

# Contents

## Book A

- i. Title
- i Foreword
- iii References and Acknowledgements
- iv Acknowledgements
- v - vi Vessel Types
- vii-viii Contents
- 1 The RAAF Marine Section Point Cook.
- 4 Advance Operation Bases
- 5 Escape from Tanambogo Island, Solomon Islands.
- 11 Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.
- 19 RAAF Marine Workshops.
- 23 RAAF Base Rathmines, Lake Macquarie, NSW.
- 26 Arrival of Catalinas.

## Book B

- 31 John Lewis Couch, Engineer (FMBC).
- 35 Oro Bay, Air Sea Rescue Boat 08.3 "Mary Ann".
- 52 Mooring Buoys
- 53 Millingimbi and Melville Bay.
- 61 Cairns Bound, Jim Hewett.
- 72 RAAF Base Cairns, Frank Purcell.

## Book C

- 77 06.9 "Betty Joan", Ketch.
- 89 Karumba Marine Section.
- 95 06.11 "Yalata", Ketch.
- 102 Sailing Vessels and RAAF Radar Units.
- 103 03.13 New Guinea Air Sea Rescue Patrols.
- 108 Trawler 016.3 in New Guinea.
- 111 Ship and Boat Building.

## Book D

- 119 Trobriand Islands 04.2 Air Sea Rescue.
- 125 03.1 Torpedo Recovery Boat.
- 131 015.09 "Una V", Ketch.
- 137 02.2 Air Sea Rescue Boat.
- 143 S.S."Wanaka".
- 147 RAAF Townsville Marine Section.
- 153 RAAF Lake Boga, No.1 Flying Boat Repair Base.
- 158 RAAF Evans Head Marine Section.
- 160 RAAF Base Bowen
- 162 Other Flying Boats
- 163 Brisbane Capital of Queensland
- 170 Martin Mariner Ditches in Storm.

## Book E

- 173 Defence & Offence: RAAF Bases in Australia's Nth.
- 175 RAAF Base Truscott & West Bay Marine Section.
- 191 RAAF Base Doctors Gully.
- 201 06.10 Schooner "Waimana".
- 211 Marine Section Merauke, Dutch New Guinea.
- 217 06.14 "The Ruptured Duck" Steel Supply Ship.
- 226 Marine Section Borneo Campaign.
- 234 Royal Australian Navy's, 925 "Air Mercy", A.S.R.
- 236 R.A.N "Air Boats"

## Book F

- 247 Fremantle Marine Section
- 259 RAAF Base Townsville
- 265 West Coast Marine Sections
- 269 Catalina, Crew and Passengers Rescued.
- 272 Saint George's Basin
- 276 Jervis Bay
- 280 Cockatoo Island "SHE CAT"
- 282 East Arm Darwin
- 291 Admiralty Islands, Manus, Los Negros
- 293 Paynesville Victoria

## Book G

- 295 Japanese Rabaul Surrender
  - 301 Disposal of Marine Section Boats
  - 304 RAAF Marine Sections in the Post War period
  - 307 Interim RAAF Port Moresby
  - 309 Morotai
  - 313 Timor, East Arm, Borneo, and Rathmines
  - 319 Point Cook
  - 323 Townsville
  - 329 Cocos Atol, the International Air Port
  - 339 Neutral Bay
  - 349 Cairns Memorial
  - 351 Epilogue
  - 352 About the Author
  - 353 Roll of Honour
- Inventory of RAAF Marine Section Vessels

## Fremantle Marine Section

Bill Lucas (later FLTLT) enlisted in the RAAF during 1941 and was posted to Melbourne to undergo a six weeks course (No.22) in Administration and Special Duties. There he joined 300 young men at Ormond College where 20% would not pass the Course. On Graduation as a Pilot Officer (with a minuscule 1/8 inch wide ring!!) Bill found himself posted to RAAF Rathmines. Those in the know informed him he was going to the RAAF "Country Club". There he spent many months being trained in the handling of Marine Section Boats and attending to the flying boats.

He was selected to take charge of one of two 45-foot luxury launches taken over by the RAAF from their owners.

"Norlin" and "Mirrob" were used between Newcastle and Sydney for training Marine Section Personnel. On one occasion Bill well remembered a very colourful character, Theo Haltane, who had been the Skipper of "Larrakia" an armed Customs Boat, that operated in the Northern Territory. Although in the Marine Section Theo always wore a Navy Uniform, used an Army slouch hat and carried an American .45 automatic pistol.

After six months at Rathmines Bill Lucas was posted to Air Board and interviewed by the Director of Technical Training. Training in airport procedures was then undertaken followed by a posting back to Perth. His immediate assignment was "impressing" suitable power boats to be used in supplying RAAF Radar Unit Stations scattered along the Western Australian coast.

From within ANA House in Perth (where he had enlisted) Bill impressed some twelve boats, which were not all pleasure boats. Pearlina Luggers and fishing boats were taken over by the RAAF, one being "Southern Cross" owned by Keith Stephenson and the Italian fishing boat "Princess Yolanda", which had a large Hornsby Diesel motor.

Bill spent a great deal of time on "Princess Yolanda" with one of his crew being Johnny Alver, a pre-war professional boxer. Johnny was a very muscular athlete, who thought nothing about diving overboard and descending to 30 feet to retrieve a snagged anchor.

Japan had just entered the War so Bill had to plan patrols along the West coast as far away as Geraldton, regardless of the weather conditions. The "Princess Yolanda" was very slow, but very seaworthy in seas that on occasions could be very dangerous but it was necessary to have her replaced for this type of work.

The Arcus Brothers in Perth were at that time building two 60-foot Torpedo Recovery vessels Type 03. each with four Chrysler Petrol Engines. Bill was appointed Skipper of the newly launched 03.6 Torpedo Recovery Boat and one of his first jobs was to transport a load of diesel to Jurien Bay Radar Station, a difficult place to negotiate because of many reefs and dangerous seas.



015.15 "Princess Yolanda" operated between Fremantle and Geraldton until a new fast Torpedo Recovery Boat was built by the Arcus Company in Perth. She then operated between Fremantle and Rottnest Island taking supplies, equipment and personnel



The steel plating on the Target Boat made it top heavy so PLTOFF Bill Lucas applied to have it removed then operated with the target being towed.

(Ron McGraw)



Frank Del Rosso (2<sup>nd</sup> left) the owner of “Princess Yolanda” said goodbye to his Italian Crew the day he went off to join the Australian Army. They went into an Internment Camp. (Frank Del Rosso)



Corporal Frank Del Rosso suddenly found he was seconded to the RAAF as Skipper on his own boat to operate between Fremantle, Geraldton and Rottnest Island. He also acted as Marine Pilot to introduce PLTOFF Bill Lucas to the dangerous west coast of small bays hidden behind reefs. ( F.Del Rosso)

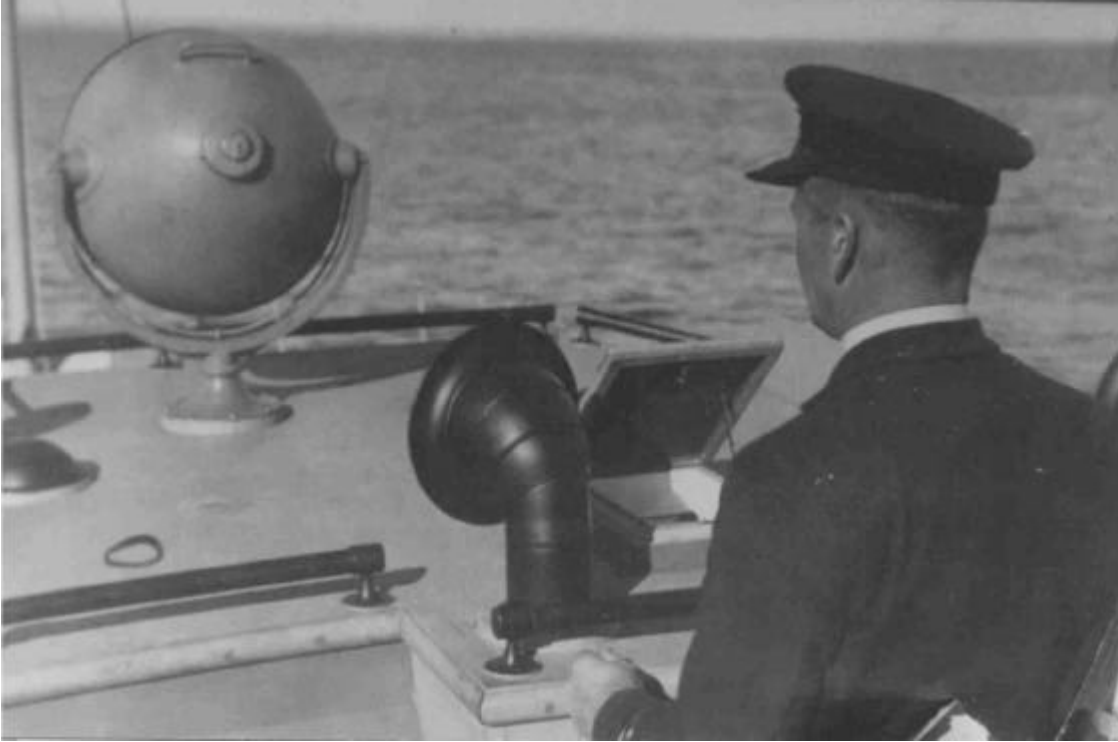
Italian men, who were not Naturalized British Subjects, had all been interned by the Army because Italy had entered the war on the side of Germany. Bill Lucas desperately needed the assistance of one of the Italian Fishermen, who knew the Western Australian coastline intimately. Fortunately Bill had, before the war, struck up a friendship with Mr Christofono Del Rosso, and his son Frank at Rottnest Island so Bill Lucas approached the Australian Army to have Corporal Frank (Francisco) Del Rosso released and attached to the RAAF Marine Section on a temporary basis.

While operating as a professional fisherman in Geraldton, with his boat the "Princess Yolanda" an ex pearling lugger, Frank Del Rosso was informed that the Commonwealth Government required it for Defence Duties. Soon afterwards Frank joined the Australian Army, although he volunteered to join the RAN having served on the Reserve.

One morning Corporal Frank Del Rosso was told by Major Symonds, of No.12 Company, to pack his gear because an Officer in the RAAF was coming to pick him up. Much to his surprise the Officer was FLGOFF Bill Lucas, who took him back to the Marine Section H.Q. located in Perth at the foot of Mill Street on the Swan River. Bill explained to Frank that he was short of Skippers, and his second surprise for the day was when he discovered he was to be in charge of the lugger "Princess Yolanda", his old boat.

