Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia

On The Step

Issue 19 - June 2009

In this Issue

Safety First

As pilots, safety should be our prime concern and it is something we should consider and talk about regularly.

To focus on safety issues, I am delighted to announce that Dale DeRemer will be writing regularly for the newsletter on seaplane safety and operations. In newsletter #12 we published an article by Dale on the importance of the passenger briefing. In this issue, Dale writes on how to make yourself immune from dangerous whims. We look forward to more of Dale's valuable articles.

Dale is highly qualified to guide us in these matters. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of North Dakota. He taught aviation studies at university for more than 20 years and has 20,000+ hours ATP and CFI. Dale is known as the father of the Seawings National FAA Safety Program for seaplane pilots and he has written numerous books and articles on aviation, particularly seaplane safety. We are honoured to have him write for us.

This issue also celebrates the "birth" of another seaplane in Australia. Many of our members have built their own seaplanes, are in the process of building, or dream of building. I remember the sense of anticipation, then wonder, then sheer exhilaration I felt when I first flew the plane I had built myself.

You can see all of these emotions on Keith Clark's face on page 2 of this issue. Keith's new SeaRey has just taken to the air and that smile says it all. Two and half years of working, sourcing parts, thinking, solving problems . . . and now this thing of beauty - AND it flys!

What could be better. (ed) **Fly Safe**

From the Editor

Learning from the Experts

The Australia Pelican is a magnificent bird, the largest pelican in the world, with a wingspan of 2.5 metres, a body weight of 9-13kg and a very light skeleton. It is a perfect amphibious aeroplane. As I perched on a rock in a marine sanctuary on Kangaroo Island (off the tip of South Australia) I was captivated by the pelican's superb landing technique.

Looking up, I could see pelicans soaring above preparing to drop down for a feed of fresh fish. When cruising at high speed they twist their necks in an S bend to get their heads and beak close to their body, reduce drag and position their beak and heavy head close to their centre of lift. When they approach the water, if they are too high, they turn and slide slip to a lower altitude.

A few metres above the water they deploy their feet, previously tucked into their downy rear, square them to the water to maximise drag and dive the last couple of metres to their riparian runway.

Then comes the landing phase. The webbed feet come forward to act as skids on the water and the wings arch down providing flaps for maximum lift and airbrakes at their low touchdown speed.

When touch down is complete they tuck their wings completely out of the way for convenient docking. On landing, they scoop up fish and crustaceans in their expandable, pale pink bills which act as dip nets.

I had to laugh at the poor pelican who misjudged a glassy landing and was caught by the Lady of the Lake, in the same way that some seaplane pilots have been caught. It was a glassy expanse of water and in he came, gliding down towards the water, still in the penultimate stage of landing. Only problem was, he hadn't deployed his flaps and he hadn't begun his flare. He crashed straight into the water, beak first. Embarrassment, pelican style!

Gear UP to "kiss the water" # #

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ)

Oh! What a Feeling!

Keith Clark

As a preschooler I was taken to Rose Bay to fish, but the only thing that interested me was watching the Sunderland flying-boats thundering along on their takeoff run.

Fifty five years later and I still can't fish but I finally have my own wonderful little flying boat. Since those childhood days there has been a constant in my life, I have always wanted to fly. But there was always some project which prevented me from fulfilling my dream. Something about approaching your 60s makes you assess with greater urgency where you are going in life and I decided that I didn't want to end up as an old man regretting that I never achieved something I had always yearned for. So I learnt to fly.

I must admit that it was as I had imagined, having flown in my imagination all my life, with the exception of crosswind landings which didn't come naturally. But, before long the constraints of flying a hired conventional airplane made me dream of those early flying boats and movies I'd seen of float planes on North American lakes.

I still can't believe my luck when, flipping through an Australian Pilot magazine, an article struck an instant chord deep within me. There in the magazine's pages was everything I had wanted. A plane that I might possibly afford to own and fly whenever I wanted. It was a flying boat that could fulfil that lifetime of dreams, and it was one that I could build myself. I had only built flying models as a teenager and a few houses for my own use (still got to finish that project), but strangely had no doubt that I could build a real aeroplane.

