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06.9 "Betty Joan"

in New Guinea Waters.
1944 1945

"Betty Joan"	06.9 Ketch
Skipper	SQNLDR Jim Richmond
Coxswain	Warrant Officer Arthur Bennett
Coxswain	FLTSGT "Chook" Dixon
FMBC	SGT Jack Oxenbold
Senior Engineer	LAC Maurie Castledine
Engineer	AC1 Alf Wilson
FMBC	Sergeant Jack Oxenbold
MBC	Jock Dunning
W.O.P.	Fred White
Shipwright	Scotty Boyd
	Bill Harvey
	Harry Hunt
	Les Henderson
	Laurie Cummings
	Hughie McMahon
	Norm Higson

Other large sailing vessels with auxiliary motors operated in the same waters:

"Ena" a three masted Schooner, the "Wymana" also a three masted Schooner, the "Yalata" a large Ketch. Many Luggers formed part of this group of ocean going vessels and all played an important role during WW2 by moving supplies, materials, stores, equipment and Personnel to isolated bays, and off shore islands.

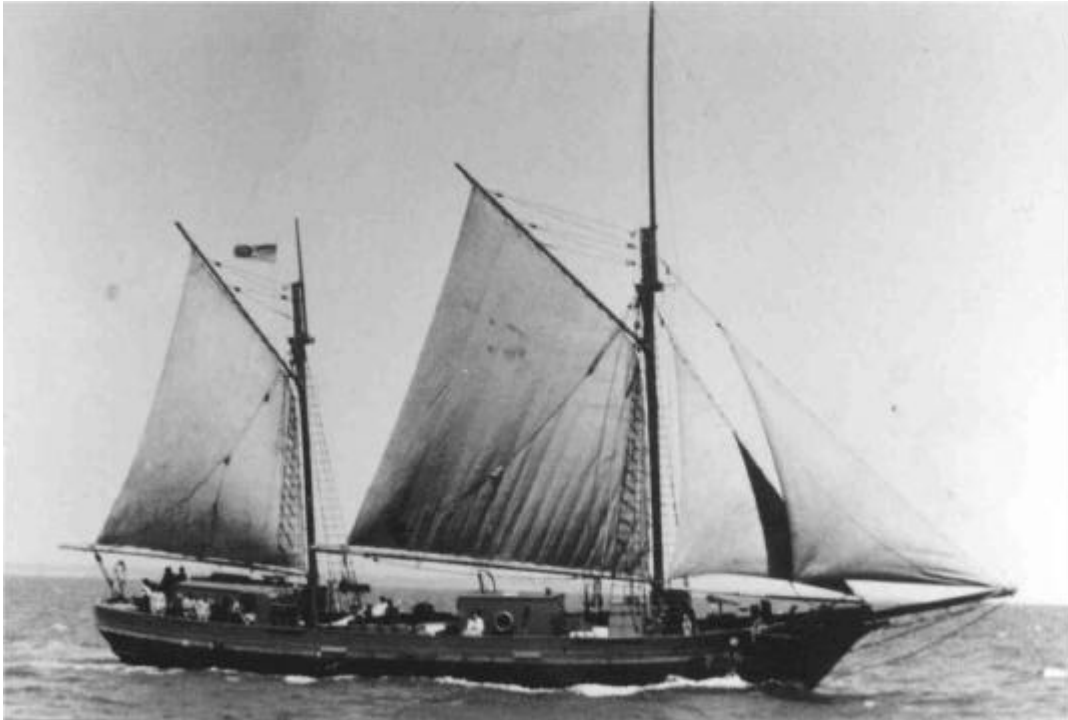
A number of RAAF Radar Units, which provided the monitoring service of all aircraft movements made by the Japanese, and also those of Australia, New Zealand and American were taken into their Base and kept supplied by the Personnel and vessels of the Marine Section.

The following account of the "Betty Joan" was related to the Author by AC1 Alf Wilson (later W.O.)

Alf Wilson (Service No. 83388) entered the RAAF as an 18-year-old in midyear 1943 as an AC1 trainee Technical (5STT). Alf was then posted to RAAF Rathmines for Marine Duties then followed by a FMBC course at No.3 STT, Ultimo Sydney. (Fitter Motor Boat Crew).

After a stint at Panesville (East Sale) on Target Towing, he was then posted to Townsville (No.1 RPP) on a pre-embarkation course.

In Townsville (1RPP), along with a large group of RAAF going overseas, under went extensive pre-embarkation training for tropical duties. Combat training, survival skills, health precautions against tropical diseases, and personal hygiene.



06.9 "Betty Joan" roaring along with the Crew watching a passing vessel. Note the .5 machine gun mounted on the forward deck. Another was on the aft deck.

(Alf Wilson)



"Betty Joan" just berthed in Milne Bay with a load of supplies and equipment. Two "friendlies" close by.

(Alf Wilson)



The "Betty Joan" football team played the local natives at Dogs, but were defeated. Back (?), Alf Wilson, Skipper Arthur Bennett, FLGOFF Wilson, Jock Dunning, (?), (?), Coxswain FSGT "Chook" Dickson, Wireless Opp.?
 (Alf Wilson)



Skipper, Coxswain Arthur Bennett, (?), Alf Wilson, passenger
 FGOFF Wilson, (?), (?), Jock Dunning. (Alf Wilson)

As was the usual practice, Alf was given no indication as to his destination, and to his surprise, landed in Port Moresby. There he was attached to the Marine Section, which by then was an extensive Unit serving a great number of vessels that used it as a Base for collecting cargoes.

Flying boat Squadrons were also served there by the usual range of specialised boats manned by the RAAF Marine Section men. Night Crews were always on stand-by to lay flare paths for emergency or incoming Catalina or other Flying boats. Air Sea Rescue boats and Crews were on constant readiness not only for aircraft landings but any other emergencies that did occur, especially during an air raid by Japanese aircraft.

Morning after a raid on Port Moresby Coxswain Ron Cook and Alf Wilson took 08. Crash Boat out to investigate an object floating over the harbour. There they found a very large red balloon hovering with a mysterious box dangling from it on a long piece of rope. Cautiously Ron circled believing it might be some explosive device until Alf raised a boat hook and dragged the box onboard. It proved to be a weather balloon that had been released in United States with a notice attached requesting it be returned to an American Base together with details of its final landing. Although Ron and Alf later joked about the incident they both agreed there had been some apprehension at the time.

One afternoon Alf was instructed to go aboard 06.9 "Betty Joan" and report to the Skipper, SQNLDR Jim Richmond for his posting. There he was introduced to the Crew and shown over this very large sailing Ketch after meeting the Senior Engineer LAC Maurie Castledean. Alf was introduced to the particular intricacies of the, Gray Marine, 6 cylinder, 250 HP engine. Alf had no previous experience with this engine but he learnt fast for the "Betty Joan" sailed the next morning. The crew operated on a six hour watch, which necessitated in diesel fuel being pumped into an over head tank every 15 minutes. In reality, together with the multitude of tasks related to keeping the efficiency of the engine and the bearings of the propeller shaft regularly oiled little time was available for a quick break to the deck.

Alf soon adapted to the routine of life aboard a large sailing vessel and the procedures like stopping the engine for the required and regular oil changes as well as other servicing tasks. Hoisting sails added to the efficiency and enjoyment of journeying in this large craft to Milne Bay their next port.

Alf was introduced to an added, but highly important duty of defence of the ship, of manning, servicing and operating a .5 machine gun mounted on the stern. Maurie manned the other .5 machine gun mounted on the bow. The "Betty Joan" was operating in an operational area where sudden attacks from the air could happen any time as well as attacks emanating from hostile shores.



