



ADF Serials Telegraph News

News for those interested in Australian Military Aircraft History and Serials

Volume 1: Issue2: Autumn 2011

Message Starts:

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 - RAAF to acquire a further Heron UAV to be based in Australia(Perhaps Woomera)for training
 - Request through Foreign Military Sales (USA) for pricing and delivery of a fifth C-17A Transport for 36 Squadron RAAF
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Editor's Note:

We would still welcome further stories and perhaps story topics from those who are interested in contributing

Message Board – Current topics

- Huey A2-085
- More C-17s
- New book, REMEMBRANCES 2Squadron RAAF Vietnam 1967-1971 by Ken Marks
- Crash Of Vampire N6-838 leading off from John MILLER request

These boards can be accessed at: www.adf-messageboard.com.au/invboard/

Story : *The Churchill Wing Offensive Operations*

Chapter 1

Background

Early in March 1942, at the height of Japanese expansion, some of Netherlands East Indies Island chains east of Timor were not yet occupied by the Japanese advancing forces. Shortly after this time, leading nationalists like Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta accepted Japan's offer to rally the public against the Dutch Government and to show their support of the Japanese war effort.

The Dutch authority and governance was still being maintained in some areas. But in the case of the Aroe Island Group, they were eventually ejected and handed over to the Japanese at Dobo in early June 1942.

In a further case during June 1942, this time concerning the Tanimbar and Kai Island Groups, the local pro- Japanese movement of the indigenous population attempted to eject their own Dutch civil authorities at Saumlaki and Toeal respectively. Both failed and these islands remained under Dutch civil control after the local Dutch police placed them under custody.

Having recognised the importance of these island chains for future offensive operations to regain control of the Philippines, General McArthur instructed General Sutherland to effect Operation "Plover"; the re-occupation and establishment of Dutch sovereignty of those island chains on the 27th June 1942.

Plover Force consisted of 3 officers and 75 men from Dutch Military units and a further 29 men and 1 Officer from Australian Military Units to be landed by three individual luggers, for three separate occupation forces for each provincial island centre locations; Dobo, Saumlaki and Toeal.

At the time, RAAF reconnaissance flights were carried out a few days before, culminating in a bombing demonstration on the morning of the landings on the 12th and 13th July 1942, at Dobo and Saumlaki respectively, so as to intimidate the indigenous population from any form of resistance.

Surprisingly, no one seemingly expected the swift Japanese counter landings to these operations that followed on all of these three island groups in late July 1942. Without fighter support, RAAF Hudson patrols continued for the next few weeks, with one 2 Squadron Hudson, A16-234 going missing on a patrol of Saumlaki in the Tanimbar Islands on the 30th July 1942.

According to one report, a Japanese news broadcast reported that a Hudson had collided with a Japanese seaplane and had crashed into the sea near Kai Island. The Crew of A16-234; F/O Robert C. Muecke, F/O Frank S. Moss, P/O Lloyd M. Miners and Sgt James E. Laman were all lost, missing presumed killed.

Thus Operation "Plover" was a disaster, with the remnants of the occupying force evacuated, killed or captured by early August 1942, leaving the three island chains firmly under Japanese military occupation.

A military airfield would be built on Selaroe Island in the Tanimbar Island Group by mid 1943, which would be the subject of numerous raids by NEIAF and RAAF Units, including 18 NEIAF Squadron B-25s, 31 Sqn Beaufighters and 12 Sqn Vengeances, during 1943.

But without fighter support, they would be vulnerable to Japanese fighters, if given ample warning time.

The Churchill Wing goes on the offensive

Much has been written on the air defence of Darwin and its surrounds by the 1st Fighter Wing over the past sixty-eight or so years, but very little has been written in depth of its offensive operations that took place over a period of some fourteen months between 1944 and 1945. These four

operations involved at some time, all of the five RAF/RAAF Spitfire squadrons that were to be based there during the period: 452 Sqn RAAF, 457 Sqn RAAF, 54 Sqn, 548 Sqn and 549 Sqn RAF.

