

WING MAN: CPL Glen Conrad-Christ prepares for a flight at RAAF Base Point Cook in an ex-RAAF DHC6 Chipmunk training aircraft. **WARBIRD:** Below, Mustang A68-170, nicknamed 'Duffy's Delight', restored to pristine condition. Photos: Sue Conrad

Mustang sallies

By Sue Conrad

AS HER name implies, wild horses could not have kept Mustang A68-170 from flying again as the centrepiece aircraft of the RAAF Base Point Cook Flying Club.

Next to the club's hut at Point Cook was a hangar, in which the RAAF Museum stored a German Me-262 jet fighter, a Tiger Moth, Puss Moth and a P-51 Mustang, serial number 170.

SQNLDR Kevin 'KD' Duffy, who was the club's first chief flight instructor in 1971, had his interest piqued by the Mustang.

Perusing the log book, he was surprised to find the [Allison] engine had been replaced with a Rolls-Royce Merlin. The engine had flown only eight hours in a Mark VIII Spitfire.

CPL Glen Conrad-Christ (ret'd), who gained his wings through the flying club, takes up the story:

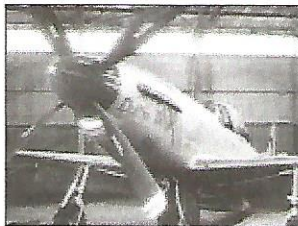
'KD' thought that the engine was sent to Australia for use in the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Mustang program and thus converted to 'Mustang fit' by a change of accessories.

One day, he was sifting through the bits and pieces of the Mustang, remembering his Mustang conversion course at No. 2 Fighter Operational Training Unit at Mildura in Victoria in 1945, when he came across its serial number.

That stunned him a little. He went back to his office, where he blew the dust off his log books to revisit July, 1945. His finger ran down the pages consisting of approximately 30 hours of flight time on P51-170; then the memories flooded back.

It was not long before the Air Force had given 'KD' the authority to repair the aircraft. No. 1 Flying Training School (1FTS) Maintenance Unit did a lot of extra work, while on weekends members of the flying club pitched in.

The Mustang began to see some definition, especially after CPL Tom Gilbert and an unknown metal surface finisher



completed their work on the wings and airframe. CPL Bruce Bishop did his magic in manufacturing missing accessories and engine rebuilding.

When would it fly? This was where the first major setback occurred.

The aircraft was officially a static exhibit allocated to the RAAF Museum and there was no official policy that any of the aircraft were to be returned to flying status. 'KD' wrote to RAAF Headquarters requesting that the Air Force operate it as a flying exhibit – similar to the Battle of Britain Flight in the UK – but nothing positive was done. However, he did get approval for a high-speed taxi test, but not a test flight.

We all pushed the aircraft out of the hangar that Saturday in 1971. The 12-cylinder engine barked and crackled until it hit an even note. As the P-51 showed its tail section to all watching, 'KD' began to taxi. He opened the throttles and stood the aircraft tail up. Then, the aircraft hit a 'bump' on the runway and, after hundreds of manhours and reams of paper, 'KD' and 170 were airborne again for the first time in over 20 years.

For some reason, the Mustang became airborne again over the next two runs.

Later, the RAAF Museum was given approval to return some of the static exhibits to flight status.

'KD' believes that A68-170 is one of them and that she has flown in some air shows.

BULLETIN BOARD

Air Force Band

November 28: The Ceremonial Band will support the 2FTS pilots' graduation from 11am.

November 28: The Ceremonial Band will support the WOFF-AF farewell parade at RAAF Base Wagga from 10am.

November 28: Catalina will provide background music for the WOFF-AF dining-out night at the RAAF Base Wagga Sergeants' Mess.

November 28: The Ceremonial Band will support the SATC graduation parade at RAAF Base East Sale.

November 28-29: The Sydney Detachment will perform at the 2008 Defence (Sydney Region) Christmas Treat at RAAF Base Richmond.

December 3: The Ceremonial Band will support the 1RTU graduation

parade at RAAF Base Wagga from 11am.

December 3: The Sydney Detachment will support the officers' and sergeants' drinks at RAAF Base Glenbrook.

December 6: Catalina will give a performance for seriously ill children at Ronald McDonald House at 11am.

December 10: A band trumpeter will support the Brunei Commemoration in Brunei.

December 10: The Air Force Wind Quintet will give a schools concert at the Song Room in the Convent, Abbotsford, Victoria.

December 10: The Low Brass Ensemble will provide background music for the Internet Macintosh User Group December meeting at the Museum of Victoria.

December 10: The Ceremonial Band will support the laying up of the 10SQN Colour at the RAAF Base Point Cook chapel.

Ex-apprentice reunion

The annual reunion of RAAF ex-apprentices will be held on January 24, 2009. The function is for all ex-apprentices and their partners and will be held at the Werribee RSL, Melbourne, from 1- 5pm. There will be a \$10 entry fee and dress will be neat casual.

→ For more information, contact Dick Tracy on (03) 9324 6821 or email: philip.tracy@optusnet.com.au

PCK Flying Club reunion

Former Air Force members of the Point Cook Flying Club from 1971-1974 are holding a reunion at the existing flying club on March 20-22, 2009. See the story at left for more on the Point Cook Flying Club.

→ For more information on the reunion, contact Glen Conrad on 0488 747 737 or email: herken.about@bigpond.com

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