Waterbird Takes Flight



On 23 September 2022, the replica Waterbird, a member of the Navy Wings' Associate Collection, gave her first public flying display at Lake Windermere.

On 25 November 1911, the original had made the first successful flight in Britain by a seaplane and featured on the front page of Flight magazine. The replica is as close as possible to original, save for the modern engine and propeller.

Waterbird was test-flown on behalf of the Admiralty in 1912 by Lieutenant (later Air Chief Marshal) Arthur Longmore. He had landed on water before, but not taken-off.

The first British seaplane school was established at Windermere in 1911 and there was a Royal Naval Air Station for training pilots from 1916-17. The first intake included 9 Canadians and 2 Americans. Amongst the pupils were John Lankester Parker who became Shorts' Chief Test Pilot, Charles Morrish and Henry Boswell, later credited with the first submarine sunk by the RNAS, and William Dickson who went on to be Marshal of the RAF. During 1942-1945,

Sunderland flying boats were built and repaired at Windermere.

At the September event, Navy Wings Chairman, Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham, gave a speech, to which the response was given by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Ben Bathurst. Sir Ben is President of the Lakes Flying Company Ltd.

The Lakes Flying Company, a registered charity, now hopes to raise funds to build a seaplane heritage centre on the shore of Lake Windermere and so provide the replica Waterbird with a permanent base.



