

# On-the-Step

Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I fear there is a theme in this issue of On-the-Step and it is one of stranded seaplanes and recoveries not going to plan. The recovery of three seaplanes leaving, one written off, one severely damaged, and one shrouded in mystery.

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But wait, there is more! Even our historical article reproduces extracts from the diaries of Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson and his pilot Eric Douglas, where he describes flying their floatplane in that extreme and unfamiliar environment and reports on a botched recovery episode where the plane was damaged while being retrieved by their ship.

Mawson has a special significance to us as, not only was he a famous Antarctic explorer, but he was someone who our much missed colleague, Ross Vining, had a great fascination for. In 1985 Ross led a party to Mawson's hut at Commonwealth Bay, Antarctica, to help prevent its further deterioration. He also lived in the Adelaide suburb named after the explorer, Mawson Lakes.

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All members should have received an email notifying you of delays to the launch of our new website. Our excitement at the early looks at the new

site while under construction probably got the better of us and we jumped too early to announce its launch. It turns out there is a lot more to achieving security and "cross platform" compatibility than a computer illiterate like myself had any comprehension. Anyway, we have had to take a step back and take a more rigorous look at what we require from the site and how best to achieve it. In the mean time please be patient, it will come.

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I don't know if all members are aware of it, but the SPAA survives on the donated skills and hard work of a small band of dedicated members, and on the donations you make. In earlier times membership of the SPAA was contingent on paying an annual membership fee but that approach was dropped about 4 years ago in favour of a voluntary donation scheme. I'd have to say that while this approach has been extremely successful in attracting new membership, it has been a little disappointing in respect to donations. That is why you see calls for donations in almost every issue of this news letter.

However it certainly lifts one's spirits and boosts the enthusiasm of the executive when substantial donations are received, and that was certainly the case when Nicolas Fabert donated \$500 to help us



continue our work in keeping waterways open to seaplanes and seeking safe and enjoyable seaplane activity. Nicolas hales from Bali in Indonesia but received floatplane training from one of our executive, Adam Holt. We hope to see Nicolas in Australia soon so that he can enjoy the wonderful seaplane friendly locations and fabulous scenery we are lucky to have access to. A very grateful thanks to you Nicolas!

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I received an email from someone who I believe is our most remote member. Matthew Byrne lives on the world's most remote inhabited island, Tristan Da Cunha, and is investigating possible transport links to the island. He is keen to talk with someone who is knowledgeable about seaplanes and their limitations. If you think you might be able to share some useful knowledge with Matthew, send me an email and I will put you in touch with him.

*Happy, safe flying  
and  
Wheels Up For Water*

**SPLASHDOWN 2015**  
Australian Seaplane Pilots Conference



Rathmines NSW  
October 23/24

Enquiries:  
Malcolm Burns 0448 744 763

**A NOT TO BE MISSED  
EVENT!  
See details on Page 6**



The mysterious appearance of an apparently abandoned seaplane on the shores of the Hawkesbury River north of Sydney generated some wild speculation for the local residents which turned out to be all too close to the truth.

According to the local newspapers, “Patonga residents scratched their heads over “James Bond” seaplane left on the beach for weeks”

Mystery surrounds how an expensive seaplane came to be abandoned on the shores of Patonga Beach.

Depending on who you talk to the plane, believed to be a Seawind 300C worth up to \$US400,000, has either been sitting on the eastern end of the beach since Easter or washed up in the April 20 storms.



Regular visitors to the area assumed it had been washed up during the cyclonic April storms while locals are adamant it’s been there since around Easter.

“The only thing I know is that I saw it straight out the front of here about six weeks ago, just out there,” Patonga Beach Hotel manager Mat Burgin said.

“It looked like it was trying to take off and couldn’t and then they dragged it to the beach and its been there ever since.

Later newspaper reports say the mystery of the seaplane beached at Patonga since Easter has been solved in a bizarre real-life version of TV series Breaking Bad.

The true-life story of the man who has admitted to owning the plane has been likened to the hit US show.

The owner was diagnosed with a second bout of cancer in 2011 and was understood to be in remission, with his long-term prognosis unclear.