Those intended targets were part of the Netherlands East Indian Island chains stretching east from Timor to Leti, Babar, Tanimbar Island Groups, to the Aru, and Kai Island Groups west of Dutch New Guinea.

Air raids over northern Australia were thankfully becoming a rare event and that expectedly, those pilots of the 1st Fighter Wing were feeling left behind in a backwater far away from the fighting.

Following ongoing reconnaissance flights over Babar and adjoining Sermata islands, intelligence reports were compiled on Japanese installations, particularly noting a Radio Station on Babar Island.

Operational planning for a raid by 1st Fighter Wing was commenced in early April 1944 for a squadron size harassing raid within the range of a slipper tanked Spitfire Mk V. That target would be Babar Island's Radio Station.



A RAAF Hudson in period finish

The reconnaissance flights were not without peril, for as late as March 1944, 2 Squadron RAAF lost an aircraft undertaking a three aircraft reconnaissance flight over Babar Island. Hudson A16-230 had failed to return on the 27th March 1944 and the five crew members; S/Ldr J Scott, F/O D Beddoe, F/Sgt R King, F/Sgt B Wallace, and F/Sgt K Wright were listed as missing.

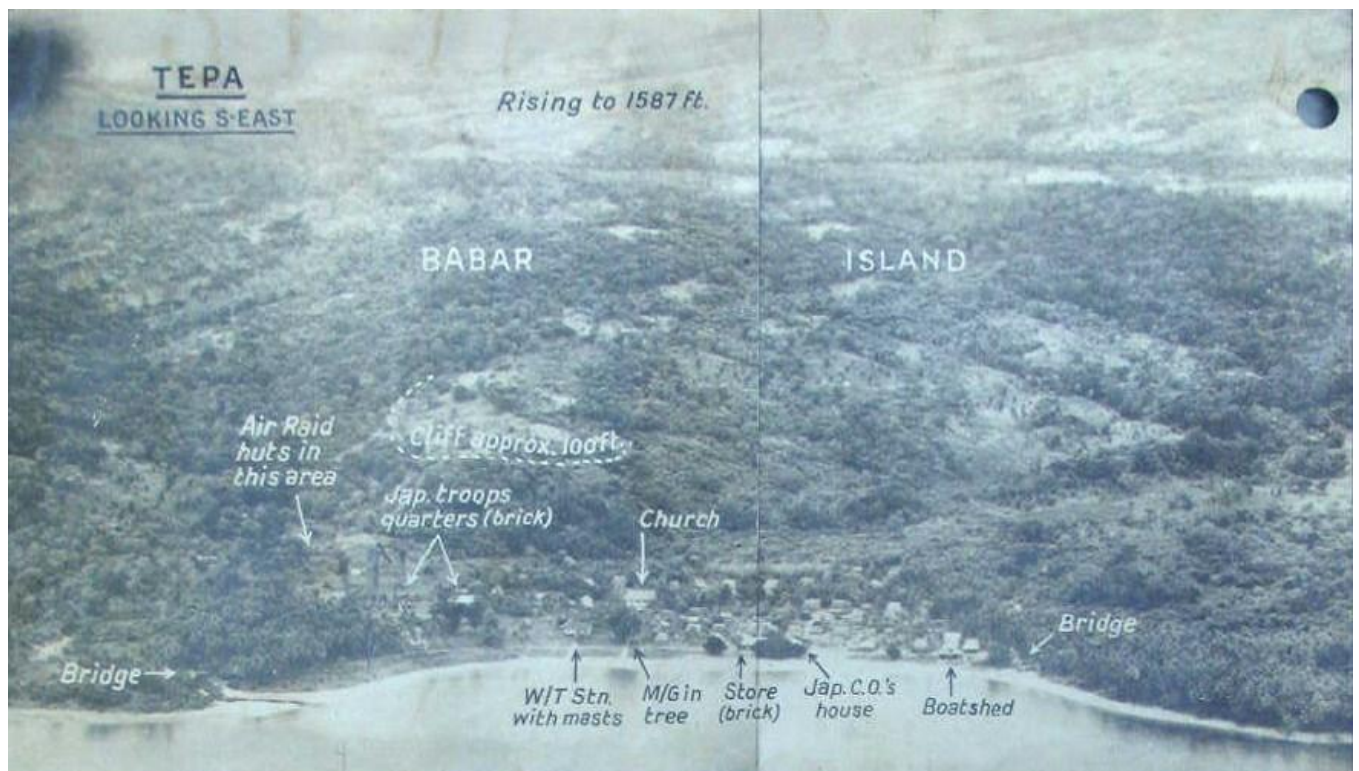
Subsequent reports and interviews post war had the aircraft ditching after being shot down, with all five crew members successfully being able to inflate and board their life raft. They managed to paddle to nearby Loeang Island where local natives at first looked after them, before betraying them to the Japanese weeks later who then transported them to Saumlaki in the Tanimbar Islands.

