



## ADF Serials Newsletter

For those interested in Australian Military Aircraft History  
and Serials  
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### Editor's Note:

This month Gordon B takes a break from P-40's and regales us with the mysteries of the Spitfire MkVIII. As a librarian, it's always pleasing to see new Australian books hitting the streets. This month we provide details of some new titles that feature Australian involvement in the Vietnam War.

As usual we have some interesting Can you help snippets for you. Until next month,

Jan

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### Website News:

Brendan Cowan has been busy putting together AFC aircraft pages for the website. Please check it out at:

<http://www.adf-serials.com/afc.shtml>

**The image database is up and running again!**

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### Canadian Military Serials Website

Jos Heyman alerted the group to the existence of the Canadian Military Serials Website, put together by Bill Walker. Bill's goal is to identify every serial number ever assigned to a Canadian military aircraft, and to track the history of each aircraft in as much detail as he can. In Bill's words "Since starting these pages I have been lucky enough to receive correspondence from serial number enthusiasts from around the world, and they have become a major source for the data presented here. I'm always in the process of adding this new

information to my database and these web pages. Check out my change log each time you visit, to see the progress.”

The site is: <http://www.odj.ca/~bwalker/>

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## **RAAF Spitfire MkVIII A58 Supplementary #1Ver1a – Gordon B**

This is the first of many updates per this model to give the reader an insight of airframe history or new research findings on this type. Though not a regular article series, it will at times, be subject to further research and feedback.

Supermarine Spitfire LFVIII RAF Serial **JG655** was built as part of a 50 aircraft batch serialised JG646-JG695 per the 1<sup>st</sup> Order to Contract No Aircraft/1877/C.23© for Supermarine (23<sup>rd</sup> January 1942) for 800 Mk VIII aircraft. This aircraft was delivered at Chattis Hill Airfield by Supermarine and accepted by 6 Maintenance Unit, RAF on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1944. She was then disassembled and crated by 82 Maintenance Unit, RAF and was then shipped on the SS Lycaon to Australia on the 2 April 1944.

Arriving in Melbourne on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1944, the crates containing this aircraft were initially held by 1 Aircraft Park (1AP) where the aircraft had earlier on the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1944 been allocated the RAAF serial of **A58-482**. The aircraft was then received by 1 Aircraft Depot (1AD), Laverton on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1944 after assembly by 1AP.

In accordance with the newly introduced practice of non-camouflaging of single seater aircraft, all of the RAF temperate paint camouflage was removed with paint stripper to a natural metal finish, with only a black anti-glare painted on top of the cowl extending to the windscreen applied. (Per Appendix B RAAF Camouflage 1944, with previous aircraft despatched from 3 Aircraft Depot in early 1944 to 548/549 Squadrons RAF confirmed from Records and Photos)

On the 29<sup>th</sup> July the aircraft was received by 14 Aircraft Recovery Depot and then issued to 548 Squadron RAF on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1944.



Spitfire MkVIII A58-482 as delivered to 548Sqn RAF August 1944.

548 Squadron RAF had previously formed in December 1943, but had only received its first aircraft, a Wirraway and a Tiger Moth, on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 1944. It would be equipped with some 24 Spitfire MkVIII aircraft and one Wirraway in the next few months and then move to the Northern Territory in May 1944.

A58-482 was coded **M-TS**, but it was to only stay with the squadron for only a few days, when it was then issued to 7 Recovery and Service Unit (7RSU) on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1944 for servicing and camouflaging due to the conspicuousness of natural metal aircraft on the ground.

She emerged with a fresh re-spray of Foliage Green with Sky Blue underneath, with the Unit Codes now forward in Medium Sea Grey, with the aircraft's Squadron Code trailing rear of the

Roundel, usually in White. In this guise, A58-482 was received back with 548 Squadron RAF on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1944. (Nb: Spinner colours unknown except Foliage Green when re-painted at 7RSU)

Following its return the aircraft became the personal aircraft of Squadron Leader R A Watson Ser#65530 RAF, CO of 548Sqn RAF. (RT Callsign *Bellboy 15*). It was used on an operational sortie to Selaroe Island on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 1944 as one of 4 aircraft from 548Sqn RAF participating with 8 other Spitfires from the two other Squadrons (54 and 549 Squadrons RAF)



Spitfire LF Mk VIII A58-482 following installation of 4 20mm Cannon Armament by 7RSU November 1944

There's little further on its history with 548 Squadron RAF during the following months, except that the aircraft during its servicing at 7RSU in November 1944 had its four Browning .303Cal Machine guns were removed.