A RAAF driver then took Frank back to Fremantle Fishermen's Harbour and once more stepped aboard and met Allan, the Engineer. He immediately set about making the boat ship shape in readiness for its future role. On the bow was painted the RAAF Roundel and No.015.15, and no doubt Frank re-examined the 30 Hp diesel motor he had installed in 1939 for the Shark Bay fishing season. The large two ton ice box had been removed so there was a large hold to store cargo. Several days later a consignment of stores was loaded aboard for delivery to Rottnest Island. This became a regular service for 015.15 "Princess Yolanda".

On one occasion Frank could not unload so he moored along side the Army Jetty and while there he heard a cry for help. He looked over both side of the jetty but could see no one so rushed to the beach and from there he spotted an arm above the water. A shout brought Allan, the Engineer topsides and when he saw the person in the water dived in and held him up. Frank rushed back on board and threw Allan a line and dragged them both ashore. An ambulance responded to a telephone call made from a telephone on the jetty while Allan attended to the patient. A week later both Frank and Allan received a thank you from the fellow they saved, who explained he was a regular swimmer but had developed a severe cramp.



The placid waters of the Swan River was a complete contrast to the rough seas often experienced by the Marine Section Boats & Crews as they kept the secret Radar Units supplied with essential supplies and personnel. (C. Symons)



The placid waters of the Swan River was a complete contrast to the rough seas often experienced by the Marine Section Boats and Crews as they kept the secret Radar Units supplied with essential supplies and personnel. (C. Symons)

During this period on the Princess Yolanda Frank decided he wanted to get married so he arranged with Allan to telephone him at a Perth Hotel, where he would be on his honeymoon, if a cargo should arrive. After a consignment was loaded Allan made the telephone call and the trip to Rottnest was made the following morning.

03.6 Torpedo Recovery Boat was handed over to the Marine Section from the Perth Builders, Arcus Brothers, to undergo trials. These shake down cruises went on for two weeks not only to make sure every thing was working correctly but for the Crew to become expert at handling this very fast, four-engine boat, for the role she was destined to perform throughout the war.

The first task allotted to the 03.6 was to deliver a consignment of supplies and diesel fuel to the secret RAAF Radar Bases along the WA coast. It was in the role of marine pilot and navigator that Frank's expertise as a fisherman was used for he could show the way to enter the very few, but dangerous bays on this W.A. coast. FLGOFF Bill Lucas had a great deal to learn from Frank about this very reef strewn coast, with often dangerous seas running when going into places like Lancelin and Jurien Bay.

Frank's time with the Marine Section was about to end, although Bill Lucas desperately tried to have him made permanent but the Army wanted him back. One of his last jobs for the Marine Section was to bring down to Fremantle from Geraldton two 30-foot fishing boats, the "Derna" and the "Hood". Frank took Allan as his Engineer on one boat while Johnny Lavara and his engineer took the other. Because of stiff south westerlies blowing Frank hugged the inside reefs for the trip.

On the first trip north to the Port of Geraldton the Crew of 03.6 T.R.B. was given a Reception by the City Council. Bill Lucas asked of Frank to make sure their departure was to be at daybreak the morning following. By the time the Crew came on deck 06.6 was well down the coast under the control of Frank. Delivery of mail and change over personnel to the Radar Stations was an important function, for the boat was probably the only form of communication in these remote locations. A constant supply of freshly cooked fish was result of having a professional fisherman on board. Frank returned to the Army after what he described as an enjoyable interlude.

An essential role of an Air Force Officer was a person who diligently attended to "paper work" of forms as required by Regulations, which Bill tended to ignore or defer while he got on with the important part of his job. WGCDR Valston Hancock (later C.A.S.) called Bill into his office and delivered a severe "dressing down" for making many decisions without completing the required forms, but this was followed by congratulations on a job well done.



When 03.7, another new Torpedo Recovery Boat ended trials, FLGOFF Frank Cable was posted in to ferry her to Darwin. Unfortunately 03.7 was rocked by an explosion while refuelling at Exmouth and sank. With the assistance of U.S. "Chanticleer", an 80 foot T.R.B. the wrecked 03.7 was recovered. These details were recorded in Bill Lucas' memoirs. (Chris Symons)



Bill Lucas (left) with his Crew of 03.6 the day of his departure to Townsville (Queensland). His period in Western Australia had been extremely busy in establishing the Marine Section. (Bill Lucas)

The early successes of the conquering Japanese Forces throughout the region to Australia's North created a great deal of apprehension in the Defence Authorities yet the general public was kept in the dark through strict censorship. The sudden appearance of American Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen in Perth and Fremantle tended to give some degree of security in our defence. U.S. submarines and their "Mother Ships", the "Pelius", "Orion" and "Euralyia", American and Dutch warships together with Royal Navy Submarines and HMS "Maidstone", along with warships of the R.N and RAN Ships, gave a sense of security.

Submarines could be seen tied up to their fully equipped repair vessels being prepared for their dangerous patrols to attack the Japanese. On the Swan River near the City of Perth, Catalina Flying Boats were constantly taking off and landing with their flight paths often directly over the City.

In Crawley Bay the Americans had two powerful 63-foot Air Sea Rescue Motor Boats Skippered by Charles Martin and Calvin Coolidge (a gifted pianist). On one occasion Bill Lucas was asked by Charles Martin to act as Marine Pilot on an Air Sea Rescue mission to look for an aircraft that had come down in the sea in the vicinity of Busselton. A stiff gale was blowing as they passed through the submarine defence boom in Fremantle Harbour at midnight. In pitch darkness they jumped from wave to wave in the four hour trip but although they made an extensive search off the coast no sighting of the downed aircraft was made.

Back in Perth a FLGOFF Frank Cable, a Sydney Lawyer and a member of the Marine Section was posted to Perth to take command of the new 03.7 Torpedo Recovery Boat and take it to Darwin. In due course this 03.7 Boat arrived in Exmouth and while being refuelled it blew up and was completely wrecked and finally sank in 30 feet of water. Bill Lucas immediately flew to Exmouth when he received the signal reporting the accident. To compound the damage thousands of .5 machine gun ammunition had exploded when the 03.7 caught fire. It is believed that the kerosene refrigerator was the cause of the explosion. At the time there were many rumours as to where this accident occurred as well as what had caused the explosion but Bill Lucas in his memoirs provided the explanation.

On Bill's arrival he had large drums attached to the hull of the sunken boat then air was pumped into them to raise the crippled boat but this was not successful. When Bill heard that the Americans had an 80 foot Torpedo Recovery Boat, "Chanticleer" at Onslow, he contacted the Skipper and requested assistance. The "Chanticleer" had no difficulty in raising the bullet riddled and burnt vessel to the surface where it was loaded onto a barge and taken back to Fremantle. A brand new boat on its first delivery voyage destroyed.



The heavy duty lifting hoist of a Torpedo Recovery Boat can be more clearly seen on 03.4 (Alf Wilson)



03.6 with a load of U.S. practice Torpedoes, that had been recovered from being launched from submerged United States Submarines based in Fremantle Harbour. (Bill Lucas)

One very dangerous job that befell Bill was as Skipper of the Marine Section 40-foot Target Boat, powered by three engines and protected by steel plating. Only two narrow slits in the plating gave forward vision so with all this top heavy plating there was the ever present danger of the boat capsizing if a turn was attempted at speed which would give the Crew little chance of survival. After much correspondence it was finally agreed that the armour plating could be removed and a target towed behind the boat. Aircraft from RAAF Base Pearce carried out bombing practice in Cockburn Sound off Fremantle. Whether by poor bombing, or intent, bombs on occasion, came very close to the boat.

The Americans were having problems with their Torpedo Recovery Boat, "The Chanticleer" so Bill was asked to assist. Departure from Fremantle Port usually took place at midnight so as to rendezvous with HMAS "Adelaide" some 25 miles north of Fremantle. Although Bill and his Crew knew that submarines were lurking below they rarely saw one. The "Adelaide" took evasive action from the submarines so the sighting of the torpedo wake was made difficult for it was the task of the 03.6 to get to the torpedo before it sank. The yellow practice torpedo would float for a certain length of time with its bow upright. MBC Jonny Alver had the task of attaching a mooring to the ring on the nose of the torpedo then he would climb aboard and slip a noose over until it was in the balanced position. The crane on the TRB would then lift the torpedo on board. Jonny Alver's skill in this work is even more remarkable when you consider the weather and the seas that can be experienced in this region. Up to five torpedoes could be carried on the aft cockpit much to the delight of the US Base Repair Ships.

Bill took great delight in being able to show the US onlookers his ability to manoeuvre his 03.6 Torpedo Recovery Boat in between the submarines moored to the Mother Ship using the three engines. This required a great deal of skill so as not to cause any minor bumping against the subs.

On one occasion Bill and his Crew had just retrieved the last of the practice torpedoes when for the first time the US Navy's largest attack submarine "Blue Fin" (3500 tons) surfaced along side of the TRB. The sudden appearance of this giant ship gave them quite a start for it had never previously occurred, and from the Coning Tower, a figure appeared and shouted down:

"Did you get all our torpedoes?"

Bill replied in the affirmative, which was followed by a short conversation and ended with a siren sounded. Within a minute this light blue painted ship had disappeared leaving a gigantic whirlpool.



The Crew of 03.6 after FLGOFF Bill Lucas was posted is Slim Turner (left) who was later drowned at Exmouth Gulf while serving in the Marine Section. (C.Symons)



Jack Sue, DCM & U.S. 3 Star Citation, served for a short period on 03.6 then volunteer for the I.A.S. (Inter Allied Services) later changed to S.R.D. Services Reconnaissance Services) and later "Z" Special Unit. Jack received his D.C.M. for over six months behind Japanese lines in Borneo where he witnessed the notorious "Death Marches" & was there for the last large sea borne landings by Australians at Labuan. Jack's U.S. Submarine Citation was awarded for his time with the U.S. Submarines "Tuna" and "Bream".

(Jack Sue)



Jack Sue (with tie) had just joined the Crew of 03.6 when Warrant Officer Reg Cox was the Coxswain.

(Jack Sue)

## **Townsville Posting**

Just prior to leaving Fremantle and Perth in mid 1943 two young Air Crew Trainees, Ted Harding and Bert Motteram, from No.5 Initial Training School, Clontarf, approached Bill Lucas with a request to join the RAAF Marine Section. This request brought about their posting to Rathmines and their subsequent posting to Marine Section, Merauke, on the south coast of New Guinea.

In Townsville Bill saw for the first time the results of the war against the Japanese with the constant flow of aircraft landing at RAAF Base Garbut, and the Flying Boats coming into the Marine Section, all loaded with war wounded and sick personnel. During this period there was an ever growing spate of flying accidents in New Guinea and a SQNLDR Jeff Warren, from RAAF Headquarters was sent to investigate. On his return flight the aircraft was forced to crash land on the very remote Princess Charlotte Bay on the east coast of Cape York.