Whilst in transport between Tenaman and Macassar Islands in the Tanimabar Island Group, their barge was attacked by two allied aircraft on the 24th May 1944. Investigations showed that these aircraft were two B-25s from 18 NEI Squadron. After being forced to beach because of the inflicted damage, Beddoe was shot as he waved to one of the overflying allied aircraft by his guard. His body was dumped over the side. As for the remaining crew, they too would be executed, this time by decapitation, at Galala on Ambon Island on the 16th August 1944. He who would wield the sword would be convicted and executed as a war criminal later in 1946.

It would with this knowledge of Japanese treatment of allied airman or the sound of a rough running engine over water that eleven 1st Fighter Wing pilots commenced their first six hundred and forty mile long return sortie there and back, in their cramp single seater and heavily fuel laden slipper tanked Merlin engined Spitfire Mark V Trops on the 18th of April 1944.

To Babar and back

On the 18th April 1944, the first offensive harassing operation to be made by the 1st Fighter Wing from the Northern Territory was launched against the Japanese occupied Babar Islands, located between Timor to the west and the Tanimabar Islands to the east. Targets for this day: the strafing of Tapa Village, the Wireless Transmission Station and nearby enemy installations, including those on nearby Wetan Island.



The target for today: Babar Island (2 Sqn RAAF photo)

On a dawn take-off at 0630hrs from their respective bases, a force of thirteen Spitfires fitted with slipper tanks representing all three 1st Fighter Wing Squadrons (including one air spare) ferried separately in flights from each squadron's base some 60 miles to Bathurst Island Mission Strip, arriving there following a short twenty-five minute flight.

Raid Aircraft 18/04/1944: Radio Code "Toga"					
Red Section	Pilot	Aircraft	31Sqn RAAF	Pilot/Nav	Aircraft
Red 1	S/Ldr R B Newton OC 54Sqn RAF	DL-A/ A58-246	Red Leader	W/Cdr F W B Mann & P/O Barber	EH- /A19-176
Red 2	F/Sgt Knapp 54 Sqn RAF	DL-M/A58-155	Yellow Leader	F/O Wickens & F/Sgt Staines	EH-M /A19-159
Blue Section	Pilot	Aircraft	Green Section	Pilot	Aircraft
Blue 1	W/Cdr R C Cresswell Wing Ldr 1st FW	A58-259*	Green 1	G/Capt P Jeffrey CO 1st FW	QY-F A58-257
Blue 2	W/O P L Beeston 452Sqn RAAF	QY-Y/A58-244	Green 2	F/O Dale 457Sqn RAAF	ZP-K/A58-18
Blue 3	F/O R L Sprake 452Sqn RAAF	QY-V/A58-254	Green 3	F/Sgt Donaldson 54Sqn RAF	DL-T/ A58-139
Blue 4	P/O M J Beaton 452 Sqn RAAF	QY-K/A58-248	Green 4	F/Sgt Finney 54 Sqn RAF	DL-V/ A58-47
Yellow Section	Pilot	Aircraft	Reserve 1	Pilot	Aircraft
Yellow 1	F/Lt N C Ligertwood 457Sqn RAAF	ZP-Z/ A58-95	Spare	S/Ldr T Trimble 457Sqn RAAF	ZP-W/ A58-234
Yellow 2	F/Sgt G Jude 457Sqn RAAF	ZP-M/A58-251			

*Last Vickers Mk V built by CBAF 31/07/43

Two Spitfires of 457Sqn RAAF went un-serviceable due to a slipper tank feed and a battery problem, leaving their pilots, S/Ldr T Trimble and F/O Dale, out of the operation. After checks and refuelling on the ground, eleven Spitfires took off one and half hours later and form up into two flights (six and five), joining with two circling Coomallie based 31 Squadron Beaufighters (One armed with 16 x 60lb Fragmentation, 60 x 4 lb incendiary bombs, and 20mm cannon only; with the other carrying a camera and armed with only 0.303 machineguns and 20mm cannon only).



