



USAAF/RAAF P40E/E-1 Operations in Australia Supplementary #2

As we continue our research on the P-40E/E-1s, occasionally we come across some interesting items, which may seem at the time, quite mind racking.

Recently I was fortunate to discover some interesting documents, ex 5th Fighter Command Combat Reports from late 1942 to late 1943 concerning the 7thFS/8thFS and 9thFS of the 49thFG. These reports among other things contained the dates, pilot names, squadrons, aircraft serials and types of enemy aircraft shot down. Particularly, believe it or not, I was interested in the 8th FS as it was a P-40E/E-1 unit. The information available was, shall we say, absolutely brilliant in tying up numerous pilots, P-40E/E-1 serials and buzz numbers for the 8th FS.

More interesting, was the conclusion, by it's listing in numerous Combat Reports, was the "post RAAF life" of Kittyhawk **A29-145**.



P-40E-1 A29-145 as it may have looked, post Charleville 30/08/42, in the RAAF GRB

The P-40E Pool

From my research, apart from direct assembled April-May 1942 P-40E-1 issues, it had been a long established USAAF practice to issue aircraft that have been re-built or refurbished from combat weary or crashed aircraft from the 49th FG.

Reasons why?

- The number of available P-40E replacements were always limited due to the importance placed on supplying aircraft to more pressing units/theatres.
- The model had been out of production since late May 1942.
- The type was experiencing several structural problems associated with their heavy use (as exemplified with gun blast tubes cracking the leading edge, the forward wing spar and the housing where the 0.50cal protruded from).

75 and 76 Sqns RAAF had a high percentage of their aircraft restricted due to the gun blast tube cracking and leading edge cracking during August 1942 and in November 1942 respectively.

The dire need to have these fixed and return to service was the need of replacement aircraft to replace the unserviceable examples.

As of 14th September 1942, the RAAF had 106 P-40Es on hand, of which only 55 were serviceable.

To ease the burden on replacements, the USAAF and RAAF had formed a joint P-40 pool on the 30th July 1942 (under signature of Brig General Edward S Perrin USAAF), whereby their aircraft would be jointly managed and issued as needed, to maintain the tactical strength of each P-40 Squadron (both USAAF and RAAF). **A29-145** was one of the early replacement pool aircraft that were transferred to the RAAF.

Its beginnings started at the Curtiss Wright Factory at Buffalo New York when it emerged and accepted as a USAAF P-40E-1 serial **41-36240** during March 1942. Following testing and acceptance, the aircraft was disassembled, crated, and shipped out to Australia via New Orleans, with it and several others on the 3rd April 1942 by sea.

Re-assembled and issued to the 49th FG post May 1942, its 8th Fighter Squadron service is very vague for the next two months, apart from being the personal mount of Lt Ben Kingsley. What is known was that it was returned to the 43rd Service Squadron for repairs and then was allocated to the RAAF on the 20th August 1942. It was then allocated to 76Sqn RAAF for use on the 21st August 1942.

On the 30th August 1942 whilst on its ferry flight from the US aircraft pool at Charleville Queensland to 76 Sqn it had crashed. As a result of this write off, per Form E/E.88. annotation, the next P-40E received by the RAAF was to be numbered A29-145. Through exhaustive research, I can confirm that this never happened. What of the aircraft's fate? It would seem in the RAAF context, it was not repaired.

In fact it was repaired and re-issued to the 9th FS who took the aircraft to Doburaba PNG with them in mid October 1942.

On their Squadron's last P-40E mission on the 7th December 1942, Captain Bill Levitan of the 9th FS shot down a G3M "Betty" Bomber down in **P-40E-1 41-36240**.

On the 12th December 1942, 41-36240 was crash landed by 1st Lt Sid Woods at Rogers Field outside of Port Moresby. It would be repaired again and re-issued to the 8th FS, where all of the remaining 28 P-40E/E-1s would be pooled for its use. That was the last mention of 41-36240 in the direct sense. The 9th FS converted to P-38s, while the 7th FS had already converted to P-40Ks.

After this period the documents state **41-36246** as opposed to **41-36240**.

41-36246 is better known as **A29-148**, which, as marked so on its Form E/E.88, was in use by the RAAF throughout 1943 and therefore could not be the same aircraft.

I surmise that there may be a typo, whether it is on the Form RAAF E/E.88. or the USAAF Combat Records as lodged by the 8th FS. But it does seem odd considering the report dates are separately lodged with the 5th Fighter Interception Command Records. *Perhaps the reports filed thereafter were gleamed off the same Aircraft Status Report of the 8thFS that had 41-36240 replaced by 41-36246 in err. What is consistent is its Squadron Buzz number and name of the aircraft.*

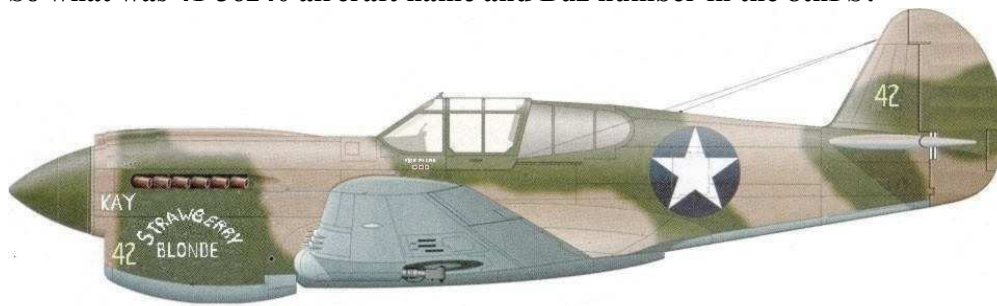
There are examples of this throughout, including 41-5511 down instead of 41-5611 in subsequent reports (see further on). Accepting that this is a mistake, as perhaps in error of reporting 41-36240 as 41-36246, we'll continue.

From that date, 1st Lt Robert Moose was flying it with White Flight on the 3rd March 1943 when the 8thFS engaged the Japanese over Oro Bay. He was 1st Lt Ernie Harris's wingman when both of them engaged a Zero, which was shot down and credited to Harris. ***For those P-40E buffs, 41-5611 was 1st Lt Ernie Harris's White Flight 8thFS's #67 "Carolina Bell"***

On the 11th April 1943 the aircraft was again over Oro Bay, but flown this time by Flight Officer Pierce of the 8th FS. He would be credited in shooting down three Zero fighters this time in this aircraft.

That was the last time that we found any further details concerning 41-36240 apart from knowing that it was not used in a front line squadron after July 1943. I dare say the old P-40E comment of "Off LEFT 31/10/44" applies to it and it's other 500 or so Project X P-40E brethren.

So what was 41-36240 aircraft name and Buz number in the 8thFS?



Faded P-40E-1 41-36240 #42 "Kay" "Strawberry Blonde" White Flight 8thFS/49thFG GRB



F/O S A Pierce in the cockpit of 41-36240, being ex- A29-145

I would like to express my sincere thanks Craig "Buz" Busby as always, for his professional help. The research would not have been possible without the Airforce Historical Research Association (USAF) in the USA for aircraft data cards and Unit History Reels. The RAAF Museum E/E88 Cards, the National Archives of Australia and to those people who added "important" bits, here and, to make this story possible.

Please note: My Aircraft Profiles that are depicted in any story are representations only, though every effort is made to be accurate given the information available.

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