



Newsletter of the Seaplane Pilots Association of Australia

Peter Gibberd being "breathalysed" in the main street of Lake Boga. See other Boga stories p2 &3

This Issue

In your magazine

This issue is a departure from our usual format. Typically, **On The Step** contains a mixture of trip reports, safety matters, forthcoming trips, training and technique tips, a little history, and news. Only rarely does an item exceed one page. This issue is different because it includes a long historical article about a single flight.

The Golden Hind

Jack Peters sent me the article with the plea "*this is an old article from a 1970's magazine, but I still reckon its the best seaplane article ever.*" On reading it I had to agree. The story relates to a bygone era, but it has a timeless quality. Save it for when you don't feel rushed. I hope you enjoy it.

Seaplane for sale

If you are interested in a well-cared-for near new SeaRey - check out Page 9

Time in your tanks

Fuel exhaustion and starvation remain a major cause of light plane accidents. An article titled *Exhausted At Home*, (Flight Safety magazine issue #86) points out that many fuel exhaustion accidents happen when pilots try to stretch their endurance to make it home. The solution is simple, don't do it!

Beware control cable failures

Recent articles in flying magazines have highlighted safety concerns from fraying control cables. The current Flight Safety magazine lists 2 service reports of frayed control cables. The next issue of SPAA will detail my own recent experience of a frayed control cable that caused in-flight problems.

Take a trip

This issue reports 2 recent seaplane gatherings, GASA #3 at Tiona and the Lake Boga Museum opening. Each was well attended and provided great companionship for all involved. Organise a gathering now. Tell us your plans. **Editor**

From the editor

The weakest link

You and your plane are a team. The safe outcome of every flight depends on both of you performing your role capably, but if one or the other fails it can result in an accident.

Some accidents are primarily the result of mechanical failure, others result from inadequate skill or bad decisions by the pilot.

So who is the weakest link, the pilot or the plane?

The latest edition of Flight Safety (by CASA) lists the reported accidents and incidents in February and March this year in Australia.

It makes sobering reading. Six of the accidents involved light aircraft. The accident description for each of these suggests the following primary causes:

- 1 fuel exhaustion + 1 fuel starvation
- 1 downwind landing + 1 unsuitable landing area
- 2 stalls (1 on T/O & 1 on landing)

In each case I think it is fair to say that the pilot failed their plane.

I say this without any sense of smugness because on occasions, I too have failed my plane.

So as pilots we may worry about failures of aircraft causing us grief, but by far the greatest cause of accidents in light aircraft is due to poor decision making or poor handling by the pilot.

Let's face the facts, in light aircraft, the pilot is the weakest member of the team.

Yes we must maintain our aircraft carefully, but we also need to build and constantly maintain our own manipulative and decision making skills.

Gear up to Kiss the Water ##

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ) Editor



An Albatross in Australia! (page 4)

Lake Boga - The Pleasure



Thanks to Dick Peel and all the organisers and volunteers for this great event.

The official opening of the new Flying Boat complex at Lake Boga by federal and state MPs took place on Saturday 21 April to the beautiful sound of flying boats taking off and landing on the lake.

The display Catalina is now complete and the museum is adding the forward fuselage of a Dornier Do24K and many aircraft components including many from the Martin PBM Mariner. What a big aircraft that was. The underground OPS centre has been restored back to its wartime state.

The participation of many SPAA members in their seaplanes gave the opening a really special vibe.

In attendance were 3 Lake Amphibians, a Husky float plane, a Cessna Bird Dog Amphibian, a Cessna C-185 Float plane and 4 SeaRey Amphibians.

Joyflights for the volunteers and the public were immensely popular.

Bad weather in the Sydney basin prevented several NSW members from attending and a paperwork challenge blocked the participation of several Super Petrels (see stories next page).

Jack Peters

A special weekend for me. I could finally put faces to the names I speak to on the intranet site. And with lots of instruction from Kevin Bowe I also achieved my water endorsement. A great way to spend a weekend and I look forward to many more.

Peter Gibberd

What an experience! 1,834 nm (3,400 km) with 30 hours flying, 14 land landings and 22 water landings.

Two days flying from Brisbane to get to Lake Boga with a stopover at Lake Cargelligo, I love flying a seaplane, you get such a warm welcome wherever you go and catching up with seaplane pilot friends in itself worth the trip. The bonus was taking the local volunteers for a fly around Lake Boga, some had never seen their town from the air.

