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Rathmines - ANZAC Day 2010

Mike Usher, president of the Rathmines Bowling Club and one of the key movers and shakers in the efforts to establish the Rathmines Hangar Museum, the eventual home for VH-CAT wrote to us to report on the success of the ANZAC Day proceedings at Rathmines and to brief us on some of his efforts in organising the 2010 Catalina Ball and Festival. An extract of his letter appears below:

Dear Philip

Just thought you might like to know what we have been up to.

Anzac Day was a great success. Greg Combet and Greg Piper both attended and were impressed, this should help show them the enthusiasm for the Catalina. We had twenty six veterans from the Catalina squadrons. A choir of twenty eight added much dignity to the occasion. Wing Commander Philip Champion C.O 11 squadron plus the Squadron Leader, two Warrant Officers plus sixteen other ranks flew in from Edinburgh.

A short march comprising the R.A.A.F plus Toronto R.S.L members, local scout and school children took part. As the R.A.A.F could not bring rifles with them we were lucky enough to get a catafalque party from the army cadets. The crowd at the memorial exceeded all expectations.

As you will see Greg Piper is spreading the word through his publication "Legend of ANZAC" and the local paper gave us the attached advert.

2010 Catalina Ball

Just a "heads-up" folks to let you know that the scheduled date for the Catalina Ball is Saturday 10 July. So please pencil this into your calendar. More details will be provided as they come to hand.

RAAF Catalina Operations during WWI I



This story was written by Louise Howden, the Editor of the Salisbury (Old) Rotary Club

The saga of the Catalina in its role as the RAAF's long-range strike and mine-laying force had its origins in Port Moresby in the early 1940s. This was when 11 Squadron was re-equipped with the newly arrived Catalinas from America in March 1941, and subsequently when 20 Squadron was formed, also equipped with the Cats.

Although the name of the squadrons never changed from General Reconnaissance (GR) an addition to this role did when six aircraft, three from each squadron, set out for the first raid on Japanese positions, staging through Manus and Kavieng respectively, to attack the Japanese naval installation at Truk in the Carolinas.

From then on bombing attacks continued as the Japanese advanced southward until many targets such as Rabaul, Kavieng, Lae, Buka and Buna were covered. After heavy bombing attacks on Moresby made that base untenable, 11 and 20 Squadrons were re-located back to the mainland, first to Bowen and shortly after to Cairns. From there they continued their mainly bombing operations until April 1943 when part of their effort was allotted to the new mine-laying role. On the 22nd of that month, eight Catalinas from 11 and 20 squadrons departed Cairns, each carrying two 2000 lb mines to lay them at Silver Sound in the approaches to Kavieng. Thus began a new era for the Catalina force.

In September 1944, 20 Sqn was re-located to a new base, East arm at Darwin, from where it operated until the end of the war. At the same time 11 Sqn was relocated to

Rathmines. Meanwhile 43 Sqn was formed at Karumba, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and re-located in April 1944 to Darwin. At Darwin the unit was first housed on the airfield but then moved to facilities at Doctor's Gully. A third squadron, No. 42 also equipped with Catalinas, was formed about this time and located at Melville Bay on Arnhem Land just East of Darwin. The three squadrons formed No. 76 Wing with headquarters located at Doctor's Gully.

After the introduction of mines in April 1943, the bombing effort of the Catalinas would gradually decrease until the three squadrons were virtually totally committed to the mine-laying campaign with singular success. However, the General reconnaissance role was not lost and the occasional supply drop, sea reconnaissance, and sea rescue was undertaken.

From Darwin, the Catalinas ranged over the whole of the then Netherlands East Indies from Surabaya and Banka Straits in the West, to Irian Jaya in the East and North to Borneo, the Halmaheras and the Celebes. All mineable harbours and roadsteads were sowed with mines and Japanese shipping was dislocated to the extreme. To reach some of these targets it was often necessary to refuel at forward staging bases such as West Bay and Yampi Sound. In addition, American seaplane servicing ships in forward areas were used for this purpose. Towards the end of the war our aircraft staged North through the Philippines, at Leyte Gulf and Lingayen, to mine ports on the China coast, including Hong Kong, the Pescadores and Wenchow - 28° North Latitude – the most northerly penetration of any RAAF aircraft in the Pacific war.

One particular highlight of the campaign was the mining of Manila Harbour when 27 Catalinas left Darwin to rendezvous in Leyte Gulf for the task. On this occasion, the Wing was augmented by six aircraft of 11 Sqn flown up from Rathmines. The object of this exercise was to bottle up the Japanese fleet in Manila pending General MacArthur's invasion of Mindoro. This operation was completely successful and the object achieved.

RAAF Cats were the first to bomb Japanese installations after their southward thrust to New Guinea, they were the first to bomb the Japanese-occupied ports from the Netherlands East Indies to the China coast, they were the first in and last out in the evacuation of our prisoners of war at the cessation of hostilities.

Considering that they were designed in 1935, the Catalina must be classed as the most successful and longest operating flying boat ever built. Powered by two Pratt and Whitney engines of 1200 HP each, it had a range of 2500 miles, could carry a bomb load of 4000 lbs, a wingspan of 104 feet, a fuselage length of 64 feet, and a loaded weight of 35 420 lbs. Although slow in comparison to some of the land-based aircraft, its versatility made it ideal for the type of work it was engaged in. Many operations exceeded 22 hours in the air.

During WW11 the RAAF had 168 Catalinas on strength within Australia and the Western Pacific, 68 of which were lost to enemy action or aircraft accidents. From all Catalina Squadrons and support units 320 aircrew lost their lives in the defence of their country. That ground crew continued to do their work with exactitude and

dedication is deserving of recognition. This has seldom been given except by the aircrews themselves whose lives depended upon their skills.

LEST WE FORGET

New Members/Donations

The Catalina Flying Memorial welcomes the following members to the Aussie Cat Club:

One year Members

Stan Goodwin
John Bourke

The CFML is extremely grateful for the following donations:

- Sydney Seaplanes - \$500

A very big thank you to all of the above for their support!

News or comments

If you have any news or comments regarding the website, please forward to Colin Cool (colin.cool@jemena.com.au) or Jill Brandon (info@catalinaflying.org.au).