

## Vale Robert (Bob) Cowper

Our member—highly decorated WWII flying ace Bob Cowper has died in Adelaide, aged 93, on 19th June 2016, just five days short of his next birthday.

Born in Broken Hill, New South Wales he moved with his family to Kangaroo Flat, north west of Gawler in South Australia, when he was still a child.

He joined the RAAF on his 18th birthday in June 1940.

Former Squadron Leader and fighter pilot Bob Cowper, survived dozens of wartime missions and the crashing of his Mosquito aircraft on two occasions.

Leader of the famous 456 RAAF Night Fighters, Bob's many medals included a Distinguished Flying Cross (with bar) for gallantry, the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) and the French Legion of Honour.

His remarkable exploits as a World War II ace are recorded in his biography 'Chasing Shadows', written and published by Stephen Lewis in 2007.

He was a tireless advocate for veterans and will be sorely missed by the veteran community.

A full profile is attached with this Bulletin.



# The President's Log



Our main focus at the Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia remains the restoration of the RAAF Museum's Mosquito PR Mk XVI aircraft A52-600. Despite dwindling membership numbers, our Association has maintained a strong active volunteer presence both in and around this aircraft in the Restoration Hangar at Point Cook, Victoria.

The Wednesday Warriors have continued re-skinning the fuselage; final finish of the outer skin they've completed looks every bit as good as the original. Don Taylor has made significant inroads to our computerised data recording, and it's becoming more user-friendly the further he goes. These links help with relating single parts to other items on assemblies such as the tail landing gear assembly, one of our current tasks. Don who has recovered from his cancer treatments is continuing his management of our website ([www.aussiemossie.asn.au](http://www.aussiemossie.asn.au)).

Ron Gillis leads the first and third Sunday work parties each month, and with Peter Lewis and Eddie Wassenaar also actively involved with our 'normal' crew. Eddie has taken on our Merchandising portfolio as well, and you'll see our new range of polo shirts, caps and stubby holders in this edition of the Aussie Mossie Bulletin, while Ron's Restoration Report lists some important progress made by the Wednesday Warriors and the Sunday crew. Peter Lewis' contributions to a safe work environment are valuable, and Eddie

Wassenaar's detailed investigations into pivot pins and associated components, although they will never be seen in the finished assembly, are nevertheless vital. Ron Gillis and Pat Dulhunty continue their good work, and we're all starting to know more about where to find the nuts and bolts of the project.

After completing the finishing touches on our new home (Hut P170), David Devenish has continued to make a major contribution to our archives. You will hear and see more results of his research efforts later at the AGM and in the Aussie Mossie Bulletin. We'll see and hear more next year, too, at the MAAA's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebra-

tion. Both No.1 PRU and No. 87 Squadron RAAF were formed here during WW2. Under the late Alan Middleton's stewardship, the MAAA installed and dedicated plaques both at the Darwin Cenotaph Memory Wall and near the Cenotaph at the north end of the Point Cook parade ground, to honour those who designed, built, flew and maintained Mossies.

While one of our foundation members, Bob Cowper's final take-off was celebrated in Adelaide at the end of April, another of our "Olds and Bolds" is alive and kicking. At 96, Harrold (Hal) Hobson is still taking an interest in Mossie history with a copy of the book 'RAF 100 Group – Kindred Spirits' heading his way, thanks largely to the efforts of wife Nancy.

Stepping aside from Mossies for the moment, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan will be commemorated at Point Cook. The bush telegraph says that 5 or 6 ex-Vietnam Birddogs and a Trojan will fly at an augmented Interactive Flying Display; the Museum's Technical Curator David (Jonesy) Jones also hopes to get the Vietnam War vintage Caribou out onto the flight line as a static display.

Best wishes to all our members, and thanks one and all for your contributions and support.

Terry Burke



# Coomalie News

Although numbers were slightly down this year, the 2016 VJ Day commemorative fly-in at the former WW2 RAAF Base Coomalie Creek NT on Saturday 14 August was celebrated with host Richard Luxton's usual gusto.

Many ultralights, homebuilts and light aircraft were involved, as were Nick Bellfield's Harvard and the MKT-based Antonov AN-2. Nick re-enacted the final flight by the RAAF from an Australian mainland base during WW2, when, on 15 August 1945, the RAAF's No. 87 Squadron Mosie A52-609 was on a mission an hour out over the Arafura Sea north of Darwin. Then the crew received a coded signal 'surrender signed, come home' which they did, booming down the strip at full noise and about 50 feet altitude with the whole Squadron lined up, punching the air in jubilation. Four 87 Squadron serving members provided the uniformed element 71 years on, with plenty of enthusiastic civilian support.

A barbecue tea on Saturday evening was provided by stalwarts Rick, James and Denise and was followed by the Darwin Folk Club 'Fettlers' group plus 'Sand' Williams, once more singing her haunting ballad 'Three Mosquitoes, Sacred

Ground'. Bonfire, port(s) –what more can we say? Many visitors stayed overnight in tents, caravans, campervans and huts or simply in a swags under the stars; great Dry Season weather sure helps.

Richard led a group of visitors down Runway 17 to Squadron Leader Gillespie's memorial plaque at the crash site of A52-605, where a wreath was laid in his memory. The entourage then regrouped at the 31 Squadron replica Chapel, where the service was conducted by Rev Ian McDonald. Once again, it was part solemn remembrance for those who died, and part celebration of the return of peace. To conclude, 87 Squadron members laid a wreath at the foot of the Cross.

Top End communities have a greater awareness of just how desperate things were in the earlier days of WW2 in this area. By the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VJ Day in 1995, their support for this commemorative weekend was strongly established; support has been strong ever since.

Terry Burke, with Richard Luxton

## Restoration News

Work is continuing on the Mossie fuselage upper surface by the Wednesday team with progress advanced to the upper area straddling bulkhead 3 and the cockpit rear pressure bulkhead, including the dinghy access hatch area.

The structural components of the LHS & RHS Wing Fixing Bearers are currently being carefully removed, deconstructed, cleaned of old glue and then to be rebuilt with new glue and reinstalled. This has to happen before the outer reskinning can proceed. (See photo).

Our weekend team has been involved with searching for fuselage drawings or components such as rear access hatch hinges, bulkhead skin bolts and upper and lower fuselage antenna masts etc, as part of their support.

Restoration of the pilot's seat continues, recently acquired with parts from the ex 'High Ball' aircraft by the RAAF Museum. It has had initial bead blasting to remove surface rust and corrosion and a new volunteer has accepted the challenge to progress it.





# Restoration News

Right: Pat Dulhunty with the "High Ball" rear fuselage and tail wheel assembly.

Below: (L to R) Terry Burke, Eddie Wassenaar and Peter Lewis locating, recording and classifying parts and drawings covering the main undercarriage and tail wheel assemblies.



Work has commenced by the weekend MAAA members on the tail wheel assembly using some of the parts from the ex 'High Ball' aircraft recently acquired by the RAAF Museum. This includes the tail plane support structure, with first emphasis on locating all the components and assessing their condition. (See photo).

Work has continued on finding, cataloguing and assessing restoration of the main undercarriage assembly bolts. This project is nearing completion and we hope to hand over the results to the Technical Curator in the near future. Some external repair work was carried out on the

RHS and LHS U/C door closing frames, cataloguing the contents of the Mosquito storage racking in the restoration hangar continues as does Don Taylor's clean-up and reconfiguring of our major computer Parts Data inventory. This is also nearing completion.

A pleasant environment now awaits us after our best Mosquito pictures have been hung on the allocated wall areas as part of the further consolidation of the MAAA occupation of our newly renovated accommodation in P170.

Ron Gillis.





# Fuselage Restoration by Peter Carne

At our AGM Peter Carne came to the Mosquito Association and gave us a talk on the status of the restoration of the Mosquito at the Point Cook Aviation Museum. Before joining the team some six years ago, Peter was a qualified carpenter and joiner and later a building inspector.

When he first became involved with the A52-600 building construction and worked on the restoration of the bulkheads - they needed removing and repairing. Each original bulkhead was in two halves and to maintain the integrity of the restoration they have remained so. The big problem was to maintain the integrity of the fuselage shape during these actions and therefore each bulkhead was removed, repaired and replaced, one at a time. Finding the screws that were holding the bulkheads to the inner ply was a time consuming and very exacting exercise. The outer view of the exploratory drilling looked like Swiss cheese. The fuselage as received from a private owner was distorted, when the aircraft was stored. One old photo showed her sitting on tyres! The current fuselage jig was used to correct these distortions, so the restoration could continue.

For those who are not aware, the fuselage is a composite construction made of two pieces of plywood separated by balsa wood creating a sandwich that can be formed into the shape required. The old glues used during the war have now crystallised and there is delamination of these layers. The museum has copies of the original drawings and reference is constantly made to them.

To repair the fuselage, the outer ply and the balsa must be removed, leaving a fragile egg shell ply internally. To support the inner ply, struts and props were inserted creating 'false work' so that there was something to strap down on when regluing the new balsa and outer ply back on. Straps were left for about 2 days while the glue cured. Once the inner shell was exposed the original glue was scraped off to leave a better surface for the new glue to adhere to. No sanding was done on these surfaces as it can leave a dusty residue which could weaken a glued joint. The epoxy glues that are being used, should last decades longer than the original.

The re-skinning process was started at the rear bulkhead and moved forward so that each new outer ply could be scarfed on to the existing ply. This is how the ply panels were applied so as to give an overlapping fish-scale effect to make each joint aerodynamically smooth.

When looking at the fuselage you can see the outer ply on the rear of the fuselage is at a 45 degree angle to that applied on the forward panels. This approach is in accordance with the original plans and probably used to strengthen the rear fuselage from the twisting action forces from the tailplane. To get all panel shapes correct a "boat builder's method" was used. A full sized paper pattern was used as a template from which the ply was cut. This catered for all the changes in fuselage shape. The scarf joints are generally 1:20 making the joins very strong.

The rear fuselage has 2mm ply up to the dinghy hatch where it changes to 3mm providing more strength while passing over the wing and also because this mark (PR XVI) of aircraft was pressurised when in flight.

Currently the complexities of replacement narrow width ply doublers external to the trapezoidal shaped beams used to spread the stresses and strains that would have been experienced while flying, are being grappled with.

It should be mentioned that a Mosquito was most likely never intended to be taken apart in the fashion that is being done and she has fiercely resisted on many occasions.

Peter Carne



# World War II Aviation Archaeology: Coomalie Creek NT

New member Fiona Shanahan, an Archaeologist, has been introduced to the world of Mosquitos and in particular Coomalie Creek. Her biography follows with a few photos from our (MAAA) archives .

Recently I attended the 70th VP day anniversary events at Coomalie airstrip in August 2015 and it was there that I met a number of people who are actively involved with the Mosquito Association, 31 Squadron and various aviation enthusiasts.

I'm an archaeologist who became involved with the site in January 2014, when a local recommended that I visit the site and meet the owner (Richard Luxton) in the short time I was there. At the time I was researching the management of World War II aviation sites in Australia as part of a comparative study with the Marshall Islands. The results were written up as part of my archaeological Honours thesis and provided some interesting insights into how each nation protects and manages their wartime past. Australia, specifically the Northern Territory, has inclusive and enforceable heritage legislation that protects World War II and aviation sites. Unfortunately, while the Marshall Islands have legislated protection for World War II materials and sites, it is not easily enforced. The Marshall Islands however do have management plan guidelines for World War II sites and materials, while in Australia it is a case by case situation. Both nations can learn from each other's policies, and I believe that as people begin to realise the importance of maintaining these sites and ma-



Fiona Shanahan and Richard Luxton

terials, the required guidelines and legislation will be eventually introduced.

Coomalie was one of four case studies for my thesis and when I first called Richard about my research, he was more than happy for me to visit. The result of that visit was 6 hours of information, a tour of the main aspects of the base and taking photographs. There was something about Coomalie that intrigued me, and I found myself heading back there in 2015 to complete further research. I was expecting to hear a little from those whose family members had served at the air base, however what I had not anticipated was being able to gain an insight into and experience what Richard refers to as the 'living history' of Coomalie.

The living history of Coomalie combined with my past investigations have enabled me to travel around Australia and present at local, national and international heritage conferences and symposiums. At these events I have been able to share the importance of management plans and living histories with others who work in the industry, and overall the feedback regarding the events, management and community engage-



View of Coomalie Creek airstrip showing the control tower and strip number #17 as well as three DH98 Mosquitos, C.1945.



# World War II Aviation Archaeology: Coomalie Creek NT

ment at Coomalie has been positive and will hopefully influence others who continue to work within the industry.

While my specialty is within conflict and aviation archaeology, I also work as a subcontracting archaeologist throughout Australia and this work allows me to work at both historical and Indigenous sites. One of the larger projects that I have worked on is at Port Arthur in Tasmania. I am also actively engaged with student peer reviewed archaeological journals and conference committees. I believe in introducing students to these mediums of communication in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere. I am also an advocate for community archaeology. This means that more community engagement and input should be introduced to archaeological works to ensure that the outcome of projects are optimised.

