Woomera were operated on a charter basis and flights to Naracoorte/Millicent commenced on 13 October 1962 using a Piaggio P166.

Initially, the DC-3s operated all routes but were supplemented by the Convair 440 to Port Lincoln (four flights per week), Whyalla (two flights per week), Broken Hill (Sunday only) and Woomera (charter flights). This latter town was at the site of the rocket range.

In the early days of this 'new' airline there was a special Convair 440 flight Adelaide to Port Lincoln on 23 January 1960 by VH-BZH, which gave the local population the chance for an inspection together with joy flights at 30 shillings per passenger to aid a local charity.

The second Convair 440, VH-BZN, was delivered to Adelaide on 13 March 1960 replacing a DC-3. This enabled more ports to be served by the larger type and commenced the eventual running down of the number of DC-3s in the fleet. After the upgrading of Kingscote Airport runways Convair 440s also commenced operations to that port with a special flight on 14 December 1960. The aircraft departed Adelaide at 0915 arriving Kingscote at 1000 and at 1015 the Chairman of the Kingscote District

Council welcomed the official party to Kangaroo Island. Mr Phil Stedman responded on behalf of ASA. A plaque unveiled by Hon Dr A J Forbes, Member for Barker, commemorated the runway extension and landing of the first scheduled Convair aircraft at Kingscote Aerodrome. This was followed by a tour of KI with the Convair 440 arriving back at Adelaide Airport at 1830.



CV-440 VH-BZF Adelaide 7 Feb 1972 (NK Daw)

In September 1961 ASA announced holiday charter flights to Proserpine in Queensland via a refuelling stop at Charleville would commence the following month. The service would allow people wishing to holiday at the resorts of the Whitsundays, especially the Ansett owned Hayman Island, to fly direct from Adelaide rather than via Sydney and Brisbane. These charters operated until August 1965 when passengers needed to travel via the eastern states. The charters were popular with the airline's staff as their passengers were in a happier state of mind being on holidays.

Hostess Jill Milton when asked 'What was your favourite aircraft type?' commented: 'I enjoyed working on the Convair 440 as it was an excellent aircraft for hostesses. It was roomier than the Fokker 27'. Pilot Keith McCoy when asked the same question commented 'The Convair 440 was my favourite. This was the best aircraft that I ever flew –a solid aircraft with three wing spars. I felt I was surrounded by a tank. It was self contained, pressurised, had a GPU, inbuilt steps, good handling capabilities, family compartments and an excellent flight range.'

Comments by Bob Keelan were: 'In the early 1960s I was NCO in charge of air movements at RAAF Edinburgh and that involved the co-ordination of flights to Woomera and Maralinga. Generally on Monday mornings at 0700 there were two Convair 440s, VH-BZH & VH-BZN, along with two DC-3s, and they generally returned at 1500. I did the trim sheets for the weight and balance. The front locker (behind the cockpit) took 600lbs, the belly locker 600lbs and the tail locker 1,800lbs. When being loaded, there was a strut positioned below the tail to ensure the aircraft did not drop onto its tail'.

During 1965 an order for a Fokker F-27-200 was announced and that meant the beginning of the end for both the DC-3s and Convair 440s currently in the fleet.

In the 1960s ASA encouraged people to fly on 'Mystery Flights' when seats were available. My first flight of this type (for a cost of AUD8.00) was on 11 January 1969 in Convair 440 VH-BZF from Adelaide to Kingscote as F/N GJ1102 (flight time 30 minutes) and after a short turnaround, F/N GJ1101 to Adelaide (flight time 27 minutes). It was a smooth flight over the sea at 5,000 feet and I found the aircraft very quiet at cruise level (my first flight in a Convair 440). I managed another 'Mystery Flight' on Convair 440 VH-BZN again on 6 November 1971, also to/from Kingscote as F/N's GJ1104/1103, 30 minutes each way.



CV-440s VH-BZF & VH-BZN Adelaide 4 Feb 1972 (NK Daw)

