



ADF Serials Newsletter

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Editor's Note:

Hi everyone,

My apologies for the delay in the newsletter which has resulted in a combined July-August newsletter being compiled.

As usual Gordon Birkett has provided some interesting research for you all to enjoy. This month Gordon examines RAAF Spitfire identification codes. John Furze has sent some additional information on the Frank Brown story. We have our usual feedback, can you help and on this day sections for you.

Till next month,

Jan



RAAF Spitfire Identification Codes 1st Fighter Wing Supplementary #2 Ver2 – Gordon B

This supplementary issue is themed at questions often asked and seldom answered.

Question 1: What were the original and subsequent Codes to be allocated to 54Sqn RAF, 452 and 457Sqn RAAF with the 1st Fighter Wing in Australia 1942-1944?

Memo from Headquarters, 1st Fighter Wing dated 30/01/43 stated that RAF Squadrons had been allocated by the Air Ministry, combinations of TWO (2) letters for identification purposes. This would assist in the identification of individual aircraft in an area where two or more squadrons would be operating. They had been painted on the sides of squadron aircraft so that they could be distinguished from a distance of some 100 yards. Individual aircraft would be numbered alphabetically throughout the squadron, giving a code sequence of three letters per aircraft.

In Australia, it was recommended that the two letters for each of the squadrons within the 1st Fighter Wing (RAAF) would be allocated as follows:

- 452Sqn RAAF would be **DL**-*
- 457Sqn RAAF would be **XB**-*
- 54Sqn RAF would be **TA**-*



The use of the 457Sqn RAAF allocated **XB** letter codes was short, with it being replaced by the letters **ZP**. Previously, in the United Kingdom during 1941 to 1942, they had used the letters **BP**. Interestingly, the **ZP** letters had been previously /concurrently used by 74 Sqn RAF (Tiger Sqn) during 1941 through to 1943, until it was allocated the numeric/alphabetic code of **4D**.

After this Squadron Letters allocation, there appeared to be some representation by 54 Sqn RAF to have the codes **DL** allocated to their squadron. The Reason was a simple request as they had previously been allocated those letters in the United Kingdom between 1941 through to 1942, after using the letters of **KL** earlier in 1940.

The squadron, during the Battle of Britain, had been one of the highest scorers of enemy aircraft destroyed. It was granted the re-allocation of the letters **DL** in due course. 91 Sqn RAF also had used the letters **DL** as well.



452Sqn RAAF were given the letters of **QY** in return. When in the United Kingdom during 1941 to 1942, they used the letters **UD**.



All of the 1st Fighter Wing would continue to use these codes to the end of their operational tour in the Darwin Theatre. Both 452 and 457Sqn RAAF would continue to use them in the SW Pacific under the command of 80th Fighter Wing.

Two further RAF Squadrons would form in late 1943 and be assigned to the 1st Fighter Wing. They would be as follows:

- 548Sqn RAF with the code of **TS**
- 549 Sqn RAF with the code of **ZF**

As for the letter codes, **ZF**, they had been previously/concurrently used by 308 Sqn RAF (Polish) in the United Kingdom.

Question 2: What's with the Individual Letter Codes of the Commanders?

It was also understood that in the United Kingdom and the Middle East Fighter Wings at that time, permission was given for the Officer Commanding and the Wing Commander aircraft which were not attached to any individual squadron to have on their aircraft there granted to display their own three individual initials on their aircraft.

The letters for those Officers in those positions would be for 1st Fighter Wing:

- **AL-W** for Group Captain Allan Leslie Walters AFC
- **CR-C** for Wing Commander Clive R Caldwell DFC

It is not known if Group Captain Allan Leslie Walters AFC had his initials on his personal Spitfire, as had Wing Commander Clive R Caldwell DFC during 1943.

I am unable as yet get his serial of his assigned Spitfire. He did however shoot down one enemy fighter on the 20th June 1943, some 4 days prior to handing over command.