Bill Lucas responded to a signal received and took off in a RAAF Walrus amphibian to affect a rescue. Due to heavy seas, and overloading with the downed Crew it was a touch and go situation but the Walrus Pilot's skill brought it off.

While in Townsville Bill learnt about the problem and potential danger in using the Invincible Engines used in the RAAF Refuelling Barges. These engines had caused explosions and serious injuries and after a series of these accidents Bill was called down to RAAF H.Q. to make a report. There confronted by a Committee ranging from Air Marshall down Bill was finally asked to give a Report and his recommendation.

"Get rid of those engines and replace them with Diesels," was his explanation. Shortly afterwards the replacement Diesel motors commenced arriving and the problem disappeared.

### **"Gong" Recommendation**

Warrant Officer Guy Moody, a pre-war member of the RAAF, and a Member of the Marine Section, was an accomplished Coxswain in boat handling and in the course of his duties had personally rescued over 250 men from the sea. FLTLT Bill Lucas recommended to Phil Andreas at Air Board that W.O. Guy Moody be awarded a Medal (Gong). This recommendation, as suggested, did eventually occur.

### **Posting to Port Moresby**

Late in 1943 Bill Lucas received a posting to take up duties at Port Moresby and arrive there in a Sunderland Flying Boat captained by a W.A. Pilot Charlie Hugall. The first familiar face Bill saw was that of his friend Jonny Alver, who was operating a Bomb Barge.

Another well known friend was the Skipper of a Marine Section Lugger, Bill Cook, who occasionally delivered, at a price, deep frozen beef "acquired" from American Freezers, to supplement the Base Messes.

One of his first assignments was to visit Horn Island Marine Section to inspect the slipping facilities for servicing the new fast 08.0, 38 foot Air Sea Rescue Boats. One of these boats was sagging amidships and Bill was there to inspect it and come up with a solution. Worm had entered the keel through an unpainted section so expensive repairs had to be done but the discovery highlighted the need for precautions to be carried out to protect all the Marine Section Boats of wooden construction.

### **Inspection Duties in N.G.**

Using a Martin Mariner Flying Boat Skipped by SQNLDR Graham Pockley, an ex-UK Sunderland Pilot, Bill flew to Milne Bay to inspect the Marine Section. SQNLDR Graham Pockley had other Transport duties to carry out but would be available to carry Bill to Finschhafen, Lae, Madang, and Hollandia to inspect Bases and Units in their operation.

Bill would be based in Madang for some time but the day he arrived he could hear the screams of an airman, who had that day trodden on a deadly Stone Fish.

This region of high humidity caused a range of skin diseases that were treated with purple, red and pink ointment or lotion as was clearly evident when visiting the ablution showers. Prickly Heat was a complaint that Bill had to endure while in Madang, and the remedy was to cover himself with calamine lotion and discarding his shirt.

### **"Gibson Girl"**

This new emergency life-raft radio, with its aerial suspended by an inflated balloon, had to be tested in this region so a Marine Section Boat took it 100 miles north. With any wind blowing the balloon would drop to sea level so the radio did not function. Later, with a telescopic aerial fitted it proved to be successful for downed aircrews. On the return trip to Madang the Boat ran into a floating island but no damage was sustained by the MS Boat.

### **Lake Sentani**

Very near to Hollandia was the large Lake Sentani controlled on the south side by the Japanese while the northern side was held by the Australian Troops. The local native women carried on their fishing by diving with a cone shaped net and ignored both warring parties.



FLTLT Bill Lucas' postings were many and varied after leaving the Perth Marine Section. He was often called back to RAAF Head Quarters in Melbourne (Victoria) to submit assessments and reports. ( Bill Lucas)



A Martin Mariner flying boat of RAAF Transport Squadron was often used in Bill Lucas' roving assignments of Marine Section Units in New Guinea. (Bill Lucas)

During this period Malaria showed no regard for rank for Bill was struck down with this disease probably when they slept on the gull shaped section of the Mariner wing. Inside the aircraft was extremely hot and laden with petrol fumes so the wing was the alternative. During Bill's period in the RAAF Hospital the treatment was heavy doses of Quinine, which was later, replaced the drug Atabrine.

### **To Morotai**

Bill was posted to Morotai when there was a great build up of equipment, materials, ships and Personnel at Hollandia Bay for the planned invasion of Borneo. Another friend of Bill's was Windus Smith, who arrived in Hollandia with his ship "Latrobe" so Bill made the voyage to Morotai on board. Seas were very calm so they were well aware of the great number of sea snakes in this region.

The RAAF Marine Section on Morotai was very active where a great armada of invasion forces was assembling for the assault on the Japanese occupying Borneo. Large forces of Allied Bombers, Fighters and Flying Boats were bombing around the clock to assist the coming invasion so the Marine Section was extremely busy.

"Latrobe's" next destination was Borneo itself so Bill decided he would also go but without Official Sanction but at the last moment he received an immediate posting back to Air Board. As "Latrobe" was also redirected to Townsville Bill decided to also travel with his friend and Skipper, Windus. By the time they reached Townsville the war with Japan had ended.

Back in Air Board, Bill, under the direction of his immediate "Boss", SQNLDR Phil Andreas, was kept busy with administrative tasks relevant to winding down the Marine Section's far flung Bases and Units.

FLTLT Bill Lucas was finally discharged in late 1945 after a distinguished and active career in the Marine Section of the Royal Australian Air Force.

### **Post War**

Bill Lucas had to re-establish himself back into his own business that his Wife had run during the war, but he called a meeting of men who had served in the Marine Section in an endeavour to form an Association.

Dave Bentley accepted the position as Secretary but with some men returning to their pre-war employment, others endeavouring to find work, while some accepted the Government offer of a Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Courses, and with the added pressure of marriages and families most drifted away from the idea of an Association. Many would eventually join the RAAF Association, Squadron Associations and the R.S.L.

Bill Lucas became a legend in yachting and Business circles in the post war period.

## **West Coast Marine Sections**

In the Port of Geraldton was the small ASR Boat "Maori Lass" that also attended to the Crew needs of an American Catalina based there. Two RAAF Fitters, Alex Thompson and McKillick were responsible for maintaining this boat as well as performing their other duties at No.4 SFTS. There they worked on the Avro Anson aircraft flown by Trainee Pilots until they were awarded their coveted Wings.

During this period in mid 1942 an air strip was built on East Wallaby Island but for what purpose has not been established. Trainee Pilots did fly over these off shore Abrolhos Islands as part of their training so perhaps the strip was there as an emergency to land a Tiger Moth.

### **Pot Shot/Exmouth Gulf.**

During June 1943 a Marine Section was established at what was known by the code name of "Pot Shot" which was located in Exmouth Gulf. The Submarines operating out of Fremantle would stage through this Base by calling there to top up their fuel tanks from a floating fuel barge before continuing their patrol to attack Japanese shipping and especially their Tankers and War Ships. American Catalina Flying Boats would also land there, some with supplies for the US Forces stationed there while those going on long patrols would top up their fuel tanks going and returning.

### **Marine Section**

The RAAF Air Sea Rescue Boat 017.02 "Columbia" was brought into the Gulf as deck cargo on the MV Koolinda that had been servicing these northern ports since 1927. Although a relatively small sailing yacht, and ex-cray fishing boat, Columbia was very seaworthy and had a powerful diesel motor.

When anchored off the US Jetty the Columbia's Crew enjoyed the comforts and privileges offered by the US Navy. Sleeping ashore in Navy quarters and having access to the "Ship Store", where a great variety of "goodies", including beer was available to the US Sailors. No other Australian Army or RAAF Personnel were permitted on the American Base nor did they receive the variety and quality of foods issued to the Americans.

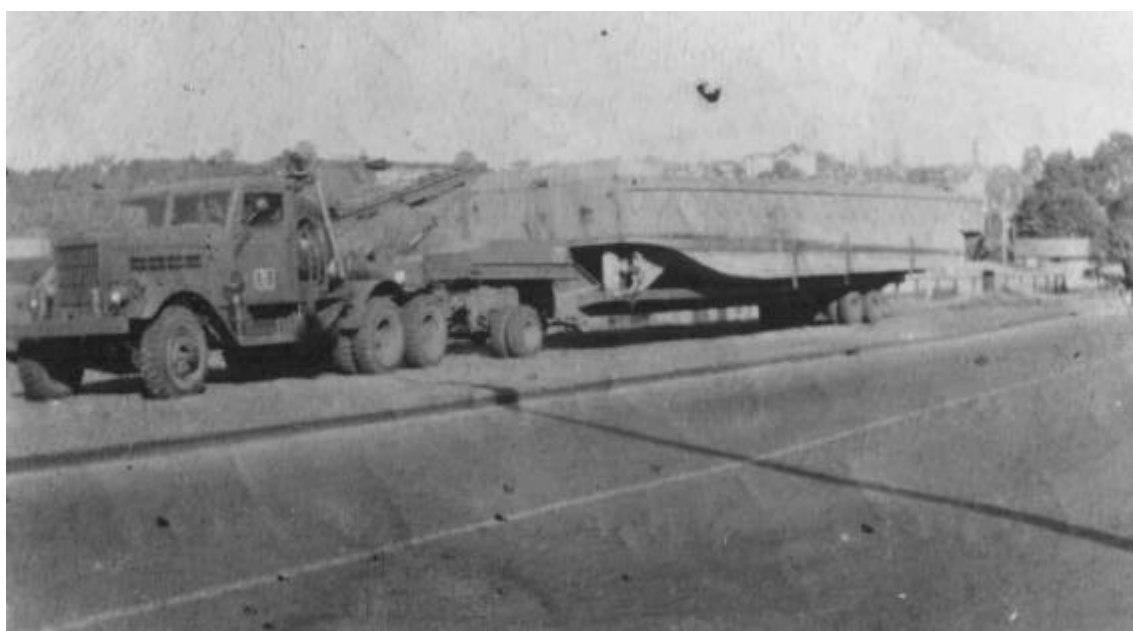
017.02 Columbia and her Crew made their Base in the Bay of Rest. On shore, two living quarters tents were erected and a large American bell tent served as a Mess. Like all other Australian Servicemen in remote Units they showed the usual initiative and ingenuity to make things a little more comfortable. Scrounging was always a unique way of accomplishing this objective.

Foods supplied by the Australia Defence Forces was usually in the form of tinned foods such as "bully beef".

