

THE CATALINA NEWS

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THE CAT SKIRTING THE CLIFFS OF THE GUERNSEY COASTLINE (ARTHUR GIBSON)

CATCALL

So the end of another year for the Catalina and remarkably only its second full year on the display circuit. As recorded in 'The 1987 Season' report in this issue it has proved to be a most successful year for the Cat.

The aeroplane is now safely tucked away at Duxford, whilst under the professional guidance of David Charlesworth the groundcrew undertake the winter overhaul. As any of you who have visited Duxford over the past few months will know, this is a real 'overhaul' in the truest sense of the word. The starboard leading edge has been removed to allow the lift strut fitting to be replaced as in 1986 along with inspection of the spar booms and webs, however, this time only preventive maintenance is being done. Although no cracks or corrosion have been found the CAA requires this work to be done before the next flying season begins. Also the engines and props have been removed, the props going away for a complete overhaul and the engines being worked upon on site. All areas of the airframe are being inspected and any problems or corrosion found are being repaired. Also various modifications are being included to make the operation of the aircraft easier on the crew, and finally the hull is being completely stripped and readied for a respray. David expects to have all this work completed by mid-March, all in good time for the 10th April Society meeting, further details of which you will find in this issue of the Newsletter.

Again we have a very complete magazine for you with an article on Canadian waterbombing Cats (sorry Cansos in Canada!) from Ron Mak, who all being well should be providing a slide show at the Society meeting of some of the more unusual Cats he has photographed on his travels all around the world. David Legg continues his run down on the RAF Catalina Squadrons with 202 Sqn in the spotlight this time, the interesting story behind the Alaskan Historical Society's retrieval of their Catalina by helicopter, plus an account of a modern amphibian, the Dornier Seastar.

Now to the more personal messages! Firstly, I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Angie Diggins on the delivery of a bouncing baby girl, Clare Louise, on the 19th October. Also, we wish Joan Watts a speedy recovery following a rather painful operation late last year. Our special thanks go to Mike Jackson and Tony Cook for kindly agreeing to sign off the wing repair last year. Another new address for you to note is David Legg's. Please make sure all mail sent

to David reflects his new address, many thanks.

Regrettably, this is where I am forced to sign off. Hard decision as it may have been, unfortunately sheer pressure of work and other new commitments has caused me to hand over the Editorial pen to my erstwhile colleague David Legg and take a back seat in the production of The Catalina News. May I therefore make a request to you, the readership, that you will continue to support David to the same extent you have supported us both up to now, and also that if there is any member from the South East area who feels they could help David with the writing, research and compiling of articles to please contact him as soon as possible.

Once again thanks for all your kind hearted support over the past year and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at The Catalina Society's second annual meeting. A belated Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year from us all.

RUSSELL MASON
EDITOR

OBITUARY

It is with great regret and deep sadness that we record the passing away of one of our original and loyal supporters, Keith Rodgers, Member No.12 from Whitehaven, Cumbria. His son Mike has written a fitting obituary of his father which we have pleasure in reprinting in full as The Catalina Society's tribute to Keith.

"Keith Rodgers, a devoted and much loved family man died suddenly on 19th November. Being Member No.12 he quickly realised the importance of the society and its ongoing commitment to the preservation of JV928. His brother Alan was killed in action in tragic circumstances off the French coast in April 1943 whilst serving in the RAF seconded to Ferry Command, Elizabeth City. Undoubtedly this sparked Keith's initial interest in the 'Cat'. His enthusiasm and considerable knowledge of the aircraft, in its many guises, was both infectious and important to those of us whom appreciate its timeless elegance. Unfortunately time caught up with Keith, but his lucid documented accounts remain in the family home as a permanent reminder of his attention to detail. Indeed, much of his work was passed on to a notable Canadian authoress, who is currently writing a historical novel based on his brother's last flight. Keith's love of aircraft, past and present, was only surpassed by his love

3

and devotion to wife Nancy and family. A truly reciprocal love, a man greatly missed and remembered with affection by all who were fortunate to have known him."

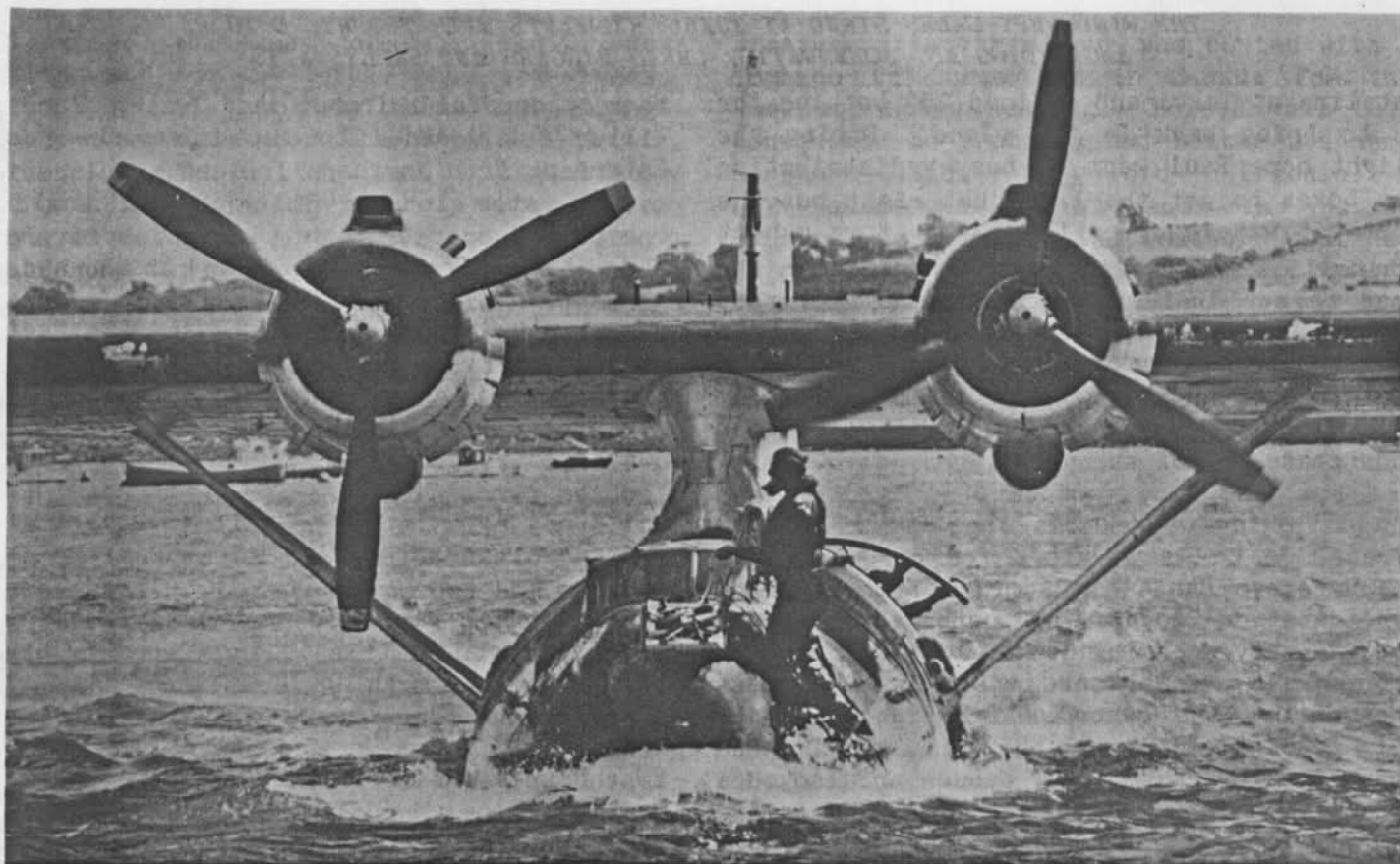
THE 1987 SEASON

The Editor reviews the highspots, lowspots and memorable moments of the Catalina's 1987 display season.

After the winter, or should it be year, of discontent in 1986, 1987 proved to be a very successful season for the Killer Cat with her graceful shape appearing at many shows around Europe, as far North as RAF Leuchars and as far east as Munster in West Germany.

2

ever proved interesting! However all was not lost, as the show was blessed with a Royal visit. Prince Bernard of The Netherlands was given a guided tour of all the aeroplanes and he took special interest in the Cat. Luckily John and Paul were on their best behaviour for a change, giving the Prince and his entourage the full lowdown on the history of the aircraft - it seemed the Prince had in fact flown Cats himself out in Dutch New Guinea - but I think they convinced him that they had brought the aircraft all the way back from South Africa that morning, as later in the we were awarded the trophy for flying the furthest distance to get to the show. This was definitely not the case, for also attending the show were aircraft from the west of England, Norway and Switzerland, all further from Holland than our point of

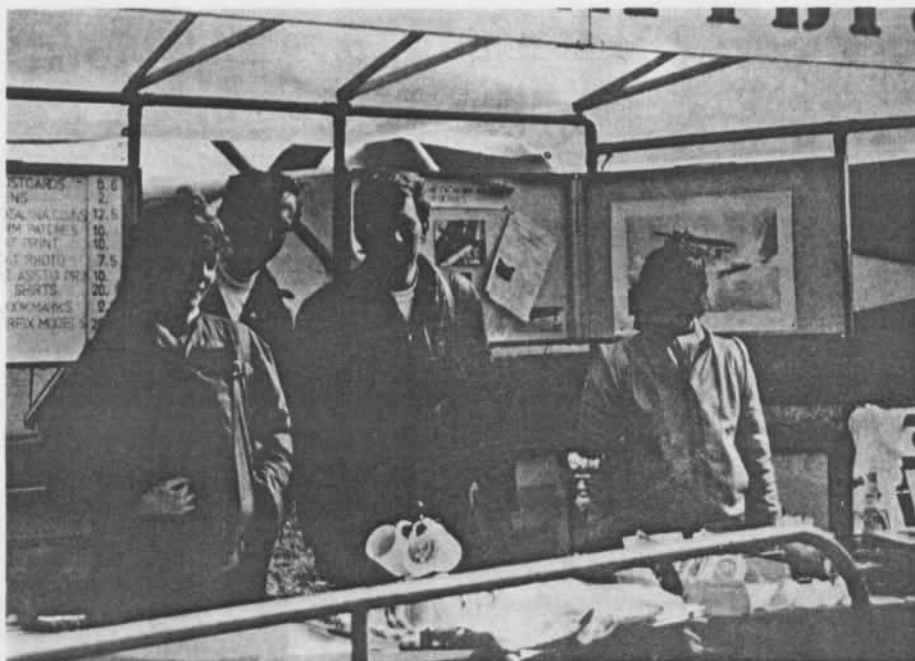


JOHN WATTS AWAITING THE MOORING BOAT AT PEMBROKE DOCK (RUSSELL MASON)

The first major display of the year was at Texel Island, off the east coast of Holland. Never having been to this show before, the crew were somewhat unsure of what to expect. Texel turned out to basically be a glorified fly-in. The Cat arrived a little late due to some radio problems the night before at Norwich and ended up parked at the end of the crowd line. Unfortunately the weather proved to be abysmal with driving rain and a cold wind blowing across the flat land - erecting the sales stand in this weather as

departure, Duxford. Oh well it was a nice trophy and as ever the Dutch hospitality was superb.

A little extra story from this weekend concerned John and Sally's forthcoming wedding. Sally's mother had found that it was far cheaper to obtain the wine they wanted for the wedding reception direct from the vineyard in Germany rather than buying it in England. To enable her to bring back more wine in the car she had arranged to meet the



**THE WINDSWEPT SALES STAND AT TEXEL, COMPLETE WITH TROPHY, L TO R,
ANGIE DIGGINS, JOHN WATTS, CHRIS DIGGINS AND SALLY WATTS**

Catalina at Texel and offload 200 bottles for us to bring back in the plane. During the flight home Paul kept us busy redistributing the boxes to get the trim just right but the best bit was reserved for the customs man at Norwich. As ever the customs inspector was keen to see inside such an unusual aircraft thus John knew he was going to have to declare the wine. Thus asked whether we had anything to declare, John calmly replied, "just a few bottles of wine" - the understatement of the year!

The following weekend on from Texel, we had arranged a day at Duxford for our erstwhile supporters, the R.J Merrett Aviation Syndicate at Lloyd's of London, whose name you will have seen by now on the port side of the aircraft. A great bonus for all those present was the second flight of the sadly ill fated Bristol Blenheim, G-MKIV. The Blenheim flew a number of passes and looked a superb piece of restoration work even in the now expected dull weather - such a sad loss to the British air display scene.

Coventry on 25th May proved another damp and overcast British 'Spring' airshow, however the weather improved for the foray to the little airfield in Northern Ireland at Newtownards. The day before the show the aircraft performed its first water landing of the year in Belfast Harbour and appeared on the Irish evening news doing its thing to promote the airshow. As can be seen from John Manson's pictures this certainly had the desired effect of pulling the crowds into the show, the queues for the 'Walk-Thrus' only being beaten by those in West Germany. After

the successful airshow and water landing, Killer Cat decided to let its owners down. Returning from Northern Ireland, Paul decided a fuel stop in the Isle of Man would be cheaper (due to less duty) than at Liverpool thus the aircraft put down at Ronaldsway Airport. This was a decision Paul was about to regret! On turning off on to the taxiway the aircraft suffered a brake seal failure on the starboard side. Gingerly the aircraft was taxied to a quiet part of the ramp where a little trail of brake fluid highlighted the problem for a rather disappointed crew.