So, I contacted this fella Rob Loneragan who was referred to in the magazine, to get a demo flight. I was pretty sold on the idea already, but once I tried water flying that was it, I was hooked.

It seemed to take an eternity for the SeaRey kit to arrive (Progressive Aerodyne were going through a bit of change at the time). The building was engrossing and rewarding, but it was flying that I really wanted to do. The one year project blew out to two and a half and tested friendships as I became a recluse in my garage, and must have tested my family, as the house and gardens slowly went wanting for maintenance. But I will be forever indebted to my family who, much to my amazement, were encouraging me all the way.

One of the wonderful things about becoming a SeaRey owner is the friendships and support both locally and from around the world, and I would like to give a special thanks to Ross Vining who, when completion seemed so far away, kept my spirits up by taking me flying and a few splashes.

I could not write anything about my Searey experience without acknowledging the "Messiah" Rob Loneragan, an absolutely wonderful man who has forever changed my life and helped me realise my lifelong dream.

VH-ZeeRAy flew for the first time on 6th May.

I wondered if I would ever finish, BUT I DID!!!
And. Oh what a feeling!

The newly hatched SeaRey VH-ZRA, nicknamed Kittylina, shelters under the wing of the Catalina Flying Memorial VH-CAT

Hey - Let's fly under the bridge. No one will notice.

Immunity from the seaplane pilot's whim

By Dale DeRemer

Whim: "I don't need to do a weight and balance. This airplane has flown loads like this before…let's just go, it's getting late"

Whim: "I don't need to pick up that piece of FOD on the ramp, it's not my responsibility

> ***a WHIM:***
>
> ***A passing impulse, sudden thought, idea, or desire, especially one based on impulse rather than reason or necessity.***

A seaplane pilot-friend and I were hunkered down by the fire in a little cabin way up north in the Canadian bush. The wind was threatening to peel shingles off the roof and the rain came down in bucket loads. It was so nasty outside we only went out for firewood and to answer nature's call.

On the same day, there were three fatal seaplane accidents within 100 miles of us. Later, when I asked the Canadian inspector investigating those accidents what had caused them, I was blasted with a resounding, frustrated answer: "STUPIDITY!"

My dictionary defines stupidity as: extremely rash or thoughtless behaviour. According to the inspector, stupidity caused those accidents. Seaplane pilot stupidity. We are all susceptible. How can we protect ourselves from it?

> "The weather is crappy but I can handle it so let's just get going"

Much of the decision-making that produces stupid decisions results from whims. We all have them. They are "pop-ups." Advertisers and merchants work hard at helping our 'pop-ups.' They call it "impulse buying" and we all do it. Impulse-driven decision making (making a decision to act on an impulse or whim) generally produces poor decisions because it is based on shallow-intuitive decision making, rather than logical decision making. Shallow-intuitive decisions are largely based on whether we think it will make us feel good and often are followed by remorse. (Example: It felt really good when I made it through that sucker-hole five years ago, but since then, my conscience has scolded me for trying it every time I think of it.)

The complexities of impulsive decision-making are not fully studied, but we do know some things. A study by the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management and the University of Chicago's Graduate School of Business concluded:

1 Impulsivity can wreak havoc on a person's life. In recent years, binge drinking, binge eating and impulsive shopping have helped both our waistlines and our credit-card debts reach epidemic proportions — indicating that despite the hangover of

> "I don't need to preflight, the airplane was perfect when I flew it this morning."

remorse which often accompanies such whims, many of us continue to indulge the same action over and over again.

Impulsivity is addictive!

2 We are more susceptible to suggestion if we have recently completed a decision which resulted in good feelings (I can have a cake because I only had a salad with no dressing on it for lunch, or… I can fly under that bridge because I have done everything else perfectly on this flight, and it's a beautiful day, etc.)

It gets easier after the first time!

3 The study found that choices made in the recent past may influence how we respond to the next whim. Susceptibility to making poor choices in response to whims may vary. We may be more susceptible if we have recently made some good choices that rewarded us with positive feelings.