The Marine Section Milne Bay, had created comfortable quarters for themselves.
(Alf Wilson)



A section of the Marine Section Workshops where major engine
maintenance and modifications were carried out. (Alf Wilson)

Along side the RAAF jetty in Milne Bay the Crew set about unloading their cargo and Alf quickly adapted to the presence of the rigging while operating the hoisting engine and ancillary equipment. Little time was spent in Milne Bay for the crew having unloaded their cargo immediately set about storing another cargo with supplies and equipment meant for delivery to outer island and mainland New Guinea RAAF Units. Necessity of correct loading relevant to unloading was a well developed skill for the Betty Joan and her Crew had been operating in these waters for years.

Meals had to be prepared for hungry shipboard RAAF Personnel and the democratic method adopted on this ship meant everyone, except the Skipper, took turns to create their own specialities. Maurie Casteldean, being some what skilled in this department imparted his knowledge to all new members of the Crew including Alf. Maurie was adept to producing cakes using the supplied dried egg, powdered milk and hard to find dried fruits. The Betty Joan had a galley on the deck and a stove fired by dripping oil on a hot steel plate provided the necessary heat. Little criticism was evoked but on later occasions, when the opportunity to call into an American Stores Depot, or if U.S. Stores Ship was near by then a whole range assorted superb foods and stores were obtained from the ever generous Americans. What a complete contrast to the Australian issue of bully beef and baked beans and assorted dried vegetables. American Servicemen and Servicewomen took for granted, but unheard of "goodies" by Australians, such as candies, icecream etc, etc, as well as huge range of things available from the "PX" Stores that accompanied all large Bases. Bartering by Aussies was another way of obtaining selected items. Certain Skippers had a certain aptitude for these techniques to which the Crews certainly gained. Fishing in shallows was often rewarded by an assorted range of types especially when a grenade or dynamite was dropped over board. Crews had to work quickly to retrieve their "catch" for sharks or crocodiles would suddenly appear. Deadly stone fish and their like inhabited these tropical waters and Crews had to most careful if they had to do any wading in the shallows.

When Betty Joan was under sail a hugh steel centre board some 12 foot long and 6 foot wide was lowered by block and tackle so that it protruded well below the keel. As with all sailing vessels this was necessary to lessen drift. Why the ocean did not flow up through the centre board housing often mystified new crew members. While travelling under sail "Betty Joan" could make 6 knots in a good wind yet under power alone 8 knots could be attained.

For the following 15 months the "Betty Joan" was constantly on operations moving cargoes and on occasions transporting a whole RAAF Radar Unit to Hansar Bay near the Sepik River. The Unit's Jeep was wrapped in a tarpaulin and lowered over the side, where it floated, and then towed ashore. All the other Radar equipment, tents, personal gear, support gear and materials were floated ashore on rafts and pontoons. This type of exercise was carried out on many occasions by the vessels of the RAAF Marine Section all around the coast of Australia as well as New Guinea waters.



“Betty Joan” undergoing anti fouling to her hull while on the Navy Slip at HMAS “Tadova”, Milne Bay, October 1945.
(Alf Wilson)



Sergeant Jack Oxenbold, Fitter Motor Boat Crew (Engineer) on “Betty Joan” had an opportunity to relax ashore in Milne Bay (New Guinea)
(Alf Wilson)

During this period Alf saw a number of the Crew posted south:

Skipper SQNLDR Jim Richmond was replaced by FLGOFF Wilson, and later, Warrant Officer Arthur Bennett took over command. Alf in turn became the Senior Engineer with AC1 Harry Hunt as assistant.

On one occasion Betty Joan, when travelling through the night, the Skipper ordered the motor to be immediately shut down while they proceeded along under sail and completely blacked out. Everyone took up action stations in complete silence and Maurie and Alf took over their .5 machine guns. Either side of them loomed the threatening outline of two Japanese submarines on the surface, with motors running charging batteries. When clear of this danger it was generally admitted they had all been really scared. Betty Joan made many trips through the Bismarck Archipelago to the Admiralty Islands and Manus Island in particular. This was the region through which Japanese submarines travelled to get desperately needed supplies through to their troops along the north coast of New Guinea. Surface vessels had given up attempting to run the gauntlet of low flying RAAF Beaufighters, Catalinas and bombers.

The war in Europe ceased in May 1945 while "Betty Joan" lay at anchor in Hansa Bay on the Wewak Peninsula.

When the Pacific War came to an end in August 1945 the "Betty Joan" happened to be in Milne Bay so she was dispatched to Goodenough Island. Much to the relief of the RAAF Radar Unit there for they had been advised to break camp and pack all gear and equipment ready for the arrival of the "Betty Joan. Maybe the Radar men had thoughts of being forgotten and marooned.

This was a time of rejoicing and relief by all Service Personnel in the region where conflict with Japanese had taken place. Some men had been in one of the Services for the previous six years and the thought of going home was high on their priority. Yet for many men there was now still a great deal to be done in packing equipment, supplies, machinery etc etc along with assisting with the return of thousands of Allied Prisoners of War back to Australia. Then there was the task of what to do with the Japanese troops and War Criminals and Allied Personnel were needed for this task.

No doubt there were some frustration about going home but demobilisation plans were in place but some delay would occur.



The slipway at Milne Bay was in constant use by vessels based there supplying RAAF Radar Units on off shore islands and remote bays. Frequently, boats passing through from the Australian mainland had need to slip their boats to carry out repairs and maintenance. (Alf Wilson)



“The New Guinea Music Hall” at Milne Bay was well attended by “local troops” when a visiting Concert Party played there. Other times movie films were shown. Like all amenities on these Bases, were usually provided by local enthusiasts. (Alf Wilson)

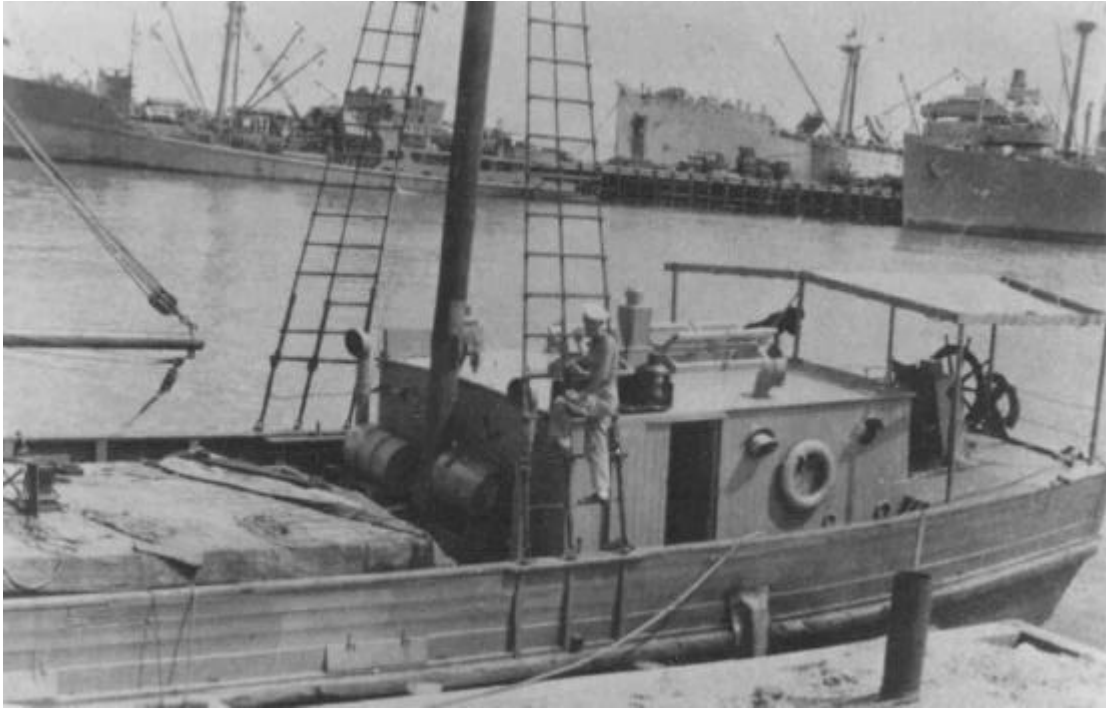


, A “boarding party” at Jinalla, from Raymond Village, came aboard “Betty Joan” to be inspected by Abel, the Chief Constable, and Eric the Village Constable.
(Alf Wilson)



