

SOME NOTES FROM BOB MAITLAND'S DIARY:

25.12.43 Took off from Cairns at 8.50.a.m. in A24-45 with Flying Officer Gregerson as "Skipper" on strike to Kavieng. Landed at Port Moresby about 3.p.m. and refuelled. Took bomb load of 4600lbs. (6 - 500 lb., 30 - 30 lb. incendiaries, 10 - 10 lb. frags. and others besides nearly full petrol load, about 1350 gals. Water rough and had some difficulty and anxious moments getting off. Got away on second attempt. Flew across New Guinea some way down from Port Moresby towards the eastern end of the island. Flew across New Britain somewhere near Gasmata. Crossed New Ireland and attacked Kavieng from the north dropping bombs in air strip area, numerous fires and a couple of fair sized ones. Some lights were on approaching the target but these were quickly extinguished by Japanese. Three search lights used. Picked up aircraft a couple of times but lost it again soon after. About two bursts of ack ack a long way behind the aircraft. One bomb did not fall so it was dropped on Hoskins Strip on the top of New Britain. Did bombing 1.a.m. approximately. Enormous amount of shipping in the harbour, ^{at Milne Bay.} Arrived back at Cairns about 2.30.p.m. on the 26th. In the course of the bombing the large bombs which were under the wings were released from the bow position but the small bombs had to be manhandled to the blister from one member of the crew to another before being released from the blister position.

5.2.44 10.am. Took off on Kavieng strike. F.O. Bob Temperley was the 3rd Pilot. Landed at Milne Bay and refuelled. Left about 7.p.m, Harassing attack over the target for 3 hours. Made 4 bombing runs and another run to take a photo. After each run went some distance away. Very little flack 1st run and flack very heavy on the 2nd run, heaviest of the lot. Search light on the port side kept picking the "kite" up and "skipper" had to take violent avoiding action. Ack ack heavy on the 3rd run. Heavy ack ack used. Could feel concussion under the "kite" On the last run flack was not so heavy due to more cloud cover. Landed Milne Bay on the return trip. Arrived back at Cairns about 4.45.p.m. *b-2.44.*

30.4.44 Left Cairns for Pt. Moresby at 8.am. in A24.78 captained by Geoff Gregerson. Only 3 "Cats" were required for the job which was to go to the junction of the Sepik and Yellow Rivers with 18 native commandos to each "kite" with 2 white persons in charge, one a Navy Lieutenant. He had been in this particular area before but was brought out against his will. He had these men who were from the Sepik River area thoroughly trained. They were armed with rifles, tommy

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guns, knives etc. and were a fearsome looking lot of commandos.

Our C.Os "kite" had lost an anchor in the river and some of the local natives dived down in Morseby harbour and brought up an anchor from a sunken Catalina. The four aircraft returned to Cairns in formation working R/T. between them.

14.4.44- 7.50.a.m. Left in A24-42 with F/Lt. Gregerson for Admiralty Islands. There was a heavy swell and the sea was very rough in Seeadler Harbour, Manus Island. Our aircraft were carrying 4 - 1000 lb. ~~mines and some maintenance staff. We had considerable difficulty in~~ landing. It took about 2 hours but finally made it on the fourth attempt. Eight Catalinas from 11 and 20 Squadrons took part in the mine laying of Woleai atoll in the Caroline Islands. We were one of 2 crews quartered on the U.S.S. San Pablo, the other members of the crews were allotted to the U.S.S. Tangier, the largest seaplane tender and the U.S.S. Heron, all of which were servicing U.S. Navy catalinas. The next day, Saturday, the 15th April, the water was very rough and all flying was scrubbed. At 5.10.p.m. on the 16th we set out on "poppsy" to Woleai island. There was no ack ack but sighted an aircraft over the target with navigation lights on. Dropped mines from 200 ft. in west channel. There was a strip right across one island. The group was 5 miles by 2 miles.

Our trip was "scrubbed" on the night of the 17th as the water was too rough for take off.

