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Part Ten: 'A Flying Boat Finale at Poole from 1953' 'Remains of Their Day'

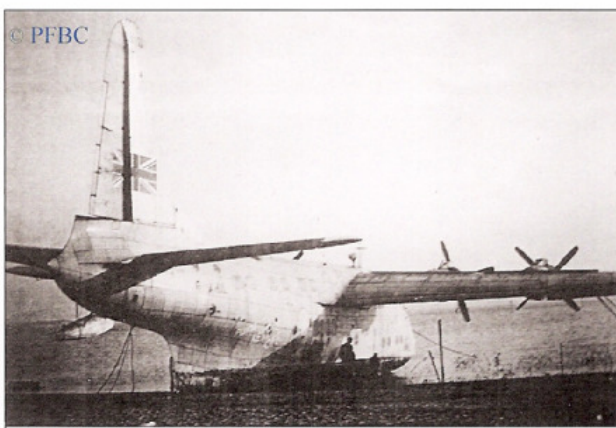
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During the relatively brief period from 1953 through to March 1959, the former Flying Boat base of RAF Hamworthy along the foreshore of the Lake District of Hamworthy - Poole, became a place for storage, and eventual dismantling ! This involved the nearest set of Moorings, the Slipway & the Hardstanding of the Yard which were cleared accordingly ready to gradually receive a mixture of Sandringham 5s and 7s Flying Boats, and a cross-section of the Solent Classes.

This era was extended by a further site on the shore at Lower Hamworthy 2½ km or so down Poole Harbour from Lake where a handful of Solent Class Flying Boats was hauled on shore & scrapped, with 2 remaining until the early 1960s.

So within approximately the span of a decade the History of the Flying Boats at Poole significantly encompassed many distinctive and evocative scenes at these 2 sites which for many local people still invoke strong images vividly recalled.

Upon the shore at Lower Hamworthy, when sat upon your father's knees in order to see out of the cockpit windscreen, collective imaginations took in routes of the Solent Class Flying Boats across the Med., to the Middle East, and India; also down the Nile to the African Rift Valley and its Lakes either heading for the coast of E. Africa, or to South Africa: In observing Egyptian pyramids, spotting wildlife - especially herds of elephants, then reaching glorious Victoria Falls. Yet the most tangible task was to head out towards Corfe Castle before approaching a runway & turning into the wind ! The 'Oysterman' was in charge down on the shore there & looked after the Flying Boats as well as his tanks of oysters.

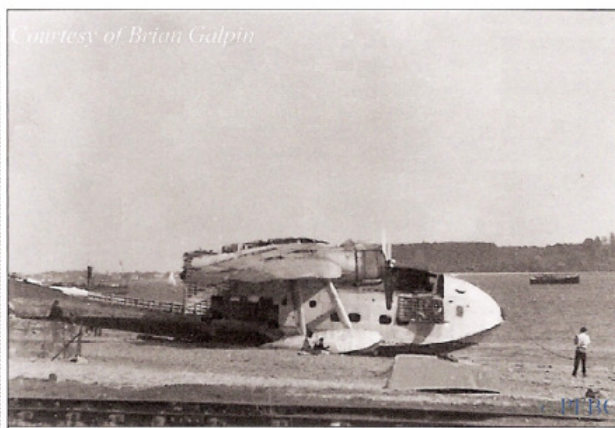


G-AHIL City of Salisbury at Lower Hamworthy in 1954

Left: G-AHIL was beached in front of the oyster tanks

Right: Family on the shore, in the lee of G-AHIL sadly being partly dismantled...

Note: railway in foreground



G-AHIL City of Salisbury at Lower Hamworthy in 1956

Dad was given permission to be on the hulk as he had been a designer with Blackburns so seemed very knowledgeable. As with other people in the early 1950s he had moved to Poole to take advantage of new business & job opportunities ! Various of these had arisen from a role that Poole had played in the salvage of valuable wartime equipment / materials, including those of the many American forces which had been based in & around the area from the build up for D-Day, and left behind (as not being worthwhile to ship back to the USA) when forces' personnel subsequently returned home. [*A major contingent at Poole in 1944 had been 60 USCG craft - Coastguard Cutters deployed on Search and Rescue.]