The heritage industry is starting to experience a shift toward technological advancements and it is hoped that a few colleagues and I will soon be able to start producing digital 3D replicas of World War II air bases, as well as program simulator-like original World War II events on or near the base with this data. Additionally, a database of World War II air bases and aircraft is under

construction and any information that you can provide would be very much appreciated by myself and colleagues (please email [info@aviationheritage.org](mailto:info@aviationheritage.org)). These projects will take time (much like the Mossie restoration) as we are completing them in our own time, however we hope they become useful research tools.

Due to work commitments this year I unfortunately will not be returning to Coomalie until 2017. In the meantime though, I hope to be able to again take up my post as a volunteer at the Point Cook Museum as well as become actively involved with the restoration works on base.

If you would like to know more about my research, please email me and I will forward you a copy of my thesis or happily chat with you about it.

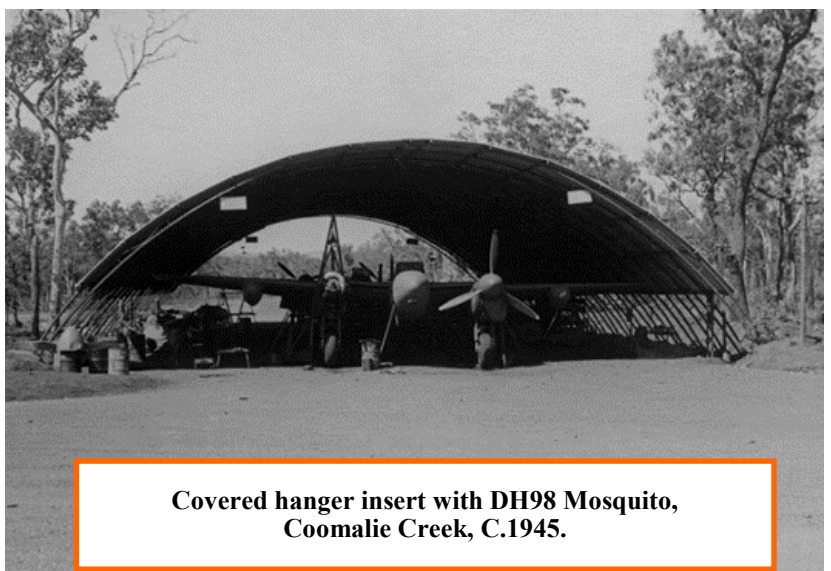
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## Stop Press ! Congratulations

**Fiona's academic article, written in relation to the 'living history' at Coomalie Creek has been accepted for publication by the International Council on Monuments and sites (ICOMOS) and includes the cover image of A52-609's return on 15th August 1945.**



Coomalie Creek airstrip control tower. C.1945.



Covered hanger insert with DH98 Mosquito, Coomalie Creek, C.1945.

# Burke Road Trip

**During May this year President Terry Burke and his wife Pat drove through to South Australia and recorded their adventure on a 'Trip Log'. The following is a small extract of that log covering their visit to Woomera.**



Left:  
Woomera Space  
Park: Blue Steel  
cruise missile/stand  
off bomb. Canberra  
in background.

Below:  
Redstone rocket  
(there is Pat stand-  
ing beside it provid-  
ing a bit of perspec-  
tive).

It's only about 170km on from Port Augusta to Woomera, where we arrived via Pimba mid-afternoon and booked in for a 2 night stay in a cabin at the caravan park. Pattie opted for a snooze and I set off for a stroll up to the town centre for a look-see. How different to our last visit back in 1971 or 1972! It was a thriving, high tech centre for weapons trials, space research and exploration at that time with a busy community of 1500 or more support staff, including scientists, engineers and other highly skilled people. It's almost a ghost town now, with less than 200 people. It's sad to see perfectly good houses simply abandoned, school almost empty, hospital closed ... all a bit depressing. Couldn't help thinking that this may be the shape of things to come, in a broader sense, throughout Australia. Is this more political incompetence / expediency / lunacy, or am I simply becoming older and grumpier? (The last bit's a given). Cooper's Pale followed by a cheap and cheerful red, sausages on the barbecue and cheerful company all provide some sort of answer, short term as it is. And the stars above the desert are spectacular.

Next day I left Pattie in bed and struck out for a 3 – 4km walk around the outskirts of town on a cracking clear, crisp morning. There's a unique smell, too: dewy moisture on dry grass and sand – 'Yer in Oztralia, mate'. With town on one side and semi-desert on the other, it's hard to imagine a starker contrast. Back for breakfast, then a leisurely (there's that word again) mooch about until cuppa time with morning tea. We walked about a

kilometre into the town centre, stopping frequently to look down deserted streets lined with deserted houses; to see a person walking on these streets was surreal. Near the town centre the outdoor Space Park is an important slice of history. Many aircraft, rockets and used bits are displayed here; some parked on the ground, others on poles. Little or no maintenance work seems to have been done – it's probably back to the "Who pays?" and/or "Who cares?" questions. In this at-





# Burke Road Trip

mosphere and environment, the exhibits are probably in the best possible place for their preservation. I particularly liked seeing Jindivik, Canberra and radio controlled Meteor cum NF-11, although the two junk yard enclosures containing bits and pieces, some recovered from the desert, were brilliant.

As the Heritage Centre Museum next to the Space Park was closed (due to lack of volunteers to staff it), we strolled down to the Town Centre, where one lonely general store was open among a host of empty shops and offices and once again, almost no one about – and the ones who were seemed to be mostly tourists like us. Bought the obligatory pie for Pattie's lunch, and sat in the pleasant treed and planted surroundings of the town square to despatch it. Believe it or not, Optus mobile phones have coverage here – so I rang our neighbour to check in.

Then across the road to the Woomera Museum which is a ripper. A good selection of early history of the Long Range Weapons Research Establishment at Salisbury and Woomera was bolstered by stories of Len Beadell's surveying exploits; his books are must-reads. Most of the models and displays are absorbing; the only addition I'd like to see is some interactive and/or working models.

Back to the camp for a cuppa and snooze, more strolls around the local area, and found out that Thursday was pizza night at the campground. Why not? – and they were good, too. Early to bed, up early for a welcome shower, pack up and depart.

