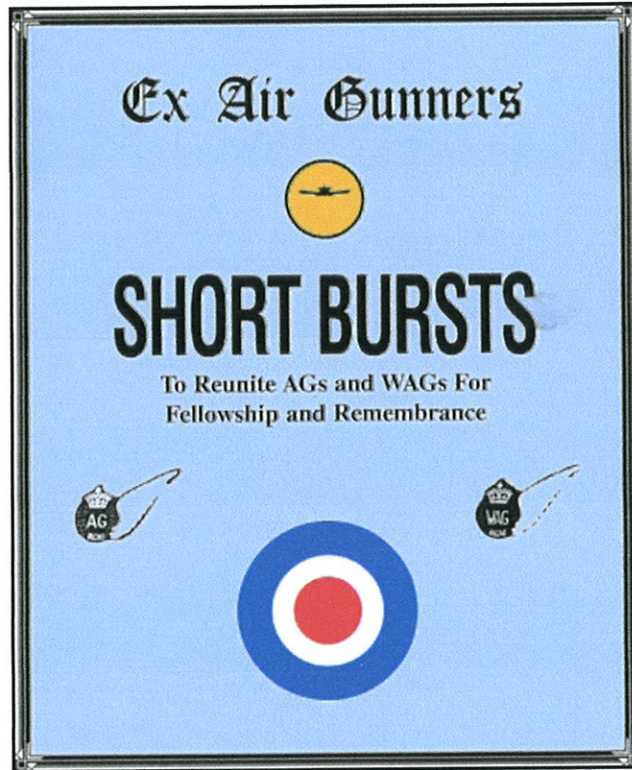


**JUNE 2005**



**A SALUTE TO OUR BROTHERS DOWN UNDER**

We thank Member, Howard Elliott, Winnipeg, Manitoba, for the following.

Darwin Australia November 1944.  
Catalina RAAF A24-87. Crew:

P/O Keith Houston	Captain
W/O Arthur Brown	2nd. Pilot
W/O Terry O'Brian	Navigator
F/S J. Keith Bower	Wireless Op. Air Gunner
F/S J. Alex Sim	Wireless Op. Air Gunner
F/S H. (Tex) Morton	1st. Flt. Engineer
Sgt. George Boden	2nd. Flt. Engineer
Sgt. Jock Clough	Armourer/Gunner
Sgt. Jack Willis	Armourer/Fitter

#### **A Mine Laying Mission In a Catalina from the First Engineer's Position**

By Tex Morton.

Catalina aircraft are quite unique to any other aircraft as the fuselage becomes the hull, with a keel, chine, bollards etc. and all gear is in naval terms.

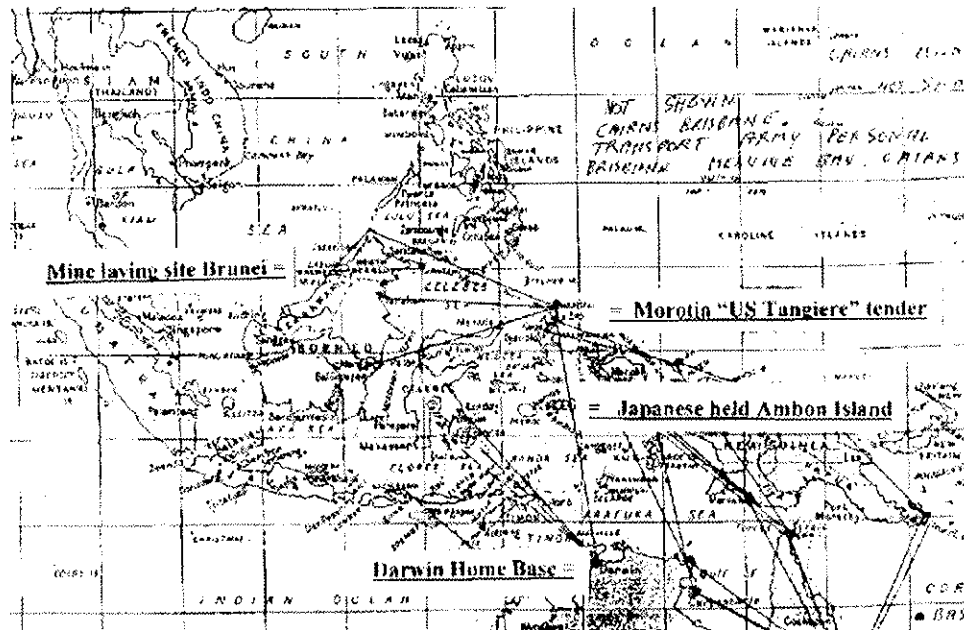
As the aircraft has to operate, in most cases, on its own away from the home base, the crew are made up of the following: 2 pilots, 1 navigator, (doubling as bomb aimer), two wireless operator air gunners. The remaining four crew members are remustered qualified ground staff; 2 engine fitters, 1 airframe fitter, and 1 armourer. All RAAF aircraft must have a daily inspection by qualified persons before they are allowed to fly, and form EE77 must be signed, names of all persons on board have to be entered on the form.

