

THE

# CATALINA



NEWS

ISSUE NO 104 - AUTUMN / WINTER 2025



## Duxford Hangar Project

The exciting Duxford Hangar Project is underway – see how you can help on pages 2 and 3.

## Biscarrosse 2025

2025's visit to Biscarrosse went smoothly until an engine failure – read all about it in Paul Mulcahy's journal and Paul Warren Wilson's reports on the subsequent engineering work required.

## John Cruickshank VC

John Cruickshank VC was a modest hero – his recent passing, at age 105, is marked in our obituary.

## World Catalina News

Considering all surviving Catalinas are now well over eighty years young, there is still news to report in World Catalina News on page 20.

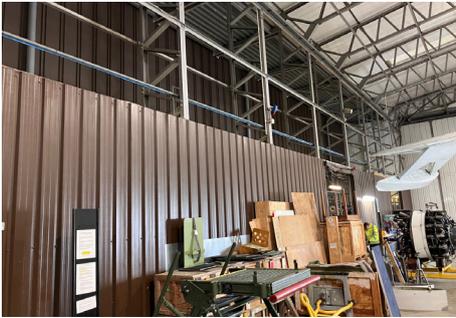
**The Re-creation Photoshoot at Duxford's Flying Day: The Americans on July 25th – see story inside**

- WARTOG

# The Catalina Hangar Project

After some 10 years of planning, work has just begun on a major upgrade to our Duxford hangar space!

We're rebuilding the engineering area into a two-storey workspace. It's an expensive project! We've raised much of the funding but still need some additional support – please see the *Introduction* for details.



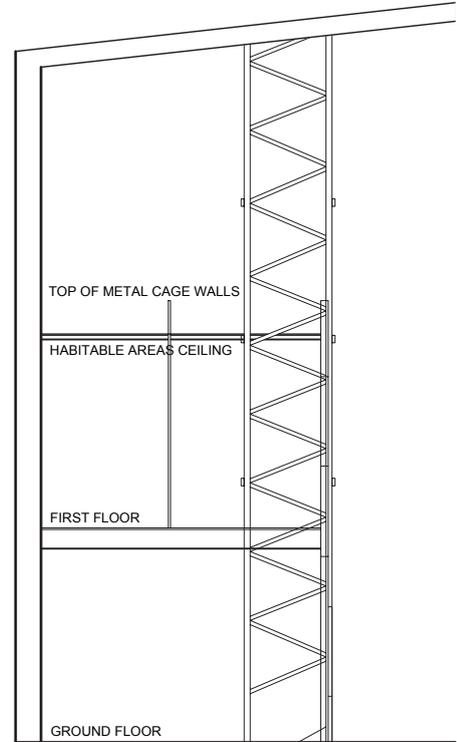
How it has looked up to now



Single storey... not enough space!



Now cleared and ready for work to start.



Side view of planned development

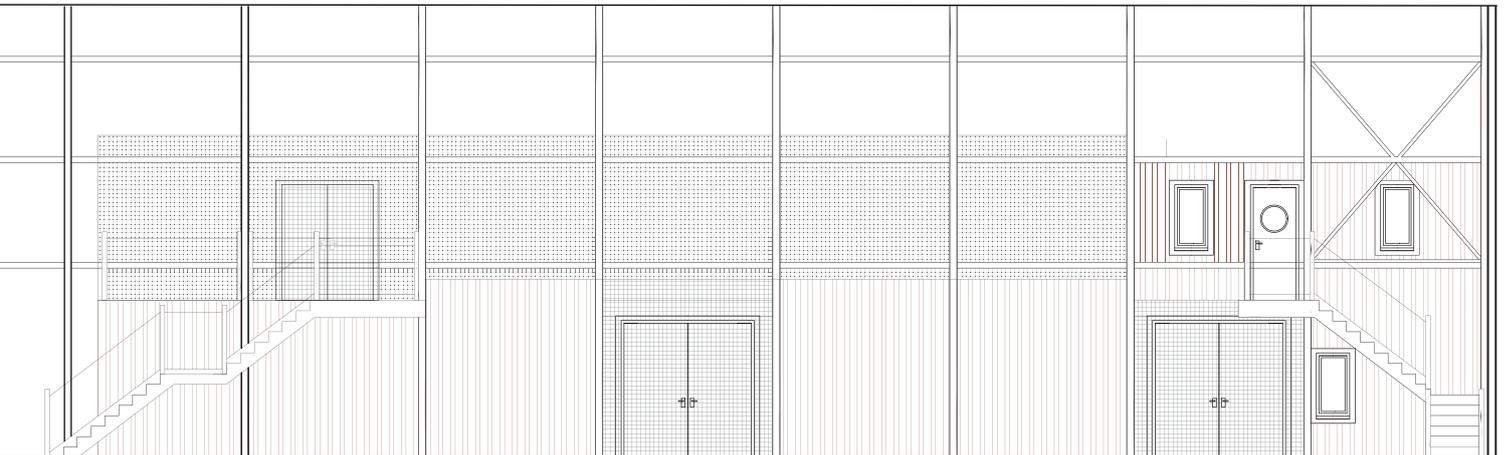


## Can you help? All amounts welcome!

For a donation of £750, life membership of the Catalina Society is included, for yourself, or a person of your choice.

If you can add **gift aid**, instead of using the link or QR code, please email David Legg for details: [pby5@btinternet.com](mailto:pby5@btinternet.com)

Please consider donating using the QR Code or by visiting: [catalina.org.uk/make-a-donation](http://catalina.org.uk/make-a-donation)



Frontal view of planned development: Two storey - much more storage & workspace - offices, toilet, crew room - private viewing gallery

# Introduction

Anyone connected with aviation will know a couple of general rules that apply to everything we do in flying...

Firstly - there are many, many things that have to come together to enable an aircraft to make the planned flight... the aircraft has to be serviceable (which means hangarage and associated servicing, see later!), fuel and oil levels have to be filled appropriately, pilots have to be available, the weather has to be acceptable, the aircraft has to be loaded on time, the airfields of operation have to be open, with no problematical snow, ice, flooding etc, the aircraft documents must all be up to date, the pilot's licences, ratings and medicals have to be valid, the aircraft's radio licence must also be valid, the aircraft's insurance level must meet the destination requirements, numerous documents have to be sent to air display organisers in advance, and so it goes on! If any one thing is missing or wrong - we don't get to fly. And - if everything is perfect, we just get to do the planned flight and earn our planned income. Phew! It's thanks to many people in our team, and helping our team, that we're able to put all these things in place and achieve all the flying that we manage with our wonderful Catalina.

Secondly - keeping an aeroplane flying is expensive! Aeroplanes eat money! Basically, it almost never costs less to operate the Catalina than expected. The one exception, I guess, is flying to a destination with a tailwind. That means a shorter flight time, less fuel, and less cost - always welcome! But of course, on the way home, there will probably be a headwind!

We saw many of these factors come together earlier this year, with an amazing 8 days of flying at the seaplane base in Biscarrosse, France. We renewed sea ratings for many of our pilots, trained some of those who were new to water ops, qualified one of our Type Rating Examiners to examine on water, and carried out some passenger flights for our shareholders. Just as we were finishing, there was a cough from the starboard engine. Then everything settled and looked fine. But the pilots brought the Catalina in to land at Biscarrosse land airport to be checked over. And that check showed that one of the pistons in the starboard engine had become detached from its connecting rod. It's an amazing feature of the radial engine that she can sometimes tolerate significant problems and keep running. However, this meant an engine change was required.

So what we saw, in a way, touched on nearly every aspect of our operation. We achieved some amazing water flying and training over a week-long period - but then we saw the complexity and cost of an engine change away from base. And we saw how our small team can pull together and get this job done, and return the Cat to flying in a pretty short time. She was back at Duxford just a few weeks later. Many, many things came together to allow us to train so many of our pilots on water. And then a single thing going wrong (the piston) caused us a huge headache and amount of work, as well as a cost - considering also the loss of airshow income over the following few weeks - of maybe £40,000. That's aviation. And we are always really grateful to our supporters who contribute to the cost of keeping the Catalina flying - thank you.

One thing we don't do often is ask our members if they can help raise funds for a specific cause. Here comes the exception to that! For more than 10 years now, we have been working to develop plans to improve our hangar space at Duxford. We are privileged to be based at, and to work with, the Imperial War Museum at Duxford, where the Catalina is of course quite an attraction. The hangar we use - the construction of which we also part-funded many years ago - is an excellent base for us, and between our hangar and the next one is a covered and very useful floor-level area that we have used for our engineering works for a long time now. A big aircraft like the Catalina does need a fair amount of associated engineering space and, until now, it has been something of a squeeze fitting everything in - various engineering spaces, storage areas, bonded storage, clean areas, and so on.

After years of work, the development of this space into a 2-storey area for our operation is suddenly about to start - and should be under way by the time this issue of *The Catalina News* is printed. We'll have much more storage and work space, offices, toilet, crew room and a viewing area. We have offered to contribute the cost of this work... and it's not cheap, at an overall budget of about £280,000. Thanks to some extremely generous donations, mainly from our shareholders, as well as from The Catalina Society and others, we have put about £240,000 of funding in place. But now we need to cover the final £40,000. If any of our Society members who are able to, could offer a small contribution - maybe £50? - then we will be really well on the way to this target. To make this easy, please just scan the QR code (see inside front cover) - this will take you direct to The Catalina Society donation page. All donations received up to 30 November 2025 will be specifically applied to the Hangar Project.

(Note - if you are able to use Gift Aid, please don't use the QR code / Catalina Society donation link - but instead, email David Legg at pby5@btinternet.com for details of how to do this. There is a short but important procedure to be followed.)

The completed 2-storey space will include a small, private, upper level hangar viewing gallery (available to Catalina Society members), with associated Catalina memorabilia, and a record of all those who have contributed.