Terry and Pat Burke  
May 2016

# From the Mailbox

You make me drool again. It is something I never get sick of, looking at photos of Mosquito Aircraft. My Log Book tells me that on the 1st June 1945, I flew low level with my navigator, F/Lt. Dick Burgess over Germany for 4 hours 40 minutes, having a look at the dreadful damage done by us and a lot of other pilots.

I still remember flying at about 200 feet along the Rhine river, and the sights of the smashed up towns and cities has remained with me ever since. My last flight in a Mosquito was on 7th June. 1945.

On 28th July 1945, I was back home in Australia. 1267 hours in my Pilot Log Book, and I guess I was wondering what it was all about!! I still do.

In September I will be 94 years old, and I am not exactly enjoying living on my own. My family are very supporting, I still drive my car, and enjoy being connected with my choice of activities at Leongatha. The R.S.L. here is excellent, and I am often to be found in the dining room enjoying the lovely meals.

Tom Parsons F/Lt.  
139 Squadron. (Pathfinders)

The facilities works around the Museum are progressing well but will continue for several months. The tarmac in the Museum precinct has been dug up and replaced. The new asphalt surface looks excellent and for additional durability it has also had a fuel resistant membrane applied in the areas where we park and refuel Museum and visiting aircraft.

Six of the ten Bellman hangars are being reclad in colourbond as well as having their door rails replaced and some structural repairs done to the frames where needed.

Air Force Headquarters are seeking funding for refurbishment of other hangars next year. The public viewing stands are back in place and looking smart with freshly galvanised and powder coated safety rails.

The current round of hangar recladding will continue until at least August and will cause some disruptions to Museum activity but I am sure you will agree the significant improvement in the appearance of the Museum precinct will be worth the inconvenience.

Radmila Pantelic (RAAF Museum

# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

Air Commodore Mark Lax CSM (Retd) granted our Association access to reproducing his Mosquito story about No 1 Squadron. This abridged instalment, chapter six, of his story has been included this Bulletin along with supporting photos sourced from collections donated collections.

Once again we must thank all the those who have generously donated information and photos, to enhance Mark Lax's work. In particular for this issue, W. L. Orr, R.G. Hunt, J.T. Harrison, David Little and the RAAF.

## MOSSIE OPERATIONS

Although the war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945, this did little to affect operations against the Japanese and the *Oboe* series continued. The object of *Oboe Six* was threefold; to establish an advanced fleet based in Brunei Bay, to recover and protect oil and rubber resources, and to re-establish British Government control. As part of these operations, No 1 Squadron together with No 93 Squadron (Beaufighters) were to conduct rocket, bombing and strafing sweeps of Japanese positions.

No 1 Squadron was part of No 86 (Attack) Wing which included No 93 Squadron and several other support units. According to the Official RAAF Historian, George Odgers:

*It was intended that aircraft of this wing would deploy to Labuan on 25 June and operate at a rate of 1,200 hours per month. They were to carry out rocket, bombing and strafing sweeps. However, the move forward to Labuan was constantly delayed because the strip was not long enough for the Mosquito aircraft.*

Commanded by Group Captain J.M. 'Jock' Whyte, the squadrons operated as two separate identities on orders issued by Advanced Headquarters First TAF also based on Labuan. According to Whyte:

*At this time, the Beaus were used mainly [for] patrolling the coastal areas and the Mossies doing recce as far as Kuching. There was no enemy aerial activity there and strafing or rocketing Jap barges off the coast was the order of the day. There was some ground fire from such barges which were quickly dealt with by rockets.*

Although the first of 114 operations was A52-521's escort of two Spitfires over Batjan Island on 3 July 1945, the remaining aircraft would only arrive in time to fly out the last two weeks of the war. At this stage according to reports; 'in all combat areas of the Pacific, Japanese air activity is purely defensive and has resolved itself down to a series of unco-ordinated local reactions.' As it was, the greatest threat to flying operations was from ground fire and of being shot down by other friendly forces.



A52-500, FB Mk VI Mosquito (c/o D. Little).



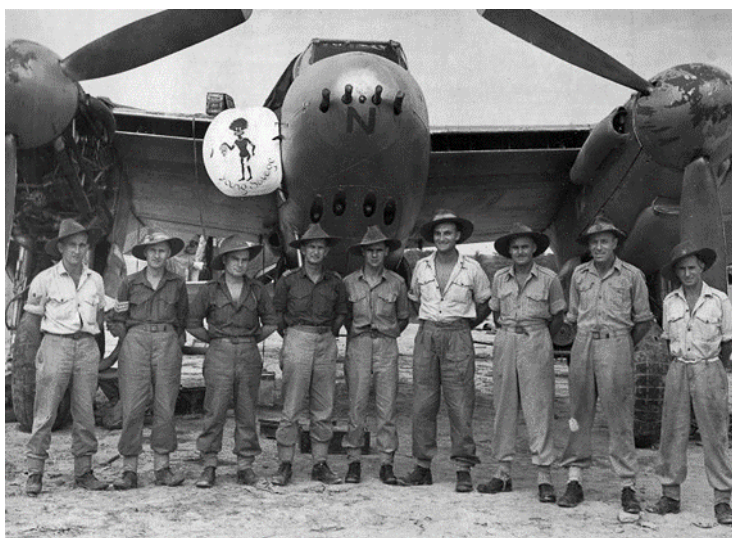
# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

In 31 July 1945, twenty aircraft formed up at Amberley for the forward deployment to Labuan. Their route would be Higgins Field on Cape York Peninsula, thence Morotai and finally to Labuan. But accidents still dogged the Unit. A52-502 swung on take-off and hit a truck beside the runway and A52-510 had to return to Amberley after one engine became unserviceable and the external fuel tanks had been jettisoned.