Phone calls were made back to Catalina HQ in Reigate and two members of the groundcrew who were about to go out for Saturday night were secured for a little mercy mission. These two lucky individuals were Keith Rowson and myself! The spare brake seal kit was in the container alongside the hangar at Barkston Heath (the container had yet to be moved down to Duxford). The plan was to find the kit and then take it to Manchester Airport to be put on the 5.00am (note, Sunday morning that is) Air Atlantique newspaper flight bound for the Isle of Man. Keith Rowson was to fly with the spare seal kit in the Dak and to help the Cat's crew complete the repair in Ronaldsway, while I drove back down to Coventry Airport to meet the Dakota on its return flight from Ronaldsway with Paul on-board. The reason for this was that Paul had to be at Booker Airfield in West London by 11.30am to fly Arthur in his Aztec on a photo sortie taking shots of the first take-offs from the London City Stolport. And would you believe it, it all worked! We reached Barkston Heath by 11.30pm Saturday; found the

seal by torchlight and then popped in on the Houblon Arms in Oasby (the old watering hole when we were based at Barkston) for a swift pint; reached Manchester Airport by 3.00am Sunday and kipped in the car for two hours before the Dakota arrived; Keith departed safely on the Dak at 6.00am; I reached Coventry at 7.30am and was able to get in another two hours sleep before Paul arrived in the Dak at 9.30am and after a 100 mph drive south (which Paul slept through most of the way, thankfully!) we pitched up at Booker by 11.15am for the 11.30am take-off. Phew! All in a days work for the Catalina crew of course!

Biggin Hill and BAe Lostock will be remembered by all those who had the misfortune of being on the crew as a flight not to be repeated in a hurry. Even seasoned travellers had problems, although those of us on the ground thought it was all very funny of course! But why oh why can't Jock Maitland and his crew (the show organisers) have a chat with him up there and arrange some good weather for the Biggin Hill Air Fair just for once? Even pushing the airshow date back into June did not help - perhaps he should move the show to the South of France. I know we would definitely attend then!

The end of the Biggin show was the signal for the Cat to start winging its way across into Europe again, with Munster and Celle in West Germany following on consecutive weekends. It seems from the crew who attended these two shows that the German idea of crowd control was a little on the lax side. The crowdline was soon ignored by the public who proceeded to amble around the display aircraft as they were starting up and taxiing! The Cat crew attempted to keep some of the crowd back in their area but were fighting a losing battle. Eventually the organisers woke up to the situation and brought in the security guards complete with really friendly and verso tame Alsatians! Highlight of the Munster show for all concerned was the sight and sound of a real Daimler-Benz powered Me109, the MBB owned machine only having recently taken to the air again after its accident a couple of years ago. Lets hope MBB can be persuaded to bring the aircraft over to the UK in 1988, perhaps for the Fighter Meet - how about it John?

Well the next show on the agenda was of course North Weald, the problems encountered having been explained in the last issue of the Catalina News. However, all was eventually fixed which was a good thing too as the aircraft was due to take part in a private airshow in Guernsey four days later. This show was not on the list published in

issue 5 of the Newsletter but came as one of those unexpected bonuses which sometime happen during the year. The airshow was arranged on behalf of the Transglobe/Polygon Underwriting Group, an Aviation Insurance underwriting company (and not a travel agency as Arthur thought!) partly owned by Swissair and KLM. Taking part in the show in front of about 150 guests of the company were one of Air Atlantique's DC-3s, the Cat and Nick Grace's two seater Spit, strangely enough sponsored by an Aviation Insurance Broker! However, the flying was superb, with gorgeous weather (why did we have to come home?) and good hospitality. On the flight back to Duxford Arthur used the opportunity to do some filming of the the aircraft from the Aztec including some very low flying over the sea - this is where it is useful to have RAF pilots flying the aeroplane who are used to flying down on the deck!

Straight after this John was posted with his Tornado to Goose Bay in Canada for three weeks of Moose hunting. However all things considered he probably had better weather in Northern Canada than we did in Britain. The next show was RAF Chivenor in the West Country but the cold weather continued. Helping to make the show even more dismal was the fact that the Cat turned up six hours late due to engine starting problems at Duxford. Oiled plugs following on from a discharged battery were the cause of this delay. Paul, Dizzy Addicott, Colin Campbell and David Legg beavered away, eventually succeeding in getting the one offending engine coaxed into life after a complete plug change. With some skilful flying and navigating, Killer Cat arrived over Chivenor bang on time for its slot, although the crew obviously missed the chance to assemble the sales stand at the show itself. Rather than night stopping at Chivenor the Cat carried on to RAF Brawdy. The following day much brighter weather was accompanied by gale force winds and despite these David and Colin managed to put up the stand and sell some goodies although a losing battle was being fought against the elements!

Old Warden, home of the Shuttleworth collection was the next show to be graced with the presence of the Cat and on the positioning flight back to Duxford Alan Bramson from Pilot Magazine was allowed to take control of the aircraft under the watchful eye of Dizzy. Alan's article on flying the Cat appeared in the December issue of Pilot - you can't miss it, as the Cat is on the front cover of the magazine.

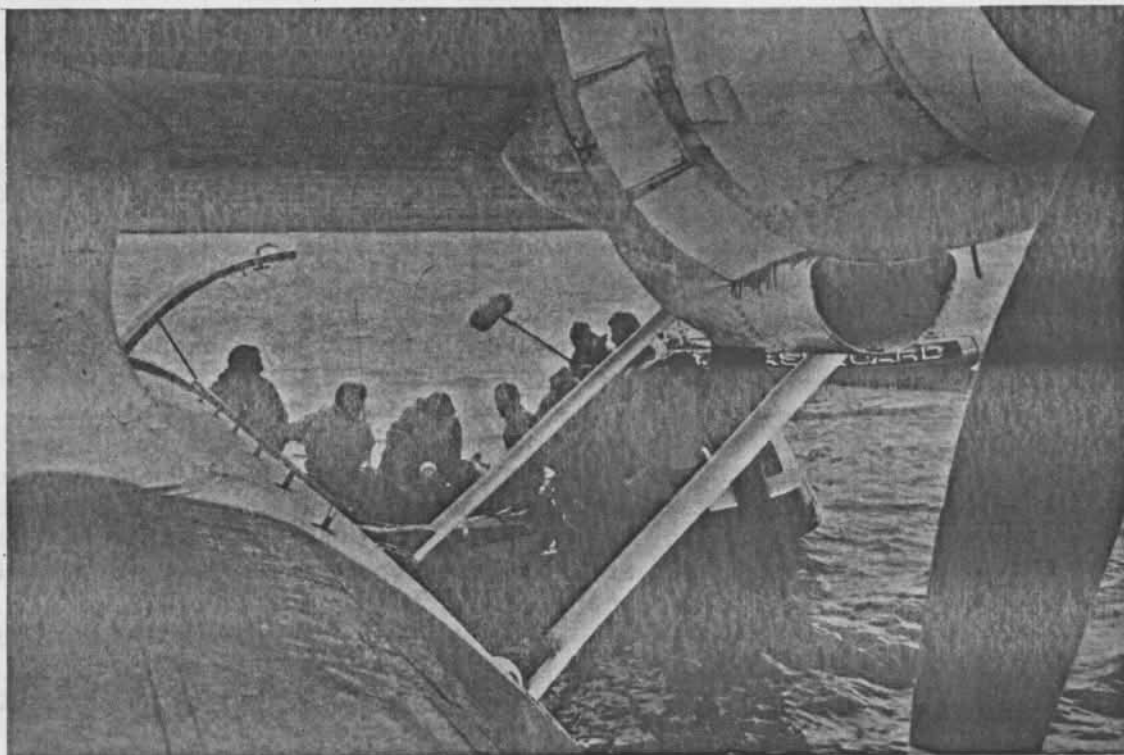
Exeter Airshow was another show to suffer at the hands of this country's wonderful summer



THE WALK-THRU QUEUE AT NEWTOWNARDS! (JOHN MANSON)



THIS MOTLEY CREW ARE SUPPOSED TO BE CHANGING A BRAKE SEAL !
L TO R, ROB SMITH, KEITH SISSONS, MIKE SEARLE AND JOHN WATTS
(JOHN MANSON)



**TV STAR AT LAST - JOHN WATTS FACES THE CAMERAS IN NORTHERN IRELAND
(JOHN MANSON)**

weather, with high winds and driving rain. Of course this show saw two Catalinas together on a British Airfield for the first time in many, many years. Unfortunately the other Cat, Avalon Aviation's PBY-6A waterbomber C-FHNN (featured in these pages before), was tucked behind a hangar on the far side of the airfield, away from prying eyes - which was perhaps a good thing as after nearly two years of open storage it is beginning to deteriorate rapidly.

The organiser of Exeter Airshow was the same as that at Staverton a few weeks later. Due to his big financial loss following Exeter, a number of aircraft were cancelled from the Staverton programme including the Killer Cat, which logistically suited us fine. The reason being that the Cat was booked into two shows in Ireland, one at Baldonnell in the south and Belfast in the north and in between these two shows was Staverton, thus the cancellation saved the Cat from two positioning flights to and from Ireland. The interest in the aircraft created at Newtownards continued at Baldonnell and Belfast, where security was obviously quite tight but in no way constricted the organisers in running a successful show.

Talking of successful shows, West Mall, home of the Great Warbirds Airshow certainly provided one of the most entertaining shows of the year. Ruined by torrential rain last year, West Mall was blessed with glorious sunshine this year - Elly Sallingboe, the organiser, was still on a high two weeks

later! The finale which put the Cat in amongst a flypast of nearly every warbird at the show was superb and a joy to watch and listen to.

Another bonus airshow not in our original listing was that at Pembroke Dock where the Cat was the one and only star of the show. Cat Society member John Evans had arranged a massive reunion of nearly 800 ex-Flying Boat aircrew from all around the world in his home town of Pembroke and the Cat was asked to land in Pembroke Dock to commemorate those wartime days when Pembroke Dock was the world's largest flying boat base and home to scores of Sunderlands and Cats. Edward Hulton's Sunderland was also slated to appear but unfortunately was not ready in time.

On the afternoon of Friday 4th September, Keith Sissons and Paul (now rated as co-pilot for water landings in the Cat) brought the aircraft in low over the north of Pembroke for two touch and go's for the assembled press, TV and official Plane Sailing photographers' Colin Campbell and yours truly! A full stop landing was then made and the hull gracefully lowered into the water landingowly, against the strong river current Keith and Paul taxied the aircraft up to the mooring buoy (in fact a genuine WWII Sunderland buoy) and cut the engines just short to enable the Pembroke Dock boat crew to tie the aircraft up. There followed a performance which Keith and Paul would not wish to relive. Due to the strong current the aircraft was slowly drifting backwards

and the Mercury powerboat was not powerful enough to haul the aircraft back to the buoy. As the chaps on the Mercury struggled with the ropes the aircraft was steadily drifting back and was now dead in line with a substantial barge with a gunnery target on it. With very quick thinking Paul hit the engine starters and fired up the Port engine pulling the Cat away from the barge in the nick of time. Second time around the Dock employees on the Mercury were able to successfully tie up the aircraft - a close one though!

The aircraft remained on the water in Pembroke Dock for about three hours but an approaching squall line prompted Keith to decide to take-off and make for Haverfordwest where the aircraft was to night stop. The following day the aircraft flew over the town in salute of the ex-aircrew and made its way to RAF St Athan for the following weekend's airshow, which surprise, surprise was a total washout with heavy rain and bitter winds!