Life is all about making memories. Not every weekend becomes a lifetime memory but the Lake Boga 2012 will become one of mine.

David Geers (VH-XWW)

Our little ship needed maintenance and so Donna and I departed Wedderburn later than we had intended. However this made for a beautiful arrival at Boga. We were the last in and we alighted on the lake with the sun setting in the west - it was beautiful.



There was a huge welcoming crowd on the ramp clapping and taking photos, we felt like "Rock Stars" coming up the ramp. David marshalled us (using two empty beer bottles) to our parking spot in the main street. Lions Club volunteers watched our wing tips as we squeezed

between the telegraph poles and other obstacles, all very helpful. The next day was full of excitement, especially providing the volunteers with joy flights around the lake.

The accommodation was excellent and everybody at the venue was truly helpful and friendly, a great weekend.
Bill & Donna Handley



Lake Boga was a great weekend for Jo and me. Our Lake Boga hosts greeted us with a complimentary courtesy bus at Swan Hill airport, delivered us to our accommodation and onto dinners at night. Thanks to the Swan Hill / Lake Boga communities for outstanding hospitality and support.

My only disappointment was that with my Petrel grounded by the weight of paperwork I had to come without my water wings. I hope it becomes an annual event. I will be back in the Petrel next time.
Vaun Moncur



A Pain in the Boga

The Lake Boga fly-in was an outstanding success, thanks to excellent work by the organising volunteers. But the weekend was not without its difficulties as the stories below illustrate.



Beached, Bent & Bugged before Boga!

I was headed for Lake Boga, but the wx in the Sydney basin was appalling. Twice I departed but discretion required a return to home area to avoid bad wx.

Eventually I gave up and landed on Hardys Bay (close to home). Whilst beaching there I ran into a submerged log.

BENT AXLE - Bugger!

So now I could not land at my home base (YSMB), although with cloud on the ground at that time it would have been a while anyway.

I water taxied to a friend's beach to make repairs.

But, where can I get an axle in a hurry? Teddy Munckton had a spare and sent it by OVERNIGHT post - it took TWO days! But we had an axle. Didn't fit (another story).

Eventually fitted an axle and by then wx cleared enough to get 'home'.

But I didn't get to Lake Boga, maybe next year.

Jim Moline



The view out my windscreen as I contemplated departing the Sydney Basin

Paper Prevents Petrels Participating!

It was the Thursday before the Boga fly-in and Super petrels from Vic & Qld were preparing to depart their home base to take part in the Lake Boga fly-in. The day before their scheduled departure an error was discovered in the paperwork relating to their Australian registration. So even though some of them had been flying here for more than a year, they were grounded. A huge frustration for all concerned.

Vaun Moncur (A Petrel pilot) was determined to get there so he saddled up his trusty Jabiru and flew it instead - he just had to remember NOT to try landing on any of the inviting rivers along the way!



Those that reached Lake Boga had a fantastic weekend

Things that go BUMP in the flight!

Lake Boga was fantastic, and the flight home to Goolwa was "interesting"

20 mins after departing Lake Boga there was a loud bang. We returned to Swan Hill to find that something (probably a nut) had gone through the prop, leaving a hole on its leading edge. We used a knife to smooth the rough edges and found a thread without a nut! We had a spare and replaced it.

We flew back staying close to the Mallee Highway just in case! The headwind grew stronger, and we were concerned we would not have enough fuel to make Goolwa. We headed for Pinnaroo, but the cross wind of 30 knots was not inviting, so we diverted to Meningie.

The mega headwind dropped our GS to 48-50 knots and by the time we got to Meningie we were eating into our 30min reserve. The last 30 mins was a bit scary. We landed at Meningie with a huge cross wind and hitched a ride to town for more fuel.

Back at Goolwa we filled the tank and determined that we had used 88 litres on the trip back. Just as well we refuelled at Meningie, the tank only holds 87 litres!