He was sentenced to a maximum 19 months in jail for his part in an international drug ring by flying a small plane, thought to

be containing drugs, into Australia. He pleaded guilty earlier this year after a plane was raided at Illawarra Regional Airport last July by police investigating drug supply in Sydney.

His lawyer argued his client took part in the ring because of his love of flying and wanting to secure his family’s future, sparking comparisons to Breaking Bad.

In the show, a mild mannered schoolteacher Walter White is diagnosed with terminal cancer and starts dealing in drugs to leave a nest egg for his family.

The owner of the Seawind said he was exploring options to recover the \$518,000 Seawind 3000 — the fastest seaplane in the world with a top speed of 322km/h.

“The ideal situation is to fly it out of there but if the parts don’t come I might need to get a small crane in there to lift it out,” he said.

“It is in my interests to get it out of there as soon as I can. It’s already been vandalised and damaged.”

He said the parts, ordered from Canada to repair the plane, are due in six to eight weeks.

“The damage is substantial,” he said. “The nose gear has a crack in it and they need to manufacture the part and the lead time is six to eight weeks. The (landing) gear door is also broken and so is the wheel.”

At the end of May we received a report that neither of these options were adopted as the Seawind was sighted slowly taxiing in Brisbane Water some 17km of taxiing, much open water, from Patonga.



# MAWSON, ANTARCTICA & GIPSY MOTH VH-ULD

**B**ANZARE  
January 1931 - by Eric  
Douglas 1902 to 1970

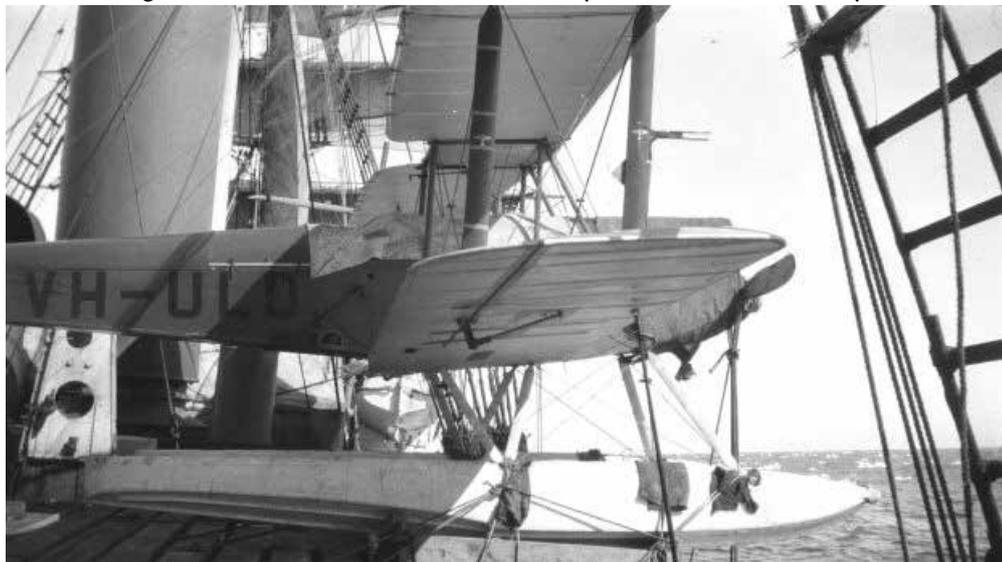
Among the many occasions when it was my privilege to pilot Sir Douglas Mawson in the small seaplane belonging to the B.A.N.Z.A.R. Expedition 1929 -1931 on reconnaissance flights from the vicinity of the Expedition Ship DISCOVERY 1, when in or close to the pack ice off the unknown sectors of the Antarctic Continent south of Australia and the Indian Ocean, there was one instance when we came close to disaster. It was in Latitude 65 - 07 S. Longitude 107 - 22 E on the 27th January, 1931



