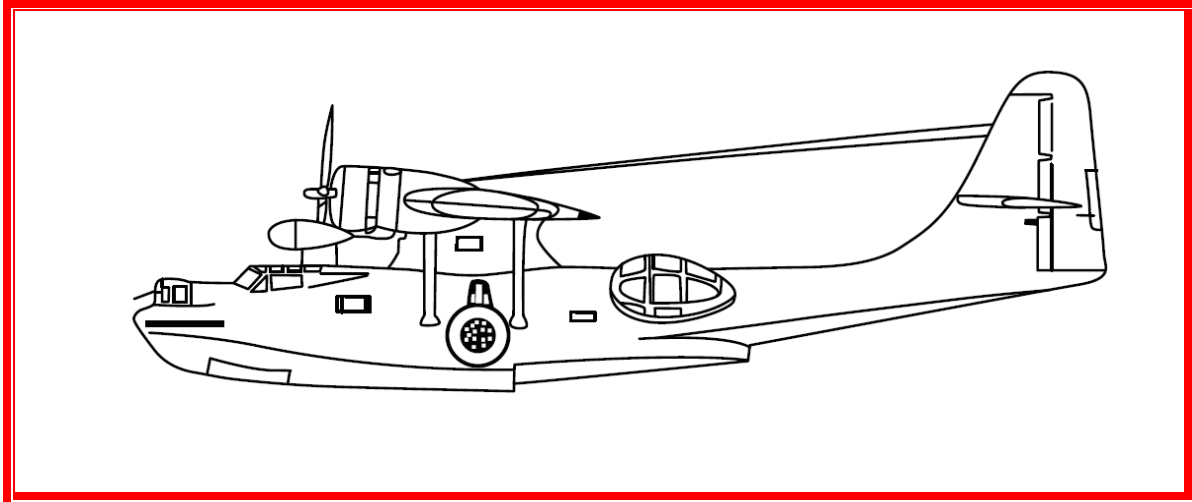


NEWSLETTER



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2010 Catalina Festival

The Fourth Annual Catalina Festival was held at Rathmines on Saturday 23 October 2010. After last year's event the Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC) designated the Rathmines Catalina Festival a "Significant Regional Event" and it won festival of the year for the LMCC area.

CFML volunteers (and Lake Macquarie locals) Dave Swanson and Terry Woolard repeated last year's efforts by delivering a superlative effort in organising, setting up and manning the CFML stand throughout the day, raising \$3,025 (compared to \$2,300 last year) through the sale of merchandise and membership fees.

For the first time, the CFML had on display a new range of its own merchandise with polo shirts and caps featuring its new logo (the one appearing on the front page of this newsletter) as well as coffee mugs sporting a photo of VH-CAT doing her splash and go at Rathmines on 7 December 2008. The gallery of photos of VH-CAT being worked on at Bankstown that were on display at the CFML stand, as well as the display stands and signage for the CFML stand were all the work of CFML volunteer Gordon Finn from the Hunter Region School of Photography. Of course, the stand wouldn't have been complete without a display of wartime photographs of Catalinas, aircrew and other paraphernalia from Bob Cleworth's collection.

So the CFML owes a great deal of thanks to Terry and Dave for their efforts not only on the day, but in the time leading up to the big event. I know they worked hard to ensure our stand was the best possible. The only way you could have bettered this effort would have been to have had VH-CAT there as well.

We were also fortunate to have had glorious weather for most of the day, with rain starting to set in around 2.30 pm. Unfortunately, the weather reached Luskintyre Airfield a little earlier, grounding the Tiger Moths that were scheduled to do their flypast at 2.00pm. This also meant a hastened departure for all but one of the seaplanes. The one that remained was forced to do so as it had flown down from the Gold Coast and its pilot, Rohan Whittington and friend Grant, had made arrangements to stay the night, planning to depart Rathmines at 7.00am the following morning.

Overnight security for the aircraft was provided by a dedicated team of local Scouts who camped there over night in the pouring rain in their mobile camper. I spent the night at Toronto and was woken at 5.00am on the Sunday by the enormous downpour. My thoughts went immediately to those vigilant scouts keeping guard over Rohan's aircraft, as well as to Rohan himself. By 7.00am, the whether had not let up, clouds seemed to cling to the lake with a vice-like grip. There was no way, I thought, that Rohan was getting out of here any time in the near future, with no artificial horizon and unrelenting clouds so low.