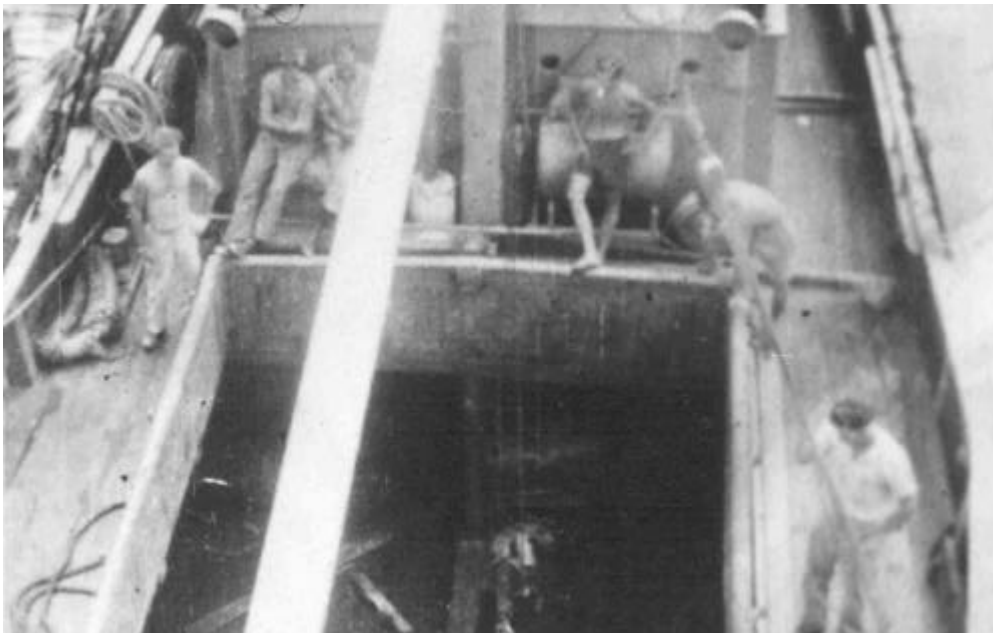
Alf Wilson, later Warrant Officer, remained in the Permanent Air Force Marine Section up until it was finally disbanded.

(Alf Wilson)



Soon after “Betty Joan” arrived at Manus Island, (Admiralties) an American Sailor asked permission to “come aboard”, for he coul’n’y believe sailing ships were still being operated during the war.

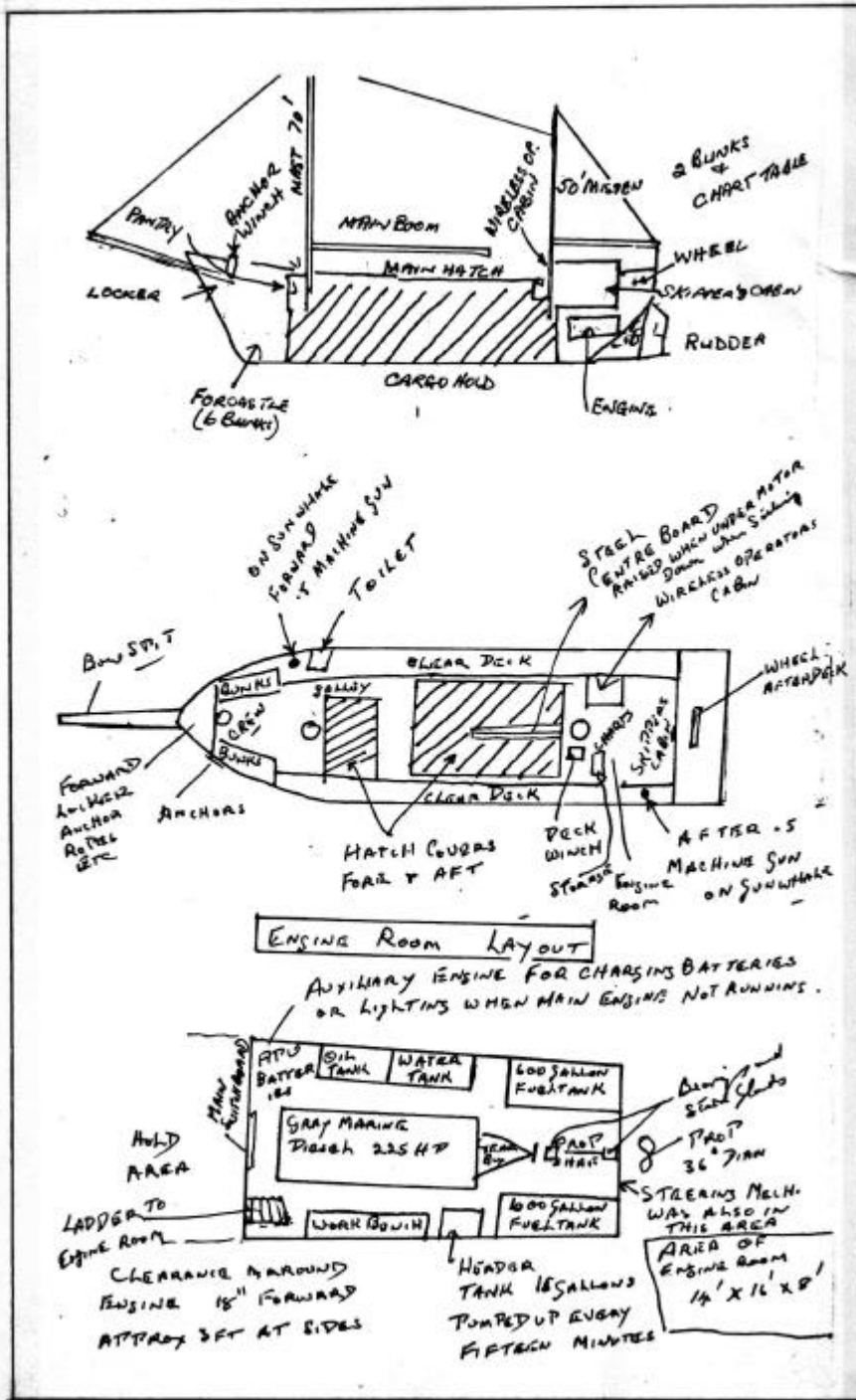
(Alf Wilson)



The very large cargo hold was being made ready by “on lookers” below to accommodate a large consignment of equipment, were being watched by onlookers.