At Lake, BOAC Flying Boats deemed to have become obsolete were likely to be scrapped in being reduced to produce, but in some cases (where certain aircraft were still in good condition) offered for sale as being surplus to requirements. In the eventuality a majority were stripped of reusable fittings & machinery before being reclaimed for precious metals, and destined to be manufactured locally as a diverse range of products from powder compacts to electrical components.

The arrivals with a few departures at the Yard by the shoreline of Lake, together with the easily accessible open aspect of the foreshore at Lower Hamworthy, rekindled much of a passion for the Flying Boats which remained within Poole: For there had been more than 650 staff based with BOAC at Poole with approximately 250 each with HMS Daedalus II at the Royal Naval Air Station, Sandbanks up to the Autumn of 1943, and with RAF Hamworthy before January 1944 ! Let alone the numbers of aircrews and their families who had enjoyed being here & decided to make Poole their home; also a significant contingent of local contractors, tradesmen, suppliers, victuallers & landladies who had been involved.

So the reappearance of Flying Boats, various of which had been previously based at Poole, after an absence of 5 years, brought these more conclusively into the public gaze, the close scrutiny of enthusiasts and the focus of photographers... as well as it is rumoured (and is hardly surprising) some trophy hunters who scrambled around to gather memorabilia ! - Whilst for a new generation of admirers these provided a fascination and lasting interest with this magnificent subject.

When BOAC's Fleet of Flying Boats left Poole & relocated to Southampton Water for April 1948, to join those already at Hythe just in advance of an official opening of Berth 50 on 14th. April by Lord Nathan & the Mayor of Southampton as the new Marine Terminal, the Moorings throughout the Harbour were vacated except for those of Lower Hamworthy. In particular, 2 Flying Boats - the largest Empire type *G-AFCI Golden Hind*, and Sunderland V *G-AHJR* remained here.

G-Class Golden Hind had been completed in 1939 at Shorts, but had not been put into passenger service with IAL, for along with the others in the class *G-AFCK Golden Horn* (February 1940) and *G-AFCJ Golden Fleece* (July 1940), all these 3 had been handed over to the Air Ministry, to be impressed by the RAF as X8275, X8273 & X8274 respectively. Subsequently *Golden Hind* & *Golden Horn* were returned to BOAC in December 1941; *Golden Fleece* was lost in June. With only 200 hours so far on the clock *Golden Hind* had joined the Poole-based fleet on the shuttle services to Foynes. However, in July 1944 *Golden Hind* was collected from the UK by Capt. James Peers and delivered through to Durban, for operations on a new route *Cairo-Durban-Kisumu-Seychelles* beginning its association with Captain Dudley Travers.



Left : *G-AFCI Golden Hind* on the Moorings by the wide mouth of the Wareham Channel just off the foreshore of Lwr Hamworthy - which is in the background left

With the opening of the airport in the Seychelles, *Golden Hind* was returned to the UK in 1945 - for overhaul at Belfast. From Sept. 1946, *Golden Hind* was placed on the regular Poole-Cairo services with Capt. Dudley Travers in command. These flights finished in September 1947, so after storage at Hythe *Golden Hind* was sold to BMS Ltd. and returned to Poole in November, to spend several months languishing on Moorings here, before eventually departing for Rochester. Despite various plans for new ventures and then conservation, in March 1954 *Golden Hind* was damaged beyond repair in a storm whilst moored at Harty Ferry, on the R.Swale (sadly just after jigs at Shorts Rochester had been broken up) !