It gets easier, and easier!

How can we protect ourselves from whim-induced seaplane pilot stupidity? A huge percentage (75-95% of all general aviation accidents, depending on who you ask) result from poor decision making by the pilot.

We have met the enemy, and he is us!

So, the next step in improving aviation safety, and improving the chances that we, as pilots, will live a long and satisfying life, is to immunize ourselves against the "stupidity factor."

Stupidity factor immunity

We can arm ourselves against this endemic plague fairly easily. Start by creating your own personal set of standards of conduct and responsibility, write it out, review it often and then live by it.

This is nothing new. Many recognized organizations, whether airline, manufacturer, professional or governmental entity have created a code of conduct for their employees or members to live by and aspire to. In the absence of such a code, both the individuals and the entity will not be as good as they could be. The code makes it clear what is proper & safe behaviour and attitudes.

General aviation, including seaplane aviation in particular has no imposed code of conduct, no standard of behaviour or responsibility (and I am not proposing such). Nonetheless I am sure that we can all be better, safer pilots who are less susceptible to poor decision-making and who are better stewards of the future reputation of seaplane pilots, if we each construct and adhere to our own personal statement of appropriate behaviour and responsibility (- a code of conduct).

Stupidity:

Extremely rash or thoughtless behaviour.

By doing so, we will be far more immune to the temptations of the moment (whims) that arise before and during flight. And, we will quickly discover that much of aeronautical decision-making becomes quicker, easier, and better because, in the decision-making process, answers to the 'right' questions are more quickly and easily made. We will talk about "the right and wrong questions" in future SPAA Newsletters.

Where do you start to compose your own personal code of conduct? I'd recommend the Aviators Model Code of Conduct, available in several versions (airplane, seaplane, light sport, glider and student pilot at www.secureav.com. This document was developed by an editorial board of qualified pilots with input from more than two hundred and fifty experienced pilots and other experts. It's a good place to start building your own personal set of aspirations to help you become the highly respected and highly qualified pilot you want to be. I commend it to you. Have a look at the Seaplane Pilots Model Code of Conduct and start becoming immune, as a pilot, to impulse decision making.

We have met the enemy, and he is us!

Note - The SPAA Code of Conduct is on the SPAA web site (ed)

Dale DeRemer beside his Cessna

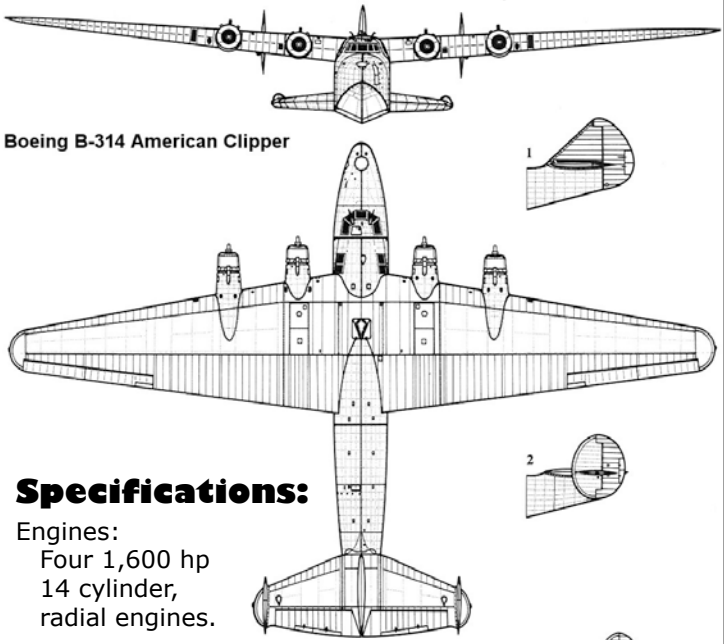
Boeing 314 "The Clipper"

Ben Hunter

In 1935 Pan American World Airways wanted a flying boat to enable Trans-Atlantic passenger flights with a high degree of safety, comfort and speed. In response, Boeing developed the 314, nicknamed the "Clipper". It was modelled on the great ocean going sailing ships of the era.