**PAUL WARREN WILSON**  
*Director & Head of Training*  
*Plane Sailing Air Displays Ltd.*



**DAVID LEGG**  
*Editor*

## Cat Call

This issue's articles are biased toward our own Catalina *Miss Pick Up* and with good reason as, in addition to the usual airshow Season Report, there are reports on the visit to Biscarrosse for water training and the subsequent engine problems we experienced. Of course, we have our usual *Review Column* and the latest *World Catalina News* but there is also an interesting piece on the reenactment of some classic World War II photos of the original *Miss Pick Up*. Last, but by no means least, there is an obituary of John Cruickshank, legendary Catalina Victoria Cross holder who passed away earlier this year at the grand age of 105.

Enjoy.

# 2025 SEASON REPORT

- DAVID LEGG

With winter maintenance completed, *Miss Pick Up* took to the air again just in time to fly a private flight to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, arranged by shareholder/pilot Jeff Boyling for May 9<sup>th</sup>. Amongst the guests was Chris Warne who provided the following report via his Facebook page: 'The opportunities that I've been honoured to receive over the past year just keep coming, and I do consider myself to be extremely lucky, as well as eternally grateful. From an L-4J to A-26 Invader, today saw me get the opportunity to fly in my favourite 'warbird' at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford – the Plane Sailing Air Displays Catalina! It all started last Summer, when I was introduced to Jeff Boyling, shareholder and pilot of Catalina *Miss Pick Up*, by our mutual friend Hayley Ginn, one of Plane Sailing's 'Cat Pack' volunteers. I told Jeff about my good friend Steve Foster, whose father had flown Catalina's during WWII, and was friends with Mark Smith (Militaria expert on BBC's *Antiques Roadshow*), whose father had been part of the same crew. Steve and Mark had been in touch for some years, and I introduced them both to Jeff, with the thought that maybe Steve and Mark could come and view *Miss Pick Up* sometime. Well, that viewing turned into something far greater than I had expected and there was even a spare seat for me! We met just after 10am on May 9<sup>th</sup> for a meet and greet, along with

Caro Howell (CEO, IWM), Hugh Bullock (IWM Trustee), Caroline Cecil Bose (Author) and Mitchell Reiss (US diplomat), and then had a safety briefing from our Crew Chief, Chris Hodson. Once on board, and with engines started, captain Phill Petitt and Jeff, who were flying us, departed Duxford and headed south, destination Tower Bridge and a U-turn over central London, before heading back to Duxford, roughly following the M11-A10 as our corridor. There's something about flying in vintage airplanes that is impossibly difficult to explain to anyone who hasn't been fortunate enough to have had the opportunity. The noises, the smell of an old airplane, the vibrations and 'basic' feeling of being inside a machine built for purpose, rather than comfort. The roar of the R-1830's at takeoff, with the propeller tips just 8ft away from you, albeit the other side of a thin sheet of aluminium!

'The Catalina truly is a 'flying boat' and her motion through the air – noting there was some breeze and thermals over London – isn't unlike being in a boat on a choppy lake at times.

We were over central London in no time and later found people in The Shard had filmed us fly past! Lots of photos and a couple of videos were taken before, during and after the flight, and I live streamed several times

**The VE Day flight party including Caroline Cecil Bose (far left – see also Review Column) then Chris Warne and crew members Jeff Boyling, Phill Petitt and Chris Hodson), the IWM's Caro Howell (4th from right) and Antiques Roadshow's Mark Smith (third from right)**  
- Richard Ash, IWM



during the startup, taxi and takeoff. What a privilege to have been invited along and what a wonderful airplane to have flown in. My thanks to Plane Sailing, Jeff, Phill, Chris and the rest of the Catalina crew and 'Cat Pack' for this amazing opportunity.'

The next day, *Miss Pick Up* was on static display at the IWM's Flying Days: VE Day event whilst a few days later, on the 13<sup>th</sup>, an odd incident occurred when during the final landing run for John Harmsworth's Display Authorisation renewal with Phill Petitt as captain, the nosewheel inner tube deflated. Luckily, the landing was on Duxford's grass runway so although a furrow was ploughed in the grass and the Catalina finished its landing run in a slightly different direction than intended, there was no damage and, after spending the night out on the grass, the wheel and tyre were replaced. Two days later, on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the Catalina, together with B-17 *Sally B*, were on display for the 'Classic Battlefield Tour – American Air Force'. Around 16 attendees were shown around both aircraft with a number of our shareholders and volunteers being on hand to help with walk-throughs and to answer questions.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Catalina flew out to Biscarrosse for a period of training – Paul Mulcahy's journal entries that follow this article describe the next few days and what happened subsequently. Suffice to say that, due to engine problems, we very regrettably had to pull out of our bookings to fly at the Bisca' show and to appear on static display at the RAF Cosford Air Show and the Blackbushe Open Day during June as well as the Sum-

mer Air Show at our Duxford base.

With the Catalina back at Duxford at the start of July, it was back to business with a booking to fly at the Belgian Open Aerobatics Championships at Koksijde in the north of the country, although no 'aeros' for us of course! Operational difficulties meant that the Catalina was unable to get to the same weekend's airshow at Roissy-Meaux near Paris. In mid-July, *Miss Pick Up* flew to Fairford for the Royal International Air Tattoo where she was in the static display as part of the event's *Eyes in the Skies* theme, parked alongside one of the RAF's contemporary maritime reconnaissance aircraft, the Boeing Poseidon MRA1 (P-8A). Then, back at Duxford, it was the turn of the IWM Flying Day: The Americans on July 25<sup>th</sup> – see article elsewhere in this edition – and the next day, the centrepiece of a visit by the Aeromobility charity, organised by our shareholder/pilot Richie Piper.

It is always good to be invited back to events we have previously attended and this was the case with several of the 2025 shows, not least the Blackpool Airshow on August 8<sup>th</sup> when *Miss Pick Up* displayed along the famous beach, having taken part in some air-to-air photography on arrival the day before. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, the Cat' flew a commemoration flight for the next day's VJ Day anniversary with invited guests on board. Specifically for the occasion, the emblem of the Birmingham Area Far East Prisoner of War (BAFEPOW) association was applied to the forward hull of the Catalina. The sortie went out to the east to the old airfield at RAF

**An unusual angle on *Miss Pick Up* at Blackpool Airport for the town's airshow in August**

- Andy Bell Images



Halesworth in Suffolk, home of the original 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Catalina *Miss Pick Up* in 1945. A second flight with more guests was made in the afternoon, this heading south to London City before returning to Duxford.

The next day, VJ Day, the Catalina flew out to Rotterdam. This needed some careful departure flying in order to leave Duxford just before the airfield closed for a two-minute silence at noon. Getting away in time, pilots Phill Petitt and Jeff Boyling, plus this writer as crew chief and crew member Luke Twentyman, then headed toward Cambridge and spent a few minutes orbiting in the vicinity of the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial at Madingley before heading to Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge for an overflight at the conclusion of the VJ day commemoration service there, again requiring some precision timing.

The aircraft then flew on to Rotterdam. After flying some VIP local flight, Phill, Jeff and the privilege of making flight over the Indisch Monument in The Hague. This Dutch citizens and soldiers

to Rotterdam guests on a myself had an evening monument honours the killed during

World War II in the Dutch Indies. Our participation was appropriate as Dutch Catalinas played a prominent part in the war in that part of the world. We made two fly-bys at just under 1,000ft in the gathering gloom, flying over a large crowd that included Willem-Alexander, the King of the Netherlands. After returning to Rotterdam Airport and putting the Cat' to bed, we had a late but delicious Indonesian meal at the end of a long but satisfying day.

From Rotterdam, the original intention was to fly to Manston the next day to take part in a planned air show which, in the event, was postponed until 2026 by the organisers. Instead, we flew back to Duxford and appeared in both the static park and the flying display at the IWM Flying Evening, a bonus for our ground crew and airshow visitors.

A new event for the Catalina was the 2025 RAF Syerston Airshow and Friends & Families Day, part of the RAF Air Cadets' National Air & Space Camp. The aircraft was on both static display and in the flying programme at this Nottinghamshire airfield. August 28<sup>th</sup> saw another ground-based event at Duxford when a group of Historic Aircraft Association (HAA) members came to



**Seagull's-eye view of Miss Pick Up heading toward the coast whilst displaying at St Aubin's Bay, Jersey at the Jersey International Air Display - Marc le Cornu / BAM Perspectives**

visit. The next day, the Catalina and crew flew up to The Victory Show, held over the weekend of August 30<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, in a field at Cosby in Leicestershire before returning to Duxford for the following weekend's Battle of Britain Air Show. Here, *Miss Pick Up* flew a display slot in formation with the Royal Navy Historic Flight Fairey Swordfish, an unusual pairing but recalling the involvement of both types in the shadowing and eventual sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck*.

Another repeat visit was to the annual Jersey International Air Display where, this year, the Catalina was on static display at Jersey Airport and in the flying programme off the seafront at St Aubins' Bay. We flew out from Duxford on September 9<sup>th</sup>, the show being on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The weather was somewhat challenging at times, a taster for the next event at the Sanicole International Airshow in Belgium. Departing Jersey on Friday 12<sup>th</sup>, a customs stop was made at the ever-friendly French airport at Caen before proceeding to Leopoldsburg airfield, home of the Aero Club Sanicole. With a hard runway of only 600m, all display aircraft except helicopters fly out of nearby Belgian Air Force bases at either Kleine-Brogel or Beauvechain but as the 'Cat' was on static display only, we had to land at Leopoldsburg. Captain Phill Petitt made a precision approach and a planned go-around from a height of 20ft before coming back for an excellent landing on the short runway in gusty conditions. At times during the weekend, the winds were strong with occasional very heavy rain but this did not seem to deter the large and enthusiastic crowd at this small airfield and most of the show went ahead, albeit somewhat abbreviated due to torrential rain on the Saturday.