I checked in with Dave Swanson, who lives at Buttaba which is next to Rathmines to see how Rohan was going. The report was that there looked as if there would be a

break in the whether around 11.00am, so Rohan was planning to take that window of opportunity to make a quick getaway at that time. I checked in with Dave periodically for an update as the weather appeared to be unrelenting, even as I departed Toronto for Sydney at 9.40am. Anyway, Rohan and Grant did manage to get away at 11, arriving at Port Macquarie about two hours later, then safely home by around 8.00pm.

The festival certainly appears to have significantly grown since last year with more goodies on offer for sale. This was evidenced by the fact that soon after we arrived at the CFML stand, my partner Carole took off to do her own thing and I didn't see her again for about three hours! Believe me when I tell you that she sure did her bit to boost the Lake Macquarie economy. In total, this year's event raised \$10,000 for the CFML (not including the \$3,000 taken at our stand), compared to \$9,000 last year. According to one of the key organisers of the event, Mike Usher, the numbers attending were at least the same as last year.

Just to digress slightly, I mentioned Carole's disappearing for some three hours. Well, after catching up with Terry & Dave at the stand, I set off to take some photos for this newsletter. The first place I went to was the main drag where all the stalls were. When I got to the end, I decided to take a shot looking back towards the avenue of stalls so that I could give you lovely folks some idea of the scale of the event. At this point in time, I had no idea where Carole was or what she was up to. After I got home the following day, I downloaded all the photos and on going through them, I carefully scrutinised the above mentioned picture and sure enough, there was Carole's unmistakable form, parked there at one of the stalls – doing what she does best!

No doubt, the Rathmines Catalina Festival will continue to grow. It will be important in the on-going effort to raise funds to get VH-CAT to Rathmines and as a significant event in bringing the Rathmines community together. At the risk of omitting many who helped, the CFML would like to thank Mike and Lyn Usher from Rathmines Memorial Bowling Club, who carried much of the load in planning and running the day; Bill Hitchcock and Barney Reardon, who helped organise aircraft, and Don Lowe of the Rathmines Catalina Memorial Park Trust.

And a very special thank you to the team of scouts who braved that horrible weather to look after Rohan's aeroplane. I can highly recommend the security service they provide – a message for any seaplane pilots who may wish to make an entire weekend of next year's festival!

As I write, preparations for next year's festival are already underway – the date is already set – 5 November 2011. The Festival's bank, Newcastle Permanent was approached for the use of their 7m x 4m marquee for next year and they agreed which means they will be shown as a sponsor for next year. This will allow festival organisers to place posters in all their branches. So arrangements for 2011 are off to a good start! Finally, let me leave you with some photos - Enjoy.

Colin Cool



The CFML Stand with model Black Cat keeping guard



CFML Caps and Coffee mugs for sale!



At the CFML stand - a display of photos and general information, including photos of VH-CAT being worked on at Bankstown – conveying the subtle message to the Lake Macquarie locals that their Cat is slowly* edging her way home

* *Slowly* becomes *quickly* with a large injection of funds!



L-R: Worker, Freeloader, Worker
(Aka: Terry Woolard, Colin Cool, Dave Swanson)



**That Dulhunty fellow (L) with Ben Hunter from the Seaplane Pilots Association (and CFML volunteer).
In the background behind the fence are Gwen and Bob Cleworth.**



Display of models and photos at the *Friends of Rathmines* Stand



Carole propping up the local economy

**And of course, there were stalls galore.
(Money talks, so they say, but Carole's only says "goodbye")**



**What are you
lookin' at!**

Don't mess with an angry Black Cat!



Seaplanes spreading out so far and wide!



Vintage cars on display



...and a display of vintage military vehicles



On display in the Scouts hall – a scale model of the Rathmines base – depicted as it would have been during the war. It took up almost the entire hall!!



Sydney Seaplanes lending their support – offering joy flights to the public in their Cessna Caravan



Lots on offer for young and old!



