

On-the-Step

Issue 50
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Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At our AGM in February, the previous SPAA committee was unanimously re-elected. This was pleasing, as the professional skills of those on the current team are indispensable. My sincere thanks to members of the SPAA committee who continue to volunteer their time and expertise for the benefit of all Seaplane Pilots in Australia.

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Wings Over Illawarra is now only a few weeks away. It is the largest and most popular annual Airshow in Australia, so it is important for us to demonstrate our aircraft and activities. WOI is also a great social occasion for SPAA members. Assisting at the SPAA stand is a great way to meet other members and learn more about your Association. Why not register your interest on the SPAA website?

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Our recent Splash-in at Lake Boga was very

well attended by locals, enthusiasts and at least eight or ten SPAA members. Glenn Graham thrilled the crowd with an incredible low level aerobatic display in Paul Bennet Airshows' Rebel 300. It was a shame that Mark O'Halloran's Tri-Pacer didn't quite get its floats on in time, but other Seaplane activity on the lake was very well received. ABC Radio crew attending the event were intrigued by the unique aspects of our aviation environ, and interviewed several of our SPAA pilots. After the event, a friendly group of SPAA members enjoyed a lovely evening dinner together at Swan Hill, topped off with some remarkable sticky date pudding, thanks to Bob Priddle!

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The tragic Beaver accident on Cowan Creek last New Years Eve continues to draw media interest. The ATSB is collecting details and background, and has already released its initial report. If YOU are approached by a journalist seeking information, please politely



remind him or her that the ATSB is conducting an investigation.

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Are you planning a trip to Oshkosh this year? If so, please register your interest with us at seaplanes.org.au and consider the benefits of also attending LakeFest at Brainerd in the week prior. LakeFest is a great educational conference with a safety focus. For more details check our website.

Fly Safely!
Malcolm Burns
0448 744 763
Rathmines NSW



Mack McCormack's Grumman G164A AgCat recently gained operational approval from CASA and local authorities on the Swan River. It is great to finally see and hear this classic aircraft on the water near the Perth CBD.

These images show pilot Werner Buhlmann and crewman Aiden Scott near Elizabeth Quay.



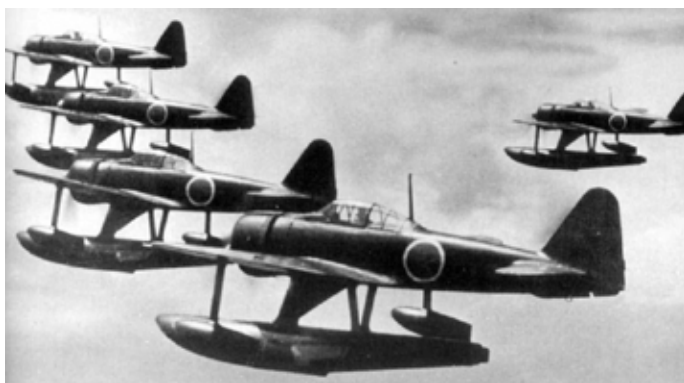
ANYTHING BUT WHEELS

After many many years of talking about it, later this year I am off to tick off two items on my bucket list. Firstly to visit the EAA AirVenture at Oshkosh and then to take a flight in the only passenger carrying, flying Avro Lancaster bomber. The Lancaster is based at the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum near Toronto. That got me looking at some of the Canadian warbirds sites where I came across an article, which I am sure you would enjoy, on the "Vintage Wings of Canada" website. The article, "Skis and Floats - anything but wheels", written by Dave O'Malley, gives a great overview of the wartime aircraft not hampered by the need to land on airstrips. While North America has the added delights of landing on snow and ice, I have reproduce below that part of his article dealing with water. Go to the Vintage Wings of Canada website for the full article, its a great read.

Extracts from
ANYTHING BUT WHEELS
Fighters on Floats



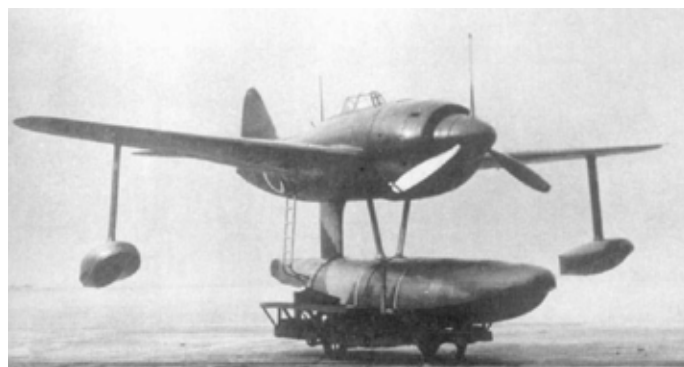
Prior to the development of the Hurricane, Hawker Aircraft was a producer of some of the finest and fastest biplane fighter and light bomber aircraft of the interwar period—the Hawker Hector, Hardy, Hind, Nimrod, Hartbees, Hornet, Osprey, Audax, Demon, Fury, Super Fury and Hart. Nearly all were powered by Rolls-Royce V-12 engines like the Kestral. The Estonian Air Force purchased 8 Hawker Harts in 1932, four with floats, four on wheels. The float-equipped four were used in coastal defence by the Independent Naval Air Flight, but when this unit was disbanded, the float planes reverted to wheels. *Photo: GoPixPic.com*



No one did float plane combat aircraft better than the Japanese Imperial Navy. With an empire stretched thin across millions of square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean, and

a Navy that could not be everywhere at once, the Japanese took the art of the float plane and the flying boat to the highest levels. Many distant outposts were too small for landing strips or too far away to economically construct one. Japanese fighter aircraft like the Mitsubishi A6M Zero held the upper hand for the first part of the war, and its slower float plane development, the Nakajima A6M2.N (Rufe) had some success. Deployed in 1942 defensively in the Aleutians and Solomon Islands, they were effective against PT-boats on night operations. Here a flight of five Rufes makes an impressive sight.