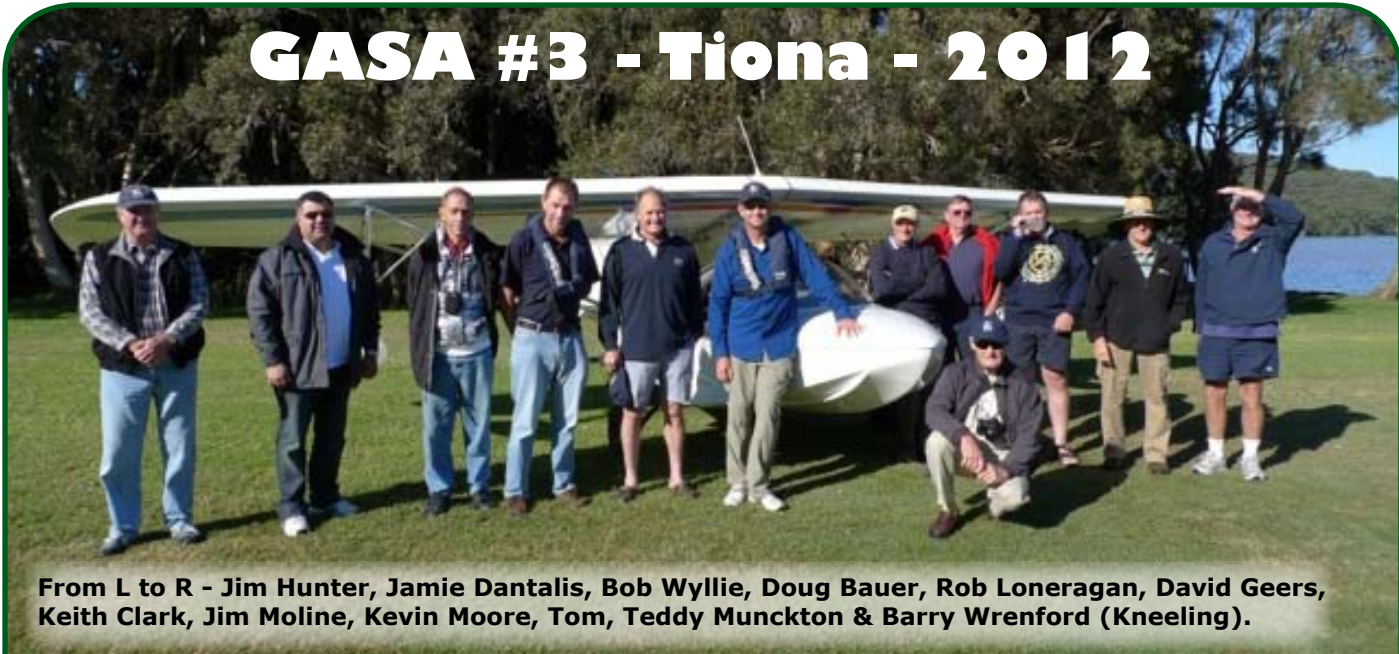
But what a great weekend it was!

Peter Gibberd (SeaRey 19-7078)



**Beached for repairs.
By the time my axle was fixed
the weather was perfect.
But Lake Boga was over!**

GASA #3 - Tiona - 2012



From L to R - Jim Hunter, Jamie Dantalís, Bob Wyllie, Doug Bauer, Rob Loneragan, David Geers, Keith Clark, Jim Moline, Kevin Moore, Tom, Teddy Munckton & Barry Wrenford (Kneeling).

The 3rd Great Australian SeaRey Adventure (GASA#3) was held at Tiona on the NSW central coast over 15-19 May.

Five days of flying together. The weather was outstanding, warm and beautiful.

Five SeaReys attended - Ben Hunter, Jim Moline, David Geers, Teddy Munckton & Rob.

Unfortunately several SeaReys were prevented from attending, Pete & Trish Stuart-Smith had undercarriage problems, Keith Clark had sprag clutch problems and Ross Vining had recently damaged his hull on rocks in the Coorong. However, Pete and Trish and Keith drove to Tiona to take part.

A total of 20 people attended including Bob Wyllie (Vanuatu), Jamie Dantalís (Adelaide), Doug Bauer (Maryborough), Kevin Moore (Mackay) and Marty Corr who are all currently building SeaReys.

A great period of companionship and flying. Let's make GASA#4 even better!

Rob Loneragan

Beached for lunch at "Ripples" Cafe on Wallis Lake.



Australia now has an Albatross!

And isn't she a beauty

Mack McCormack has bought her to Australia as the centre piece of a tourism operation to be based on the Kimberly coast of north western Australia.

She arrived in Newcastle by ship from the USA in April then took to the air and flew through Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide on her way to Perth, leaving a trail of bewitched seaplane lovers in her wake.

Phil Dartnell (SPAA Webmaster) hitched a ride as she passed through Sydney. He is still taking about it!

The sound of the Wrights at full power was something incredible to behold. The landings and the take-offs were so smooth (and extremely exciting!) etc etc etc! (Phil)

I'm just jealous cause I didn't get a ride! Ed.