On Monday September 15<sup>th</sup>, the plan had been to make the short hop to Kleine-Brogel to take on our fuel allowance and clear customs before returning to Duxford. However, with strong winds and a forecast for 45kt gusts all the way back to the UK, the decision was made to stay at Kleine-Brogel after refuelling and return the next day. Landing there was made more interesting as it was on the taxiway, the parallel main runway being closed for resurfacing. As the customs facility at 'K-B' was only temporary, this meant a stop at Calais en route to Duxford where, after arrival, Phill Petitt carried out a short display practice and John Harmsworth completed his Type Rating revaluation with Paul Mulcahy. By this time, the crew had been away from base for eight days.

As I write this report on Saturday September 21<sup>st</sup>, the Catalina is down at Lee-on-the Solent in Hampshire for the two-day Parco Victory Festival & Air Display where she is booked to be on static display and fly on both days. Thereafter, there was one more event in the calendar, the IWM's 'Flying Finale' on October 4<sup>th</sup> when *Miss Pick Up* will have been on static display and flying.

So ended a good year of flying, interspersed with some engineering challenges and where, in addition to display and event commitments, our shareholders were able to carry out a number of training/revaluation flights on land and water and fly guests on several occasions too.

**Phill Petitt makes a planned go-around to assess the 600m runway at Sanicole, Belgium before a textbook landing**

- Benoit Denet



## PAUL MULCAHY'S

Paul Mulcahy, amongst other roles a former Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Chief Test Pilot and now approaching retirement, is one of our Catalina Type Rating Examiners and is qualified to instruct our pilots on water. He was able to interrupt his busy work schedule to come on this year's trip to Biscarrosse in south-west France which was intended to cover both training and an appearance at the 2025 Rassemblement International des Hydravions airshow. Things did not quite turn out according to plan as you will read! Paul kept a journal and these are his personal recollections of the trip...

**Thursday May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Duxford-Caen-Biscarrosse Parentis:** we were up at 7am and away by 7:30 onto the M11 and towards Duxford. Upon arrival, we discovered that neither of the cafés were open – but the Officer's Mess was! So, that was where we headed for breakfast. And by 9am I was at the Cat' Cabin loading up for the trip. Our first leg was to be Duxford (EGSU) to Caen Carpiquet (LFRK) for customs clearance and then onwards to Biscarrosse via the Gironde. We arrived at Biscarrosse-Parentis's grass runway at 5:30pm and headed for a briefing on local procedures – in a 2CV! – before heading to the St Hubert Hotel for a beer and dinner before bed. The block times for the day were Duxford to Caen – 09:16 to 11:18 = two hours two minutes, flying time 09:22 to 11:12 = one hour 50 minutes; Caen to Biscarrosse block time 12:31 to 15:32 = three hours, one minute, flying time 12:45 to 15:28 = two hours 43 minutes.

**Friday May 23<sup>rd</sup> – Biscarrosse Day One – Recurrence:** was up early at 7am, breakfast at 8am and out at the field by 9am. Did all the recurrency items for both land and water with Paul Warren Wilson (PWW); now both current and ready for the training week. We did have a float issue – the locking pin failed on the left float but it was safe to continue with visual monitoring. A spare component is being flown down from Duxford via Biarritz, courtesy of Matt Dearden's team! The afternoon was 'off' for me and so I took an afternoon nap and a bird watch around Latécoère, returning around 6pm for an admin (logbook) session before dinner with the group at 8pm and bed around 10pm.

**Saturday May 24<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Two – David Barlow and Phil Moorcroft:** I was up as usual at 7am, in breakfast by



Paul Mulcahy in *Miss Pick Up's* cockpit. Paul is a vastly experienced test pilot who also flew one of the RAF Victor tankers on the famous 'Black Buck' Vulcan raid on Port Stanley, Falkland Islands in 1982

8am and today we had to leave the St Hubert for one day (entire hotel booked months ago for a wedding!) so it was time to pack up and depart; tonight we shall be in the Relais Hotel in town. We were out at the Cat' by 8:30 and I briefed David Barlow for his refresh/renew – he was left seat, I was right and he did a great job!

I then swapped with PWW and he did a session with Matt Dearden who was training for his Type Rating Instructor (TRI) qualification on water – he also did a great job and we returned to Parentis airfield for lunch and crew swaps. I was then first up with Phil Moorcroft pm; we briefed in the blister and then headed for the lake. With Phil complete I swapped with PWW once again and he started water training for Phill Petitt whilst Phil Moorcroft, myself and Tony Russell relaxed in the blister area. We were back at Parentis around 4:30pm and the boys promptly got stuck in to repair the float which was completed early evening. Meanwhile we headed to the Relais Hotel shortly thereafter. Dinner was at Uncle Sam's Saloon, the local American diner! And an early bed – v tired.

**Sunday May 25<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Three – John Harmsworth:** once again an early start, this time from the Relais Hotel and breakfast at 8am followed by the ride to Parentis to get the Cat' ready for action. Her floats had been repaired and PWW was first up with Matt Dearden and I listening in from the blister. We later exchanged seats when I took the right hand side and John Harmsworth was left seat for refresher training. His check will be tomorrow with me and in front of Glen Bradley from the UK CAA. Once all complete I departed the airfield and headed for the St Hubert to check back in, but the rooms were not ready so I headed to the Chez Camette restaurant. Sadly, they were unhelpful so I had a beer and went on to L'epicurean for a lovely relaxed lunch and then went back to St Hubert to check back in and have an afternoon nap!

**Monday May 26<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Four – John Harmsworth test & Phill Petitt training:** after breakfast as usual at 8am, it was time to relax until 10:30 when John Harmsworth and I headed out with engineer Chris Hodson to take the second slot of the day. After a successful morning, and with John's re-validation complete, Richie Piper and John Stevens arrived (from the UK), in the latter's Piper PA-31 Navajo, to join the group. Matt Dearden had a (French military) friend with a Cessna 185 floatplane who was keen to get some air-to-air shots in formation which we did during Phill Petitt's second training detail and went on to include 'dive and drive' and 'step-taxi' practice before heading back and handing over to PWW for the final trip of the day; Matt Dearden's check observed by Glen Bradley. I had taken the opportunity to head back to the hotel and, after refuelling, the team were back for dinner at the St Hubert at 7:30pm and bed early for me – tomorrow will be another busy day.

**Tuesday May 27<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Five – Jeff Boyling, Glen Bradley (CAA), Phill Petitt & John Stevens:** after breakfast as usual we were on the airfield by 9:15am – Glen Bradley was with us today. We were off blocks on time for Phill Petitt's continued rating training but met 'glassy' conditions on the lake which were far from ideal. We pressed on but conditions were very tricky. PWW gave some good demos, we took a look at the mooring buoy and had the main gear down in the water. Following this, we returned to Parentis and had an early lunch

# BISCARROSSE JOURNAL

at the airfield bistro which was very good and welcome! We hoped the wind would increase a bit for the afternoon detail. I also had a chance to look at John's very lovely Navajo before venturing back to the lake for a refresher session with Jeff Boyling and another with Glen Bradley with PWW. Following this, PWW headed back to Parentis then handed over to me for Phill's test, observed by Glen for my own TRE renewal! All went well so we swapped Phill out and John Stevens in for a water demo by me before returning to Parentis at the end of the day. So, then it was back to the hotel to celebrate the achievements of the day despite the glassy water conditions! A screen shot from Polarsteps, the Apple travel app, certainly showed that we were using all of the lake!

**Wednesday May 28<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Six – Richie Piper & Jeff Boyling:** once again after breakfast we were back out at Parentis and preparations were well underway to head out onto the lake. PWW led off with Richie Piper and we later headed to the mooring buoy which had been relocated at our request. After departing the buoy, they repositioned using a visual circuit and put the aircraft mid-lake for me to take over with Jeff for his revalidation check which went well. By midday we were back at Parentis and headed to the bistro for lunch after which it was check time for Richie who also did a great job. After an hour and three circuits, we were back at Parentis to refuel. Visiting shareholder Nick Walsh and his family dropped in to see us and stayed overnight, joining us for dinner. They will fly with PWW tomorrow; it will be a very welcome day off for me! We were back at St Hubert by 4pm and, after a short nap, convened for drinks at 6pm and dinner at 7:30 – bed around 10pm!

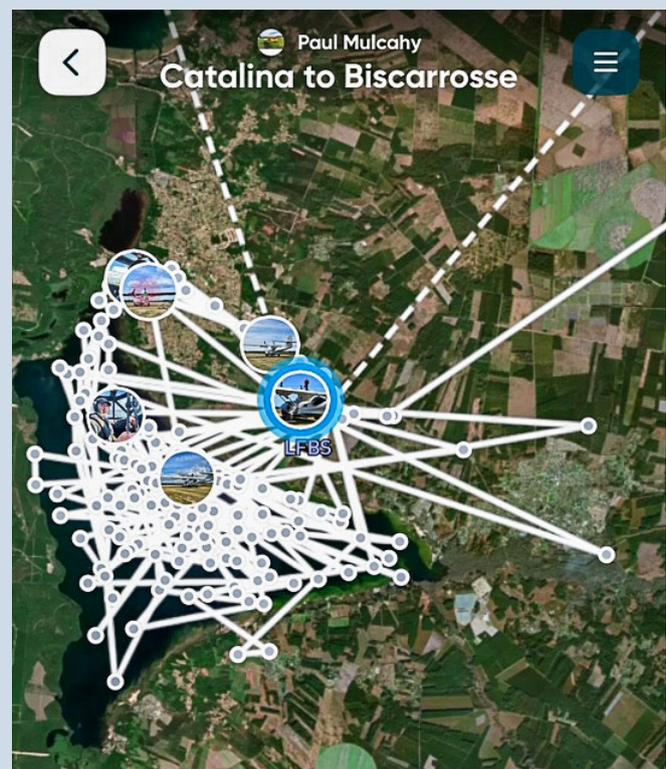
**Thursday May 29<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Seven – Day Off!:** after a leisurely breakfast, PWW headed off to Parentis for the passenger flight with Nick Walsh's group; meanwhile I had organised a bike for bird watching on the lakeshore which was fabulous, and took me along the lake path and an encounter with the Longhorn cattle, then out to the lake itself. Meanwhile, PWW was out on the lake with Nick and family. We were all back at St Hubert by 2:30pm for a briefing, a crew photograph with all those still there, and a poster signing for Loret the hotel owner. By 6pm we were gathering for a ride out to Parentis village and dinner with our local friend and supporter Maureen Thorburn – a very impressive selection of Indian curries – but first Richie and I gave a helping hand cutting down some wild growth on her border which was required by the local Forestry Service. The dinner was wonderful and very welcome. PWW and I departed at 9pm in preparation for tomorrow's passenger flights.