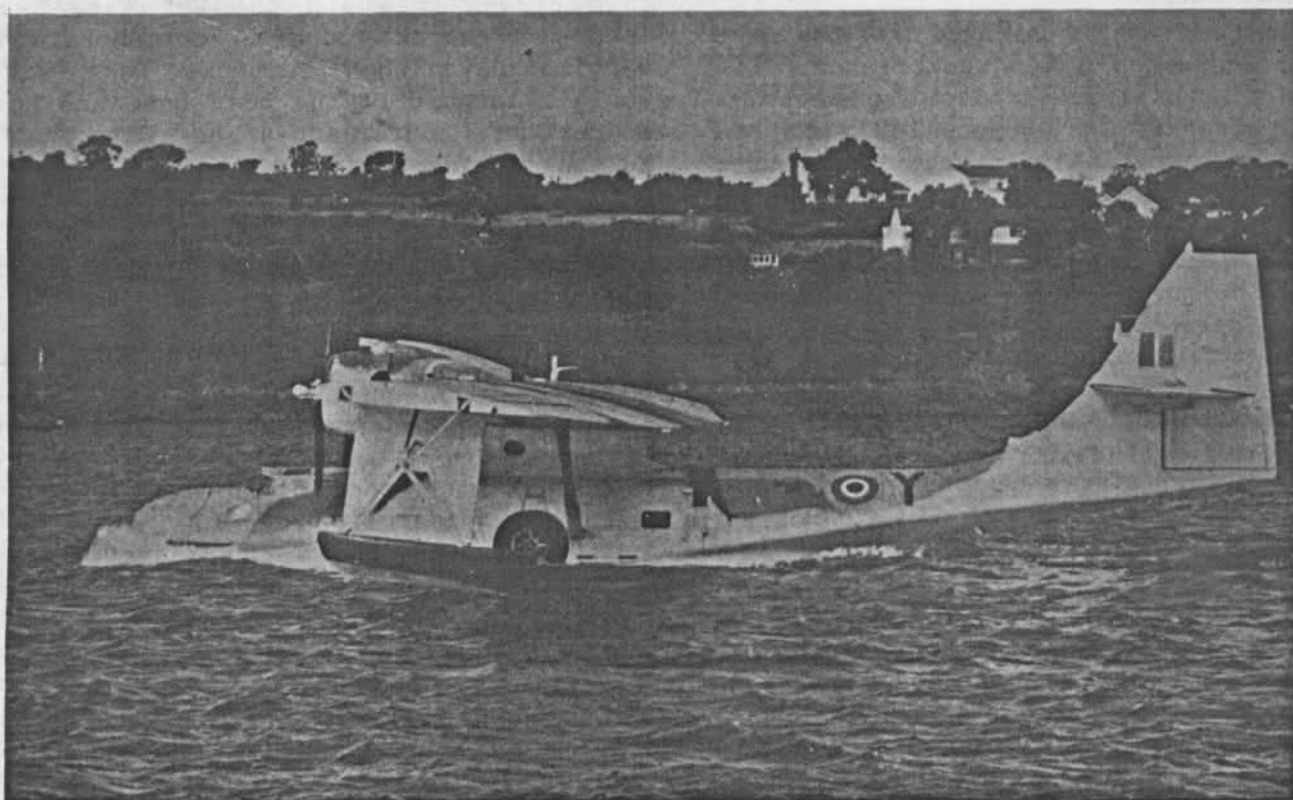
Jersey Air Day provided beautiful weather as usual and the customary 'good' party - I think I might emigrate to the Channel Islands! The final display of the year was RAF Finningley which is always one of our favourites as it is partly run by Chuck Knight who helps out with the organisation of the Fighter Meet. But guess what, it rained and it rained. The Cat, following its

display way up in Scotland at RAF Leuchars during the morning, managed to get down to Finningley and complete its display slot, the final one of the year, before the organisers cancelled the rest of the show due to the weather. The next day the aircraft positioned into Duxford in glorious sunshine to be put to bed for the winter.

So that in brief was the 1987 season. Many more things of note happened during the year too numerous to mention here, some repeatable, some not, but all in all an interesting and enjoyable year for all concerned. It was of course marred by the poor weather and occasional malfunctioning of the aircraft but it wouldn't be a challenge if those problems didn't occur occasionally!

Obviously a lot of people combine together to make a successful year but mention must be made of a few. Firstly, Angie Diggins for her fantastic efforts in looking after the smooth running of the Sales Stand at the shows and making sure it was continually well stocked, Joan and Sally Watts for co-ordinating so many of the arrangements at each of the shows, the groundcrew for keeping the aeroplane flying (nearly!) all the time, the pilots for displaying her so gracefully at each show and finally to you, the membership for giving us such support at each show we attended. Thankyou.

THE KILLERCAT TAXYING ON THE WATER AT PEMBROKE DOCK (RUSSELL MASON)



NEW MEMBERSHIP

If one of your friends wants to become a member, or you have just purchased this copy of The Catalina News from the Catalina Stand at an airshow, and would like to become a full-time member of the ever growing Catalina Society, this is how you do it. Just fill in the application form below and send the appropriate sum of money (either by Cheque, including Eurocheque, Postal Order or International Money Order for overseas subscribers) to the address given below and you will be sent a full Catalina Society membership pack (including car stickers, colour pictures of the aircraft, certificate of membership, membership card and official society badge) along with the first of four issues of this magazine The Catalina News. You will also then become entitled to all the normal benefits associated with being a member of The Catalina Society. If you do not wish to cut up this copy of The Catalina News a photocopy of this form will be entirely acceptable.

SPECIAL NOTE to all overseas subscribers - we must receive payment in Pounds Sterling due to the fluctuating exchange rates. No foreign currency, cheques or cash will be accepted.

To: Mrs Joan Watts, The Catalina Society,
24 Batts Hill, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0LT.

I/We would like to enrol as members of The Catalina Society.

Name(s)
Address(s)
.....
.....
.....
Telephone

Number of individual memberships required (at £10 UK/£12 Overseas each).....
Family (2 adults and up to 2 children) membership required (at £18 UK/£22 Overseas).....

I/We enclose a cheque/postal order/money order for £..... made payable to Plane Sailing Air Displays.

Signed.....

Please allow 28 days for delivery of membership pack.

BLISTER APPEAL

First the bad news: the blisters will not be attached this winter; however, the good news is that next winter we will definitely undertake the work barring any unforeseen

disasters. In fact David Charlesworth will be doing some of the preparatory work on the airframe this winter in readiness for their attachment later in the year. Also the blisters enter the workshops of the perspex company within the next two weeks or so for full glazing.

Ultimately though there is still one thing holding us back and that is the lack of original engineering drawings of the rear fuselage section of the aircraft. We cannot stress too strongly that we must have these drawings before work commences and any help in obtaining these items, especially from those members in the USA and Canada, will be immensely appreciated. Obviously we have tried most of the existing Catalina operators but if someone knows for sure that a company has a set of original engineering drawings, or copies of the originals, please contact us as soon as possible.

As ever your kind donations keep on coming in, for which ever so many thanks - to Mr M. Beaumont (Member No 339) of Beckenham, Kent for your £30, Mr G. Crosby (Member No 33) from Leeds for your £5, Mr M. Good (Member No 358) of Richmond, Surrey for your £10 and finally to Wg Cdr Don Bleach on behalf of the Pensacola Veterans Association for their mammoth donation of £250. To all of you, thank you for your generous support!

BACK ISSUES

Back issues are now available from the Membership and Subscription address at a price of £1 per copy in the UK or £2 per copy Overseas (including postage and packing). As ever please send a cheque/postal order/money order made payable to Plane Sailing Air Displays for the correct amount, and also clearly state which issues you require and how many.

FURTHER READING

Among the Catalina publications recently reviewed in this magazine was "The Story of the PBY Catalina" by Ray Wagner, published in America by Flight Classics. At the time we pointed out that this book was very difficult to obtain in England. We have since been advised by George C. Sterling of Flight Classics that he can still supply copies direct at a price of \$3.50 including postage; payment to be sent with order (either an International Money Order or Dollars cash). Orders should be sent to George at Flight Classics, P.O. Box 1051, San Diego,

California 92112, USA. All we need add is that at the price (even better with the current exchange rates), this book is highly recommended as a concise history of the Catalina's development.

Having read the Season report in this issue, you will know that our Catalina was the star attraction at the Pembroke Dock Flying Boat Reunion. Catalina Society member John Evans, who was heavily involved in the organisation of this and earlier events, has been researching the history of his local flying boat base for some years. In 1985 he published an illustrated book entitled "Flying Boat Haven" which, by way of photographs, described the various phases in the history of Pembroke Dock from the earliest seaplane visitors of 1930 to the final residents, Short Sunderlands in the late 1950's. Catalinas were based at P.D. with both RAF and US Navy Squadrons and mention is made of these units in the book. However, P.D. will always be remembered for its association with the Short Sunderland and it is thus appropriate that this aircraft should receive the lion's share of the coverage in the book. Unfortunately we believe that no more copies of this book are available.

Now, in the fiftieth year of the Sunderland, John has published a second work, this time devoted entirely to the Sunderland but with particular emphasis on its association with the Pembroke Dock base. Entitled "The Sunderland Flying-Boat Queen", this softback book is again in pictorial format, the text consisting of detailed and informative captions. After a short (no pun intended!) introduction showing the Sunderland's predecessors such as the Rangoon, Singapore and Empire boats, the reader is treated to marvellous photos of the great boat during her long and varied career. There are many air to air shots and even some rare colour photos taken in Singapore during the fifties. The story is brought up to date with the ex-French Navy Sunderland that came back to P.D. for preservation and which now resides in the RAF Museum at Hendon, along with the other surviving examples around the globe. There is no doubt that many Catalina fans also have a soft spot for the Sunderland and this latest book from John Evans is certainly highly recommended. Copies can be obtained direct from the author at 6 Laws Street, Pembroke Dock, Pembrokeshire, Dyfed SA72 6DL at a cost of £6.50 incl P & P (cheques made payable to Paterchurch Publications).

Returning to the Catalina, it was clear that many of you enjoyed reading the reminiscences of Ron Martin's Arctic flying during 1942.

Mention was made at the end of the article that Ernest Schofield - the navigator on Ron's flights - in association with Roy Nesbit had written a book all about these adventurous series of flights. A copy of this book entitled "Arctic Airmen - The RAF in Spitsbergen and North Russia 1942", which has just been published, has been received for review by The Society. It recounts all the background to the Admiralty's reasons for instigating these flights, the characters involved, the actual flights themselves, the subsequent attempt to fly the Cat to the North Pole and finally the tragedy surrounding the death of the crew's Skipper, 'Tim' Healy. The esteem the whole crew felt for this man comes across very clearly and the reader is left in no doubt that here was a man of a genuine rare breed, with immense courage but with a zest for life. Even to the uninitiated the book is entertaining from cover to cover with the right degree of technical back-up information. It is well illustrated throughout with pictures from the actual flights to Spitsbergen, although not surprisingly given the conditions prevailing and the equipment provided some of the pictures are a little on the blurred side.

After reading the book one is left with an overriding impression of the gallantry along with personal hardship endured by the crew of VA729, P for Peter as they, as a slick team led by a superb Skipper, pushed back the frontiers of endurance and navigation in extreme weather conditions - the pilots of today just don't realise how easy they have it! This book also stands as a tribute to what a strong, reliable and thorough piece of aircraft design the Catalina really was. The book is an absolute must for the members of The Catalina Society, young and old alike. If you only buy one book in 1988, make sure it is "Arctic Airmen" - you won't be disappointed. The book is published by William Kimber & Co Ltd, 100 Jermyn St, London SW1Y 6EE at a price of £13.50 (not including P&P). Flypast are also offering the book for sale through their mail order book service.

DORNIER SEASTAR

A short description of the Dornier aircraft company's Do-ATT prototype was contained in the last issue of the Catalina News, which was used in various test programmes for the German Ministry of Research and Technology. Here the Editor describes the results of this research, the Claudius Dornier Seastar.

In the early eighties Claudius Dornier, the son of Prof. Claude Dornier - who was the



*THE CLAUDIS DORNIER SEASTAR DURING WATER TRIALS, CLEARLY SHOWING THE
TWO STEP FLAT BOTTOMED HULL, SIDE SPONSON AND STUB WING
(C. D. S. GmbH via STUART BOURNE)*

designer of Dornier's highly successful range of pre-war and wartime flying boats - believed the market was ready to accept a new utility amphibian embodying modern materials and technology. The Dornier Aircraft Company, by then partially government owned, were unfortunately not of the same opinion and were unwilling to fund the design even after the success of the Do-ATT. Eventually, Claudius Dornier used his own and private funds to launch the project although the facilities of the Dornier Aircraft company at Oberpfaffenhofen were utilised to help in the construction of the first prototype.

The genesis of the design was the belief that the world's fleet of seaplanes and amphibians were steadily getting older with no replacements appearing on the horizon. The Seastar was designed to include as much advanced technology as possible while at the same time lowering operational and repair costs. Claudius Dornier believed the answer to these problems lay in the use of composite construction allied to turbo-prop powerplants. Thus the Seastar embodies the experience gained in the production of over 12,000 composite gliders by West German manufacturers. The first prototype Seastar,

in fact a smaller 'proof of concept vehicle', had a Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) fuselage and tail assembly but to save time and cost the wing was taken from a Dornier Do27. Mounted in a nacelle on top the wing were two ubiquitous Pratt and Whitney PT6 turbo-props in a push-pull arrangement. The hull of the prototype showed a further refinement of the Do-ATT's two step flat hull design with the addition of side fuselage mounted sponsons, which also contained the main undercarriage units, in place of the normal wing mounted outrigger floats seen on most previous flying boats and amphibians.

Initial flight trials in early 1985 proved the general layout of the aircraft but of course the acid test of the aircraft came when she first attacked the water. Testing was conducted on Lake Constance and in the harsh environment of the Baltic Sea. These tests again proved the concept to be sound and in need of little modification. Unfortunately in July 1985, after a successful debut at the Paris Air Show where the Seastar created much interest, further testing on Lake Constance ended in disaster. The test pilot inadvertently left the undercarriage extended when landing. Like

all good amphibians this caused the aircraft to nose under and the aircraft was damaged beyond repair. However, the extreme strength of the GRP fuselage was certainly proven as the crew were able to extricate themselves from the wreck relatively unharmed, except for the pilots pride!

The loss of the 'proof of concept' aircraft did not dampen the company from pushing ahead with their pre-production prototype the positive results only encouraging them. The new aircraft took to the air for the first time in April 1987. The general arrangement of the aircraft was similar to the earlier aircraft, however, it was fitted with the definitive GRP construction cantilever wing, a more commodious fuselage capable of seating 12 passengers, more powerful PT-6A-112 engines, a slightly shorter fin and small stub wings attached to the fuselage sponsons to aid in low speed handling as well as carrying additional fuel. Initial flight tests of the aircraft proved successful with waterborne trials again taking place on Lake Constance and in the Baltic Sea, however, the first water landings took place much earlier in the test programme than with the 'proof of concept' aircraft so convinced were Claudius

Dornier Seastar of their product. Additionally a warning system was installed in the cockpit so that a similar accident as befell the 'proof of concept' vehicle could not happen again.