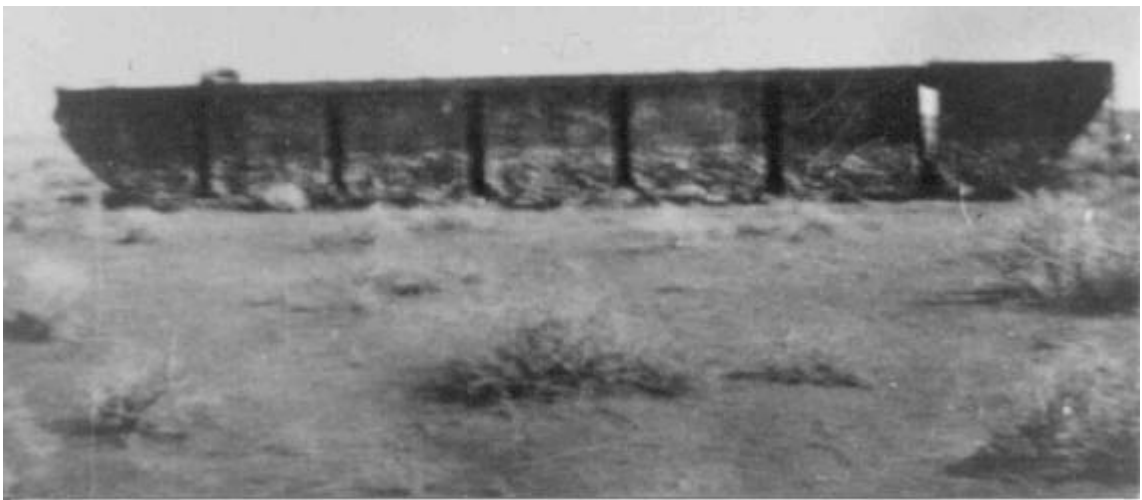
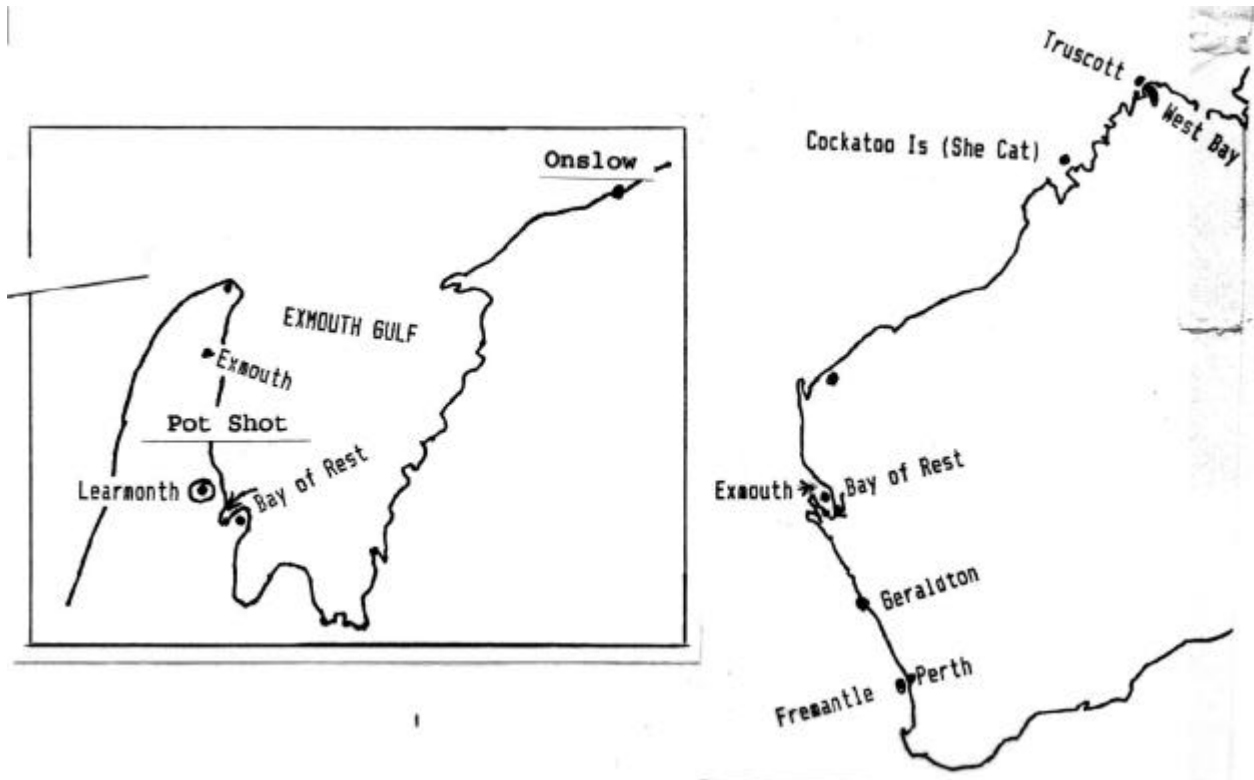
EXMOUTH GULF (WA)  
**Marine Section**



017.02 "Columbia", an ex -crayfishing boat, was taken over by the RAAF Marine Section and operated as an Air Sea Rescue Boat at the secret Base at Pot Shot in Exmouth Gulf. United States Catalina aircraft from Perth flew into this Base with supplies and personnel or to refuel for their long mission patrols against the Japanese. Warrant Officer Dave McKay was the Coxswain. (Eric Mc Nabb)



This Marine Section Landing Barge was brought to Exmouth Gulf by low loader truck across what must have been a very rough track. This secret U.S. Base was very isolated. Later a cyclone drove this Landing Barge many miles inland. (Chris Symons)



The Exmouth Marine Section Landing Barge was driven well inland by the fierce cyclone of February 1945. A great deal of damage was done. (Eric McNabb)

Being now men of the sea the RAAF Marine Section Crew set fish traps to supplement their rations as well as by fishing in the traditional way together with the occasional half stick of gelignite technique.

Suitable moorings were laid to provide facilities. Storage of two hundred drums of fuel would provide supplies to cope with the irregular deliveries.

During the month following the establishment of the Marine Section, 017.02 Colombia and her Crew began exercises with the No.31 Radar Station based on the tip of the Gulf known as the North West Cape.

The presence of Columbia in this huge and extensive bay of Exmouth Gulf would be comforting to land base Air Crews flying from the Base as well as Catalina Crews that landed there.

In May 1944 Sergeant Eric McNabb was posted into Exmouth to install an old 1082/83 Radio Transreceiver on board the Columbia and to be the Radio Operator. Warrant Officer Dave McKay, who was the Skipper, had been in the Navy during WW1, held a Master's Ticket. Charlie Monger was the Fitter MBC, and a young Norwegian was the Deck Hand.

Eric well remembers accompanying Dave McKay into the US Navy Captain's Office and announcing that a "blow" was coming and 017.02 Colombia was off to the Bay of Rest. The Americans took heed of this warning, gained by his practical experience, and within a short time small boats of the USN and Catalinas were also heading to take shelter in the Bay of Rest. Once before the Americans had not taken the warning of a "blow" and consequently suffered a great deal of damage both to buildings and boats and flying boats.

### **RAAF Landing Barge**

During October 1944 a RAAF Landing Barge commenced duties by carrying drums of bitumen ashore from the MV Koolinda and MV Chungking for the construction of the all weather airstrip. It was from this dirt strip that SQNLDR K.W."Bluey" Truscott, DFC & Bar, MID, the Commanding Officer of the Kitty Hawk Squadron, lost his life in a flying accident over Exmouth Bay on 28 March, 1943.

### **Enormous Tidal Wave**

In this region of the far north of WA was always the ever present possibility of being hit by a cyclone and preparedness was important. On one occasion in February 1945 Sergeant R.A.Hawkins, the Skipper of 017.02 Columbia returned to the Bay of Rest and double moored his boat for he knew a "blow" was coming.



To anti foul 018.11 Landing Barge the Marine Section constructed this device so that when the tide went out servicing & painting could be undertaken.  
(Gordon Sharwin)



02.5 Air Sea Rescue Boat was here being launched in Melbourne then taken by ship to Fremantle, and finally delivered to the Marine Section at Exmouth Gulf in May 1945. No doubt there was considerable delight in receiving a brand new vessel.  
(Jim Hewett)

SGT R.A. Hawkins shared a tent with LAC Tonge and Corporals Carr and Turner in the other tent. They all retired to sit out the storm as was the action taken in previous cyclones. Before settling down the Skipper took out his jack knife and laid it along side his bed. During the height of the storm the whole tent was suddenly engulfed in the sea so the Skipper used his knife to rip open the tent and assisted LAC Tonge to escape to the surface. A terrifying ordeal must have taken place with seas of this magnitude for not only was the 017.02 Columbia and a Motor Landing Barge swept inland and wrecked but three of the Crew were lost. Skipper R.A. Hawkins was the sole survivor and only the body of Corporal B.J. Carr was ever recovered.

Another replacement 018.11 Power Barge arrived on the deck of U.S. "Coucal" in March 1945. On 2 May 1945 02.05 Air Sea Rescue Boat was delivered to the Marine Section by an overland transporter. Some months later the Air Sea Rescue Boat 02.05 broke its mooring during strong winds that buffeted the Base in December 1945. The Marine Section Crew, set off after the drifting ASR Boat in the Power Barge, and took it in tow back to another mooring.

Late in December 1945 the RAAF Power Barge with trucks onboard was dispatched to the Port of Onslow to bring back supplies and fuel that had been left there by a State Ship. This also occurred again in March 1946.