**Friday May 30<sup>th</sup> – Biscarrosse Day Eight – Passenger flights:** with John Harmsworth and Richie Piper it was breakfast at 8am for a 9am departure. Our visitors were with us and we departed around 10am for the Grande Dune du Pilat or the Dune of Pilat, the enormous sand dunes on the coast southwest of Arcachon and to the north of Biscarrosse. We were back at 11am for the second set of guests, friends of our pilot Seb Mazuchetti who could not be with us due to professional flying commitments. On our second flight, we encountered a problem with the right engine with rough running at high power and rpms; consequently, we abandoned the plan to land on the Biscarrosse lake for this second flight in favour of a low pass but once again experienced engine issues when applying power. At one stage I thought we would lose the

right engine but I throttled it back to Cruise rpm and power and once again it settled. With the left engine at 32/22 (Climb Power) and with the right at Cruise Power, and therefore slightly asymmetric, we got back to Parentis airfield safe and sound and handed her over to the ground crew for investigation. At their request we parked her on the hard ramp rather than the usual grass. For me it was time for a nap but, around 4pm, the fun started when an incoming Spitfire, scheduled to fly at the weekend's airshow, tipped on its nose after hitting a hidden obstruction in the grass whilst taxiing in.

Meanwhile, our engine was under investigation with engineer Chris Hodson leading the charge! By early evening, the matter was still inconclusive and we were no further forward. We shall continue investigating in the morning. We adjourned to the hotel for a beer then dinner at the show courtesy of PEP40 (Pupilles de l'Enseignement des Landes that runs the local youth sailing club), whilst I headed to Chez Camette!

**Saturday May 31<sup>st</sup> – Biscarrosse – engine trouble:** today we had a leisurely start (9:30am) based upon the need for continued engineering investigation. Sadly, upon arriving at the Cat' we discovered that the problem had been found – one number seven cylinder spark plug revealed the issue. Metal shards on the plug and excessive oil confirmed that internal mechanical failure had caused our problem. This was later confirmed when checking for piston movement, only to find that it had no movement! The con-rod had failed and this confirmed that an engine change would be needed – game (and airshow) over for us. We adjourned to the hotel, had lunch and I planned a BA flight home, departing Bordeaux at 21:25 this evening with transport from Maureen and arrival at Gatwick on time at 9:30pm local.



A screen shot from Paul's Apple Polarsteps travel app certainly showed that we were using all of the lake!

## TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS AT BISCARROSSE

It is always good to go out to Biscarrosse in the Catalina. It is the place where we carry out our water training and re-currency training and, every two years we usually attend the Rassemblement International des Hydravions airshow. So it was in 2025, and you can read elsewhere Paul Mulcahy's journal describing this year's trip. All went well until the end of our training when an engine problem led to the cancellation of our airshow appearance and an unplanned engine change...

The following article has been compiled from Paul Warren Wilson's update reports to shareholders and crew.

The story really starts in late-April when Paul reported on the engine that had gone to the USA for 'inspection and repair as necessary' following the discovery of metal in the filters as follows: 'The engine which we sent to Anderson Aeromotive in Idaho for rectification last autumn is now (finally!) complete with testing and ready to ship back to Duxford, as of a few days ago. The problem turned out to be with the supercharger bearing (as Garry Short, our Chief Engineer, had suspected). Unfortunately, this has ended up just a week or two too late for us to ship and reinstall the engine before returning to flying this season - our first commitment is on Friday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, a special flight arranged by Jeff Boyling. Of course, we do need to start flying about a week before then, to allow for rectification of any start-of-season defects that may show up. Therefore, our spare engine will be in use for a month or two, with the rectified engine going back on, most probably in June.'

So, the flying season started successfully but with our high-time engine on the starboard side.

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, the starboard engine started giving trouble in flight (see Paul Mulcahy's *Biscarrosse Journal* article elsewhere in this issue) and, after some investigative work on the ground at Parentis airfield adjacent to the lake, it was found that a con-rod had failed and an engine change in situ would be required.

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, Paul updated the team: 'The overhauled engine had arrived back from the USA and was on its way to France together with necessary stands and tools in a hired truck. Meanwhile Chris Hodson, together with volunteers who had travelled out to France to help, have worked to prepare the failed starboard engine for removal and removed cowlings, connections etc. Chief Engineer Garry Short arrived on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> to continue the work and the prop' was removed yesterday (June 4<sup>th</sup>) and the engine today. There will be several days of work to change components from the failed engine to the spare and, following that, engine and prop' re-installation will follow. It's great to see our team working through difficulties like this and - once again - the value of our holding a spare serviceable engine is very clearly seen.'

Paul's next report was a week later on June the 19<sup>th</sup>: 'Thanks to some continued hard work by our team out at Biscarrosse, the spare engine was installed yesterday, the prop' is about to go back on and engine runs are expected today or tomorrow. The Cat' has missed a couple of displays, unfortunately - but should be back home at Duxford this weekend or next week, in good time for our pilots to complete some training/rating revalidations/display practices and for the aircraft to be comfortably ready for her next booked event in Belgium on July 5<sup>th</sup>. The value of having a spare engine on standby is pretty clear - otherwise I reckon it would have been a struggle to see the aircraft flying in less than six to eight weeks, maybe much longer depending on engine availability and, consequently, we would probably have lost much of our flying display season.'

The next day, June 20<sup>th</sup>, a further update was sent out, advising that the prop' was now installed on the replacement starboard engine and that Chief Pilot Phill Petitt and Captain David Barlow were about to leave the UK for Bordeaux by air. It was anticipated that a short check flight would take place on Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup> and a return transit to Duxford would be made the next day with a planned arrival after the end of the airshow being held there.

Paul's communication on June 22<sup>nd</sup> updated everyone with the not so good news! 'Our team in France have completed the engine and prop' installation, and carried out engine runs - pretty hard work, especially in the heat. The plan was to complete engine runs today and then, time permitting, to fly home - today or maybe tomorrow. Chief Pilot Phill Petitt and Captain Dave Barlow had already positioned to Biscarrosse, helping with engine runs also. However, as is so often the case, there was one snag on checking the newly fitted engine - the RPM lever didn't control the RPM. Thanks once again to excellent work by our engineering team, led by our Chief Engineer Garry Short, the problem was today traced to a damaged distributor gasket in the prop mechanism. The distributor directs oil to the prop dome to get it to move the blades. I don't have information as to how this might have happened but a gasket replacement will be needed. We have a spare in stores at Duxford. This will mean a few days' delay - it's time for some of our team at least to take a short break, as they have been hard at work in the Biscarrosse heat for a while now, and the spare part needs to be sent to Biscarrosse and fitted. I would hope that we're looking at a delay of a few days only, but these things are always a little unpredictable. I'll update as soon as we have progress to report.'

Then a week later, on June 29<sup>th</sup>, came this: 'Our team in Biscarrosse took a quick break last week from the sweltering heat of Biscarrosse, and spent a couple of days of recuperation back in England. That also enabled Chris

Hodson to pick up the spare part that we needed from our Duxford stores – basically a spare of the whole prop' control unit. Chris arrived back in Biscarrosse on Friday, installed the spare part yesterday, and then today Phill Petitt, our Chief Pilot, carried out an engine run. This time, all is well! Garry Short is travelling down to Biscarrosse today, and will complete inspections and paper work tomorrow (Monday). That may leave time for a short 'shakedown' flight – not strictly necessary, but something we prefer to do after an engine change. Then the plan is for the Catalina to fly back to Duxford on Tuesday. That will leave a couple of days spare before her next engagement, which is at Koksijde in Belgium on Saturday July 5<sup>th</sup>.

The Catalina duly arrived back at Duxford and successfully met her commitment to fly at the Koksijde event.

Sadly, we had missed shows at Blackbushe and Cosford but, due to the hard work put in by the team led by Chris and Garry, the engine had been changed in quick time many miles from home. The episode once again showed how our dedicated team can rally around to keep the aircraft flying with a number of volunteers flying out from the UK to France to assist our engineers. We also had a lot of help from individuals and organisations locally including Maureen Thorburn for meals, accommodation, transport and all-round support; Aquitaine Hydravions for use of its hangar; Wings West flying school for use of its facilities; V2V Flexiloc for providing equipment hire and all-round help and for putting up with our poor French, and the Musée de l'Hydraviation at Biscarrosse for the loan of a work platform.



Chris Hodson begins to investigate the engine problem that in due course led to an extended stay at Biscarrosse and an engine change



The two P&W engines in the hangar at Biscarrosse – overhauled replacement on the left - Benoît Denet



Chief Engineer Garry Short in the hired crane just after putting the starboard prop' back in place - Chris Hodson

# JOHN CRUICKSHANK, VC

- DAVID LEGG

John Cruickshank, the last surviving Victoria Cross holder from the Second World War, passed away peacefully on August 9<sup>th</sup> at the grand age of 105. His significance to the Catalina community was of course the fact that the action that led to the award of the VC to him involved a Coastal Command Catalina mission...

Born on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1920 in what was then Banffshire, Scotland he was educated at Aberdeen Grammar School and Daniel Stewart's College in Edinburgh and, in 1938, commenced a career in banking with Commercial Bank of Scotland, a career that was to be initially interrupted by the advent of war. A member of the Territorial Army, he was called up in August 1939 by the Royal Artillery but transferred to the RAF in 1941. At first, he trained in Toronto, Canada before going to Pensacola, Florida to become a US Navy-trained flying boat pilot. Returning to the UK, he was posted to 210 Squadron, Coastal Command in March 1943.

