



TRANSPORTS

By ROBERT G. HUFFORD



The first Boeing 707 jet airlines built for Qantas Airways of Australia rolled from the Boeing Plant at Renton, Washington on 16 Feb. 1959. Named CITY OF CANBERRA, it was the first American built jet delivered to a foreign airline and was the 29th Model 707 produced. It was given register number VH-EBA but, while being flight tested, was registered by its U. S. number N31239, and it is noteworthy that VH-EBA was the former register of a "Catalina" Flying Boat used by Qantas for many years, as told in the following story "Last of the Cats". (Photo - Boeing Airplane Company)

This Department of the JOURNAL is begun anew through the efforts of Member Robert G. Hufford of 4908 Wortser Ave., Sherman Oaks, Calif. Bob was one of the first 26 Members of the Society whose Introductions were published in Volume 1, Number 1 (Spring 1956) and he stated then that his category of interest was, and is Transport Aviation. He has also become well informed on air traffic control, having studied all of its phases and regulations, and has VHF radio in both home and automobile to listen in on airways radio chatter. Bob is associated with the motion picture film department of Eastman Kodak Co., with offices at 6706 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood 38.

Member Hufford states: "I will solicit articles from all Members interested in this (transport) field, and such articles would carry the author's by-line. It should be known that I am acting as a clearing house for transport material; though not an experienced author, I do have time to write letters." He has planned a considerable series of articles for forthcoming issues un-

der such interesting titles as "The First and the Last", "The Las Vegas Run", "Catalina Clipper - VS-44A", "Air-line Markings", "Million Dollar Trade-ins", and "Presidential Aircraft" to name but a few, all of which will be compiled with the help of other Members of this Society. It is a cooperative effort of the highest order.

To begin, the following story "Last of the Cats" was compiled by your Editor with the help of Gordon S. Williams (now our Regional Vice-President in the Northwest area) who supplied the photos of the Boeing 707's. He points out that registers VH-EBC and VH-EED, two of Qantas Airways' 707 jetliners were formerly assigned to "Catalinas" built by Boeing of Canada in WWII. We are indebted also to John Ulm, Public Relations Director of Qantas, and incidentally the son of Capt. Charles T. P. Ulm, copilot with Kingsford-Smith in the flight of the SOUTHERN CROSS, for the photographs used here with "The Last of the Cats".

... LAST OF THE "CATS" -

Reprinted from Qantas News

FIRST QANTAS BORINGS (Headline)

When Qantas puts its Boeing jets on the round-world service next year they will not be the first Qantas aircraft built by this American firm.

Senior Technical Records Officer Ken Downey has uncovered this fact.

Our two "Catalina" flying boats - VH-EBC ISLAND CHIEFTAIN and VH-EED ISLAND PATROL - were built by Boeing of Canada under contract to the designers, Consolidated Aircraft.

ISLAND CHIEFTAIN was built in 1944. It is not known when ISLAND PATROL was built.

Qantas took delivery of EBC on December 31, 1948, and of EED on July 12, 1949.

To EED went the honor in August last, of making the last Catalina flight in the Territory of New Guinea.

Its final flight was between Port Moresby and Lae.

On August 27, 1958, Catalina VH-EED touched down at 9.16 a.m. on the Lae alighting area after a smooth ferry flight from Fairfax, Port Moresby.

Thus ended the last Catalina flight in the Territory of New Guinea and Papua.

It was a sentimental journey for the captain - Ken Montagu, Qantas' senior route captain in Port Moresby, who had 4,000 hours' "Catalina" time.

It was the end of a chapter in Qantas history - a glorious chapter which started in 1941, when Qantas people ferried the first of 19 Catalinas from San Diego, U.S.A., to Australia for war.

Since then the Catalinas have done sterling service in war and peace.

There are many people - like yachtsman Danny Weil whom Captain Burgess rescued from shark-infested waters out from Moresby - who owe their lives to the timely arrival of a Catalina.

Then again, there are people like Mr. and Mrs. Harry Bode, plantation owners at Jacquinot Bay who regard the Cats as old friends, each with its distinctive characteristics which identified it long before it hit the water.