and rode over the swells the plane was repeatedly thrown into the air without proper flying speed. It was touch and go but we made it with about 100 yards to spare before we met the dangerous pack ice and to my surprise I heard Sir Douglas say to me over our speaking tubes "well done". At 1500 feet altitude we climbed through a mist and at 3000 feet we met a layer of clouds through which we climbed for 600 feet

before we broke through above them. I then climbed the plane to 6000 feet and observed that the clouds below us stretched away to the horizon in all directions except to

the south where we detected a faint blue showing up in a sector of the sky. It probably was the Antarctic Continent as generally we proved from experience that when clouds prevailed over the pack ice the sky over the continent was clear of clouds. We flew southwards for about 20 minutes before making a sweeping turn to the right. What appeared to be undulating ice covered land showed up to the south but we could not be certain that it was indeed part of the Antarctic



and our leader Sir Douglas Mawson was most anxious to gain a glimpse of the elusive Antarctic Continent which he considered was relatively close by. In rather unfavourable weather conditions we were lowered overboard in the Seaplane and I then taxied the plane down wind. Several times the plane's floats were buried under the oncoming swells and I was forced to stop. Eventually we gained what appeared to be adequate distance for the take-off run up wind before we would meet the heavy pack ice. Early in the take off run it became evident that I would need all my skill to get the plane off safely, for as we picked up speed

Continent. Sir Douglas recorded the sighting as probable land in the vicinity of Wilkes' Knox Land. After about 3/4 of an hour I throttled the engine down and glided through the clouds and after a short time sighted our ship about 4 miles away to the north west in a pool of water which appeared to be almost black against the glare of the surrounding pack ice and ice bergs. We came in low over ice strewn sea and made an alighting close to the ship. Sir Douglas then indicated to the Discovery that we would attempt to hook onto the ship's lifting tackle with the ship steaming slowly into the swell to decrease the roll of the

ship and thus minimize the danger of damaging the plane as it was being lifted on board. I turned the plane alongside but the surge and wash from the ship carried the plane out from the ship's side and we missed the lifting hook. I made another attempt with much the same results but on the third try, Sir Douglas managed to hook our sling over the lifting hook. The next instance the plane was lifted clear of the water with a jerk as the ship rolled and then suddenly the starboard wing of the plane went under the sea and before we could appreciate what had caused this, the plane tilted up vertically and Sir Douglas who had been kneeling on the fuselage decking near the sling, fell towards the water but fortunately managed to grasp a strut and to hang on with only his feet in the sea. I was still strapped in my cockpit but managed to release the strap and clamber up towards the nose of the plane in an effort to weigh the nose down and give some degree of righting to our machine. A few seconds later the plane's lifting sling broke and the aeroplane fell into the water with its tail and the rear part of the fuselage under the sea. We quickly dropped astern of the moving ship and could see and hear that consternation reigned as the crew made efforts to launch a boat to come to our rescue. During this time both Sir Douglas and myself clambered on to the bow of the plane's floats and apart from our legs escaped a ducking in the cold sea. Several minutes later the boat came along side and took us on board. We knew from repute and other incidents that Sir Douglas had always acted with great activity and control in emergencies and although this incident could have had serious consequences, his presence of mind and encouragement given to all, made our difficulties appear far less than they actually were. We managed to get the aeroplane on board without further damage and later on made repairs and had the plane ready for further flights. I wish to add that we all loved our leader as he was a truly great man and an inspiration to us, at all times. (Eric Douglas Antarctic Collection).

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*(Messages from Sir Douglas Mawson on board the  
Discovery)*

Though a clearance in the weather seemed imminent on January 21 we were sadly disappointed, no sooner had the Discovery pushed out of the pack to the open sea than an easterly gale arose, and the ship was hove to for two days. The wind gradually abated, and the clouds cleared from the Southern horizon, where an appearance of land was presented. Whilst awaiting the subsidence of the heavy cross swell for suitable conditions for launching the aeroplane a heavy fog, with snow, descended, and still remains unchanged. Evidently this is an exceptionally foggy locality. . . . This morning we decided we could

wait no longer, hoping for a clearance, so we have moved west, and are now in 240 fathoms of water in latitude 10. longitude 109.30. This is a dead reckoning position, as the sun had not been seen for several days. Although fog and weather bound, we are still able to prosecute much scientific work thus, without delaying the purely scientific operations, an important series of marine stations have been conducted throughout the cruise. Data relating to temperatures, chemical characteristics, current movement, and like peculiar life of the seas have been at frequent intervals along the route. Each of these stations deals with serial observations from the surface to the ocean bottom.