About 6.p.m. on the 18th we set out on the 2nd "poppsy" to Woleai, dropped mines in different channel. parachute type, from 400 ft. Spent about $1\frac{1}{4}$ or $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours over the target area checking datum point. Some light ack ack. Flying Officer Williams' "kite" was hit by ack ack and night fighters over the U.S. Central Pacific Fleet. There were numerous holes in wings and fuselage but no one was injured, The aircraft was flown back and immediately after landing was hauled on board the U.S.S Tangier for repairs.

On the 19th we left on our 3rd mine drop to Woleai. Mined another channel into the harbour. Saw one of our aircraft drop a flare. It was Flight Lieut. Ham's Catalina. He encountered intense ack ack from strip. The mines were dropped at 400 ft. and were parachute ones. On target for over an hour. Visibility was poor. Encountered intense ack ack from the strip. Came over it out of cloud before knowing. Keith Kleinert, our Observer, reported night fighters attacking but it was evidently machine gun fire from the ground. Intercepted message from other aircraft (Ham's) to say A.A. shell exploded in blister and 3 crew badly hit. On way back further messages intercepted, 1 crew

dead and 2 bleeding badly". Blood groups given. Getting bearings". Message also sent, saying, 6" hole in blister and stand by to haul aircraft on deck of U.S.S. Tangier immediately after landing. Other arrangements by W.T. and R.T. Aircraft hauled on "Tangier" as arranged. Another crew member died on the way back. The crew members who died were Sgts. Eli and Phillips. An Intelligence Officer who went as an Observer was severely wounded in his foot. A 40 m.m. shell did the damage. On Friday, the 21st we went ashore on Los Negros to attend the funeral of the two men which was conducted by an R.A.A.F. Chaplain from Squadrons of Spitfires. Mud and slush everywhere but roads fairly serviceable and strips good. Yanks and Aussies ashore were doing a great job in bad conditions. Bull dozers everywhere. All crews except three go back to base, Ham's crew spare. We were waiting aircraft repair and transferred to "Tangier". We had interesting yarns with the sailors and the Navy Cat crews who were very obliging. They were fine types of fellows and treated us very well. It was a queer atmosphere, Food and habits on the ships were strange. We had no complaints about the quality of the food but would have preferred hot cups of tea instead of iced tea. There were such announcements As "smoking lamp is out aft of frame so & so", bells were ringing bugles played and also noisy jute boxes. All the food was served on a single metal tray for each person and there was lot of noise with these coming in contact with one another. There were noises of all description as well as the sound of guns being fired periodically on land. On the 23rd we departed about 6.a.m. in another aircraft, A24-49 with a scratch crew, F/O. Wise, a 2nd Pilot was our "Skipper. S/L Lawrence flew F/L Hams "kite" and "Bing" Chapman from our crew flew with him as Engineer. We flew in formation all the way. The course was through Dampier Strait by Cape Gloucester. It was a good trip and was uneventful. Made a good landing. The mine laying was in support of the Hollandia invasion.

19.6.44 Set course for Hollandia, passed Wewak in daylight. Landed at Lake Sentani in Hollandia Area. In Catalina A24/55 with F/Lieut. Gregerson. Pulled "kite" into shore tail first for refuelling. Had to strip off and swim out to tie on ropes. Taken ashore in a duck. Had to do own refuelling, rolling drums etc. Set out about 4.p.m. on "popsy" to Halmahera. Flew very low over the water. On target about 11.30.p.m. One run. Dropped mines from 800 ft. No ack ack. Couple of ships sighted in harbour. Arrived back at Hollandia about 9.am. Three of crew, Kev Fallon, Ray Sellwood and Bing Chapman in hospital

with dysentery; Alan Palmer also very sick and unable to fly. Four of F/o Day's crew replace them and we set out about 4.p.m. on another "popsy" at Halmahera, same datum point, 4 runs. Mines dropped from 200 ft. Crew observed plenty of lights on ground and around strips but no search lights or ack ack.

23/6/44 - Returned to Hollandia about 9.a.m. The cool waters of a creek nearby were very pleasant and served as a shower and place for washing clothes. This same creek of cool clear water coming down from the mountains could have been the source of the dysentery. Former Jap headquarters a few hundred yards up the valley. Portions of dead Japs there. A batch of Jap prisoners brought in by Yank patrols Saturday, 24.6.44 - Crew out of hospital, doing 80 hourly inspection, partly destroyed Jap car near lake. High mountains in background, otherwise is ideal Cat base. Left about 6.p.m. for Cairns. Passed over Finschaven which was a blaze of lights. Went through^{gh} gap about Collingwood Bay.