The Japanese seemed to favour the centreline float with wing outriggers. The A6M2-N float plane was developed from the Mitsubishi Zero and was designed to support amphibious operations and defending remote bases. *Photo via RCGroups.com*



The Kawanishi N1K Kyofu (Allied code name Rex) was perhaps the hottest looking float plane of all time—a fighter grafted to a submarine. It was originally built as a float plane fighter to support forward offensive operations where no airstrips were available. This story is about combat aircraft converted to floats and skis. The "Rex", purpose-built as a float plane does not qualify, but the conversion in this case went the other way. By the time this aircraft entered service in 1943, the war had shifted to defence and super-hot float plane had lost its importance. The Rex was then converted to a wheeled fighter, named George by the Allies. *Photo: IJNAFPhotos.com*



One of the greatest looking float planes of all time the Supermarine Spitfire on floats. During the Norwegian campaign in 1940, when the British were attempting to drive the Germans from the west coast of the Scandinavian Peninsula, they were at a severe disadvantage to the Germans in that they had no access to airfields in the war zone. Short-legged fighters like the Spitfire and Hurricane could not operate from Scotland and still have usable time over Norway. The British Air Staff put out an emergency request to develop float plane versions of both the Spitfire and the Hurricane. The first attempt, by Folland Aviation, a major subcontractor to Supermarine supplying most of the rear fuselages for Spitfires, utilized a Spitfire Mk I and the floats from a Blackburn Roc.

The mashing together of the Roc and the Spit was called the Narvik Nightmare. Before it could be properly tested, the Germans had taken control of Norway and the need for a float plane fighter had faded.

Despite the low priority for Spits on floats after the Norwegian campaign, Folland continued to play with the concept and in 1942 began testing a series of Spitfires modified with custom designed, high speed floats. In addition to the floats, the Spit sported a four bladed propeller and a highly modified tail, bearing little visual connection to the tail we have all come to know. Despite the low priority for Spits on floats after the Norwegian campaign, Folland continued to play with the concept and in 1942 began testing a series of Spitfires modified with custom designed, high speed floats. In addition to the floats, the Spit sported a four bladed propeller and a highly modified tail, bearing little visual connection to the tail we have all come to know. The first flight of a Spitfire float plane (W3760) took place near Southampton and showed that a larger ventral fin was needed. Further tests were flown near Glasgow, Scotland. Despite the mass of the floats, the aircraft weighed only 1,100 lbs more and the topside speed was reduced by only 40 miles per hour. The aircraft was surprisingly nimble despite the floats and test pilots were of the opinion that it could be a front line aircraft flown by line pilots. Three float plane conversions (W3760, EP751 and EP754) were transported to Egypt for testing. It was hoped that if tropical operation tests proved successful, more Spits could be converted for operations from concealed bases in the Dodecanese Islands, disrupting German supply lines. However, the battlefield had shifted with the German capture of Kos and Leros, and no role could be found for the Spitfire float plane. The three aircraft languished in Egypt. *Photo: Imperial War Museum*



The Grumman F4F-3S Wildcat (BuNo 4038), jokingly referred to as the "Wildcatfish", was an investigation into the viability of converting the little barrel-like ship borne fighter to a fighting float plane using Edo floats. The large ventral strake and tail plane fins were added to restore lost stability. The Wildcatfish (without the ventral fin), was first flown on 28 February 1943 and the results were less than promising. The heavy floats were so draggy, they reduced the maximum speed of the Wildcat from 320 to 281 mph. Given that the main Japanese fighters like the Zero already had better performance than the Wildcat, the benefit of the floats was far outweighed by the fact that it was a sitting duck. *Photo: US Navy*

The United States Navy Curtiss SB2C Helldiver was a carrier based dive bomber, many of which were made under



licence in Thunder Bay, Ontario. The fifth production aircraft (BuNo. 00005) was modified with two floats and a large ventral fin to become the XSB2-C Helldiver Seaplane. The Navy was considering purchasing up to 350 of the type. The second prototype was lost in water tests and the programme cancelled. While the Curtiss Helldiver XSB2-C2 Seaplane was a poor performer, it was an impressive looking aircraft, standing on amphibious floats. Note the "hydrovane" below the tail, offering increased lateral stability. Only the one prototype and a single SB2C-2 production aircraft were built. The second one was lost in tests. *Photo: US Navy National Museum of Naval Aviation*



The Curtiss Helldiver was not the only United States Navy carrier-based combat aircraft that received floats. One Douglas TBD-1A Devastator, the only other variant of the poorly performing torpedo bomber is seen here in Rhode Island undergoing torpedo testing with a high visibility torpedo slung beneath. During the Battle of Midway, the wheeled production of the Devastator proved to be utterly inadequate in terms of manoeuvrability and speed, so it doesn't take much imagination to picture how inadequate the single float-equipped variant was. In this photo, it is difficult to tell whether the propeller is spinning or removed. *Photo: US Navy*



The Vought SB2U Vindicator was the first monoplane dive bomber of the United States Navy, coming into service in 1937.