The aeroplane is now undergoing the rigours of it's German CAA (LDA) and FAA certification testing which is expected to be completed by late 1988 leading to first deliveries in 1989. The second aircraft is currently under construction at Oberpfaffenhofen which will have slightly larger flaps and ailerons than the pre-production prototype. Claudius Dornier Seastar hopes to have begun production of the aircraft by at latest, the end of 1987, working up to a production output of three aircraft per month by 1991. The facilities at Oberpfaffenhofen have been extended by 43,000 sq ft in anticipation of this output, however, the company are still seeking further investment to shoulder the cost of putting the aircraft through the certification process and into production. Since the launch of the project the company have taken 21 deposits for purchase options along with receiving four 'Letters of Intent' to purchase from civil and military

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SEASTAR SEEN DURING TRIALS IN KIEL HARBOUR IN MAY 1987 (C.D.S. GmbH via STUART BOURNE)



13
customers.

12

So what are the chances of the Seastar succeeding in the highly volatile modern aircraft marketplace, with an estimated potential market of 500 units in this particular class. The aircraft is designed very much for utility work and with this in mind two large entrance doors are installed, one in the forward fuselage and one in the rear fuselage -containing an over-size cargo door rather like that of the 'Killer Cat'. The advantages of the aircraft are :- its lightweight and very strong GRP construction which obviously does not suffer from corrosion like aluminium aircraft; repair methods for the GRP construction are not far removed from that used in the GRP boat building business which are thus far simpler for third world countries to adapt to; the fuel efficiency of turbo-prop engines; the aircraft has no outrigger floats to get damaged when taxiing on water, and when combined with the central, high mounted, engine position, allows the aircraft to come alongside a slip like a boat unlike most other waterborne aircraft; a flat bottomed hull design allowing the aircraft to get on the step quicker than normal amphibians; the aircraft is capable of being used for a wide variety of missions including passenger carriage, cargo carrier, air ambulance (when it can carry six stretchers and two attendants), maritime patrol and surveillance, fisheries protection and coastguard/law enforcement. Thus there is no doubt it is a capable and versatile aircraft.

However, there are a number of minus points, namely the aircraft's poor range when loaded (approx 250km with a 1450kg load); its limited seating capacity although a stretched variant is envisaged; the reluctance of many conservative operators to purchase large composite construction aircraft and probably it's biggest drawback; the price. US\$ 2.75 million is a substantial sum of money for a 12 seater utility aircraft. The Seastar's nearest competitor is the Cessna Caravan I, fitted with floats, which retails at US\$1 million and has 16 seats and similar payload/range capability on the fuel burn of only one Pratt and Whitney PT-6A. The other competition is limited to wartime designs such as the Grumman Mallard, Grumman Goose, De Havilland Canada Otter, however, none of these aircraft have a sale price anywhere near the Seastar and in the case of some Mallards and Otters are in fact re-engined with turbo-props. The operators of some island shuttle airlines have looked at the Seastar but turned it down due to the simple fact that the repayments on the aircraft well exceeded their potential revenues. Given

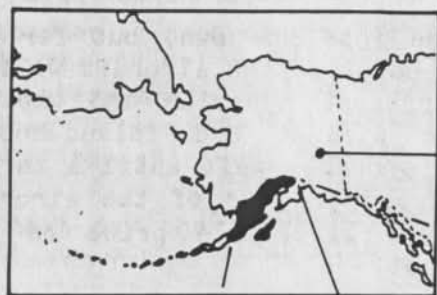
time, when some of the older designs get to retirement age there is no doubt that the Seastar may come into its own, but for the moment at least sales of the aircraft will be limited to Government agencies and wealthy companies. The airline and island-hopper operations will probably wait until a larger variant is produced or some of the aircraft appear at a more affordable price on the second-hand market.

THE QUEEN OF DAGO LAKE

In the last few years the world's population of surviving Catalinas in airworthy condition has slowly diminished as time-expired specimens have been withdrawn from use and, sadly, some have been written off in accidents. However, since 1984, two Catalinas have taken to the air again after spending many years firmly on the ground. Their return to the skies was, however, strictly temporary, as in both cases the derelict airframes were carried aloft by helicopter! One of these is the subject of this article by David Legg, whilst the other will be documented in a forthcoming issue.

Towards the end of World War II many Catalinas originally ordered by the US Navy were transferred to the USAAF who operated their own air-sea rescue service. Canadian-Vickers built PBV-1A, serial Bu.67918 was one such aircraft and became 44-33954, type designation OA-10, prior to even leaving the factory. It subsequently served with various units until April 1947, when it was transferred to the 10th Air Rescue Squadron at Elmendorf Air Force, Alaska, where it operated alongside such diverse types as Dragonfly helicopters, Grumman Ducks and SB-17 Flying Fortresses. Five months after arrival the Catalina was flying some distance from base, when the starboard engine threw a rod and the plane was forced to land on shallow water at Dago Lake on the Alaskan Peninsula, many miles from civilisation. This happened on September 30th, 1947. According to contemporary reports, the crew were flying low and chasing bears over the tundra at the time! Various attempts were made to recover the aircraft but these failed, and after the accidental loss of a replacement engine in the surrounding water, along with damage sustained to several Noorduyt Norseman aircraft used as crew ferries, the official interest in retrieving the aircraft had waned. The guards who had been posted to watch over the wreck were instructed to sever the control cables and hydraulic lines and the previously lightly damaged airframe was left to the severe Alaskan elements.

P.B.Y. AIRLIFT



ALASKA

ANCHORAGE

LAKE CLARK

KING SALMON

COOK INLET

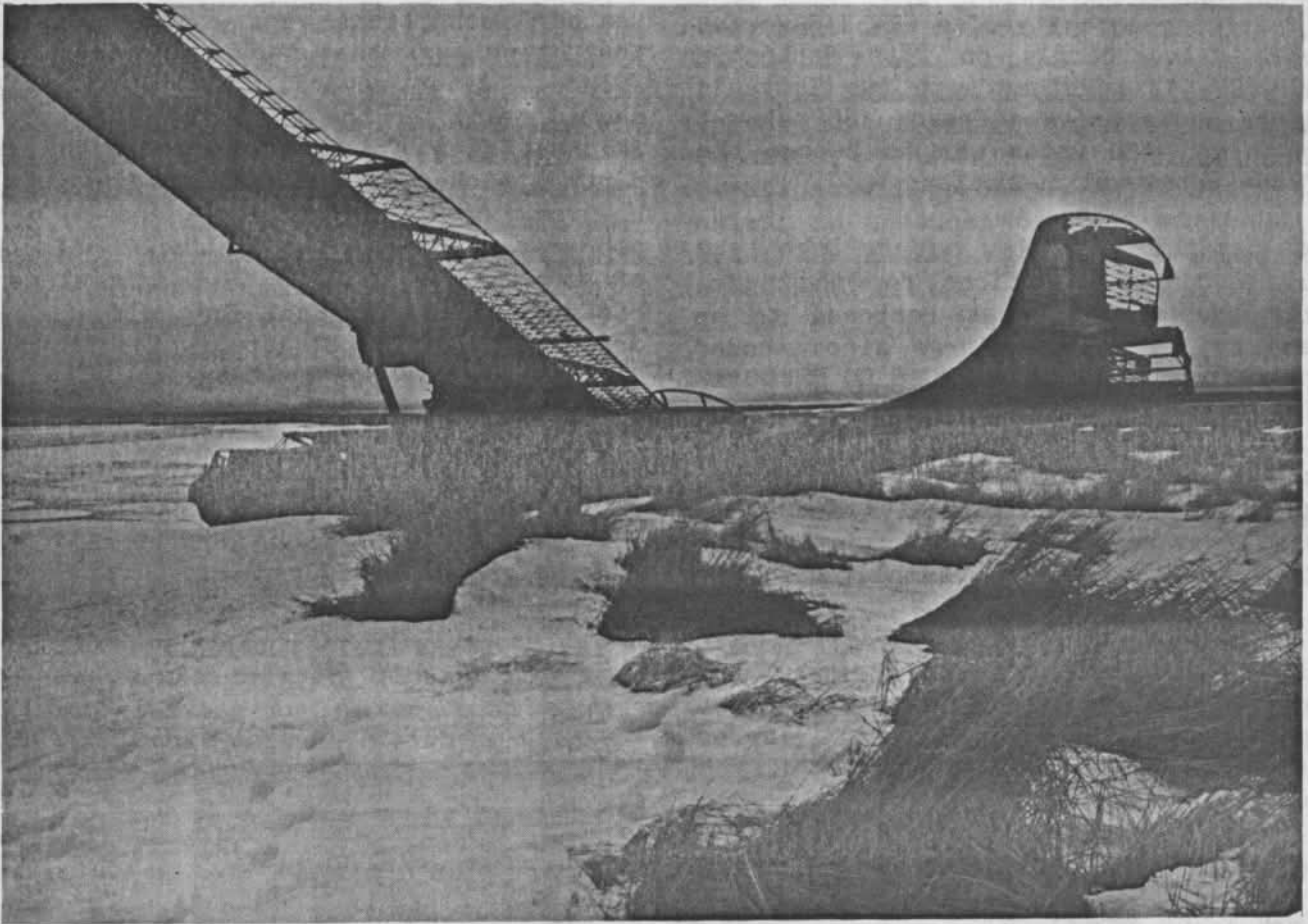
ANCHORAGE

SEWARD

DAGO LAKE

KODIAK ISLAND

MAP BY MICHAEL PROPHET



*OV-10A CATALINA, 44-33954, SEEN AT THE ORIGINAL CRASH SITE AT DAGO LAKE
(AHAS via TED SPENCER)*

Soon after the incident, the wreck was put for tender but all bids were below the minimum reserve and were therefore rejected by the authorities. Alaskan law of the time dictated that the best offer made at any subsequent auction had to be accepted and, when an Anchorage contractor later offered the princely sum of \$58, he and his sons became the proud owners of one surplus OA-10 Catalina. The Richards family found that their initial enthusiasm was dampened somewhat when they discovered that flying their aircraft off the lake was impossible due to the USAAF's efforts at demobilizing it. They therefore exchanged some of the components from the Cat with a local airline in a trade for a Piper Cub floatplane, thus once more leaving the Cat to its fate. The combined forces of local inhabitants, vandals and the harsh weather ensured that over the ensuing years the Queen of Dago Lake became a weather beaten shadow of it's former self. Local pilots who used the wreck as a navigational aid came to know the area of water around her as 'PBY Lake'.

There the story might have ended were it not for the determined intervention of the Alaskan Historical Aviation Society (AHAS). The AHAS was formed in 1977 with the aim of

promoting, preserving and protecting all aspects of Alaska's aviation history. Main driving force Ted Spencer, and his colleagues, convinced the Federal Government that the many old wrecks in the State were potentially historic objects. In 1981 the AHAS donated a derelict B-25J Mitchell bomber to Clear Air Force Base and this was airlifted out by Sikorsky CH-54 helicopter, an experience which was to prove invaluable at a later date.

Fired by this and earlier successes, the AHAS turned their attention to the Dago Lake PBY. After a while the owner of the wreck, Fred Richards, agreed to donate the airframe to the AHAS and after a long and frustrating period of negotiation with the Bureau of Land Management and State of Alaska, the way became clear for the AHAS to take over responsibility for the aircraft. In the meantime this did not prevent an enterprising individual succeeding in removing the centre section fuel tanks with an axe, surprisingly without too much damage being inflicted on the aircraft. Once in possession of the Cat, the AHAS now faced the massive problem of recovering it. The AHAS managed to obtain the co-operation of the 207th Aviation Section of the local Air National Guard unit.

The plan was to move the Cat using the 25,000lb lifting capacity of a CH-54 Skycrane helicopter. Accordingly on 28th September 1984, the CH-54, together with two Iroquois helicopters and a private Cessna 185 set out to King Salmon AFB which was to become the base of the retrieval operation.

The next day the crew flew out to Dago Lake to commence the preparations for the lift. Initially the aircraft was restored to an even keel by inflating a large airbag under the starboard wing thus lifting it from the creek in which it had been resting for nearly forty years. With the rise and fall of seasonal water levels the fuselage and wing tip had progressively filled with sand, and as much of this as possible had to be removed before any move could be contemplated. This

unpleasant task was aggravated by changeable weather conditions and the presence of irritating bugs that were constantly buzzing around. After several hours hard work all seemed ready for the first lift attempt. The Skycrane flew over the site and the ground party attached lift cables to the Catalina. However, despite much noise and effort the old wreck refused to leave her resting place of so many years. The CH-54 therefore flew off and burnt some fuel for half an hour in order to lose weight, after which it was once more hitched up to the Catalina. Eventually after much heaving, ten feet of air separated the Cat from the ground but further height could not be gained. She was therefore moved to a spot of firmer ground 300 yards away and lowered gently back down to earth. Nonetheless, the 'Queen of Dago Lake' had flown again.

