



The Old Fliers' Group

Attached to the Royal Aero Club of WA (Inc).

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Last Meeting

The May meeting attracted just over 100 members who heard Rob Vaughan Johnson cover additional material regarding his previous talk on life as a helicopter pilot in Uganda. He told us of fish poachers, smugglers and more stories of his amazing experiences flying for the Uganda Police Air Wing – never a dull moment.

Speaker of the Day

The Speaker of the Day at the last meeting was Reg Adkins who delivered a most interesting story on the fate of four of the five Catalinas that were used by Qantas on the Double Sunrise flights to Ceylon during WWII.

Under the terms of the Lend Lease Agreement, the Australian Government had the option of destroying the aircraft or, alternatively, purchasing them for £80,000 each. At that price the, their fate was sealed.



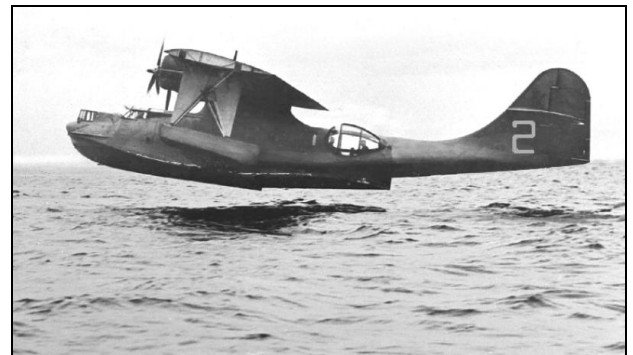
A Catalina in flight.

Four Catalinas were scuttled off Rottneest while the fifth was sunk off Sydney. The aircraft had been moored at Crawley for some months while they awaited their fate. RAAF servicemen, Arthur Jones and Jonnie Evans were assigned the task of making them airworthy for their last flight to their final destination.

The first to go was *Antares Star*. On 17th January 1946, after a thorough service and a test flight, she was flown to a point about thirteen miles west-south-west of Rottneest; there she landed alongside a waiting RAAF crash boat. Two charges of explosive were placed in the Catalina, one in the nose and the second in the blister. The demolition crew, Jones and Evans, rowed away in time to see the Cat exploded, break in two, and sink.

Three other Cats followed in a similar manner. *Rigel Star* on 4 February, *Vega Star* on 14 February and *Altair Star* on 27 February 1946.

The last to travel west of Rottneest, *Altair Star*, presented the most problems. A wing broke off and refused to sink. It took a great deal of hacking with a crash axe to dispatch it to the bottom of the ocean.



Antares Star at touchdown.

The fifth Catalina of the Qantas group, *Spica Star*, was scuttled off Sydney in March 1946. It was a sad end to a classic group of wonderful aircraft that served us well. Thanks to Reg for the detailed story.

Future Speakers

Do you have a story to tell? If you do, let me know at the next meeting.

Winjeel Display and Talk

Two restored Winjeels were on display outside the club during our last meeting. Members were invited by Denis Macneall to inspect them at the conclusion of proceedings – many did and were much impressed.

Denis will return, this month, as Speaker of the Day, to tell us about those aircraft that was designed and built in Australia by CAC and introduced as an ab initio to advanced trainer by the RAAF in 1955.

The next meeting will be held at the Royal Aero Club at noon on Friday 24 June. Note in your diary now. It is the last Friday of June, but some may be tricked by it occurring so early. Come and hear Dennis speak and enjoy a relaxing lunch.

Hope to see you there.

Brian Hernan