The trip was recalled by John Young, the navigator of A52-506:

*For July there was an air test flight on the 11th and then finally on the 31st the long awaited departure for Borneo. Departure time for A52-506 was 0700 hours and arrival at Higgins Field, at the tip of Cape York was five and a quarter hours later. The flight was carried out in a loose formation with visual contact. I well remember the landing at Higgins. The airstrip appeared to be cut out of a dense forest and the approach met with a very strong updraught as the aircraft came over the edge of the clearing and was about to drop onto the strip. Drop it did, and bounced several times. Next day we departed from Australia at 0830 for Morotai. This flight was our first experience of flying over enemy held territory, Dutch New Guinea, and although no encounter with the Japanese was anticipated, I well remember that the tension was a little high. The flight to Morotai was of 5 hours and 10 minutes duration. It was a dual runway of quite large dimensions, and the trip had been uneventful.*

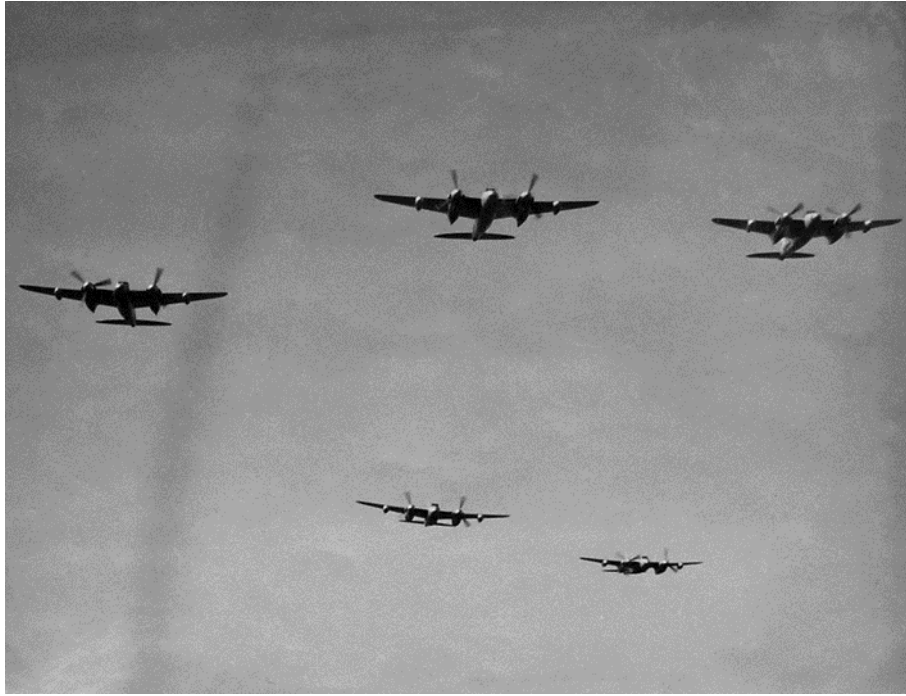
*Breakfast next morning, August 2, was early and was baked beans, not very appealing. Departure for Labuan was at 0700. One member of the ground staff travelled with us, squatting on the cockpit floor in front of me. Without a parachute of course, I think we agreed to jump together. The flight to Labuan was logged as 4 hours 20 minutes and this most likely included the 30 minutes circling the island. The arrival of our flight coincided with an air alert, this air raid alarm may well have been the result of unidentified aircraft arriving from Morotai. Newcomers of course.*



Left photo - FO Young (Nav) & FLt Savage (pilot) & Right photo – Servicing flight NCO's in front of A52-506 named "Young Savage". (c/o D. Little).

The first fourteen aircraft arrived at Labuan after their overnight stop-over at Morotai. Lead by the CO, the aircraft were parked in a space reserved for their use to the right of the taxiway, between the road and the airstrip. It was a tight squeeze, but space was at a premium. Two days later, Squadron Leader Dick Browne the 'B' Flight Commander, and the rear echelon of seven aircraft also arrived.

## Something to Remember— Chapter 6



**Formation of #1 Squadron Mosquitos. (c/o D. Little).**



**A52-519 taxis past a No 113 ASR Flight Catalina, also based on Labuan Island (RAAF)**

Crews were then introduced to the camp so well prepared by the advance party. Each crew had their own tent in the rubber plantation campsite. Although it had been two months since the Allies had arrived, it became general practice to sleep with a 38 Smith and Wesson under the pillow, as Japanese snipers were still about. One member of the Unit pointing out that 'this practice probably was of more danger to our partners if they should get out of bed during the night.'



## Something to Remember— Chapter 6



**Tent lines at Labuan. (c/o D. Little).**



**Labuan, North Borneo, C. Aug 1945. After torrential rain roads have many traps like this one. Manhandling the bogged jeep are (L to R) Sgt J. Brown, Cpl R. Marks, LAC F. Tullock, LAC M. Hayes-St-Clair, LAC J. Warfield, and LAC H. Knox. (c/o JT Harrison ).**



**Sgt Dowman & LAC Kerr with captured Jap canon. (c/o LAC R.G. Hunt ).**

# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

War operations would again be delayed due to scheduled aircraft maintenance - 100 hourly inspections. The next day, at a meeting of all crews, the CO advised them that the Mosquitoes would be used as 'long-range all-purpose intruder aircraft' and all set about their camp duties to await their first tasking. Meanwhile camp life went on. Squadron member, Jim Hess, a navigator recalled the periods of inactivity:

*In between flying, [which was] again limited, there was swimming, football etc, movies in the rain, visiting Malay villages and seeing the POWs from the Kuching area when their rest and recreation facilities were set up.*



**Ground crew swarm over No 1 Squadron Mosquito to complete overhaul in preparation for missions ahead. . (c/o JT Harrison).**



**LAC R. Scott of Killara NSW putting the sting in a Mosquito. The sting comprises 4 x 20mm canons in the lower forward fuselage and LAC Scott is installing the ammunition belt. Note the extra fuel tank in the back of bomb bay in second photo. (c/o JT Harrison).**



**9<sup>th</sup> division beach Labuan island. (c/o D. Little).**



# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

Malay school children,  
Labuan, north Borneo.  
(c/o D. Little).



Meanwhile, on 7 August, eight Beaufighter aircraft from No 93 Squadron, who had arrived in Labuan on 5 August, were tasked to attack an oil tanker in the mouth of the Tabuan River with rockets and to strafe the barracks at Trombol and any shipping in the South China Sea. The target ship was sighted and successfully attacked, but one aircraft, A8-85 flown by Flight Lieutenant Vernon Sims and Flying Officer Reg Farrant went missing and they were presumed lost. The remainder made it safely home.

The Squadron's first task came on 8 August, two days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The task was twofold. First, attack shipping in Sarawak River at Kuching and second, search for the missing Beaufighter from the previous day's flying. To complete the operation, eight aircraft were tasked as shown in Table 6.1.