**THE DRAMATIC SIGHT OF THE CAT SLUNG BELOW THE CH-54 EN ROUTE TO ANCHORAGE
(AHAS via TED SPENCER)**



17

The next day, 30th September, was damp and windy although the local bugs were undeterred and out in force again! The immediate task was to remove yet more accumulated silt from the fuselage and starboard wing in an effort to reduce the weight still further. The removal of the undercarriage and some interior fittings was undertaken for the same reasons. Several hours later, the aircraft had lost weight to the tune of 1000lbs. All was now ready for the lifting to resume, but before this happened an unfortunate rigger himself became airborne when he slipped and fell off the wing. He had to be taken off to hospital by helicopter with a badly injured ankle. With this incident out of the way, the Cat was at last linked up to the hovering CH-54 and shortly after she was airborne again, exactly 37 years to the day after her unscheduled arrival at Dago Lake. Once aloft, a drogue chute ensured that the Catalina was towed through the air with some degree of stability. Meanwhile the recovery crew hurried to get off the ground themselves so that the operation could be recorded for posterity from the support aircraft.

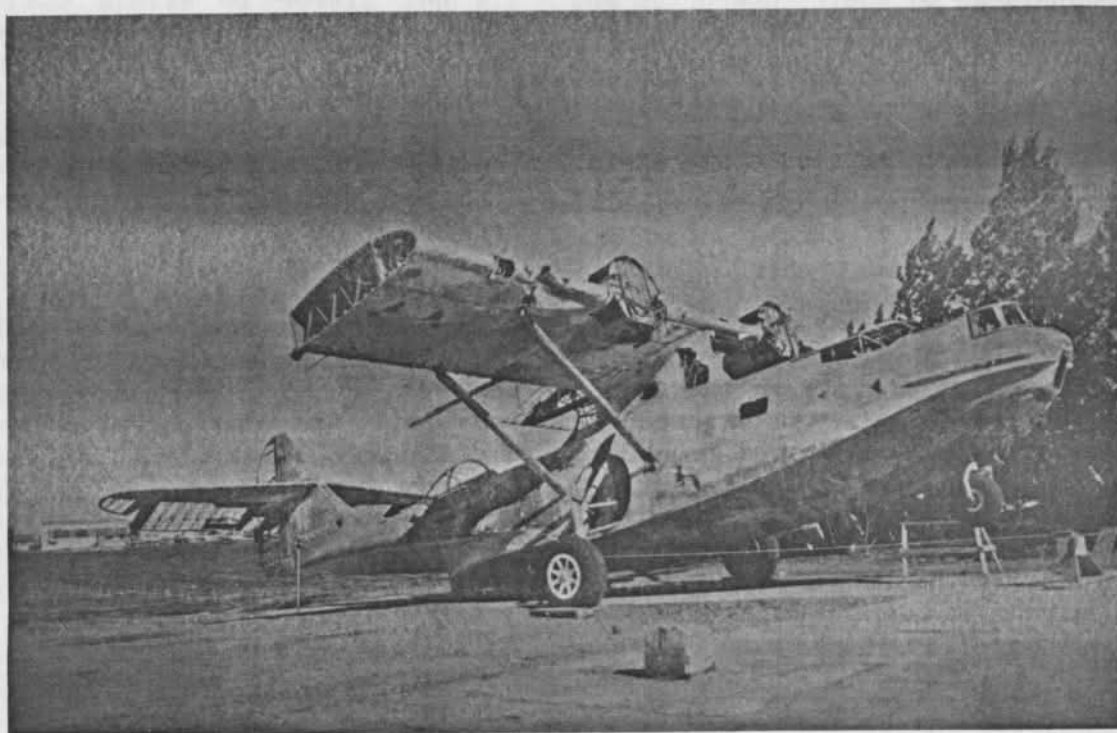
The Catalina was moved to within 22 miles of King Salmon in fine but slightly turbulent conditions. Eventually, the decision was taken to release the precious cargo at a safe location as air turbulence began to increase. The temporary resting place was a small hill, and after ensuring all was well, the CH-54 departed to King Salmon to await the

16

following weekend whilst the AHAS crew returned to Anchorage.

A week later all was ready to resume the recovery attempt. The Cat was hitched up to the CH-54 and lifted skyward again. However, after travelling only ten miles the chopper crew felt the load shift and the airframe was lowered to terra firma again so that the problem could be investigated. To everyone's dismay it was discovered that one of the attachment points had failed completely and the other was showing signs of going the same way. Clearly it was lucky that the old bird had not plummeted to destruction, and thus it became essential that a new method of lifting be found. The ideal solution was to use heavy duty lifting straps such as those used in boatyards for moving hulls around, but the nearest set available was located at Fairbanks, 1100 miles away. Fortunately a set was discovered at the local yard instead and these were donated. By this time poor weather had set in with high gusting winds and snow, and this was to prevail throughout the night.

The following morning much time was spent in clearing snow and de-icing the CH-54. Everyone was conscious that should the Catalina be similarly covered in ice, the mission leader would be unable to sanction the lift and that it would almost certainly have to be postponed until the following Spring. The crew all flew off to the



THE QUEEN OF DAGO LAKE SEEN AT LAKE HOOD/ANCHORAGE INT'L IN AUGUST 1987
(MICHAEL PROPHET via RON MAK)

Catalina fearing the worst. One can imagine their jubilation therefore when, within a quarter of a mile of the Catalina, the snow line abruptly stopped. There was their prize, sitting majestically in dry conditions. She was quickly placed in the straps suspended beneath the CH-54 and a test lift proved them to be satisfactory. The race was on to fly the last few miles to King Salmon, where in due course, the AHAS's latest acquisition was lowered into position amongst whirling clouds of snow. Their mission had been accomplished.

This was not the end of the operation as eventually, the Catalina was destined for the Alaskan Aviation Heritage Museum in Anchorage. It was to be another three years before the final leg of the journey was accomplished. In 1987 'Queen of Dago Lake' was once more hoisted skyward by a CH-54, but this time a lifting strap broke and the poor old Catalina had to be left en route again, on this occasion at the eastern end of Lake Clark Pass. A replacement strap was found, and then on 22nd August the last stage of the journey took place, culminating in the Queen's arrival on the south shore of Lake Hood, alongside Anchorage International Airport, the site of the new museum. Here restoration work has now commenced and the PBY will join the other aircraft in the collection. Although the US civil registration N57875 has been allocated to the aircraft, a rebuild to flying condition would seem to be a mammoth task. However, the AHAS must be congratulated on their enterprise and perseverance with this project and the Catalina News will keep its readers up to date with developments.

The author would like to express his grateful thanks to Ted Spencer of AHAS in the preparation of this article.

CAT LETTERS

Ron Martin's excellent article on the Arctic Catalina operations has prompted a number of responses from the membership, one from John Fish which was especially interesting. John's letter also highlights a typographical error which went unnoticed by the Editors, which concerned the length of Ron Martin's operational tour. It should of course have read 1,100 hours and not 100 hours!

Dear Editor

The piece by Ron Martin in the Catalina News, Issue No. 6, came to me just as I had finished reading "PQ 17 Convoy to Hell" and

it spurred me into yet further research in following up my own share of Arctic experiences in Catalinas on 210 Sqn.

I joined the Squadron in February 1942 at Oban but a month later we were moved en-bloc to Sullom Voe in the Shetlands. By curious coincidence my log book records that my first operational trip (patrol off Trondheim for Tirpitz - 18hr 25min) was with F/O Potier and P/O Martin (no relation) and me as 2nd pilot. My second operation, 21 hours off the Lofoten Isles, was also with Gillie Potier and P/O Martin, after which I became Potier's regular number two.

AH559/N was Potier's usual aircraft but I see that at the end of April and the beginning of May 1942 we were using AH551/M. On 24th April we did an ice recce as far as Jan Mayen. I remember being impressed by the Island's high volcanic cone (Berenberg I think it was called) and knowing it was an area in which to be wary in bad visibility. On 11th May we had recovered the use of 'N' and went from Sullom Voe on an ice recce to Spitzbergen. My understanding was that we were the first to represent 210 Squadron there. We had been told that there might be some Norwegians at the coal mine at Barentsberg in Green Harbour. We saw smoke but no people, so proceeded up Ice Fjord and found first some ski tracks on the mountainside and then a Heinkel on the ice with a hut or tent near it. Figures ran towards the plane which we shot up, but we did not linger to assess the results. We heard subsequently that this Heinkel remained there until the ice melted and it sank; I believe this to be the aircraft which Ron Martin reports as "damaged in an ice landing". We claimed it as our victim. That trip was logged as 24 hours 40mins - my record for quite a long time - and all logged as day flying. (Ron Martin comments as follows - "The Heinkel which John says his crew claimed as theirs did in fact fly back to Banak in North Norway the day after they shot it up, to have the damage inflicted repaired. The Heinkel we saw was actually in a different position and in fact was sinking through the melting ice of Advent Fjord, whereas John's was on land covered with snow further up Adventdale" - Official German records confirm this fact, Ed)

At the end of May 1942 I went on a Captain's course so I did not pick up much of the follow-up story of Spitzbergen. From what reached me, I gathered that our discovery of Germans on the ground in Spitzbergen was news that did not get to Iceland before the two ships of the landing expedition left, so they may have lacked warning of the local enemy

19
activity on Spitzbergen.

When I returned to 210 Sqn in late 1942 I inherited AH559/N and was straightaway involved in the detachment to North Russia to provide some of the help for convoy PQ 18 which PQ 17 had so sadly lacked. Tim Healey's mission with Spitzbergen had been kept a carefully guarded secret of which only snippets got into general circulation on the Squadron, but it certainly was a blow that he should be the one to be the victim at the end of the Russian episode.

I had other excursions subsequently to the Arctic, and to Russia, but that was in 190 Sqn, which succeeded 210 Sqn at Sullom Voe. My longest trip was in June 1943 on an ice recce from Sullom Voe to well north of the Bear Isle; on return weather prevented us from landing at base and we went on to Invergordon. Trip duration was logged as 29 hours and 10 mins - again all day flying in those latitudes! Yet I know that the Catalina's record is of longer flight durations than that.

Finally, one small point on Ron's article. It states that he and his crew went on to finish their "first tour of 100 hours operational flying". This must be a misprint! The Coastal Command Catalina tour was 800 hours. On the Squadron any trip that did not get into double figures was dubbed as local flying!

With best wishes to the Society

Yours sincerely

John Fish
The Green
Stockton,
Nr Rugby
Warwickshire

(Editorial Note - Catalina AH551/M ended its career with 1310TU when it spun into a hill at Ballinamallard, Formanagh on 16/10/43. AH559/N crashed on take-off and sank at Gibraltar on 4/11/42 whilst still with 210 Sqn)

Dear Editor

Following your request in the last Newsletter for responses from those people who have appeared in the 'Cat Contact Column' as to their relative successes, I am pleased to respond positively.

Member Dr Arthur Banks who was a 'Met Man' in the Indian Ocean area has been in touch with

18
me several times. Between us we are trying to contact more members from that wartime area of operations, aircrew or groundcrew. So far by various means, I have been able to contact one ex-259 Sqn aircrew member, Ron Knibbs - we were on the same crew for about 9 months. Ron has now since joined the Catalina Society, I hear. I have also managed to contact four other ex-aircrew of 259 Sqn through the widow of a former Squadron Pilot. I have requested a note in the next in the RAFA magazine - it may come in the Christmas edition. I will be doing my best to get all those people who respond to join the Catalina Society with a view to a party of us attending the Society's meeting in April. Incidentally an ex-Pilot (not Cats) friend of mine and I have reserved our places on the Wartime Aircrew Reunion in Winnipeg, Canada next September ('88). I have no doubt there will be ex-Catalina crews from Canada, Australia and New Zealand present. Maybe I can 'recruit' a few overseas members and gather some stories for Cat News!

Yours sincerely

Geoff Guy
54 Grenidge Way
Oakley
Beds

CATALINAS IN SCALE

As mentioned in the last Newsletter we will be holding a Catalina scale model competition at the Catalina Society meeting in April with a very desirable prize for the three different categories. These are:- flying scale model; scratch built static; and plastic kit. We are very much looking forward to seeing the results of your endeavours, so don't forget you have only got about three months to go before the big day.

CATALINA HELP LINE

As is often the case with a privately run organisation of our kind, new equipment for our hangar tool chest cannot be procured as and when it is required due to budgetary constraints. Therefore if you, the membership, come across any suitable equipment of good quality and in working order for our groundcrews' use, please drop John Watts a line at the Membership and Subscriptions address. Our thanks therefore go to member Harry Claridge who has kindly donated an air drill which will prove most useful.

20

In the last issue of the Newsletter we requested any leads on an Avgas APU. Well you will be pleased to know that a completely original Catalina APU still in its box has been located and purchased for a very small sum. At long last we won't have to worry about our internal battery life nearly so much when we are on the water or when at airfields with no ground power!

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE AND THE CATALINA - 202 SQUADRON

This article, the first in a series on the RAF Catalina units, looks at the history of 202 Squadron with particular emphasis given to the period between 1941 and 1945, when Catalinas were flown from bases in Gibraltar and Northern Ireland.