February 2,

The fog lifted yesterday at noon when the ship was approximately in latitude 65.10, longitude 107, with 300 fathoms beneath the keel. Further improvement of the weather appeared small, so we decided to seize the opportunity for a further aeroplane reconnaissance. However, conditions were poor, for the sky was almost completely overcast, and there also was a considerable swell and an easterly wind. But it was a case of making the most of the only opportunity presented for a long time. Douglas and myself were swung over the side, and the machine was launched successfully. The take-off was difficult, on account of the ocean swell and the waves.

There were many unsuccessful essays, which, after rising hopefully from the crest of the great wave, we would fall back with a resounding smack into the succeeding trough. Eventually to our great relief, Pilot Douglas' skill got the machine into the air. Then until the 'plane entered the first stratum of clouds at an elevation of 1300ft, there was presented a fine panorama of ice strewn sea, extending unbroken to the east, west, and the southern horizon. Emerging into clear air at 1600ft. we found still a higher cloud over all' the sky, except in the south. This second cloud stratum was met at an elevation of 3000ft

PLATEAU OF ICE.

Rising through it, we eventually came out into brilliant sunshine, with the sky almost clear of any other cloud. At 5700ft. we had a fine view over the cloud gap to the south, and could discern on that horizon a line of high ice, the plateau extending approximately east and west. No rock outcrop was visible. This makes the fourth new landfall sighted between Adelie Land and Queen Mary Land. In association with data from soundings till continuity of the Antarctic coastline throughout this sector appears to be effectively demonstrated.

On reaching the sea again the embarkation of the 'plane proved to be fraught with considerable hazard. The machine had to be taken on to skids on the starboard side. To minimise the rolling the ship steamed slowly across the swell. Dancing and plunging uncomfortably, the 'plane

taxied alongside. Matters were complicated on account of the wind blowing across the swell, and consequently the manoeuvre had to be repeated several times before it was possible for us in the 'plane, as it passed beneath, to seize and hook on to the lifting tackle dangling from the ship's boom.

#### MISHAP TO 'PLANE.

At length a favourable moment arrived, and in an instant this tackle was hitched, and all hands on the ship threw their weight into the effort to lift the 'plane from the water before the next sea should catch it unfortunately the right wing dipped, and the sea struck it, throwing so great a weight on the right-hand sling attachments that they were carried away by the strain. The derelict, surging between the sea and the sky, under the impulse of passing seas, was raised higher and higher by our friends on board, who had redoubled their efforts. Everything loose fell into the tea. Douglas and I managed to hang on dangling from the struts. Then, as the remaining sling attachments on the 'plane were not able to support the waterlogged machine, the final crash came, and the 'plane fell into the sea. Fortunately it remained afloat, and was got on board in a battered condition. Douglas and I suffered no damage as the result of these wet and exciting moments.

#### WHALES INTERESTED.

Having rescued the 'plane, we then discovered that Matheson, one of the sailors who was some distance away rescuing lifebuoys and gear which had floated from the 'plane, had become the object of interest of several whales, which, in a most disturbing manner, sported and snorted around his small boat. Though a hardy fisherman, Matheson had never before been so closely associated with these monsters, and was obviously glad then, the Discovery steamed alongside the cockleshell. Later in the evening I

was relieved to be advised by the aviators that the damage was not beyond repair, and that, with help, they expect to have the 'plane ready for service again in a week.

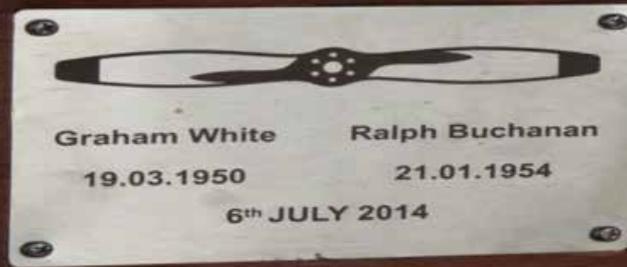


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# A Fitting Fly Past for a Foregone Friend....



By Dianne Becker & SPAA Secretary Ben Hunter

Mother nature could not have been kinder as to provide the most stunning CAVOK day with light winds at the NSW South Coast's Moruya Airport on Sunday 5 July 2015. A town get-together, BBQ, and aircraft fly past had been organised by Bec and Paul Smith of Moruya Airport in remembrance of Bec's late father, past SPAA Vice President and past SPAA Secretary, well known and respected Flying Instructor and friend to many, Graham White.

Graham and another well known Moruya resident Ralph Buchanan were conducting a flight review in Ralph's private aircraft when it crashed into the sea 5Nm north of Moruya Airport resulting in the tragic loss of both men on 6 July 2014.



Some of the many aircraft that flew in for the occasion



The bench seat dedicated to Graham and Ralph at the Moruya Aero Club

The Moruya Aero Club and its associated Flying School where Graham had spent many years working as Chief Flying Instructor was the focal point of the day's activities, including a BBQ and a great spread of cakes and slices put on by the town locals. In memory of Graham and Ralph, the club has placed a dedicated memorial bench on its upstairs balcony facing north towards both runways. The bench's location provides a great vantage point where Graham would have spent much time observing the work of his solo-flying students, overseeing movements at the Aero Club, and feeling a part of just about anything else that was happening on the airport.

Many Moruya Locals attended the event, together with a large number of local aviators and visiting aircraft that had flown in from afar. A fly past of the Aero Club was conducted by a number of aircraft at 1210hrs which was the same time as Graham and Ralph's accident, with the formation lead being flown by Bec and Paul Smith in Graham's personal RV4 aircraft VH-WHC.



Graham's RV4, VH-WHC

A number of seaplanes also attended, with the Moruya River based 'South Coast Seaplanes' providing a dedicated fly past in both their Maule aircraft. This



Seaplanes Fly Past

in particular was significant, as Graham's passion for seaplanes had fostered an ambition to commence regular seaplane operations from the Moruya River adjacent the airport. This ambition has now become a reality and is testament to Graham's positive aviation influence in the region.



South Coast Seaplanes now operate from the Moruya River

Overall, it was a fitting day of remembrance for a great aviator.  
Vale Graham White.

# SPLASHDOWN 2015

Australian Seaplane Pilots Conference

ALL WELCOME



**Rathmines NSW** **Cost \$295**  
**23-24 October 2015** **if registered by 22 August**  
**(otherwise \$345)**

Speakers will include

- *Keith Clark*: President, Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia (SPAA)
- *Mark Skidmore*: Head of Flight Safety, Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)
- *Jill Bailey*: Operations Manager, Recreational Aviation Australia (RAAus)
- *Steve McCaughey*: Executive Director, Seaplane Pilots Association (SPA USA)

Speakers and topics will also include:

- *Dan Nickens*: 'Travelling the world by motor yacht with Seaplane'
- *Adam Holt*: 'Seaplane training matters'
- *Michael Smith*: 'Melbourne to London by SeaRey'
- *Steve Dines*: 'Maintenance trends for Seaplanes'
- *Peter Ridley*: 'Flying the PBY Catalina in Papua New Guinea'
- *David Geers* and AMSA representative: 'Surviving an accident, disaster planning'
- *Kriesha Ballantyne*: 'The use of Avplan for your flight'
- *Philip Dartnell*: 'Waterways access'



**Enquiries: Malcolm Burns 0448 744 763**  
**mal.767@icloud.com**

**Register at [www.seaplanes.org.au](http://www.seaplanes.org.au)**

## Rathmines Catalina Festival

Will be held immediately after the conference, on Sunday 25 October 2015. This annual event typically attracts more than 10,000 spectators. The Historical Aircraft Restoration Society's PBY-6A Catalina "Felix the Black Cat" will perform a flying display at the festival.