We were airborne at dusk from Darwin heading North and skirting around the Jap held Ambon Island, up past the Western tip of Dutch New Guinea, over the equator about 60 miles, and land at the Island of Marati. We were to operate with the USA Navy, their sea plane tender "The US Tangiar" was to supply our planes with all their needs.

After mooring up amongst a line of US Navy Catalinas, which, to our crew seemed a bit too close to shore, we were informed by the boat crew that two of their planes were cut below the water line during the night. To avoid sinking, these planes were towed over to, and hoisted aboard the "Tangiar" for urgent hull repairs. That was news we could have done without. It was decided that all RAAF flying boats would have an anchor watch every night they were moored up.

The crew had to form the watch, 2 hours on and 2 hours off, guns loaded, one in the breech, feed belts connected ready to go if needed. The Skipper came aboard about 0830 hrs. and informed the crew that we had a long and hard trip tonight, requested the fuel tanks filled to maximum and to give the engines a thorough check. To check the engines we had three work

platforms, two clipped onto the side of the engine with the third slung underneath. The main source of oil leaks are the 28 rocker box covers, and return oil lines to the oil tank.



**Flight plan – Darwin, Skirt enemy held Ambon Island, Morotia (to refuel), Brunei (drop site) and return.**

The fuel barge arrived and we loaded the maximum amount of fuel, 1460 Imperial gallons. Tank caps were locked and (good old RAAF practice) secured with locking wire. Next to arrive were the U.S. Navy with 2 mines (about 1 Imperial ton each) made up of 1760 lbs of high explosive in high tensile steel case, plus dry battery, firing mechanism and parachute.

The Skipper and rest of the crew arrived about 1430 hrs. with the news we were to mine the oil producing port of Bunri down the West coast of Borneo.

After engine start up, the aircraft was prepared for take off. Airscrew pitch control fine, mixture controls to full rich, fuel cross feed on, hand fuel pumps locked off, sea drouths stowed, gun blisters closed. For an overloaded aircraft to take off in the hottest part of the day will mean a long run. As soon as the cylinder head temperature reached 150, oil temperature 40, I called the Skipper, "all clear for take off."

By now we were out in the middle of the bay, turned into wind (with a small chop on the water), increased engine RPM to 2700 with manifold pressure at 48" and we were away. One would need good imagination to think that this overloaded Cat, sitting low in the water would ever fly. Still, the bow rose up, spray covered both windows, we gathered speed, up onto the hull step, lifted off, touched down again, then started to climb.

Maximum take off engine power can only be used for two minutes, so RPM was reduced to 2300, manifold pressure to 35" and we climbed to 7000 feet. The Skipper has the engine throttle and airscrew pitch control (RPM) All engine controls are left to the Engineer, which include manual mixture control, fuel flow meters, fuel gages, temperature gauges etc.

