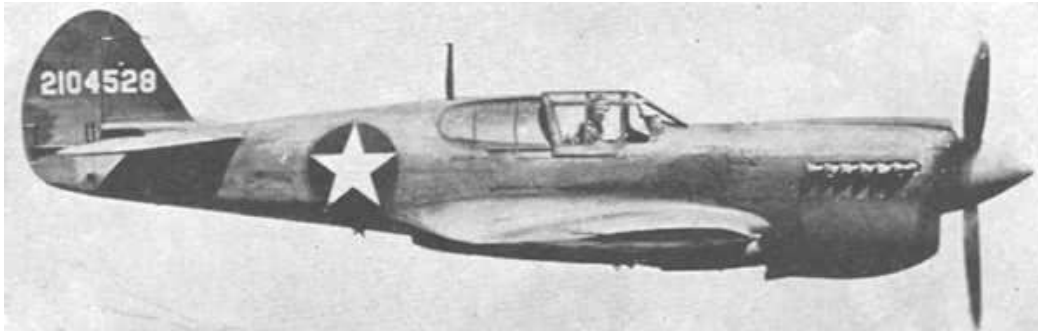




## **P40 USAAF/RAAF Operations in Australia**

### **Supplementary #4: P-40N-1s A29 re-serialised vers6**

**Without doubt, P40N-1's were lightest and fastest of the P-40N production aircraft. These were result of direct lessons learnt during the early months of aerial combat in the Pacific.**



**Often misidentified as a P-40M, this is a P-40N-1, with its original canopy frame, as seen on earlier models. Only the serial can giveaway its true identity at a glance.**

Being fabricated almost totally from alclad, they compared to latter models (N-20, 40's etc), with less equipment and options by weighting in at 6400lbs empty.

These equipment losses and options were a mixed blessing, depending on the item, as illustrated:

- The P-40N-1 had only 4 .50Cal Guns installed, with the other two supplied in the aircraft shipping Box. It had the provision to be made a six-gun P-40, and on the whole was, by all users, except when carrying wing bombs.
- The P-40Ns were equipped with non-metal self-sealing tanks. The P-40Ns were of aromatic resistant type, whereas the P-40E/E-1 were not, but were lined with a Fuller compound which broke down from the effect of the High Octane fuels, causing these liners to be replaced at an earlier time.
- On the P-40N, they were only being delivered with the rear wing tanks and fuselage tank, reducing their capacity to only 120 US Gallons capacity. Thus the P-40N had less range on internal fuel at some 850miles.
- The braking systems on the model P-40N-1 were reduced to 11" x 3" diameter brake wheel hubs.

Thus you had, in P-40 terms, a very spritely performer compared to previous and later follow-on models.

The first A29 Serial for the P-40N-1 is recorded at **A29-400**. This would imply that **42-104813** was sequentially the first P-40N-1 allocated.

What is in truth is that this aircraft was the first RAAF A29 re-serialied P-40N-1 airframe following its arrival in Australia at 2AD Richmond on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1943.

By the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1943, had been assembled, tested and dispatched to 78F Sqn RAAF. The *actual* first ordered and A29 serialied P-40N-1 was actually **42-104634**.

This was the first aircraft to be marked at the factory in A29 serials, under contract to the RAAF during our February 1943 allocation of our first 23 P-40N s following the completion of the M model allocation of January 1943.

What research has found is that the first 23 Model N-1s were serialied **A29-1000's** per RAAF Case 126 at Curtiss Wright.

Sequentially FY Serialied from **A29-1000**, minus one P-40N-1 sent elsewhere, the first twenty-three P-40N-1s of some seventy allocated to the RAAF, **42-104634**, **42-104659** to **42-104681**, were marked and numbered at the factory from **A29-1000** to **A29-1022** in accordance with the *quoted* Mac Air serial then used.

This is the reason why the P-40N-1 **A29-448** of Garth Hogan and Charles Darby has two A29-serials: **A29-1050** (MacAir) and **A29-448** (Post delivery). It doesn't explain why both are displayed though on opposite sides! Again the same reason is applicable for Neville Dawson's **A29-405** (**Ex-A29-1068 MacAir**).

NO. A/C	SERIAL NO. A29	AIR CORPS SERIAL NO.	LOCATION	C.V.	BLAD-ING	SAIL-ING	DESTINATION	MARKS/REMARKS
1	A29-1000	42-104634	New York	111	110257	308	128	WL 891 29/5
2	1001	104659	"	"	"	"	"	"
3	1002	104660	"	"	"	"	"	"
4	1003	104661	"	"	"	"	"	"
5	1004	104662	"	"	"	"	"	"
6	1005	104663	"	"	"	"	"	"
7	1006	104664	"	"	"	"	"	"
8	1007	104665	"	"	"	"	"	"
9	1008	104666	"	"	"	"	"	"
10	1009	104667	"	"	"	"	"	"
11	1010	104668	"	"	"	"	"	"
12	1011	104670	"	"	"	"	"	"
13	1012	104671	"	"	"	"	"	"
14	1013	104672	"	"	"	"	"	"
15	1014	104673	"	129	BL 18	648	"	WL 892 9/7
16	1015	104674	"	"	"	"	"	"
17	1016	104675	"	"	"	"	"	"
18	1017	104676	"	"	"	"	"	"
19	1018	104677	"	"	"	"	"	"
20	1019	104678	"	"	"	"	"	"
21	1020	104679	"	"	"	"	"	"
22	1021	104680	"	"	"	"	"	"
23	1022	104681	"	"	"	"	"	"

*Above the "proof of the pudding" being an extract from the NAA File with the original allocated A29 Serials with FY Serials. We know that they were re-serialied, as stated on their E/E88 Cards. Extract from NAA File*

Below, to air in public perhaps for the first time, listed are the FY Serial breakdown of both the pre and post A29 Serials of these first P-40N-1s.