A58-234 ZP-W flown as spare to Bathurst Island by S/L T Trimble 457Sqn RAAF

Following forming up in two loose abreast formations, each lead by a Beaufighter, they then set course at three thousand feet to Babar Island in 2/10th cloud cover. Some fifty minutes later, both formations reduced their altitude to fifty feet above the sea on their approach to Babar Island.

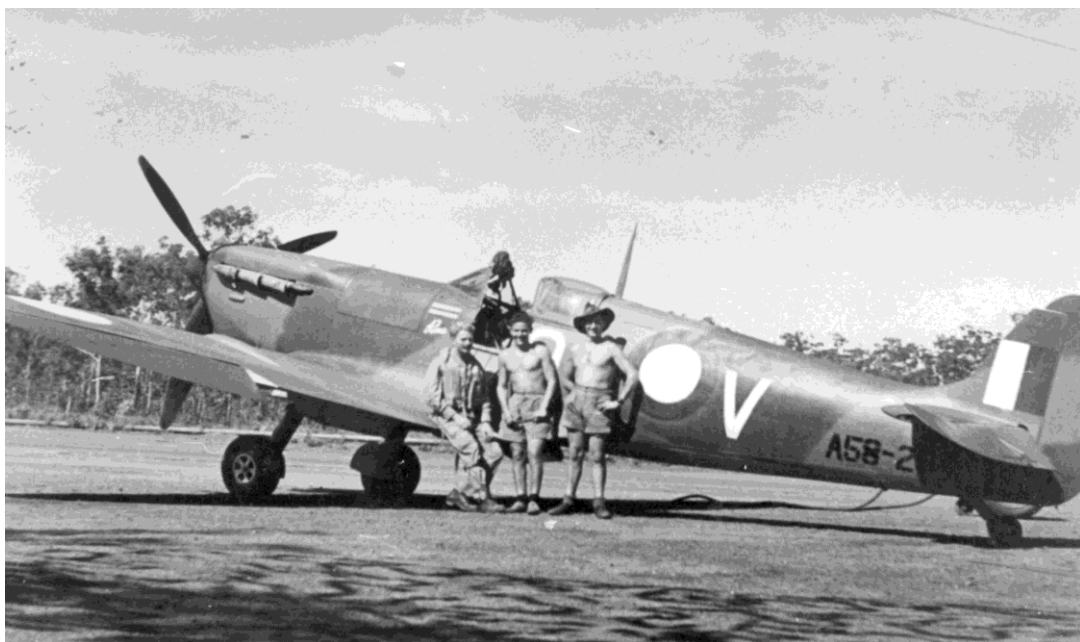
After covering an over the water distance of some two hundred and sixty-seven and a half statute miles, they sighted Babar Island Group at 0955hrs and prepared to undertake a set plan of attack from the south east, following a lead Beaufighter. Cloud cover was by this time 7/10th Cloud.

Yellow Section, with Ligertwood and Jude of 457Sqn RAAF, led by the Beaufighter of F/O Wickens, broke formation south of Babar Island and popped up to five hundred feet and turned on a western axis to attack their allotted target; a boat and launch hide-out on Wetan Island which was situated one mile across the separating strait. Jude sighted a barge on the beach and attacked it. Ligertwood followed Wickens and fired in the same area where the Beaufighter's cannon shells had exploded. Following this attack, they circled and attacked a collection of huts at Herlei Camp in the same area.