Flying from Sullom Voe on Shetland, Flying Officer Cruickshank set off with his crew in Catalina IVA, serial JV928/Y, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944 for a patrol that they no doubt anticipated would be like the others they had previously flown – long and uneventful. Flying north



John Cruickshank as a young man before the July 1944 mission that earned him the Victoria Cross

up into the Norwegian Sea, it seemed the mission would be no different when, as John was preparing to head back to Shetland, a contact was made with a vessel some 20 miles away in a position some 205 nautical miles west-northwest of Bodö, Norway. It transpired that this was the German U-boat U-361, sometimes in the past mis-quoted as U-347 which was sunk the same day by the crew of Liberator FK223 of 86 Squadron. The Catalina was put into a dive toward the submarine and, at low level, was met with a hail of fire from the surfaced U-boat's deck guns. On JV928's first pass, the depth charges failed to release and John took the decision to make another approach, knowing that the German gunners would be even better prepared this time.

As the Catalina continued toward the submarine, and into a barrage of accurate fire, the navigator, and John's regular crew colleague, Flying Officer John Dickson (not Dixon as reported by much of the media in their obituaries of John Cruickshank), was fatally hit by a shell. Cruickshank continued to press home his attack despite having been hit by gunfire himself, releasing the depth charges successfully this time. The U-boat, commanded by Kapitänleutnant Hans Seidel, was hit and subsequently sank.

Many miles from home, the Catalina was turned toward Shetland but it was in bad shape with damage to the fuel tanks, hull, wireless and windscreen. John initially flew the aircraft but the effect of his 72 individual wounds, affecting his chest, legs and lungs, meant that he was persuaded to relinquish control to his less-experienced co-pilot Flt Sgt Jack Garnett. His wounds were dressed as best as they could be by his crew, but he declined morphine as he wanted to be mentally capable of flying the Catalina should it be necessary. Garnett had not landed a Catalina on water at night before, so Cruickshank ordered him to circle until daybreak whilst lightening the aircraft by jettisoning surplus and unnecessary weight, all the while suffering from blood loss and breathing difficulties. As the Catalina approached the waters of Sullom Voe to alight, John went back to the cockpit, took over control and, with water pouring into the hull from a gash in the side, guided the flying boat to the nearest beach at Garths Voe where it was grounded. John was carefully extracted from the aircraft after being given a blood transfusion and taken to hospital in a near-death state. He was judged to be in danger for some ten days before beginning to recover but, by September, was well enough to receive the Victoria Cross from King George VI at Holyrood. His fellow crew member, 3<sup>rd</sup> pilot Sgt F Fidler, later said of his captain that 'some people in times like that fall down like a pack of cards. He stood up, and he was head and shoulders above the bounds of duty, and thoroughly deserved his award.'

The citation for the award published in the London Gazette on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1944 reads as follows:

‘Flying Officer John Alexander Cruickshank (126700), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. No. 210 Squadron.

This officer was the captain and pilot of a Catalina flying boat which was recently engaged on an anti-submarine patrol over northern waters. When a U-boat was sighted on the surface, Flying Officer Cruickshank at once turned to the attack. In the face of fierce anti-aircraft fire he manoeuvred into position and ran in to release his depth charges. Unfortunately, they failed to drop.

Flying Officer Cruickshank knew that the failure of this attack had deprived him of the advantage of surprise and that his aircraft offered a good target to the enemy’s determined and now heartened gunners.

Without hesitation, he climbed and turned to come in again. The Catalina was met by intense and accurate fire and was repeatedly hit. The navigator/bomb aimer (John Dickson) was killed. The second pilot and two other members of the crew were injured. Flying Officer Cruickshank was struck in seventy-two places, receiving two serious wounds in the lungs and ten penetrating wounds in the lower limbs. His aircraft was badly damaged and filled with the fumes of exploding shells. But he did not falter. He pressed home his attack, and released the depth charges himself, straddling the submarine perfectly. The U-boat was sunk.

He then collapsed and the second pilot took over the controls. He recovered shortly afterwards and, though bleeding profusely, insisted on resuming command and retaining it until he was satisfied that the damaged aircraft was under control, that a course had been set for base and that all the necessary signals had been sent. Only then would he consent to receive medical aid and have his wounds attended to. He refused morphia in case it might prevent him from carrying on.

During the next five and a half hours of the return flight he several times lapsed into unconsciousness owing to loss of blood. When he came to his first thought on each occasion was for the safety of his aircraft and crew. The damaged aircraft eventually reached base but it was clear that an immediate landing would be a hazardous task for the wounded and less experienced second pilot. Although able to breathe only with the greatest difficulty, Flying Officer Cruickshank insisted on being carried forward and propped up in the second pilot’s seat. For a full hour, in spite of his agony and ever-increasing weakness, he gave orders as necessary, refusing to allow the aircraft to be brought down until the conditions of light and sea made this possible without undue risk.

With his assistance the aircraft was safely landed on the water. He then directed the taxiing and beaching of the aircraft so that it could easily be salvaged. When the

medical officer went on board, Flying Officer Cruickshank collapsed and he had to be given a blood transfusion before he could be removed to hospital.

By pressing home the second attack in his gravely wounded condition and continuing his exertions on the return journey with his strength failing all the time, he seriously prejudiced his chance of survival even if the aircraft safely reached its base. Throughout, he set an example of determination, fortitude and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the Service.’

After the VC action, he never flew operationally again and, by now promoted to Flight Lieutenant, John served at Coastal Command HQ and then, after his release from the RAF, as Aide-de-Camp to the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He subsequently worked for Grindlays Bank in London and, from 1977 to 1985, for the Northern Division, North West Securities. He made his home in Aberdeen with his wife Marion whom he married in 1955.

John was delighted that Plane Sailing Air Displays Ltd started operating a Catalina in 1985 to recognise the contribution made by Allied crews during World War Two, in particular when the decision was made to paint her in Coastal Command colours to represent his 210 Squadron Catalina JV928/Y. At first, the Catalina was based at RAF Barkston Heath, Lincolnshire and some of the crew were able to meet with John at a reunion meeting of the British Pensacola Veterans, held at Harlaxton Hall near Grantham. This followed a short display by the Catalina which John and the other attendees greatly appreciated. John continued to support the aims of the operator and The Catalina Society over the years, and it was a great honour for us when John flew in Plane Sailing’s second Catalina, G-PBYA, before the RAF Leuchars airshow in 2013. On this occasion, the crew included Captain Derek Head, Co-pilot ‘Spiney’ Norman and this writer as Crew Chief. In contrast to his modest demeanour, he was driven out to the aircraft by the organisers in a brand-new Bentley before climbing on board for a 20-minute flight up to the River Tay and back. At the rear of the aircraft, I recall him gazing out of the port blister toward the old Catalina base at Woodhaven. What was he thinking? – he didn’t say but he seemed deep in thought!

Later, in 2024, Catalina shareholder/pilot Jeff Boyling organised *Operation Shetland* to commemorate the two Catalina VCs awarded for separate missions in 1944, one to John and the other, posthumously, to Flt Lt David Hornell, RCAF. During the five-day ‘mission’, the Catalina visited Aberdeen Airport from where permission was granted to orbit John’s home on the city’s outskirts. By then 104 years old, John came out to watch us fly over him several times, enthusiastically greeting us. Later that day, and exactly eighty years after the 17<sup>th</sup> July action that sank U-361, the Catalina crew visited

Lerwick Cemetery in Shetland and laid a wreath on the grave of John's navigator, F/O John Dickson, who was killed in the attack. In earlier years, John Cruickshank had made the pilgrimage himself but on this occasion the Catalina crew did it on his behalf. After a subsequent road trip to Sullom Voe, John's base, we flew over the site in our Catalina, 80 years to the day after the badly injured John Cruickshank beached his crippled aircraft at the adjacent Garths Voe. The full story of this trip was told in Issue 102 of *The Catalina News*.

Subsequently, *Operation Shetland* was awarded a trophy for 'Enterprising Aviation' in Pooley's International Dawn to Dusk Competition and John graciously supported our entry. He wrote: "I want to wish the Catalina crew well that planned and delivered *Operation Shetland*. I was very touched to see that amazing 81-year old white bird circling over my house 80 years to the day. To then fly to Sullom Voe and place wreaths on

the grave of John Dickson and David Hornell was very special to me."

Your Editor learned of John's passing, just before the news was released to the media, from an email sent by his friend of many years, Bob Kemp the Chairman of Veterans Housing Scotland who had accompanied John on the 2013 Catalina flight from Leuchars and joined us in 2024 for *Operation Shetland*. At the time I opened the email, I was flying across the North Sea from Rotterdam to Duxford as part of the crew that, the evening before, had overflowed the Indisch Monument in The Hague in our Catalina on the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VJ Day. The crew included *Operation Shetland*'s mastermind, Jeff Boyling. It seemed serendipitous somehow that we shared the news in this way.

We were privileged to know this unassuming and modest man.

**In 2013, John flew in our Catalina on a 20-minute flight from RAF Leuchars, a memorable occasion for all involved, not least the media!**  
- Sqn Ldr Dylan Eklund



# MISS PICK UP & ‘THE AMERICANS’

- CHRIS WARNE

As is well-known, our Duxford-based Catalina is painted to represent a United States Army Air Force OA-10A Catalina, *Miss Pick Up*, operated by the 5<sup>th</sup> Emergency Rescue Squadron, US Eighth Air Force from RAF Halesworth, Suffolk in World War Two. During the Spring of 1945, an official USAAF photographer took colour images of at least two of the 5 ERS OA -10As – 44-33916 *Sophistacat* (sometimes mis-quoted as *Sophisticat*) and the un-named 44-33991. In addition, black and white photos of *Miss Pick Up* surfaced many years later showing her nose-art and crew members. This article by Chris Warne, amateur historian and USAAF enthusiast, describes a recent exercise to re-create original photos of 44-33991 and *Miss Pick Up*...