### Super Petrel 100 Amphibian For Sale

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 Currently homed at Wedderburn NSW, and if you require hanger space this can also be accommodated with further discussions.



# WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

*There is a suggestion that Santa's workshop has been hard at work producing a special Christmas present for lovers of the thrills and freedom that only a seaplane can offer.*

*In Finland, near the Arctic Circle, a seaplane that first saw the light of day many years ago has now been launched in a substantially upgraded and more attractive form.*



ATOL was designed in the late 80's and sold as a kit and now totally renewed in all details and components, including engine and avionics. They have also designed many features which improve safety and handling. One of our best new features is AWTS - ATOL Water Thrust System - which enables to steer the plane accurately in water with two small electric motors controlled by a separate joystick. This is a patent pending system which will make the difference!

ATOL is packed for shipping in a container which can easily be modified to a trailer housing. We call it ATOL Mobile Hangar Concept. This is not just a trailer but also a hangar which is environmentally controlled for best temperature and humidity for Your ATOL!

BRS rescue parachute, emergency released canopy and ATOL even reminds for proper landing gear position prior to landing, just to name few of our safety features!

We have working to get the FAA approval next winter (2014/15) and the EASA LSA documentation process in expected to be finished next year.



# A VERY UNFORTUNATE SALT LAKE ADVENTURE

*A report by David Geers*

*David Geers has to be one of SPAA's most enthusiastic pilots. It seems that every time you talk with him he has just returned from, or about to embark on, another fabulous seaplane adventure to some breathtaking part of Australia. I have to admit to more than a hint of jealousy and a strong sense of admiration. David is a competent and very thorough pilot, one I would have no hesitation on sitting beside on any flight. However, one small misjudgment triggered a series of bizarre incidents which ended a virtual write-off of his beloved Searey. But for David's indomitable spirit this story would be the end, but I am pleased to say there will be follow ups as XWW gradually gets a new life.*

Hi all, have had some time to put a detailed report together regarding our outback seaplane adventure? Have also reposted this report on the intranet with photos. [www.wwx.com.au/intranet/seaplane](http://www.wwx.com.au/intranet/seaplane)

Incident Report VH-XWW for Tuesday 17 March 2015

This is a long winded story and if you don't wish to read it all please read my 12 recommendations at the end, it may save your life one day.

Flying in company with VH-SEY, both aircrafts are two seater Searey Amphibians. Both planes departed Noccundra heading West to Dig Tree, and then on to Innaminka, for a refuel stop at 11:30 SA time. On this leg we had a 10 knot tail wind.

We departed Innaminka at 1:15 local time, tracking to the northern end of Lake Eyre, on a heading of due west. We calculated sufficient fuel with reserve to arrive at William Creek, a distance of 252 nautical miles. VH-SEY was also carrying additional fuel of 30 litres in fuel bladders should we have required a top up due to unforeseen weather conditions. Initial winds we encountered were a 10 knot headwind on departure from Innaminka. As a result we adjusted heading to a direct route to William Creek. Now tracking direct to William Creek we encountered the 10 to 15 knot headwinds.

To maintain a sufficient fuel reserve we decided to land refuel with Doug's 30 L.

Overflying Lake Eyre we decided to perform a precautionary landing to decant the fuel from VH-SEY. VH-XWW elected to land first to establish a safe landing spot at approximately 4:47pm. On

initial touchdown the surface seemed suitable and firm for landing. As we decelerated, the aircraft broke the salt crust surface layer and sunk 75 mm into the clay surface. The aircraft was not damaged by this landing and the two POB's were not injured in any way. We tried several attempts to recover the aircraft by removing all luggage, tools and spare parts, we lowered the aircraft off the wheels in attempt to slide the aircraft of the salt lake to no avail. SEY continued on to William Creek to raise assistance.