(Alf Wilson)

06.9 "BETTY JOAN" Ketch



Drawn from memory in 1996 by ex W.O. Alf Wilson, but not to scale. 100 feet in Length, with a Beam of 22 feet

Karumba Marine Section

Sergeant Reg Blower, Engineer

R.A. Blower, 80499, enlisted in the RAAF in May 1942 and completed a Flight Mechanic course at Ascot Vale. When applications were called for the Marine Section Reg applied and was posted to Cairns. There he served on all types of vessels gaining a great deal of experience before joining an Advance Party to establish a Base at Karumba near the mouth of the Norman River in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Reg as a Fitter, joined the Crew of 08.11 Crash Boat with SGT Vic Bull as Coxswain. The boat had been built by Halvorson in Sydney and was 48-foot long and powered by 2 Chrysler Royal Marine 8 Cylinder motors. A Crew of four operated the boat and carried out a wide range of duties.

QANTAS had operated a refueling facility at Karumba during the Flying Boat era and a large Meat Works also carried out their meat processing there. The Norman River was very fast flowing with 24 foot tides which meant Marine Section vessels had to be kept in first class condition. Like all Engineers it was a source of professional pride to these men that engines under their care performed perfectly especially because of the speed of incoming and out flowing tides. Their own lives could also be in jeopardy.

No.43 Squadron operated Catalina flying boats from Karumba which meant a considerable fleet of vessels were required to carry out the wide range of duties.

Type of Boat and their function.

Air Sea Rescue: Escorting "Cats" to buoys or in case of battle damage to the beach ramp. Laying Flare Paths and maintaining they were clear of debris, in case of wind direction changes having the flare path changed.

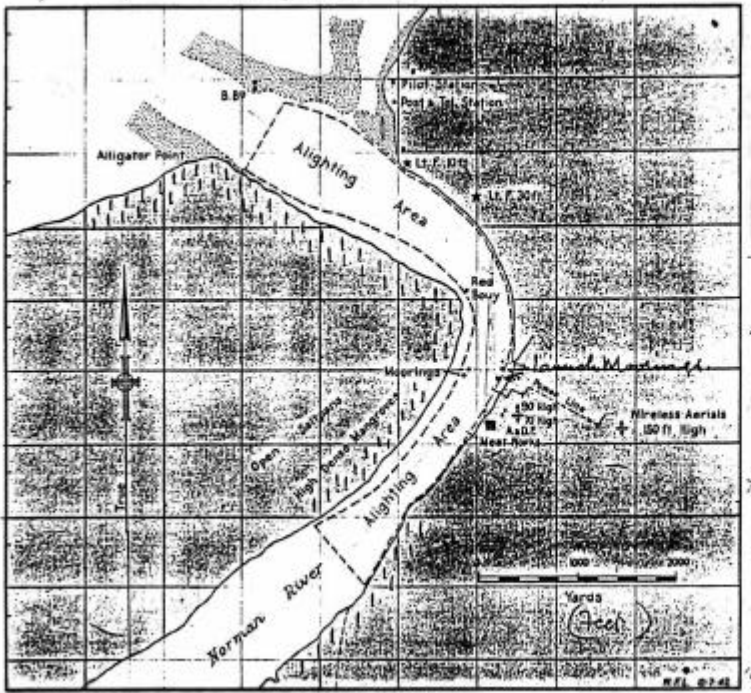
Work Boats: Powered by Ford V8 engines were used to carry "Cat" Crews to and from their plane as soon as they were required.

Refueling Barges: These crews had to be especially good in the conditions that prevailed on the Norman River. Delivering high octane fuel and holding the boat in position took a lot of skill.

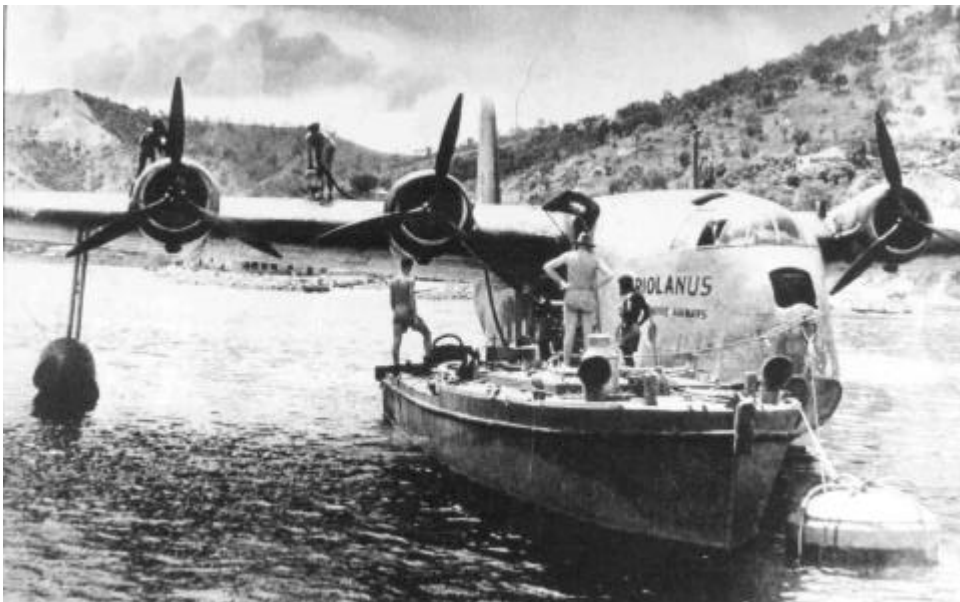
Bomb Barge : A 60-foot vessel powered by 2 Gray Marine Engines, with a load of high explosive bombs, also require a great deal of skill while the Armourers hoisted and loaded the deadly cargo.

Torpedo Recovery Boat 03. was a 60-foot boat with 3 Chrysler Royal 8 Cylinder Engines.

KARUMBA Q'LD.



Drawn by R.A.A.F. Map Section



QANTAS Empire Airways used RAAF Karumba for refuelling their C. Class Flying Boats on their way to Darwin and Singapore. A Shell refuelling Barge provided the service. On an occasion an engine had to be flown up from Sydney and installed in the aircraft that was stranded in Karumba. Engineers had to do this exchange of engines with the aircraft was still on the water.
(QANTAS)



No. 43 Squadron Catalina Flying Boats were based at RAAF Karumba, in the Gulf of Carpentaria. A very remote place. (Reg Blower, Engineer)



Reg Blower was the Engineer on 08.11 but he also preferred to live on board this 48 foot Crash Boat instead of camping on shore. (Reg Blower)



Reg is here steering a Work Boat for a recreation day out with other Marine Section Members. The 303 rifle was presumably for defence against crocodiles in the river.
(Reg Blower)



The whole efficiency of the Section relied upon the Refuelling Barge and her Crew, for all aircraft had to be speedily refuelled, It was always dangerous occupation with inflammable, and highly volatile 100 octane petrol.

(Reg Blower)



A barbecue at the marine Section camp in Karumba was an opportunity for the Crews to come together and create their own entertainment. (Reg Blower)



Originally these aircraft were known as Seagull Mk. 5 and flown by RAAF Pilots from RAN (Navy) Cruisers. When the RAF had them built they called them "Walrus". but their wings were not hinged. (Frank O'Brien)

Flare Path Launch: This boat laid the flares and kept them operating for Pilots greatly depended upon this single row of lights.

Supply Boat, called the "Glenda", was a 60-foot "impressed" vessel taken over from the owners and taken to Karumba. Previously it had been the Pilot Boat at Townsville.