In Royal Navy service it was known as the Chesapeake. One Vindicator, an extended range variant called the SB2U-1, was modified with a pair of Edo floats to become the XSB2U-3. Here we see it being tested in US Marines livery, pushed by a couple of Marines/sailors standing between the floats. The aircraft proved a poor performer and was taken out of service, and returned to SB2U-1 standard. The XSB2U-3 Vindicator in flight with US Navy markings. The aircraft proved a poor performer and was taken out of service, and returned to SB2U-1 standard. *Photo: U.S. National Museum of Naval Aviation*



The lumbering tri-motor Junkers Ju.52 utility transport was used in all fronts and in all situations—on wheels, skis and floats. As Germany began to lose air superiority later on the war, the Tante Ju (Auntie Ju) became a sitting duck for Allied fighters. Any Ju.52 on floats would not have had a chance without fighter escort. *Photo via Pinterest*



A Royal Air Force Northrop Nomad on floats in 1943. The Squadron code GS on the side indicates that the Nomad is from 330 Norwegian Squadron. 330 Squadron was formed in Iceland in 1941. It was manned by escaped Norwegian pilots and aircrew who were trained in Canada. The Nomad N-3PB was built on floats to a Norwegian specification and used by them for anti-submarine patrol, torpedo bombing and coastal work. *Photo: Flying Officer Woodbine, RAF via Imperial War Museum*



A Ryan PT-22A Recruit trainer on floats. Recruit seaplanes were ordered by the Netherlands Air Force... to be powered by a 160 Menasco engine. The order was cancelled and then 25 were built for the United States Army Air Corps. *Photo: San Diego Air and Space Museum*



The previous article clearly illustrates that putting floats on aircraft originally designed for wheels has been extensively practiced, and North America is clearly the current centre for such craft, but it could be argued that floating hull activity is further East. Since WWII the Russian military have seen flying boats as a key part of its arsenal. In recent times that activity seems to have evolved into an active general aviation flying boat program.

The Beriev Be-12 is one example of Russia's military flying boats. Beriev Be-12 Chayka ("Seagull", NATO reporting name: Mail) is a Soviet turboprop-powered amphibious aircraft designed for anti-submarine and maritime patrol duties.

Design and development

The Beriev Be-12 was a successor to the Beriev Be-6 flying boat, whose primary roles were as an antisubmarine and maritime patrol bomber aircraft. Though tracing its origins to the Be-6, the Be-12 inherited little more than the gull wing and twin oval tailfin configuration of the older aircraft. The Be-12 had turboprop engines, which gave it an improved speed and range over the Be-6.[2] The Be-12 also had retractable landing gear, which enabled it to land on normal land runways, as well as water.

The Be-12 was first flown on October 18, 1960 at Taganrog airfield, and made its first[2] public appearance at the 1961 Soviet Aviation Day festivities at Tushino airfield. A total of 150 aircraft were produced, in several variations, with production ending in 1973.

Operational history

The Be-12 entered service with Soviet Naval Aviation, or AV-MF (Aviatsia Voenno-Morskogo Flota), in the early 1960s in the maritime patrol role, and is one of the few amphibians still in military service in the world. Initially its role was ASW patrol, but when newer missiles enabled United States Navy submarines to launch from further offshore it was converted to the search and rescue role (Be-12PS). Small numbers are Be-12 at Ukrainian State Aviation Museum in Kiev Ukrainian Be-12 Be-12P-200 technology demonstrator still in service. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, some aircraft were converted to water bombers for the suppression of forest fires. During development of the Beriev Be-200 unique fire-fighting equipment was tested using a specially modified Be-12P, code-named "12 Yellow". After installation of the fire-fighting system, the aircraft was registered as RA-00046 and given the designation Be-12P-200. This modified Be-12 was also used to trial firefighting operations envisaged for the Be-

200.[3] According to figures released in 1993, the Russian Navy had 55 aircraft in service. By 2005 this had dropped to 12,[1] and by 2008 there were only nine aircraft still in service.[4] A surviving Be-12 is preserved at the Central Air Force Museum at Monino, outside of Moscow. Other examples exist at the Ukraine State Aviation Museum at Kiev, Ukraine and that the Taganrog Air Museum, in southern Russia.

Specifications (Be-12)

General characteristics

Crew: Four

Length: 30.11 m (98 ft 9 in)

Wingspan: 29.84 m (97 ft 11 in)

Height: 7.94 m (26 ft 1 in)

Wing area: 99.0 m² (1,065 ft²)

Empty weight: 24,000 kg (52,800 lb)

Loaded weight: 29,500 kg (64,900 lb)

Max. takeoff weight: 36,000 kg (79,200 lb)

Powerplant: 2 × Ivchenko Progress AI-20D turboprops, 3,864 kW (5,180 hp) each

Performance

Maximum speed: 530 km/h (290 kn, 330 mph)

Range: 3,300 km (1,800 nmi, 2,100 mi)

Service ceiling: 8,000 m (26,247 ft)

Wing loading: 298 kg/m² (61 lb/ft²)

Power/mass: 260 W/kg (0.16 hp/lb)

Armament

1,500 kg (3,300 lb) of external stores, including bombs, depth-charges and torpedoes



Recently my attention was drawn to another Russian flying boat however this time it was something that some of us may have some chance of owning. I don't know what you think but in my opinion it has some resemblance to the much larger Chayka.

The Seabear started development in 1986 and has developed in stages to the rather attractive looking aircraft shown here. In the most recent version it is being powered by the Rotax 914.

It appears to have attracted the attention of our local seaplane adventurer Mike Smith who recently produced a YouTube video him flying over frozen lakes and landing wheels-up (deliberately) on snow.

Gross weight 3,218 lbs (1460kg)

Empty weight 1,830 lbs (830kg)

Useful load 1390 lbs (630kg)

Load factor +4-2

Cabin

4 seats, dual control

Cabin width 50 in (1,26m)

Cabin height 55 in (1,39m)

Landing gear

Taildragger, retractable

Differential brakes on main wheels

Dimensions

Length 29 ft (8,9m)

Wing span 46 ft (14m)

Wing area 204 sq ft (19 sq m)

Height 8,5 ft (2,5m)

Power

Rotax-914 ULF, 2 engines 115HP each

Airmaster 3-blade variable pitch propellers
(mt-propeller MTV-34-1-A)

Fuel

Auto Fuel 95 or AVGAS 100LL

Fuel consumption 10,5 gph (40l/h)

Fuel capacity 132 US gallons (500l)

Speed

Cruise speed 118 kt (economical cruise) (220km/h)

Max speed 130 kt (fast cruise) (240km/h)

Take-off speed 43kt (80 km/h)

Stall speed 40 kt (full flaps) (75km/h)

Range 1350 nm (2500 km)

Service ceiling up 13 000 ft (4000m)

Glide ratio 12

Endurance 12,5 hours

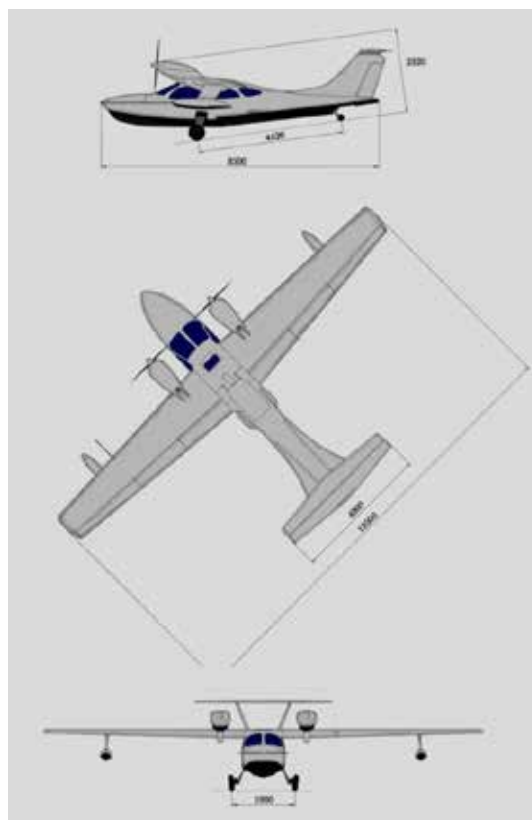
Take-off & Landing

Take-off distance at max gross weight 800 feet (ground/water) (250m)

Landing distance (land/water) 500 ft (150m)

Max Climb rate 1000 ft/min (5m/c)

I wouldn't be surprised if we see one of these aircraft in Australian skies, and on Australian waters, in years to come.



If ownership of an aircraft like this takes your fancy you may want to contact Terry O'Brien who is considering a syndicate. Terry can be contacted via the SPAA website, or the members' Facebook Group.

P G TAYLOR, SEAPLANE PILOT AND MUCH MORE

Sir Patrick Gordon Taylor (1896-1966), aviator and writer, was born on 21 October 1896 at Mosman, Sydney, third son of Patrick Thomson Taylor, manufacturer's agent, and his wife Alice Maud(e), née Sayers. As a child he so disliked his Christian names that he called himself 'Bill'. In his dinghy, Query, on Pittwater, he adventured to uninhabited Lion Island and acquired a lifelong love of the sea.

Soon after leaving The Armidale School, where he was senior prefect, Taylor was rejected by the Australian Flying Corps and went to Britain. Commissioned in the Royal Flying Corps on 12 August 1916, he joined No.66 Squadron which was equipped with Sopwith Pup scouts. Awarded the Military Cross in July 1917, he was promoted captain and served with Nos.94 and 88 Squadrons. He later wrote: 'I deplored the killing and all the other evils of war'.

In 1919 Taylor returned to Australia. During the 1920s he flew as a private pilot, worked for De Havilland Aircraft Co. in England, completed an engineering course and studied aerial navigation. He operated a Gipsy Moth seaplane from Sydney Harbour (1928-32) and also flew as a captain with Australian National Airlines Ltd (1930-31).

He was second pilot and navigator in the Fokker Southern Cross on Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's 1933 and 1934 flights (Australia-New Zealand-Australia) and navigator aboard Charles Ulm's Avro Ten Faith in Australia for two flights in 1933 (Australia-England-Australia). Disappointed at missing the Victorian Centenary Air Race, 'Smithy' and Taylor completed the first Australia-United States of America flight, via Suva and Hawaii (21 October-4 November 1934) in the Lockheed Altair, Lady Southern Cross.

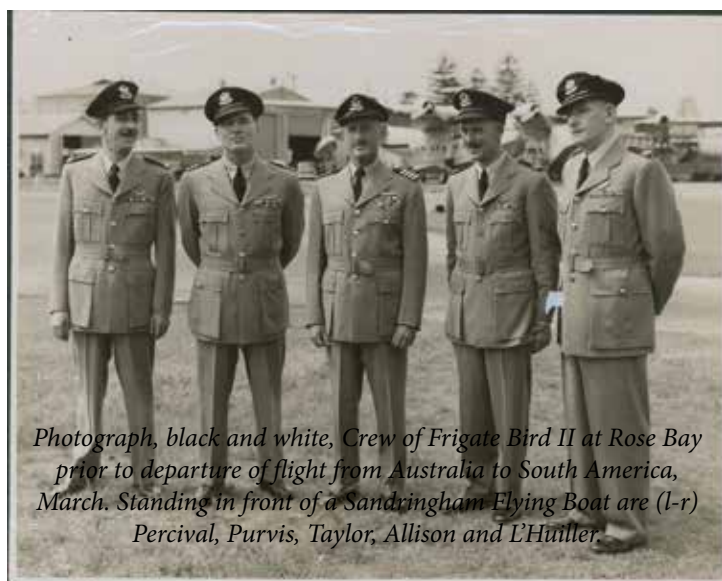
On 15 May 1935 Taylor was Kingsford Smith's navigator in the Southern Cross for the King George V jubilee airmail flight

(Australia-New Zealand). After flying for six hours, the heavily-laden aircraft had almost reached half-way when part of the centre engine's exhaust manifold broke off and severely damaged the starboard propeller. 'Smithy' closed down the vibrating starboard engine, applied full power to the other two, turned back to Australia and jettisoned the cargo. The oil pressure on the port engine began to fall alarmingly. The flight appeared doomed.