Sunday 25th - Arrived back at Cairns about 8.a.m. Other crews had gone over Palau. F/L Lawrence's crew transferred to 11 Squadron and 11 Squadron including our crew posted.

Friday - 30th June - Checking schedule of aircraft, wat^{er} test, A24-47 and loading equipment for transfer south.

Saturday - 31st July - Left Cairns 6.30.a.m. for Rathmines. Had to land at Hamilton as weather too bad at Rathmines. Stayed at Cat Club AOB.

Sunday 2nd July - Left for Rathmines about 10.a.m. Arrived there about 2.p.m.

Friday 7th July - Main body of Squadron arrived.

Wed, 19th July - Commenced anti sub patrols from Rathmines - 27 in all. During this period, on the 6th October, our Catalina, A24/79 was one of the 15 Cats which were in formation over Sydney in connection with the "Victory Loan"

On the 30th August we flew to Lord Howe Island with a Doctor, S/L Bond, some other passengers, mails and supplies and returned next day, with 2 women and a child who needed additional medical attention.

On the 8th August, whilst on convoy duty, oil bubbles were observed coming to the surface and depth charge was dropped and more oil bubbles were observed, later found to be oil from a sunken ship.

6th March, 1945 - Departed from Rathmines in Catalina 5A- (A24-91), amphibious, for Morotai, under the Captaincy of F/L Bimbo White and after various stops, arrived at Morotai on 11.3.45.

6.3.45 - We were now members of 113 A.S.R. Flight under C/O Bimbo White,
23.3.45 - Our first operation at Morotai, an Air Sea Rescue Patrol to
Ceram to provide cover for Beaufighters. This was with F/O Gregerson in
A24/91 and up to 13.6.45 nearly all our flying was done in this aircraft.
and up to 1.4.45 was patrol work, mainly covering aircraft movements.

1.5.45- D. Day Tarakan. Our aircraft, A24-91 was the first allied
aircraft present at the invasion. Aircraft bombing and shelling
from our ships. We landed 9.a.m. alongside American naval ship, "Rocky
Mountain". Big oil fires. A.I.F. ashore. No air or naval opposition.
Left 1540.

3.5.45 - 1.45.a.m. took off on Courier flight to Tarakan in A24-98.

Side wheels stayed down and nose wheel up. After an hour 50,mins
got the nose wheel down and landed. Changed to A24-109 and took off at
6.30.a.m. with mails, documents, cargo and passengers. Had a "snack"
on "Rocky Mountain". 1445 to Tanahmerah village to pick up commandos.
Picked up Capt. Prentice and Jimmy. Others OK but stayed to defend
village. Landed on water at Tarakan again.

1640 Took off for Morotai. A.V.M Bostock on board, also 2 Group Captains
and American Colonel etc.

7.5.45 2.40.a.m. Courier to Tarakan with blood plasma, mail, passengers
etc. Buoyed up near American destroyer escort. Went ashore with cargo.
Small town a shambles. Strip taken and work be gun on it. Land mines
and mortars delaying operations. Left 2.p.m. for Morotai with mails,
cargo and passengers, including an Australian Colonel.

9.5.45 2.a.m. Courier Tarakan in A24-91 with blood plasma, supplies,
mail etc. Brought back 2 Japanese prisoners.

14.5.45 - Left 2.30.a.m on Special Mission Togian Island.. Landed at
Katoepa village which was deserted. Put commandos ashore. Jap machine
gun fire somewhere in area. Search for 5 members of American Lib. crew.
Contacted natives from another village who said Japs told natives to hide
and have nothing to do with our party. Took off and did A.S.R. Patrol
N.E. Celebes.

15.5.45 - Took off 2.30.a.m. for Togian Is., Katoepa village. Picked up
Commandos. 4 of Liberator crew had been killed and 2 captured by Japs.
Helped before to rescue 5 members of a crew but unfriendly now. Afraid
of threatened punishment by Japs. 4 friendly natives taken on board
otherwise would be killed.