Such people mourn the passing of the "old boats". And they are not only lay people, for the boats vs. land planes controversy rages hot wherever airmen meet.

Mr. and Mrs. Bode called in to Qantas House with some color transparencies of the Catalinas for our files.

"At home we didn't know the date, the month nor the year half the time," said Mrs. Bode, "but our life has always been divided into Plane Week, and Non-Plane Week."

And when she says "Plane Week", Mrs. Bode makes it quite clear she means Catalina Week. For one of the Bodes' chief pleasures was to chuff out to the Cat in their launch.

The Catalina crossings of the Indian Ocean from Perth to Colombo - a distance of 3,500 miles - during the war years was a saga never before or since equalled in airline operation.

The epic flights started on July 7, 1943, and terminated in 1945.

The Catalinas were leased from the Australian Government and retained their "G" registrations. Their course was guided by celestial navigation since "radio silence" was the order of the day.

The Catalinas were christened with the names of the stars by which checks were taken.

RIGAL STAR, SPICA STAR, ALTAIR STAR, VEGA STAR and ANTARES STAR, carried a payload of only 1,000 lbs. . . a precious cargo of VIP's - there were usually three passengers - and additional petrol in the hull for the



Lae, New Guinea, 27 August 1958. Qantas "Catalina" VH-EED made the last Catalina flight in New Guinea when it was ferried from Port Moresby to Lae. (Photo - Qantas)

long flight, the longest regularly flown sector in airline history.

Crossing times averaged between 27 and 28 hours, and when conditions were unfavourable - maximum flight times of 31 hours 55 minutes were recorded.

As single engine performance was limited to 29,500 lbs., the survival of the Catalinas depended upon two engine operation for the first ten hours of flight.

Meteorological advice was also confined to forecasts on local weather conditions at either end, so that intermediate weather was accepted as "come what may". Later a "Met" office was set up at Cocos Island, to be used only in extreme need.

The faith which grew trip by trip in the dependability of the Catalinas is explained by the fact that only on one occasion was it necessary to feather an engine, and this happened after land was reached.

Captain Lew Ambrose, in his "Brief Outline of Indian Ocean Operations", gives an indication of what the passenger accommodation was like.

"When the aircraft were flown to Sydney for fuel tank conversion, many changes were made. Two bunks were fitted on the left side of this compartment while three Empire Boat - type chairs were fitted facing athwartships on the right side.

"The floor was built up in the blister compartment and the lavatory established in the rear compartment. Later, we were able to fit a two-element electric stove on which tea was brewed and soup heated.

"The food containers were moved into the blister compartment and the Second Officer was responsible for all feeding arrangements, and a very fair job he made of it, too!

"Salads with chicken and cheese, biscuits, cake and chocolate helped to satisfy the demands of hunger. The long night hours were improved by potions of hot soup, tea or coffee.

"Flying suits, wool-lined boots and blankets were provided for each passenger, and reading matter helped to keep boredom at bay."

Each passenger was given an illustrated certificate entitling him to membership in the "Rare and Secret Order of the Double Sunrise", reminding him he had been airborne for more than 24 hours.

"Air travellers today become accustomed to unusual experiences," said Captain Ambrose, "but those who have



UH-EAX was operated by Qantas over the Australian-Pacific Islands on regularly scheduled service from 1947. It had two Pratt & Whitney R.1830-92 engines of 1050 H.P. and cruised at approximately 120 mph. In long flights it could carry 28 passengers and for the shorter New Guinea operations its high density loading was 44 passengers. (Photo - Qantas)



VH-EBC came from the factory in early May 1959, the third of seven Model 707's for Qantas. Actually these were the shortened 707-138's. -EBC was same registry as the ISLAND CHIEFTAIN Catalina described below. In the rear are the first Braniff 707-220, American 707, Qantas VH-EBB, and the first BOAC 707-420. (Photo - Boeing)

A typical scene in the South Pacific operations by Qantas. Weekly calls were made at various island stopping points and the passengers and cargo were transferred to and from shore by small boats. Beautiful clouds were indicative of the warm humid climate. (Photo - Qantas)



made the Indian Ocean crossing may rest secure in the knowledge that their brotherhood will always be few in number."

Crews operating on the Indian Ocean route were entitled to wear the "Long Range" gold star on their uniform jackets.

"I was first officer on the last Indian Ocean Catalina flight in July, 1945," said Ted Neal, now a Statistics clerk in Qantas House, "Captain John Shields was skipper."

The years have softened the memories of those Indian Ocean flights for Ted.

He remembers the heavy flying suits, the tension, the "dead reckoning", the strong winds that made it necessary for the aircraft to fly at 2,000 feet on the westbound run, where it was hot and bumpy...the eastbound run, when flight was made at 10,000 to 12,000 feet to catch the benefit of tail winds.

Up here the crew suffered from lack of oxygen, and extreme cold. The aircraft was not heated.

Most clearly of all, he remembers the people carried. The generals and admirals and air commodores on their way to war, the "wags" and "hard cases" who brightened the long trip, the Chinese VIP and his family whose crossing sped them to assassination, the man whose claim to posterity was the inauguration of the first bus route across the Sahara desert.

The five Indian Ocean Catalinas were scuttled at the end of the war under the Lend-Lease agreement. (1)

Catalinas, between 1943 and 1945, flew 271 trips on the Indian Ocean service.

Between 1947 and 1950 Qantas bought seven Catalinas.

(2) Australian based Catalinas operated services to Fiji, Lord Howe and the New Hebrides.

(1) Registrations G-AGFM, G-AGFL, G-AGIE, G-AGID and G-AGKS. Soon after the SPICA STAR, a Consolidated PB-5, commenced the trans-Ocean service serious fuel leaks developed in the integral wing tanks and attempts to re-seal the tanks were unsuccessful up to the termination of Catalina operations on the Indian Ocean. Satisfactory tanks repairs were finally accomplished in 1945 at Sydney and the cabin interior was improved to increase passenger seating. The terms of the Lease-Lend Agreement were invoked, however, without the aircraft having entered service operations with the new agreement, and it was scuttled at sea in 1946. It had made 6 crossings of the Indian Ocean beginning in 1944. Total flying time is unknown. Register G-AGKS.

(2) Registrations VH-EAW, VH-EAX, VH-EBA, VH-EBB, VH-EBC, VH-EED and VH-EBU.

Between 1947 and 1951 they carried 7,223 passengers, and flew 5,970,608 passenger miles.

On May 30, 1949, Catalina operations began from Port Moresby with the West Coast Service. Captain Hugh Birch and First Officer (now Captain) Ross Treadgold operated the service. In October, 1949, they were joined by Captain Freddy Fox and First Officer (now Captain) Ron Roberts.

Between 1949 and 1958 New Guinea Cats flew 12,427 hours, 14,753,398 passenger miles, and uplifted 54,259 passengers, and 7,367 short tons.

Chief Pilot for New Guinea, Captain Phil Oakley, has sent down a short history of the aircraft which made the final flight - VH-EBD.

When this aircraft was accepted from the RAAF early in 1951, 614 hours 10 minutes had been logged. The Certificate of Air-worthiness was signed out on April 24 by Base Inspector Jack Prince. (Jack is now Area Engineer, New Guinea.)

VH-EBD arrived in Moresby on May 22. Its first service, on May 30, was operated by Captain Freddy Fox, with engineer Tom Mitchell. Its route was Abau, Samarai, De Boyne, Nimoa, De Boyne, Samarai, Esa' Ala, Losuia, Woodlark, Samarai, Abau, back to Moresby.

EBD saw service throughout the islands.

It was a boon to outstations, and isolated coastal plantations, and its rescue missions were numerous.

Probably the most eventful mercy flight of EBD was in 1952.

A DCA Drover en route from Wewak to Momote had ditched in the sea near Bat Island at 5 p.m. on April 16. The port propeller had sheared and struck the fuselage.