Taylor reacted heroically. Climbing out of the fuselage, he edged his way against the strong slipstream along the engine connecting strut and collected oil from the disabled starboard engine in the casing of a thermos flask. He then transferred it to the port engine. With assistance from the wireless operator, John Stannage, he carried out this procedure six times before the aircraft landed safely at Mascot some nine hours later. For his resourcefulness and courage, Taylor was awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal, gazetted on 9 July 1937; it was superseded by the George Cross (instituted in May 1941).

Taylor portrayed his exploit in the 1946 film, *Smithy*.

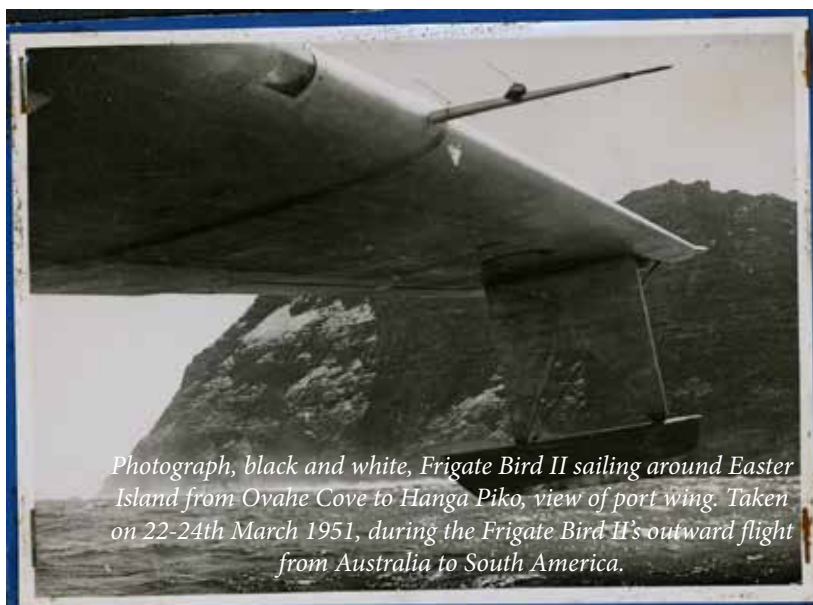
From 1935 Taylor operated a succession of Percival Gull Four and Gull Six aircraft on private and charter flying; having visited Britain in 1938, he became agent for Percival Aircraft Ltd in Australia. His marriage on 29 December 1924 in St James's Anglican Church, Sydney, to Yolande Bede Dalley, niece of J. B. Dalley and granddaughter of W. B. Dalley, had quickly proved disastrous; she eventually divorced him in March 1938. On 10 May he married Eileen Joan Broadwood (d.1950) in the Methodist Church, Mosman. He made the first flight across the Indian Ocean from Port Hedland, Western Australia, to



Photograph, black and white, Crew of Frigate Bird II prior to departure of flight from Australia to South America, March. Standing in front of a Sandringham Flying Boat are (l-r) Percival, Purvis, Taylor, Allison and L'Huillier.



Photograph, black and white, Frigate Bird II over Sydney Harbour on the 21st of April 1951.



Photograph, black and white, Frigate Bird II sailing around Easter Island from Ovahe Cove to Hanga Piko, view of port wing. Taken on 22-24th March 1951, during the Frigate Bird II's outward flight from Australia to South America.

Mombasa, Kenya, in the Consolidated flying-boat Guba II on 4-21 June 1939.

Taylor ferried flying-boats from U.S.A. to Australia in 1941. On 9 June 1943 he was commissioned flying officer in the Royal Australian Air Force. Transferring to the Royal Air Force in 1944 as a civilian captain, he ferried aircraft from Canada across the Atlantic Ocean. At his own request, he commanded the R.A.F. Catalina Frigate Bird in September-October 1944 on a pioneer Pacific Ocean survey flight from Bermuda to Mexico, Clipperton Island, New Zealand and Sydney. In March 1951 he flew across the South Pacific from Australia to Chile, via Tahiti and Easter Island, in the Catalina Frigate Bird II.

A writer of distinction, subtle and realistic, Taylor published eight books: *Pacific Flight* (1935), *VH-UXX* (1937), *Call to the Winds* (1939), *Forgotten Island* (1948), *Frigate Bird* (1953), *The Sky Beyond* (Melbourne, 1963), *Bird of the Islands* (Melbourne, 1964), and *Sopwith Scout 7309* (London, 1968). In 1963 he took part in the Australian Broadcasting Commission's television film, *An Airman Remembers*. Taylor lived at Bayview on Pittwater, where he sailed a 35-ft (11 m) sloop and in 1947 established Loquat Valley School for his daughters. On 4 May 1951 he married Joyce Agnes Kennington at St Mark's Anglican Church, Darling Point.

Chairman of the family firm, P. T. Taylor Pty Ltd, and a director of Trans Oceanic Airways Pty Ltd, 'P.G.' operated the Sandringham 7 flying-boat Frigate Bird III from Sydney on Pacific island cruises in 1954-58. A wiry man, greying at the temples, with crowsfeet edging his blue eyes, he belonged to the Union Club and Royal Aero Club of New South Wales.