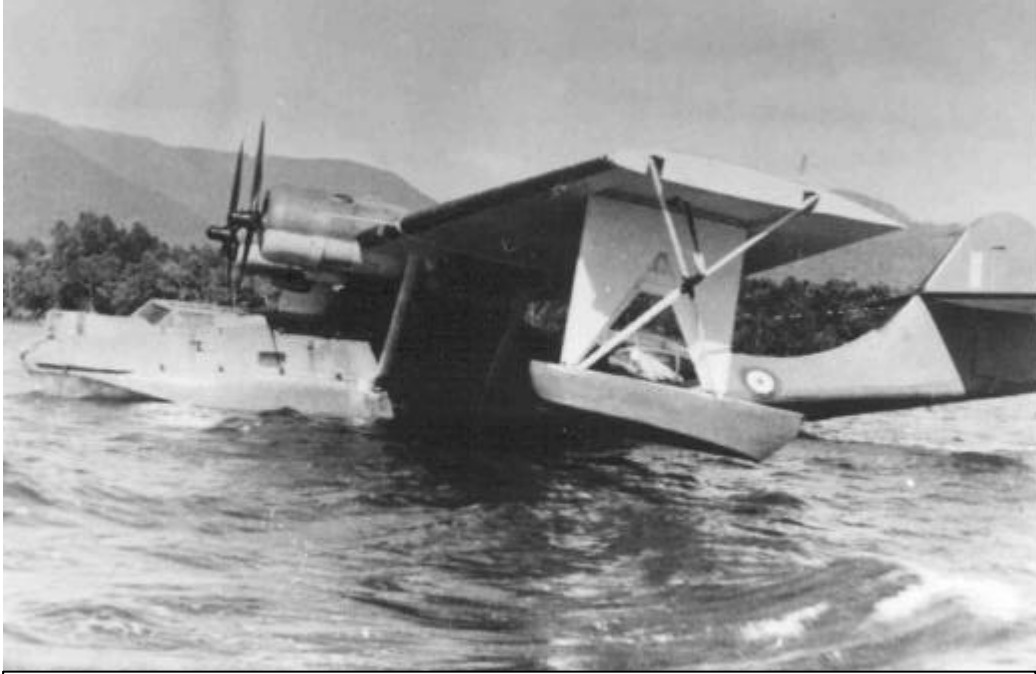
With the war over and the winding up of Bases and Personnel being posted out the Base at Pot Shot/ Exmouth Gulf was finally disbanded when a convoy of vehicles and remaining members of the Services finally departed for the south.

The Marine Section had played a vital role by their presence in this region, but details of the intimate part the Crews played has been lost in the passage of time. No records appear to be available as is the usual case of isolated Units of the RAAF Marine Section.

Much of the details recorded here came from assistance provided by Mr Eric McNabb, both verbally, and from his book, "Pot Shot Profile" 1942 - 1946.

## Catalina, Crew & Passengers

### Rescued by Marine Section



A24-106 Catalina departed Cairns on 17 April 1945 with a group of American Fighter Pilots bound for Lae, New Guinea. (W.A.G. Phil Grapes)



50 miles from the SE tip of New Guinea the Catalina was forced down in the ocean. Phil Grapes the Wireless Air Gunner (3<sup>rd</sup> from left, front) sent a distress signal to Milne Bay. A Marine Section boat was immediately dispatched to rescue the Air Crews and take in tow A24-106. The photograph was taken by the Catalina Skipper. (Phil Grapes)

## Catalina Squadrons

Australian Flying Boat Squadrons and ASR Flights also carried out a great diversity of roles other than bombing, mining, and patrols. Among these included transporting Army personnel and their essential supplies into remote locations behind enemy lines, materials, equipment and food to the men known as the Coast Watchers, who operated alone from isolated island locations providing valuable Japanese ship and aircraft movements so important to Allied Forces. Such men had to have regular supply drops or by landing on inland lakes or rivers as well as open sea landings.

Air Sea Rescue Flying Boat Flights played an important part during the war against the Japanese. Their presence in areas where land based aircraft were attacking Japanese Bases must have given an assurance to downed aircraft Crews knowing they had every chance of being rescued from the ocean, beaches or reefs. On a number of occasions Flying Boat Crews were themselves rescued by a Flying Boat.

After the war Flying Boats played a very important role in the movement of Servicemen and Women who had been in Prisoner of War Camps.



In April 1943, Phil Grapes in No.20 Squadron Catalina delivered these three Australian Army personnel to Lake Kuvimmus, Sepik River, together with supplies. Their role was to spy on the Japanese forces & send back reports. Re-supply drops were made by Catalinas. (Phil Grapes)

## **Saint George's Basin**

No.107 Squadron's "Kingfisher" Sea Planes used St. George's Basin as their Base for sea patrols off the NSW coast. The Kingfisher had a large single float, with wheels incorporated for coming ashore, while two wing tip floats kept it stable on water.

The Kingfisher had a crew of two, a Pilot and Observer, and was used for reconnaissance. It first entered the RAAF in 1942 and remained until 1953.

It is assumed that at least, as a safety measure, there would be some Marine Section Boats at this Base.

## **107 Squadron Sikorsky**

### **Vought Kingfisher**

#### **Seaplanes**

A shipment of these Seaplanes was destined for the Dutch Forces in the East Indies but were diverted to Australia when the Japanese occupied the Islands.

Air Crews under-went conversion training at the Seaplane Training Flight, and No.3 Operational Training Unit at RAAF Rathmines.

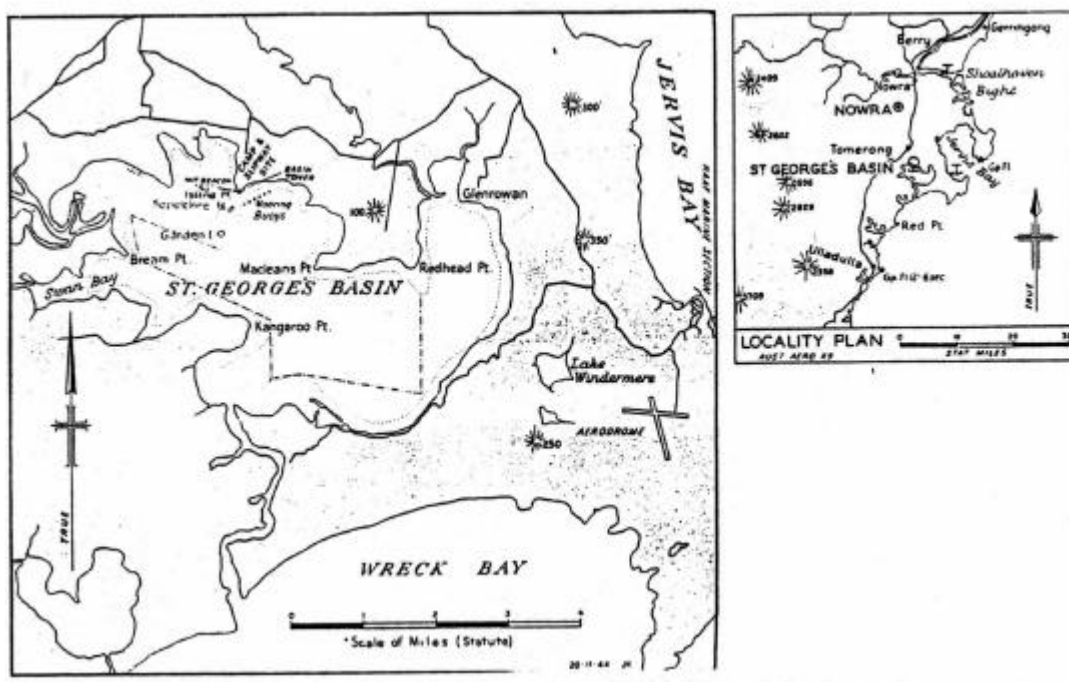
No.107 Squadron was formed in May 1943 and flew anti-submarine and convoy patrols from Rathmines. In July the following year the Squadron was relocated at Saint George's Basin in NSW.

A U.S. Liberty Ship "ROBERT S.WALKER" was torpedoed south of Jervis Bay on Christmas Day 1944 by the German U-862. No.107 Squadron flew continuous sorties every day for a week. Warrant Officer H.T.Moore made the only reported attack on a suspected periscope on the 29 December 1944 in the area where the "Robert S. Walker" was sunk.

SQNLDR T. Egerton, DFC, the Squadron Commander, landed and rescued a Royal Navy Corsair Pilot, Sub.Lieutenant, Leonard, who had crash landed. The RAAF Marine Section Work Boat came along side the Kingfisher and collected the R.N. Pilot and returned him to shore.

When the Marine Section Crash Boat was sent to Jervis Bay for a refit, 03.8, with Coxswain, Warrant Officer Tom Harbeck and Fitter Harry White were sent to Saint George's Basin to take up duties. During all take off and landings 03.8 would be on duty with engines running in case of a sudden emergency but prior to this they would have swept the area for any floating debris.

Although some 15 moorings were available the Kingfishers were frequently brought ashore and tied down during inspections and servicing.



Kingfisher Seaplanes used by No.107 Squadron carried out sea patrols along the NSW coast. Initially they operated from RAAF Rathmines then from St. Georges Basin with the Marine Section as part of the Unit. (RAAF Point Cook Museum)



Harry White was a Crew Member of 03.8 when Skipper, Warrant Officer Tom Harbeck brought their boat to St George's Basin from Jervis Bay, while the St George's Basin Marine Section Crash Boat was under going a refit.  
 (Harry White)

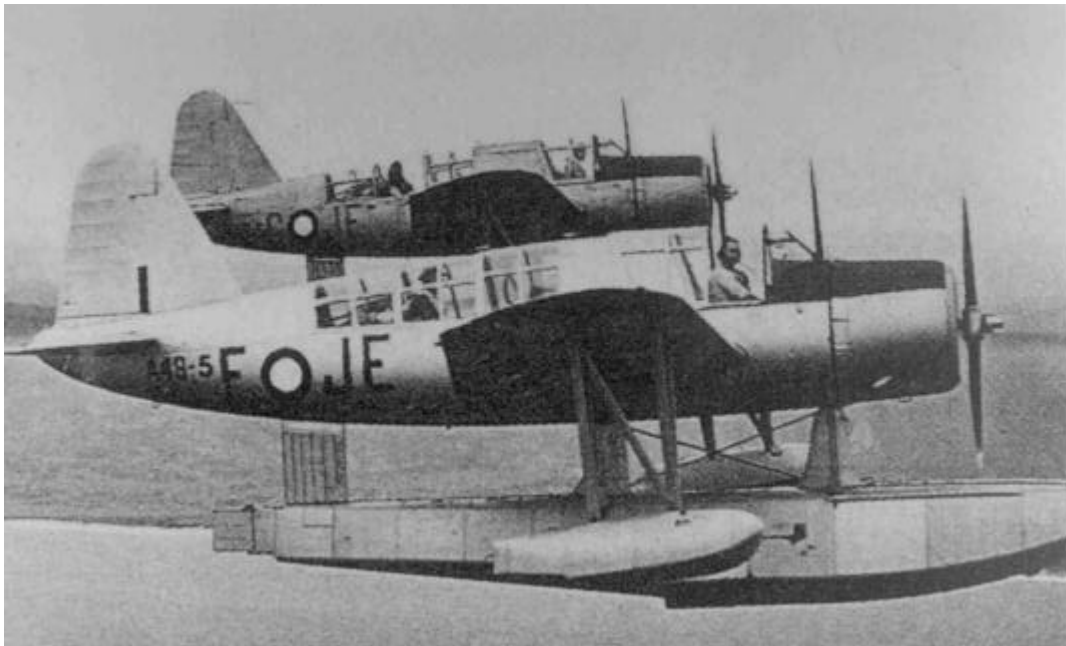


RAAF Beaufort Bombers made practice torpedo launchings off the coast near Jervis Bay (NSW), and 03.8 Torpedo Recovery Boat would recover them for use on another occasion,  
 (Jack Lorimer)

This Kingfisher Squadron carried out a great number of sea patrols during 1943 to 1945, for, unknown to the general public, many ships were sunk along the N.S.W and Queensland coast by Japanese and German submarines.

