

What's News?

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On Saturday, 24 October, the third annual Rathmines Catalina Festival was held at Lake Macquarie and was the most successful to date. This event celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the RAAF Rathmines Flying Boat Base and the formation of 10 and 11 Squadrons RAAF. It was a keystone event in the effort to get VH-CAT to the site and an opportunity to reflect on the contribution made by the many flight crew and support personnel who defended Australia from this important airbase.

The spirit of what was once the largest seaplane base in the Southern Hemisphere was invoked by a flypast including flying boats and floatplanes from the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia. The atmosphere was added to by the appearance of and fly-pasts by Tiger Moths from the Luskintigers based at Luskintyre and the wonderful sight and sound of a World War II era Grumman Avenger Torpedo Bomber from Cessnock. Sydney Seaplanes also attended and provided joy flights throughout the afternoon in their large single-turboprop Cessna Caravan. We understand that some of the proceeds from these flights will go to the Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd (CFML). Emphasising the significance of the event, the festival included a parade through Rathmines Park and a memorial service dedicated to the men and women who served at Rathmines.

In attendance was Mr Greg Piper, Mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie and local State MP who has been very supportive of our project. A highlight of the parade was the presence of Air Vice Marshall JGW "Jack" Marshall, retired, and Wing Commander Phillip Champion, present commanding officer of 11 Squadron RAAF, based in Edinburgh, South Australia. It is significant that 11 Squadron was formed at Rathmines in 1939 and was later equipped with Catalina flying boats. The attendance of the contingent from 11 Squadron was a fitting tribute to the history of the base and was greatly appreciated. The parade concluded at the Catalina Memorial with a memorial service and laying of wreaths to acknowledge those who served and to remember those who died while serving the nation or who have since passed away. Commemoration of former servicemen is provided through a Memorial Wall maintained by the Rathmines Memorial Trust.

Everyone involved in running the festival agreed that it was a huge success. An estimated 9,000 people joined in the activities that recalled the former air base, as well as a raft of activities that would be expected at a local festival. These included stalls and entertainment, exhibitions, displays of military equipment, vintage cars and motorcycles, canoes, camel rides, live music and children's activities. The proceeds raised by the Catalina Festival will go toward the efforts of the CFML to relocate VH-CAT.

CFML volunteers (and Lake Macquarie locals) "Blister" Dave Swanson and Terry Woolard delivered a superlative effort in organising, setting up and manning the CFML stand throughout the day, raising over \$2,300 through the sale of merchandise and membership fees. Immediately next door to the CFML stand was the Hunter Region School of Photography stand. The school is run by CFML volunteer Gordon Finn and his lovely wife Lyn. The vast gallery of photos of VH-CAT being worked on at Bankstown that were on display at the CFML stand, as well as the CFML membership packs, display stands and signage for the CFML stand were all Gordon's work. Gordon and Lyn also had facilities set up at their stand to process CFML membership cards for anyone who signed up as a CFML member on the day. This was all done at no cost to the CFML. "Blister" Dave's employer, Spectrom Hire donated a power generator to power the TV and DVD player so that we could play the DVD of VH-CAT's ferry flight to Australia for the benefit of visitors to the stand.

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 Gordon, Lyn, Terry, "Blister" Dave and Bob for their efforts not only on the day, but in the time leading up to the big event. I know they all 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.

It is of some disappointment that the VH-CAT is still not officially airworthy, even after having flown all the way from Portugal to Sydney last year. This was because the work required for an Australian C of A (Certificate of Air Worthiness) needs to be more thoroughly done to enable us to give "Adventure Flights" as a "Warbird" to the public.

Owing to the "Global Economic Downturn" we are finding it more difficult to attract sponsors and donors, (even those who had previously indicated their financial support). We are relying on the enthusiastic and generous support of a small team of volunteers and the generosity of Bankstown Airport who are allowing us to park there free of charge.

The Rathmines Catalina Festival has huge potential 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, particularly the Tiger Moths, and of course Don Lowe of the Rathmines Catalina Memorial Park Trust.

Finally, let me leave you with some photos. Enjoy

Colin Cool, Editor



The CFML Stand



Some of the merchandise



The CFML stand was constantly well-attended



CFML Stand stalwarts "Blister" David Swanson (L) and Terry Woolard – they did a beaut job!



Gordon Finn hard at work at the CFML stand



L-R - 11 Squadron CO Wing Commander Phil Champion, "Blister" Dave Swanson and Colin Cool at the CFML stand.



Memorial Service at the Catalina Memorial



L-R - CFML Volunteer Ben Hunter and CFML Chief Pilot Graham White giving Phil Dulhunty's Cessna 180 a bit of TLC.



Sydney Seaplane's huge Cessna Caravan providing joy flights to enthusiastic visitors



CFML's Engineering and Maintenance Manager Ken Hughes (R) with grandson Tom Gollan (centre) and Ken's Lake Renegade VH-LKT. Tom is a regular volunteer at Bankstown as well as an up and coming seaplane pilot

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The Catalina Flying Memorial Ltd

www.catalinaflying.org.au

News or comments

If you have any news or comments regarding the website, please forward to Colin Cool (colin.cool@jemen.com.au) or Jill Brandon (info@catalinaflying.org.au).