16.5.45 - Courier to Tarakan. Strip still not ready.

19.5.45 - Courier to Morotai. Usual cargo. Brought back wounded
A.I.F. Lieut.

Between 23.3.45 and 3.5.45

- 3.4.45 - Special reconnaissance mission with F/L Gregerson in A24/91 and Commandos under the leadership of Captain David Prentice and consisting of 2 A.I.F. Sergeants and a Malay Interpreter. Spent 3½ hours in the Tarakan area. On the return journey a Japanese lugger was strafed by our gunners and set on fire.
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- 5.4.45 A special A.I.B. mission to Tarakan area to gather information from the local natives who were in outrigger canoes. Made two landings. The first canoe load was chased by the commandos but got away into swampy country. F/L Gregerson brought the Catalina alongside the second canoe and the people were questioned by the Commandos and because of their fear of being punished by the Japanese because of contact with us, were flown in our aircraft back to Moratai.
- 7.4.45 in A24/91 Search for Liberator Salayar Is. (Southern Celebes)
- 10.4.45 in A24/91 with S/L White to Madang, and F/L Gregerson to Bowen for engine change. Went through a gap in the Owen Stanley Range at 13000 ft. On return journey arrived Moratai at 10.30.a.m. with Harrigan's crew as passengers. on 22.4.45.
- 22.4.45 dep. Moratai 1440 on A24/109 with F/L Gregerson on A.S.R. search for P40 Pilot - Kaburua in Tala Islands, back abt. 9.p.m.
- 24.4.45 Special A.I.B. Mission in A24/91 with F/L Gregerson and Commandos under Captain Prentice's leadership. They went ashore by rubber boat in the Tarakan area.

- 21.5.45 Courier Tarakan. Brought back 3 wounded
- 25.5.45 A.I.B. mission - Musa Island. Put in Commandos and supplies. Refuelled at Sanga Sanga (Tawi Tawi Islands, Sulu archipelago) and then back to Moratai.
- 28.5.45 A.I.B. mission to Musa Island, North Borneo. Commandos had been put ashore about 5 months' before by submarine and had trained a large number of guerillas. Took Commandos on board including a British Major and 2 A.I.F soldiers, (one a chinese Australian - Jack Wong from Perth as Interpreter - Chinese and Malay). Stayed night at Palawan.
- 29.5.45 -A.I.B. mission with four Commandos to Kimanis Bay, Nth. Borneo. Put Commandos ashore. 2 other Commandos brought rubber dinghy back. Japs believed to be within a mile or so. Took off in swell.
- 3.6.45 Courier to Tarakan and then to Sanga Sanga (Tawi Tawi Is.) and back to Tarakan. 3 Jap prisoners brought back.
- 8.6.45 Courier Tarakan - Brought 2 stretcher cases back to Moratai.
- 10.6.45 Courier Tarakan - 2 stretcher cases and 1 walking wounded on board
- 13.6.45 Courier Tarakan - Took on 3 wounded, (one with eyes gone). Landed Sanga Sanga transferred from A24-107 to A24-91 & back Moratai
- 16.6.45 Courier Labuan - with blood, mails etc. in A24-109. Starboard engine trouble. Made for Sanga Sanga, Repairs to aircraft
- 17.6.45 Left for Moratai.

In all I was involved in 84 operations on Catalinas. Besides those I have referred to, there were numbers of convoys, A.S.R. Searches, patrols etc. Our courier flight to Labuan was the last operation I participated in before the end of the war. We had only returned to Moratai after taking Catalina, A24-105 south for repairs when the war finished.

We were retained at Moratai for courier and air sea rescue purposes to cover the large number of aircraft movements in that area, until April, 1946. In that period we did the following jobs of a special nature:-

- 14.9.45 Went to Manado in the Celebes in A24-114 and evacuated 5 men and 4 women who were dutch civilian internees who were in a bad state of health and were emaciated due to malnutrition and other factors. The Doctor who was with us had a very difficult time in trying to meet their needs and coping with language difficulties.
- 17.10.45 Took General Blamey, Major General Milford and party-Balikpapan. Makassar, Koepang and Ambon and it was a very interesting experience in many ways. We were treated very well.