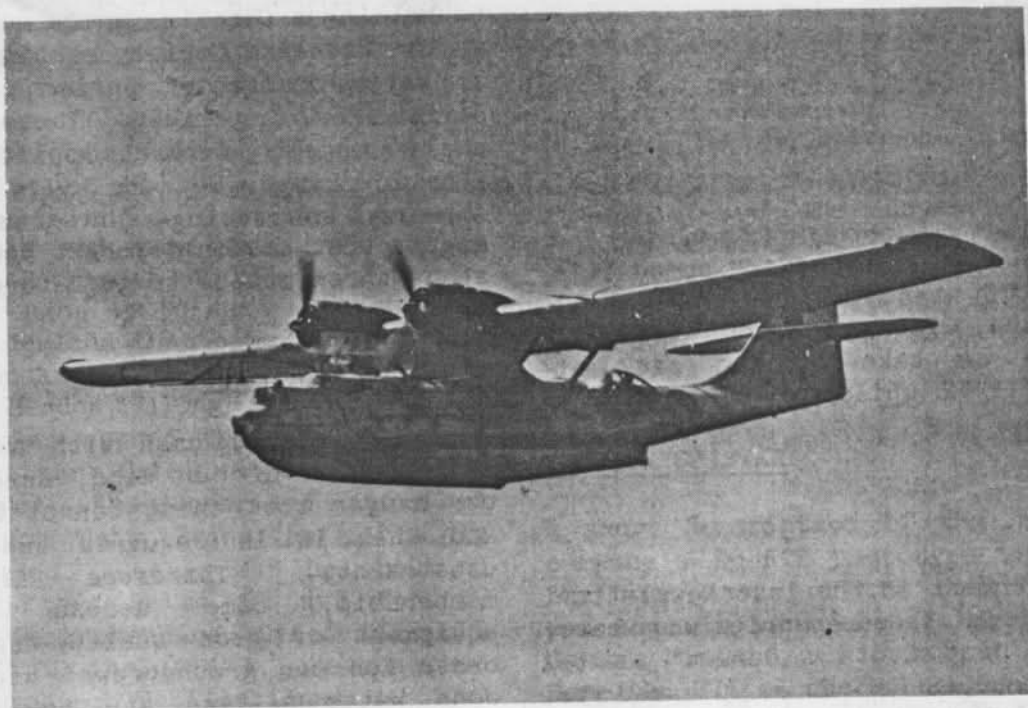
The origins of No. 202 Squadron go as far back as October 1914, when on 14th of that month No. 2 Squadron RNAS was formed at Eastchurch in Kent. After serving for two years in defence of the coast in that area it became a bomber unit based at Bregues, Dunkirk, operating against coastal targets. On 1st April 1918, the unit became 202 Squadron of the Royal Air Force and continued to fly bombing and reconnaissance missions over Belgium using DH.4s up to the Armistice. The squadron was disbanded for the first time on 22nd January 1920. There followed a short period commencing in the following April as a naval co-operation outfit at Alexandria, but

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this only lasted until May of the following year. Equipment used during this time consisted of Short 184s.

The squadron reformed on the first day of 1929 at Kalafrana, Malta, when the former 481 flight was redesignated. Equipped with Fairey IIID seaplanes, the squadron flew coastal reconnaissance and search and rescue sorties in the area around Malta. New equipment in the form of Fairey IIIFs followed in 1930 superseded by Supermarine Scapas in May 1935. The last of the five Scapas arrived on 3rd August thus making 202 fully equipped with flying boats.

The Abyssinian Crisis, caused by the invasion of that country (now better known as Ethiopia) by Mussolini's forces in the Autumn of 1935, resulted in increased activity on the squadron, the Scapas starting anti-submarine patrols around Malta on 9th October. The possibility of enemy attack from Sicily, only fifty miles away meant that the squadron had to operate its boats from dispersed moorings. The threat of attack soon receded however, and the peace time activity continued as before, new machines arriving subsequently when the Scapas were replaced by Saro Londons from Autumn 1937 onwards. At this time 202 Squadron took part in Nyon patrols, a combined British and French anti-submarine operation intended to deter Italian submarines from sinking merchant ships suspected of carrying supplies to the Communist backed forces in the Spanish Civil War. By the time the operations ceased



CATALINA IB, 'L' OF 202 SQN SEEN IN SEPTEMBER 1943
(RAFm via PETER NOPS)

in December of that year, 111 sorties had been flown by 202 using both Scapas and Londons.

The squadron was briefly moved to Alexandria following the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in late summer 1938, but when this crisis died down a return to Malta followed. Initial excitement at the prospect of re-equipment with Short Sunderlands was shortlived when the new machines were diverted to 228 Sqn. instead. By this time tension in Europe was escalating and the squadron was transferred to Gibraltar, arriving a week after war was declared with Germany. For the remainder of 1939 and all through 1940 the squadron was to continue maintaining the security of the Straits of Gibraltar, a task made more difficult when Italy joined the conflict and France fell to the enemy forces.

The old Londons were supplemented by a number of Fairey Swordfish floatplanes, previously used by No.3 AACU. After many hours on fruitless operations, patience was rewarded on 18th October 1940, when two Londons sighted oil bubbles on the water surface. Depth charges were dropped and the Italian submarine Burbo was forced to surface. It was subsequently captured by a Royal Navy destroyer. Throughout the winter of 1940/41, the squadron soldiered on with the venerable but obsolete Saro Londons, but new equipment was now imminent.

Two Catalina flying boats were taken on strength in the UK on 24th April 1941, the first example, W8410, arriving at it's new Gibraltar base on 7th May, flown by Sqn Ldr G.A. Harger. The longer range offered by the Catalina brought about an increase in action, and nine days after arrival W8410 was attacked by marauding Focke-Wulf Fw.200 Condors although the crew managed to see them off. Finally by early June, the Londons and Swordfish were relinquished and the Catalina became the sole type in use with 202 Sqn. Two Catalina destined for the squadron were unfortunately destroyed prior to delivery, when on 7th May enemy bombing was concentrated on the Scottish Aviation facility at Greenock where initial conversion work was carried out on newly arrived aircraft prior to issue to operational units. The aircraft lost were serialised AH554 and AH555. Further losses occurred when AH537 went missing enroute UK - Gibraltar on 5th June, whilst W8407 sank after crash landing at Gibraltar two days later. Subsequently W8425 was lost in a similar manner to '07, when it too crash landed at Gibraltar on 11th August.

By Autumn 1941 patrols well out into the Atlantic were routine and on 25th October Sqn Ldr Eagleton and his crew were on a search ahead of Convoy HG75 when a submarine was sighted. An escort was called in, which subsequently captured the Italian vessel Ferraris and this was scuttled by it's crew. On 21st December No.200 Group was disbanded and AHQ Gibraltar was formed as part of Coastal Command. This was a prelude to a build up in the strength of the air forces on the Rock, now recognised as a key base in the battle of the Atlantic. Around this time four of 202's Catalinas were sent to Singapore in great haste to provide a long range reconnaissance flight there. Of these aircraft, one only went as far as Koggala, Ceylon, whilst the remainder were transferred to 205 Sqn upon arrival in Singapore, this unit being particularly hard pressed at the time.

202 Sqn made few U-Boat sightings in the early part of 1942, but on 2nd May, Flt Lt Powell and his crew in Catalina C-Charlie caught U-Boat U-74 and dropped a complete stick of depth charges. The submarine was later sunk by two destroyers that had answered Powell's sighting report. As the Malta convoys were mounted from March 1942 onward, so 202's Cats were supplemented by others detached from 209, 240 and 413 Sqn as well as RAAF Sunderlands. Meanwhile Catalina AJ158 was attacked by two Vichy French Dewoitine D.520 fighters on 18th May. The Catalina was brought down in the sea 10 miles off Oran, the crew commanded by Flt Lt Bradley being rescued by a destroyer.

In the summer the Catalinas were joined on the squadron by Sunderlands for a while and activity built up with the prelude to the North African landings. This activity became very intense during November, missions being carried out to cover the huge incoming convoys and to provide anti-shipping cover for the invasion beaches at Algiers. During this period Catalinas AJ162, FP119 and FP124 were lost, whilst on 20th November, FP153 was shot down by anti-aircraft fire from a friendly convoy - one of those tragic accidents of war that tend to happen. An early instance of a U-Boat fighting back came on 19th October when Catalina G-George sighted one on the surface. As the aircraft dived to attack, the sub's crew opened up with machine guns and their very effective cannon. Slight evasive action was taken before a stick of eight 250lb Torpex depth charges were dropped and these straddled the enemy vessel. The sub disappeared leaving a large oil patch and wreckage behind it, the result being classified as "damaged". A different type of sortie was flown on 24th



*CATALINA VB, 'V', OF 202 SQN BEING TOWED ONTO THE SLIPWAY AT GIBRALTAR
(RAFM via PETER NOPS)*

October when a squadron Catalina picked up Brigadier General Mark Clark, Eisenhower's deputy, from a submarine after his clandestine trip to Algiers where he met French General Mast and other resistance leaders. A similar flight was made to collect General Giraud on 7th November, although unfortunately he fell into the water whilst transferring between the submarine and the Catalina!

Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, needed a tremendous effort from everyone based at Gibraltar, and the strength of 202 Sqn was increased to twelve Catalinas. On 2nd November the convoy transporting troops and equipment came within range of air cover from the Rock and both 202 and 210 Sqn flew a combined total of 1311 hours during the first two weeks of the month, more than double the norm. Despite all the effort, it was not until the following February that an attack was made on a U-Boat resulting in a sinking. On the 13th of that month, Catalina G-George along with two US Navy Catalinas, a Lockheed Ventura and the British destroyers Anthony and Wishart attacked U-761, captained by Commander Geider. The U-Boat blew up as a result of this attack. In August, W/O Longden depth charged another U-Boat, however, by this time it seemed that most of the U-Boats had been withdrawn from the area, and so 202 began flying long range meteorological sorties, named 'nocturnals'. The squadron also played an important part in the search for a 15 Group Halifax crew who

had been forced to ditch 750 miles from Gibraltar. An American destroyer eventually reached the crew after they had been located by a 202 aircraft.

The final submarine sighting from Gibraltar by 202 took place on 19th August 1944, when the crew of Catalina K obtained an ASV contact in bad weather. An attack was made but the results were not observed. On 3rd September 1944, 202 Sqn was ordered back to the UK, the last Cats leaving by early October. In its time at Gibraltar, 202 lost several Catalinas in accidents not attributable to enemy action. FP114 went missing on delivery between Lough Erne and Gibraltar in August 1943 whilst several others including AJ156, FP214 and JX258 crashed into high ground around Gibraltar and the Spanish mainland. Most unfortunate of all was FP237, hit by a drifting destroyer in Gibraltar harbour in December 1943 and damaged beyond repair.

202 Sqn's new task was to strengthen the maritime forces operating over the North Atlantic. The new base was to be Castle Archdale on the shores of Lough Erne in Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. The squadron collected 16 new Catalina IVs, each equipped with uprated radar mounted on top of the forward fuselage and a Leigh Light under the starboard wing. Operations began immediately, the first sortie being flown on 16th September. The bad winter weather of 1944/5 brought its toll of losses. Catalina

JX242/P crashed into the hills at Church Hill, Fermanagh, west of the home base on 20th November 1944, whilst on the night of 19/20th December JX208/F was lost along with its nine crew when it crashed into high ground, this time at Stradbally Mountain, Castlegregory. The wreckage of the latter aircraft remained on site until very recently - a local farmer eventually had to dispose of the wreck as his sheep were being poisoned after gnawing through the lead covered wiring.

With the end of the war in Europe patrol flights did not end, as it was not certain if all U-Boat commanders would respond to the German surrender instructions. On 9th May 1945, U-1058 was sighted flying surrender flags, the first of many similar vessels to make their way to Northern Ireland and Scottish ports. The last patrol was flown on 2nd June and 202 was disbanded on 12th June, thus ending the association of this unit with the Catalina. During the conflict the squadron was credited with the destruction of three submarines with a share in the victory over three more.

On 1st October 1946, 202 was reformed with Halifax meteorological reconnaissance aircraft and these were later superseded by Handley Page Hastings transports equipped for the same task. A change of role came in September 1964, when the squadron re-equipped with Westland Whirlwind helicopters, and embarked on the vital task of air-sea rescue. This is still carried out with Westland Sea Kings operated from Boulmer, Brawdy, Coltishall and Lossiemouth.

The author wishes to thank 202 Squadron RAF, for supplying basic data in the preparation of this article.

CAT CONTACT COLUMN

This is your chance to use the Newsletter to your own advantage. If you wish to make contact with an old comrade from your squadron or perhaps a lost relative who used to fly Cats or RAF flying boats why not drop the Cat Contact column a line - remember the membership is still increasing all the time.....

Warrant Officer Geoff Guy of 54 Greenidge Way, Oakley, Beds MK43 7SF, flew with 259 Sqn as a wireless operator/air gunner from December '43 to April '45. His main base was Dar-es-Salaam but they also ventured to Aden, the Seychelles, Comoro Islands, Mombassa, Madagascar, the Maldives and Ceylon. Unfortunately he is no longer in touch with

many members of 259 Sqn - are there any more of you out there?

Mr Ted Foster of 'Puffin', 6 Deeds Grove, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3NU, was NCO in charge of the Photographic section 265 Sqn and would like to hear from any former colleagues, especially his old friend Lionel Shearn. Ted has also made a request with respect to an association he is forming. Ted originally joined the RAF as a Boy Entrant photographer in 1937 and is looking to hold a reunion of all Boy Entrant photographers. Hence Ted would also like to hear from any ex-Boy Entrant photographers, RAF, of 1-8 Entries interested in forming an association. If so please write to Ted at the above address.

Mr H. Tennant of 5 South View, Hutton Rudby, Yarm, Cleveland TS15 0HE, would like to hear from any members of 240 Sqn, especially those who served with the Squadron during 1944 on detachment to Madras, South India.

