

INDIVIDUAL HISTORY

CURTISS KITTYHAWK 1V 42-106101/A29-556/ 'FX760'/9150M
MUSEUM ACCESSION NUMBER 1994/1347/A

- 1974 New Zealander Dr Charles "Bunny" Darby recovered some thirteen P-40 wrecks from New Guinea (in the same operation that recovered the Beaufort remains incorporated into the Hendon example) on behalf of "Yesterdays Air Force" based at Chino, California. Five came from Tadj. These remains later passed to David Tallichets' Military Aircraft Restoration Company also based at Chino.
- Oct 87 MoD approval given for exchange deal with Tim Routsis of Historic Flying Ltd to Exchange two gate guard Spitfire MK XVI aircraft for a Beaufort and Kittyhawk restored to Museum Display condition by a US/Routsis consortium.
- Jul 88 Exchange deal confirmed.

c.1990 Parts moved to workshop of Bob Schneider's' RJ Aviation at Hawkins, Texas from Chino for restoration. At Chino, two fuselages and a damaged set of wings were available; the fuselages reportedly came from ex RAAF aircraft - A29-556/1172, aP40N-15CU, and A29-1068, a P40N-1CU. It was not originally clear which fuselage went into the RAFM aircraft; however, A29-1068 (also serialled A29-405) was found at the former airstrip at Tadj, near the border between New Guinea and the former Dutch territory of Irian Jaya. It was coded HU-S of No.78 Squadron RAAF and survived as a stripped fuselage. Photo-Pacific Aircraft Wrecks And Where To Find Them (012142) p.57. The C/N of this aircraft was 28580 and the USAAF serial number 42-104818; recorded by one source as being scrapped in Australia in 1948; by 2002 this fuselage is recorded as being under restoration in New Zealand. A29-556/1172 is recorded elsewhere as also being stored/scrapped in the forward operational area in 1944 after operational service in the Far East – see below.

The composite P-40 was assembled from one original (then unidentified) fuselage (Firewall to tail section only, as recovered and shown in photos of the recovery site), seized engine, propeller, port wing (unskinned), and undercarriage parts; it lacks all systems and flying controls. A replica starboard wing, tail section, fairings, spinner and cockpit canopy were built, with the fairings made of fibreglass. Checking of the propeller blades in 2002 revealed that they are Hamilton standard 653A-18 blades as used on C-47s and B-17s, the prop hub also being Dakota type.

However, in 2002 contact was made with Australian P-40 researcher Buz Busby, who suggested where on the airframe to look for i.d details. Study of the airframe at Stafford found the number 1673 faintly stamped on the lower left longeron. This is the Customer Sequence number, indicating the aircraft fuselage is from a P-40N-15CU, USAAF serial 42-106101, Constructor's number 29863, RAAF serial A29-556.

Mr. Busby quotes the USAAF status card;

Model P40N; Serial 42-106101; Funds F-1; AAF Order No. AC-34423; Cost \$36,199.00
Manufacture – Curtiss.

- 24 Aug 1943 Date Received/Accepted by USAAF; Shipped by land to Brooklyn on that date for transshipment to Australia.
- 31 Aug 43 Despatched from US as Australian Air Ministry allocated RAAF serial A29-1172; Mr Busby's own researches indicate that this is the dual serialled A29-556, this being the number actually carried in service. He received a letter from Charles Darby, which stated 'When this aircraft was recovered from Tadj, the external painted US data panel clearly read 42-106101...the entire rear fuselage aft of the tailplane leading edge position was painted white'.

The RAAF airframe record card (copy on RAFM file) gives the following data on A29-556;

Type P-40N No. A29-556 Order No. 42-106101 Received from U.S.A Engine fitted Allison V1710-81

- 23 Oct 43 Date received at 3Air Depot and renumbered as A29-556
- 19 Mar 44 Issued to No.22 Repair & Salvage Unit Replacement Pool, being allocated there the following day.
- 30 Mar 44 Allocated to No. 80 Squadron RAAF, who at this time were operating from the airstrip at Cape Gloucester, New Britain, flying convoy protection patrols and armed reconnaissance missions; 22 Kittyhawks moving to Tadj, Aitape on 29 April 1944 to cover the allied landing at Hollandia. The squadron patrolled over Tadj and Hollandia and covered the invasion convoy, moving to Hollandia on 15 May 1944.
- 14 May 44 Aircraft damaged in landing accident; believed struck by another aircraft. Damage included starboard mainplane 70%, rudder10%; allotment to RSU requested.
- 6 Jun 44 Allocated to No 12 Repair & Salvage Unit.
- 15 Jun 44 Received at No.12 RSU from No 80 Squadron.
- 21 Sep 44 Aircraft damage report on this date airframe 30%; Airscrew 90%; Port Mainplane 20%; starboard mainplane 55%; Undercarriage 30%; 'all movable components of this a/c had been moved prior to inspection' Recommend conversion.(to components) Conversion proceeding & approval anticipated'
- 3 Oct 44 Approval given for aircraft to be converted to components.

And Following recovery;

- Jan 92 Restoration completed by Bob Schneider.
- 25 May 92 Arrived in UK by sea.
- 29 May 92 Delivered by road to RAFM and assembled by 31 May. Photos as initially displayed in main aircraft hall-Air Pictorial Sep 92 p.435; Flypast Aug 92 p.49
- Jun 92 Allocated Maintenance Serial 9150M.
- Later moved to side gallery (Gallery 9).

The aircraft is painted in the markings of No 112 Squadron Kittyhawk FX760/ GA-? Which operated in Italy with the Squadron between 3 and 22 June 1944, being flown in that brief period by Squadron Leader Attearne DFC and F/Lt Reg Wild DFC RAAF; On 22 June No 112 Squadron re-equipped with Mustangs, and FX760 Passed to No. 3 Squadron RAAF on 26 June 1944. Photo of original with No 112 Squadron- Flypast Nov 92 p.67. On 6 August 1944 the aircraft was damaged by AA fire whilst being flown by F/Sgt Finch near Pesaro, and was destroyed by 20mm AA fire in the same area whilst being flown by WOFF Halpin in a dive attack on gun positions on 21 August 1944; he was posted missing believed killed.

- 10 Apr 97 Dismantled and moved by road to storage at RC &RC Cardington.
- 3 Aug 98 One of a number of aircraft donated to the RAFM by the MoD.
- 8 Oct 99 By road to new temporary RAFM RC&RC facility at RAF Wyton, Cambs due to the impending closure of RAF Cardington.

- 16 Nov 2001 By road to new RAFM storage centre at RAF Stafford due to impending closure of RAFM facility at RAF Wyton.
- 11 Mar 03 By road to RAFM Hendon for further display.
- Feb 09 Used 'in situ' to provide master mould by Gateguards UK for commercially fibre-glass P-40 aircraft full-sized models for film use etc.

TEXT; ANDREW SIMPSON

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