## Background:

In 2022, the Imperial War Museum (IWM), Duxford added a new flying day to the calendar called ‘The Americans’. This came about as a result of a meeting I had in late 2021, exploring ideas and content suggestions for a USAAF-focussed event to commemorate two important anniversaries – the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the opening of The American Air Museum (AAM) in Britain, by HM The Queen Elizabeth II in 1997, and the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the USAAF arriving in England in 1942, in 2022. Following some deliberation, the IWM agreed to allocate a flying day for a USAAF-themed event, and ‘The Americans’ flying day was born. I was given the latitude to arrange the public-side display content, having been involved with historical re-enactments and displays for some years, and having an almost life-long interest in the USAAF.

The purpose of the event was primarily to commemorate and remember the contributions of the USAAF, and associated units and services, that fought for our freedom in Europe during the Second World War. The event needed to be engaging and educational for the visitors, and with the Duxford site having been home to the 78<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group in WWII, what better place to tell the story of the USAAF.

Agreement was made to have ‘live activities’ throughout the Duxford site during the event, so we created an ‘Aircrew run’ consisting of two WWII Jeeps, with authentically dressed aircrew, starting from outside the AAM and slowly driving the Jeeps through the crowd to the B-17, *Sally B*, and then to the Catalina *Miss Pick Up*. We also had ‘live’ warbirds arrive for the event and moved them to the main public display area by Hangars 4 and 5, from airside. These activities gave the impression of a living airfield during wartime, and were well received by visitors, judging by the number of photographers that gathered round!

In addition, it was important to create a platform for the many museums that exist across East Anglia, to showcase their work. If you have an interest in the USAAF in WWII, you’ll know there are many museums across the local region, all run by volunteers, who give freely of their time and work hard to commemorate the history, but they rely mostly on donations and visitors attending their location. ‘The Americans’ event would offer them an excellent platform to showcase their work, and they only had to turn up, bring a ‘pop-up’ version of their museum and enjoy the day. All the major museums had attended over the past four years, most returning every year, and they all benefitted from raised awareness and increased visitor numbers to their museums, all of which helps raise funds toward their future survival.

## Introductions:

So how did *Miss Pick Up* become so closely involved in ‘The Americans’ 2025? I have to look back to 2024, and the visit to Duxford by a Douglas A-26 Invader called *Miss Million Airess*. I had met the owner, Roger Woolsey, and crew whilst at Maupertus Airport (Cherbourg) in Normandy as part of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. I’d assisted with arrangements for the United Airlines Veterans Tour to visit the airport, and they got to spend time with the A-26, which was a highlight for Roger and his crew. That gave me the opportunity to ask them to stop off at Duxford on their way back to the USA, which they agreed to do. Whilst at Duxford, via one of the ‘Cat Pack’ volunteers Hayley Ginn, who is a passionate PBY & A-26 fan, they spent time with *Miss Pick Up* and I was introduced to Catalina shareholder/pilot Jeff Boyling and engineer Chris Hodson. It snowballed from there, with me making an introduction to Mark Smith (BBC *Antiques Roadshow*) whose father had been part of a Catalina crew during WWII. The Mark Smith introduction resulted in him taking a flight in *Miss Pick Up* in May, and he hopes to be able to support the Catalina on an ongoing basis.

## ‘The Americans’ flying day:

The introductions to Jeff and Chris gave me the opportunity to propose that we make *Miss Pick Up* a central feature of ‘The Americans’ flying day, with a display of Air Sea Rescue equipment in the morning, followed by recreation of the well-known pictures of the original *Miss Pick Up* crew and the crew of sister aircraft 44-33991. *Miss Pick Up* would then fly in the afternoon display. Liaising with Jeff, Chris and the IWM Team, we agreed where *Miss Pick Up* would be parked in the morning and the timings for each activity. I worked with our re-enactors to select members who resembled the original aircrew in height, build, hair colour, fa-

cial features etc, and once we understood who the best match for each of the original Eighth' aircrew would be, their flight clothing and equipment was mimicked as closely as possible. It would seem quite an easy task to re-create a few aircrew on and around an aircraft, or at least I thought so! Fortunately, we have two professional photographers – Wayne Davey & Mike 'Wartog' Jackson – who we know well, and we enlisted their help in recreating the pictures and they took on the challenge with a passion.

### The 'Re-creation Photoshoot':

How many problems can you throw at a photographer at once? We got the lot! – good job we love a challenge!

So, a few days before the event, we were sent copies of the images the crew would like us to re-create, which gave us the best possible start. The first couple of problems were the physical differences of the aircraft then and now, and choosing which features were the most important to keep in the image (e.g.: insignia & nose-art positions).

The next step was trying to second-guess which focal length lens would best replicate the original camera – given that we had no information on the camera used, it would be a trial-and-error solution on the day.

### The day of the shoot – problems:

- some very excited re-enactors with permission to climb onto the airframe

- airframe parked in the middle of the public viewing area
- terrible backdrop
- bright light from the wrong direction
- large numbers of the public spotting a photo opportunity and swarming the area

and, to top it off,

- the event commentator announcing the photo opportunity over the public address system, triggering a rush of photographers? Deep breath, big smile, take charge, carry on...

Mike and I both decided to set up a camera on a tripod to try and give us a framework in which to then direct the subjects into position, using different lenses, angles and heights to provide the best possible outcome. Mike fared better on his choices. The tripods also gave us marker points to work with the public crowd control, asking them to remain behind them.

Then, to the job of working from the original image to direct the subjects into position and making micro adjustments of every detail of their poses. Hands, heads, feet, face, hats, equipment, uniforms, individually perfecting the look, then working them together into the group positions.

### One last adjustment:

The guys worked very hard to help us achieve this. Remember, these guys are not professional models, just

'The Americans' re-enactors team posing beside the present-day *Miss Pick Up* in July this year  
- WARTOG & Wayne Davey



everyday guys, but they gave us complete professionalism, were calm and patient (especially those nervous of heights), ignoring all the distractions and helping us to achieve our goals.

Once set, we went to work, and fast! These things fall apart very quickly if you're not careful. Shooting prime images from the tripod-mounted cameras, moving around with our second cameras, changing angles, lenses, and adjusting settings on the move. Finally moving the tripods for secondary options. I think we took around 20 minutes to set up the shot, then 90 seconds to shoot it. Then, big smile, stand back and allow the public and fellow re-enactors to take advantage and get their own images.

We're only halfway at this point.

For 'Take Two', all we had to do was repeat the whole exercise for the second image, on the other (starboard) side of the aircraft. This time, with a LOT more public photographers as the news of the shoot had spread like wildfire.

Fortunately, Mike and I know each other very well, and work together even better, both strong but friendly characters able to control a crowd, get the images and, we hope, help everyone have fun while doing so. Interaction with both the public and the re-enactors is key to achieving the image and an enjoyable experience for all.

Once the images are on the computer then it's a case of selection and processing.

Trying to 'age and tone' the image to closely match the original in the world of 'super sharp', 'high contrast' is tricky and takes a lot of time as trial and error again play a large part in the process. I think we were both happy with our results.

We would like to thank the *Miss Pick Up* Catalina team for access to the aircraft, and Chris Warne and the guys for inviting us to take up the challenge.

Roll on 'The Americans Day' 2026!

Editor's note: I am sure readers will agree that the team did a terrific re-enactment of the original 1945 photographs, including our superb front-cover shot. The present-day *Miss Pick Up* nose-art is in a slightly different position on the hull to the original, necessary because of post-war window modifications. In addition, 44-33991 featured AN/APS-3 radar in a large housing above the cockpit which is only just visible in the 1945 photograph - neither the original nor the latter-day *Miss Pick Up's* had this feature. 44-33991 returned to the USA around June 1945 following VE-day and ended up with the USAAF in Peru, later passing to the Fuerza Aérea del Perú, her eventual fate being unknown. 44-33916 *Sophistacat* also returned to the USA at the war's end and was sold off for parts in early-1950. 44-33915 *Miss Pick Up* was of course lost in the North Sea at the end of March 1945 and is today commemorated by our own Duxford-based aircraft.

**By comparison, here is the original photo of *Miss Pick Up's* wartime crew at RAF Halesworth**

- via Wayne Neet



# REVIEW COLUMN

- DAVID LEGG

The latest crop of books for review includes a couple with specific Catalina references as well as some with more general interest to aviation enthusiasts. As usual, thanks are due to the publishers who generously supply books for review. Their details are listed at the end of this article - do check out the websites for their full range of books...

Occasionally, a book (or, in this case, two books) comes along which knocks your socks off! Such was the case when author **Keith S Bryers** sent me the two volumes of ***Scotland's Wartime Aircraft Crashes 1939 - 1942 and 1943 - 1945***. I was astonished at the amount of material contained in the two volumes that cover well over 700 pages in all. Although primarily a listing of aircraft losses caused by crashes and other incidents, it is not a stretch to say that the overall contents add up to a history of aviation in Scotland during World War Two. The genesis of the books goes back some 50 years to when the author started looking into a specific crash that is marked by a memorial in the church at Petty, north-east of Inverness in Highland Scotland. This led him down a particularly deep and long 'rabbit-hole' that has culminated in his two books. Volume 1 starts with background information on Scottish airfields and their roles; the various RAF Commands, squadrons and units operating in the area; the involvement of the USAAF, Fleet Air Arm and limited numbers of civilian/commercial aircraft in Scotland during the war; and many other chapters that give extensive details relevant to the overall topic of losses. Most of this information is limited to Volume 1 and is not repeated in Volume 2. It is these sections that add so much to the books before even starting on the actual aircraft losses.

In the *Introduction*, Keith Bryers makes it clear that the aircraft losses listed relate to aircraft destroyed in Scotland or on missions originating from Scotland. The book does not include forced-landings etc where the aircraft was repaired and put back into service. It does cover enemy aircraft losses and personnel lost due to non-flying activity such as death caused by walking into spinning props of which, sadly, there are quite a few examples. The loss listing is in chronological order, starting on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939 and ending on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1945. Each loss entry (there are hundreds and hundreds) includes the aircraft type and serial number, operating unit, squadron code where relevant and crew details including deaths and burial sites where known. This data is then followed by a description of the loss circumstances and some of these are extensive in their detail, almost akin to entries in squadron Operations Record Books (ORBs). In most cases, each entry includes an explanation about the source of information (an introductory section gives very detailed background on sources the author consulted).