If some one can state his serial and whether or not he used his personal code, it would be appreciated. It may be that the aircraft was under the care of 452Sqn RAAF and given that its letter code was just **QY** per A50 records, **BS295** did not receive his personal codes at all.

Both Caldwell and Walters flew **BS295** from time to time, with Caldwell's **CR-C** at this period being on **BS234**. Later though, after having its camouflage removed, **BS295** did end up having the letters **CR-C** applied, after Caldwell became the 1st Fighter Wing's Commanding Officer. However apart from Caldwell flying this aircraft during that period when his own **CR-C** was being serviced, it seems to point to this. Purely conjecture at present that it was the personal aircraft of Walters apart from a few sorties.

Caldwell's subsequent Spitfires all were adorned with his personal codes of **CR-C**. Caldwell's first MkVIII, **A58-484**, often mistaken as **A58-464**, was marked as such.



Spitfire LF MkVIII A58-484 of Wg Cdr Clive Caldwell March 1945

Question 3: The Squadron Commander usually wore what Individual Aircraft Code?

With the individual letter for Squadron Leaders in most squadrons, the highest usage usually fell upon the letter “V”. For example, Squadron Leader Robert “Bobby” Gibbs would also wear his own codes later, still with his “V” in 1944-45 when, as second in command of 80th Fighter Wing, his own initials of **RG**, would be applied to his aircraft as **RG-V**.

But it appears, as records show, there was a strong bias to “V”:

- Sqn Ldr Lou Spence, 452Sqn RAAF, flew **A58-254** coded **QY-V** “Rima II”
- Sqn Ldr Robert “Bobby” Gibbs 457Sqn RAAF flew **A58-497** coded as **ZP-V**
- Sqn Ldr E D Glaser of 548Sqn RAF flew **A58-482** coded **TS-V**
- Sqn Ldr E P Bockock of 549Sqn RAF flew **A58-341** coded as **ZF-A**

Why “V” in most cases? One could assume “V” stood for **Victory** or at the very least, **Victor**.

Gordon R Birkett@2006

NAA Official Sources: 54 RAF/452/457 RAAF Squadron History Sheets and 7 RSU A50 Sheets, and E/E88 IR Card. Private Sources: Unit photographs

NB: Every effort is made to make these profiles accurate, but at times we may fall short. GRB. ☺

Images from the Temora Air Show – Darren Crick

Darren has provided some excellent images from the Temora airshow which can be viewed via the following link:

<http://www.adf-serials.com/invboard/index.php?showtopic=366>

Kittyhawk A29-312

The Frank Brown Story – John Furze

Sixteen aircraft bombed and strafed Idore, destroying one house and possibly two others. Seven aircraft bombed Moemi and destroyed a bridge. Sergeant F. R. Brown was flying Kittyhawk A29-312 when he crashed on the strip on the 1 December 1944.

Brown was flying No.2 in a section of four aircraft when they had just dropped their bombs on the Japanese strip at Moemi when Brown pulled out of his dive and noticed that his engine was giving trouble. He immediately decided to crash land and selecting a spot on the Western end of the strip put the aircraft down on its belly.

After skidding for about one hundred yards, the plane came to rest with black smoke rising from the engine and Sergeant Brown picked up his maps and moved hastily to a safe distance. However, there was no fire, and in a few minutes he returned to the aircraft to find that the wireless was still working.

He then called up his section leader, **only to be told, to regain formation.** Finally he managed to make his position clear, and was then instructed to hide away for awhile, returning later to call up for further instructions. This he did after removing one of the guns and smashing the instrument panel. Fifty minutes later he was told to destroy the aircraft and make for the coast about one mile away. However he was unable to light a fire, so he headed off immediately, and a few minutes later the plane was burning well after strafing runs had been made by the two covering Kittyhawks.

