



*A Walrus launches from Canberra in 1942, very likely crewed by VAT and Duncan Murchison.*

In Port Phillip, after practising bombing, the Walrus was recovered by the underway boom method for the first time. Used in rougher swells, this involved VAT getting very wet standing in the fore hatchway to attach a towing line while the TAG clambered onto the upper wing with the propellor turning to secure the sling hook for the aircraft to be hoisted inboard.

Recovery with the ship underway was always hazardous for the Walrus crew. A rapid evolution minimised the ship's vulnerability so recovery with the ship steaming at up to 15 knots was often required. Landing was in the "slick" created by the officer of the watch. Assessing the wind direction for recovery he would put the ship's head some 60 degrees off then order full helm for half a turn before steadying on the recovery course. This created a smooth patch of water on *Canberra's* lee quarter. The pilot would judge his approach to touch down inside the slick then taxi to the ship's side, matching course and speed. From landing to hoist clear could approach



*A normal recovery of Canberra's Walrus in calm seas. While Duncan manoeuvres them alongside, VAT can be seen in the right-hand seat watching the TAG attach the hook in front of the spinning propellor.*

of up to 4g. Airborne they flew to Mascot for the obligatory compass swing.

Several weeks of work-up for the ship and ship's flight followed which included early radar trials, photographing torpedo runs and spotting for the 8-inch main guns. Five more times Murchison and VAT were catapulted into the air when not being hoisted out for take-off.

90 seconds but there were many points of hazard in the process. It was during one such evolution that VAT was hit by the swinging block while hooking on and suffered the facial injury that left him with a permanent scar on his lower left cheek. Scores of junior officers in the years to come learnt to beware when this "war injury" turned from a healthy pink to a startling white.

*Canberra* returned from work-up and secured to No. 1 Buoy, Farm Cove, on 29 May just