After realising that there was no way of self recovery, and no radio or phone contact we activated the emergency personal location beacon (PLB). We also sent a pre-programmed text message via our "find me spot" tracking



device indicating we were OK but required assistance. We eventually raised on the radio, on frequency 126.7, a Cessna caravan who was able to relay a message to William Creek. William Creek sent out their Helicopter VH-CKL with 3 POB. They landed adjacent to XWW and the skids were able to hold the weight of the helicopter on the surface. However on landing they had an overheating issue and were unable to depart without risking damage to the Helicopter.

A second Helicopter was then dispatched to recover the now 5 persons from the site and arrived at 9:30pm local time. We safely arrived at William Creek at 10:47pm.

**T**he retrieval attempt of VH-XWW and Bell long-range helicopter VH-CKL Sunday 22 March 2015

The company HeliSpirit owned the helicopter VH-CKL with engine issues stuck out on the lake. HeliSpirit operate several other helicopters out of Kununurra over 900 nautical miles north. They sent Howard the chief pilot and two engineers down to William Creek approximately a 12 hour flight stopping several times to refuel and overnighing at Ayres Rock.

Arriving Friday afternoon, Howard and the two engineers flew out to remove the engine from VH-CKL and sling it under the helicopter back to William Creek. A fixed wing aircraft flown by Trevor Wright the owner of William Creek flew to Adelaide to pick up the new turbine to be installed a flight of over 800 nautical miles by the time he returned to William Creek.

Saturday was spent installing the new parts to the engine by the two engineers and Doug, Dan and myself spent the day repairing transfer fuel pumps and scrounging up enough Jet A to complete the operation, that in itself is a story.

On Sunday the chopper that flew down from Kununurra started with two tourist flights first up, then Howard ferried out the two engineers and the repaired engine. Then returned back to William Creek to pick up Deb, the other chopper pilot and myself, we then flew back out to the site and prepared my aircraft for the slinging operation, which all went well.

Howard the chief pilot of HeliSpirit piloted the chopper that was slinging my aircraft XWW, everything went well for the first five nautical miles then for some reason XWW decided it didn't want to be towed any longer and

started to fly its own course with my aircraft showing up on Howard's left and then right windows. It was time to set her free by releasing the tether. Howard tells me that it continued to fly straight for a short period time until what I think the weight of the sling and the D shackles pulled the aircraft into a left-hand spiral back into the dry lake bed. The aircraft as you will see by the photos remained upright however substantial damage was made to all the flying surfaces. I asked Howard what speed and height he was at, he said he was comfortably travelling at 50 Knots at 1500 feet. It is hard to explain the feeling of the loss of my aircraft. It's been like a loss of a close family member, and yes I know it can be replaced, and I know there are people a lot worse off than me, so I need to stop crying and get on with getting back in the air.

If you are ever to get stuck anywhere you'd want to wish



that you had Doug Bauer and my co-pilot Daniel Collins with you. These two guys were fantastic; I just can't find the words to thank them enough. Thanks guys, I am sorry we had to cut our adventure short.

I would also like to make a special thank you to Trevor Wright and his team at William Creek, their help and generosity will never be forgotten, and our week at William Creek will be sure to become a book.

I have also been moved by the amount of people posting words of support on our Facebook page (Australian Seaplane Adventures) <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Australian-Seaplane-Adventures/533625190054817?ref=bookmarks> it has been amazing the amount of people that have offered help and support. It is hard to explain how I feel, I am relieved that my stupid mistake didn't end up injuring anybody, I am very disappointed in the loss of the "banks" aircraft and as I have just recently uninsured the aircraft makes it a bitter pill to swallow. XWW sure serviced me well over its six-year life, some of her highlights were our summer in Tasmania Adventure, our Lake Boga trip several trips to Rathmines Festival, a dozen flights over Sydney Harbour, lots of local flights exploring Moreton Bay and the beautiful islands off the Queensland coastline, and not to mention the two months we took flying around the Australian coastline with my fellow seaplane buddies.

Looking forward, I still have the support of my beautiful wife Cheryl who I've put through agony over the last week whilst us boys played in the desert, and our two beautiful Beagle dogs who were also keen to see me back home again. I will need to consolidate my financial position so it will be bum up head down at work. I have also got the round Australia seaplane adventure documentary to finish, and I guess a book to write about our week at William Creek!