By this time it was dusk. Back at the base bundles had been prepared quickly, one containing cigarettes, matches and a map showing his position, the other an Owen gun and ammunition. Warrant Officer R. Ellis took off with these in his cockpit and arrived over Brown as the latter reached the eastern end of the strip, and revealed his position by firing a smoke generator. Warrant Officer Ellis dropped the bundles, but in the poor light Brown was only able to find only the small package containing the map. This he used to set compass course for the beach, and soon was well on his way.

He was forced to crawl through heavy undergrowth and swampy ground, attacked continuously by hordes of mosquitoes, until 0030 hours, when he struck a light railway line and followed it to a motor transport road. He was to find himself in a Japanese bivouac area. After carefully looking for any sign of life, and finding none, he filled his water bottle from a well and walked the remaining twenty yards to the beach.

Sergeant Brown then tested his dinghy, which he had brought all the way from the aircraft by throwing it ahead on a rope and then crawling up to it. Finding it serviceable he hid it under a tree and started off to investigate some native huts, which he had noticed about three quarters of a mile away. Again he found no evidence of habitation so he returned to his dinghy and put out to sea about 0300 hours.

The following newspaper article was part of the Mervyn Milton Furze World War 11 collection concerning the crash landing of Sergeant Frank Brown.

The Newspaper Article

Meanwhile rescue arrangements had been made at base, and a crash boat set out a little before midnight. Unfortunately she ran on a reef soon afterwards and Flight Lieutenant Wicks (207082) who was on board, transferred to a converted American armed barge, two of which had been intended originally to escort the launch.

By daybreak these craft were close to the New Guinea mainland and sighting Manokwari at 0730 hours, turned south and reached the scene at about 1130 hours.

Squadron aircraft had found Brown on the beach an hour or so after daylight. He had been forced ashore by a storm in the early hours of the morning, and being very cramped and somewhat exhausted, had decided to rest for a while on the land. After seeing the Kittyhawks overhead he decided to launch the dinghy once more, and paddled out about three hundred yards, threw over his sea anchor, and settled down to wait.

The Kittyhawks continued to circle him and were joined by a Catalina about midday. The Catalina decided not to land to pick up the distressed pilot, and later events proved this to be justified, as the arrival of the barges was a signal to the Japanese to begin shooting.

Sergeant Brown was picked eventually by one of the barges at 1420 hours. He was hauled aboard whilst the craft was moving under mortar and small arms fire from the beach. The dinghy was sunk by a burst from a machine gun, and the barges made an uneventful trip back to base, which was reached at about 2300 hours.

The rescued pilot suffered few ill effects, his main discomfort being the rash left by the mosquito bites and scratches received while making his way to shore.

The commander of the barge from the US Army and his cool leadership played a great part in the rescuing of the pilot.

The Kittyhawk aircraft which Sergeant Brown was flying when he crashed was **Kittyhawk A29-312**. Kittyhawk A29-312 was originally received by No.82 Squadron on the 25 March 1943 and served with this Squadron. On the 11 February 1944 it was received at No.1 Repair and Salvage Unit for an engine change and then returned to the Squadron. On the 12 April 1944 when landing from a practice scramble it hit an American truck at the end of its landing run with pilot Flight Lieutenant Keith Norman Cooper (400078) being uninjured. On the 22 November 1944 it was received by No.76 Squadron from No.22 RSURP. On the 1 December it made a belly landing in enemy territory and was strafed by other Kittyhawk aircraft from No.76 Squadron and written off. The story is told above.

Many thanks to John for providing this additional information on Frank Brown and A29-312.

VH-CIZ (A65-83) Air Ambulance Crash December 1945 - Lee McCarthy

Lee McCarthy has been researching the crash involving A65-83, a Dakota air ambulance on 19 December 1945 and has now placed this information up on the web. The website provides details of the crew and passengers, the flight path, RAAF inquiry into the accident and an image gallery containing documents and photographs.

This website reveals a lot of information about the disappearance of this aircraft and Lee is to be congratulated on sharing this research with others. Please check out the fruits of Lee's labour at:

<http://www.vhciz.com/>

Can You Help?