Sunderland V *G-AHJR* passed to BOAC on loan from the RAF for trialling & training purposes on 9th. November 1945 and remained at Poole in April 1948, until joining the Sunderland Fleet of the RNZAF as 4115Q, for service until 1966. Rather than being scrapped NZ 4115Q was presented to the Museum of Transport & Technology (MoTaT) at Auckland for restoration but this was quite a challenge, nearing completion in 2009 to be placed in a specially constructed hangar.



Left : The RNZAF Sunderland V NZ4115Q photographed at MoTaT awaiting further restoration there...

This aircraft as *G-AHJR* had passed to BOAC from the RAF Nov. 1945, for trialling and training purposes at Poole, in advance of a batch of nine being overhauled and reconfigured, to become the Sandringham 5 Class replacing Hythes on the Karachi run

In April 1950 US businessman Col. D.M Miller of International Aircraft Sales Inc. had opened negotiations with BOAC for various of its remaining Flying Boats which had been stored at Belfast, also at Hythe and moored off the R. Hamble. His intention / expectation was to broker good deals to potentially sell these on to independent airlines round the world ! With no sales having been concluded, and unable to raise finance, control of the aircraft was transferred to Mentra Ltd. For purposes of care, maintenance & marketing of these aircraft it made sense to bring them closer together at a location such as Southampton Water, but there Aquila Airways which had been formed in 1948, was making progress at Hamble with a fleet of 13 Hythe Class brought directly from BOAC + added to by the acquisition of Solent 3 *G-AKNU* by 1952. Furthermore, Shorts at Belfast wanted the Flying Boats stored there moved, so these were brought temporarily to Hythe.

Then an immediate search was initiated to find a suitable location elsewhere, with established Moorings, Slip and Yard, - where specifically favourable charges for rent and harbour dues might be obtained to ensure that storage was viable... Inevitably, Poole was considered: The main concourse of the harbour, with its yacht clubs, had been restored to sailing, which left only the former RAF Hamworthy base at Lake and the dozen Moorings adjacent to the Hamworthy shoreline. Also, Poole Port Authority agreed to arrange - with good notice, for the clearing of Runway No.1 when it was required.

In the aftermath of the disbanding of 210 - *Catalina Squadron*, on 31st. December 1943, RAF Hamworthy passed to the control of *Transport Command* before its closure on 1st. May, when the R.N. subsumed the site as part of *HMS Turtle*. As such, it played along with the neighbouring *Fuel Depot at Lake* a significant role in the prelude to D-Day & beyond. The former base had generally languished immediately postwar, with the site like many others downgraded for storage, but the Slip with an immediate strip of Hardstanding were occasionally made available to BOAC for minor maintenance by contractors whenever need arose - especially during the *Winter of 1946/7* when Flying Boats were checked for icing. March brought severe gales along the south coast affecting harbour moorings at *Salterns* & also BOAC's base at *Hythe*, so the meagre facilities at Lake sometimes provided an alternative & respite from this onslaught from such bad weather.



Left : *G-AHER Helmsdale* with another Flying Boat on the Holding Moorings; nearby a pier belonging to the Dorset Lake Shipyard.