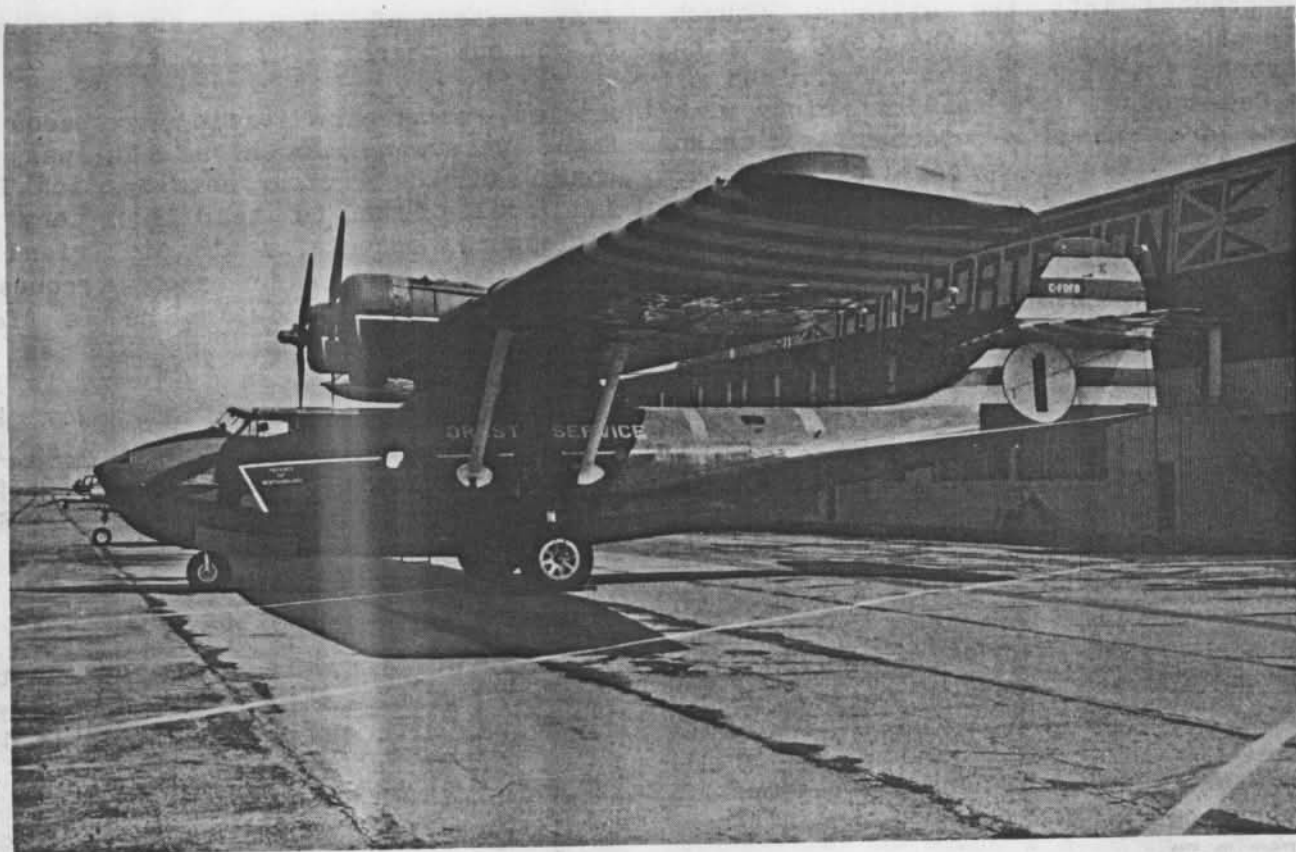
Mr Jim Park of Oakfields House, Binswood Ave, Leamington Spa CV32 5SE, trained at Pensacola during 1941/42 then with 45AT Group at Dorval and subsequently flew with 240 Sqn at Redhills, Madras. Mr Park would like to hear from any colleagues who remember him from any of these locations.

The Editors would appreciate updates to the relative successes of these appeals - thanks.

EASTERN CANADA CANSOS

Last May our Technical Researcher, Ron Mak, had the opportunity of visiting Eastern Canada which just happens to be the home for the largest remaining population of Cansos in the world. For those who do not know, the Canadian's refer to all Catalinas as the Canso although, strictly speaking this name should only refer to those actually built in Canada. This is Ron's report.

Whilst on my tour I was able to visit the Air Division of the Newfoundland and Labrador Forest Service at St Johns, Newfoundland. They still operate six Cansos for fire fighting in their two provinces during the summer months, the aircraft being split between several bases. Three Cansos are based at Gander in the Northern part of Newfoundland, one at St Johns, one at Deer Lake near the Gros Morne National Park and one at Goose Bay, Labrador. The latter airfield was built as a polar route ferry station for trans-atlantic ferry aircraft during World War II, and is still used as such today.



**NEWFOUNDLAND FOREST SERVICE'S IMMACULATE PBX-5A, C-FDFB SEEN AT ST JOHNS
NEWFOUNDLAND (RON MAK)**

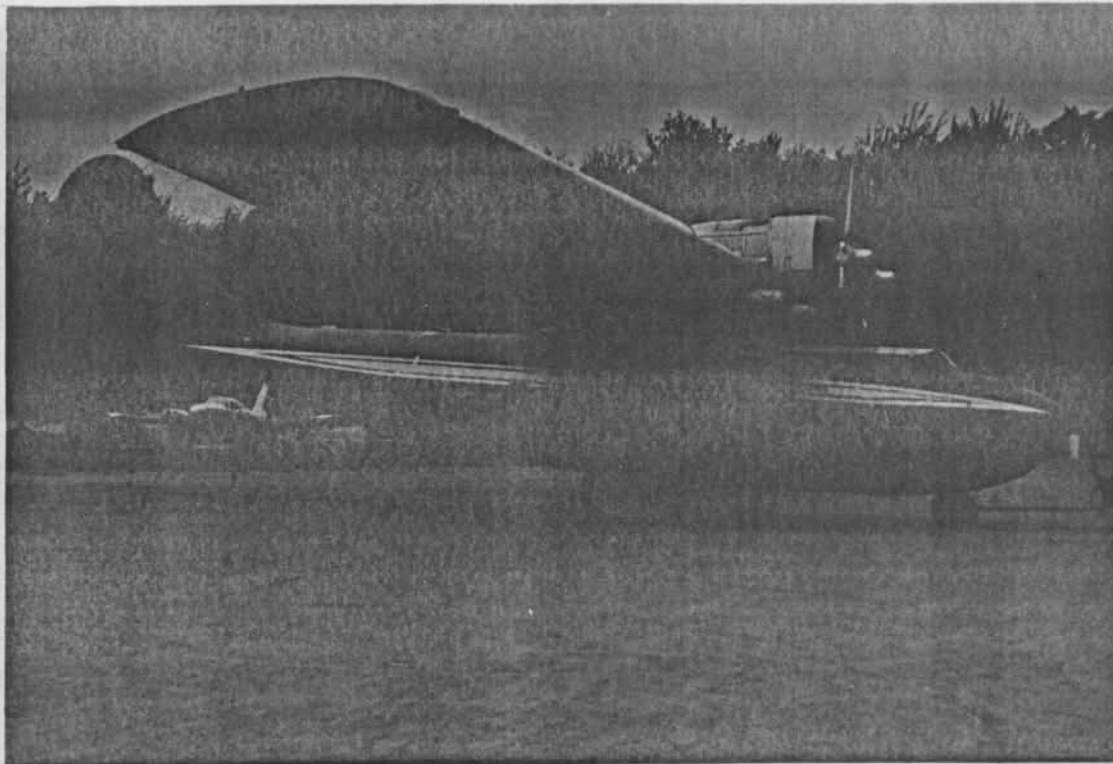
During the long winter months, the Cansos are gathered together at St Johns and Gander in very modern and well equipped maintenance hangars to be tended to by the Chief Engineer, Robert Gosse (a Catalina Society member of course!) and his professional staff. Robert told me that many of his engineers are getting itchy fingers awaiting the arrival of two new water bombers to supplement the Cansos. These aircraft, the familiar Canadair CL-215s, are of course purpose built water bombers and their delivery was imminent at the time of my visit. Catalina fans will however be pleased to know that the current plans are to retain the Cansos well into the 1990s.

The six Cansos are a mixture of ex-US Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force examples, all fitted with 1200hp Pratt and Whitney R-1830-92 powerplants. Normal cruise speed is 120 knots with a mission duration of four hours. During this time the Cansos will be required to pick up water as ammunition to be used against the forest fires. The water capacity of the fuselage tanks totals 800 gallons (3637 litres), and in a scooping distance of just under 2000ft the tanks take fifteen seconds to fill. The aircraft are painted in a very smart bright red and green high visibility colour scheme.

Water bombing is an extremely dangerous

flying environment, the aircraft being flown to the limit of their flight envelope and thus like all water bomber operations it is perhaps not surprising that the Newfoundland Government has had a few accidents over the years, thankfully without serious injury to the crews. In December 1980, PBX-5A C-FIGJ suffered an in-flight engine failure and was substantially damaged in the subsequent force-landing near Sherbrooke, Quebec. This particular aircraft is no longer in the fleet. More recently in May 1985, C-FOFI sank whilst picking up water from a small lake near Goose Bay. The Canso was salvaged from the lake no less than 52 days after the accident and, following some repairs to the nose section and engines at the site, the powerplants were started up and the 'boat flown off the lake to allow more permanent repairs to be carried out on the aircraft. C-FOFI was subsequently back in action during the 1986 fire-fighting season and remains in the current fleet, a tribute to the aircraft's inherent strength and the fine engineering ability of Robert Gosse's team. Incidentally, the lake in which the Canso sank was one of a million lakes in the area and was unnamed. However it was christened 'Canso Lake' by the recovery crew.

Just prior to my visit, on May 6th to be precise, C-FCRP fell victim to a brake failure on landing at Gander. Both pilot and



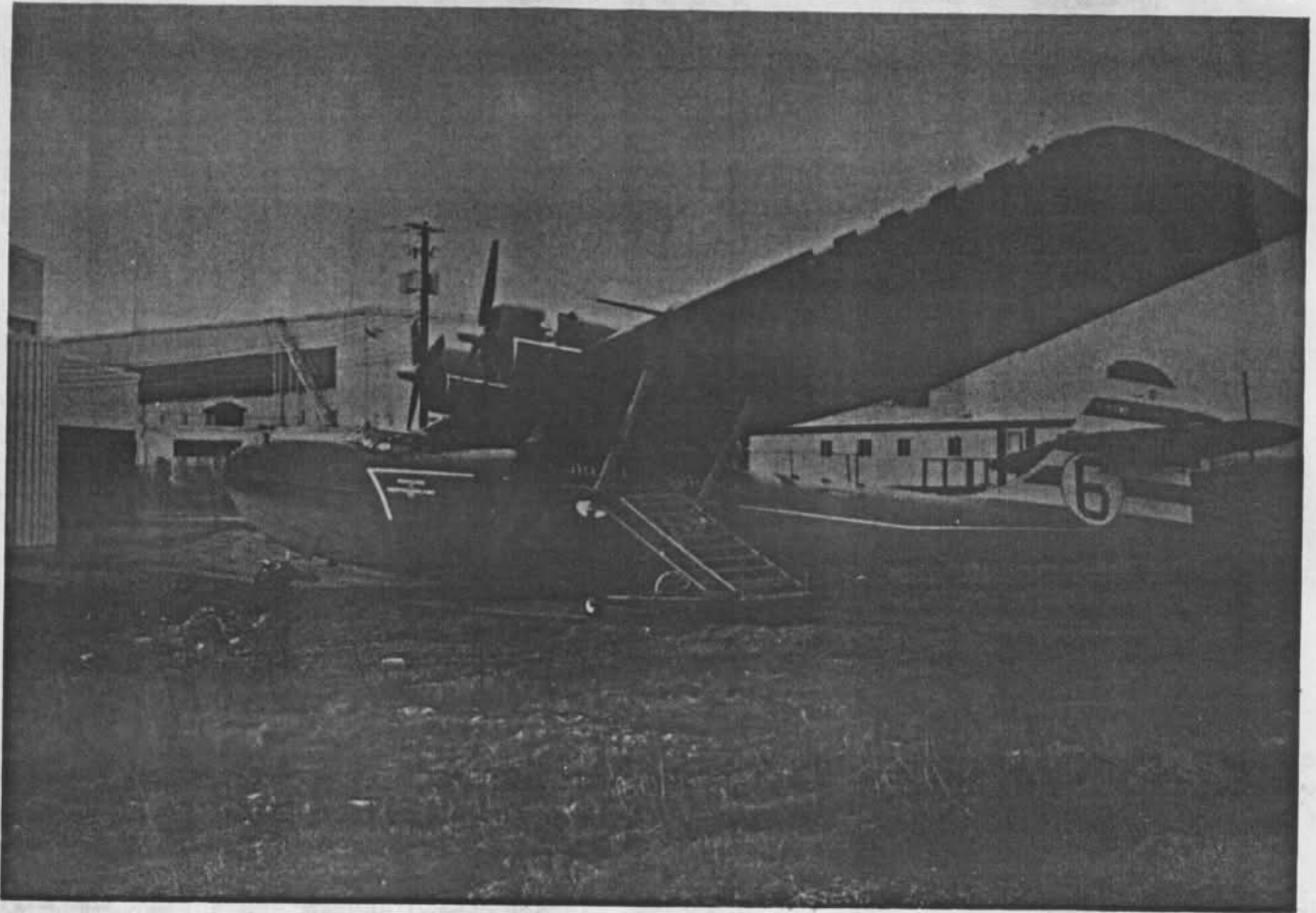
**AVALON'S ONLY OPERATIONAL CANSO, CF-1ZZ, SEEN AT PARRY SOUND IN MAY 1987
(RON MAK)**

co-pilot's brake pedals "went to the floor" and the Canso veered off the runway and down a ditch where it came to rest in front of it's hangar minus the nose wheel (see photo). During my visit I was lucky enough to be invited to be a passenger on a test flight of one their immaculately presented Cansos C-FDFB, captained by Eli Squires and ably supported by Co-pilot Ray Melanson. We flew over Conception Bay and the surrounding area spotting many icebergs as well as hundreds of lakes dotted in amongst the barren tundra style landscape. I would like to especially thank Robert Gosse and Randy Cross for making my visit to their operation so interesting.