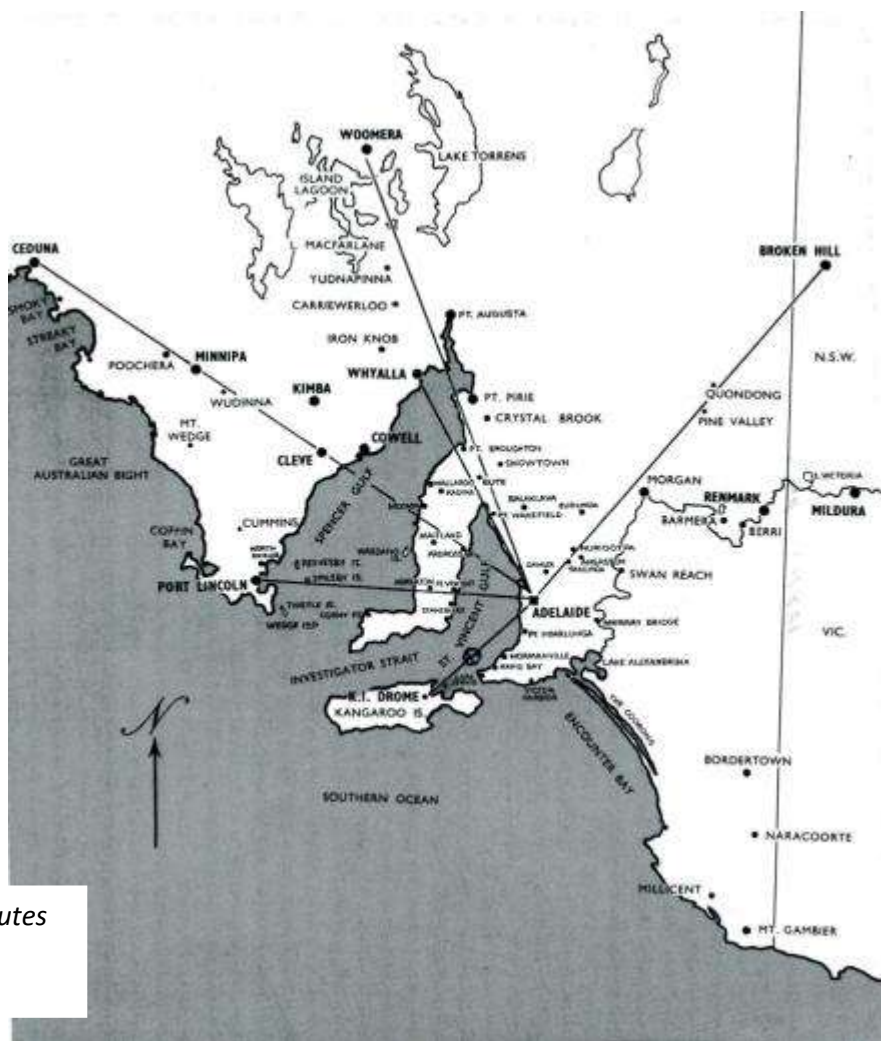
Following the delivery of the first ASA F-27-200 in September 1966, further aircraft of the type were delivered in 1971 (to replace the last DC-3s in the fleet) and with the third due in February 1972 to replace the Convair 440s. So on 11 February 1972, VH-BZN made its final flight for ASA and on 12 February 1972 VH-BZF made the final scheduled Convair passenger flight in Australia. I was a passenger on that flight with details as follows:

VH-BZF (Captained by Arnold Deed) from Adelaide to Kingscote F/N GJ1102 (flight time 30 minutes) and after a layover of four hours returning to Adelaide as F/N GJ1101 (flight time 25 minutes) and the end of an era.

The final ASA timetable listing Convair 440s was dated 4 October 1971 and on 8 February 1972 the timetable listed only Fokker F-27-200s.

The Convair 440s left Adelaide forever on 16 February 1972 (VH-BZF) and 17 February 1972 (VH-BZN). The Convair had outlasted the DC-3s that had left the fleet in October 1971 by only four months!

Australia later hosted four Convair 580s from 2006 until 2017.



Airlines of South Australia Routes
1969 AA

ASA CONVAIR 440 FLEET:

Registration	C/N	First Service	Last Service	General
VH-BZF	431	14 May 1962	12 February 1972	16 February 1972 ferried to Essendon Vic
VH-BZH	458	18 January 1960	14 May 1962	'Colonel William Light'
VH-BZN	449	13 March 1960	11 February 1972	'City of Adelaide' 17 February 1972 ferried to Essendon Vic

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AIRLINES OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

LIGHT THUNDER INDICATE A.M. TIMES
BOLD THUNDER INDICATE P.M. TIMES

TIMETABLE

ADELAIDE * FT. LINCOLN * MINNIPA * CEDUNA CEDUNA * MINNIPA * FT. LINCOLN * ADELAIDE

Flight No.	1112	1114	1116	1118	1120	1122
Adelaide	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00
Intermediate	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15
Adelaide	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30
FT. LINCOLN	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45
MINNIPA	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00
CEDUNA	09:15	09:15	09:15	09:15	09:15	09:15
MINNIPA	09:30	09:30	09:30	09:30	09:30	09:30
FT. LINCOLN	09:45	09:45	09:45	09:45	09:45	09:45
Adelaide	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00	10:00

ADELAIDE * COMBELL * GLENELG * KIMBA ADELAIDE

Flight No.	1124	1126
Adelaide	08:00	08:00
Intermediate	08:15	08:15
Adelaide	08:30	08:30
COMBELL	08:45	08:45
GLENELG	09:00	09:00
KIMBA	09:15	09:15
Adelaide	09:30	09:30

ADELAIDE * RADNUM HILL * BROKEN HILL ADELAIDE

Flight No.	1128	1130	1132	1134
Adelaide	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00
Intermediate	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15
Adelaide	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30
RADNUM HILL	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45
BROKEN HILL	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00
Adelaide	09:15	09:15	09:15	09:15

* Passengers enquiring of Station 800 for Adelaide will receive full Station 300

ADELAIDE * KANGAROO ISLAND * ADELAIDE

Flight No.	1136	1138	1140	1142	1144
Adelaide	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00	08:00
Intermediate	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15	08:15
Adelaide	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30	08:30
KANGAROO IS.	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45	08:45
Adelaide	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00	09:00

Flights 1136 and 1138 only merge Sunday service with General Transport to and from Kangaroo, Arcoona, Free and Mannville.
Flights 1140 and 1142 only merge Sunday service with General Transport to and from Arcoona, Free and Mannville.
Flights 1144 and 1146 only merge Sunday service with General Transport to and from Kangaroo and Arcoona, Free and Mannville.
Flights 1148 and 1150 only merge Sunday service with General Transport to and from Kangaroo only.

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