



*Passengers from Liberator G-AGKT stretch their legs during a Learmonth stopover in 1945. (Geoff Goodall Collection)*



*Liberator G-AGKT flies the Australian Civil Aviation Ensign during refuelling at Learmonth. (Qantas)*

Liberator and Catalina flight engineer positions were manned by Perth-based maintenance engineers endorsed for the flight engineer role. After the Liberators settled into service, flight engineers were not usually carried between Learmonth and Ceylon, because problems were anticipated to be rectified on the first leg from Perth. This allowed extra payload to be carried across the ocean but gave the engineer two days on the ground at Learmonth waiting for the aircraft's return, when he would be part of the crew for the flight back to Perth. These breaks at Learmonth were hardly a holiday, because there was little for

the engineers to do, except fishing, and the RAAF mess provided only minimal hospitality towards the Qantas "civies".

From June 1945 Learmonth was used by both Liberators and Lancastrians, and with increasing numbers of passengers passing through, the QEA terminal's basic facilities were improved. The Qantas base shared the desolate airfield with a DCA Aeradio Unit and occasional RAAF detachments. By February 1946, Learmonth was handling ten Qantas flights weekly. But that was soon to end as Singapore and the Netherlands East Indies re-opened to airlines.