

Basic Detail Report



ANMS1404[026]

Title

Pilots in the cockpit of an Ansett Airways flying boat

Date

c 1951

Primary Maker

Gervaise Churchill Purcell

Medium

Cellulose (nitrate or acetate) negative, black and white

Dimensions

Overall: 100 x 125 mm

Name

Negative

History

During World War II, the RAAF used Catalina flying boats to fly to Lord Howe Island. Post-war, commercial airlines began to establish regular passenger services using flying boats in this Pacific region. The World Heritage site of Lord Howe Island is located in the Pacific Ocean, approximately 660kms off the north coast of mainland New South Wales. From the post-war period right up until 1974, the island's primary connection to the mainland was by flying boat. Ansett Airways took over the regular passenger service from Rose Bay in Sydney to Lord Howe Island, in the early 1950s. Prior to this, both Trans Oceanic Airways and QANTAS Airways had operated the passenger service, utilising both Catalina and Sunderland flying boats. Ansett introduced the converted Sandringham flying boats Beachcomber, Islander and Pacific Chieftain for the regular Sydney-Lord Howe Island route, representing a major rebuild of the Sunderland for civilian service, with seating capacity for 42 passengers in various configurations. In Ansett Airways colours, the Sandringham flying boats operated the three hour journey from Sydney to Lord Howe Island, and back, up to six times a week during peak periods, right up until 1974 - the last scheduled use of flying boats of this size in the world. By this time, an airstrip had been constructed on Lord Howe Island, and the economy of land aircraft compared to flying boats meant that this rather romantic mode of transport was superseded. Although flying boat VH BRE Pacific Chieftain was wrecked in a storm during an overnight stay at Lord Howe Island, on the first leg of a charter to Polynesia in 1963, both Beachcomber and Islander continued the Sydney-Lord Howe service up until its end, and survive today in museum collections. The flying boat VH BRC Beachcomber can be seen at the Solent Sky Museum (previously known as Southampton Hall of Aviation), Southampton, Hampshire UK, and flying boat VH BRF Islander is on display at the Fantasy of Flight Museum, Miami, Florida USA.