Not surprisingly, some of the types included in the list of losses are seaplanes with a smattering of floatplanes and a number of flying boats - Short Sunderlands, Saro Lerwicks, a couple of Martin Mariners and, of course, Catalinas and RCAF Cansos. In all, there are 13 Catalina losses described in Volume 1 and 31 Catalinas and three RCAF Canso As losses in Volume 2, starting with Catalina I AH532 and its 210 Squadron crew that failed to return from a convoy escort on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1941 and ending with Catalina IVB JX596 of 302 Ferry Training Unit that crashed on takeoff from Oban, without crew loss, on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945. Finding the Catalinas in the books highlighted the one problem with them - there is no index of types or serials so the only way to find specific losses is to know the date (easy!) or to trawl through all the pages (not so easy!). I guess the inclusion of indices would have been too great a task and increased the book size to an unacceptable level. Although my own data has Catalina loss dates, I marked each page containing a Catalina reference with a mini post-it note so job done and I do not need to do it again. That niggle aside, I cannot praise these books highly enough. Each volume contains around 30 black and white photos, mainly of wreckage and taken during the author's own research hikes. 'Labour of love' is an over-used phrase but it really does apply to Keith Bryers' books and he has done a huge service to researchers. Anyone with an interest in Scottish aviation or Second World War losses should have these books in their library. They are published by **Aviation Books Ltd** in A4 softback format with ISBN numbers 9-781915-335326 and -335333 and retail at £22 each...

A very different book but one about Catalinas is ***We've All Life Before Us*** edited by **Caroline Cecil Bose** and published by **Fonthill Media**, an imprint of **Pen & Sword Books Ltd**. Firmly in the 'human interest' category, its sub-title is *A Love Story of the Second World War* and the book tells the story of 'Bob' Keddie, a dashing young man who had already seen victory on the St Moritz Cresta Run and had become a Catalina captain with 210 Squadron, Coastal Command and Diana Ladner, a beautiful aspiring actress. Meeting at a performance of *The Beggar's Opera* in London, they married just eight months later. Tragically, Flt Lt Wallace AR Keddie and his entire crew of ten were lost without trace when their Catalina AH535/DA-J failed to return from an anti-submarine patrol out of Sullom Voe on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1942 (an example of a Catalina loss described in the books reviewed above). Diana was four months pregnant at the time. Bob and Diana's story is told through letters and diary entries and although, as the sub-title suggests, it is primarily a love story, the wartime RAF aspects loom large, not least because of Bob's loss. The narrative takes the couple through their early courtship by which time Bob was already serving in the RAF and their subsequent marriage. It then moves through the period when Bob was training in Gloucestershire and South Africa before his posting in June 1942 to 4 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Stranraer to convert to

Catalinas. He was posted to 210 Squadron at Oban in the following September and gained promotion to Flying Officer in November. He flew his first op' on the 19<sup>th</sup> of that month and moved to Sullom Voe, Shetland when the squadron was transferred there in February 1942. By this time, Bob had completed his captain's course.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, at 04:30hrs, Bob and his crew set off from Sullom Voe on a 'Sentry 3' anti-submarine patrol. At 17:39, the Wireless Operator requested a landing back at base at around 20:00. Nothing more was heard from the Catalina and no trace of it or its crew was ever found. It is believed that it was shot down by a German aircraft some 200 miles west of Trondheim, Norway. The following morning, 210's Catalina, AH551, carried out an unsuccessful search for the missing aircraft and they were posted missing. 210 Squadron's CO, Wing Commander Walter Hutton wrote to both Diana and Bob's father advising them that Bob had not returned from a mission and in January 1943 they were formally declared dead. Hutton's letter to his father appears in full in the book. Sadly, the Keddie's lost two other sons during the war.

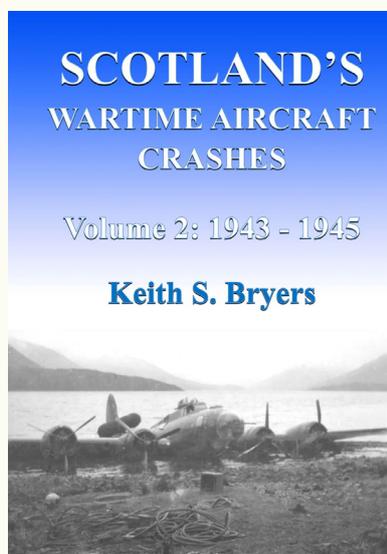
The book is illustrated with family photos and images taken during the war. One, of the Officer's Mess area at Graven, Sullom Voe, was taken at low level from our own Catalina during 2024's 'Operation Shetland' by Bob Kemp. Some letters from Bob to Diana include the original sketches that formed part of them. Although Caroline only claims 'editorship' of the book, she has done a great job of bringing this moving story together. It is very readable and makes a suitable alternative to more technical and reference-type aviation books. UK price is £29.99, ISBN 978-1-78155-960-4...

The biennial book *Wrecks & Relics* (W&R) from **Crécy Publishing** will be familiar to readers as I have reviewed editions a number of times over the past, most recently the 29<sup>th</sup> edition in *The Catalina News* Issue 102. From time to time, Crécy have published similar books on specific topics including *W&R Lost Aviation Collections of Britain*, *W&R Local Aviation Collections of Britain* and *W&R Great Aviation Collections of Britain*, all by the W&R author **Ken Ellis**. Having handed over the reins of the latter to David Willis, Ken has now produced ***W&R On Guard – Britain's Military Gate Guardians and Air Cadet Airframes since 1940***, ISBN978-1-80035-330-5. Those with very long memories may recall Ken's similarly titled booklet published by the Merseyside Aviation Society in 1978. Getting my copy down from the shelf, I see that it had 56 pages – the present hardback book has 288! The subject matter is divided into three main sections. The first two are the 'gate guardians' – those aircraft that graced the entrance to military bases mainly in Britain but with a shorter section covering British bases overseas. The third, lengthy section of 112 pages describes Cadet Corps Airframes and is credited to Roy Bonser who originally compiled much of the data, subsequently kept up-to-date by Ken,

and who authored the 12-page pamphlet on the topic published by Midland Counties Aviation Society in 1975. In each section, the data is arranged alphabetically by location and, after a short description of the location, each gate guardian or cadet airframe that has been displayed/kept there is listed with historical details and eventual fate where known. The wealth of information is formidable although this is no surprise given Ken's reputation! I looked in vain for the Hawker Hector that was allocated to the wartime Littlehampton ATC squadron and which, according to my father, was stored under the stage of the East Street School in the town when no longer in use. It certainly existed as I have a photo of it but it is not included in the book along with other, unidentified, airframes. Ken Ellis has yet again produced an absolutely invaluable addition to the W&R range of books. Price is £19.95...

**Crécy** also produce reprints of old Ian Allan titles from the latter's railway and aviation range. A recent 'Combined Volume' titled ***Military Aircraft of the 1950s*** puts together the four Ian Allan 'abc' books *British Military Aircraft*, *US & Canadian Military Aircraft*, *Continental Military Aircraft* and *Helicopters* originally published between 1954 and 1956. Edited by the well-known journalist J WR Taylor, they consisted of descriptions of contemporary aircraft, supported by three-view drawings with lesser-known types four to a page but without a three-view. All types were illustrated with a black and white photograph. Period advertisements from the original volumes are retained. The Catalina appears in the US & Canadian volume as a 'Minor Type' under the heading 'Convair PB5Y-5A Canso' and illustrated by an unidentified RCAF Canso A amphibian. Overall, photographic reproduction is not brilliant but as a nostalgia trip, the book is great fun and, at £13.50, good value – the original retail price was 2/6d (half a crown!) in old money. The ISBN is 978-1-80035-323-7.

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The cover of Volume 2 of Keith S Bryers' encyclopaedic study of wartime crashes in Scotland

## WORLD CATALINA NEWS

- DAVID LEGG

The last few months have been fairly quiet regarding worldwide Catalina news. The airworthy population of Catalinas and Cansos remains at around eight – none of the potentially airworthy examples have flown since our last edition earlier this year. Apart from our own UK-based *Miss Pick Up*, all of the other ‘flyers’ are in the USA (five) and Canada (two). The eight that are flying regularly are a mix of former PBY-5As (just two – N2172N at Madras, Oregon and N9521C at Virginia Beach, Virginia) and six that were originally Royal Canadian Air Force Canso As (G-PBYA at Duxford, UK; C-FNJE at Fairview, Alberta; C-FPQL at Hamilton, Ontario; N222FT registered in Wilmington, Delaware; N427CV at Colorado, Springs, Colorado; and N9767 at Eugene, Oregon). The most frequent flyers are G-PBYA and N9767 with the former probably the busiest overall. The Catalina website has a regularly updated summary of all surviving Catalinas – just use the ‘Survivors’ tab at [www.catalina.org.uk](http://www.catalina.org.uk) A reminder that I quote type designations as given when airframes were built which are not necessarily how aircraft are now registered, an example being our G-PBYA, built as a Canso A, later modified to a Canso 2F but registered on the UK civil aircraft register as a PBY-5A...