Last Alighting of the Golden Hind



The Golden Hind

The Short brothers (Eustace and Oswald) started making gas filled balloons in 1897. In 1908 they saw a Wright Brothers aircraft at Le Mans in France and they switched to building aeroplanes. With a third brother (Horace) they established Short Brothers & in 1909 were the first company in the world to undertake volume production of an aircraft design.

They produced many aircraft for WWI and a Short floatplane was the first aircraft to attack a ship with a live torpedo.

In the 1920's & 30's flying boats were favoured for long range civil aviation because they did not need airfields, of which there were few at the time.

The "Short Calcutta" (1928) enabled Imperial Airways to start long-range airline services between outposts in the British Empire. The larger "Short Empire" (1936) became the key to the UK's Empire Airmail scheme.

In 1937 Shorts won a British defence contract to develop the Short Sunderland which was used extensively in WWII for long range antisubmarine work.

Shorts then developed a flying boat with even greater power and range. They called it their "G class". It could cross the Atlantic without refuelling. Imperial Airways ordered 3 of them to begin a transatlantic airline service.

These 3 massive aircraft The Golden Hind, The Golden Fleece & the Golden Horn, built in 1939 & 1940 were sequestered by the RAF in WWII.

Only the Golden Hind survived the war. But her survival was to little avail. The world had moved on, and the era of the giant flying boat had passed

This is the story of the final flight of the Golden Hind.

My thanks to Jack Peters for drawing my attention to this marvellous story.

Ross Vining (VH-RRZ) Editor

Sunset at Rochester

In this article (first published in May 1979) Christopher Blackburn fondly remembers this magnificent craft, the last of the massive G-class flying boats, and her final operation in the spring of 1948

The last alighting of the Golden Hind

"EXPERIENCED FLYING BOAT Pilots and Engineers required. Apply to Fleet Airways, High Street, Chatham, Kent."

It was in March 1948, during the University vacation, that these intriguing lines appeared in the magazine Flight. It took only a few seconds to read them, yet they constantly crept back into my thoughts, distracting me when I needed most to concentrate on my engineering finals.

Of course, any idea of going back to flying was ridiculous. Now the war was over it was time to get down to something serious; I had chosen aeronautical engineering to combine the fascination

of flying boats with my great impulsion to design machines.

Then there was a headline in the News - "Two Young Airmen save the Golden Hind", I could not resist the temptation to go down to see what was going on. I would have given a whole years cheese ration just for a look on board!

EXPERIENCED FLYING BOAT PILOTS & ENGINEERS REQUIRED.

Apply to Fleet Airways, High Street, Chatham, Kent.



The Golden Hind nears completion at the Short Works in Rochester; in June 1939. The second of the three G-Class boats is evident on the right.

The office of Fleet Airways was a small Shop in Chatham High Street, not far from Short's old factory on the Medway at Rochester, where all the beautiful Empire flying boats had been built for Imperial Airways before the war. From them descended the military Sunderland, without which we



"You could fly it, couldn't you?" Ron said.

I gasped, and thought of my experience on the squadron; a couple of hundred hours, mostly as third pilot. Perhaps a dozen circuits in big flying boats, never solo. Of course I had a lot of time on Tiger Moths, but it didn't seem the same.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't possibly", I said.

"I bet you could if you tried, Skipper"

said Ron slyly

Dudley Travers, an old hand from C-class days. The story runs that he always carried a bag of bullseyes when he flew; one day he took off from Augusta without them, and had to go back to pick them up. After a couple of years the airline decided they would have to pension off the elegant old boat - I don't suppose it was anything to do with the cost of landing for supplies of humbugs.

It is easy to look back now to see what a forlorn idea it was to attempt to operate this mighty boat with no capital. There was vague talk of carrying emigrants to Australia, or freight to various romantic places, but none of us realised in those days what natural and bureaucratic obstacles existed to prevent such dreams from coming true.

Meanwhile the Golden Hind - on which Fleet Airways' fortunes rested - still rode at her buoy in Poole Harbour, the BOAC wartime base, waiting to be ferried up to Rochester for a refit. I was invited for the ride, and although I should have been boning up on my Heat Engines and Dynamics, I accepted.

A few days later I joined the two hopeful partners and two mechanics in a tiny pub on the Quay at Poole. Insurance had been arranged for the ferry, and a pilot who had flown the Hind in wartime was coming down in the morning.

should have lost the Battle of the Atlantic and probably the war.