Task No	Aircraft No	Pilot	Navigator
TAF 15.3	A52-513	WGCDR Little	FLTLT Magee
TAF 15.4	A52-520	FLGOFF Hall	FSGT Early
TAF 15.5	A52-510	SQNLDR Browne	FLGOFF Gregson
TAF 15.6	A52-511	WOFF Champion	FLGOFF Pretty
TAF 15.7	A52-507	FLTLT Pfeiffer	PLTOFF Sainsbury
TAF 15.8	A52-512	WOFF Jacob	FSGT Matthews
TAF 15.9	A52-522	FLTLT Cook	FLGOFF Evans
TAF 15.10	A52-518	FLGOFF Martin	FSGT Watson

Table 6.1 - Mosquito Tasking - 8 August 1945

The route would be Labuan - Sipang - Kuching - Malu Dam - Cape Sirik - Labuan, a 900 mile round trip. This Wednesday, the weather over the target was four tenths overcast and visibility of 10 miles. Preceding the attack would be a flight of four Kittyhawks from No 82 Squadron, also led by their CO, Squadron Leader Frank Schaaf, DFC. After lying over Kuching airstrip, the pilots found three 'Oscar' aircraft which were immediately strafed and destroyed. Three transport aircraft were also hit before the flight left to attack the river barges nearby. After the Kittyhawks departed it was the Mosquitoes turn.

## Something to Remember— Chapter 6



The flight of eight Mosquitoes got off to a bad start. Flying Officer David Hall and Flight Sergeant John Early did not even get airborne. Due to soft patches on the strip, all aircraft swung on take-off, but A52-520 swung off the narrow airstrip and collided with a parked Kittyhawk A68-608, fortunately without injury to crew or personnel nearby. Both aircraft were not so lucky.

The remaining seven aircraft flew in box formation, with the Commanding Officer leading the three pairs. They reached the target area at 1030 local time. In his report, Little described the sortie:

*A direct course was flown to Point Melban from which point Kuching Town was approached from the east. At a point about 12 miles from the Sarawak River mouth the formation broke into fluid pairs with the odd aircraft, duty 3, covering the Kuching and Batu Kawa airfields for signs of the missing Beaufighter and for targets of opportunity. There were no signs of the aircraft and no targets were attacked. Three 2E unserviceable aircraft were seen parked on the grassed area west of the strip (These have been reported previously on several occasions).*

*The strip appeared of doubtful serviceability as did also Batu Kawa where there was no obvious activity. During the run over Kuching aerodrome, the aircraft [A52-513] was holed in the port bomb door by a 13.2 mm shell, damaging two cannon. (Examination by the Flakintel Officer reveals that it was a fused H.E. - the first known report of such in this area). In a run over the town area two small craft, 40-50 ft in length and camouflaged, were strafed, and of Pending and west of Lintang.*

*Duties 7 and 8 attacked buildings considered to be possible stores and other barracks huts 2-3,000 ft from the north bank and opposite the Government offices. The buildings appeared unoccupied but were damaged, and one hut smouldered. Duties 9 and 10 searched the Tabuan River area for the missing Beaufighter but with negative results.*

*The aircraft reformed at Cape Sirik and returned to base. Duty 10 reported ground fire directed at him from near Miri. Investigation indicates that this came from our own troops, probably due to the fact that Army were not notified of the presence of Mosquito aircraft in the area.*



# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

## Operational Fatality

This one sortie, however, would remain etched into the minds of the whole unit. Number three in the formation, Squadron Leader Dick Browne and his navigator Flying Officer Dick Gregson, went missing in aircraft A52-510.

Whilst attacking the target area, the aircraft was observed to go into a shallow dive at approximately 300 mph. It then turned on its back and crashed into the Sarawak River. This was just a week before the end of the war.



Ground crew LAC W.N. Errington and LAC E.S. Cooper, defy the tropical heat servicing one of the engines of A52-510 Mosquito. (c/o JT Harrison).



FO Dick Gregson & SL Dick Browne.  
(c/o D. Little).

In the post flight report, Wing Commander Little continued:

*Duties 5 (Browne) and 6 (Champion) were detailed to search the river for barges. Two observation runs were made from east to west. On the third run, both duties attacked two probably unserviceable barges on the north bank of the river about 1,800 yards north-west of Henderson Point.*

*On the fourth run, duty 5 made a strafing pass at a possible barge on the south bank immediately opposite the fort. Towards the end of his run, the aircraft was observed by duty 6 to splurge, turn over and crash into the river where it broke up and burned.*

After cessation of hostilities, Flying Officer Speedy, the Unit Public Relations Officer, interrogated a number of English speaking Chinese, a Roman Catholic Priest and the Inspector of the Kuching Constabulary and was told that when the aircraft crashed, the Japanese closed the area and employed native divers to recover the crew. Only one body, that of Gregson, was recovered and buried on the river bank near the crash scene.

From reports submitted by other crews at the time, it appeared that Browne and Gregson had been shot down by light enemy fire over the target area. They were particularly unlucky considering the general lack of enemy activity. This was not a good start to war operations.

Two aircraft and one crew lost for little visible gain. Kuching was subsequently 'considered of no value for Mosquito aircraft' but it was revisited two days later.

# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

## Final War Operations

Tasking for the next day was different. Two waves were ordered, the first to attack enemy stores and installations at Batu Kawa and the second to do likewise at Bintulu. But a jinx must have come over the squadron because the second of three aircraft flown by Flight Lieutenant Tim Ryan and Flying Officer Bob Moulang over-ran the strip when an engine failed on take-off and aborted the mission. On this occasion there was no injury and only superficial damage to the airframe.

Task No	Aircraft No	Pilot	Navigator
TAF 18/4	A52-522	FLTLT Cook	FLGOFF Evans
TAF 18/5	A52-505	FLTLT Ryan	FLGOFF Moulang
TAF 18/6	A52-508	FLGOFF Lawrie	FLGOFF Thorncraft

Table 6.2 - Tasking for 9 August 1945 (First Wave)

The remaining pair of aircraft attacked the Batu Kawa airstrip. They hit a large hut and strafed stores on the airfield which they subsequently reported as unserviceable. In reply, the Japanese fired three short bursts of medium but inaccurate anti-aircraft artillery. The pair then made a short reconnaissance over Kuching and airstrip found the damaged aircraft from the previous days strike.



Pilot FLt Colin Cook (Rt) and Navigator FO Vic Evans, in front of their Mosquito, August 1945. (c/o JT Harrison)



A52-513, FB Mk VI Mosquito flown by WC R. Little (Pilot) and FO F. Magee, being re-fuelled in preparation for another sortie. (c/o D. Little).

The second strike had a similar aim as the first, but this time the target area was Bintulu. This time all allotted aircraft successfully got airborne and all returned safely to Labuan. Over the target, the leading pair broke left and the other, right to attack their individual targets in 'Indian Circle' formation. The four-ship attacked all huts in the target area but although hits were observed, no fires were started. One open boat was destroyed and a single Japanese soldier was seen fleeing. Although some light AAA was received, there was little enemy activity as the whole area seemed deserted. Perhaps disappointingly for him, Flight Lieutenant Maurie Shaw's aircraft had an electrical failure and neither the cannons nor the machine-guns would operate. It is also just as well that no enemy air activity was present either.



# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

Task No	Aircraft No	Pilot	Navigator
TAF 19/7	A52-511	WOFF Champion	FLGOFF Pretty
TAF 19/8	A52-519	FLGOFF Draper	FLGOFF Hess
TAF 19/9	A52-506	FLTLT Shaw	FLGOFF Robinson
TAF 19/10	A52-513	WGCDR Little	FLTLT Magee

**Table 6.3 - Tasking for 9 August 1945 (Second Wave)**

**Wing Commander Ross Little, Commanding officer of No 1 Squadron, RAAF, (Right) discusses Borneo target with his Navigator FLt Frank Magee. (c/o JT Harrison).**

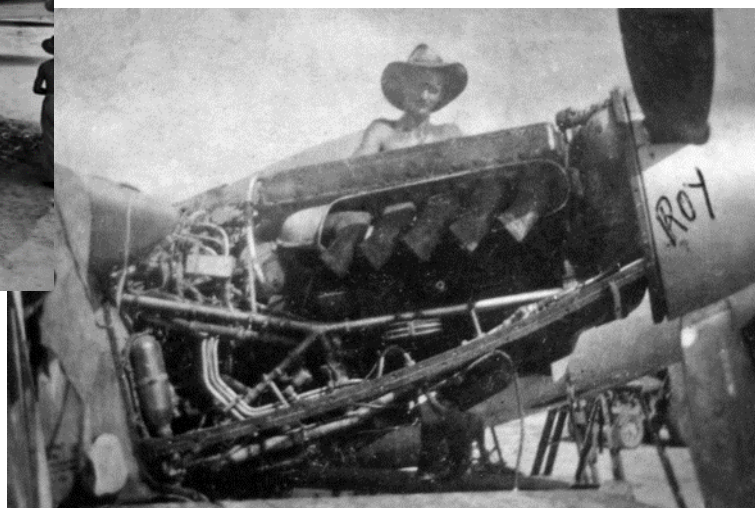


On 10 August, rumours circulated of a Japanese surrender. Personnel 'remained steady and calm although neighbouring units were heard celebrating peace'. First TAF, however, dashed all hopes with a message released at 2200 hrs stating that no such surrender had been negotiated. Meanwhile, sorties continued. The search for the Beaufighter missing from 7 August was resumed, this time in company with No 93 Squadron's Beaufort support and communications aircraft A9-401 (SK-A). The group searched from Cape Sirik, along the coast to Cape Datu and then on to Kuching, with negative results. It was not until the 20 August that news was received of the safety of both Sims and Farrant who were waiting at Kuala Belait. Runs were made over Kuching and Trombol airfield and this time, light but accurate AAA hit one aircraft in the drop tank but there was no other damage.



**Above: A52-510 Mosquito undergoing servicing by ground crew in preparation for next operation - Labuan, August 1945. (c/o JT Harrison).**

**Below: LAC Roy Hunt servicing merlin engine on A52-506, known as Young Savage (Sorry but a proud mum put my name on the prop - c/o R. Hunt)**



# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

That afternoon, Kuching was again struck by four Mosquitoes. A two storey pagoda, several huts and part of the airstrip including a suspected dump were destroyed. But there was still no sign of the enemy that the crews had heard so much about.

Task No	Aircraft No	Pilot	Navigator
TAF 29/6	A52-513	WGCDR Little	FLTLT Magee
TAF 29/7	A52-504	FLTLT Banks	FLGOFF Ashman
TAF 29/8	A52-500	FLGOFF Murray	FLGOFF Kelly
TAF 29/9	A52-524	FLTLT Savage	FLGOFF Young

**Table 6.4 - Tasking for 10 August 1945**

The war was petering out. There was no tasking on 11 August so the Commanding Officer took the opportunity to speak to the Squadron at a parade called for the purpose. He advised everyone present that nothing official had come through regarding the surrender of Japan and reminded them that they had signed on for the duration of the war and for twelve months afterwards. They could not expect to return to the mainland immediately upon cessation of hostilities. This no doubt put a sobering edge upon the building euphoria about the end of the war.

Flying operations continued unabated for the next three days, but this time, there was a change in mission type. Tasking switched to armed seaward reconnaissance and three such sorties were flown. Each sortie was given specific areas (known as Area F and Area G) to search and this included islands, estuaries and rivers. Such searches were conducted as far as the Singapore Straits, but they were mundane and inconclusive, the only action coming from a ship attack on 13 August when Squadron Leader Ian Kinross' aircraft was holed by return 20 mm cannon fire. The 50 ton vessel was strafed and left listing near Lima Island.

Date	Task No	Aircraft No	Pilot	Navigator
12 Aug	VIC 53/8	A52-531	FLTLT Dempster	FLTLT
	VIC 53/9	A52-518	FLTLT McDaniel	FLGOFF
	VIC 53/10	A52-509	FLTLT Ryan	FLGOFF
	VIC 53/11	A52-519	FLGOFF Hall	FSGT Early
13 Aug	VIC 54/1	A52-521	SQNLDR Kinross	FLGOFF Newton
	VIC 54/2	A52-517	FLGOFF Orr	FLGOFF Ryan
	VIC 54/3	A52-511	FLGOFF Lethbridge	FSGT Williams
	VIC 54/4	A52-506	FLTLT Savage	FLGOFF Young
14 Aug	VIC 56/1	A52-527	FLTLT Ryan	FLGOFF Moulang
	VIC 56/2	A52-519	FLGOFF Hall	FSGT Early
	VIC 56/3	A52-511	FLTLT Shaw	FLGOFF Robinson
	VIC 56/4	A52-524	FLGOFF Taylor	FLGOFF Bosci

**Table 6.5 - Remaining War Tasking for August 1945**



# Something to Remember— Chapter 6



Group portrait of crews walking away from their aircraft. L to R; FO W.L. Orr (pilot), FO S.A. Bosci (nav), PO R. J. Moulang (nav), FLt C. Savage (pilot), FLt T.J. Ryan (pilot), Flt Sgt M. E. Williams (nav), PO J. H. Jess (nav), PO D.W. Jacobs (pilot), Flt Sgt J. A. Early (nav), FO N. J. Draper (pilot), Flt Sgt G. Watson (nav). Behind is FB Mk VI Mosquito A52-531, nick named West Australian Woodchoppers which is painted on the access door to the cockpit. 7 Aug 1945. (c/o J.T.Harrison)

A52-511 Mosquito belly landed after star-board tyre blew upon take off due to a puncture on coral surfaced airstrip. 25th Aug 1945. (c/o W. Orr)



Labuan, North Borneo, 25 Aug 1945. The crowd cheered when A52-511 in the hands of its skillful pilot, made a safe belly landing. Quite unconcerned, the pilot FO William L. Orr stepped out examined the damage and when congratulated by his navigator PO Keith C. Ryan, said "Sorry, but it's the best I could do". (c/o J.T.Harrison)

# Something to Remember— Chapter 6

There may also be some poetic justice in life as one further accident that occurred on the 13 August also showed. The Commanding Officer was forced to ditch A52-513 after the star-board engine overheated and was feathered after take-off.