Pilot Clarrie R. Hibbert seriously injured his left foot. A passenger, T. P. Drury, who was also a quali-

fied pilot, dragged Hibbert out of the pilot's chair and made a successful ditching.

The aircraft sank soon after ditching, and the three occupants, Hibbert, Drury and Major L. J. Sheedy, got clear and inflated the dinghy.

It was a bright moonlight night. Some hours after the ditching a Qantas DC3, under the command of Captain Max Twenlow, homed on the Gibson Girl signals and fixed the position of the dinghy.

Captain Freddy Fox, assisted by First Officer Ken Montagu and Engineer Officer Tom Mitchell, flew at 17,000 feet from Port Moresby across the Highlands to Bat Island, 85 miles S.W. of Momote in the Admiralty Islands. They landed in the open sea near Bat Island just after first light.

A launch picked up the three men and took them out to the Catalina. They went aboard at 6.30 a.m. on April 17, and soon after that were comfortably in bed at Port Moresby hospital.

The Catalinas, and the men who flew them, have written their own story in the annals of Australia and the Pacific Islands - a tale of courage, fortitude and endurance, of sturdy, unglamorous planes which did the job expected of them, of fearless, stouthearted men who flew the high seas and the mountains of New Guinea, who sat their kites down in shark-infested water to rescue distressed mariners - and thought of hair-raising experiences as being "all in a day's work".

They were quite a combination. The men and the planes. The people of New Guinea will remember them always.

Newer, modern aircraft with greater speed and more comfort are planned for the Territorians, but they may never have the same heart-warming appeal of the "Old Cat".

VH-EBD - ISLAND CHIEFTAIN

Type: Boeing-Canada PB2B-2R.

Serial No.: American - 361185
British - JX-661

Services Operated for Qantas include:

Port Moresby to Samarai
" " " Rabaul
" " " Buin
" " " Kikori, plus charter flights.

This Aircraft was previously owned and operated by W. R. Carpenter of Carpenter Airline under the registration of VH-ALN. The purchase date of this aircraft was 31st December, 1948.

Aircraft Hours since new as at 15 November 1957 - 6600.
Aircraft Hours since purchase by Qantas as at 15 November 1957 - 5333.

VH-EBD - ISLAND PATROL

Type: Boeing-Canada PB2B-2R.

Serial No.: American - 44259.
British - JX-641.

Services operated for Qantas include:

Port Moresby to Samarai
" " " Rabaul
" " " Buin
" " " Kikori, plus charter flights.

This Aircraft was previously owned and operated by the Royal Australian Air Force under the registration markings of A24-371. The purchase date of this aircraft was 12th July, 1949.

Aircraft Hours since new as at November 14, 1957 - 4663.
Aircraft Hours since purchase by Qantas as at November 15, 1957 - 3949.

NUMBERS ON THE ROCKS

The little stopover place known as Wendover, Utah, is the last place to purchase fuel before the long, hot ride across the salt flats of Great Salt Lake. The rocks north of the little village contain the only scenery worth remembering. On these rocks however, are historical numbers and wording. You see Wendover AFB, though now long since abandoned, was once the training ground of numerous bombardment squadrons of the AAF in World War II. Enterprising and spirited members of these squadrons journeyed to the rocks and painted their squadron numbers on the rocks. These numbers still exist today and have defied the efforts of time and weather to erase their scrawled lettering. By tradition, a squadron's numbers were not supposed to be painted there on the rocks until they were ready to

move overseas to the combat theatre.

INTERESTING AERONAUTICS

The USAF has a big stick in the form of the SAC wings. However, in the vicinity of Colorado Springs, Colorado, home of the Air Defense Command, the ADC occupies much of the minds of the air minded citizenry. The local gentry are proud of ADC and its function. In Cheyenne Mountain, the ADC is having a new headquarters constructed into the mountainside that is practically nuclear bomb-proof. To commemorate the role of ADC, an F-91C Fighter, now obsolescent in the ADC, is perched on the top of Pike's Peak nearby, more than 14,000 feet high. This fighter is a monument to the role of ADC. It is appropriate that it is resting at altitude.

Contributed by Willis L. Nye, Hayward, Calif.