Karumba 43 SQD Catalinas

Unlike many American Catalinas, the Australian ones were generally not amphibian, so they could carry a greater bomb load, or mines on long Missions. On occasions a Cat. would have to be taken ashore so wheels had to be fitted before being dragged up the boat ramp by a tractor. The Squadron Ground Crews, as well as the Air Crews, had to live in tents, and all other facilities were also under canvas. Ingenuity by the "residents" usually made living quarters a little more bearable.

Reg Blower preferred to live aboard 08.11 during his posting to Karumba for each member of the crew had a bunk with some provision for storage of personal gear. All the usual catering facilities were already on the boat.

A regular Mail Run from Cairns, some 300 miles away, was done with an amphibian "Seagull" Mk5 but usually known as a "Walrus". RAAF Pilots had always flown the Seagulls on Royal Australian Navy Ships until they were replaced by Radar.

Fuel for such a remote RAAF Base had to be brought in by a small tanker. Likewise all the necessities to maintain this Operational Base had to be shipped in at regular intervals.

On one occasion Reg and others made a trip to the inland town of Normanton some 60 miles up river. This turned out to be quite hazardous because of hidden rocks, submerged tree trunks and local crocodiles. A 303 rifle was carried for this particular trip using a Work Boat, but the 08.11 boat was permanently issued with rifles as their only defensive equipment.

Eighteen months slipped quickly by at Karumba Marine Section for SGT Reg Blower then a posting to Millingimbi, and then followed by move to Groote Island, Darwin, Derby, Exmouth and finally to the Swan River (Perth).

While in Karumba Reg was involved in salvaging two new Boston aircraft that had landed on Mornington Island beach when fuel ran low after being lost.

06.11 "Yalata", Ketch

Dave Bently (83261) was initially in Navy Auxiliary operating out of Fremantle until he met up with an old friend from yachting days, FLTLT Bill Lucas. Bill was then the RAAF Marine Officer, who was Skipper of a Torpedo Recovery Boat based in Fremantle. Bill Lucas suggested to Dave Bentley, after he spent some time as a Crewman, picking up American practice torpedoes, that he join the RAAF Marine Section. Later came a posting to 06.11 "Yalata" then in Spencer Gulf at Port Pirie, South Australia.

FLTLT Cable (a Solicitor from Sydney), a skilled navigator, was appointed Skipper when the RAAF "impressed" Yalata. Warrant Officer W. Simms, as the former owner of the 70 foot Ketch, was First Mate and Coxswain. WO W. Simms would take his former ship to New Guinea from South Australia. With two Engineers, two Radio Operators, a Cook, Dave Bentley, Harry Wortley and two other Crewmen the "Yalata" departed Port Pirie and sailed to Melbourne. There at the RAAF Marine Section the final fitting out was completed when Radio gear and IFF gear was installed and tested.

"Yalata" set sail and commenced the long voyage to New Guinea and Darwin. Under engine power and Ketch rigged sails the ship was very steady in a seaway. Having a skilled Cook on board the Crew were well looked after on their voyage up the East coast. Off Cape Range in far north Queensland Dave Bentley developed appendicitis and had to be put ashore on Thursday Island.

06.11 "Yalata" operated as a supply vessel to those RAAF Units located up jungle rivers, or coral rimmed islands and bays around New Guinea and northern Australia. RAAF Radar personnel relied upon Yalata for regular supplies, equipment and relief personnel as well as mail from home.

To keep Yalata and the other large Ketches, Schooners and Luggers properly serviced, repaired and maintained was through the Bases developed and expanded at Cairns, Darwin, Port Moresby and Milne Bay. Essentially it was through the men with the skills that these Bases were so successful. At Milne Bay the men had to build and erect their workshops before power and electricity could be installed. Then came the drills, lathes, tools, and a host of gear to meet the needs of a great variety of Mustering. Initially a timber mill had to be in operation to provide the sawn timber for buildings. Also the need for extra timber was supplemented by sending a Bomb Scow out each day scouring the sea for suitable drift wood that could be utilised. This proved to be a very successful operation for many varieties and loads of timber was found.

RAAF Marine Section Maintenance Crews showed great ingenuity in tackling difficult jobs, like when a very large barge was abandoned on a reef they salvaged it. They replaced the two engines but then had the task of removing and replacing the two engine shafts. Because no large slipway was there, and the shafts were five feet under water, they made a diving mask out of a Issue Gas Mask, rubber hose and bellows to carry out the task.



Warrant officer W. Sims was actually the owner of 06.11 "Yalata" until the RAAF "impressed" . Yalata, like all the other large sailing ships made a commendable contribution to the war effort against the Japanese. (H. Wortley)



With the tide out "06.11 "Yalata" sat comfortably on the bottom while the ship was unloaded at a remote Base. (H. Wortly)

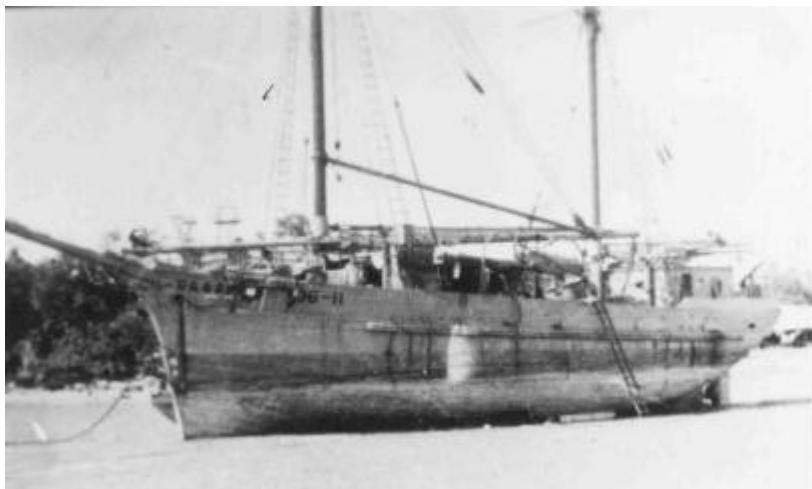


RAAF "Sailors" of the Marine Section furl jibs before entering Darwin. (H.Wortley)



The Ketch “Yalata” anchored in Apsley Strait between Melville and Bathurst Islands (off Darwin) after carrying Royal Australian Air Force Radar Units No. 39, 46, 60, and 61 to their remote and secret locations.

(Morrie Fenton (Radar))



“Yalata beached near Doctors Gully (Darwin) so that the hull could be inspected before repairing and repainting with anti fouling. (M.Fenton)



Warrant officer Simms, FLGOFF Gable, Harry Wortley with other Crew Members of 06.11 "Yalata" (Harry Wortley)



Under full sail and a favourable wind "Yalata" made a fine sight as a supply vessel when she returned to Darwin with No.46 RAAF Radar Unit. (Harry Wortley)

When the 06.08 "Ena", a 106 foot long Schooner, came in with a dry rot Mizzen Mast that had to be replaced, the Marine Section Maintenance Crew faced the challenge. From somewhere they acquired a suitable "stick" but it was six feet short. Undeterred, the men altered all the fittings and modified the rigging and sails and completed all the other necessary jobs so as to allow the "Ena" to carry on its necessary function.

This fleet of large sailing vessels would be away for months at a time without the assistance of Maintenance Bases so it was essential the vessels left Bases in tip top condition for they had to operate in tropical storms and heavy seas that thoroughly tested every section on a ship.

The vessel's Crew of RAAF Personnel had to operate as an effective and thoroughly efficient, and harmonious Unit that was in close contact each and every day for months at a time. Their particular job was most important to the men who depended and relied upon them to deliver the essentials that, in reality, was their life line in so many ways.