No.107 Squadron departed St. George's Basin for Lake Boga in August 1945, and in October 1945 it was disbanded.

Harry White was born nearby in Saint George's Basin and from the age of 14 years earned his living as a professional fisherman, and after his RAAF Marine Section days returned to that life.



RAAF Vought Sikorsky Seaplanes provided a very useful patrol capability along the eastern seaboard of NSW. (Point Cook Museum)

## **Marine Section**

at

## **Jervis Bay**

## **N.S.W.**

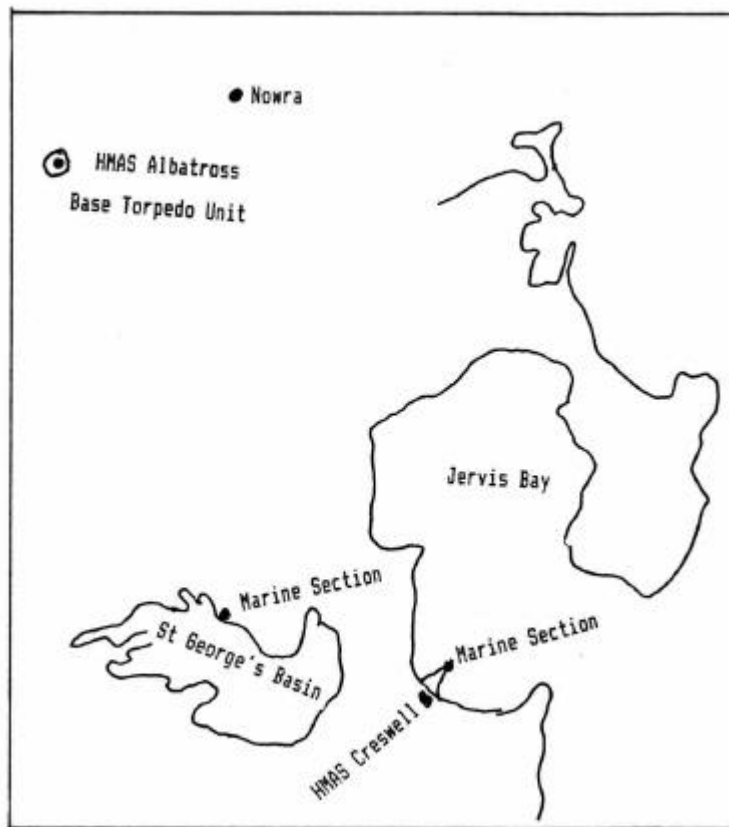
The Marine Section at Jervis Bay was located near H.M.A.S. Creswell Naval College, and the RAAF personnel had living quarters nearby. In March 1945 Corporal Harry White was posted in to the Marine Section in Jervis Bay as the Fitter MBC on 03.8, a Torpedo Recovery Boat. Warrant Officer Tom Harbeck was the Skipper.

Torpedo Recovery Boats of 03.00 Type operated off shore when Beaufort Bombers from RAAF Base Albatross (Base Torpedo Unit) was launching practice torpedoes. It was necessary for the Boat Crews to monitor the actual dropping, then follow the wake, for there was only a limited amount of time to locate and retrieve each torpedo. A built in device would automatically activate and cause the torpedo to sink if it wasn't found in a given time. Up to five torpedoes could be carried in the stern of 03.8 but a great deal of skill was required by the Crew to first, capture and attach a line to the torpedo, then more lines and finally hoisting it on board. This was very dangerous work both to the Crew and the boat especially when a sea was running.

One Anson Pilot, Keith Nicholson, returning from a sea patrol clearly recalled observing a Beaufort flying close to the sea to launch a torpedo when it struck a large swell. The Beaufort completely disintegrated on impact and sank while he watched the Torpedo Recovery Boat unsuccessfully search the area.

This Marine Section Unit was also available in an Air Sea Rescue role when seaplanes were operating from St. George's Basin, and as well when all types of aircraft operated from nearby RAAF Bases. With aerial coastal patrols constantly operating along this section of NSW the Marine Section had to be at a state of readiness at all times. Many ships were sunk by enemy submarines along Australia's eastern seaboard during WW2. On Christmas Day the American Liberty Ship "Robert S. Walker" was torpedoed south of Jervis Bay by "U" Boat 862 so it is likely the Marine Section Boats played a part.

Harry White operated from Jervis Bay for a short time after being in the Crew of "Una V" a large sailing ketch that had operated in New Guinea waters. He was posted soon afterward to Darwin and East Arm in 1946.



HMAS Creswell Naval College (current) with what was the war time Large Marine Section workshop and jetty inside the breakwater. Torpedo Recovery Boats were once moored near the jetty. (HMAS Creswell Museum)

277  
**Jervis Bay**



The Marine Section large Workshop and slipway was where regular maintenance was carried out to keep the boats ready for any emergency as well retrieving practice torpedoes. (Harry White)

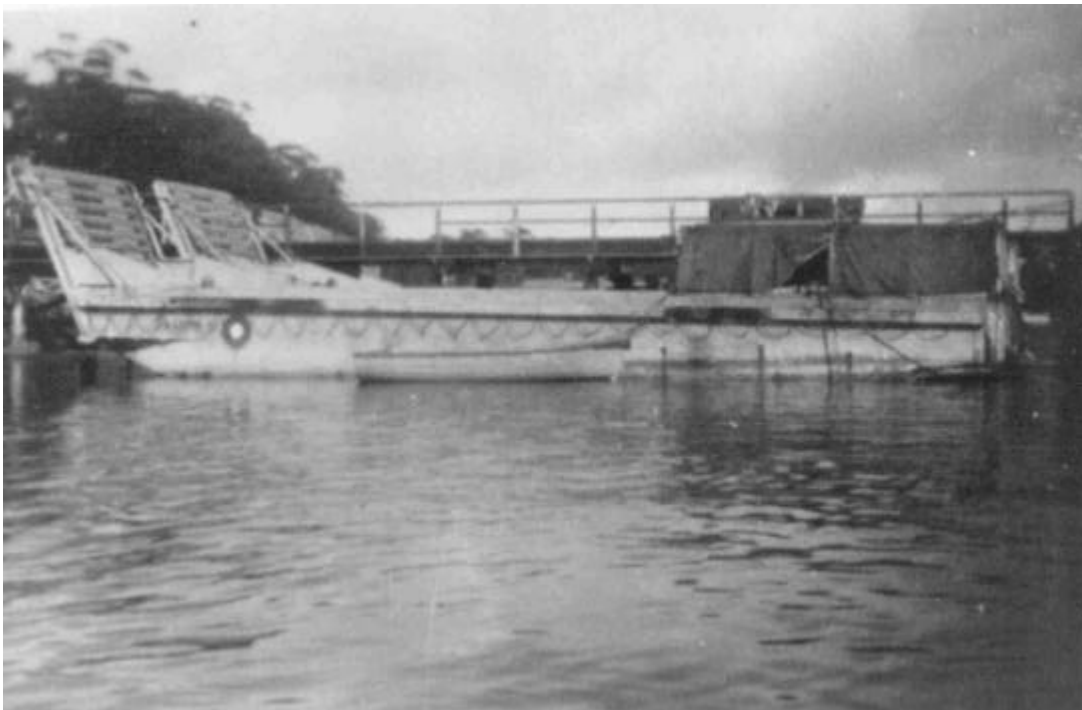


The RAAF Marine Section sleeping quarters and Mess Hall gave protection to the Marine Boats at moorings. (Harry White)



The current facilities still operate at Jervis Bay.

(Ron Mc Grath)



Two RAAF Landing Barges during a short stop over before going to a war zone.

(Harry White)

## **Cockatoo Island"**

### **"She Cat"**

Geoff Smith, a Wireless Air Gunner, who was a Crewman with No.43 Squadron, Catalinas, recalled the times when his Squadron used the very remote island of Cockatoo. No.43 SQD would depart Darwin and fly direct to the island of Cockatoo some 550 miles away in Western Australia.

The stop over at "She Cat", the code name for this remote island, would give an opportunity for a greater operational range, with the added advantage of approaching Japanese bases from an unexpected direction. One technique adopted by Catalina Squadrons was to commence bombing a target during hours of darkness then fly away for an hour or more then return to bomb again. On occasions this was repeated, or another Catalina took over and repeated the same ruse.

A Detachment (from No.52 OBU) Marine Section Boats and Crews were based on Cockatoo along with other Ground Staff musterings. Crews were ferried ashore from the moorings while the aircraft fuel tanks were topped up. Crews rested and were accommodated while waiting the final briefing that would time their arrival over the target during the hours of darkness. On one occasion Geoff's Squadron waited five days on Cockatoo before taking off on a 19-hour trip to "Trollop" (code name for Balikpapan, Borneo).

Return to the secret staging base of "She Cat" would have been welcome after these very long operations as well as knowing the presence of the Marine Section Crash Boats. Damage sustained to the Catalinas from enemy anti-aircraft barrages was always possible, as well the likelihood of Crew injuries, so the sight of accompanying Crash Boats during landing, and to the mooring, was comforting to Air Crews.

To conserve the island fuel supplies the Marine Section Fuel Barges would provide only the required amount of fuel for each Catalina to make the return flight back to Darwin.

Other Catalina Squadrons also used the "She Cat" secret base to take the war to the Japanese bases throughout the East Indies, as the region was then known.



BHP had established their iron ore mining operations on this remote island in 1937/38 and the RAAF selected it as a secret base, "SHE CAT" in 1942. Catalina Squadrons set out from here to attack Japanese Bases in the Dutch East Indies. (Walter Murray)



From the small bay in the foreground the Air Crews were brought ashore for final briefing while the Marine Section refuelled the aircraft. (Walter Murray)

## **East Arm Base**

### **Darwin**

The creation of an alternative flying boat base at East Arm just a few miles south east of the Darwin Base would not only disperse the flying boats but also allow a greater concentration in the area. Catalinas used the East Arm Base as a staging base for their long patrols, mining of ports and bombing of Japanese bases.

No. 61 Works Wing commenced construction of the RAAF East Arm Base in 1942/43 and provided a large camp area, hangar, workshop, hard stands, slipways and jetty. Later in 1944 the main wharf was completed.

The Catalina aircraft would also fly onto Cockatoo Island as another staging base to attack the enemy facilities.

