

Rathmines – The Dutch Connection

During WW2, Rathmines enjoyed a connection with The Netherlands through the Dornier Do24K flying boat. The RAAF acquired six ex-Royal Netherlands Air Force Do24Ks which were allocated RAAF serial numbers in the A49 series.

The Dutch originally had 36 of these German-built aircraft at Batavia and, when the Japanese began to overrun the country in February 1942, used those that were flyable to fight a spirited rearguard action against the advancing enemy. However, the Japanese were unstoppable and soon only nine Do24s remained. Six of these were flown to Darwin, supposedly to help in the defence of Northern Australia, while the other three went to Broome to join the armada of flying boats engaged in evacuating the civilian population from Java. Consequently, these were destroyed, together with 13 other flying boats in the attack on the port by Japanese fighters.

The Dutch crews of the six Dorniers at Darwin then flew their aircraft directly to Rathmines where, according to Bryan Monkton's book *The Boats I Flew*, "they did not bother to moor up but simply ran them ashore, declaring the war was over and Australia could have their aircraft". The RAAF, still desperately short of aircraft, took these flying boats and overhauled them at Rathmines. By early 1943, the first of the Dorniers was rolled out of the hangar, and eventually all six found their way to 41 Squadron then based at Townsville, to replace the Short S23 Empire flying boats then operated by the squadron.

For a short time in 1944, the Dorniers were again able to call Rathmines home. In May 1944, 41 Squadron moved to Rathmines, but then moved on to Cairns the following month where it remained until it was disbanded on 27 September 1945.

The Do24 could only carry 908 kilograms of freight and were in very poor mechanical condition. Consequently, serviceability was low despite the unceasing efforts of ground staff. In February 1944, high performance Martin PBM-3R Mariner flying boats arrived to supplement the Dorniers. The new aircraft, with their greater payload and performance quickly became the preferred aircraft, especially on the longer flights to Noumea.

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