A29-575 Black Magic HU-E

Daniel needs some help with a project. He wants to complete his R C model P40 true to scale as BLACK MAGIC HU-E A29-575 and wants to know where he can look for the correct paint /colour?

On This Day

1 Jul 1926 DH-9 A6-13 1FTS FLGOFF William A. Holtham (QFI) and Cdt Thomas S.G. Watson (Student). The aircraft stalled during a forced landing practice, which then crashed 3 kilometres north of Manor Station, near Werribee and caught fire destroying the aircraft.

3 Jul 1950 Pilots of No. 77 Squadron accidentally destroy a train carrying American and Republic of Korea soldiers having been assured by the United States 5th Air Force Tactical Control Centre that the area under attack was in North Korean hands.

7 Jul 1942 Demon A1-27 3BAGS SGT K.A. Bates and LAC A.F. Hehir. Aircraft crashed at Dutson, near Sale, Vic.

12 Jul 1943 Beaufort A9-225 100 SQN FLGOFF John Clifton Davis (pilot), FLTSGT Geoffrey Raymond Emmett (Observer), SGT William Thomas Brain (WAG) and SGT George Collins (WAG). A9-225 failed to return to Gurney after a reconnaissance mission near Rabaul. The aircraft was shot down near Rabaul by a US Navy Liberator. Three crew survived the crash and were spotted in a life raft but were never recovered and all were presumed to have been killed on or around 12 Jul 1943.

16 Jul 1943 Kittyhawk A29-117 2OTU PLTOFF Alan Ross Airly Arnott 426819. Taking off from Mildura at 1240hrs PLTOFF Arnott was due to carry out some combat exercises with F/SGT W.C. James flying a second aircraft who last saw the aircraft behind him at 10,000ft. The burnt out wreckage of the aircraft were later found 13 miles south west of the aerodrome in the early hours of the next day. While no cause is stated in the Accident Data Sheet it could be assumed it was a result of the Arnott's low hours on the aircraft of which he had accumulated only eight hours.

23 Jul 1944 Beaufighter A19-173 30SQN FSGT J. Hutchison (Pilot) and FSGT R.A. Wagner (Nav). Crashed on take off from Tadjji, New Guinea.

26 Jul 1940 The RAAFNS was established in response to the need for a greater number of nursing personnel as the RAAF underwent a rapid expansion early in the war. Membership of the RAAFNS expanded from 45 in December 1940 to 616 in December 1945. The service was disbanded at the end of the war, but in 1948 a peace-time service was formed.

2 Aug 1990 Iraq invades Kuwait. The invasion began the series of events that led to the Gulf War of 1991.

5 Aug 1943 Kittyhawk A29-1 2OTU SGT Maxwell Robert Walker 417682. Flying a series of night time circuits and landings it was only a short time later when a fire was noticed about 4 miles south west of the airfield. On investigation, the burnt out wreckage of the aircraft was found. This was the fourth accident involving this aircraft and the second fatality to occur in just over a year. The first fatal crash occurred at Kempsey on the NSW north coast on 7/8 Mar 1942 and killed PLTOFF L.H. Holliday. When the aircraft was repaired, it was allotted to 2OTU and on 1 Dec 1942 its port wing tip propeller and landing gear were damaged but was back in service shortly thereafter. It then suffered a third crash on landing at Mildura on 14 Jan 1943 before this its fourth and last accident.

13 Aug 1935 Wapiti A5-15 1FTS FLTLT W Rae (QFI) and AirCdt Laws. Crashed after striking wires after take off and caught fire.

17 Aug 44 Battle V1219 AGS WOFF G E Matley. Crashed at Seaspray, Vic.

30 Aug 1968 Death of CEW Bean. Bean did more than any other individual to establish the Australian War Memorial. Bean was also responsible for writing six volumes of the *Official History of Australia in the war of 1914-1918* and editing the remaining volumes.

Thank you to Dean and his aircrew losses research, the Australian War Memorial's "This Month" and the RSL Diary for dates 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>