In their place, two further Hispano 20mm Cannons were installed in the wing. There are no further details of the trial installation, nor is there any evidence of their removal. Given being the then CO's aircraft, they may have remained.

Post service information suggests it had been recoded as TS-V following its re-issue to 548 Squadron RAF; however I cannot confirm this apart from an entry dated 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1945 when the Wing strafed the Japanese airfield at Cape Chater, North East Timor. It was by then, the personal aircraft of Sqn Ldr E D Glaser DFC, commanding Officer 548Squadron RAF.



Spitfire LFMkVIII A58-482 TS-V as flown by SqnLdr E D Glaser 548 Sqn RAF June 1945

It remained with the Squadron until the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1945 after hostilities finished, then it was transferred to 6 Aircraft Depot the following day to be ferried it down to Oakey for storage with it arriving there on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1945.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1946 it was classified as Category C storage for possible post war use, however within time it would be decided to standardise the day fighter force on the CAC Mustangs resulting in her being stored as Category G. On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1946 A58-482 and all of her sisters then in storage, were authorised for disposal.

Passing into the care of DAP, they would be almost to an aircraft be broken down and melted into ingots of aluminium.

**Gordon R Birkett@2006**

**NAA Official Sources: 548 RAF Squadron History Sheets and 7 RSU A50 Sheets, and E/E88 IR Card. Private Sources: Unit photographs**

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## **New Books**

### **Possums & Bird Dogs: Australian Army Aviation's 161 Reconnaissance Flight in Vietnam 1965-1972 - Len Avery**

As the first Australian Army Aviation unit to be deployed on active service, 161 Reconnaissance Flight faced huge challenges. The Flight's personnel overcame the odds of unfamiliar operations and logistics difficulties to become a key element of the Australian task force. American Bird Dog aircraft were borrowed to boost operational capabilities. Other challenges were met with similarly unorthodox practices, but only the faint-hearted questioned their effectiveness.

The *Possum* call sign used by 161 was heard from 1965 to 1972 in Vietnam's crowded skies. During their year of duty pilots flew up to 1200 hours on a range of intelligence-gathering and direct support missions. Their commitment to the Australian ground forces was absolute. Much of their work was at treetop level, and the cry of 'Possum down' was often heard as enemy fire took its toll on pilots and aircraft.

Behind the flying lies a tale of dedicated maintenance and general support based on innovation, improvisation and opportunistic acquisition. New faces and aeroplanes replaced the old, but purpose and pride never wavered. There is a rich vein of humour throughout this fine story of men at war. It will appeal to all veterans and those who have an interest in military and general aviation.

The history of 161, entitled *Possums and Bird Dogs* is to be released for sale by publishers Allen & Unwin on 11 August 2006. Look for it in your favourite bookshop. A limited edition of 500 hard cover copies is also being produced. If you are interested in purchasing a copy please contact author Peter Nolan on 07 5473 9547 (Email [pierren@bigpond.net.au](mailto:pierren@bigpond.net.au)) or 161 historian Len Avery on 07 4633 4888 (Email [lavery19@tpg.com.au](mailto:lavery19@tpg.com.au)).

### **Sock it to 'Em Baby:: Forward Air Controller in Vietnam – Garry Cooper and Robert Hillier**

There is a new book on the shelves titled 'Sock It To 'Em Baby', Forward Air Controller in Vietnam which is the story of Flt Lt Garry Cooper RAAF who was posted to Vietnam in 1968 with the US Army 9th Infantry Division to fly O1 Bird Dogs.

A rather incredible story of one of a number of RAAF pilots who were posted to Vietnam as FAC pilots and did an incredible job as a pilot and to survive 12 months in Vietnam.

If you are interested the book has been published by Allen & Unwin, Authors are Garry Cooper and Robert Hillier and the ISBN IS 1-74114-849-9.

## **Blue Lightning – the Story of 6 Squadron RAAF – Steve Eather**

Steve Eather has provided the following information:

I am writing to provide you with a much belated update on my history of 6 Squadron. I am happy to say that, finally, the publication process is virtually complete and within weeks “Blue Lightning – the Story of 6 Squadron, RAAF” will be available to readers.

Australian Military History Publications is the publisher of the book and the enclosed page provides their contact details in case you or your local library staff are interested in obtaining a copy of the book.

It has been a long drawn out process in researching and publishing this book (I actually started work on it during 2002) and I am sincerely grateful for your assistance with the project. Your patience has also been much appreciated.