We settled down to cruising RPM of 1950, manifold pressure 30". The Starboard engine cylinder head temperature came below the maximum cruising, but the port engine was still running too hot. To cool an engine in flight you have to enrich the mixture, so a quick decision to increase the fuel flow by one imperial gallon per hour to port engine had the desired effect.

After three hours of flight a crew change takes place. Fitter 2A and Armourer start to prepare a meal, 2nd. Engineer takes my place. Myself and 1st. Wireless Operator take up positions in the gun blisters. A couple of more crew changes and we are getting close to

the Borneo Coast. Skipper requests all crew get into operational gear, which means boots, long slacks, sleeve shirts, webbing belt, which carries water bottle, emergency rations, medical kit, ammo pouch, and revolver. Next is an inflatable life jacket, and over the lot, your parachute harness, as the pack is on the bulkhead near your feet.

The Engineers position is in a small section which connects the hull to the underside of the mainplane, with a good view either side. For the last hour before reaching the target we descend to 50 feet or less to keep under the radar, which means the aircraft must be hand flown. For a successful mine drop, operations room, from a detailed map work out the deepest water along the shipping channel, select datum point (starting point), compass heading, air speed, height, and length of run to the first mine drop from datum point. Tonight it will be 90 seconds to the first drop then 32 seconds to the second drop.

Crew duties on a mine run: Skipper flies the plane, 2nd. Pilot maintains air speed, Navigator in the bow position with stopwatch in one hand and release button in the other, does the count down from datum. As the mines are hooked onto racks under the wing each side of my position, I have to report each mine gone, as they have been known to hang up on one hook.

We are now flying down the West Coast of Borneo. Skipper sets the Cat at mine laying air speed, and from his position can see the exhaust stubs, and we are showing a red flame. A call on the intercom to lean the fuel mixture down to produce a blue flame. This is done but we lose a bit of our air speed. An increase in RPM brings the speed back up.

We re now flying up the Western side of Bruni Bay to pick up our datum point. I look out the port window and count 13 "Zekes"(Zero fighters on floats) on the water. We turn at the top of the bay on to our mining run, cross our Datum point, and the counting starts, 90 seconds to the first drop. Again I look out the port window and 5 of those "Zekes" are circling around warming up for take off. We are flying straight and level. I glance at the second hand of the clock on the panel in front of me.. I would have bet any money that second hand was stuck to the inside of the glass, ... but no, the count is now 60—70—80—90—I report "Port mine gone." Then 10—20—32 "Starboard mine gone." The tail rises, the wing is relieved of its 2 ton load and up goes the airspeed. None to soon, I know the Skipper has seen the "Zekes"! To our relief there is a storm developing on our starboard side, something you would normally stay out of, but those "Zekes" can't be far behind and the cloud cover is very welcome.

We round the top of Borneo and head East and the crew have already commenced the preparation of a meal and the Billy ready to boil. We are just breaking out of the storm when we drop into an air pocket. What should have been a meal is now upside down in the bilge! I now recheck my fuel measurements to give the skipper an accurate report of the remaining fuel.

The Navigator drops a flame float onto the water below to get a wind drift from about the 5 o'clock position. Every hour, as the load decreases, we are lowering the RPM to give the best airspeed and to save fuel.

It is now about 0900 hours. I look out the port window and in the eleven o'clock position is the seaplane tender. The Skipper calls for a final fuel report, which is 15 Imperial gallons. "Don't circle or we will be pushing it home!" He request the fuel feed cross flow left off. If we are going to run out of fuel, he prefers to lose one engine at a time.

The Skipper calls up for, and is given, permission to land. We then taxi to a mooring buoy with both engines still running. The stop engine signal lights up on the panel ... but one thing yet remains .. to sign off the engine log, 18.35 hrs. flying. The crew are up on the wing when we opened the tank caps to see what fuel was left. It was a strip about 6" wide from the back edge of the tank.

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Japanese propoganda leaflet - 1942



A One Pound note printed by the Japanese to be used if they occupied Australia.



Japanese currency notes used during the Philippines occupation 1942 - 1945.