An important part of the Territory’s history has been located in Darwin Harbour.

Minister for Heritage, Len Kiely today announced that the last of six Catalinas sunk during World War Two has been found by Inpex while surveying the seabed for its proposed gas plant and pipeline.

“This is an exciting find, the site of the last Catalina has been a mystery for over 60 years and now we have the last piece of the puzzle,” said Mr Kiely.

“The flying boats were brought to Darwin by the American Navy and were an important part of Darwin’s defence during World War Two, patrolling Australia’s northern waters.

“Three were struck during the first Japanese air strike in 1942 and sank, however no crew members were lost during the attack.

“Another Catalina sank and two crew members were killed when a depth charge accidentally detonated during loading, the bodies of the crew were recovered and the men buried at the Adelaide River War Cemetery.

“The fifth Catalina crashed on take off and sank in August 1945, it’s crew quickly escaped and survived although the wreck can still be seen at very low tides.

“The sixth Catalina caught fire before sinking in the harbour.

“It’s great news that we have finally located all six Catalinas and I thank Inpex for notifying us so quickly of the find.

“The flying boat was located during geophysical surveys of the harbour seabed, which are required before Inpex is able to go ahead with laying pipelines for the LNG gas plant.

“During these surveys the crew came across an unknown wreck, which later confirmed to be the long lost Catalina.

“Inpex will continue its study of all the key issues surrounding the proposal to build a gas plant at Middle Arm, including locating known and unknown shipwrecks.

“Although none of the Catalina sites are war graves or heritage listed it’s important we know their exact position so they can be properly managed during the construction of any pipelines and infrastructure for the proposed Inpex gas plant.”

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