



ADF Serials Telegraph News

News for those interested in Australian Military Aircraft History and Serials

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Message Board – Current hot topics:

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

News Briefs

- **24th July 2014:** Boeing Defence Australia (BDA) has delivered the last of 13 repainted AP-3C Orion aircraft back to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Each AP-3C maritime surveillance aircraft took 30 days to paint in Air New Zealand's paint facility in Christchurch. BDA partner Air New Zealand Engineering Services stripped and painted the aircraft while Australian Aerospace Limited performed maintenance support services. The AP-3C is the second RAAF aircraft type to be completed under a AUD\$20 million, three-year contract signed in March 2012 for the surface finishing of RAAF fixed-wing aircraft. Together with a number of other Defence support arrangements, Boeing is contracted to deliver a surface finishing capability for the majority of the Australian Defence Force's aerospace platforms. To date, three C-130H aircraft have been repainted by Flying Colours Aviation in Townsville, Queensland, and BDA is partway through repainting 28 Hawk-127 aircraft at RAAF Base Amberley, Queensland. BDA will soon commence repainting 20 F/A-18 Hornets at RAAF Base Williamtown, New South Wales.
- **22nd August 2014:** Ex RAAF CH-47C **A15-008**, later rebuilt as CH-47D 93-00930 US Army has been demobbed. Noted for Sale by GSA auction, during May 2014. Now registered as **N401AJ**, Under Certificate of Aircraft Registration, AC Form 8050-3 on the 22/08/2014, to **Sky Cats Puma Corp** which is located at Billings, Montana, USA. They operate a variety of Chopper including S-61 Fire Fighters. Billings Flying Service (Under Sky Cats Puma Corp) has uncommon experience operating heavy-lift helicopters such as Sikorsky S61, Eurocopter 330J, and various Bell mediums. According to Blain this certificate will enable the Montana based company to integrate the CH-47D into their fleet. The team at Billings Flying Service is already completing modifications so the Chinooks can be fully optimized for the vehicle reference operations their clients require
- **13th August 2014:** 162 Aviation Squadron reactivated at Gaza Lines in Darwin with eight EC665 Tigre Helicopters



CH-47D 93-00930 ex A15-008 in Iraqi 2005

- 10th October 2014:** The Government of Australia has requested a possible sale of up to 3 Close-In Weapon System (CIWS) Block 1B Baseline 1 to Baseline 2 upgrade kits; the overhaul and upgrade of up to 9 CIWS Block 1A mounts to Block 1B Baseline 2 systems; 11 Remote Control Stations; 11 Local Control Stations, spare and repair parts; support equipment; test equipment; personnel training and training equipment; publications and technical documentation; U.S. Government and contractor logistics and technical support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support. The estimated cost is \$76 million.
- 17th October 2014:** The first of the AP-3C Orion aircraft that had been withdrawn from service and cannibalised were removed from RAAF Edinburgh and scrapped; their numbers are **A9-663**, **A9-755** and **A9-758**.
- 12th November 2014:**The Government of Australia has requested a *possible sale of up to 4 C-17A Globemaster III aircraft*, 19 F117-PW-100 Pratt & Whitney engines, 4 AN/AAQ-24V Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) Systems, 4 Small Laser Transmitter Assemblies, 4 System Processors, 4 AN/AAR-54 Missile Warning Sensors, 1 AN/ALE-47 Countermeasure Dispenser, 1 AN/AAR-47 Missile Warning System, 5 Trimble Force 524 Receivers, 2 GAS-1 Antenna Units, 2 Controlled Reception Pattern Antennas, 1 AN-USC-43V Advanced Narrowband Voice Terminal, 16 Honeywell H-764 ACE Embedded Global Positioning System/Inertial Navigation Systems, spare and repair parts, supply and test equipment, personnel training and training equipment, publications and technical documentation, United States Government and contractor engineering, logistics, and technical support services, and other related elements of logistics support. The estimated cost for up to four C-17As, support and services is \$1.609 billion.
- 17th November 2014:** The first vertical tails manufactured by Australian company Marand have been installed on the F-35 Lightning II known as **F-35A AF-72** in Lockheed Martin's manufacturing plant in Fort Worth, Texas. The work on the F-35 vertical tails is subcontracted to Marand by BAE Systems and is one of the largest planned manufacturing projects for the F-35 in Australia, with 722 ship sets planned. The first

RAAF F-35A aircraft will arrive in Australia in 2018 and the first squadron, Number 3 Squadron, will be operational in 2021. All 72 aircraft are expected to be fully operational by 2023.



A35-002 on first flight: 1st October 2014.

- **17th November 2014:** Boeing Defence Australia (BDA) and Airbus Helicopters have signed a contract for Airbus to provide 15 Airbus EC 135 T2+ helicopters for the ADF's AIR 9000 Phase 7 helicopter Aircrew Training System which will be based at Nowra, NSW. The Serial prefix will be **N52**.



How the first EC-135T2 will look in Air 9000 Ph 7 Colours: *Source Thales*

- **Late Update 22nd June 2012:**

A15-103 was damaged severely Afghanistan during landing at FOB Sarkari Karez when attached to Rotary Wing Group 7 (RWG 7). Crew and passengers were slightly injured.

“It was first thought that A15-103 had ‘gone down’, sustaining only minor damage. The aircraft had sustained significant torsional damage to the main cabin area; severe sudden stoppage of the rotor system, which compromised all transmissions and drive-line components; and major damage to all landing gear components and associated airframe structural areas. Additionally, the ramp area located at the rear of the aircraft had received a significant impact which severely weakened the airframe structure supporting the aft transmission and aft pylon area.

The hidden structural damage proved worse than initially assessed, which immediately placed the recovery mission at risk.