Awarded the 1951 Oswald Watt gold medal for his Australia-South America flight and the Johnson memorial trophy of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, London (1951 and 1952), Taylor was knighted in 1954 (and known as Sir Gordon). He died in Queen's Hospital, Honolulu, on 15 December 1966. His ashes were scattered over Lion Island where the dreams of his adventurous life were conceived. His wife, their son and two daughters survived him, as



Photograph, black and white, P.G. Taylor in the port blister meeting Chilean Air Force officers. Taken upon arrival of the Frigate Bird II in Chile on the 25th March 1951.

did the two daughters of his second marriage. Norman Carter's portrait of Taylor is held by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Frigate Bird II is held by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, and Frigate Bird III by the Musée de L'Air, Le Bourget, France.

As a pilot and navigator, Taylor was a perfectionist, fastidious, demanding, sharp and candid. Yet, his character was complex. Those 'with the patience to come to know him discovered a man of immense sensitivity, intelligence and courage'.

CHECK, CHECK, CHECK

A recent accident which left the pilot and only POB in a critical condition at the airfield that I house my Searey until very recently stresses the need for us to seriously consider weather before departing on a flight and making sure you are familiar with any unusual characteristics of the airfield you intend on flying to. Although the particular factors leading to the accident I mentioned are yet to be released by CASA, factors such as high winds, high temperatures, sloping short runway lined by high trees may well have played a role. If you are not familiar with the airfield you are flying to and there is limited information available in ERSA, it may be advisable to phone the airfield operator to see if there is any features you should be considering on the day, particularly if you know you will be flying in less than ideal weather conditions.

I was reading an old CASA document addressing distractions during pre-flight checks the other day and brought to mind the story of a flying boat pilot who, but for some good luck, could have had a very unfortunate and premature end to a flight for he and his passenger.

At the end of a seaplane gathering the pilot was working through his preflight checks using the technique he had always used, a well rehearsed and memorised routine. About halfway through his checks a colleague approached and asked if he might be able to get a lift to a waterway near his home, a short flight of less than 20 minutes. Some discussion ensued regarding exactly where the waterway was and how it could be accessed. Preflight checks were "completed", pilot and passenger hopped on board and they taxied off into the water. On the short flight the pilot decided to demonstrate the rudder authority of his seaplane, suitably impressing his passenger, and then proceeded to alight on the water and demonstrate crosswind taxiing capabilities. After dropping off his passenger on a beach he demonstrated a beach rotation before taxiing back out through many moored boats and taking off for the short trip to his airfield.

On washing down his seaplane before pushing back into its hangar, the pilot was shattered to discover that, in his interrupted preflight check, he had missed the removal of its rudder retention strap. He can only guess what might have happened if the strap was not secured on each end by a short rubber strap, just flexible enough to still allow sufficient rudder control.

A very important lesson learned thankfully without incident. A printed checklist is now referred to by the pilot every time he flies.



The Sydney Airshow

5 & 6 May, 2018

SPAA will be there

Register to help on the SPAA website

FISH OUT OF WATER



By
Doug Bauer

July/August 2017

So what is a Seaplane doing so far inland? I had heard on the Sgrapevine that the Whitsunday Flying Group were planning another of their outback trips for July. This time Queensland taking in Adele's Grove and Karumba. I thought that sounded like fun but ruled it out due to work commitments. Sometime later a call from Ian that included some wise words about not letting work rule your life and I was in. The format was overnight camping with the rule that everyone carries their own stuff.

Day one was meet up with Murray at Mackay, head up the Pioneer Valley to check out a few water bodies along the way, then drop over the back of the range and convene with the starter group at Bowen River. There is a bush strip nearby an original old school 1860's pub. Seemed like an ideal combination to me. Apparently Bowen River turns into a virtual city come Queens Birthday weekend when they host one of the biggest annual camp draft events in the area. Me and Murray in 2 Seareys and Bill, Julie and Ian in 2 Savannahs arrived almost together. The group was a mixed bunch of backgrounds and aircraft with the love of flying and in particular flying trips in common. It was set up camp then wander down to the pub for dinner. There were a few bikers around. Dinner was on the verandah with dim 'romantic' lighting and the floor may or may not have been level. This pub has a lot of character. The meal and atmosphere were exactly the way to kick off a flying trip. Later around the camp fire there was cerebral conversation with Bill lamenting that a lot of Americanisms had crept into the Aussie vernacular. Is biker an American word? In Bill's days blokes in a group on motorbikes were called Bikies. We agreed that this term was more associated with organised crime these days so it is more polite to refer to them as bikers.

Next day was relaxed not wanting to distract our hosts from work too early. As it turns out they were looking forward to the distraction. There was an aerial surveillance of nearby Terrible Gorge then off to Burdekin Dam for lunch. The plan was for the Seareys to amuse themselves on the Dam while the Savannahs cooled their heels at the old Burdekin Dam Wilderness Lodge Airstrip. The Wilderness Lodge is long gone leaving just wilderness. I know who had the better deal. Burdekin Dam is very large with a hill island in the middle. There are a lot of dead trees, good for fish not so good for Seareys. That said there was plenty of clear water for numerous Touch n Goes in the vicinity of the dam wall. There was conversation on the radio about prickly bushes growing on the runway. Later when I joined the crew, we agreed that the Burdekin Dam Wilderness Lodge Air strip is off

the holiday list. The surface is now gravel with the local double G burr bush proliferating. That is when you learn that is good to have plenty of tread on your tail wheel and to avoid burr bushes. I learnt the easy way. Let the adventure begin. Everyone was picking prickles out of their tyres. After a bit of lunch it was off to meet our hosts Brian and Amanda at Bruslee Station to the South West. Brian and the group had old flying legend Ross Millard in



Bowen River Hotel

common. He must have been a bit of a character. There are a few of them in these parts. Brian had the flying bug and had built an X-air that he now uses around the station. He would have loved to join us but is very committed to his land and, cattle. The drought had not been good to them and they were rebuilding the heard. Brian and Amanda were excellent hosts. We were amazed and entertained by Brian's intellectual view on life and Station management insights. They have quite the creative family.



