

# SAILORS, AIRMEN RESCUED

## Daring Catalina Flights To Jap-Patrolled Zone

Daily Telegraph Service and A.A.P.

Catalina flying-boats have figured in two daring rescues of naval crews and airmen in the Pacific.

An R.A.A.F. Catalina flew nearly 1000 miles into enemy territory to save the Australian crew of a Catalina forced down close to a Jap airfield and shipping lane.

On Sunday U.S. Catalina flying-boats rescued the crew of a U.S. destroyer sunk in Ormoc Bay (Philippines) within a few miles of the enemy shore.

DAILY TELEGRAPH  
6-12-44

### Longest Pacific Air Mission

Rescue of the Australian crew 1000 miles from their base was the longest rescue mission of the Pacific war.

The rescue plane was away from its base for 17 hours.

It was piloted by Flying-Officer A. A. Etienne, of Melbourne, and the crew included Flight-Sergeant J. J. Sweeney, of Newcastle, navigator; Flight-Sergeant R. V. Tumeth, of Haberfield, wireless-air gunner; Sergeant A. L. Warton, of Sydney, engineer; S. T. R. Elphick, of Bondi, armorer; and Sergeant J. F. B. Oliver, of Glen Innes, fitter.

For security reasons, the names of the rescued Australian airmen cannot be disclosed.

Their Catalina was hit by anti-aircraft fire over an enemy target, the first shot knocking out the starboard motor and cutting fuel, oil, and electrical lines.

Getting all the power he could from the port motor, the captain took the

flying-boat up to 8000 feet and safely cleared the target area.

But the port engine cracked under the terrific strain, and the Catalina had to land in darkness, three miles off shore.

It hit the water so hard that many rivets in the hull were sprung.

For 12 hours, eight of them in daylight, the flying-boat wallowed in a heavy sea.

Despite the constant bailing, the amount of water in the flying-boat steadily increased. When the crew were taken off the engineer's and navigator's compartments were flooded.

The crew improvised a sea anchor from a parachute and two drogues (aerial gunnery practice targets), but a slight breeze kept the flying-boat drifting steadily along the coast, though no nearer the shore line.

About 8 a.m. the Catalina's engineers got the port engine going. Probably this saved the crew, because it enabled the captain to taxi the plane about 20 miles out to sea.

### Located By Liberator

A few hours later one of two American Liberators searching for the Catalina strafed a Japanese patrol vessel in the inshore area where the Catalina had been all night.

The Liberator search planes dropped supplies to the Catalina crew, and one left to intercept the rescue plane and guide it to the area.

When Flying-Officer Etienne arrived he put his Catalina down in a three-foot swell, and tied up alongside the other flying-boat.

While the Liberators circled overhead, crew and equipment were transferred to the rescue plane, a job which took nearly an hour.

After taking off, Flying-Officer Etienne's gunners and the gunners of one of the Liberators strafed the damaged flying-boat until it burst into flames and sank.

On Sunday night a fleet of Catalinas rescued the crew of an American destroyer which had been sunk dur-

ing a naval action in Ormoc Bay.

The destroyer broke in two and sank less than a minute after being hit.

Today's communique says the destroyer was hit by a floating mine, but some of the survivors say it was hit by an aerial torpedo.

The communique adds that nearly all the crew were saved.

Jim Vine, Daily Telegraph correspondent, says: "Catalina rescue planes from a base on Leyte Island picked up man after man from rafts and floating debris.

"The Catalina crews worked throughout Sunday a few miles from the enemy shore, making trip after trip until not a man remained in the sea.

"The men had been in the water for 14 hours.

"One Catalina probably established a world record when it took off after a three-mile run with 56 passengers, including two stretcher cases."

### Naval Action In Ormoc Bay

Vine says the action in which the destroyer was lost developed when an Allied naval force swept into Ormoc Bay to engage enemy shipping.

Despite return fire from the enemy ships, and attacks from the air and

Two more were probably destroyed.

An American Associated Press correspondent aboard a seaplane tender says the American destroyer was hit by an aerial torpedo.

"A great shudder rent the destroyer as it was hit through the water

"Catalinas sent to the rescue had to pierce heavy low-hanging cloud-banks to find the survivors."

Captain of the sunken destroyer said the destroyer had been under heavy air

attack for an hour before it was hit.

It hit an enemy destroyer in Ormoc Bay five times with five-inch shells, leaving it a mass of flames, the captain said.

In land fighting near Ormoc (Leyte Bay), Allied troops have made their first gains for several days.

Although heavy rain continues, the Allied forces have cleaned up enemy pockets at Limon and have advanced two miles closer to Ormoc, last Japanese stronghold on Leyte.

# Catalina's 1000 Mile Rescue Trip

A RAAF Catalina crew flew nearly 1000 miles into enemy territory to save the crew of another Australian Catalina forced down close to a Jap airfield and shipping lane.

Amazing point of the operation was the failure of the nearby Japanese to locate the helpless flying-boat, despite its vulnerability to observation from sea and sky.

For 12½ hours (eight in daylight) it wallowed in an area in which the day before, American bombers and fighters had met hot interception from Zeros.

The names of the airmen saved cannot be disclosed for security reasons.

The rescue crew comprised:—  
F/O. A. A. Etienne (Melbourne), captain; F/O. I. Robson (Sandy Bay, Tas.), second pilot; F/Sgt. J. J. Sweeney (Newcastle, NSW), navigator; F/Sgt. R. V. Tumeth (Haberfield, NSW) wireless-air-gunner; F/Sgt. D. F. Robertson (Camberwell, Vic.), gunner; Sgt. R. R. Tingman (Brighton, Vic.), engineer; Sgt. A. L. Warton (Sydney), engineer; Sgt. T. R. Elphick (Bondi, NSW), armorer; Sgt. J. F. B. Oliver (Glen Innes, NSW), fitter.

## Hit By Ack-ack

The flying-boat was hit by anti-aircraft fire over a target. The shot knocked out the starboard motor, cutting fuel, oil and electrical lines.

Giving the port motor everything, the captain took the plane up to 8000 feet and safely cleared the target area.

However, the port engine cracked under the terrific strain. The Cat. had to land in darkness three miles off shore. It hit the water so hard that several rivets in the hull were sprung.

The crew had to bale, without pause, wondering the while whether the Japs or rescuers would find them first.

About 8 am the engineers got the port engine going. This probably saved the crew. The Cat. taxied 20 miles or so out to sea.

A few hours later one of two American Liberators searching for the crew strafed a Japanese patrol vessel where the Cat. would have been had the port motor failed to start.

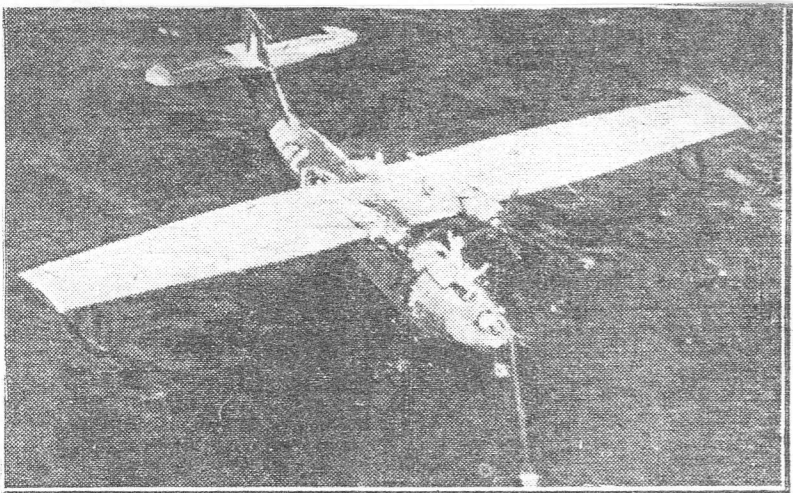
## The Rescue

Finding the stricken Catalina soon afterwards, one Liberator dropped supplies and called up the other. This bomber dropped another parcel a few feet from the aircraft, and left to intercept the rescue aircraft and guide it back.

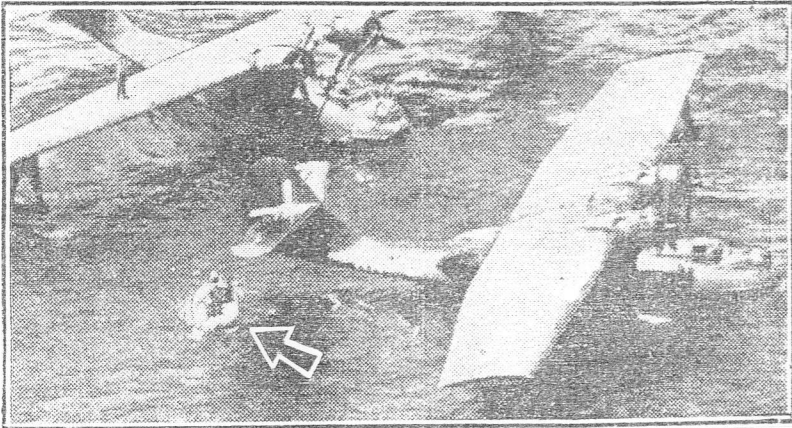
FO Etienne put his Catalina down in a three-foot swell, and tied up alongside the other aircraft.

While the Liberators circled protectively, the crew and equipment were transferred. This took nearly an hour.