The options available were very clear cut at that stage; postpone the mission; cut away or remove the damaged structure; or find a means of supporting the failing structure. After much deliberation and hasty rudimentary calculations, the failing airframe structure was ‘tied’ back into the solid bulkheads located directly above the fracture line using heavy duty military cargo straps. The Recovery lift MI-26 Helicopter's rotor disc started to ‘cone’ under the weight and the slings began to stretch and with an unruly lurch skyward, A15-103 was on its way. It was an agonising 80 minutes before we received notification that A15-103 had returned safely to KAF. The relief was immense and the RAEME guys celebrated with the typical Aussie humility.” Airframe was a write off on examination at KAF. **A15-103 was considered a write-off and two Ex-US Army CH-47D replacements were obtained to replace A15-102 and A15-103 (A15-150 and A15-151) in 2013.**

Source: RAEME National Association Newsletter vis Ross L. G. Grant and C Kerr (all photos)



A15-103 resting on her Starboard Side at FOB Sarkari Karez: C Kerr



A15-103 being retrieved: C Kerr



Better days

- **28th October 2014:** Australia. The ADF decides that they want to keep 2 Herons in Australia for 6 years, at an estimated cost of Aus\$ 120 million. One Heron already operates as a trainer at the Woomera test range in restricted military airspace, and a 2nd will now return to Australia from Afghanistan where two others are operated. Known Serials **A45-253**(Australia) with **A45-262** and **A45-274** used at Kandahar in Afghanistan. Two have been crashed, one being a fourth one during initial training in Canada and one during its time in Kandahar on landing, circa 4th June 2010 (Believed to have been **A45-253**. Replacing the sensor suite cost \$1,094,810.38, while the UAV damage assessment bill from Canadian operator MDA was \$110,000. Airframe repair costs are reportedly outside of those verified charges).
- The Peruvian navy is to acquire five Kaman SH-2G Super Sea Sprite helicopters through the Canadian government. It is understood that the helicopters are the first five of the Royal New Zealand Navy's current Sea Sprite fleet. New Zealand is currently in the process of acquiring 10 SH-2G(I) variants that had been previously ordered by Australia.



The first Heron UAV was A45-262, as delivered for use by RAAF, during January 2010.

- **30th November 2014:** Israel is to acquire a second batch of 14 Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning II stealth fighters, following its initial order for 19. The decision also includes an option for a future procurement of another 17 aircraft, pending later approval. Total is 33 firm plus 17 options.
- **4th December 2014:** First US Spacecraft vehicle to launch after the Space Shuttle demise. The Orion program is NASA's new spacecraft built to carry humans, designed to allow us to journey to destinations never before visited by humans, including an asteroid and Mars. On this unmanned test flight, Exploration Flight Test-1, Orion will test systems critical to crew safety as it travels farther into space than any spacecraft built for humans has travelled in more than 40 years. During the 4.5-hour flight, Orion will orbit Earth twice, covering more than 60,000 miles



C-76 Caravans for QANTAS and ANA



During late 1942, 1943 and 1944 the Royal Australian Air Force investigated types for its immediate requirement of ten heavy transports, with the wish to obtain the Curtiss Wright C-46 in preference. The same C-46 requirement was expanded by the end of 1944 for sixty-six Heavy transports to be operated by five RAAF squadrons, was however never fulfilled until 1958, when twelve Lockheed C-130As were delivered.

Equally by 1943, the Australian Civil Airline Fleet Ownership of DCA Registered Medium Transports had not had a new infusion or number increase since 1940. A total of thirty-three aircraft were in use in June 1943. *Those over 15000lbs in weight were: 3 x DC-3 and 4 x DC-2 operated by ANA; 3 x Empire Flying Boats operated by QANTAS, and 2 x Lockheed 14s (1 owned by W R Carpenter on charter to ANA, and 1 x owned by Guinea Airways).* These thirty-three aircraft had flown 7,000,000 miles carrying 137,000 passengers and 1,000 tons of freight in the preceding twelve months alone.

With an original late 1942 request to release second hand or new production eighteen C-47 types for the Australian Civil Airline Fleet despite numerous requests through General MacArthur had been unsuccessful.

The US War Department offered in lieu of these much needed USAAF transports, another design from the same stable; **The Curtiss Wright CW-27** in mid 1943. It offered a swing nose for ease of loading, a wide box like fuselage and the same power train of the C-47, then coming into RAAF service in 1943, with a possible local production out of non-strategic materials available in Australia to fulfil both RAAF and USAAF in theatre. The location for manufacture was to be Brisbane with a total of twenty-four C-76 Aircraft, Pratt and Whitney R-1830-92 Twin Wasp engines substituted by Commonwealth held Wright Cyclone 14 Engines, would be produced in the first two years.

The project would have required one thousand personnel (including three hundred tradesmen) with aircraft not becoming available until early 1944. *An earlier proposal to manufacture some 100 C-47 types within Australia failed had already failed by the 2nd February 1943 (Cabinet Minute No 2594).*

Following further briefings and as explained below, this interest was waning by the end of 1943 with the discussions of eighteen surplus USAAF Transports issued ex DAT. By the 7th October 1944, it was conveyed to the Australian Government that the C-76 Caravan was a failure, thus cancelled.

Extracts of the birth and death of the Australian C-76 (Wright Cyclone Engine)

SECRET.

Attachment to Notes on
War Cabinet Agendum
No. 183/1943.

CONSTRUCTION OF CIVIL TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT.

OBJECT OF AGENDUM.

To obtain War Cabinet approval to the following recommendations of the Minister for Civil Aviation:-

- (a) That the Department of Civil Aviation proceed with arrangements to negotiate a licence to build 24 Curtiss C.78 (U.S.A.) Transport aircraft modified to suit Australian timbers and conditions, and if a licence is obtained, the Department of Civil Aviation to proceed with arrangements to produce these aircraft.
- (b) The Director-General of Civil Aviation to be responsible for such arrangements within the estimated total cost of £1,080,000 exclusive of engines now in Australia, which are to be made available for this project, and the necessary priorities arranged with the Departments concerned.
- (c) The expenditure required in financial years is estimated to be:-

1942/43	-	5,000
1943/44	-	824,000
1944/45	-	450,000
		<u>£1,080,000</u>

My dear Minister,

I refer to your letter of the 21st September regarding Agendum No. 183/1943, which is concerned with proposals for the local manufacture of transport aircraft for civil airlines.

2. The C.76, which it was proposed to build, has proved a failure, and the U.S. Army contract for its manufacture in America was cancelled. Furthermore, from experience in aircraft production of the difficulties of obtaining supplies of Australian timber suitable for aircraft manufacture, it is doubtful whether an aircraft like the C.76 would prove a practicable proposition.

3. After consultation with Mr. McVey I recommend that this Agendum be withdrawn.

4. On the general policy of the manufacture of transport aircraft in Australia, I wish to refer to a recommendation of the Inter-Departmental Committee for the provision of the sum of £150,000 towards the cost of building a prototype of a twin engine, all metal commercial transport aircraft.



History of the Curtiss Wight C-76 Caravan

In 1941 Curtiss-Wright were contracted by the United States Army to design and construct an all-wooden military transport. The all-wooden construction was an insurance against any wartime shortage of light alloys. It was contracted to build the prototypes and evaluation aircraft, before handing over the production to Higgins Aircraft Company.