Line up Bowen River

After an early and hearty bacon and egg breakfast we were loaded on to the back of a truck and taken to 'help' with doing a lick run. This involved driving to all corners of the property and running a molasses supplement into a bunch of troughs, read old bath tubs in strategic locations. The cattle came running. We

were introduced to Walter the tame bull. It was a good excuse for Brian to show off his property. Everywhere you looked you could see signs of hard work. I think I will stick to my soft town job. After a cuppa and farewell we were off to Lake Dunn. I tracked via Lake Buchanan. This is a large dry lake that occasionally fills, not as salty, and much smaller than Lake Eyre. I was impressed as it is a stark difference from the surrounding country. It was then over Lake Galilee which is a number of large shallow water bodies of various colours then for a water landing on Lake Dunn. Lake Dunn has an air strip beside the sizable fresh water lake with facilities such as tennis courts and powered camp sites. It is run by the family that own the property. A bargain at \$5 a night. The land based crew had arrived earlier and were waiting on the shore for a seaplane landing show. It was by now about 1pm and the wind had increased leaving the lake quite choppy. We had the airstrip option but the lake did not look too rough for a landing. The landing was fine but as you slow down



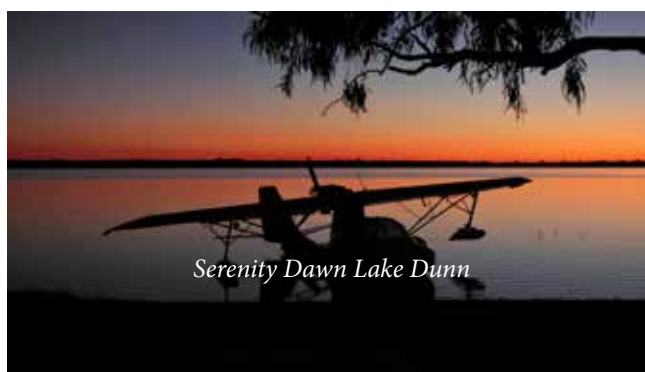
Lawn Hill Gorge dawn

the distance between the waves became problematic and made for a bit of excitement. It was a bit of an exercise making our way to shore as seaplanes tend to weather cock making it a challenge to go down wind. The solution is be patient and wait for the wind to blow you ashore. This entertained the assembly of Grey



Einasleigh Fog

Nomads for bit. It was here that we were met by Shane in his Jabiru from Longreach and his mate Henry who had come by motorbike. Locals frequent Lake Dunn in the summer months to go water skiing. They think the water is too cold in winter and leave it to passing Grey Nomads. We were confident that the wind would die down towards sunset and were not disappointed. It was time to have a bit of fun on the lake with the Searey. There is something special about landing on almost glassy water and cruising to the shore as the sun drops over the horizon. We all liked Lake Dunn with both land and water landing options and



Serenity Dawn Lake Dunn

great facilities, thoughts turned to a possible future mixed craft fly in.

Next leg took us to meet Peter at Olga Downs Station. Ian and Julie had met Peter some years ago when they had some issues with their drifter. They were directed to Peter who is a Drifter enthusiast from way back. On the way, there was the by now familiar call over the radio from Ian, 'We are up at 7000' and there is a tail wind up here. Those Savanahs can climb. There was also a bit of singing with familiar tunes but unfamiliar lyrics. This seemed mostly to occur later at night around the camp fire but sometimes out of the blue. Fuel stop at Hughenden where Jase and Trace from Townsville in their Zenith 650 caught up with us. We waited for the cooler smoother afternoon, teasing a few RPT



passengers, letting them wonder how we were all going to fit in their plane. It was also a good opportunity to fix up the spare tail wheel. The tyre businesses in Hughenden are very

helpful and don't mind delivering. Later that afternoon Olga Downs appeared on the ground before us. Before we knew it cool ales were thrust into our hands, introductions were made and we were ushered into the shearer's quarters. It was then time for a bit of a tour. Now you don't expect to see a high tech IT workshop in the midst of a large dusty station a long way from anywhere, but sure enough that is what we found. A little surreal but very interesting. Peter's son Will had a thriving business providing high speed internet to stations and a few other bits of station oriented technology as well. A short drive and we were inspecting one of Will's radio towers and watching the sun go down. We were treated to a sumptuous barbeque dinner and the night disappeared.

After another feast of a breakfast and a bit of target practice we congregated down at Peters airstrip where he showed off his faithfully restored Willy's Jeep. Just the shot for running him and his gear down to his plane. Peter was joining us in his fairly new Foxbat that he uses for fun and work. Destination Adeles Grove via fuel stop Burke and Wills Roadhouse. After a pleasant leg pointing out potential rivals for Lake Dunn of stations with an airstrip and a large lake we arrived at the well maintained strip at the roadhouse. A short stroll with the jerry cans and a bit of a feed. We were surprised by the number of customers and the impressive display of fancy vans and RVs passing through. The proprietor offered to drop us and our fuel back at our planes. Highlights for the leg to Adeles was the Gregory River and



2 Reys at Sunset Lake Dunn

Century Mine. The strip at Adeles is immaculate and quite close to the camping area. They brought the bus out almost immediately to pick us up. We learned not to feel pressured to rush, mostly staff at these sort of places are looking for an excuse to escape the routine for a bit, have a chat and sticky beak at the planes. The grove provides immediate relief from the dry heat with a great spot for a swim and a choice of dining facilities from the Fish and Chips Shack to the more elaborate Restaurant bar.