**At the end of a long day's hard work - Dinner at the Royal Motor Yacht Club
Toronto**

**L-R: Terry Woolard, Elisabeth Parrague, Patricio Parrague, Carole Gibbens,
Colin Cool, Rohan's mate Grant, Rohan Whittington, Linda Woolard, Dave
Swanson. Behind the camera: Leisa Swanson**

Vale Group Captain Paul Metzler – 1914-2010

It is with deep regret that I inform you of the passing of Group Captain Paul Maxwell George Metzler. Paul passed away on Sunday 17 October 2010 at the age of 96.

Paul was born in the Sydney suburb of Mosman on 9 June 1914, on the eve of the First World War. Paul joined the RAAF in June 1938 and remained in the service until March 1977.

Paul was a notable supporter of the CFML, especially given that one of its primary aims is to have VH-CAT permanently based at Rathmines. Paul trained at Rathmines in 1941, qualifying as a Catalina captain. He set out from there in A24-8 in early January 1942 as second pilot to captain FLTLT Robert Thompson. They carried the normal complement of eight crew but also on board were two American surveyors carrying orders to assess various islands in the South West Pacific as potential naval and air bases. That task completed, the Americans were dropped off in Fiji and the Cat headed for home.

At Noumea, however, they received instructions to proceed to Gizo in the Solomons - there to await further orders. Those orders, it transpired, were to take-off at first light on 21st January and track towards New Hanover Island just west of Kavieng in the Bismarck Group where coast watchers had reported a large enemy fleet passing southbound. This task, to quote Paul, was "like looking for a hornet's nest".

Cruising at 10,000 feet and approaching New Hanover, the Cat ran out of cloud into clear skies and saw the fleet of warships. They radioed for instructions and were ordered to shadow and report. Paul later said that what they should have done was high tail it back into cloud. Four fighters took off from one the carriers in the fleet and intercepted the Cat, made repeated passes killing two of the crew in the process and setting the aircraft on fire.

When down below 2000 ft, with fabric control surfaces largely burnt away and the aircraft spirally with little control and a crash imminent, they got out of it with the application of near-superhuman effort – the two pilots succeeded in getting the nose up by hauling back on the controls and applying full power. The hull hit the ocean at a terrific pace, first – bouncing a good two hundred yards then roared furiously through the waves. They scrambled out before the boat exploded, with six of the eight crew surviving. They were unable to get to their Mae Wests due to the flames. In the water they watched the Cat, engines still running as blowing the flames back had made the abandoning marginally less hazardous.

The Cat went around and around them in circles, finally burning out amidships so that the nose went up and the tail went up. Then, with a huge hissing cloud of smoke and steam, she sank. A short while later, the flight engineer who had been at his station in the pylon succumbed to his burns.

The five remaining then struck out towards New Hanover perhaps twenty miles to

their north. Paul was uncertain how far away they were. After about two hours swimming one of the party called out "Warship!" It proved to be a Japanese cruiser despatched from the fleet to look for survivors. As the ship neared Thompson shouted to the others "Keep swimming. Nobody wave to the bastards."

Paul recalled: "When we could ignore them no longer, Thompson called out 'Swim your best men, proper crawl in formation' ".

They did just that until they got to the rope netting that had been dropped down the side of the ship. He said he could still see in his mind's eye the massive grey side of the warship with a huge pink carnation painted on her bows. Paul further recalled that when they climbed over the rail onto the deck they encountered a large contingent of excited young ratings "jabbering and pointing, all wearing either short longs or long shorts - not much better than what you see on youth today hanging round the beaches and the streets".

They were treated well enough, examined by the ship's doctor and confined to quite comfortable quarters. All five survivors saw the war out in camps in Japan. After the surrender, Paul, being permanent air force, returned to the RAAF. After only two weeks leave he was assigned to a desk job at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. After a year there he posted himself to Sale, completed an instructor's course then went on to Point Cook.

In a short time he was CFI and then commanding officer of the base. Paul's final posting was to Air Force headquarters in Canberra. He retired as Group Captain in 1977. Outside of his service life, Paul achieved considerable distinction on the tennis court and with his subsequent authorship of several books of instruction in the sport - some are still in print in the USA.

Paul was at Bankstown on 7 December 2008 to greet VH-CAT on her arrival there at the end of her ferry flight from Portugal. Paul and his son Geoffrey took a look over her with Paul sitting in the pilot's seat – reminiscent of his time as an operational Catalina pilot in 1942.

PAUL METZLER'S CATALINA A24-8

Delivered by Qantas as VH-AFI 16/08/41. To 20 Sqn 11/9/41. Shot Down 21/01/42, 3 killed. Crew: FLTLT Robert Thompson (Pilot), FLTLT Paul Metzler (2nd Pilot), SGT Leo Clarke (2nd Wireless Op/Air Gunner), CPL Jack Perret (1st Engineer), LAC Ken Parkyn (2nd Engineer), LAC M. Sollit (1st Wireless Op), LAC Bill Blackman (Rigger) and LAC J. Cox (Armourer).

My thanks to John Williams for the much material used in this article which, if I recall correctly, was based on a recorded interview he did with Paul a few years ago. I also acknowledge the use of *Cats at War* by Coral Gaunt and Bob Cleworth and the WWII Nominal Roll Website (www.ww2roll.gov.au) in preparing this article.

Colin Cool, Editor



Group Captain Paul Metzler waiting patiently to greet VH-CAT on her arrival at Bankstown at the end of her ferry flight from Portugal – 7 December 2008

Generous Donors – Kerry and Ray Smith

In last month's newsletter, we acknowledged the very generous donation of \$10,000 made by Kerry Smith and her husband Ray in October. This was the latest in a series of generous donations received from Kerry and Ray, who reside in Perth.

Last year they donated \$5,000 and the year before that, while VH-CAT was in transit from Portugal they answered our pleas for help with another donation of \$5,000 when it looked as if we wouldn't have enough dough to pay for the fuel required to get her all the way home. I guess they, like many of us, couldn't bear the thought of having her stranded in some God-forsaken place!

The Catalina holds a special place in the hearts of Kerry and Ray, an aircraft and classic car enthusiast. Kerry's father was FLTLT Bernard (Bernie) Parker, AFC. Bernie joined the RAAF in June 1941, serving as a Catalina pilot and captain during WWII with 20 and 43 Squadrons. Bernie elected to stay on in the RAAF following the war, his efforts during the Korean conflict recognised with the award of the Air Force Cross (AFC). Bernie was also awarded the Kings Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air at the end of WWII. Bernie finally retired from the Air Force in July 1965, when, Bob Cleworth tells me, he had clocked up more hours than any other serving RAAF pilot at that time!

So to Kerry and Ray, a very special thank you for your most generous support – you have certainly helped make a difference all the way over here in the east!



L-R: Ray Smith, Bernie Parker and Kerry Smith in 2004



**Kerry's brother Bruce Parker sitting in his father's seat giving his big sister cheek
(As usual)**

Colin Cool (with thanks to Kerry Smith for vetting this article and for the photo of her with Ray and Bernie).

Membership Renewals

Those who hold one-year membership of the CFML will soon be receiving an invitation to renew their membership for 2011. This should arrive in the post late November/early December.

In the past, membership renewals were sent out in August. We have now shifted this process to November to align the membership year with the CFML financial year, which runs from January to December.

We look forward to your ongoing support. You may even wish to take this opportunity to upgrade your membership to Life membership!

Please note that we now offer a concession for students and seniors – a 50% discount on the standard membership fee. This means that students/seniors pay only \$25 for one-year membership and \$250 for Life Membership.

Colin Cool

New Members/Donations

The Catalina Flying Memorial welcomes the following members to the Aussie Cat Club:

One year Members

- Malcolm Murdoch
- William Cooper
- Beverley R. Melrose
- Chris Liddell
- Garrie Bain
- Wayne Tonks
- Ron Goodrick
- Bill Schofield
- Mrs Pamela and Mr Michael Hart (Family Membership)

Donations

- Doug Nolan - \$100

A very big thank you to all of the above for their support!

News or comments

If you have any news or comments regarding the website, please forward to Colin Cool (colin.cool@jemena.com.au).