An immensely high jetty was constructed to cater for the extremely high tides experienced there. Catalina Crews sometimes had to board a Marine Section Work Boat at the very low jetty platform but on their return step ashore at the top of the jetty.

A large concrete slipway was also available to bring ashore Catalinas requiring urgent repairs. Very few Australian Catalina aircraft were amphibian so Ground Staff would attach wheels to the aircraft hull then haul it ashore. Some work would be carried out in the open on the hard stand while others would be moved to the large workshop building where skilled Base Ground Staff would carry out the work.

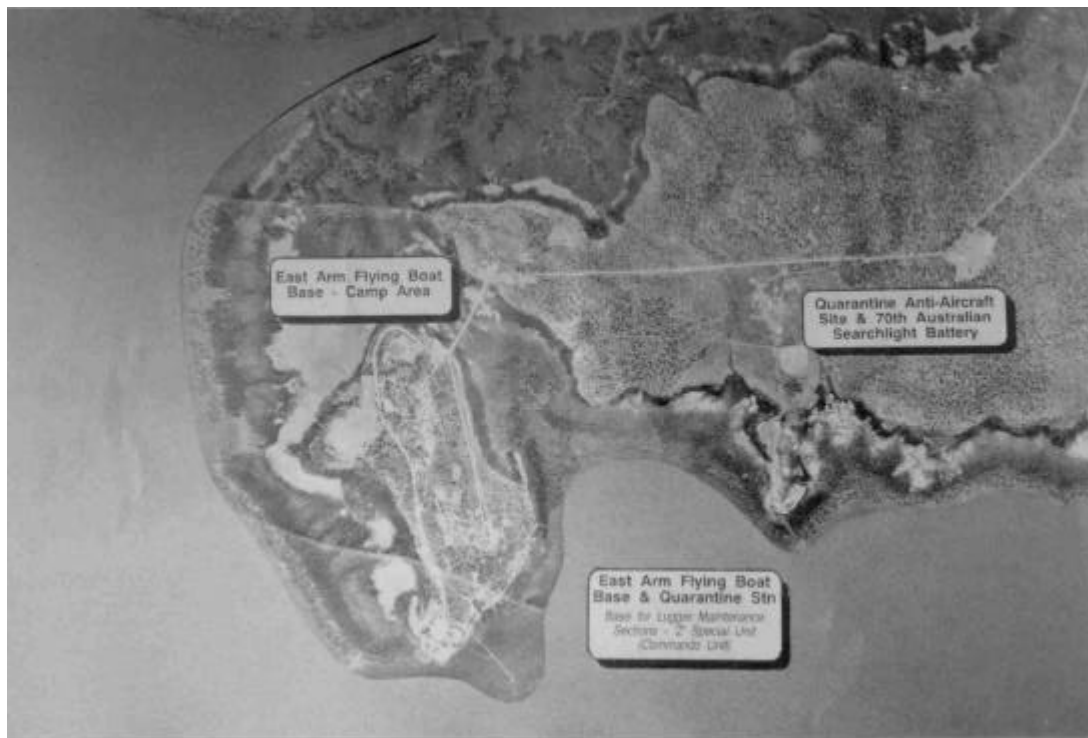
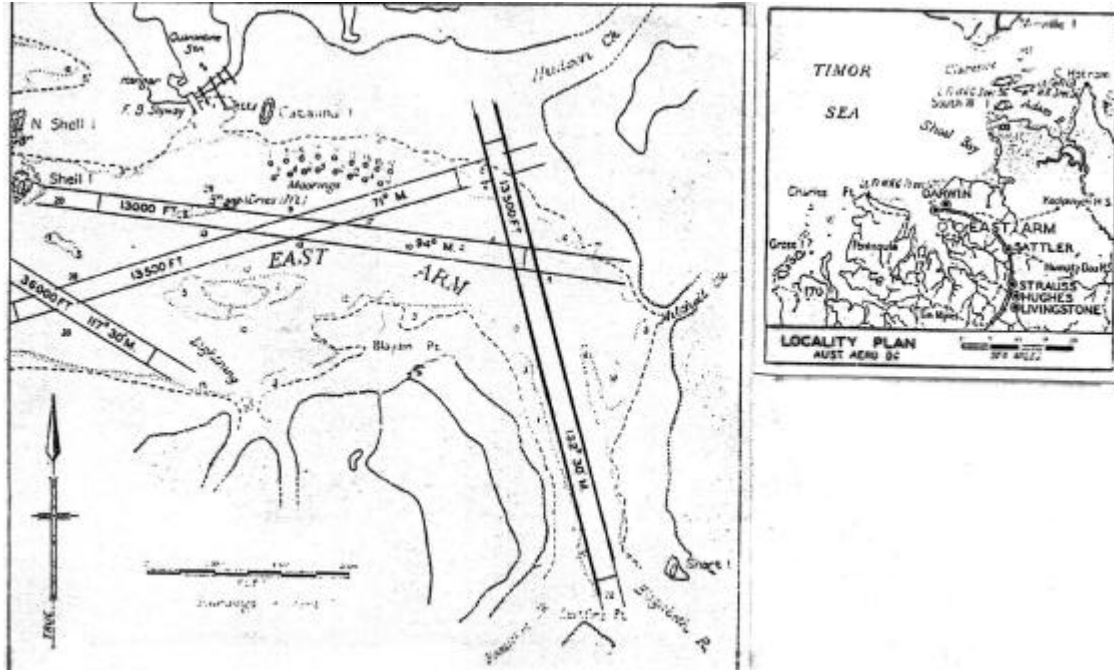
No.42 Catalina Squadron arrived on the Base in June 1944 and was followed by No.20 Squadron a few months later. When No. 42 Squadron was moved to Melville Bay No.43 Squadron joined No.20 at East Arm. During December 1944 No.112 Air Sea Rescue Catalinas arrived and would remain on duty at East Arm until 1947.

Catalina Squadron Air Crews staging through East Arm would some times be taken into Darwin and accommodated there until a target briefing was called.

Marine Section Boats would also use all facilities to service and paint their wide range of boats used at all Flying Boat Base. These included Crash Boats, Refuelling Barges, Work Boats and Bomb Barges, which all had to be maintained in perfect working condition in case of sudden emergency.

A wide range of Ground Staff musterings lived on this Base so when the opportunity arose for short periods of leave, Darwin was their nearest place.

## RAAF Base East Arm Darwin



From the original RAAF aerial photograph the dispersal of buildings can be recognised as well as aircraft on the hard. (more difficult from this reduced version). Mosaic supplied by the Northern Territory Department of Lands & Housing.



At RAAF Base East Arm Catalinas were fitted with wheels so that they could be hauled up the slipway then onto the hard for servicing. Only a few RAAF Catalinas were amphibians. (Doug Hamilton)

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	File	Mission	Remarks	Flight Time	
						Day	Night
21/5/46	0950	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Test	Lake Boga - local	1-10	
	1310	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Travel	Lake Boga - Raramines	3-15	
18/5/46	1250	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Travel	Raramines - Brisbane	3-40	
18/5/46	1750	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Travel	Brisbane - Cairns	7-30	
18/5/46	1210	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Travel	Cairns - Grotte Eyeland	5-35	
18/5/46	0840	Catalina #2479	F/L Ryan	Travel	Grotte Eyeland - Darwin	3-45	
17/5/46	0930	Catalina #2440	F/L Ryan	Mine Drop	Darwin - She Cat op travel	5-00	
12/5/46	1240	Catalina #2440	F/L Ryan	Mine Drop	She Cat - Trollop - She Cat	<del>5-35</del> 12-00	
22/5/46	1000	Catalina #2440	F/L Ryan	Mine Drop	She Cat - Darwin ops over	5-05	
Total hours for this special ops hours 28						40-53	12-00
No. of sorties 1							
Total Time						534-25	268-10

A section of a Wireless Air gunner's Log page, (Geoff Smith) records his Catalina's Mission to "SHE CAT" then for a mine drop. (Geoff Smith)



An indication to the rise and fall of tides are clearly seen by the various landing stages built into this jetty. Speed of currents in both directions could pose a real danger to any one falling overboard. (Les Buscomb)



Brian Buzzard, an ex Wireless Air gunner on Catalinas, made a return visit to East Arm and inspected this Historic Site sign erected by the Northern territory Conservation Commission. It outlines the important role played by the numerous Flying Boat Squadrons that departed on operations from here during WW2. (Brian Buzzard)



All that remains of this once busy RAAF Base is a section of the concrete slipway. Brian readily recalls the memory of the waters crowded with moored Catalinas and Marine Section Boats ferrying Air Crews to and from their aircraft. (Brian Buzzard)

Later some Catalina Air Crews were converted to the four engine Liberator Squadrons that were arriving from America in growing numbers. These aircraft were used in a number of roles apart from bombing far distant Japanese Bases and distribution ports for they also dropped supplies to Servicemen working behind enemy lines as well as Allied Commandoes who were parachuted into occupied islands.

Knowing the presence of patrolling Catalina aircraft gave the Air Crews involved in raids on Japanese Bases some degree of comfort if they were unfortunate to be shot down or forced down in the sea, on a beach or reef. Ex Catalina Air Crews recognised the danger faced by Catalina aircraft when on these rescue missions and landing on rough seas or when in range of Japanese fighters.

Marine Section Boats were always on hand to bring survivors, and often wounded, ashore to waiting Medical Personnel. These Boat Crews had to be skilful in handling their different types of boats when coming along side the comparatively thinly constructed hulls of flying boats. A constant "taxi" type service was required when a Squadron returned from a mission.

A Base for training, and preparing SRD personnel, recruited from the three Services, had their secret Base nearby to the East Arm Base. A range of strange looking sailing vessels departed mysteriously from this location. Submarines were also involved in putting groups of these men ashore on distant islands.

East Arm Flying Boat Base made a sizeable contribution during WW2 in taking the war to the heavily armed Japanese forces that occupied all the islands, of what was then known as the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea and all the islands to the north and east of the Australian mainland. The ever present threat of invasion to our country was very real especially when the bombing of Darwin commenced on 19 February 1942, and went on for some further 58 raids.

## The Island of Morotai

After Morotai was captured a large number of Japanese troops were cut off and isolated on the large, nearby islands of Halmahera and Ternate. Some Japanese did evade capture for a time on Morotai.

Large bomber and fighter runways were constructed on Morotai for the arrival of American and Australian aircraft. This island was to develop into a huge strategic base for aircraft for the assault on all the important Japanese Bases in the region. Hundreds of aircraft bombing raids were made, while fighters gave cover protection to formations as well as conducting strafing attacks on Japanese Units, barges and ships. Later, Morotai became the assembly point for a huge invasion force of Navy Ships and Landing Ships destined for the Island of Borneo.