Luckily several of the sultans of the Federated Malay States ordered a flight of Sunderlands to be based in Singapore for their defence and so subsidised the development of this tremendous aircraft. As a very junior second pilot on that squadron I had flown to such glamorous places as Hong Kong, Rangoon, Madras, Penang and Borneo. After a year the war was over and I was back at college.

Fleet Airways, it transpired, consisted of two young men. They had just left the RAF, and in a moment of rash enthusiasm had spent their gratuities on a retired BOAC flying boat. The Golden Hind was the survivor of a fleet of three G-class boats built at Rochester just before the war to open up an Air Mail service across the Atlantic. They had the same graceful lines as the C-class Empire boats, but were a great deal bigger.

Called up in the war for military service, the Golden Fleece lost two engines over Finisterre one day in 1941. She came down in the sea, and the U-boat she had been chasing rescued her crew.

Golden Horn was lost at Lisbon when an engine caught fire on takeoff. The engineer climbed out through the massive wing to fight the fire, but it was to no avail, and in she went. Her captain was John Lock, author of the best book of true flying boat adventures ever written.

After the war, Golden Hind was refitted by BOAC to carry 24 passengers in two cabins, with an enormous freight hold in the bow and a smart little cocktail bar just aft of it.

But you can't do much with a single aircraft of a type, so they put her on the run between Southampton and Cairo, with a stop each way in Sicily. The Captain was

I turned in early. In my dreams I could already see our elegant craft riding at anchor off a sandy beach, with palm trees lining the shore and native girls along the jetty, just like the tantalising pictures in the BOAC Newsletter.

The following morning dawned beautiful and sunny. From the window of my tiny bedroom I could see our beautiful aircraft riding at her moorings like a silver swan. After breakfast the two mechanics reported she was fuelled up, bilges pumped dry and ready to go.

The morning passed slowly, with no sign of the intrepid birdman from London. We had a beer or two, and sat down to a light lunch to save time later. Darkness might be falling when we arrived.

My two new friends were silent. One had been an Air Gunner, and the other a general Admin. type I think. Now I even forget their names. The Air Gunner - it may have been Ron - went to phone, and came back looking grim; no pilot.

"Looks like Fleet Airways has had it", he said. "With the mooring fees here we are stony broke already. Another day here and we're finished. We've got to get her out!"

He looked at me thoughtfully. "You could fly it, couldn't you?" He said.

I gasped, and thought of my experience on the squadron; a couple of hundred hours, mostly as third pilot. Perhaps a dozen circuits; never solo. Of course I had a lot of time on Tiger Moths, but it didn't seem the same. "I'm sorry, I couldn't possibly", I said.

"I bet you could if you tried, Skipper" said Ron slyly. "If you don't we'll have to sell her again. We'll only get £500 as scrap.

I knew it was madness. I didn't even have a licence, and she was much bigger than a Sunderland. There weren't even any Pilot's Notes, but I was tempted - my

God, I was tempted!

They weren't just allowing me to fly the biggest and most beautiful aircraft in the country, they were begging me to do so! If Vivien Leigh had walked into the bar stark naked and begged me to come upstairs I couldn't have been more tempted.

I said no.

I thought of the long trip to Rochester with time-expired engines, and the fact that it might be almost dusk before we got there, but I knew I could never turn the chance down; all I needed was a good line. "I tell you what we'll do then", I said, "Rochester's a dodgy place to get her down. We'll do some circuits here with plenty of space, and if I feel happy about it I'll take her over". "It's a deal", said Ron. We abandoned our beer and went out to the dinghy. Very soon the enormous wings of the Golden Hind were looming over us.

George Able Fox Charlie Item – that was the call sign, but as we had no radio it made no difference. Her length was 103ft, the wingspan 134ft. Her four engines were Bristol Hercules radials, and she weighed 33 tons all up. Ron and one of the mechanics were to come with me; the others had chosen the low road. We threw our few belongings through the forward port-side door, waved to the boatman, and the door banged shut with a noise like the clap of doom.

I gazed round the vast interior. Opposite me was a little walnut cocktail bar with a line of stools. Aft were two spacious cabins. They provided 24 rather ugly, but comfortable, reclining seats - a ridiculous number for such a gigantic craft. Up in the bow was an enormous hold for freight and baggage, and behind the passenger cabins was another. I followed Ron up the crew ladder into the open spaces of the flight deck. There were spacious positions for the Flight Navigator and Radio Officer, and a spare armchair and a bunk.