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### **Feedback:**

#### **Wirraway crash near Geelong during WW2**

Last year Jonathan Wright contacted ADF-Serials about information on a Wirraway crash near Geelong in WW2. The information was required for an ABC story. Jonathan recently contacted the group to let us know that the story went to air on Anzac Day this year and was posted on their website at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/goulburnmurray/stories/s1627720.htm>

#### **A20-182 Wirraway Model CA-7**

Gordon B has been assisting with information on the A20-182 Wirraway Model CA-7 which crashed on 2 July 1945 killing the pilot FLTLT Maxwell Ashdown 295306 who was attached to 6SFTS. I have included the following email from Norma Linnane:

Hello Gordy

Our family thank you sincerely for the data supplied. It is appreciated that individuals and groups combine to carry out the maintenance of such records. Please pass on our appreciation to anyone else involved.

Kind regards

Norma Linnane

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## **Can you Help?**

### **Serials batches for the Blackhawks**

Brendan Cowan want to find out why the Australian Army Blackhawks have 2 serial number batches:

A25-101 to A25-114

A25-201 to A25-225

A25-301 to A25-303 (Maintenance Trainers/simulators)

Does any one know the reason for splitting the serials?

The third batch makes sense as they are not flying airframes. But there must have been a reason for making the initial split between the first two groups.

Even if they are from different orders/contracts - why was it necessary to start the second serial number batch from the 200's?

Are there sufficient equipment/configuration differences to make it simpler to administer?

Any thoughts, theories or even facts appreciated.

### **Camouflage of hangers in Australia during WW2**

Bob Livingstone has a question about RAAF camouflage of hangars - patterns & more importantly, colours during WW2.

Anyone have any details?

So far the following responses have been forwarded:

I know for WW2 the mesh had what looks like olive green patches on it. The mesh itself looks slightly darker than the irregular patches, but it may be an artefact of the shadow in the photo. All this is just my guesstimate as the photos of course are in B&W. Have yet to see any hangars in the SWPA area during WW2, though there may have been some constructed at Pt Moresby late in the war.

I cannot recall seeing any hangars camouflaged in my time in the RAAF. That does not mean that it did not happen, but if I recall correctly when with 5ACS in Darwin even the two larger hangars and the "taxi in hanger" down there had no camouflage on them.

Now at Dubbo there is a interesting half building, which came from the USA, I am not sure what it was, but only half of it could be erected, as the remainder was lost on the ship it was travelling was sunk.

### **Aircraft crash 20/02/42**

Looking for an aircraft crash data that claimed a life later on that day.

Not the DH86 at Belmont either, as this one is a quite one (If such a thing).



**9 May 27 SE-5A A2-24 1FTS** FLGOFF Francis Ewen  
Seen to fall away from formation passing overhead during the opening of the new Legislative building, the aircraft then entered a dive before crashing into the ground about 600 metres in front of Parliament House. Although the pilot survived the initial crash he later died from his injuries, unable to speak of the accident. The cause of the accident would later be ruled as an accident as the true nature of the accident could not be explained.

**14 May 37 Demon A1-40 3SQN** PLTOFF Donald Ashton-Shorter  
Crashed after pulling out of a dive at about 500ft during an aerobatics display at Townsville aerodrome. As a result of the pull out, the top wing was seen to break away followed then by the lower wing.

**17 May 53 Meteor F.8 A77-856 77SQN** FLGOFF G. Doolittle (RAF)  
Aircraft was seen to dive into the ground on ground attack mission.

**19 May 92 F-18B A21-106 77SQN** FLGOFF Robert Jepsen (Pilot)  
Mr Michael Howlett (DSTO scientist)  
Crashed at Cape Clinton, north of Rockhampton, in northern Queensland. This aircraft had painted on the left side of the nose a reclining, naked female figure affectionately called "Daphne De Dual". It is a squadron tradition to have an aircraft in service with that squadron with the figure of Daphne painted on it.

**21 May 58 Meteor NF.11 WM374** FSGT D. Walter  
During a touch and go at Woomera, SA, the aircraft suffered a catastrophic failure of the No.2 engine turbine causing a fire. The resultant failure of the turbine and subsequent fire caused the rear fuselage to separate in-flight and sending the aircraft crashing to the ground killing FSGT Walter. The RAAF's number for this aircraft although not applied was A77-374.

**24 May 42 Hudson A16-191 32SQN**  
**Hudson A16-194 32SQN**  
Both aircraft collided in mid-air near Giru, QLD and both aircraft crashed into dense mangrove swamps.

**Thank you to Dean and his aircrew losses research, for this month's On this day segment. Jan**

**If you have something for the newsletter or would like to submit an article, query or image, please use the following links:**

<http://www.adf-serials.com/contact>