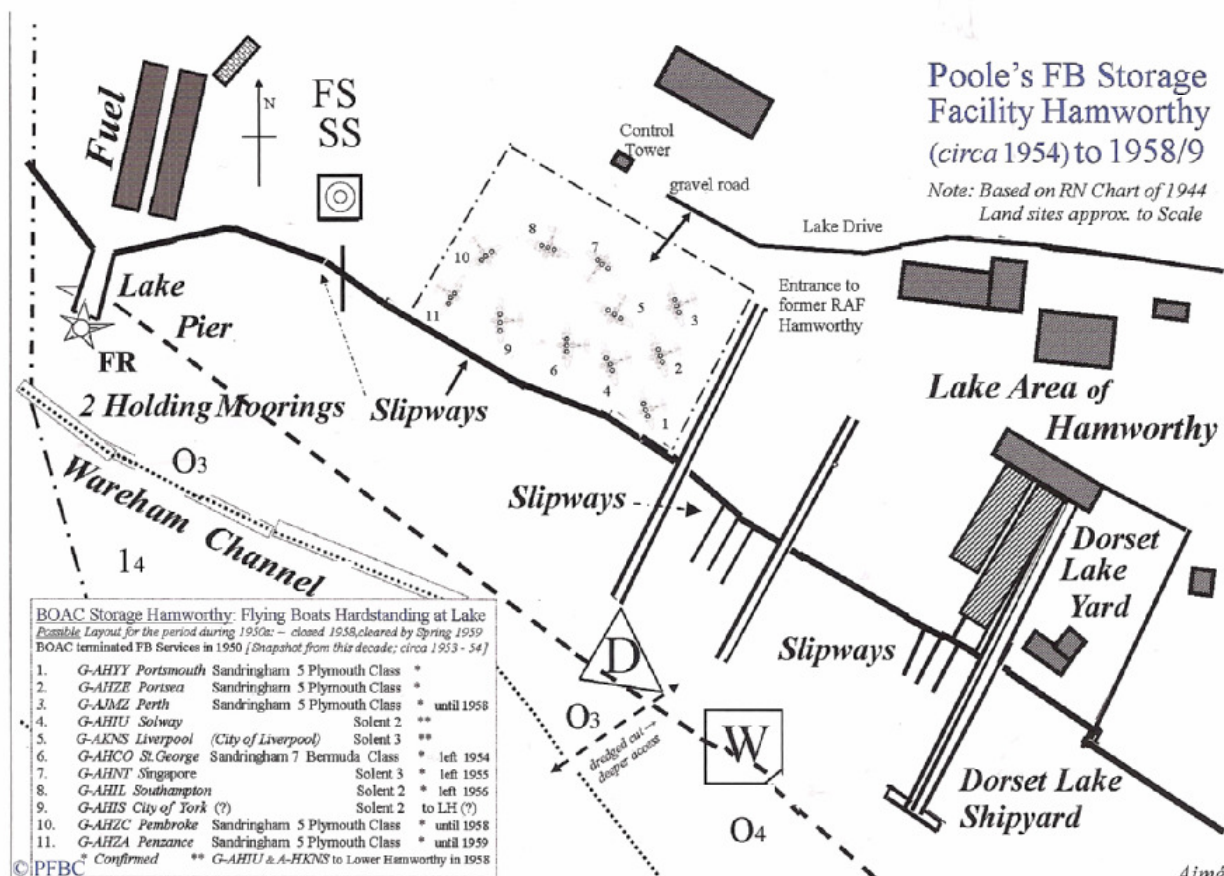
Helmsdale - a *Hythe Class* was used by BOAC as its carrier for the transporting of cargo + a proving flight

Note: Absence of Hangars

Following this period, the *Yard at Lake* became something of 'a dumping ground', and the margins became overgrown, with a perimeter fence & gates falling into a state of disrepair: So it required a major tidy-up to be ready for use again !

Starting in July 1953 and extending through to February '54, a range of Sandringham & Solent Classes arrived at Poole for storage in the Harbour initially on a pair of *Holding Moorings by Lake* - then moved to the 2 sets of *Main Moorings*. These 2 sets were situated alongside the *Wareham Channel* off *Hamworthy Park* & the shoreline of *Lower Hamworthy*, *Ham Park* with 4 moorings, *Lower Hamworthy* with 6, to give a combined total capacity of 12 berths for incoming FBs. Whilst these aircraft were afloat they had to be checked on a very regular basis with popular local boatman *Sandy Wills* contracted to undertake this task and to ferry the maintenance engineers out to the Moorings to 'turn over' their engines. The exacting routine included pumping out the bilges etc. with also checking the mooring and all security arrangements.

Maintenance regimes would be continued when the Flying Boats were eventually brought on shore for storage at Lake: Then the series of going around from aircraft to aircraft, to run each engine became a very audible, established practice! For some local residents this became an issue, and the chorus of 'splutterings' before each engine in turn roared into life could especially be heard some distance away (with the church bells) on Sunday mornings depending on wind direction.





Courtesy of Robin Culpan

A Sandringham 5 *G-AJMZ Perth* became the first 'trolleyed' into the Yard. This as Sunderland Mk.III *JM681* had been built by Shorts at Rochester, then was converted as a Sandringham Class to replace *G-AHYZ* (burnt out before delivery).



Courtesy of Douglas Cook OBE

G-AJMZ Perth, first stored onshore Lake, Hamworthy in 1953



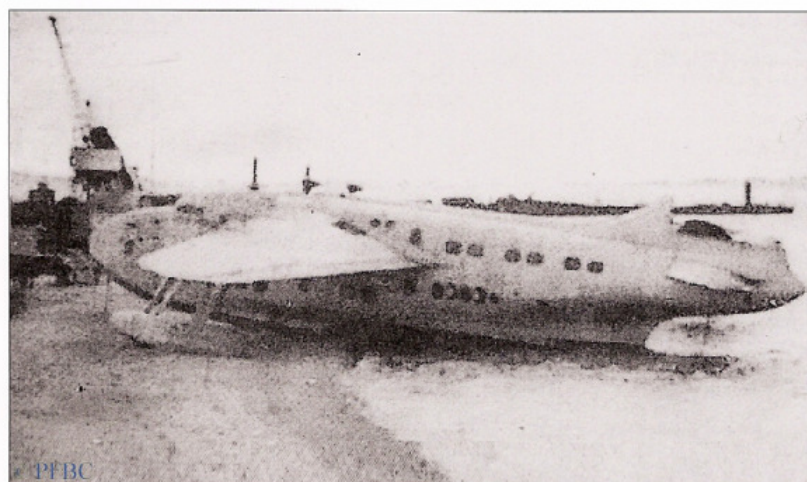
Derek Groves Coll.

G-AHIL City of Salisbury, first beached Lwr. Hamworthy in 1954

The last Flying Boat towed from the Moorings off Lower Hamworthy was the Solent 2 Class *G-AHIL City of Salisbury*. By this time, the Hardstanding in the Yard at Lake had reached sufficient capacity to still allow for some manoeuvring of the various stored aircraft to the Slipway with a view to facilitating potential sales - which had not yet been achieved. Therefore, *City of Salisbury* had to be beached at Lower Hamworthy by *Sandy Wills* and was hauled on shore nose first. There it became an object of considerable curiosity for the beach was easily accessible being popular with lots of locals as paddlers, picnickers, bait diggers & boaties, and also near to *Poole Yacht Club* + many businesses around *New Quay*. The 'Oysterman' as caretaker, reckoned that he could have earned a fortune if every onlooker paid him a viewing fee !

This aircraft remained in tact for some time until various fittings & the engines were removed, exposing miles of cables. Then the fuselage was craned-apart to allow for ease of dismantling, which commenced in 1956 on an incremental basis.

Some accounts refer to *G-AHIS City of York* formerly *Scapa* as being the next scrapped here (being quickly completed), whilst these are contradicted by info. which notes this amongst a batch bought by a farmer and broken up at Felixstowe ! Official records have not been available (unlike the *BA Heritage Collection*), so local informants are a welcome source.



Left : Solent Class 2 Flying Boat as beached at Lower Hamworthy with the detail of the New Quay of Poole Harbour in background; sunken barges form promontory.

This FB is not *City of Salisbury*, - nor the pairing joined together of *City of Liverpool* and *Solway* with the tail fins retained in tact

Some accounts do specify this Solent as *G-AHIS City of York*...



Aerial Photo. of Lake - Hamworthy

Courtesy of John Whitcomb

At **Lake** the aircraft were positioned to fan out around the Yard, with those which had received an expression of interest stored strategically nearer to the Slipway: This included the **Sandringham 7 Bermuda Class G-AKCO St. George** which with 2 others, had been ordered by BOAC as replacements for the trio of Boeing 314As on the Baltimore-Bermuda run. The 3 were trialled at Poole & elsewhere in 1947, registered to BOAC 29th. July - but were not ready for ops until 1948.

However, as the Bermuda service was discontinued, these were mostly deployed on the Dragon Route (Singapore-HK), where sleeping accommodation on board the **Sandringham 7s** was also not essential - and so modified within the design. Whilst **St. Andrew** & **St. David** were destined for CAUSA operations in S. America, **St. George** had been sold in 1954 to 57 year old, **Capt. P.G. Bill Taylor** a very experienced pilot who travelled to the UK for March to supervise his purchase. A bill of sale for £20K was signed **W.S. Shackleton Ltd.**, so **St. George** was flown to Cowes for overhaul at **Saro** in May. [Originally an Aviation Design Company, **W.S. Shackleton Ltd.**, had its Headquarters at 175 Piccadilly, London W.1]

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Courtesy of Anne Norbury

Lft: **G-AKCO St. George** when stored on the Hard at Lake, 1954
Rt: **F-OBIP** moored in a lagoon of a Pacific Ocean Atoll when with RAI...



© Tonga Tourism

Capt. Taylor planned to provide luxury flights for 30 passengers on 6 routes inc. **Fiji, Tonga, Samoa & the Barrier Reef**, to enjoy the layout of **St. George** with its bar, the lounge and 5 cabins, together with a galley for the serving of the meals. Leaving on 4th. November 1954, the delivery route was direct via 10 stops inc. Malta, Karachi etc. instead of a leisurely journey which had been envisaged to take in Madeira, the Caribbean, California & various island groups in the Pacific ! **St. George** was re-registered as **VH-APG Frigate Bird III**; subsequently sold to **Transports Aériens Incontinentaux (TAI)** in May 1958 as **F-OBIP**; before next passing to **Réseau Aérien Interinsulaire (RAI)**; + then eventually being preserved... Australian Flying Boat enthusiasts see this aircraft as *the one that got away* - having hoped that it would be moved there, rather than being transported from Tahiti to become an exhibit at Le Bourget's **Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace** north Paris, whereas the residents of Poole & our Charity **Poole Flying Boats Celebration**, also have equally strong feelings for her !



Left: Solent 3
G-AKNT
Singapore
due to leave
Yard at Lake

Rt: At Lake
a Selection
of FB Classes
- Solents and
Sandringhams



The next of only 3 aircraft which were purchased when stored at Lake was the *Solent 3 G-AKNT Singapore* during 1955. Arrangements were made for an overhaul at *Aquila's Hamble base*, with delivery to *South Pacific Airlines* in November as *N9947F*, from Southampton Water via Reykjavik (Iceland), Halifax (Nova Scotia), Patuxent & Corpus Christi (USA). SPA had also purchased 2 other Solents: the former *G-AHIO Somerset* when *VH-TOB* & *G-AKNP City of Cardiff* when *VH-TOD* with Trans-Oceanic Airways based at Sydney, to be registered in the US as *N9945F* and *N9946F* respectively. The intention was operate between Fiji, Tahiti & Bora-Bora, but the outfit after much expenditure went into liquidation ! The trio were sold to Paul Mantz before then passing in 1959 to the Howard Hughes Collection also based in California. However, *N9945F* & *N9947F* were scrapped in 1974, which just left *N9946F* currently preserved at *Oakland* as *NJ203* !



