

One aircraft each of Nos. 11 and 20 Squadrons failed to locate the datum points and jettisoned their mines, while a No. 11 Squadron aircraft failed to release one of its mines and returned to San Pedro Bay with it hung up. Other aircraft released their mines with little opposition, with some reports that the lights of Manila were still turned on. While the mission was successful, A24-64 flown by Flight Lieutenant Herbert C Roberts failed to return after missing a planned rendezvous over Cape Calavite and was presumed to have flown into a hill.

It was not until March 2019 that the RAAF investigated a crash site:

... south-east of Cape Calavite on the north-west end of Mindoro Island, after they became aware of several artefacts at this location in 2014. These artefacts consisted of a small metal tube engraved with the aircraft manufacturer's logo, a brass crown identified by the RAAF Museum as part of an early RAAF officer's cap badge, and .303 ammunition. Although little remained of the aircraft, a number of small items of wreckage were found with metal detectors on this recent visit. Several items were subsequently identified as unique to the Catalina, which when combined with other evidence, confirmed the wreck site was the missing aircraft.

Killed in the crash of A24-64 were Roberts; Flight Lieutenants Frank W Silvester and James H Cox; Flying Officer Robert C Barbour and Raymond H Bradstreet; Flight Sergeant David J Albert; and Sergeants John C MacDonald, James R Robinson and Harold S Goodchild.

Meanwhile a further Catalina unit had formed at Darwin on 10 December, with the establishment of No. 112 Air Sea Rescue Flight under the command of Squadron Leader K Crisp. The first mission was flown on 27 December when Crisp borrowed a No. 20 Squadron Catalina. It was flown back from the Philippines following the Manila Bay mission, to the Semoes and Nila Islands to rescue an Allied meteorological party. The unit received its first dedicated aircraft, A24-56, on Boxing Day.

Soerabaya continued to be a prime target during January 1945 despite the monsoon creating difficulties for the Catalina crews. A24-204 was lost during one mission on 27 January during a minelaying mission in Laoet Strait. Other aircraft on the operation reported cyclonic weather over the Timor Sea. No trace of Flight Lieutenant Jim Seage's crew was found. Also missing was Pilot Officers P Laney and PM Brown; Warrant Officers VM Browness and HR Wickham; Flight Sergeant RL Warne; and Sergeants ASR Martin, RC Preston and JK Thomson.

Meanwhile on 14 January A24-96 was on its way to Soerabaya when it experienced engine failure. The aircraft captain, Flight Lieutenant Ron Harrigan, jettisoned his mines however height could



*No. 42 Squadron Catalina A24-96 on 15 January 1945 after making a night landing near Soemba following an engine failure during a minelaying operation. The crew have taken to their inflatable dinghies and are moving across to Catalina A24-60 which had landed to rescue them. (AWM)*