The Clipper outstripped all rivals in size. The aircraft used the wings and engine nacelles of the giant Boeing XB-15 Bomber on the flying boat's towering, whale-shaped body. The new Wright 1,600 hp engines eliminated the lack of power that handicapped the XB-15. In the place of the traditional floating stabilisers at the wing tips, sponsons mounted on the sides of the hull were used. Fuel tanks in the sponsons and wings held 16,000 litres of fuel.

The Clipper made the first scheduled Trans-Atlantic flight on in June, 1939. By the year's end, Clippers were also routinely flying across the Pacific. Clipper passengers looked down at the sea from large windows and enjoyed the comforts of dressing rooms, a dining salon that could be turned into a lounge, and a bridal suite. The Clipper's 74 seats converted into 40 bunks for overnight travellers. Four-star hotels catered gourmet meals served from its galley.



Specifications:

Engines:
Four 1,600 hp
14 cylinder,
radial engines.

Wing Span: 152 ft. (46.33 m.)
Length: 106 ft (32.31 m.)

Max T.O. Weight: 82,500 lb. (38,102 kg.)

Max level speed: 199 mph (320 km/h)
Cruising speed: 184 mph (296 km/h)

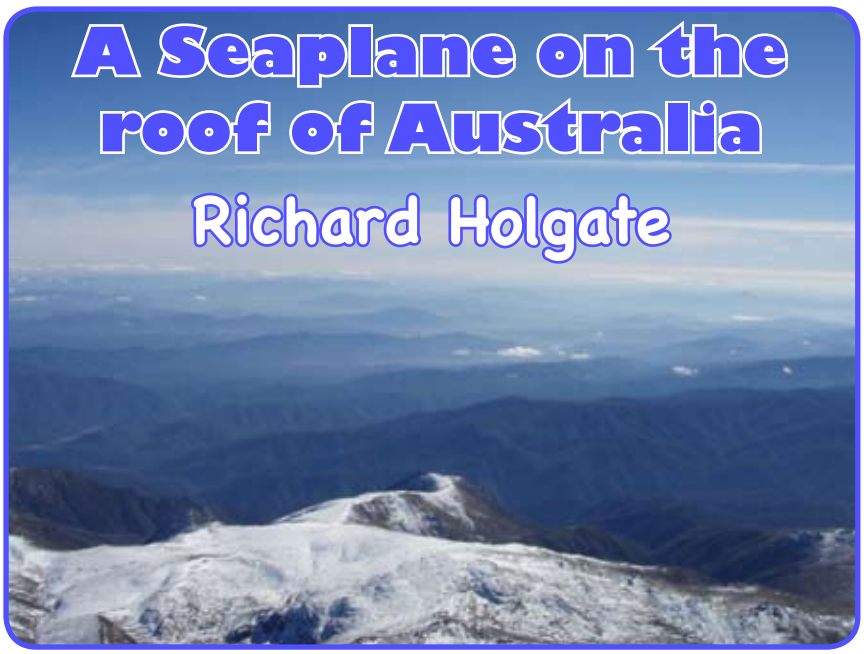
Range: 3,500 miles (8369 km)

Boeing built 12 Model 314s between 1938 and 1941. At the outbreak of World War II, the Clipper was used to ferry materials and personnel. Few other aircraft of the era had its range and load capacity and it supported military operations as far afield as southeast Asia.

WWII saw rapid progress in the development of long-range landplanes and the Clippers were retired from Pan Am in 1946. They were then used by various small charter companies and not withdrawn from service until 1950

A Seaplane on the roof of Australia

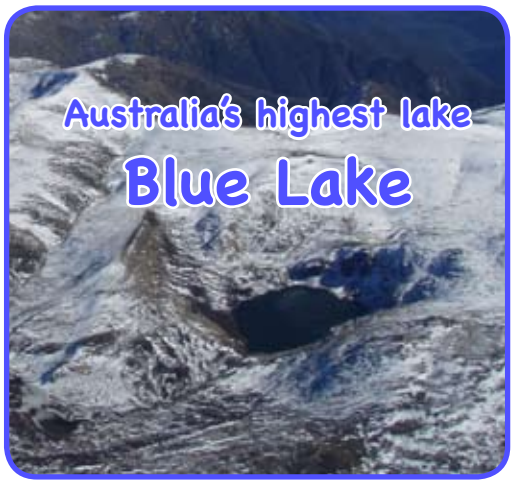
Richard Holgate



My home is in Cooma NSW which is the 'Gateway to the Snowy Mountains'. What better way to celebrate and appreciate the enormity of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme than doing a tour of each of the major dams in the one day.