Other great sailing vessels

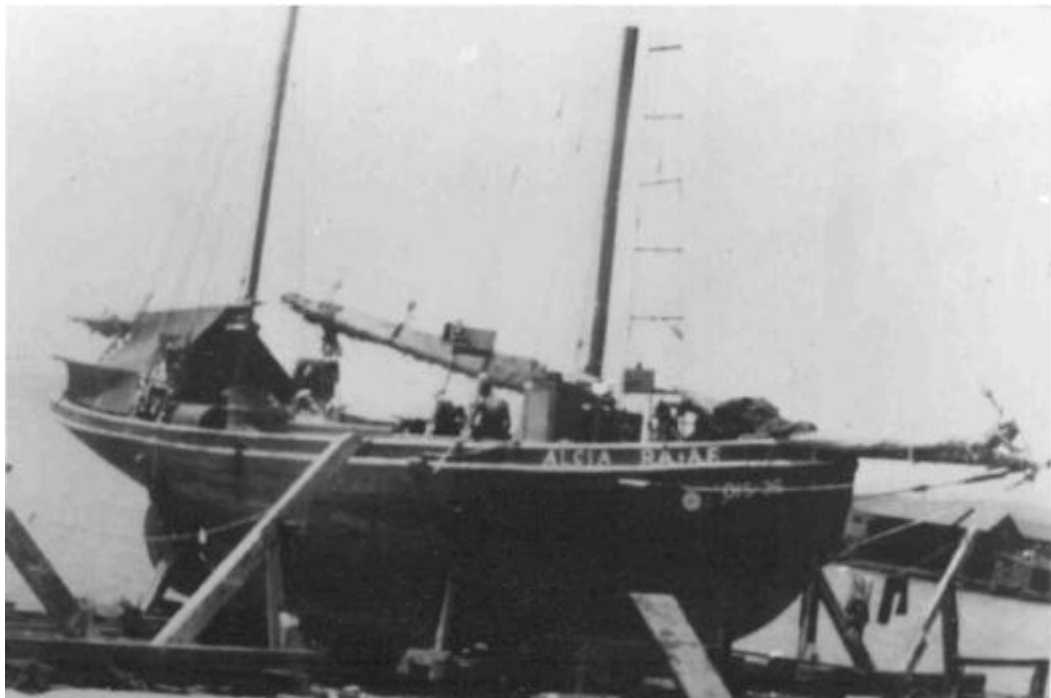
If only the Crews and voyages of the 106 foot 06.08 Ena", and all the other sailing ships and Luggers, could be retold, what a vast store house of stories, adventures, escapes from destruction by the Japanese, cyclonic storms, etc would be unfolded.

These exploits made by a group of men and their very special ships that provided a very important role during the dark days of WW2 when Australia was in peril of invasion, and to suffer the horrible fate that befell the other countries in our region.

Perhaps this attempt to record in a small way may stimulate and provide a catalysts to achieve such a goal for without it occurring would be a great loss in our history.



This is the 106 foot Schooner, 06.08 "Ena" in Port Melbourne loading stores before sailing north to New Guinea. "Ena" was one of the four "impressed sailing vessels taken into the RAAF Marine Section.



The RAAF Lugger 015.36 "Alacia" under going essential maintenance. She was one of many ex Luggers that served in the Marine Section. (Ron McGraw)

Sailing Vessels & Radar Units

Australia was fortunate that large sailing Ketches, Schooners and Luggers were available when the Japanese forces were threatening our shores, the island Bases in New Guinea and off shore islands.

RAAF Radar Units were trained and equipped with specially designed transportable Radar Equipment, which had to be transported into difficult and isolated bays, islands, and remote locations. RAAF Marine Service Ketches and Schooners were able to carry out this role.

Once these small, self-contained Units had reached their allotted locations by the use of these motorised sailing ships they had to be regularly supplied with provisions, equipment and relief personnel.

Some of these RAAF Radar Units were very close to Japanese Forces, who were constantly searching for their well camouflaged Radar "Doover" (Antenna), power plants and living quarters. Setting up of the Radar Unit frequently required a great deal of back-breaking transportation of all their gear to difficult places.

Skippers of these sailing vessels had to be skilled navigators to negotiate reef strewn coasts and coral rimmed islands as well as finding their way up winding, twisting and dangerous rivers as was found in New Guinea. Time after time these Skippers (Warrant Officer Coxswain) would have to return to these Radar Units with spares for the Radar equipment, food and the very important personal letters from home, for these Radar men were often completely isolated.

RAAF Marine Section Crews manning these large sailing vessels were young men, trained in Technical Colleges, then introduced to the intricacies of boat handling at RAAF Base Rathmines. They then joined the men with a great deal of sailing experience on such large vessels. For many of these new crewmen this would have been their first experience on a sailing vessel.

One such ship was 06.11 "Yalata" whose Skipper was Warrant Officer, Chief Coxswain, W.Simms, and also the former owner. The Yalata had operated in the South Australian Gulfs transporting wheat and wool before making the long voyage to the waters of northern Australia.

To keep "Yalata" and the other sailing vessels properly serviced and maintained, for they would often be away for months at a time, had to have access to land based RAAF Marine Section Workshops. These sailing craft had to have their rigging and sails in perfect condition to combat the constant use and the heavy punishment of winds and tropical storms. Heat and humidity could cause havoc to sails and ropes in these regions.

Air Sea Rescue Patrols

by

03.13, New Guinea

Warrant Officer Lester Cribb, as Coxswain, sailed 03.13, a 60 foot Torpedo Recovery Vessel from Melbourne early in 1944 to New Guinea to operate as an ASR boat, but without the speed of the new Types designed for very high speed. As the war against the Japanese army was gradually moving back along the North coast WO Lester Cribb kept moving to where the action was taking place. He had commenced his operations initially at Milne Bay where supplies and fuel were provided, then onto Goodenough Island and so up the East coast.

With bombing and strafing attacks being intensified against stubborn resistance from the Japanese troops the need for the presence of an Air Sea Rescue vessel was essential. Low flying strafing attacks by Allied Squadrons with the ever present possibility of sustained damage from intense and accurate ground defence, could result in immediate ditching. Swift radio contact from accompanying aircraft to the ASR vessel was paramount if a rescue had any hope of success.

The presence of a skilled Radio Operator on the ASR boat, was always "listening out" on the AWA Radio Receiver/Transmitter. W.O. Tom Scully, (WAG) was one such Operator, who had been temporarily posted to 03.13 from 100 SQD, Beaufort Bombers, when his Skipper was medically unfit. He relieved an Operator, who had been simply exhausted from weeks of constant duty.