C-76 Prototype 42-86913

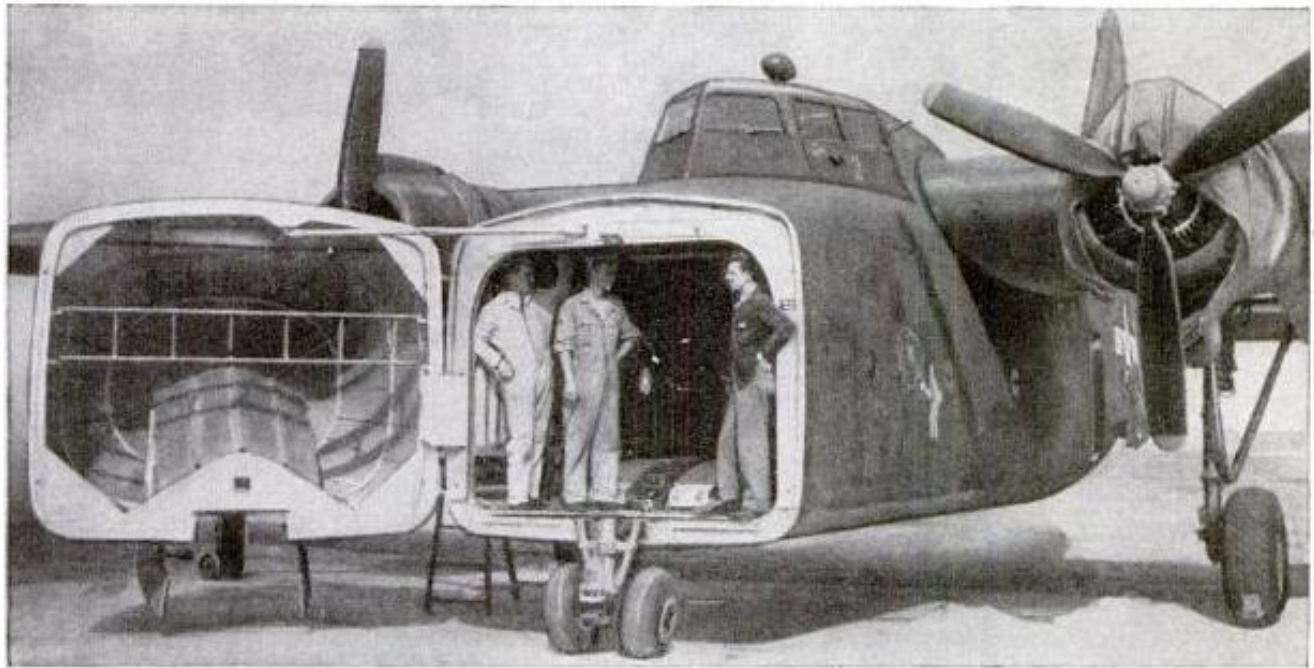
C-76 Caravan was the United States military designation for the Curtiss-Wright CW-27 medium military transport aircraft to meet this requirement.

It was designed by Curtiss-Wright's chief designer, George A. Page, around a high-wing spanning 108'2", with power coming from two wing mounted Pratt and Whitney R-1830-92 Twin Wasp engines (1200 hp) that would see the maximum speed attained near 192mph. The aircraft was fitted with a tricycle undercarriage on a fuselage of 68'4" in length.

There was accommodation for 23 persons plus one or two crew; with an all up weight of 28000lbs. Empty Weight was 18300lb. Range was near 750 miles.

The initial contract was for five C-76 prototype aircraft. Further orders for eleven YC-76 pre-production aircraft and nine revised YC-76A improved evaluation aircraft were placed by the US Army. The prototype YC-76 first flew on 1st May, 1943.

On 10th May 1943, the first YC-76 constructed at the Louisville, Kentucky plant, **FY43-86918**, lost its tail unit at 17:29hrs due to lack of "forgotten" securing bolts not fitted on the production line, whilst on a test flight, causing it to crash at Okolona, Kentucky, killing three Curtiss test crew, (Pilot Edward Schubinger, Co-pilot John L. "Duke" Trowbridge, and Engineer Robert G. Scudder.)



The

Caravan had a nose section that swung out to the right to enable outsize loading, including a jeep or small artillery pieces.

Due to its revealed shortcomings on so many levels, the United State Army decided to cancel the whole concept and contract. The lesser reason was that the shortage of light alloys did not materialise, but the design was fraught with numerous problems: underpowered, range and load capacity, and generally outdated with production of better types well underway.



Only twenty-five aircraft (*Eleven YC-76-CKs, Five C-76-CS and Nine YC-76A-CK*) were ever produced, when production was terminated in 1943. Only five production aircraft were completed in 1943: three from Curtiss-Wright's St. Louis Division, and two from a new plant at Louisville, Kentucky.

On cancelation, the status of the delivered aircraft for the Twenty-five YC-76 aircraft:

- Aircraft #1, #3, # 4, and #5 were placed in the "Z" category, ZC-76, due to the poor gluing conditions and assembly procedures by subcontractors found through a Material Division inspection of the subcontractors work. These aircraft were assigned to the Technical Training Command and used for ground purposes only.
- Aircraft #2 was destroyed in static testing at Wright Field.
- Aircraft #6 was lost in a crash.
- Aircraft #9 was under repair, but repairs were stopped and the airplane placed in Class 26, non-operational status.
- Air Service Command operated twelve YC-76's for nine months and found that they required excessive man hours to maintain. It was suggested that these be placed into Class 26 or Survey.

The final disposition of the aircraft as of 1st October 1945, by letter of the Air Technical Service Command; 1- Washout upon delivery from factory, 5-Class 26, 10-Survey, 1-Condemned, 8-Reconstruction Finance Corp. to be sold as surplus. The proposed order for 175 aircraft by Higgins Aircraft Company was cancelled by the War Department on the 3rd August 1943.