My father Dave and I set out to do that earlier this year. Our SeaRey, VH-CHI is based at ***Polo Flat*** a small private grass strip near Cooma. What a fantastic place to have a seaplane. It is uncontrolled airspace and has both the Snowy Mountains and the NSW Sapphire coast within a 50 mile radius. We can fly to the coast for some sun and fun and then return to the freshness of the mountains for a cleansing wash down in fresh water before returning to Polo Flat, and all before lunch.

Our challenge on this day was a 140nm round trip visiting every major dam in the Snowy System in one day. It involved a lot of altitude changes as you can see on the GPS profile.



We departed Polo Flat and headed for Lake Jindabyne in the shadows of the snow-capped mountains to the West. This is a relatively sheltered lake which is long and is aligned with the prevailing southerly wind so it's a good choice on the frequent high wind days in the Snowy Mountains.

After negotiating Lake Jindabyne it was on and up to Island Bend Pondage and then Guthega Dam.

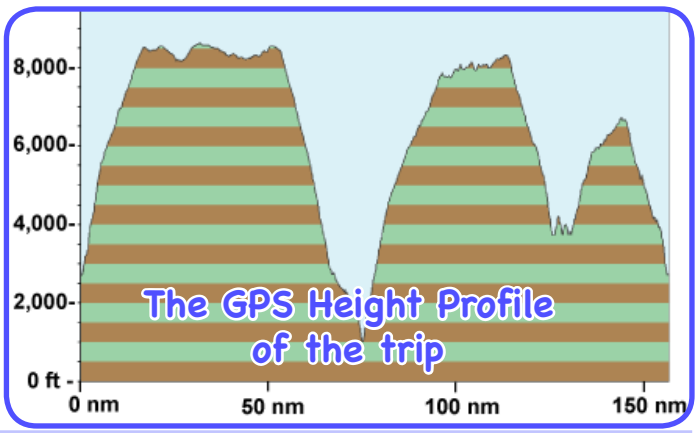
As we climbed up towards Mt Kosciuszko we passed over the eerily beautiful glacial Blue Lake which at 6,200ft is the highest lake in Australia and just a bit small to land on as the climb out at that altitude would be very difficult with sheer cliffs on all sides!

We flew past Mt Kosciuszko, Australia's highest point and then on to the most spectacular part of the flight as we headed over the high country enroute to Khancoban.

Dropping from Mt Kosciuszko (7,700ft) to Khancoban (800') in only 25 nm called for a rate of descent of 300 fpm for 25 mins! It was beautiful, the western sun filled the cockpit, keeping us warm as we headed down, down, down. That sinking feeling never felt so good! Fuel burn was about 3 litres per hour for this leg!

Heading over the mountains and past Murray 1 Power Station the inviting valley below with Khancoban pondage beckoned us.

The township of Khancoban is located in a picturesque valley and at only 800' AGL it felt about 20 degrees warmer than half and hour ago on the roof of Australia. It was strange to see people water skiing at Khancoban when 25 miles away there is snow on the mountains. Alighting at 800' on Khancoban pondage slows everything down – the indicated airspeed (IAS) is the same for all landings but it is a noticeably slower approach and landing (TAS) than the previous

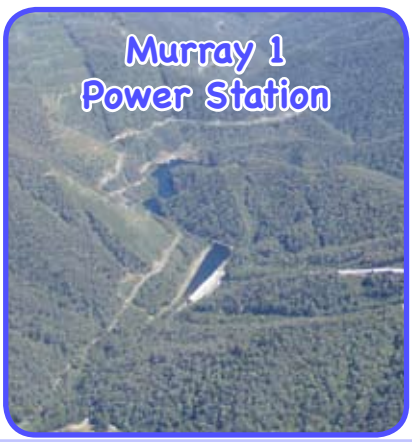


higher altitudes. Almost had time to order an in-flight cuppa on final!

