

Other Names	Catalina Ramp and Hardstand	
Street Address	Thomas Street	Bowen
Title Details/ GPS Coordinates	168SP129648	(E: 630293 N: 7785909)

Historical Context

The association of RAAF amphibious aircraft with Bowen extends back to the late 1920s when 101 Flight operated Supermarine Seagull III bi-planes from the seaplane tender HMAS Albatross, to obtain aerial photography over parts of the Great Barrier Reef. From the early years of World War II, RAAF No.9 Fleet Cooperation Squadron operated Seagull V (Walrus) amphibious aircraft from Bowen.

Consolidated Catalina flying boats of RAAF Nos.11 and 20 Squadrons were initially based at Port Moresby, flying long range patrols often involving night bombing of Japanese island strongholds. The Japanese attempt to capture Port Moresby and gain a foothold in the Solomon Islands was thwarted in early May 1942 during the Battle of the Coral Sea. RAAF Catalinas flew many hours of reconnaissance missions over the Coral Sea searching for the Port Moresby invasion fleet.

As the battle began an urgent request was made by the RAAF for a flying boat slipway at Bowen to maintain the Catalinas of Nos. 11 and 20 Squadrons, based there. The first slipway was built at the harbour end of Brisbane Street, north of the town jetty in mid-1942. This section of Brisbane Street is still of concrete construction. The slipway was prefabricated with heavy timbers bolted together in sections. The majority of the structure was underwater and suffered badly from marine borers.

In August 1942 RAAF No.22 Operational Base Unit was established at Bowen to undertake administration and maintenance of the base. The RAAF took over the local picture theatre as a maintenance workshop and most of the squadron officers and ground crews were accommodated in various hotels, houses and shops in the main streets of Bowen. The Denison Hotel served as squadron headquarters and officer's accommodation.

Adjacent shops were used as an airmen's mess, station headquarters, and station store and guard room. Private houses along Dalrymple and George Streets became airmen's barracks, electrical shops, carpenters' shops, an instrument makers' shop, a sergeants' mess, transport sections and a photographic section. Elsewhere in the town houses were converted into a hospital and dental clinic, a parachute store and general equipment stores. Many of the wartime requisitioned buildings in the town survive as private shops and dwellings. In November 1942 Nos. 11 and 20 Catalina squadrons moved their base from Bowen to Cairns. RAAF No.43 Catalina Squadron was formed at Bowen in May 1943. The squadron moved to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria during August to conduct night minelaying operations at Japanese-held ports in the Netherlands East Indies.

RAAF No.1 Flying Boat Maintenance Unit was formed at Bowen in October 1943. Following the decision to upgrade the development of Bowen as a flying boat repair depot, the AWC placed an order for a concrete slipway. The MRC was again responsible for supervising construction of the slipway and additional buildings erected through the Department of Public Works. From the new slipway and concrete maintenance hardstand, additional roadwork was undertaken along Thomas Street and Sinclair Street to provide access within the town, for up to four aircraft hideouts with maintenance hardstands and tie-downs. Requisitions for additional buildings and services including two cantilever maintenance hangars at the repair depot were received by the AWC in April 1944. The cantilever hangars were designed to cover and shade the nose and wings of the flying boats during maintenance. No.1 Flying Boat maintenance Unit was disbanded in March 1947. Following the war one of the hangars was dismantled and re-erected at the Rose Bay flying boat base at Sydney. Part of another wartime building is now incorporated in the clubroom of the Port Denison Sailing Club.

Physical Description

The Catalina Ramp and Hardstand is located on the Bowen foreshore to the south west of Bowen Jetty. The hardstand area comprises a wide expanse of concrete bounded to the north by Thomas Street and Santa Barbara Parade, to the west by the current Port Denison Sailing Club building, to the east by the interpretive display/area and to the south by the water. Sections of the hardstand area close to the interpretive centre have been enclosed by a fence line and the concrete has been painted with layout shadows to indicate where flying boats would previously have been located. Some of the hardstand area along the southern edge, adjacent to the waterline is badly damaged and cracked and in need of repair.

The concrete ramp is located to the west of Bowen Jetty. It comprises a concrete slab laid on top of boulders and extends approximately 50 metres into the bay. Supporting concrete infill on either side is deteriorating and cracked.

Integrity	Fair	Condition	Fair
Statutory Listings	No statutory listings		
Non-Statutory Listings	No non-statutory listings		
Inspection Date	16/02/2011		

References

Queensland Government, 2010. Queensland World War II Historic Places Website,

Heritage Significance

Criteria	Definition
A	<i>The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region's history.</i>
Statement	Constructed in 1942-1943, Bowen Catalina Slipway and Hardstand are important in demonstrating Bowen's role as a base for amphibious aircraft during World War II and from where the Catalina flying boats of RAAF Nos.11 and 20 Squadrons could continue to mount operations against the Japanese. The concrete slipway and expansive hardstand area remain intact as evidence of the important wartime role played by Bowen as a major flying boat repair depot.
B	<i>The place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the region's cultural heritage.</i>
Statement	Bowen's Catalina Slipway and Hardstand are significant as the only example of World War II flying boat base infrastructure in the region. As one of only four flying boat bases across Queensland, it is also significant as an uncommon example of its type.

Location Map



Source: Google Earth Pro.

<http://www.publicworks.qld.gov.au/sites/qldwiiplaces/Pages/Places.aspx?PlaceCode=QWWIIHP-111>.

Pearce, Howard, 2009. WWII NQ: A cultural heritage overview of significant places in the defence of north Queensland during WWII. Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane.