



TASMANIAN AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY Incorporated
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
AIRCRAFT THAT CONTRIBUTED TO TASMANIA'S AVIATION HISTORY
DE HAVILLAND DH.114 HERON

Where are they now? Aircraft that contributed to Tasmania's Aviation History

De Havilland DH. 114 HERON

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Aircraft History

The de Havilland DH.114 Heron was a small propeller driven British airliner that first flew on 10 May 1950. It was a development of the twin-engine de Havilland Dove, with a stretched fuselage and two more engines and was designed as a rugged conventional low wing monoplane with tricycle undercarriage that could be used on regional and commuter routes. A total of 149 were built and it was also exported to about 30 countries. The aircraft was initially powered by four de Havilland Gypsy Queen engines fitted with two blade D H 2/1000/2 constant speed propellers.

With two pilots and seating for up to 17 passengers the Heron was well received by flight crews and passengers alike.

After production ceased in 1963, some companies, notably Riley Aircraft Corporation and Pinair offered modification kits which replaced the Gypsy Queen engines with Lycoming IO-540 or Continental IO-520 engines, which greatly enhanced load carrying and performance.

18 Heron's were registered in Australia.

Tasmanian Operations

Heron's first made their appearance in Tasmania during the early 1980's when local airline, Airlines of Tasmania, purchased VH-CLY and later further acquired VH-CLV, VH-CLT, VH-KAM and VH-CLX. The airline was then currently operating Tasmanian intrastate services and regular flights to Flinders Island, King Island (via Wynyard) and Essendon in Victoria.

Airlines of Tasmania continued using Heron aircraft until 1995.

The operating history and eventual retirement of each of the five aircraft is detailed in the following order of their purchase dates.



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VH-CLT De Havilland DH-114-2D/A1 Heron c/n 14071

This aircraft was built in 1955 for Indian Airlines Corporation and delivered in July 1955. The aircraft was sold to Connellan Airways Ltd and was entered in the Australian Aircraft Register as VH-CLT in March 1963 and in December 1969 was fitted with Lycoming engines. This was the first of the Connellan Herons to undergo the refit at a cost of \$100,000 and some 2,000-man hours.

This aircraft was on the ground in Darwin when "Cyclone Tracey" struck the city in December 1974 but remarkably suffered only minor damage and was back in the air the next day.

The aircraft was placed in storage at Alice Springs Airport in 1981. It was purchased by Airlines of Tasmania in 1983 and ferried to Launceston before entering service in March 1983.

In June 1989 the Heron was withdrawn from service and stored at Launceston Airport. It was removed from the register the same year. The aircraft was subsequently scrapped on site with the fuselage being used as a hunting lodge at Woodbury, a somewhat ignominious ending to the aircraft's life.



The fuselage of VH-CLT now serves as a storage shed in the hills of Woodbury, Tasmania



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VH-CLY - De Havilland DH-114-2D/A1 Heron c/n 14122.

The aircraft was first registered on the Spanish register in 1957. In 1975 the aircraft was purchased by Connellan Airways Ltd, re-engined with Lycoming engines in 1976, and entered the Australian Aircraft Register as VH-CLY in 1976.

In February 1981 the aircraft was withdrawn from service, when Northern Airlines ceased operations, and placed in storage at Alice Springs. In May 1983 it was acquired by Airlines of Tasmania and flown from Alice Springs to Launceston via Leigh Creek and Essendon.

Services then commenced out of Launceston, flying the Flinders and King Island routes, whilst still sporting the basic Northern Airlines livery.

On the 3rd of August 1983, following a flight from King Island via Wynyard to Launceston, the aircraft was on its final approach to Launceston Airport, when attempting a missed approach, the aircraft crashed. Fortunately, the two pilots and five passengers all escaped relatively unscathed; however, it was deemed uneconomical to repair the aircraft and it was written off although some parts were used on other Herons in the fleet.



File photo of VH-CLY



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VH-CLV - De Havilland DH-114-2D/A1 Heron c/n 14124

This Heron had the unique distinction of being built for and delivered to the German Luftwaffe in April 1958, being allocated West German Air Force colours and used as a communication aircraft.

The aircraft was purchased in 1970, by Connellan Airways Ltd, and was placed on the Australian Aircraft Register as VH-CLY in May 1970. In August 1973 this Heron was also fitted with Lycoming Engines. In September 1974 it commenced charter operations for Ansett Airlines of NSW operating Sydney-Lord Howe Island-Sydney route. It returned to the renamed Connellan Airways Ltd Connair in March 1975.

The aircraft was purchased by Airlines of Tasmania in May 1984 and flew a similar schedule to other Airlines of Tasmania Herons continuing operations until the airline suspended operations in February 1997.



Cockpit of a Heron similar to that of VH-CLV

The aircraft was sold to Australian Pacific Air Parts in 1997. As it was unairworthy, it was consequently grounded and removed from the Aircraft Register. In August 1997 it was moved to the Queen Victoria Museum at Inveresk in Launceston and placed in storage, where it is still kept today. The museum is anxious to divest themselves of the aircraft and has had initial discussion with Tasmanian Aviation Historical Association as to a restoration programme for this aircraft. Such discussions are ongoing and the Association, as custodians of *Miss Flinders* restoration and display, are keen to rescue and restore a further aircraft such as this.



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VH-KAM - De Havilland DH-114-2D/A1 Heron c/n 14123

This aircraft was built and initially delivered to AVIACO Spain in 1957 and was then sold to Fiji Airways Ltd in October 1964, before arriving at Connair Australia in May 1975. The aircraft was then purchased by Airlines of Tasmania in July 1985.

In June 1992 the aircraft was leased and ferried to Wellington New Zealand to be operated by Vincent Aviation. At this time the aircraft had accumulated 24,687 hours and thirty minutes of flight time. In September 1993 it was returned to Airlines of Tasmania on the termination of the lease.

The aircraft's final revenue service was conducted on the 9th of November 1994, operating the Launceston - Flinders Island - Launceston route. The aircraft was withdrawn from service in December 1994 and stored at Launceston Airport, with 26,885 flying hours.

Fortunately, this airplane was to achieve a better retirement programme than that of other Herons when the Queensland Air Museum crew arrived in Launceston in February 1998 to prepare the aircraft for transfer to Caloundra.

Loaded on the back of a truck the aircraft was driven to the Queensland Air Museum Caloundra, restored and is currently on display.



VH-KAM on display at Caloundra in her final Airlines of Tasmania Livery



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VH-CLX - De Havilland DH-114-2D/A1 Heron c/n 14198

First flown in January 1957, this aircraft entered the Indian Register in November 1957. It was purchased by Connair in December 1970 and entered the Australian Aircraft Register as VH-CLX in March 1971.

Lycoming engines were installed in January 1972 and the aircraft operated until February 1981. It was placed in storage at Alice Springs Airport until purchased by Airlines of Tasmania in 1986.

VH-CLX was then ferried to Launceston in July 1986 and commenced revenue flights for the airline until 1995 when it was withdrawn from service and stored until the aircraft was sold to Australian Pacific Air Parts for spares in 1997.

In June 2001 the fuselage was donated to the Moorabbin Air Museum in Victoria. The aircraft was removed from the Aircraft Register in May 2004. The aircraft was then purchased from the museum for \$8,009 in about 2020 and then sold once more to an unknown buyer.



A somewhat weather beaten VH-CLX outside the Moorabbin Air Museum



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The Heron's in Tasmania Today

So, there you have it, a brief history of the De Havilland Heron's operations in Tasmania, all operated by Airlines of Tasmania, and used primarily in the Launceston - Flinders Island - Launceston and Launceston - Wynyard - King Island - Wynyard - Launceston routes. The aircraft provided a faithful mode of transportation for both passengers and freight to the islands, offering safe regular transportation for many years.

Only one aircraft, VH-KAM, has been restored and placed on display in Queensland with the others either sold, stripped for parts or parked outside for the elements to gradually eat away.

Fortunately, there is still one aircraft that could be saved. VH-CLV, "Victor", is still housed in Launceston's Queen Victoria Museum awaiting disposal. Some initial discussion with TAHS and the museum has been undertaken although how long the museum wishes to keep the aircraft in storage, we do not know, but the challenge for restoration is there.

Some of the aims and objectives of TAHS is to recognise, document and promote the aviation history of Tasmania and where possible collect and maintain historical items. The society achieved this when they became custodians of *Miss Flinders* than is now proudly on display at Launceston Airport and the same opportunity exists for the Heron.

Hopefully it can be achieved!!



VH-CLV "Victor"