USAAF FY Serial	Mac Air A29 Serial	Final RAAF A29
42-104634	A29-1000	A29-420
42-104659	A29-1001	USAAF
42-104660	A29-1002	A29-421
42-104661	A29-1003	A29-422
42-104662	A29-1004	A29-423
42-104663	A29-1005	A29-424
42-104664	A29-1006	A29-425
42-104665	A29-1007	A29-426
42-104666	A29-1008	A29-427
42-104667	A29-1009	A29-428
42-104669	A29-1010	A29-429
42-104670	A29-1011	A29-430
42-104671	A29-1012	A29-431
42-104672	A29-1013	A29-432
42-104673	A29-1014	A29-433
42-104674	A29-1015	A29-473
42-104675	A29-1016	A29-474
42-104676	A29-1017	A29-475
42-104677	A29-1018	A29-476
42-104678	A29-1019	A29-477
42-104679	A29-1020	A29-478
42-104680	A29-1021	A29-479
42-104681	A29-1022	A29-480

### A29-1001's Fate

Interestingly as per the above table, it is recorded all but one entered RAAF Service. The exception was allocated to the USAAF in July 1943. The aircraft, **42-104659**, was forwarded onto the USAAF Pool at Townsville in August 1943.

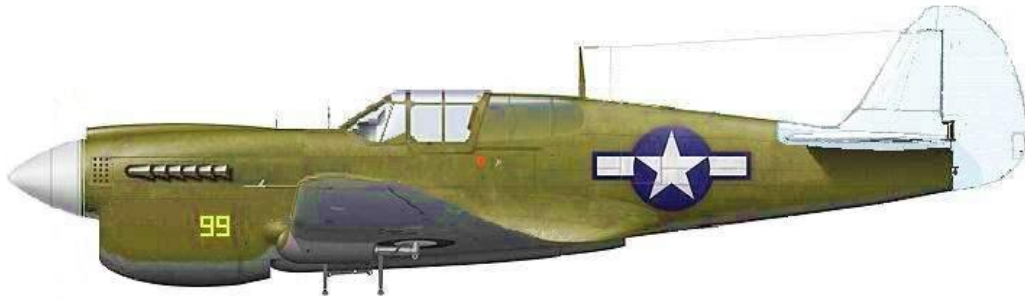


*P-40N-1 MacAir numbered A29-1001 (Ex-42-104659) as shipped to Australia in May 1944 ex Curtiss Wright Factory. Indications are that they were still marked in USAAF Star Cockades, though marked A29-1\*\*\* in black numerals. GRB*

Being one of the first P-40N-1's in theatre, it appears that the USAAF wanted one for comparative tests against P-40E/E-1s and Ks currently used by the 5thAAF. They were to receive their later model P-40N-5 allocations during the following month to replace their P-40Es and later Ks of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadrons, respectively.

Following these tests, this particular aircraft trail went cold.

It is possible that it later served with the 49<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group with the HQ Flight during 1943/1944.



*Often quoted as a P-40M, this is, by examination of a 49thFG photograph, a P-40N-1, given its four only gun ports and by the photograph, without a landing light visible. GRB*

If indeed it was the aircraft involved as often used by Lt Col David Campbell, the CO of the time in 1944, it was deemed as the fastest P-40 in the Group. It was used on operations right up to August 1944, a period of twelve months service.

Perhaps the reason of its longevity was that it was actually a P-40N-1.

With its inherited lightness, some 350 lbs lighter than the average P-40N-40, it had the highest speed of all service P-40Ns: 378mph compared to 362mph of the later.

All indications of research show that only one P-40N-1 could have entered 5thAAF service, supported by only three P-40Ms issued to the 5<sup>th</sup> Airforce, with two of these being ever returned to the RAAF.

There is another report of an **ex-44thFS P-40M** used in the 7thAAF finding its way to Milne Bay, then onto the 49thFG. A creditable witness of the period, the engineering Officer of the Squadron states that this is how a P-40M got there.

With no further details of its history, and as the only missing P-40M in theatre, should it be that type, it is also an aircraft for consideration.

In all cases, the corresponding USAAF Individual Record Cards per P-40Ms or the single P-40N, shows no details whatsoever per the 5thAAF code of LEFT

The RAAF P-40M trio were **43-5411**, **43-5424** and **43-5433**. They served only three months with the USAAF. They became **A29-204** and **A29-205** respectively on return, for the first two mentioned.

**P-40M 43-5433** may be the alternative culprit, but it is extremely unlikely that it is the aircraft in question, given lesser performance.

My conclusion? Given the performance over the standard P-40N-5 to a P-40N-35, it points I feel to the P-40N-1. It still awaits some concrete proof to be discovered. But I guess the result is that it can be any one of these three aircraft mentioned above.

That's a lot closer than we've been.

*This research would not have been possible without the RAAF Museum E/E88 Cards, the National Archives of Australia records and to those people who added "important" bits, here and, to make this story possible. Special thanks to be given to Buz Busby for his usual helpful input, insight and advice*

***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.  
Gordon R Birkett complied @2005***