Our route then took us back up and over the mountains and onto Tumut Pond Reservoir sitting just below the township of Cabramurra. The climb out from Khancoban at 800' back up to 7,000' required careful negotiation of the mountain updraft to maximise the rate of climb and maintain the engine temp in the green range.

From Cabramurra we flew to Tantangara via 3 mile Dam. This is named for being 3 miles from Kiandra - a 19th century gold mining area, a 20th Century ski field and a 21st Century ghost town. Its elevation of 5,000 ft agl made for a very fast touch and go!

Next splash in was at Tantangara pondage, the highest dam in the Snowy Scheme at around 4,000' and one of my favourite places to visit in a seaplane. It is very remote and so quiet (after you shut down the engine of course!). The alighting at Tantangara just after the Khancoban experience was like someone had hit the fast forward button – the approach seemed to be twice as fast as the Khancoban experience even though the IAS was the same. Reminds me that flying at sea level does have some advantages!



Last lake on the trip is my regular play ground of Lake Eucumbene which is only 15 nm from Polo Flat and has some extraordinary characteristics (both good and bad) for seaplane operations. On the plus side is the incredible size of the lake – it is over 20nm from the Dam Wall to Buckenderra over the water. In this length it is possible to do so many splash and goes that you need to do a '100 hourly maintenance' before you get to the end! However, the wind is very unpredictable in both speed and direction – I have seen it blowing 20kts from the west and 5 miles away it was blowing 15kts from the South. It is not unusual to have glassy conditions in the middle of the lake and small waves near the edges – seems to defy the laws of nature. If it is too windy at Eucumbene a diversion to Lake Jindabyne, just 10 nm away,

usually pays off with more sheltered water.

Finally after a leg stretch at Old Adaminaby the fun had to end. We returned to Polo Flat after another memorable flight. Fish and chips on the South Coast will have to wait till next week.

It makes you appreciate how lucky we are when experiences like flying in this part of the world are a reality. I thoroughly recommend any seaplane or landplane to come and enjoy the unique, unspoilt and uncluttered flying experience of the Snowy Mountains.

NOTE: Think safety - this flight is almost totally in a designated remote area.

For information on flying in the Snowy Mountains contact Richard at Rholgate@seaplanes.org.au.

News * News * News * News

RAAF 10SQN/11SQN

70th Anniversary

10 & 11 Sqn were formed in the dark days of 1939.

70th anniversary celebrations are being held at RAAF Base Edinburgh on 24-26 Sept 2009.

See full details at www.ednwelfare.com.au

All members of 10SQN, 11SQN or 492SQN, and anyone who flew, maintained or supported the Catalina, Sunderland or Neptune aircraft are invited to attend.

Over the three days, there will be an informal night at the hangar, a dining-in in Adelaide, and the VP International bar open for everyone to catch up. The Catalina and Neptune aircraft from HARS (Historic Aircraft Restoration Society) will fly in for the event.

Email: edn92wg.orionanniversary@defence.gov.au

Or write: 70th Committee; c/o Orderly Room; 11SQN, PO Box 1500; RAAF Edinburgh SA 5111

FLTLT Gregg McFaul
On behalf of the Organising Committee

Flight: Air & Space

The Powerhouse Discovery Centre in Sydney is a great place to visit and there is no better time to visit them than on July 11 when they have an open day focusing on *Flight: Air and Space*. The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd is involved in the event.

The day includes illustrated lectures, talks, behind the scenes tours, displays, demonstrations and kids activities.

The Powerhouse Discovery Centre is a satellite facility of the Sydney Powerhouse Museum. It is at 172 Showground Road, Castle Hill.

The Open Day runs from 10am to 4.00pm

Entry is $8 adult, $5 concession, $25 family Free to children < 4yrs & Powerhouse Museum members.

