



*Martin Mariner flying boat A70-3 in Bowen in May 1944. In December 1943 this had passed through Lake Boga after its delivery flight from the US. (AWM)*

reaching the Indian Ocean at Kingston SE, near Robe, some 260 miles over distance. Fortunately for the six-man crew, the sudden appearance of a flying boat at Kingston had alerted local members of the VAOC, the Volunteer Air Observers Corp, a nationwide body entrusted with reporting unexpected aircraft sightings. Cat #6 was low on fuel, had engine trouble, but made a successful ocean landing. Overnight accommodation was found for the Americans, and the following morning, the engine problem was rectified. The navigator was provided with a more detailed map, and with assistance from the VAOC the Cat was gassed. The aircraft then battered its way across the ocean, lifted and was once again on its way to Lake Boga.

On 13 November personnel were saddened by news of the death of one of their number, Corporal Charles J Buchholz, who had been killed in a motorcycle accident. Following a funeral service, the 23-year-old corporal, from Monto, Queensland, was buried in the War Grave Section of the Lake Boga Cemetery. In due course the RAAF Register of Deaths and Burials recorded the circumstance surrounding Buchholz' demise under the requisite category: Ground Accident.

Towards month's end, the silhouette of yet another type of flying boat entered the area, circling the lake on its descending legs and alighted after what appeared a deceptively slow approach. Among a flurry of wild fowl, Squadron Leader Sam Wood DFC, brought in A70-1, the first of twelve newly acquired RAAF Martin Mariner flying boats. Safely down after a long ferry flight from the US, the flying boat taxied towards the marine craft which directed the Mariner's skipper to a vacant buoy. With a clatter, the Mariner's motors coughed and died, its massive four bladed propellers stilled. A large bow door swung open as a crew member with a boat hook secured a mooring line.

Through November, Mariners continued to arrive, and after beaching gear was attached, were unceremoniously towed, tail first, up the concrete slipway, then hauled to a hangar or placed in the open awaiting their turn for operational fitment, a coat of matt jungle green paint and service. The heavier Mariner beaching gear differed from that of Catalinas. Above each main wheel, which was part water filled, a large watertight duralium box was fitted to the beaching arm, thus providing balanced flotation during attachment.

November had been another eventful month. Four aircraft had departed, while fourteen flying boats had arrived: Catalinas, Dorniers and now Martin Mariners.