Bus drop off dawn Adels Grove

The following day saw us play tourist with a boat tour down Lawn Hill gorge. Some of our number chose a bit of a bush walk and swim at the 1st falls. The road between Adeles and the gorge was atrocious. This made us appreciate our chosen mode of transport. The gorge lives up to the picture postcard expectations and is well worth the visit. It was then back to camp, scrounge some firewood for later and a refreshing swim.

We elected for a dawn take off for the leg to Karumba to avoid the forecast headwinds and bumpy air. A flight over the gorge gave us another perspective, very scenic in the early dawn light. It was then a competition on who could find the most efficient altitude and see the sea first. On the approach to Karumba I elected to explore a few of the water ways and was not disappointed. The Leichardt River and the Sweet Swamp lake were smooth enough for an obligatory touch and go. There were seemingly endless termite mound populated plains and then the vast area of salt pan mud flats. I felt obligated to splash down on the Karumba town reach of the Norman River before catching up with the rest of the crew at YKMB. I think you can get a bit too focused on getting to your destination in as short as time as possible but as long as you have sufficient fuel it is definitely worth while checking out some features along the way. On the way in to town Peter was recognised on the radio, It seems he knew the fellow doing some prawn spotting, this became a bit of a recurring theme, as it turned out he knew quite a few other locals as well. Neighbours live a bit further away and backyards are a bit bigger in this part of the world. Chosen activities for the day were the Barramundi farm. In my view a bit lame and touristy though it is impressive to see them feed. It was also interesting to hear the views of the guy who was doing the presentation when he gave us a lift into town. It seems that Grey Nomads aren't so popular with the locals in Karumba. This has a bit to do with their parking habits. After a bit of refuelling, the next activity was whistle wetting at the Sunset Bar. It warms the soul with a cool beer in hand and watching a great northern sun set over the water with friends after a fulfilling day. This was a special moment for Jase and Trace who made a toast to Tracy's dad who used to frequent these parts.

The next leg was to Einasleigh via Croydon. We tracked over the meanderings of the Norman River and could see Normanton in the distance. The crew elected to have smoko at Croydon Airport where apparently some renovations were underway. I thought I would explore Croydon Dam. It was a bit breezy and choppy but the landing was fine with a bit of mucking around to taxi to a suitable smoko location. It looks like the locals do a bit of skiing in the warmer months. We all got airborne at about the same time and saw what looked like rich cattle country with some sizable dry riverbeds and billabongs and the odd lake. We listened to Peter recite off cattle station names and the owner families as we passed over them, more 'neighbours'. The approach to Einasleigh was over some rugged range country with dramatic gorges and waterfalls. Most of us left it to the last before losing altitude to make sure we missed the ground. Lining up for Einasleigh you could be forgiven for thinking you were at a much larger centre. Einasleigh is blessed with a long brand new bitumen airstrip equipped for night landings. Not what you would expect for a 2 horse town. Apparently the military use this for training. Einasleigh is a small town with an old pub with fuel and a spectacular gorge all within a short stroll. Priority was a pie at the pub then something to wash it down. We were introduced to some of the locals. There are more characters per capita here than most towns I have been too. On the bar was a coffee table book 'Bush Pubs of Australia' where the Einasleigh pub featured. We challenged Peter to a game of let's see who has been to the most pubs in the book. We didn't stand a chance. One of the local characters offered to do a fuel run for us. Then it was time to explore the gorge. I think we saw it at its best, there is a good chance the water may go a bit green after a long hot summer. Excellent swimming spot with rock caves, waterfalls and tea tree lined sandy banks. As the sun got lower we wandered around town checking out the bowed railway bridge, railway station, and closed police station. Julie had organised a group dinner at the pub. We were treated to a feast of home cooking. Everyone enjoyed Einasleigh and would highly recommend this as a stopover, we will be back.



Copperfield Gorge Einasleigh

The locals warned us about morning fog. We awoke early to clear skies. I wandered into town for a sunrise photo of the pub. On my return after some toasted muffins and a cup of tea we could see this fog bank moving in from the South East. It looked pretty cool washing over the mountains. We had to wait for an hour or so. It was time for half of us to head off towards home. Shane and Peter headed West towards Longreach and Richmond. Jase and Trace back to Townsville. The rest of us chose to go 30nm East to Undarra. There is no mobile coverage in Einasleigh so a message was left the previous night with the resort. Just before take-off the lady from the pub walked in with news from the resort. We were

to buzz the resort on the way to the airstrip and someone would come and pick us up. Off we went with a pass over the gorge on the way out. It looks impressive from the air too. On the way to Undarra you start to see Lava Tube country with break throughs scattered about. Good for tourists bad for cattle apparently. I buzzed the resort as requested then landed at the strip and before I had even got out of the plane, the bus had arrived to pick us up. This is where we learned the advice earlier given about airport pickups for resorts. No rush. They seem to charge for everything here but it is worth it if you haven't been. We had booked for an afternoon Lava Tube tour. In my opinion the best time as the sun shines into a few of the tubes making for nice photos. In a word the tubes are impressive I wasn't prepared for the scale of some of them, and so convenient with the airstrip, who would drive.

That was it then, Ian and Julie headed for home and back to work. Myself, Murray and Bill tracked for Atherton to catch up with some common acquaintances before going our own way. What a Fantastic trip, great company and an excellent experience. I am sure glad I took on board Ian's wisdom. Bring on the next one. Thank you Julie and Ian for making it happen.



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