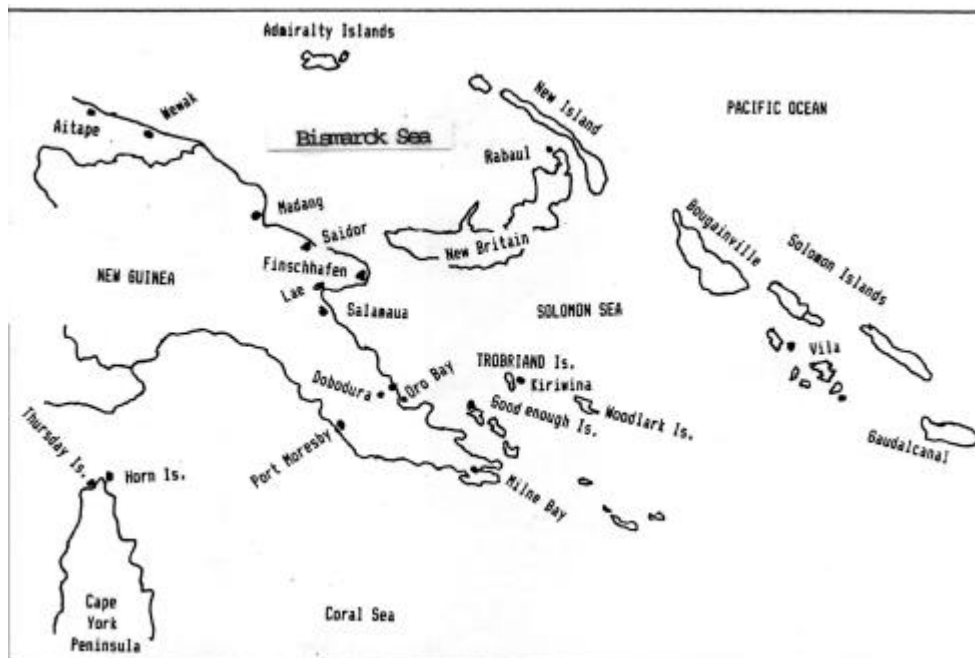
The Crew of 03.13 consisted of the Coxswain Lester Cribb(NSW), SGT Cliff Winch (from WA) and four others as Gunners, Deck Crew and the WOP. 03.13 had three motors giving it a range of 500 miles but by carrying drums of aviation fuel on deck the range was extended to 1000 miles. Accommodation was provided for six men but their food supplies consisted of the usual tinned varieties provided by Australian Bases.

Because Lester Cribb was a "master of bartering" and negotiating deals with American Bases and US Supply ships, the Crew benefited greatly in the variety of foods and goods. American Service Personnel were often generous to visiting RAAF Marine Section men and their boats, but they did have the resources that they considered normal victuals.

Because of the ever present danger from air attacks the 03.13 had Vickers, water cooled machine guns mounted on the Port and Starboard forward deck. The Crew had Tommy guns and standard .303 rifles that were usually at the ready when approaching unfamiliar coasts. Around Hansa Bay, near the mouth of the Sepik River, they came under fire from Japanese artillery although they had been informed by Australian troops that the area had been cleared. Because the 03.13 had not stopped its engines nor had dropped their anchor they were able to make a hurried exit. Vigilance was the key word for isolated pockets of determined Japanese could be expected every where.



On arrival in Port Darwin Marine Section, Warrant Officer Lester Cribb was ordered to report to Milne Bay with 03.13 where she would be assigned further duties.
(Jim Hewett)



Some of the important islands and places mentioned.



03.13 passing typical coastlines in New Guinea waters. (E. Hummerston)



A great diversity of native people of New Guinea gave assistance to Marine Section personnel.
(E. Hummerston)

Frequently 03.13 had a close view of Royal Australian Navy (RAN) ships bombarding Japanese defences when on stand-by duty like the time the 6th Australian Division attacked Wewak. "Shropshire" and Destroyers were bombarding the Japanese defences while overhead No. 7, 8, and 100 RAAF Squadrons made countless sorties while 03.13 patrolled the sector. An RAN Air Sea Rescue (one of the new Air Boats) was also on Patrol. These vessels were capable of very high speed and carried twin .5 machine turrets for defence and offence.

When three heavily laden Army Barges had broken loose from an American Tug in heavy seas the 03.13 was called into assist. These barges, with vital equipment and Army Personnel on board were drifting towards Japanese positions near Aitape. The Marine Section's reputation soared when the next day the Army Section stranded on shore saw their three loaded barges being slowly dragged towards them.

That same day 03.13 went searching for a downed Beaufort Bomber which was over due after a night patrol during a heavy and violent tropical storm. ASR 03.13 had to conduct a search close into hostile shores during heavy seas and blinding rain for the Monsoon had commenced.

On return to their Base another assignment was waiting for they were dispatched to escort an Army Tank Landing Craft loaded with supplies for an Army Section cut off by the Danmap River.

This followed by a search for a group of soldiers caught in flood waters sweeping towards Wewak. Japanese 75mm shells fell just off the stern of 03.13.

When dawn broke the ASR Crew had been on station for three days with no rest or sleep.

Perhaps WO Lester Cribb thought a little respite might be the order of the day when he took 03.13 to the off shore island of Mushu for a little light relaxing by letting the Crew have some practise with their machine guns after cleaning them. Little did they know at the time, that Mushu was the Head Quarters for a Japanese Division but fortunately for 03.13 they receive no hostile retaliation.

After a month of experiencing how another section of the RAAF operated, WO Tom Scully returned to his 100 Squadron Beauforts "refreshed in the knowledge" of another side of war fare.

Trawler 016.3 in New Guinea

Edwin (Ted) Richard Hummerston, 45904, enlisted in the RAAF on the 30 October 1941 as a Trainee and completed a Rookies Course at RAAF Base Pearce. After Trade Training in South Australia was posted to RAAF Rathmines for further Marine Section Training.

His first posting was back to Western Australia with FLTLT Bill Lucas at Fremantle aboard a Target Towing boat operating off Garden and Rottnest Islands. Aircraft from Pearce used this vessel for bombing practice and on many occasions the bombs came perilously close. No doubt some blaspheming was uttered with threatening gestures to the Air Crews. On one occasion Ted took his brother Peter, a RAAF Observer along for a ride to enlighten him how it was like on the receiving end.

Ted was again posted and this time found himself in Exmouth Gulf for a short time, then followed by a stint in Broome. Somewhat like a stepping stone series of moves he ended his northward travels at Koolan Island where his boat refuelled American Catalina aircraft that were based in Crawley Bay on the Swan River. From this point the "Cats" set off on long patrols to the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia).

Like all RAAF personnel Ted came under some mystery Controller, who was readily able to move men about at will. In November 1944 Ted was handed another Movement Order that had him travel diagonally right across Australia to Rose Bay in Sydney. There he was engaged in converting and modifying large Trawlers, taken from private companies, for use by the RAAF in northern waters.

Early in 1945 SGT Ted Hummerston boarded Trawler 06.3 as Engineer in a crew of six and set sail on the long voyage to New Guinea. Like every other such posting of vessels, Ted's Crew only learnt about further movement after reaching their next destination port along the East Coast of NSW and Queensland.

Port Moresby Authorities sent them onwards delivering and picking up essential supplies for Bases and Islands up along the East coast of New Guinea and finally operating along the Northern coast. Japanese positions were by then being hard pressed by Australian Army, RAN, and RAAF Units but it no easy task for there was stubborn resistance from the Japanese, who were bound by a code of not surrendering. By this time the main thrust by the huge American Forces was moving northwards from the Philippines but fortunately for Australians there were still many USA supply Bases and Forces still operating in this New Guinea Sector.

O16.3 operated from Morobe, Madang and Mannum delivering supplies, equipment and personnel as well as being available for Air Sea Rescue. There was a constant stream of aircraft bombing and strafing along this northern coast with the ever present likelihood of aircraft ditching, or Air Crews bailing out. The Japanese were still entrenched throughout and fought to the bitter end with no thought to surrender.



Ted Hummerston and fellow war time travellers during a short troop train stop at Zanthus, on the Nullabor Plains. None appeared to have “roughed” it like many, who made the trip across Australia in a “cattle truck”
(E. Hummerston)



A spot of fishing while 016.3 Trawler, travelled through the Great Barrier Reef on the way to New Guinea.
(E. Hummerston)



016.13 being refitted in preparation for extended cargo carrying operations in New Guinea. (E.Hummerston)



Madang (nth coast New Guinea) was an important port for the distribution of supplies, equipment and materials by 016.13. (E. Hummerston)

When the war against Japan did officially cease it did not necessarily occur everywhere for many of the Japanese Commanders would not believe there had been a surrender. It would take some time before the reality of the surrender was implemented.