The Flight Engineer sat at his tall instrument panel in the wing centre section, and behind him was the Royal Mail compartment. Looking forward I made out the pilots' seats in the middle distance; you could walk right round them.

I settled myself in the Captain's seat, fastened the belt, and felt out the controls. Ron went down to the bow compartment to release the mooring.

"One, four, two, three" I said to the engineer. The outer engines started beautifully, and I signalled Ron to let the short slip go. The old lady moved smoothly forwards a few yards, and then stopped dead. We were hard aground even before I'd started the inner engines! I leaned out of the window. "What the Hell is it?", I yelled at the boatman. "Nothing to worry about", he shouted back, "only mud hereabouts. Swing her round to port - she'll soon come clear!"

A hell of a start, I thought bitterly, but I did what he said, and she came free quite easily. Soon we were steaming down the main "runway", all four engines humming silkily. Ron came up and settled himself in the right-hand seat. "All secure below", he reported.

"Outers warm!" said the engineer in a few minutes.



Very soon the enormous wings of the Golden Hind were looming over us.

I ran them up to about three-quarters throttle and tried the magnetos. Everything seemed perfect, and I followed suit with the inners: all OK. I tried to remember my Tiger Moth takeoff drill: TTMPFF, I think.

'T' for trim. I carefully checked both tabs the whole way and set them back to the centre.

'T' again; something to do with the tail skid I think - not much help.

Mixture rich, OK.

'F' must be for flags! In service we would be flying the light blue Civil Air Ensign and House Flag. "Flags in" called the engineer, and "Fuel OK"

If there was an intercom it wasn't working.

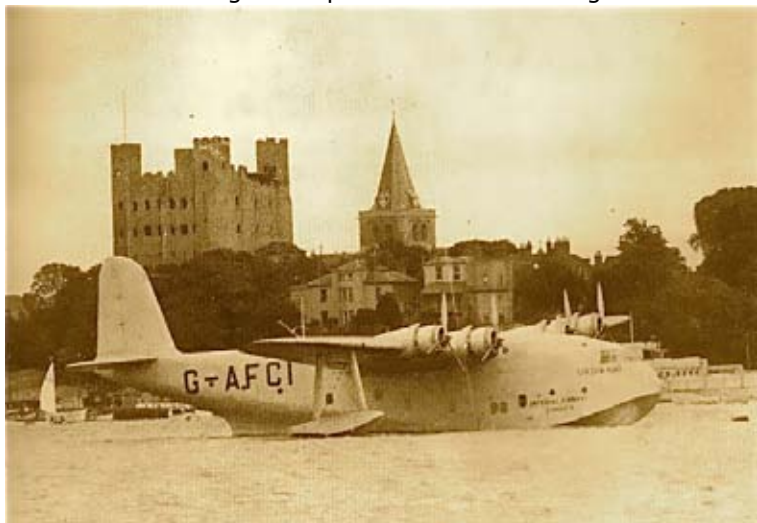
Flaps? I ran the Gouge flaps out to one third. They ran on rails, driven electrically, and took an age.

"All set?" I asked,

"OK, Skipper" said the engineer;

"OK" said my First Officer. They were both brave men.

I pushed the four throttles slowly forward with my open hand, leaving the starboard outer a bit behind. She swung violently to starboard, almost across the runway. The Sunderland had always swung to port. Of course - American engines. I pulled No 1 throttle right back and





The gracious lines of the Golden Hind are apparent in this view of her first take off, Rochester, July 21, 1939 (Flight 17534s)

she swung the other way; eventually I got her straight and started to push the throttles wider. Golden Hind shot from the water like a leaping salmon.

I rammed all the throttles forward as hard as I could. Ahead I could see nothing but the bright blue sky. "HELP ME PUSH!" I yelled to Ron. He grabbed the wheel in front of him and we both pushed together. I fumbled for the elevator trim control and wound it forward and further forward, almost the whole way. Once we had 100kt on the clock we could relax our pressure.

I felt utterly disoriented. I didn't know why the boat seemed to be so tail-heavy, the airspeed so low, and the attitude so nose-down. In fact I couldn't see the nose at all, and I kept wanting to pull back on the wheel to get the long, familiar nose and the front gun turret into view.

I never could - there WAS no nose, so how in hell could I keep her level? In the distance I could see Old Harry Rocks. We were climbing like a Meteor, and with a great deal of mind over matter I wound the trim still further forward.