The three aircraft then swung their attack over to Babar Island, with both Wickens and Mc Jude joining in on the final attack of the Radio Station and the boat shed. On splitting up with Yellow Section, the main strike force; Red Section lead by Wg Cdr Mann followed by Blue and Green Sections, made their first runs on targets on Babar Island.

The Spitfires strafed in section order in dives from four hundred feet on a south to southeast axis and then would continue out to Wetan Strait, turning around, making a second attack from the northwest from three hundred and fifty feet. Red Section's Mann, Newton and Knapp carried out their strafing attacks with cannon and machineguns on Japanese troop quarters and the radio station.

Newton's port 20 mm cannon would jam after 80 rounds fired. After trying to release his 16 x 20lb Fragmentation and 60 x 4 lb Incendiary bombs on the radio station on both the first and second attacks, W/Cdr Mann realised that they had failed to be released from his aircraft and would return to Australia with them. Blue Section's Cresswell, Sprake, Beaton and Beeston carried out their strafing attacks with cannon and machineguns on various other Buildings in Tapa Village's north side and the radio station.



A58-254 QY-V Rima III was flown by F/O R Sprake 452Sqn RAAF on the mission.

Green Section's Jeffrey, Dale, Donaldson and Finney carried out their strafing attacks with cannon and machineguns on the boat shed, two concealed grey coloured launches and a suspected machinegun tower near a coconut tree on the beach front.



A58-137 DL-T after an earlier accident, was repaired and flown by F/Sgt Donaldson on the mission

After a total time on target of eight minutes, the four flights formed up above Wetan Strait at three and half thousand feet, and set course to Bathurst Island for the return leg.

The force recovered on a direct course to their respective bases via Bathurst Island around 1215hrs, covering on average another three hundred and twenty-five and a half statute miles back over the water, completing the first offensive Spitfire mission for North Western Command in World War II.

The radio station on Babar Island would however be back on the air soon after.

Following a later raid on the installation in July 1944, a voice was heard to say '*Come back here Wentworth, you bastard!*' to the astonishment of the 31 Squadron Beaufighter crews on that operation. The squadron used pilot's names instead of squadron call signs, so it was suspected that an enemy radio operator had broken into the squadron wireless communications. As expected, a change of radio procedures was soon actioned.

Researched and written by: Gordon R Birkett 2010

Curtiss Corner:

This Issue's Curtiss: A29-138 ex 76Sqn RAAF



P-40E-1-CU FY 41-35949 CW Line#1056 c/n19782 RAF #ET595 RAAF #A29-138 Shipped ex New Orleans 2/03/1942 and arrived in Australia 04/04/42. Named 'Zombie Too' with 76 Sqn's City of Gili Gili motif on cowl and coded "IM" To RAAF as A29-138 and served with 76 Sqn, 82 Sqn and 2 OTU; on 21/7/42 it was received by the RAAF at Charters Towers, Qld from the USAFIA and later in the month was ferried to 76 Sqn at Milne Bay, NG and participated in the battle for Milne Bay; on 7/10/42 it was sent to 43rd Material Sqn; on 10/10/42 it was involved in a crash landing causing damage to the cowl, engine and belly tank; on 25/10/42 it arrived back at 76 Sqn but was with them some 7 months before it went to 2 OTU by 9/5/43; on 15/10/43 it was involved in a landing accident at Mildura caused by poor flying technique of the pilot on 16/12/43 it was sent to 82 Sqn at Bankstown NSW where on 10/1/44 a burst fuel pipe caused an engine failure and F/O Clifford Robert Taylor carried out a crash landing near Williamtown, NSW; after the accident it was sent to 2 AD and from there on 19/6/44 it was allocated to 2 CRD for conversion.

Message Traffic:

John MILLER
[108.0.220.127]
03/21 05:52

Vampire A 79-624 8 seat jet...I have a very poor quality (B & W, istamatic photo of this, taken from quite a distance from the A/C in Nevada.

RAN Vamp. A 79 (N6) 839, crashed @ NAS Nowra 15/5/69 LtCdr Fred Goodfellow. Could the accident be caused by a "micro burst?"