More info at www.castlehill.powerhousemuseum.com

Inaugural seaplane festival in Ireland

The picturesque County Fermanagh Lakes in Northern Ireland were famously used in World War II as a launch-pad for seaplanes that played a pivotal role in the battle over the Atlantic.

The Fermanagh Seaplane Festival in May this year, the first of its kind in Ireland or Britain, brought seaplanes from across Europe to touch-down on Lough Erne once again. The main event attracted a crowd of 3,000 on lookers.

The event's lead pilot and one of its organisers Steve Powell said: "When we landed the planes in Enniskillen on Saturday the locals where gob smacked. The Waterways Ireland Seaplane Festival has been superb, we have been able to bring something truly unique to Ireland."

Seaplane festivals are popular in parts of continental Europe and have grown to become huge events.

Now the organisers of the first Fermanagh festival are planning to make it an annual event.

In World War II, Catalinas and Sunderland seaplanes used Co Fermanagh's huge waterways as a launch pad to fly out over the Atlantic to protect convoys coming from the USA.

The Fermanagh and the Lough Erne water system covers 300 sq miles and was once described by a Canadian pilot as "one of the most beautiful runways in the world".

RIP

We note with sadness a seaplane accident in the US on Melton Hill Lake in Tennessee. The accident killed the pilot Brett Smith and his passenger. Brett was very well known in the SeaRey community through his contributions to the SeaRey internet discussion forums.

The entire sequence was captured on video and makes chilling viewing. The accident is noteworthy to all seaplane pilots because Brett was a very experienced seaplane pilot and yet appears to have been caught by a classic hazard, a stall spin off the base/final turn. (As one who escaped from an accident resulting from a stall/spin at low altitude, I know how easy it is to be caught). This hazard is well known to all pilots and yet continues to claim lives. (Editor) - Fly Safely.

SPAA Profiles a Commercial Operator

Strahan Seaplanes & Helicopters

If you are in Tasmania and need a seaplane "fix" there is no better place to get it than in the picturesque town of Strahan, on the shores of Macquarie Harbour in the centre of the rugged west coast of Tasmania.

Strahan Seaplanes dock their seaplane at the main wharf, just beside their office, in the centre of Strahan CBD.

They are the only commercial seaplane operator in Tasmania, and fly 2,500 passengers per year into the heart of the south west wilderness.

The Scenic Flight (a quick fix!)

Their 90 minute scenic flights depart from Strahan village, fly over Macquarie Harbour to the entrance at Hell's Gates, then continue south into the beautiful world heritage areas surrounding the Franklin and Gordon Rivers. The flight lands in the 800ft deep, Gordon River Gorge and docks at a jetty at Sir John Falls. After an opportunity to view and photograph the well known falls, they take off and do a gradual climb following the course of the river. Often the conditions require high speed turning departures in the gorge. The flight back to Strahan, is over a myriad of rain forested and weathered mountains to the north side of Australia's second largest harbour.

The Fleet:

Strahan Seaplanes operate 2 Cessna 185 Floatplanes which with good performance and low operating costs are well suited to the challenging conditions at Strahan.

All company maintenance is carried out at their own facility at Wynyard. The aircraft are landed in the Inglis River and transported 2 kms on special retrieval trailers up the main street of the town to the airport.

Endorsements

If you need more than just a quick scenic flight fix, Strahan Seaplanes also offer endorsement training in this challenging and rewarding environment. Expect rough and glassy water landings, training in mountainous operations and dealing with the roaring forties.

Their standard package worth $4,800 includes:

- 5hrs dual in their Cessna 185 Floatplane.
- 10hrs ground instruction (pre-flight, docking, ramping, securing, care & maintenance
- Single accommodation, and transfers

Strahan Seaplane operate from September to May each year with a 3 month layoff in winter.

Contact Dale Triffett at strahanseaplanes@bigpond.com

Ph 0418 326 228

www.adventureflights.com.au

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Stories, articles, photos and news are welcome and can be sent to: editor@seaplanes.org.au.

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