Lft: G-AHIN
Southampton
on Moorings
(by the Bluff)
just off Lake

Rt: G-AHIN
Southampton
and G-AKCO
St. George to
the fore of the
Yard at Lake



Lastly, the iconic *Solent 2 G-AHIN Southampton* which had resonance with the traditional home of British Flying Boats was bought by *Aquila* to replace *Solent 3 G-ANAJ City of Funchal* damaged in a gale at Santa Margherita in Sept. 1956. *Southampton* had been used as the *Flagship* in the era of BOAC's final FB services from *Berth 50* until November 1950, then piloted from Southampton Water to Poole for storage in 1953, where it was photographed in the lee of Lake Bluff ! 3 years' storage at the Yard had taken their toll - so *Southampton* had to be towed to *Aquila's Hamble Base* for overhaul. This purchase proved to be a good decision for when put back into service following a new Certificate of Air Worthiness *Southampton* again became popular with passengers until transferred to the Portuguese carrier *ARTOP* in October 1958, with the termination of *Aquila's* services... *Southampton* was eventually scrapped at *ARTOP's River Tagus site* in 1971.

With the departure of *St. George, Singapore* & then *Southampton*, by 1957 the remaining *Sandringham Vs* at *Lake* were: *G-AJMZ Perth* (as noted), alongside *G-AHYI Portsmouth*, *G-AHZA Penzance*, *G-AHZC Pembroke* & *G-AHZE Portsea*; - also *Solent 2 G-AHIU Solway* with *Solent 3 G-AKNS City of Liverpool* (formerly *Sheerness*) as subject to negotiations. *Solway* and *City of Liverpool* became subject to speculation regarding a venture and a proposed move to the R.Thames. The plan was to join these 2 together - to form a restaurant, to rival one which was successful in Paris on the R.Sienne ! However, by 1958 the project had run into so many problems that the pair were towed to Lower Hamworthy + beached where following another abortive attempt to reconstitute them as a coffee /snack bar, these made very striking images !



Lft: G-AHZC
Penzance
and G-AHZA
Pembroke
the last pair
dismantled
at Lake, 1959

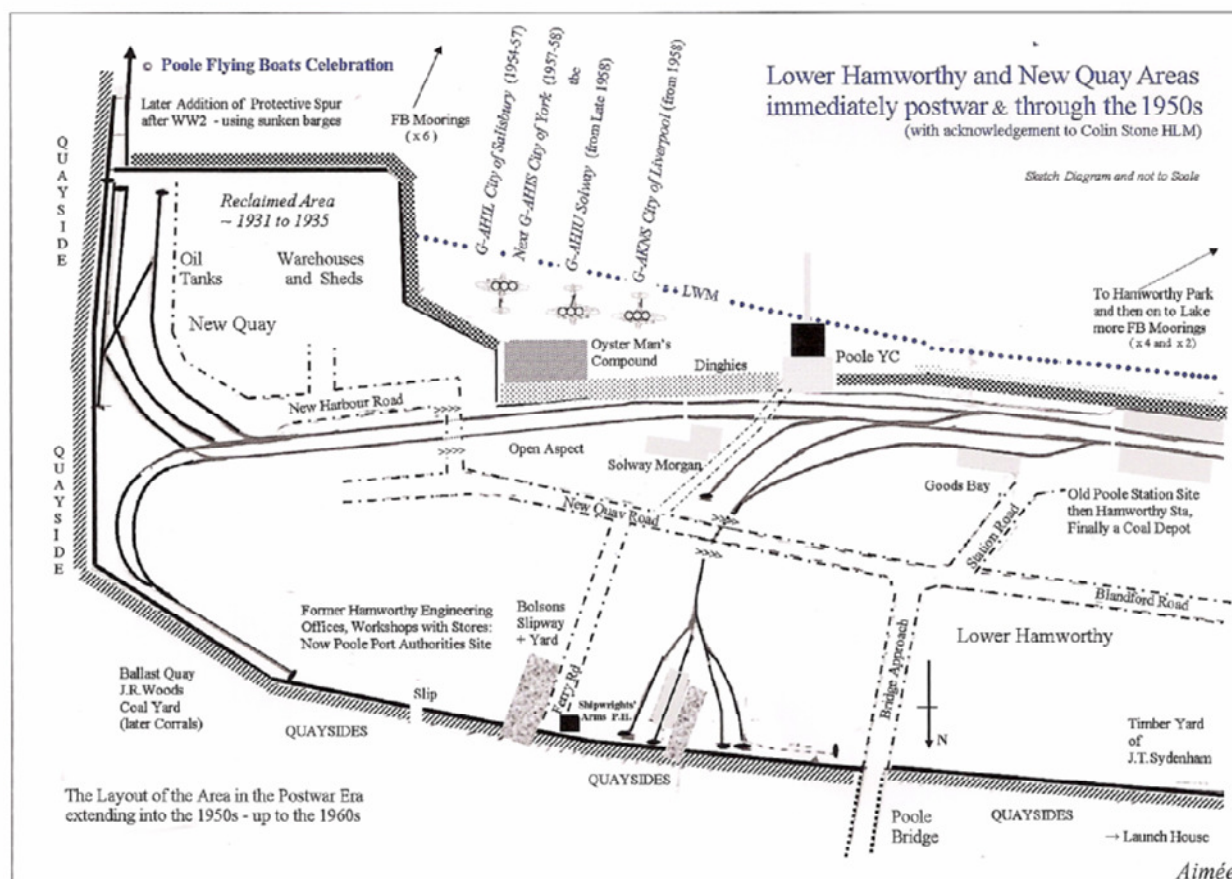
Rt: G-AKNS
and G-AHIU
when ashore
to be joined !





Without any prospect of resale and the [Yard at Lake](#) now required for other purposes, the [Sandringhams](#) were scrapped one after another in being 'reduced to produce', until by late 1958 just [Pembroke](#) and [Penzance](#) were still recognisable. No longer on beaching trolleys - supported by old railway sleepers they were cut up like the others by 'the dismantlers'. Unlike the incremental tail-first method of dismantling deployed at Lower Hamworthy, the midsections were dissected first to separate the wings, the nose and tail parts of the fuselage, to splay these out across the Yard for ease of access... [Penzance](#) was the last one at [Lake](#), put to cutting torches in March 1959, with the Yard then being completely cleared ! Rather poignantly, this was just a dozen years since 9 Sandringham 5s (when overhauled & reconfigured from a batch of the Sunderland Vs) had originally arrived at Poole with [G-AHYX Portsmouth](#) the first to be delivered in March 1947. [*Noteworthy amongst these, was [G-AHZF Poole](#) delivered in July. Also several Solents 2s had arrived in this period.*]

The Royal Marines had taken on part of the site in 1954, and soon their needs were quickly & significantly expanding. Today it is the Amphibious Training Unit Royal Marines (ATURM) - associated with the Special Boat Services (SBS).



This left just the hulks of *Solway* and *City of Liverpool* on the shore at *Lower Hamworthy* as objects of much curiosity. The pair had been joined together in a relatively bizarre formation which at first proved to be stable enough, but left to ravages of the weather and tides (*despite Poole's small tidal range*) when perched on the foreshore. became inundated ! As abandoned hulks (and a source for potential danger), the decision was taken early in the early 1960s to cut these up, and then to recoup the cost of dismantling from the sale of the salvaged materials to dealers supplying local businesses. So much light industry in the area, which was growing in significance at the time, may well have benefitted from this... inc: Solway Morgan, Hamworthy Engineering Ltd., Chalwyn Lamps, Wallis Whitecap, Metalbox & Bluebird Caravans that gave much of the foundation for a growing prosperity of Poole. *A somewhat surprising legacy of the Flying Boats.*

Aimée - with acknowledgement to Mike Phipp, also Ian Andrews, Douglas Cook OBE, Robin Culpan and Brian Galpin