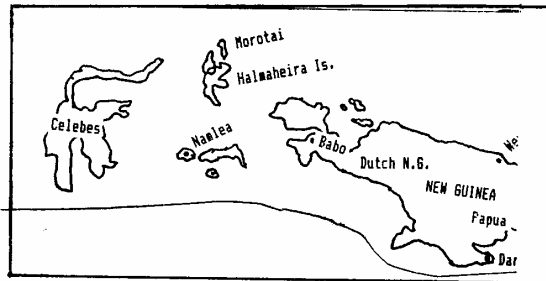
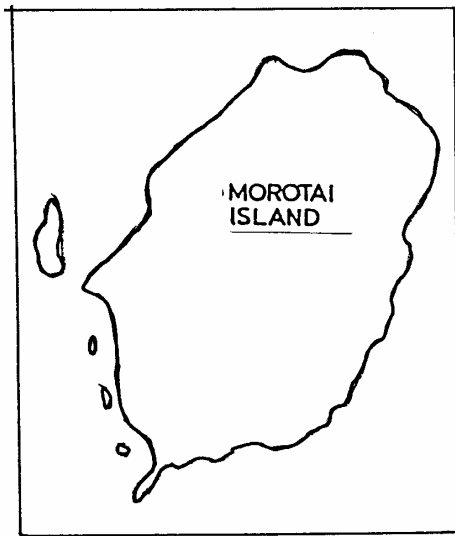
The RAAF Marine Section provided an essential role with Air Sea Rescue Boats, as well as their range of Boats needed for Catalina Flying Boats that operated from the island.

Many different Marine Section personnel were posted in and out of Morotai after Warrant Officer Cliff "Cisco" Searle and his Crew sailed 02.2 to make the first long distant ocean crossing to Morotai in 1944 from Noemfoor.

Marine Section Boats and Crews tended, by nature of their role, operated as a small separated Unit away from their O.B.U. under which they were officially controlled.

Like all similar Units much Australian ingenuity, combined with a system of "barter", added facilities and amenities to their isolated life style. In such circumstances these small groups of men functioned in a jovial and harmonious atmosphere. They provided for their own enjoyment between a busy schedule of work and maintaining their own strict boat maintenance, for on them their own safety depended.

This routine continued well past the Japanese Surrender.



At the top of this photograph can be seen some of the Marine Section Boats while the two main runways, one "Wama" for fighters and the other (on Rt) "Pitoe" for heavy bombers. Many B24 Liberators are in the dispersals.

(James M. Kendall, Historian, 307<sup>th</sup> BG Association, USA)



Bill Dicker with two of the “locals” from the Island of Loleba, who had been working with him. (Bill Dicker)



A RAAF Landing Barge approaching Rigel Rigel Island with a load of Australian Troops. (Bill Dicker)



This secret photograph was taken from a Marine Section boat, and shows a Japanese Hospital Ship, that had been escorted into Morotai. Japanese soldiers were observed walking down the gang plank with hands behind their heads. (Bill Dicker)



016.12 a Marine Section Boat at a mooring in Morotai, with the Crews' personal "taxi", a Japanese vessel hanging off the stern. (Alf Wilson)

## Admiralty Islands

### Manus, Seeadler Harbour, & Los Negros

This region was of important strategic importance to the Japanese Services and consequently was often bombed by Australian Catalina Squadrons.

American Forces also viewed the possession of the Admiralty Islands, Biak, Noemfoor, and Morotai Islands as part of the overall strategy in their thrust to the Philippine Islands.

During February 1944 U.S. General Kenny used his entire bomber force in New Guinea during the invasion of Los Negros. As soon as Momoto airfield was secured the American Engineers set about to strengthen and lengthen the air field for the arrival of No.76 Kittyhawk Squadron. American Liberators Squadrons were soon operating from Momoto Airfield.

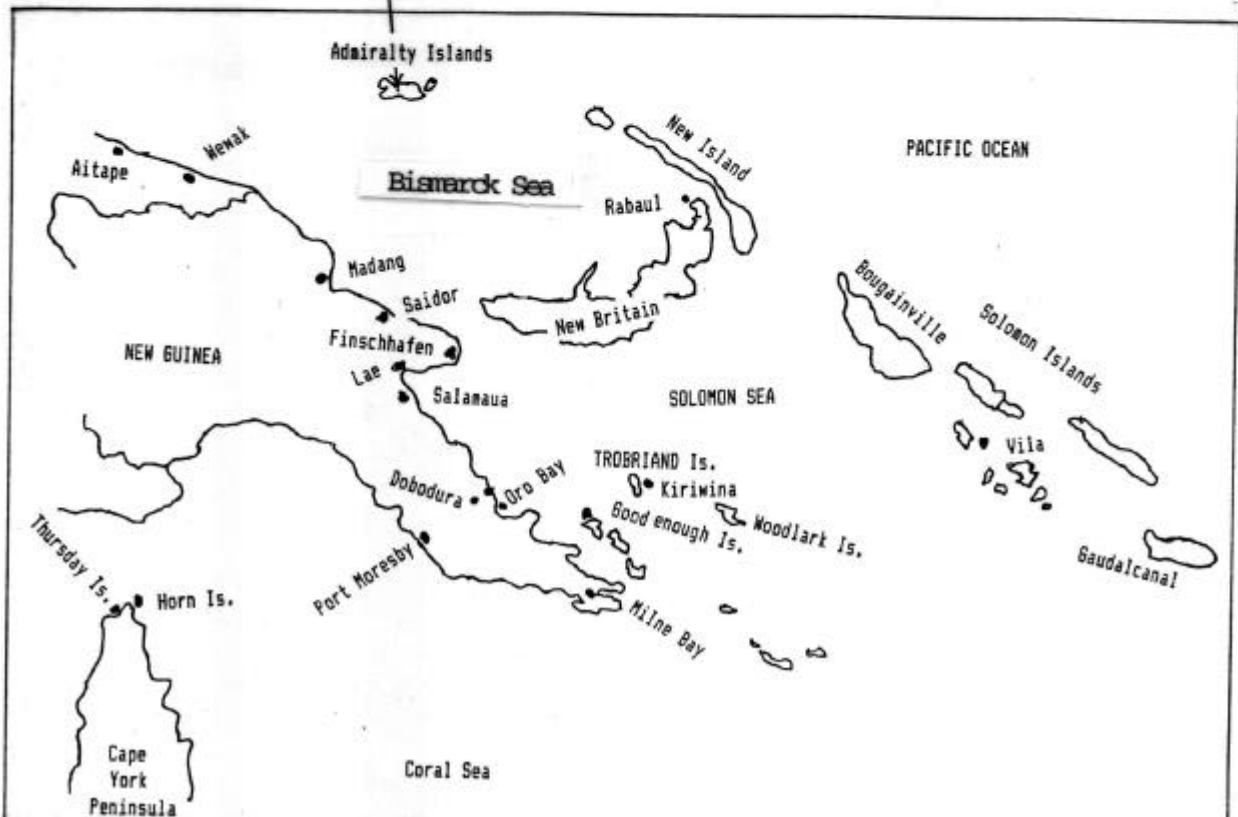
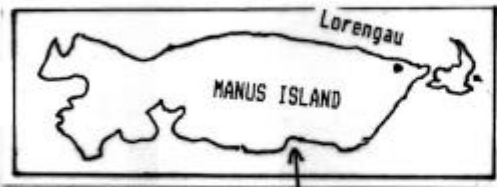
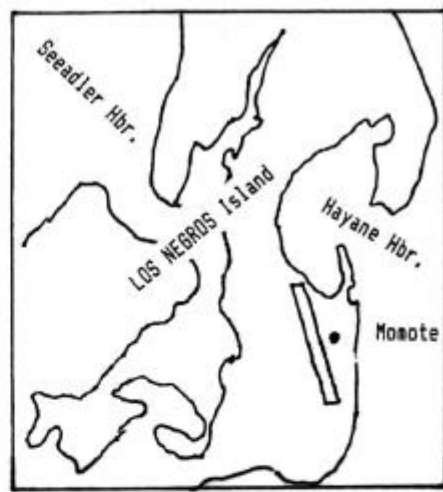
Australian Air Sea Rescue Walrus aircraft now played an important role by taking off just prior to a Liberator strike on Japanese bases. Warrant Officer Don Watson well recalls how he would fly out following the track of the Liberators in case of a ditching.

Seeadler Harbour became a very important American Base for Warships, troop and cargo carrying vessels.

Australian Marine Section Boats, including the two masted ketch the 06.9 "Betty Joan", commenced bringing in supplies from New Guinea.



This RAAF Walrus' role on Los Negros was primarily that of Air Sea Rescue, but the Pilot, Warrant Officer (later FLTLT) Don Watson carried out many other official assignments. Left to Right SGT Jim Gickson, (?), Engineer FLTSGT Jim Laycock, LAC Holland Armourer, Pilot Don Watson in pith helmet.  
(Don Watson)



## **Paynesville**

The Marine Section located at Paynesville played an important role during the training of Air Crews in Operational Training Units (OTU) at East Sale in Victoria.

During bombing exercises, that were designed to give a practical application for attacking submarines and surface vessels, the Marine Section boats would tow a target across a large lake. A Radio Operator on the Marine Boat would be in voice contact with the Pilot of the "attacking" Bristol Beaufort bomber.

From bombing height the target, being well astern of the Marine Section Boat, could not be readily seen so the Observer/Navigator using a bomb sight would use the Marine Boat as the target. This was also the case when the Pilot made dive bombing attacks on the moving target.

On many occasions, whether through first class marksmanship, or by sheer accident, the raining practice bombs came perilously close to the Marine Boat with a degree of profanity emanating, first from the Coxswain then relayed by the Radio Operator. By not being stationed on the same RAAF Base there appears to have been no direct confrontation between the Air Crews or Marine Section Crews.

Although Air Crews did not admit to aiming at the Boat during that period, a Pilot from that era has now admitted that he did use the Boat as the target. Some Marine Sections did originally have Target Boats that were protected with steel plating but in some cases, like off Fremantle, the protective steel was removed because it made the boat difficult to handle in rough seas experienced in Cockburn Sound.

These bombing exercises were essential for, with in a short period, these Air Crews would be operating against the Japanese from a forward Base so the Marine Crews depended upon poor marksmanship for their survival and a hope for a transfer.



Some of the Marine Section Boats on moorings at Paynesville, Victoria.  
(Alf Wilson)



RAAF Marine Section Target Boat at Paynesville, used by Bristol Beauforts for bombing practice. The onboard Radio Operator frequently admonished the aircraft Skipper when bombs fell too close for comfort. One Pilot has admitted it was easier to aim at the Armoured Target Boat than the actual target being towed.  
(Alf Wilson)