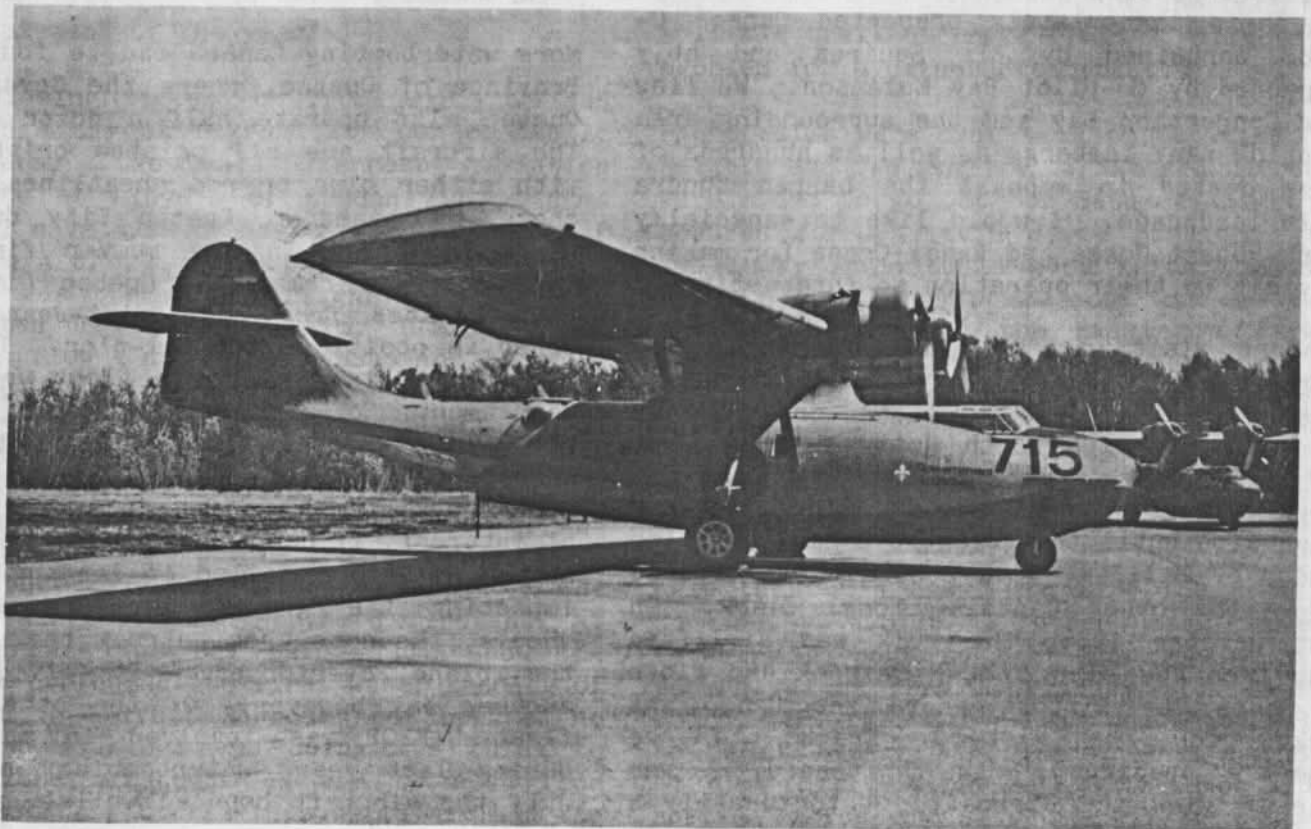
A short visit was also made to Goose Bay where CF-HFL of Eastern Provincial Airways is parked on a taxiway. This Canso crashed back in 1957, 52 miles North West of Goose Bay. The three man crew escaped safely from the wreck which subsequently remained on the crash site until the Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum of Halifax, Nova Scotia, were offered it by the owner Captain Lionel Clark. On 27th October 1986, the hulk was airlifted away from the site by CAF Chinook and flown to Goose Bay Airport where the Canso was parked for the winter. Thanks to the museum's president, Mike Whitehead, I was able to view the aircraft. Unfortunately a lot of parts have been removed from the aircraft, along with all of it's identification plates, either by Eastern Provincial after the crash or by souvenir

hunters. At the present time the aircraft is still at Goose Bay where the ACAM are proceeding to dismantle it prior to shipment to Nova Scotia. A full account of this retrieval operation will appear in a forthcoming issue of the Catalina News.

More waterbombing Cansos can be found in the Province of Quebec, where the Government of Quebec also operate half a dozen examples. The aircraft are all painted bright yellow with either blue or red cheatlines. All of these are based at Quebec City during the winter months. In the summer fire season four aircraft remain at Quebec City whilst one operates from Lac Saint-Jean and the other is positioned to Val-d'Or. The Cansos are only part of a larger fleet used by the Government of Quebec, which includes seventeen Canadair CL-215s for waterbombing and two Fairchild F-27s and a DC-3 for transport. Of their Canso fleet, C-FPQM is of interest, if only for it's resilience! In August 1962, it stalled on landing and after impacting the ground hard on it's main wheels, the nose wheel struck the runway and the plane overturned. It lived to fly another day however. Of the others in the fleet C-FPQP was involved in an accident during last years waterbombing season. In July the aircraft bounced whilst undertaking a water pick up on Lac Cache, Quebec and subsequently nosed under, unfortunately with one fatality to an observer on-board, thus emphasising the dangers in this form of operation.



THE UNFORTUNATE RESTING PLACE OF C-FCRP AT GANDER AFTER IT'S BRAKE FAILURE
(RANDY CROSS via RON MAK)



GOVERNMENT OF QUEBEC WATERBOMBER, C-FPQO, SEEN AT QUEBEC CITY AWAITING THE
NEXT FIRE FIGHTING (RON MAK)

Another big Canso operator who readers of this journal will be more familiar with, is of course Avalon Aviation from Parry Sound, Ontario, the company from which Plane Sailing purchased their blisters. Avalon's fleet numbers eight aircraft, but at the moment the company seems to be keeping a very low profile. At the time of my visit to Georgian Bay Airfield, Parry Sound, only one Canso was operational, C-FIZZ. Five other examples could be seen in open storage minus their propellers and it seems they are all unofficially for sale. One other member of their fleet is also in open storage but on

the other side of the Atlantic, namely at Exeter in Devon (see Catalina News No 5). It's fate also appears uncertain although rumours persist that it will soon be returned to flying status.

If any Catalina Society members intend to make a trip to this part of Canada and would like to visit the operators mentioned in this article please do not hesitate to drop me a line and I will provide you with more detailed information as to their location and who you should contact.

FLEETLIST:

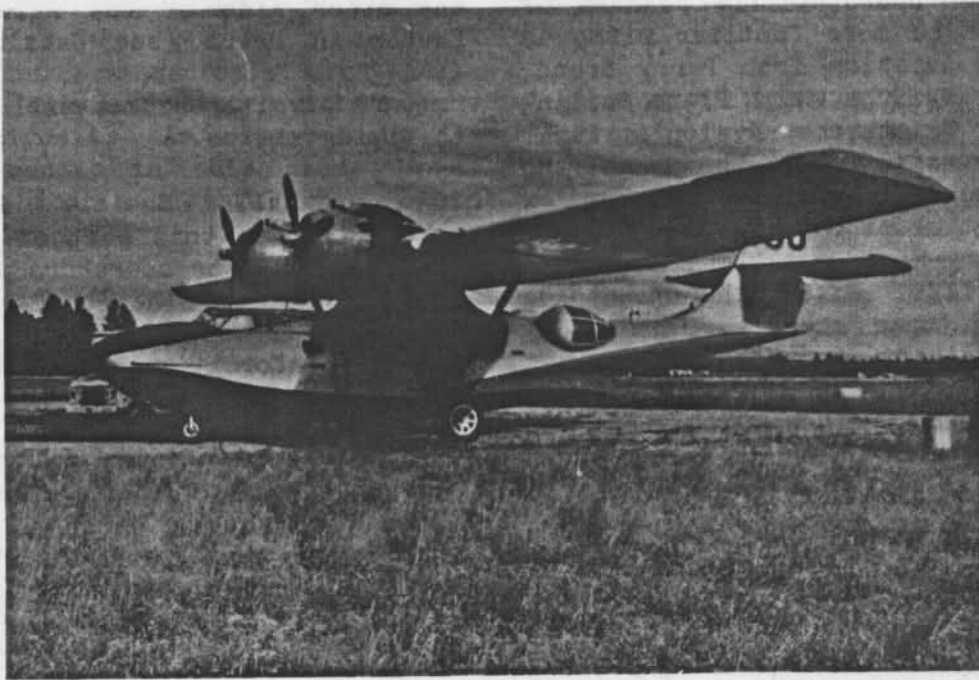
Reg No.	Model	Const. No	Remarks
<u>Newfoundland and Labrador Forestry Service</u>			
C-FCRP	PBY-5A	CV-271	Ex RCAF 9837
C-FDFB	PBY-5A	CV-605	Ex 44-34094, NC65715, TF-RVG
C-FIZU	PBY-6A	2019	Ex Bu.46655, N10014. Fitted with a -5A rudder
C-FNJC	PBY-5A	CV-430	Ex 44-33929
C-FNJE	PBY-5A	CV-437	EX RCAF 11094
C-FOFI	PBY-5A	CV-343	Ex RCAF 11047
<u>Government of Quebec</u>			
C-FPQF	PBY-5A	CV-333	Ex RCAF 11042
C-FPQK	PBY-5A	CV-264	Ex RCAF 9830
C-FPQL	PBY-5A	CV-417	Ex RCAF 11084
C-FPQM	PBY-5A	CV-425	Ex RCAF 11088, CF-GMS
C-FPQO	PBY-5A	CV-427	Ex RCAF 11089
C-FPQP	PBY-5A	CV-407	Ex RCAF 11079
<u>Avalon Aviation</u>			
C-FCRR	PBY-5A	21996	Ex RCAF 9767
C-FGLX	PBY-5A	CV-560	Ex 44-34049
C-FHHR	PBY-5A	300	Ex Bu.2459, NC18446, N18446
C-FHNF	PBY-5A	225	Ex Bu.64097, N7082C, F-ZBAW
C-FHNNH	PBY-6A	?	Ex Bu.64017, N2846D, N5555H, F-ZBAV
C-FIZO	PBY-6A	2009	Ex Bu.46645, N10013. Fitted with a PBY-5A rudder
C-FIZZ	PBY-6A	?	Ex Bu.64064. Fitted with a PBY-5A rudder.
CF-PIU	PBY-6A	?	Ex Bu.64092, N6681C

CATALINA PICTURE PAGE

Gerald White of Spokane, Washington State, USA submitted two photos of his 'local' Catalina waterbombing operator for inclusion in the Picture Page.

The Catalina concerned, N85U, is operated by the American arm of Flying Fireman, the well known Canadian waterbombing company. The

aircraft is based at Deer Park Airport during the summer fire-fighting season and is laid up at an airfield in Tacoma during the winter awaiting the resumption of its fire-fighting contract. Pilot Eric Johnson told Gerald that this particular Catalina's water-carrying capacity is 1500 gallons and the local rivers and lakes provide ample pick-up zones. As can be seen from the photos, N85U is a tall-tailed PBY-6A and has been



retrofitted with two Wright 2600s like the 'Killer Cat'. The identification number '85' is carried in black on the tail. This is the aircraft's fire-fighting call sign which must be visible to the fire-fighting crews on the ground as well as in the air hence their large type. The colour scheme is basically silver overall with high visibility orange undersides, wingtips and cowlings. Due to the high serviceability requirements demanded of the fire-fighting contracts issued by the U.S Dept of Forestry, there is no question that this aircraft is in good condition, although the pictures also confirm this.

For the record N85U, was originally built in the summer of 1945 for the U.S Navy as serial no. Bu 64041 and following civilianization, was registered N6453C. It has subsequently enjoyed (!) a long career as a fire-bomber, being operated by several Californian outfits including Sonora Flying Service and Hemet Valley Flying Services. Later sold in Canada, she became part of the large Catalina fleet operated by Flying Fireman of Victoria, B.C. She flew as C-GFFI until 1986 when she was re-registered in the U.S with Flying Fireman Inc. of Spanaway, Washington State to operate a U.S fire-fighting contract.