The Boeing of Canada-built **Canso A N9767** flies out of Eugene, Oregon with the Soaring By The Sea Foundation. It flies shows mainly in the north-west of the USA as well as offering rides for passengers. At the end of June this year whilst on the way to the Tanglefoot Splash-in at Cavanaugh Bay, Idaho the port engine started to lose power. The crew diverted to Arlington Municipal Airport, Washington and an engine swap was completed in four days. Pilot/engineer Peter Houghton had connections at the airport which is his old base of operations. Inspection found that the port engine had dropped a valve and broken a piston, contaminating the engine. A new oil cooler was put on and the prop’ and prop’ governor, the oil tank and oil



**Despite engine problems, Canso A N9767 has been busy at airshows in the north-west states of the USA this summer**

- Elin-Jay Pemberton



**Canso A C-FPQM is readied for engine runs at Gander, Newfoundland this summer, a prelude to flight hopefully**

- Ian White

lines were all flushed out. Once back in the air, N9767 flew shows at Olympia, WA; Skagit, WA; Klamath falls, OR; Boeing Field, Seattle, WA; and was due to display at the Wings & Wheels show at Spanish Fork, Utah on September 27<sup>th</sup>...

For some years now, work has been underway on John Sterling’s **PBY-6A N24VP** at Ocaña in Spain. When John acquired it, the intention was to fly it to the USA and then display it at the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum at Ford Island, Honolulu. However, work has been sporadically underway over the last nine years or so and the Catalina shows no signs of being near to flight. A recent email to John went unanswered so the current status of the project is not known – but see entry below. N24VP was originally built as a PBY-6A but was one of three examples acquired by a Canadian company after being sold by the US Navy that had to have the tail areas converted to PBY-5A standard in order to gain Canadian certification...

Meanwhile, **PBY-5A N607CC**, for many years stored in the open at what is now the National Naval Aviation Museum at Pensacola, Florida, has been moved by road for restoration by the Kalamazoo Air Zoo at Kalamazoo, Michigan prior to a move to the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum. Does this mean that N607CC will take the place of N24VP? – time will tell. The move by road to Michigan took place on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025. In between wartime and post-war service with the US Navy as BuNo 46602, this Catalina flew with the Mexican Navy before going to Canada and conversion to a waterbomber then going to Pensacola in the early-1990s. The last registered owner was Florida Aircraft Leasing Corporation of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the aircraft being de-registered in August 1999 with ownership passing to the Pensacola museum in May 1994. The loan to the Pearl Harbor museum was agreed in July 2023...

In Canada, **Canso C-FPQM** has been stored in the open



**PBY-5A N607CC's engines in store at the Kalamazoo Air Zoo in Michigan whilst the airframe receives attention**

- Kalamazoo Air Zoo

at Gander, Newfoundland for some years now. A veteran of waterbombing service with the Province of Quebec government it was later sold to Buffalo Airways Ltd of North West Territories before being acquired by fire-fighting pilot Patrick White of Exploits Valley Air Services Ltd, the current registered owner. Although not flown for a very long time, it seems to have been looked after and a recent Facebook post by Ian White, Patrick's son suggested that engine runs, hydraulic testing and taxiing were imminent so perhaps a return to the skies is on the cards?...

Now to Australia. The one-time Royal Australian Air Force **PBY-5 A24-46**, for many years displayed at the Whale World Museum on the coast at Albany Bay, south-east of Perth, Western Australia, has moved a few times since museum owner John Bell was killed in an aircraft crash in 1996. The most recent move was to the Merredin Military Museum at Merredin, due east of Perth, in October 2023 since when work has continued to restore the Catalina to display condition. The most recent news is that in May this year, the wings were placed back on the hull superstructure (pylon) although, initially at least, it was not supported by lift struts. Meanwhile, in June, a truckload of parts arrived at Merredin including spare floats...

Peter Costigan of Historic Aircraft Restoration Society (HARS) at Shellharbour Airport, Albion Park, New South Wales advises that restoration work continues in their **PBY-6A VH-PBZ**. Previously a frequent flyer, it has not taken to the air for some time now. Latest news is that the first trailing edge section has been refurbished with new riveting. This work was completed at the end of August and after a trial fit back on the wing to check for any distortion, the fabric guys will get to work and recover the section. They are experienced in the task, having been involved in replacing fabric on the *Southern Cross* Fokker FVIIIB replica. The repairs are quite extensive in this section but HARS feel that it is the worst section, or at least they hope so! Some of the sections used in the repair came from our cousins

in NZ who look after *Canso A ZK-PBY*. They saved our bacon says Peter!...

And, speaking of **Canso A ZK-PBY**, she is still parked out in the open at North Island's New Plymouth Airport although the plan is to get her flying again and move her to a more suitable location for work to continue. Gear retraction tests were successfully carried out on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. She remains for sale...

Back to the USA for our final item. **PBY-5A N459CF** spent many years flying in the Netherlands as PH-PBY until she had to be sold a few years back. She is still greatly missed by the Dutch as we found out when we took *Miss Pick Up* to Rotterdam in August. The good news is that her restoration to 'stock' condition continues to a fantastic standard. Here is an update from Project Manager Casey Littrell: 'That old saying 'the devil is in the detail' certainly holds true for the ongoing restoration of Consolidated PBY-5A Catalina BuNo 2459 in New Smyrna Beach, FL at American Aero Services. Though the exterior restoration is mostly complete, the interior restoration to bring the aircraft back to accurate 1942 wartime configuration has been an enormous task that has tested the skills of the restoration crew. Because the aircraft arrived from Europe with little original equipment, nearly all of the interior components have either had to be found or fabricated. And considering the early vintage of this PBY, original equipment is scarce...so just sourcing the materials is a monumental task in its own right. And for items that need to be fabricated, finding original drawings or photos to accurately reconstruct them is an additional challenge.



**At Merriden, Western Australia, the wing recently went back on to the hull of the former Royal Australian Air Force PBY-5 A24-46**

- Vicki Mick Allen

# DUXFORD BATTLE OF BRITAIN SHOW PHOTOPAGE



*Miss Pick Up* and the Royal Navy Historic Flight Fairey Swordfish in what is definitely the best shot we have seen of their formation. Taken by event commentator Ben Dunnell



**Little and Large** - the Joystick Club pedal Catalina finally got together with the real thing. Find out more at <https://www.joystickclub.co.uk/>  
- Richie Piper

# CAT CONTACT COLUMN

In the past we have used this part of *The Catalina News* to re-unite former-Catalina crews but there has been less call for this as time has marched on and the number of surviving veterans has fallen away. However, we are still open for business and happy to publish requests for contact and questions about Catalinas and seaplanes generally, either via email or letter to the editorial address shown elsewhere in this issue.

In August, and on the same day, we received two requests for contact with former 209 Squadron crew members, one from Denis Saunders who is involved in a book project concerning the war service of Bruce Daymond, DSO, DFC, RAAF and the other from Lady Scott Moy, daughter of the late Air Chief Marshall Sir John Barraclough, whose friend is the daughter of Bruce Daymond. Small world! If any member has contact with relatives of **Air Commodore David Fitzpatrick** or **Flight Lieutenant 'Jeep' Balfour**, they would be interested to hear from you - any initial responses via the Editor please.

One of our newer members, Kathy Wadey, wrote to tell us that her father, **W/O George Ernest Hollis**, had flown with 228 and 423 Squadrons, both Short Sunderland units, but had a Catalina entry in his logbook and was interested in finding out more. The aircraft concerned was AM268, a Catalina II originally intended as a PBY-5 for the US Navy but diverted to the RAF as one of seven that came to the RAF following a deal negotiated directly between Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt. The log' entry is dated November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1942 and the captain was F/O Cooper. The entry is described as 'Ferry' and the Catalina took off from Stranraer at 13:00 arriving at Invergordon (also known as Alness) three hours later. Delving into Editorial records, it seems that this 4 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit aircraft was being moved following the transfer of that unit between the two bases. Three hours does seem to be a long flight across Scotland so other duties may have been carried out during it.

Sadly, we have to record the passing of some of our members and in the recent past these have included Robert Aiken, Peter Chalk, Leslie Crowhurst and John Macklin as well as one of our former 'Cat Pack' volunteers Jamie Hunt.

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks	Time
17 Nov	13:00	PBY-5	F/O COOPER	FERRY	STRANRAER - OBN	3:00
7 "	07:00	"	Flt. HARBOUR-JACKSON	"	APUS SOLO	3:30
8 "	07:00	"	Flt. HARBOUR-JACKSON	"	"	3:30
9 "	17:30	"	Flt. PARSONS	"	"	5:30
10 "	15:30	"	Flt. PARSONS	"	"	5:50
11 "	08:00	"	Flt. PARSONS	"	OBN - INVERGORDON	1:15
11 "	18:00	"	Flt. PARSONS	"	INVERGORDON - STRANRAER	2:50
14 "	18:00	"	Flt. COOPER	"	STRANRAER - INVERGORDON	3:0

Total time not used on STRANRAER (Day) 19:0  
(Night) 5:30  
SIB [Signature] of COMD. A. COU.

A copy of the page in Kathy Wadey's father's logbook recording his ferry flight in Catalina AM268 in November 1942

# DONATIONS

We are very grateful to all Catalina Society members who support us through their subscriptions, whether it be via annual renewals or through life membership. In addition, we receive donations and bequests from time to time and, whether large or small, these are much appreciated. We are happy to acknowledge recent donors here as well as those who donate via social media...

- Bob Franklin
- Bill Giles
- Karen Harris
- David Legg
- Bohumil Panyrek
- James Wilson

In addition, Tim Hampson made a donation following the successful sale of his Catalina print advertised in our last edition and Graham Crisp donated a superb scale model of the original Catalina Miss Pick Up which is now stored until we can display it at Duxford.

We are currently in need of support to complete the funding for our Catalina Hangar Project (see pages 2 & 3). All donations are greatly appreciated - if you would like to donate, please see the information below.



## Can you help? All amounts welcome!

For a donation of £750, life membership of the Catalina Society is included, for yourself, or a person of your choice.

If you can add **gift aid**, instead of using the link or QR code, please email David Legg for details: [pb5@btinternet.com](mailto:pb5@btinternet.com)

Please consider donating using the QR Code or by visiting: [catalina.org.uk/make-a-donation](http://catalina.org.uk/make-a-donation)



Prior to this year's Blackpool Air Show, *Miss Pick Up* carried out a flight for guests and air-to-air photographers. This shot, by Steve Comber of Centre of Aviation Photography (COAP), shows her over the town's pier and tower.