I'd meant to level off at 1,000 ft to do a circuit, but we were through 2,000 and still climbing.

"I haven't got the hang of it yet at all", I told my Number One. "I couldn't possibly get her down yet. We'd better get up to Rochester, and I'll try and come to terms with her on the way". "OK by me" he said.

He told me later that when they checked the bilges again there was about a ton of water that they'd overlooked in the aftermost bilge. Well, I should have checked myself.

I ran in the flaps, throttled back, and headed up the coast. I could see we were in a nose-dive, but the altimeter still went up. We passed Calshot, where a



squadron of white Sunderlands rode at the trots, then Cowes, where the previous summer I had worked in the vacation on the first, fantastic, Princess flying boat. On we flew, past Portsmouth and Langstone Harbour, intended to be the UK's major airport, and then past Brighton. I gazed down at the tiny field at Friston, near Beachy Head where once I'd been in trouble for another escapade. I once took off from there in a Taylorcraft Cub, taking up a cuddlesome WAAF corporal. I didn't know that 100ft of cable from the runway lighting was trailing from the tail skid. Watchers saw the Cub lift over the telephone lines to Eastbourne hesitate in mid-air, then dive down out of sight

below the trees, never to re-appear.

Actually I was showing off to an impressionable passenger flying down to the sea below tree-top height. Nobody would have paid much attention to a little low flying practice, but when I got back the CO was waiting to call me in. All the phone lines along the coast were out of action, tightly knotted together in a bunch a mile from Beachy Head by a length of electric cable. I hadn't really wanted to go on leave that weekend, anyway.

Now I was in a tighter corner. What goes up must come down, but not necessarily in one piece. At least the old lady was now flying straight and level, and by throttling back I could even persuade her to descend a little. I was beginning to get the feel. Although the engines were humming sweetly I followed the coast right round, turning slowly North, and then back West after Ramsgate.

Soon I could see the Isle of Sheppey ahead, and then Rochester. The Medway wound down past the town like a demented silver snake in the evening sun. There was a short straight stretch in front of the old Short's factory, luckily into wind but it ended in a hill, with houses up the slopes like the backdrop on the stage of a very small theatre. The touchdown had to be right first time; there wouldn't be much of a future for us if we had to overshoot.

I made a run along in front of Short's and soon spotted the dinghy lying off the slipway. I thought of Canopus, Caledonian and Calypso and all their sister ships, of all the Sunderland and G-class boats that had taken off and got down again on this wretched strip of water, proving that it must be possible.

There was no point in hanging around, so I turned downwind, ran out full flaps and tried to think of the landing checks:

BUMPF.

- ▶ **Brakes:** Hell, how I wished I had some!
- ▶ **Undercarriage?** Not today.
- ▶ **Mixture** rich;
- ▶ **Pitch?** Say fairly fine.
- ▶ **Fuel, flaps,** OK --too soon to put out the flags!

Here goes. I brought her in as low as I dared over the dyke, with the railway bridge to port, pulled back the throttles and started to round out. Another hundred yards, I thought, when there was a tremendous thump, followed by a long, ominous silence. We were down,



Airways to take her over, but they had plenty of Hythes, which were more economical. Very much later I went down to the Medway again. The Hind was riding at anchor off Sheerness. An odd character seemed to be living aboard, a watchman probably, but he said he had flown with her in wartime and had now bought her. I asked who he was, but all he would say was "just call me Digger!", and I never did find out.

Digger wanted us to fly Portuguese emigrants out to Brazil. If he'd had the price of the petrol I might have done it, but he couldn't afford a ride on a Bondi tram. Eventually he had the aircraft towed round into the channel that runs between the Isle of Sheppey and the mainland. One night in a storm she dragged her anchor, smashed onto the beach, and was a total loss.

Years later I used to fly over in my Dakota and stare down at the silver bones disintegrating in the shallows, just a few miles from the spot where she first rose from the water one July day in the last summer before the war - the war which so changed the history of the world and the fate of the flying boat.

Christopher Blackburn (first published 1979)

and up again. I grabbed the throttles and started to open up. "It's all right, Skip", said Ron calmly, "you've made it!" and as he spoke there was a quiet hiss from the keel, and then a crescendo of thundering spray. In a few seconds she settled off the step. I remembered to pull the wheel right back into my chest to keep the elevators out of the torrent of water flung up behind. I felt elated in spite of the awful touchdown. I'd forgotten that when the step was just skipping the water the cockpit would still be much higher than that of a Sunderland. Ron slid open the hatch between the seats and went below to resume his duties as a seaman. The boatman probably distrusted our abilities to manoeuvre on the water; at any rate he signalled me to cut the engines, took us in tow, and in a few minutes we were moored to a proper aircraft buoy.