The RAAF Marine Section boats and vessels still had important tasks to perform during this period. Ted Hummerston, together with the Crew of Trawler 06.3 would go on with their role of transporting supplies and materials for many months.

Ted later spent some time in Darwin before he was finally discharged in Perth in 1946.



One of the many duties for Ted (centre) on 016.13 as Engineer, was the operation of deck hoisting gear when unloading or loading essential cargoes.

(E.Hummerston)

Ship and Boat Building

Throughout Australia during WW2

The desperate need for a wide variety of vessels for the three Defence Services, caused by the threat of invasion to Australia by the conquering Japanese Army, Navy and Air Forces saw the ship building industries in this country mobilised.

Relative small boats were urgently needed so traditional boat yards commenced production, while other Companies throughout Australia, but NOT commercial boat building enterprises, also began production.

Arcus Company

Within walking distance of the City of Perth centre a small Shop Fitting Company turned their extensive workshop of skilled tradesmen into building sixty (60ft) wooden hulled Torpedo Recovery Boats, (Type 03.) for the Royal Australian Air Force "Marine Section". This Marine Section operated out of the Port of Fremantle and later from Matilda Bay on the Swan River.

When the Australian Army saw the results of what the Arcus Brothers had constructed for the RAAF Marine Section, contracts were issued for boats of a special design to meet the needs of the Army.

Because the Arcus workshop was not on the waterfront each boat had to be carried on jinkers down to the Swan River and launched down the concrete slipway used by the American Catalina Squadron in Crawley Bay.

There were many small companies and businesses in the Perth area whose expertise produced and manufactured a great number of components that were required to fit out each boat constructed.

State Ship Building Boat Yard

at

North Fremantle

Mr Jack M.A. Arcus (a brother) was made Manager of the State Ship Building Yard, which was located next to the Swan River. This Company obtained a contract to build 300 ton wooden vessels some 125-foot long with a beam of 25-foot and a draft of 12.5 feet. Two powerful Diesel engines powered these vessels that had a 2000 miles range.

Some two hundred and fifty men and women were employed after these yards had been constructed. Mr Albert Arcus (son of Jack) scoured the inland mining regions looking for suitable building materials. Albert and his team dismantled the buildings at "Youanmi" gold mine and had it



To meet the needs of the rapid expansion of the RAAF Marine Section, boats had to be constructed in the quickest means possible. Often small Businesses, without previous commercial boat building experience rose to the task, as did the Arcus Brothers, a shop fitting Company in Perth, Western Australia.
(Arcus Family)



Some man handling was required to bring out the first completed 03.6 Torpedo Recovery Boat, destined to play an important role in Western Australia.
(Arcus Family)



The Arcus Family also built these large wooden boats for the Australian Army Water Transport. (Arcus family)



On the way to launching on the Swan River these Army Personnel were looking eagerly forward to going on board. The W.A. State Ship Building Yard in Fremantle , under the Manager, Mr Jack Arcus, also built many large wooden hull boats for the Army Water Transport. (Arcus Family)

transported to North Fremantle and re-erected. At Yarloop Timber Mill he was provided with a steam boiler and from Kalgoorlie came a quantity of water pipes to construct steam boxes so essential in bending large timbers for forming planking. Mining Companies provided, on loan for the duration, a wide range of tools so essential for constructing the boats.

A continuing supply of timber, such as Jarrah, Karri and Wandoo had to be maintained to meet the demands brought about by the size of the contracts. Sub-contractors had to be found to produce the host of products needed to fit out a vessel. Specially designed water tanks, baffled fuel tanks, plumbing items and a myriad of small and large components had to be manufactured.

A number of different types of engines also had to be manufactured not only to provide propulsion but also to drive an electrical generator for all the electrical requirements and an engine for a compressor tank to start the Diesel engines.

Ten of these 300 ton wooden boats would be constructed and each named after a River in Western Australia. The "Swan" was completely fitted out as a floating workshop to service equipment in the New Guinea waters. Jim Calder well remembers being aboard the "Swan" during sea trials prior to handing over to the Authorities.

A Crew of thirteen, together with a Gun Crew of eight was the complement of each boat.

Mrs Jack Arcus formally launched the "MV Fitzroy", which was the ninth vessel constructed with another vessel following three weeks later. This continuity of production must have reflected the careful planning needed to have vessels coming down the slipway every three weeks.

Starting from "scratch" this State Ship Building Yard at Fremantle, together with the "Arcus Brothers" Yards in Perth must rank as an outstanding achievement carried out during WW2 in Western Australia.

Around Australia

In every State of the Commonwealth a countless number of vessels were built in steel and wood to provide the three Defence Services with a great diversity of vessels to meet their needs.

A great debt is owed to the Companies and the Tradesmen and Women, who met the challenge to build this Armada of ships for the defence of Australia during WW2.



In every State of the Commonwealth, wooden and steel boats were coming down slipways . Here 02.14, an Air Sea Rescue Boat would soon be ready for trials.

(Norm Greaves)



This 46 foot Air Sea Rescue Boat was being tested before handing over to the RAAF Marine Section.



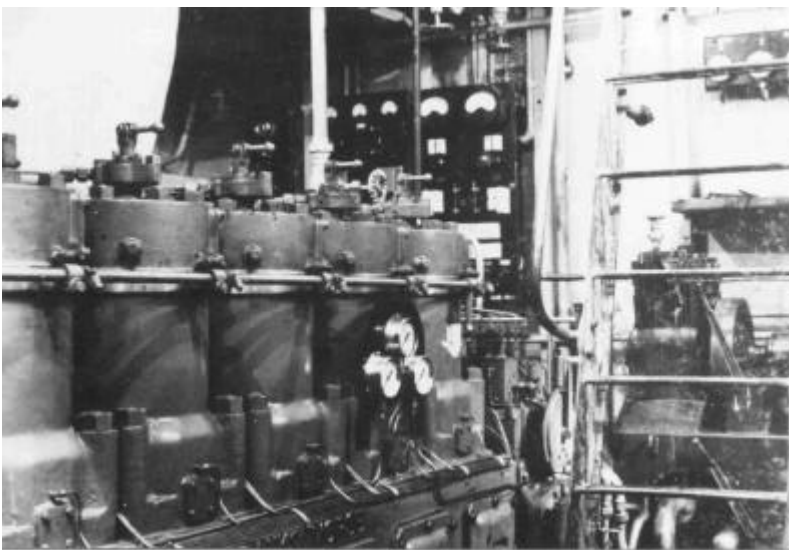
An interested crowd watch as 03.11, a 60 foot Torpedo Recovery Boat is about to be launched. (Kitch Williams)



03.11, newly built by Harold Chandler, will soon be in the hands of the Marine Section. Three propellers can be clearly seen. (Kitch Williams)



06.15, a steel constructed vessel, 120 foot long, was one of the newly designed Cargo Boats.



Large Diesel engines were used in the 06 Type vessels, destined to operate around northern Australia, New Guinea and onto eventually Borneo.



A newly launched 04.4 Refuelling Barge was here undergoing trials in Sydney Harbour prior to be sent to a forward Base.



It was most fortunate for Australia that so many small companies were able to construct the great range of special TYPES of boats needed for the Marine Section.