Although this adventure didn't have the outcome I would

have liked, it was still an adventure I will never forget, the sun set over Lake Eyre, or the starry night waiting to be rescued, the atmosphere at the William Creek Pub, the people, and not to mention the several million flies out there...

#### My recommendations....

This is a list of important things when flying in remote areas, someone we did, some we didn't.

1. Don't land on a salt lake unless you are 100% sure of the surface integrity. I Failed.
2. Carry plenty of emergency water!!! I Failed.
3. Make sure you carry a PLB and it is up-to-date. We Passed.
4. A spot device also assisted our recovery. Being able to send a preprogramed text message informing my wife Cheryl that we were okay but required assistance helped out immensely. We Passed.
5. A satellite phone would have been helpful. We Failed.
6. Flying in company certainly adds an extra safety factor to any trip. We Passed.
7. Avoid being rescued at night by a helicopter it can be very dangerous, especially on a salt lake. We Failed.
8. Try to obtain local knowledge before landing on unfamiliar surfaces. (We did ring the local operator at William Creek however the discussion was more about where to land if there was any water still in the lake) I Passed and Failed.
9. Always take an extra minute or 2 to think about a decision, which relates to an unknown landing site, in hindsight we should have tried landing closer to our destination and another surface. I Failed.
10. Don't forget to take out your insurance when doing long distance flights! I Failed.
11. Fuel management and weather forecasts planning could have been better. I Failed.
12. Always look on the Bright side of life! (A song that was playing just as I was leaving a Opal shop at Cooper Pedy)

Cheers

David Geers and XWW over & out!

PS. I think I may have a few firsts... The first Searey to land wheels down on the Lake Eyre -14feet below sea level. The first Searey to be released while being slung under a helicopter. The first unmanned flight of a Searey, and the first tourists to spend a week at William Creek.

# THE SURFING WAS BAD BUT THE RESCUE WAS A DISASTER



A Catalina PBY which was to be used in the movie *INDIANAPOLIS* being filmed off shore of Orange Beach FLORIDA got into trouble during a shoot and was beached near the Flora-Bama on Monday, June 29. A crowd gathered including director Mario Van Peebles who swam to get a first hand look at the plane.

With the holiday weekend finally here, many people packed the beaches near the Flora-Bama. Several vacationers have been here all week. On Friday, there was a notable absence of one particular visitor. It's a World War II era Vintage PBY, used during the filming of the new Nicolas Cage film: *U.S.S. Indianapolis: Men of Courage*.

to a barge for removal, but before they could get it on board, the plane broke apart.

"It's kind of a bad ending for this. Hopefully, the movie still comes out great," Michael Davis, a vacationer from Ft. Worth, TX, said.

Producers were not available for an on-camera interview, but said in a statement:

"We are thankful that no one was hurt. The pilot and co-pilot are well. And the entire cast and crew are safe and sound. The Vintage PBY being used by production met a tragic end at the hands of the sea yesterday, and the salvage company was unable to save the aircraft. The PBY will be immortalized in the film, as will the unfortunate events surrounding the *USS Indianapolis* and the rescue teams from the US Navy.

"You know, it's like we built this relationship with this plane



Erin Frank has been down visiting from Louisville, KY with friends and family all week. She said they were enthralled with the plane ever since it came down from Washington State.

"My dad is very into history and so he was there looking it up on his phone, telling us all the details he could find," Frank said.

But after making a water landing Monday, a mechanical problem caused it to take on water. Former Navy Seals John Rottger and John Ballis helped to bring it close to shore.

After shooting several scenes near the plane on Tuesday, a number of attempts were made to save the plane.

"Every day this week they've attempted getting the plane out of the water in several different ways. And I've watched that and videotaped it and hoped each day that it would get the plane out of the water," Elizabeth Moss, a vacationer from Hendersonville, TN, said.

Thursday, salvage crews were able to bring the plane nearer



in hopes of it surviving and it being a victory," Moss said. Crews were still working to get the last pieces out of the gulf late Friday afternoon.

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