Her engines never ran again. .

We thought then that this was the beginning, not the end.

Sadly, however, Fleet Airways never found the capital they needed for their venture, and as the months passed Golden Hind remained at Rochester. I tried to help by getting the newly-founded Aquila



SeaRey For Sale

**near new - deceased estate
best offer will be accepted**

SeaRey VH-CHI was built by Richard Holgate and his father David.

Richard was tragically killed in an accident last year.

The aircraft has a Rotax 912ULS engine with only 260hrs, it is well built and well maintained.

The family wish to sell the aircraft ASAP.

For more details contact David Holgate.

daveholgate@dodo.com.au

Ph 0438884092

02 6452 1186

SPAA Office Bearers

Chairman:

Phil Dulhunty (02) 9870 7277 Mb: 0413 431 441 chairman@seaplanes.org.au

President:

Rob Loneragan (02) 8003-3130 Mb: 0411 816 300 president@seaplanes.org.au

Vice-President:

Graham White Mb: 0403 625 445 vpresident@seaplanes.org.au

Secretary:

Ben Hunter Mb: 0417 022 712 secretary@seaplanes.org.au

Editor of On-The-Step Newsletter & SA Coordinator

Ross Vining Editor Mb: 0418 493 220 editor@seaplanes.org.au

Treasurer and Membership enquires:

Jim Moline (02) 8003 6998 Mb: 0418 235 879 treasurer@seaplanes.org.au

Advertising and Public Relations:

Philip Dartnell. Mb 0458 605 168 philip.dartnell@hotmail.com

Keith Clark. Mb 0419 237 831 keith.clarkservices@gmail.com

Webmaster:

Philip Dartnell. Mb 0458 605 168 philip.dartnell@hotmail.com

Qld Co-ordinators:

Perry Taylor Mb: 0401 003 161 qldco@seaplanes.org.au

Kevin Bowe (07) 5474 4745 Mb: 0414 744 799 qldco1@seaplanes.org.au

Peter Gash. (07) 5599 4509 Mb: 0412 644 497 qldco2@seaplanes.org.au

David Geers

ACT Co-ordinator:

Peter Stuart-Smith Mb: 0419 287 201 pstuartsmith@srk.com.au

Vic Co-ordinators:

Jack Peters. (03) 9690 5398 Mb: 0414 737 400 vicco@seaplanes.org.au

Doug Thomas. Mb: 0410 560 324 vicco1@seaplanes.org.au

Rod Gunther. (03) 9547 4454 Mb: 0417 688 388

SA Co-ordinator:

Ross Vining Mb: 0418 493 220 editor@seaplanes.org.au

WA Co-ordinator:

Craig Muir (08) 9168 1333 Mb: waco1@seaplanes.org.au

Tasmania Co-ordinators:

Kyle Gardner (03) 6471 7280 Mb: 0419 363 731 tasco@seaplanes.org.au

John Williams Mb: 0428 450 108 tasco1@seaplanes.org.au

Committee Members:

Ben Hunter Merchandise & Mktng. Mb: 0417 022 712 committee1@seaplanes.org.au

Neville Kennard NSW Liaison

Bill Lane Training & Commercial Operations

Brian Dehlsen. Mb 0408 860 971

RAAus Liaison:

vacant

Victorian Commercial Representative:

Rod & Leonie Gunther: Melbourne Seaplanes (03) 9547 4454 Mb: 0418 688 388

Sydney Basin Commercial Representative:

vacant

Local Area Contacts:

Smiths Lake - Steve Ridley (02) 6554 4953 Mb 0408 284 799 steveridley52@yahoo.com.au

Wallaga Lake - Ted Munckton (02) 6493 4055 Mb: 0407 934 055 olcp@bigpond.net.au

St Georges Basin/Nowra - John Daley (02) 4443 4092 Mb: 0412 434 765 delay@optusnet.com.au

R405 Sydney NSW - Rob Loneragan . (02) 8003 3130 Mb: 0411 816 300 rob@searey.com.au

Central Coast (NSW) - Jim Moline Mb: 0418 235 879 treasurer@seaplanes.org.au

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