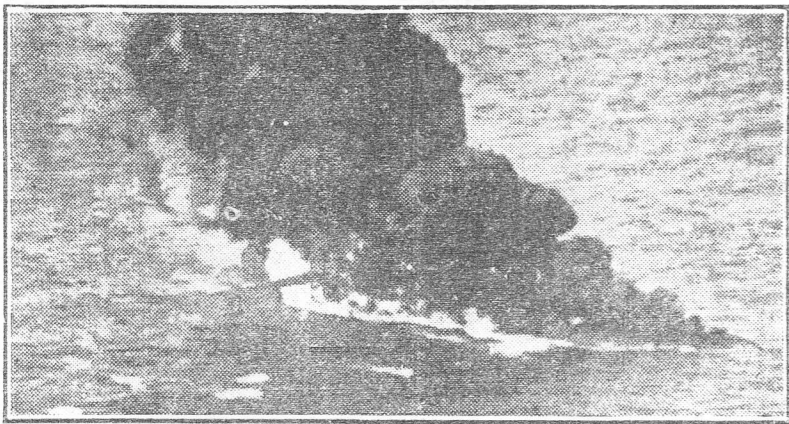
Seventeen hours after his original take-off FO Etienne landed his Catalina back at base.



**DRIFTING.** R.A.A.F. Catalina forced down in enemy waters. The crew narrowly escaped capture, drifted for 12 hours close to a Japanese airfield and shipping lane. An improvised sea anchor checked the plane's drift. DT 6/12/44



**RESCUE.** A second R.A.A.F. Catalina, after flying nearly 1000 miles, takes aboard the crew and equipment from the damaged plane. Arrow indicates rubber dinghy from rescue craft.



**AFLAME.** The damaged flying-boat, after the rescue, is straddled by the rescuing Catalina and left in flames to prevent its capture by the Japs. The mission was the longest daylight rescue undertaken in Pacific war zone.—Department of Air photos.

DAILY TELEGRAPH 6.12.44

SUN (SYDNEY) 6.12.44

# War's Longest Aerial Rescue

**I**N the longest daylight rescue mission of the Pacific War, an R.A.A.F. Catalina crew flew nearly 1000 miles into enemy territory to save the crew of another Australian Catalina forced down close to a Jap airfield and shipping lane.

Amazing point of the operation was the failure of the nearby Japanese to locate, or even stumble on, the helpless flying boat, despite its vulnerability to observation from sea and sky.

**F**OR 12½ hours (eight in daylight) the crippled Catalina wallowed in an area in which, only the day before, American bombers and fighters had met hot interception from Zeros.

For sheer daring, the rescue, effected in daylight, virtually under the nose of the enemy, ranks as one of the R.A.A.F.'s greatest exploits.

The names of the airmen saved cannot be disclosed for security reasons.

The rescue crew comprised: W./O. A. A. Etienne (Melbourne), captain; F./O. I. Robson (Sandy Bay, Tas.), second pilot; F./Sgt. J. J. Sweeney (Newcastle, N.S.W.), navigator; F./Sgt. R. V. Tuneth (Haberfield, N.S.W.), wireless-air-gunner; F./Sgt. D. P. Robertson (Camberwell, Vic.), gunner; Sgt. R. R. Tingman (Brighton, Vic.), engineer; Sgt. A. E. Warton (Sydney), engineer; Sgt. T. R. Elpbick (Bondi, N.S.W.), armorer; Sgt. J. F. B. Oliver (Glen Innes, N.S.W.), fitter.

The flying boat was hit by anti-aircraft fire over a target. The first shot knocked out the starboard motor, cutting fuel, oil and electrical lines.

## Engine Cracks

Giving the port motor everything, the captain took the aircraft up to 3000ft. and safely cleared the target area. However, the port engine cracked under the terrific strain. The Cat. had to land in darkness three miles offshore. It hit the water so hard that several rivets in the hull were sprung.

Throughout their stay off the hostile coast the crew had to bale without pause, wondering the while whe-

ther the Japs or rescuers would find them first. Despite baling, water rose steadily. The engineer's and navigator's compartments were flooded when the men were taken off.

A parachute and two drogues were thrown out as sea anchors, but did not stop the flying-boat from drifting. During the night the throb of a motor vessel was heard, but the ship did not sight the plane.

About 8 a.m. the engineers got the port engine going. This probably saved the crew. The Cat. taxied 20 miles or so out to sea.

A few hours later one of two American Liberators searching for the crew strafed a Japanese patrol vessel where the Cat. would have been had the port motor failed to start.

## Damaged Plane Sunk

The Liberators were captained by Major H. C. Williams, of Missouri, and Lieut. T. J. Lenihan, of Iowa.

Finding the stricken Catalina soon afterwards, one Liberator dropped supplies and called up the other. This bomber dropped another parcel a few feet from the aircraft, and left to intercept the rescue aircraft and guide it back.

F/O. Etienne put his Catalina down in a three-foot swell and tied up alongside the other aircraft. While the Liberators circled protectively, the crew and equipment were transferred. This took nearly an hour.

Before leaving, F/O Etienne's gunners and one of the Liberators strafed the damaged seaplane and waited until it burst into flames and sank.

Seventeen hours after his original take-off, F/O Etienne landed his Catalina back at base.

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