C-76 Serials:
42-86913 to 42-86917 C-76-CS Prototypes
42-86918 to 42-86928 YC-76 Pre-production aircraft
42-86929 to 42-86937 YC-76A Improved Evaluation aircraft
42-86929 to 42-87112 C-76A Production aircraft from Higgins Aircraft Co
Sources:
NAA Aircraft Assignments 1943/44/Procurement of Transport and Aircraft for Australia 1943-1944
Popular Mechanics / June 1944

RAAF Hawker Hurricane first fights, 1941 by No 3 Squadron (F) “*Operta Aperta*”,

Following the successes of 1940 against the Italian Forces in Africa, the Squadron, as part of 202 Group, had moved from Gerawla to a new advanced Landing Ground some 4 miles north of Gambut near Tobruk in Italian Cyrenaica on the 8th January, 1941. Its fighter Aircraft equipment was still the Gloster Gladiator.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

006487

No 3 Sqn RAAF Hurricane V7566 “Pamela” flown by F/Lt B Pelly being serviced in a Roofless Hanger at Benina March 1941

By month’s end, a decision and subsequent action to replace these aircraft by Hawker Hurricane Mk1s had been made. *It also marked the introduction of the Afrika Corp into the Western Desert.*

Unit strength would be sixteen Hurricane aircraft in use with a further four as immediate reserve. A high number of these aircraft were ex No 33 and No 73 Squadron RAF aircraft thrown up. A further two Westland Lysander aircraft (MkII P9185 and MK1 R2642) would be also be attached and used in communications duties. Squadron Code allotted for each aircraft would be OS-*

On the 1st February 1941, following establishing its base at Berka, Benina, near Benghazi, ferrying of Hurricane aircraft for both flights were being made from Amiriya, in Egypt, which was located approximately 16 km south-southwest of Alexandria; some 180 km northwest of Cairo.

The first enemy contact was on the 15th February 1941 when two RAAF Hurricanes (V6737 flown by Steege and V5476 flown by Saunders) intercepted a German Ju88A-5 near Benghazi. F/O J.H.W. Saunders engaged it scoring

hits, but then lost sight of it. It was later confirmed that the aircraft was indeed shot down when the crew were eventually collected from their collapsible boat some six miles off the coast (Stated by 3 Sqn History RAF Form 540 Page 213/RAF Form 541 Page 220).

This was also the first Luftwaffe aircraft to be claimed in Africa by allied fighter aircraft.

However, only one actual German JU-88 was lost that day, from III (K)/LG1 which crashed landed at Tripoli. That was JU-88A5 **L1-JR** WNr3214 from III (K)/LG1.

Some three days later on the 18th February, 1941 after 1450hrs whilst on a second patrol for the day, a flight of three Hurricanes sighted 10-12 JU-87 Dive Bombers.

The Germans were beginning to appear in strength over the skies of Italian Cyrenaica. The Germans were dive bombing Agedabia, Agheila and other townships en route on their advance under recently arrived Rommel and the Afrika Corp.

With F/O John F Jackson (P5176), F/Lt G H Steege (V6737) and F/O J H W Saunders(V7770) at four thousand feet above them unseen, the JU-87 were at one thousand feet carrying out dive bombing attacks about 20 miles north east of Agheila on Australian Army Transport trucks.

The three aircraft formation dived on their quarries. After the initial fire, all Ju-87s scattered into all directions. Jackson attacked three in formation, and saw one crash in flames. All three pilots claimed probable's in addition, and several enemy aircraft damaged, prior to losing sight of the aircraft and returning to Agedabia to refuel and rearm.

One confirmed loss by the Luftwaffe was 1/Stg 1 JU-87R-1 WNr 3351 with FW Hans Drolshagen and Uffz Wolfgang Schaefer killed near Agedabia on that day. One JU-87 was damaged and its gunner wounded. The Germans did claim a Hurricane shot down, but no combat losses were sustained by No 3 Squadron RAAF. Only one loss was reported, that was F/O Jewel who stalled on landing earlier that day at Benina at 0830hrs, making a heavy landing in Hurricane V7414. The aircraft was not repairable within the unit. Such is the fog of war.

On the following day, the 19th February 1941, the Luftwaffe returned in force, with Bf 110 fighter escorting nine JU-87s of 11/StG 2. They were from III/ZG 26.

Standing patrols by No 3 Squadron Hurricanes over Benghazi were being made when after 1000hrs; the nine JU-87s were observed and dived on by a flight of three Hurricanes (V7757 F/Lt J R Perrin, P3726 F/O Boyd and V7552 F/O A A Gatward). One JU-87 was shot down into the sea by F/Lt Perrin before the escorting Bf110 attacked and shot down F/O Gatward 2 miles on a bearing of 60 degrees from Mersa el Brega Minaret. He was acting as swinger in the flight of three and did not see the attacking enemy aircraft.

F/Lt Perrin then managed to set on fire one Bf110 before he too was set on fire after a cannon hit from a second Bf110, to his reserve fuel tank; however he was too low to bail out. This forced him to make a wheel up forced landing close to the shore line. The German pilot of the second Bf110 continued to strafe his aircraft after he exited, ultimately destroying this aircraft on the ground. He would later be awarded a DFC for this action.

German III/ZG26 records show only one Bf110E-1 lost in combat that day, with WNr3886, piloted by Lt Alfred Wehmeyer and Ogfr Wust (Crew) ditching in the sea on the way home after it had shot down F/O Gatward. No Ju-87s lost in combat except one from 5/StG 2 on landing.

To make good the losses of the past few days, three No 73 Squadron RAF Hurricanes and their pilots (V7553 F/O Jas Storrar, P3767 P/O Donald Scott DFC and P3763 P/O R L Goord) were transferred into 3 Squadron RAAF on this day.

The following day, on the 20th February 1941, lead ground units of the Afrika Corp make contact with British Army Units for the first time.

The last aerial contact for the month of February 1941 for No 3 Squadron RAAF would also signal the first Radar control intercept by a RAAF Squadron Aircraft against a German Bomber in the Middle East and, as far as I have researched, in RAAF History.

On the 28th February 1941, at 0905 hrs, the new operational Radar at Benghazi, directed No 3 Squadron RAAF Commanding Officer, Sqn Ldr Duncan Campbell in Hurricane P3980 to a enemy bomber contact which resulted in him shooting down a Luftwaffe III/KG30 JU-88A-1, **4D-HR** WNr 6021, 3 miles south of Benghazi ten minutes later.

For much of the following month, patrols were flown without contact, though several aircraft were still lost in accidents.

On the 2nd March 1941 whilst on his landing, F/O Saunders struck a parked truck on the runway in Hurricane P5176, damaging the left main and leading edge. Two days later on the 4th March 1941, F/Lt Rawlinson after carrying out a Tac/R mission in Hurricane V7484 over the Aghelia-Ras Lanuf area, suffered engine problems and forced landed on the return flight.

On the 16th March 1941, six Hurricanes carried out a ground attack mission against a concentration of enemy land forces that were closing in some 20 miles west of Agheila at 0700hrs.

The following days more patrols and interceptions were made, but without any enemy contact.

The following day, four Hurricanes were sent to attack the Marada Landing Ground. Whilst refuelling at Agedabia, three Bf110s strafed the airfield without effect. With one Hurricane suffering Gun mechanism problems, the remaining three continued on to Marada Landing Ground and strafed the sole aircraft found there, a crashed S-79 Italian aircraft and any other targets of opportunity. All returned safely after refuelling again at Agedabia, to their base at Benina.

The following days more patrols and interceptions were made, but without any enemy contact.



F/Lt Blake Pelly

On the 21st March 1941, another ground attack mission was planned but a severe dust storm on route to Marada Landing Ground caused it to be abandoned.

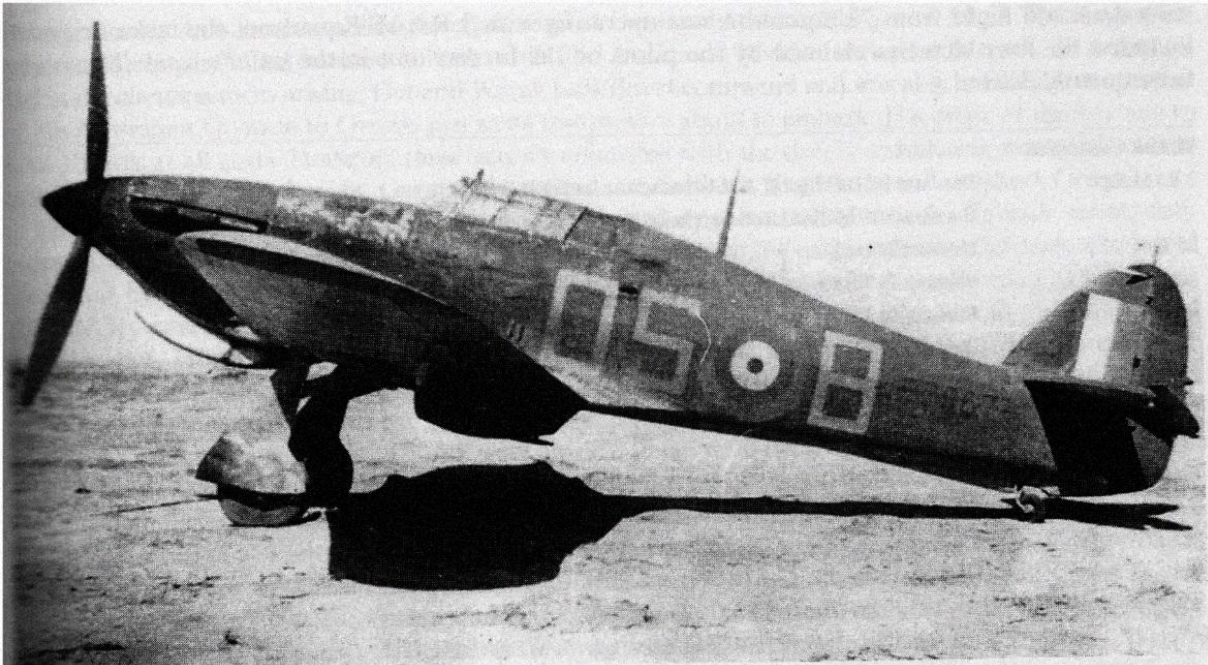
On the 28th March 1941, whilst flying from Benina to Aboukir (Egypt) F/Lt Pelly and F/O Arthur in Lysander P9185 had to make a successful forced landing due to engine problems, some 8 miles east of Sollum.

On the 29th March 1941 on a nine aircraft offensive patrol over Mersa-El-Brega-Agheila, P/O Jewell in Hurricane V2628 returned to Benina with engine problems. No contact was made with Enemy aircraft.

On the last day of the month, twelve Hurricanes were launched to intercept an enemy formation approaching Agedabia at 1015hrs. They flew in three four aircraft formations for the first time, three in "V" s with a fourth flying as a "floater" (*This "V" plus one Floater/Swinger formation was still used by 75 Sqn RAAF in Moresby and Milne Bay as many of these mentioned No 3 Squadron Pilots would be Leaders in 1942*). Each four aircraft flight was staggered at 3000ft/7000ft and 10000ft.

The enemy formation consisted of ten (two flights from 240th and 241st Squadriglia of the 98th Gr BT) Italian BR.20s, with an escorting flight of five German Bf-110s. The middle flight of Hurricanes attacked first with one Bf-110 WNr3948 **3U-PR** shot down and credited to Sqn Ldr Duncan Campbell. The Bf-110E-1, flown by Ofw Josef Bracum and Uffz Kasper of 7/ZG26, crashed in flames, killing both crew. Though several of the BR-20s were seen to be damaged each by three pilots of No 3 Squadron (V6737 F/O Saunders, V7253 F/O Kloster, and V7556 F/O Knowles), all managed to leave the area. No Hurricanes were lost that day. *It would be recorded by Italian sources that a total of four BR-20s (BR.20 MM21910/22619/22245/21914) were severely damaged with a fifth (MM21921) also damaged with one crew member dead, and several wounded during the engagement.*

At the start of April 41, No 3 Squadron RAAF had twenty Hurricane aircraft on strength, three of which were awaiting repair and two Lysander aircrafts (one waiting repair).



Hurricane

Mk 1 P3967 flown by F/Lt Perrin

With the Axis forces advancing, No 73 Squadron and No 3 Squadron RAAF fell back to Maraua by the 3rd of April 1941 as their operating base. During this day, whilst on patrol, No 3 Squadron intercepted ten JU-87s of II/StG 2 escorted by ten Bf110s of III/ZG26. Some four Bf110s were claimed as destroyed by F/O Peter Turnbull in Hurricane V7492 along with F/Lt Gordon Steege claiming another in Hurricane V3937 (Coded **OS-P**). Some three JU-87s were claimed by F/Lt Rawlinson in Hurricane V7772 along with a further example by SAAF pilot Lt Smith in Hurricane P3980.

German records show no III/ZG26 Bf110 aircraft lost that day, aside from a wounded gunner, Uffz Bock in Bf110E-1 WNr 3885, piloted by Uffz Stirweis. Two StG 2 JU-87R-2s were lost that day; WNr6034 crash landing, and WNr5885 lost in the air after the pilot bailed out.

Though loosing no RAAF Hurricane aircraft, the Germans themselves claimed three Hurricanes.

The 5th of April 1941 presented the squadron three aircraft flight along with a two aircraft flight from 73 Squadron RAF, with an opportunity to engage the enemy with some success. Around 1430hrs, the patrol spotted a formation of JU-87s from 6/StG 2. Five JU-87s were claimed: F/Lt M L Beytagh V7810 (73 Sqn RAF); P/O W T Eiby V7550 (73 Sqn RAF); F/O W G Kloster P5176 (3 Sqn RAAF), with F/O M D Ellerton V7353 (3 Sqn RAAF) claiming the last two. Later that day at 1635hrs Sqn Ldr Duncan Campbell led off another joint Sqn patrol of nine Hurricane aircraft towards the Barce Pass. Here German forces were attacking retreating Allied ground forces. Some twelve JU-87s from 4/StG 2 were involved with a total of nine claimed to been shot down. The Nine claimed: P/O R M Millist V7766 (73 Sqn RAF) two JU-87s; Sgt G H Garton V7716 (73 Sqn RAF); F/Lt J R Perrin P3967 (**Coded OS-B**) (3 Sqn RAAF) with three JU-87s, F/O W E Jewell V3818 (3 Sqn RAAF) with three JU-87s and F/O J F Jackson V7772 (3 Sqn RAAF) a single JU-87.

Sadly for No 3 Squadron RAAF they lost two aircraft and pilots; Sqn Ldr Duncan Campbell in V7567 had been shot down and killed, whilst F/O A M Edwards in V7347 had forced landed and had been captured by Axis Forces. German forces had lost five shot down and three further aircraft lost on forced landings.

Two days later on the 7th April 1941, an offensive patrol with 73 Sqn RAF over Mechili, which resulted in two JU52 Transport being strafed, then destroyed. F/Lt Rawlinson P3967 (**Coded OS-B**) and F/O Knowles P5176 claimed one each. Later that day on the next patrol over Derna –Martuba area, F/O Knowles had to land Hurricane P3980 at Gazala due to engine problems. Advised by Army personnel there that the enemy were only a few miles away advancing, he torched his aircraft and set off with the Army to Tobruk.

On the 8th April 1941 during a six aircraft Offensive Patrol, P/O W E Jewell in Hurricane V3818 experiencing engine problems had forced landed 20 miles south of Gazala. Again, enemy were only a few miles away advancing, he torched his aircraft and set off with the Army to Tobruk by road.

Interestingly, though confirmed per Form 540 as Hurricane **V3818**, further NAA Records show that this was purposively Tomahawk **AN406** (NAA File A705 Barcode 1055061; JEWELL Wallace Edward - (Flying Officer); Service Number - unknown; File type - Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Tomahawk AN406; Place - Western Desert, North Africa; Date - 8 April 1941) Form 540 Records show that the first of the type were delivered in mid May 1941.

Interesting, he was not the only person to have a close escape on that day. General Wavell and his staff were flying in to Tobruk in a Lockheed Loadstar **AX682** of 267 Squadron RAF when it was forced to crash land some 10 miles north west of Sollum. All escaped injury. *The RAAF connection was that later on the 15th April 1941; F/Lt John Jackson (Promoted from F/O) strafed the same airframe in Hurricane V777 and destroyed it.*

On the 14th April 1941, during an offensive patrol over Tobruk, with Axis Forces starting envelop the land forces, three Bf110s were seen approaching for an attack on one of their two aircraft offensive patrols, Lt Tennant (P3725) and P/O Arthur (V7728). During the attack, one Bf110 engaged by Arthur was seen diving steeply to the sea trailing blue smoke from the fuselage. Records show that they both claimed a probable Bf110 (two). After the engagement, they continued their patrol and sighted a JU52/3M on the ground at Menastir which they attacked with little result.

By the 15th April 1941, the Squadron strength in aircraft for 73 Squadron RAF had fallen down to only seven serviceable Hurricanes and was amalgamating flights into one. No 3 Squadron RAAF was also close to ceasing operations as they were down now to seven to eight serviceable aircraft themselves to defend Tobruk. Several low flying attacks were carried out, along with Tac/R missions on the day. On a second Low Flying attack by Sqn Ldr

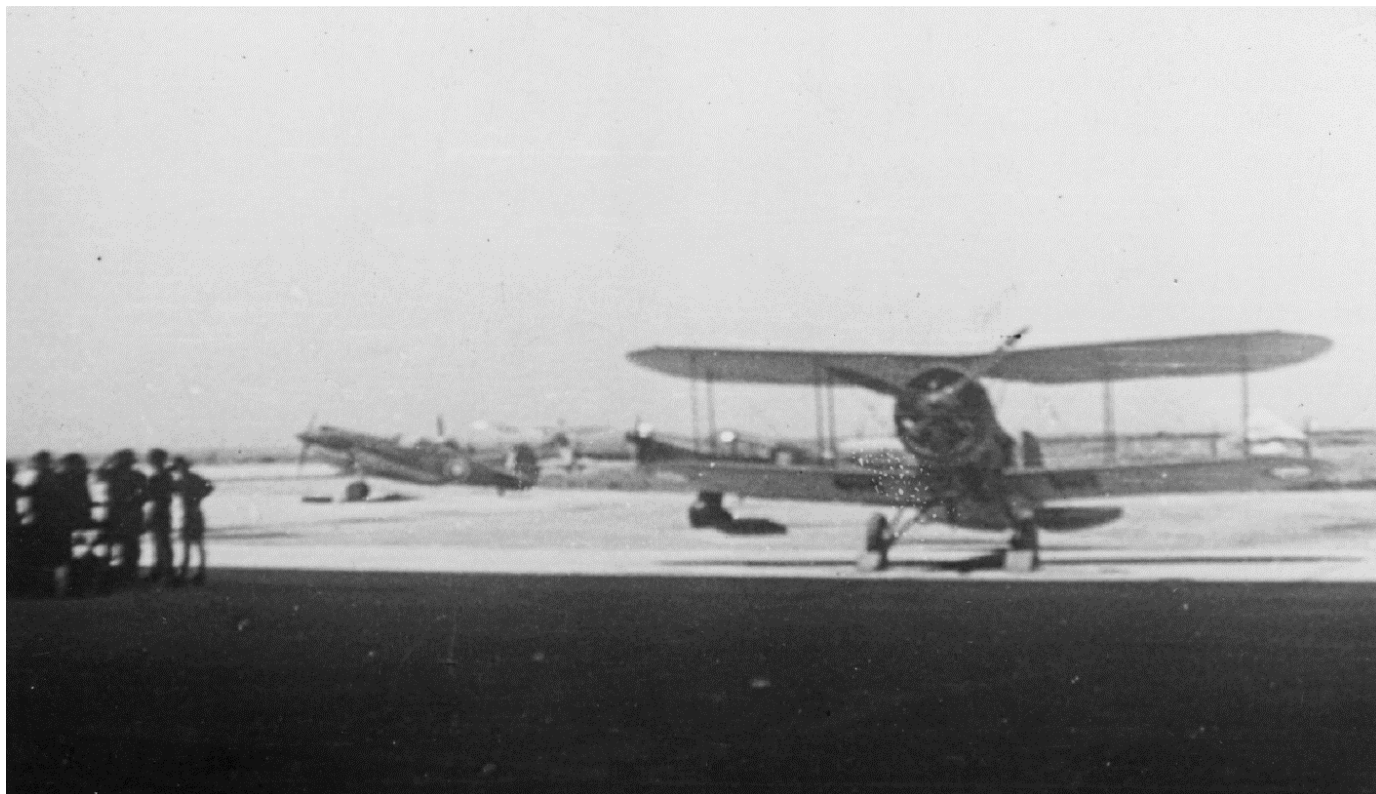
Jeffrey in V7770 four JU-52s were seen flying along at low level beside the Bardia-Capuzzo road. As the aircraft were seen to land nearby at Fort Capuzzo, he attacked them, destroying all four. Later that day F/O Donati in V7834 claimed another JU-52 in the same area on the ground. As mentioned, F/Lt Jackson in V7770 also destroyed General Wavell's crashed Lockheed Loadstar on that day also.

With the situation deteriorating further, Naval Gun Fire support from HMS Gloucester was used on the 16th April 1941 to stem and interdict Axis Ground forces. Spotting was done by a RNFAA Walrus catapulted off the ship, with No 3 Squadron RAAF providing cover. Three Bf110s engaged for a few minutes with the aircraft, but soon departed without effect. Later that day, F/O Davidson performed a Tac/R mission to Derna in Hurricane P3977 successfully.

More Offensive Patrols and Tac/R mission were flown on the 17th/18th/19th April 1941 without engagement of the Axis.

On the 19th April 1941, given the aircraft strengths of 73 and 274 Squadrons (RAF) and No 3 Squadron RAAF it was decided that all of the Squadrons Hurricanes be handed over to 274 Squadron RAF that day, with personnel were to proceed to RAF Station Aboukir in Egypt the following day by road, before the noose was sprung by the Axis on Tobruk. The Squadron stood down until the 1st May 1941.

The 19th April 1941 also herald a new period, perhaps badly for all Allied fighter pilots, with the introduction of the Bf109F in theatre.



One of the two Gauntlets used at Lydda, along with the Magister, with a new Tomahawk in background. RAAFWA

No 3 Squadron RAAF was earmarked to convert to the Curtiss Wright Tomahawk fighter from mid May 1941 at a new base, Aqir, Palestine. They would move to Lydda thereafter, where on the 14th May 1941, they received the first two Curtiss Tomahawks, AK407 and AK410, flown by Sqn Ldr Jeffrey and F/Lt Perrin respectively.

The days of Hurricanes were thought over, but an old familiar type to help conversion by new pilots was returned to the unit in the form of a single Gloster Gauntlet, **K5268**. Later a second Gauntlet would be allotted, **K5318** ex 112 Squadron RAF replacing K5268, on the 30th May 1941.

With conversion underway, six Hurricanes were taken over from No 80 Squadron RAF to create a Hurricane Flight to be based in Cyprus due to Luftwaffe flights from the island of Rhodes, then along the coast of Turkey to fly into Syria and perhaps Iraq.



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One of the Cyprus based Hurricanes

Sqn Ldr Jeffrey in Z7000, F/Lt Perrin in Z4205, F/O Turnbull in Z4208, F/O Arthur in Z4201, and F/O Knowles in Z4613 and P/O Saunders in Z4162, all highly experienced Hurricane Pilots proceeded to Cyprus on the 24th May 1941.

Two additional Hurricanes from 80 Sqn RAF were later flown by F/Lt Rawlinson in W9355 and F/O J. Jackson in W9320 and to replace both Sqn Ldr Jeffrey and one other pilot. A Miles Magister was also allotted to the Squadron at this time at Lydda, **P2445**.

The Hurricane detachment lasted until the 3rd June 1941, whereupon the Cyprus flight returned and disbanded after handing over the aircraft to 30 Squadron RAF.

That ended the Squadrons association with the Hawker Hurricane and started with the use until almost to the end of the war, the Curtiss Wright P-40 Series.

By the middle of April 1941, the Royal Air force in the desert had been reducing its strength over the preceding months, with the transfer of several squadrons being re-assigned to Greece. Desert Army Forces had also been withdrawn by then to reinforce Greece in the advance of an expected German invasion. Both the 6th and 7th Infantry Divisions (AIF) had been sent there, along with the New Zealand Division.

*One Infantry Brigade of the 7th Infantry Division was delinked and assembled with a recently arrived 9th Infantry Division (AIF). The garrison, commanded by Lieutenant General Leslie Morshead (Ming the Terrible), consisted of the 9th Division's 20th, 24th, and 26th Brigades, the 18th Brigade of the 7th Division, along with four regiments of British artillery and some Indian troops. They would through German propaganda, be eventually be known as the **Rats of Tobruk**.*

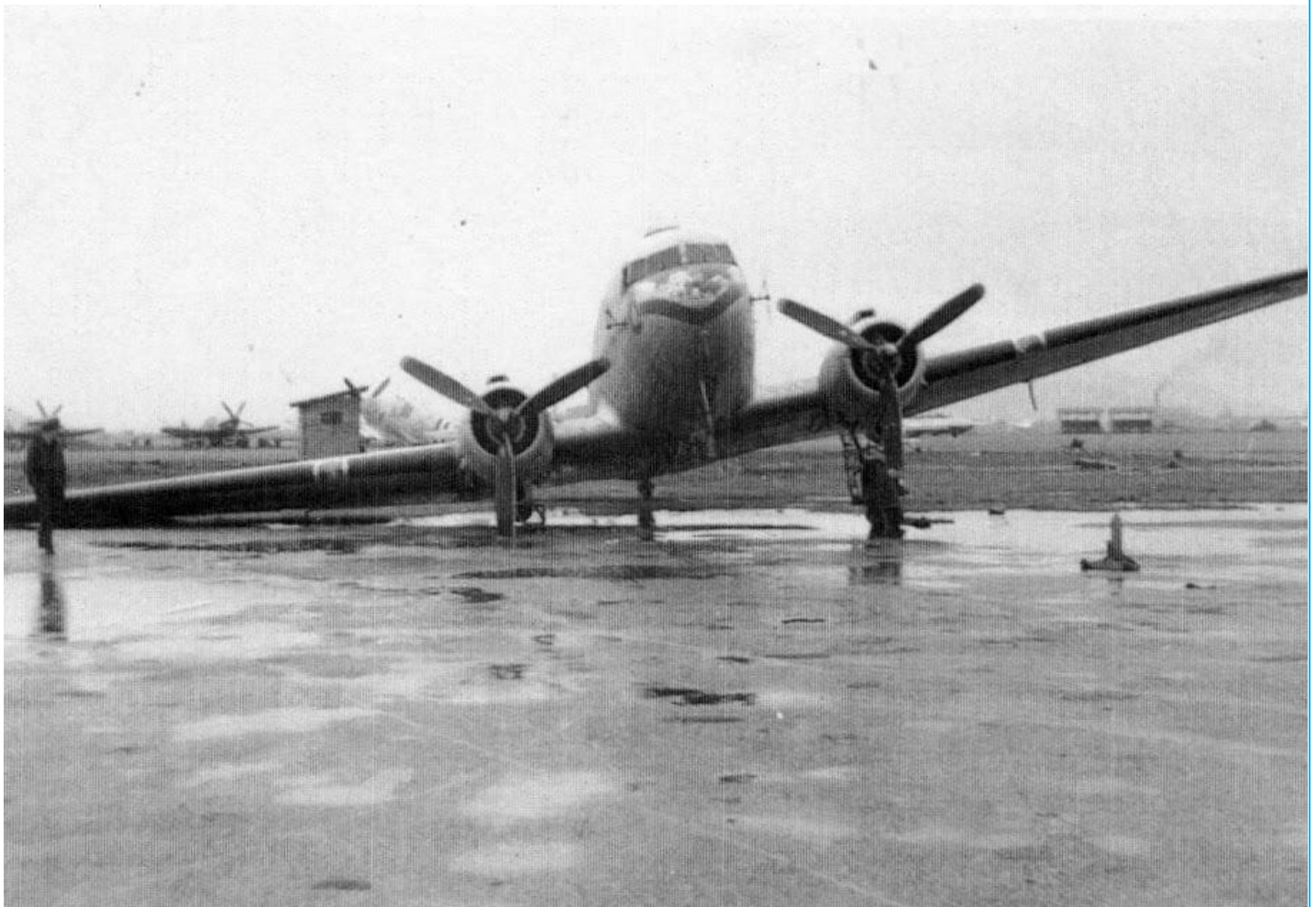
For over six months Australians had defied and denied him possession of the area, and although they were evacuated by sea in October for a "rest", having been relieved by the Polish Carpathian Brigade, one Australian Infantry battalion, the 2/13th remained to fight its way out and join up with the advancing British Eighth Army on the second advance westwards.

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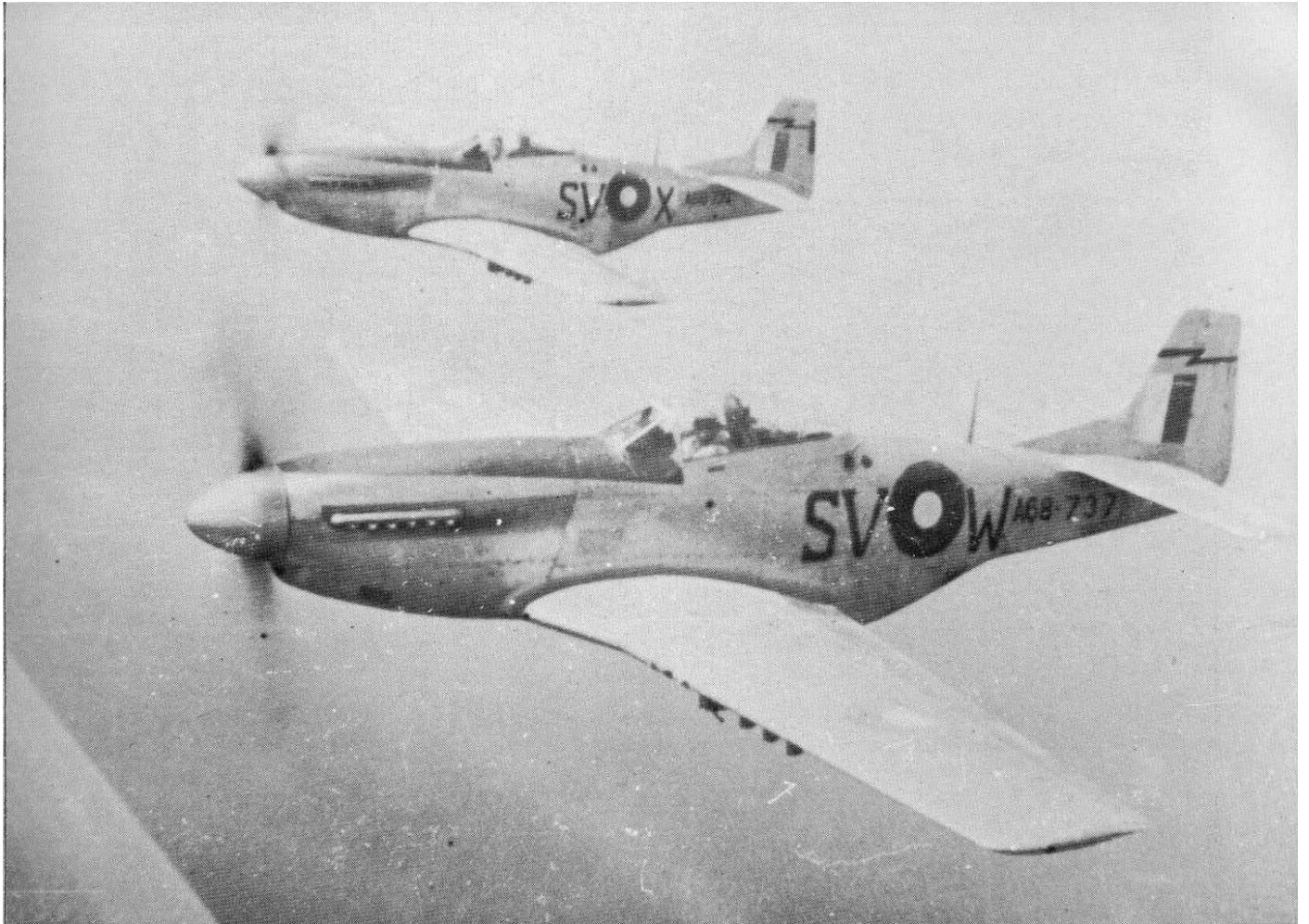
Sources:

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Casualty Reports 1941

Odd Shots: Japan Late 40s/Early 50's



Gear Collapse for A65-70 at Iwakuni, Japan



NA Mustangs A68-737 SV-W and A68-774 SV-X of 76 Sqn RAAF



NA Mustang A68-704 82 Sqn RAAF 1947.



Gloster Meteor A77-570 being serviced at Iwakuni



CAC A20-750 over Japan

Next Issue, the autumn 2015 edition, will be out circa late March 2015.