Daniel Leahy
[123.243.212.183]
03/20 09:45

Hi guys,
I'm currently working on getting all of my aircraft photos uploaded to my Google Documents account.
If you'd like to use them on the site, feel free to send me your Google account details (e-mail address) and I'll invite you to the site.
I've also got most of my wartime documents up there as a bit of an 'off site backup', so they might be of interest also.
Cheers,
Daniel

<p>Matt Gowty [203.10.224.93] 01/05 09:02</p>	<p>Hi,</p> <p>My name is Matt Gowty and I am a member of the recently re-formed 452 Squadron RAAF. Through a bit of research, I have developed an interest in SQNLDR Keith "Bluey" Truscott as he was a founding member of the Squadron, a former CO and also an old boy of Melbourne High School. I would greatly appreciate any information you could provide me about his service in 452SQN, especially details of Spitfire serials that he flew.</p> <p>Regards</p> <p>Matt Gowty</p>
<p>Gordon Birkett (Dakota, Hudson, Spitfire, Vengeance, Wirraway) (Gordy) [114.77.243.240] 03/06 23:06</p>	<p>Ah Matt,...after a little digging in my job order</p> <p>From Oct 41 to Mar 42, UK</p> <p>Flew AB994 from Nov 41 to last op on 16/03/42 but at times used AD563, AB857, AA935 and AD376 as spares. Last German E/A Credit to him (a FW190) was 14/03/42 in AB994. Rec a Bar to DFC (Given four days prior, he only went to Buckingham Palace to get the original DFC) Then 18/03/42, replaced by Sqn Ldr Thorold-Smith DFC, went home to Oz per urgent request for experienced Fighter pilots</p> <p>AB994 Vb CBAF M45 Presentation Spitfire "Gingerbread" 45MU 31/08/41, 401Sqn RCAF, 27/09/41, ROS 07/11/41, 452Sqn RAAF 18/11/41, 457Sqn RAAF 22/03/42, FTR Ops 04/04/42, TTHrs 106.30mins. Missing from Boston escort to St.Omer Sgt A B Burgess killed</p> <p>AD563 Vb CBAF M45 9MU 23-11-41 452S 5-12-41 [Missing on sweep to Le Havre 26-3-42] 307S collision on approach with EN832 Atcham CE 10-7-42</p> <p>AD376 Vb CBAF M45 6MU 452S 22-11-41 52OTU 23-11-42 to 2799M Armee de l'Air</p> <p>AB857 Vb CBAF M45 37MU 27/07/41, 452Sqn RAAF 06/08/41, 401Sqn RCAF 01/03/42, Cat C ops 13/03/42, ROS 501Sqn RAF 07/04/42, RNAS Stretton 05/09/42, AST 13/10/42, hook fitted mods, Lee on Solent 02/11/42. Hooked RNFAA MkV. Converted to a Seafire and served with 801 and 719 Sqn's of the RN. Re-Serialled to NX987?</p> <p>AA935 Vb 2245 HPA M45 FF ff30/10/41, 6MU 02/11/41, 452Sqn RAAF 12/11/41, 457Sqn RAAF 22/03/42, 303Sqn RAF(Pol) 15/04/42, Flying accident Cat B 07/06/42, AST VSM 11/03/43 fuel system mods and wing stiffening, 308Sqn RAF 24/08/43, FTR ops 23/09/43. TT262.50hrs</p> <p>More to come later</p>
<p>alan macdonald [124.186.223.133] 02/12 23:51</p>	<p>A20-652 was flown from Parafield to Caloundra Qld by Matthew Denning, accompanied for the most part of the trip by his wife Simone. It became the first aircraft for the Queensland Air Museum to have flown in to Caloundra on delivery to the museum since it moved there. Following a flying display it was handed over to the museum at Caloundra at a ceremony on 18 December 2010.</p>

Martin Edwards
(Beech 1900,
Canberra, CT4,
Sabre, Vampire)
(Martin)
[203.206.204.80]
02/15 14:18

Hi Alan
Thanks for the update.
I will add the info to A20-652's aircraft history.
Regards
Martin

Any contributing Articles would be most welcome, along with pics for the next issue; due June 2011

Next Issue 3 will be July - Sept 2011 Vol 1/3rd Edition