The aircraft subsequently lost height and crashed in the shallows of the lagoon. This indeed was an occupational hazard but to make matters worse, WC Little had inadvertently left the undercarriage locks in place, an embarrassing gaff when considering his attitude towards others who had made simpler mistakes.

Little was unhurt, but his navigator, Flight Lieutenant Tom Isbister suffered minor injuries and had to be admitted to the Station Sick Quarters for a week. The aircraft was only slightly damaged and after being extricated from the water, was quickly repaired and flying less than a week later.



**Mosquito, A52-529 flown by FO Draper & PO Hess, over-ran the strip when an engine failed on take-off. There was no injury and only superficial damage to the airframe. 29th Aug 1945.**

In all, the Squadron conducted only eight war operations. There was little action and little sign of the enemy. Squadron Leader Kinross was one of the last to arrive at Labuan (on 9th August) and his log book is typical of the flying rate per crew member. Table 6.6 records his August flying effort logging 37 hours 20 minutes of which 19 hours was of an operational nature:

Date	Aircraft No	Navigator	Details
9 Aug	A52-1011	F/O Newton	Zamboanga - Labuan (ferry)
11 Aug	A52-527	F/O Saywell	Air Test
13 Aug	A52-521	F/O Newton	Labuan - Singapore Attacked 50 tonner (6,000 rounds)
16 Aug	A52-505	LAC Hutchinson	Air Test
23 Aug	A52-507	F/O Newton	Photo Recce Ranau - Boto
25 Aug	A52-507	FSGT Morgan	Air Test
27 Aug	A52-507	F/O Newton	Kuching Photo Recce POW & Strip
28 Aug	A52-507	F/O Newton	Air Test
29 Aug	A52-507	F/O Hart	Air Test
30 Aug	A52-507	F/O Newton	Balikpapan & Return

**Table 6.6 - SQNLDR Kinross' Log Book Entry - August 1945**

War operations were discontinued on 14 August after a signal to that effect was received from First TAF Headquarters, but this was not the end of the flying operations over Borneo. Although the war officially ended on 15 August 1945, the unit continued search, reconnaissance, escort and air cover missions until mid-September to ensure Japanese compliance with cease fire directives. Of the 114 operational sorties flown, 50 were seaward searches, 23 escort or top cover, 21 armed recce and only 16 attack. Sea search and armed reconnaissance were the two primary roles undertaken during this period and all at the Squadron had time to consider their future.



# A58-492 Replica



**A58-492 holding pride of place outside the RAAF Museum Administration Building, Point Cook.**

service on Morotai.

Much of the research on paint schemes was obtained from the book 'Aussie Eight' by Peter Malone.

The book is only available with the purchase of an injection moulded kit from Eduard ([www.eduard.com](http://www.eduard.com) cat number 1188).

Manufactured by Gateguards UK for the Friends of the RAAF Museum, the replica is a gift to the RAAF Museum from the Friends' members and sponsors. The full size replica is constructed using fibreglass and where necessary, carbon fibre for reinforcing. The average thickness of the skin is 7mm.

There is no internal steel frame due to the need to make allowance for the extremely wide range of temperatures recorded at Point Cook, particularly the hot weather (we reviewed weather records for the past seventy years). European fibreglass replicas, with internal steel frames have experienced cracking of the aircraft skin, due mainly to the steel tube expanding and contracting.

The replica weighs approximately 1500 kg, not including the pole. The steel pole has three parts, top outer is a socket which is attached to the internal structure of the fuselage. Top inner, is approximately 10mm in diameter smaller than the outer pole to allow for expansion. Lower pole is 2.7m long and was fabricated in Melbourne. The three pole components have a wall thickness of 11mm.

Underneath the red circle of concrete, there is a foundation block of reinforced concrete weighing over 27,000kg.

The replica is painted using AkzoNobel Polyurethane Aerospace Coating. The paint scheme represents the last few months of the prototypes

## A58-492 (MT-518) Prototype Information

Type: Spitfire MK VIII LF RAAF No. A58-492 RAF No. MT518

Fitted with Engine: Merlin 66

Received from: UK-Chattis Hill

Date Received: 4 July 1944 at 3AD in Amberley

With 79 Sqn, the aircraft was named "Mac III" by it's pilot, Flying Officer Hugh Kennare. At various times in the aircraft's short career with the RAAF it carried reporting marks of: UP-U, UP-P and finally UP-B. A58-492 operated from Pitoe Strip, Morotai for some part of 1945.

Spitfire VIII aircraft with RAF serials in the MT and MV range were finished in the RAF Day Fighter Scheme of Dark Green and Ocean Grey over Medium Sea Grey. They also had RAF Sky spinners, Sky rear fuselage band, and Yellow leading edges. This is how A58-492, (ex MT518), was finished when received by the RAAF.

The original paint scheme and markings were modified in Australia. The modification can be seen on the replica, in particular around the roundels (RAF roundels at the time were significantly larger than those used by the RAAF). For the over painting, the RAAF used Foliage Green where the RAF had used Dark Green, and the RAAF used Dark Sea Grey where the RAF had used Ocean Grey. Other changes included, removing white leading edges, and towards the end of the aircrafts life, painting the spinner Foliage Green.

# Vale

The Association is sad to announce the passing of the following members since the last Bulletin was produced:

**Robert Barson COWPER** of Netley, South Australia  
**Ramon AUSTEN** of Clifton Springs, Victoria

## New Members

The Association is pleased to announce and introduce new members since the last Bulletin:

**Peter CARNE**  
**Russell GARRAWAY**  
**Colin HANCOCK**  
**Bruce KEAN**  
**Fiona SHANAHAN**  
**David UPRICHARD**

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