

Veteran bomber a tough old lady

A modern Kelly gang has just plundered a grave yard in Papua New Guinea to bring back to Australia an Air Force war relic.

Wing Commander Tom Kelly, of RAAF Base Wagga in New South Wales, has just made his third Papua New Guinea war-treasure expedition — this time to retrieve an RAAF Boston bomber which crash-landed there in 1943.

And the power he used to forcibly remove the old Boston from an aircraft grave yard was provided by a massive Chinook helicopter of No 12 Squadron at Amberley, near Ipswich.

On the fuselage of the RAAF veteran retrieved from the steamy jungle was a large letter J — which Wing Commander Kelly's research showed denoted the old aircraft's squadron call sign: "J for Jessica".

But Jessica proved to be a tough old lady, resisting initial efforts to remove her from among the other wartime wrecks at the old Vivigani airstrip on Goodenough Island.

Wreckage from several Boston bombers, all from the United States Air Force and flown in Australia's defence in World War II, have been recovered during Wing Commander Kelly's previous trips to Papua New Guinea — the aim being to restore one by the end of this year for the Bicentennial.

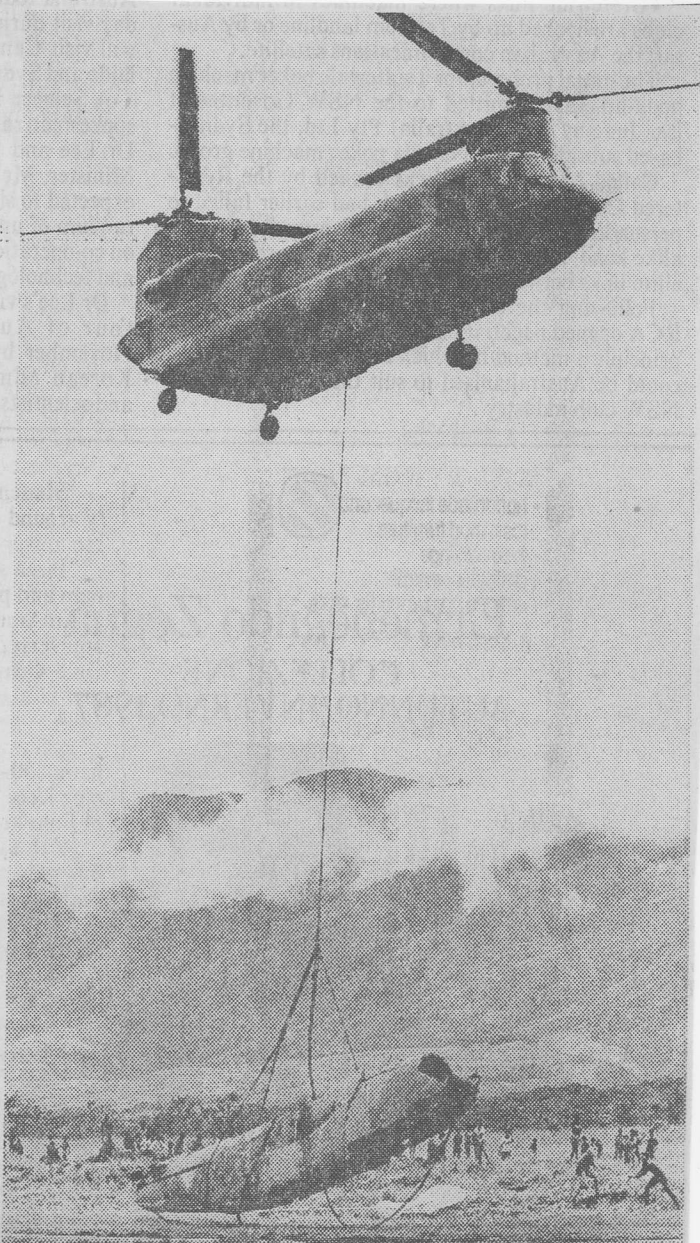
Jessica also will be examined in Australia regarding restoration prospects.

One man keen to see her is former Flying Officer Harry Rowell from Western Australia, who

managed to bring home Jessica — badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire — with no injury to his crew-mates in that crash landing at Vivigani in September 1943.

And looking forward to being

with Harry to see the old Boston is former Warrant Officer wireless operator/air gunner Dough Lyons of Brighton, Queensland, who was aboard when Jessica crash-landed.



UP SHE GOES ... the old Boston bomber takes to the air again after four decades, helped by a Chinook helicopter.

'Kelly Gang' hits PNG graveyard WW2 wreck liberated at last **Jessica fights with rescuers**

THE RAAF's version of the Kelly Gang plundered a graveyard in Papua New Guinea recently — with Lcpl Greg Vinton, of the Air Movement Training and Development Unit, included in the gang.

However, the "gang" — headed by Wg-Cdr Tom Kelly of RAAF Base Wagga — made its third expedition to retrieve a war treasure from an aircraft graveyard on Goodenough Island.

This time the expedition retrieved an RAAF Boston bomber, which crash-landed on the island in 1943. The power used to forcibly remove the WW2 veteran was provided by a Chinook helicopter from No 12 Sqn, Amberley.

On the fuselage of the Boston was a large letter "J", which Wg-Cdr Kelly's research revealed was the old squadron call-sign — "J for Jessica".

But Jessica proved to be a tough lady, seemingly resisting initial efforts to remove her from the other war-time aviation wrecks at the old Vivigani airstrip.

When Jessica stirred for the first time in 44 years the powerful downwash of the Chinook's rotors forced the Boston to roll sideways and huddle next to another WW2 victim, an RAAF Beauport bomber.

In doing so, Jessica threw Lcpl Vinton into the kunai grass — he had been trying to attach rigging from the Boston to the Chinook's lifting hook.

In a second attempted lift Jessica tossed more riggers off before she became airborne and thrashed around until lowered to the edge of the old strip — ready for a 70km flight to be put aboard HMAS Tobruk for passage to Australia.

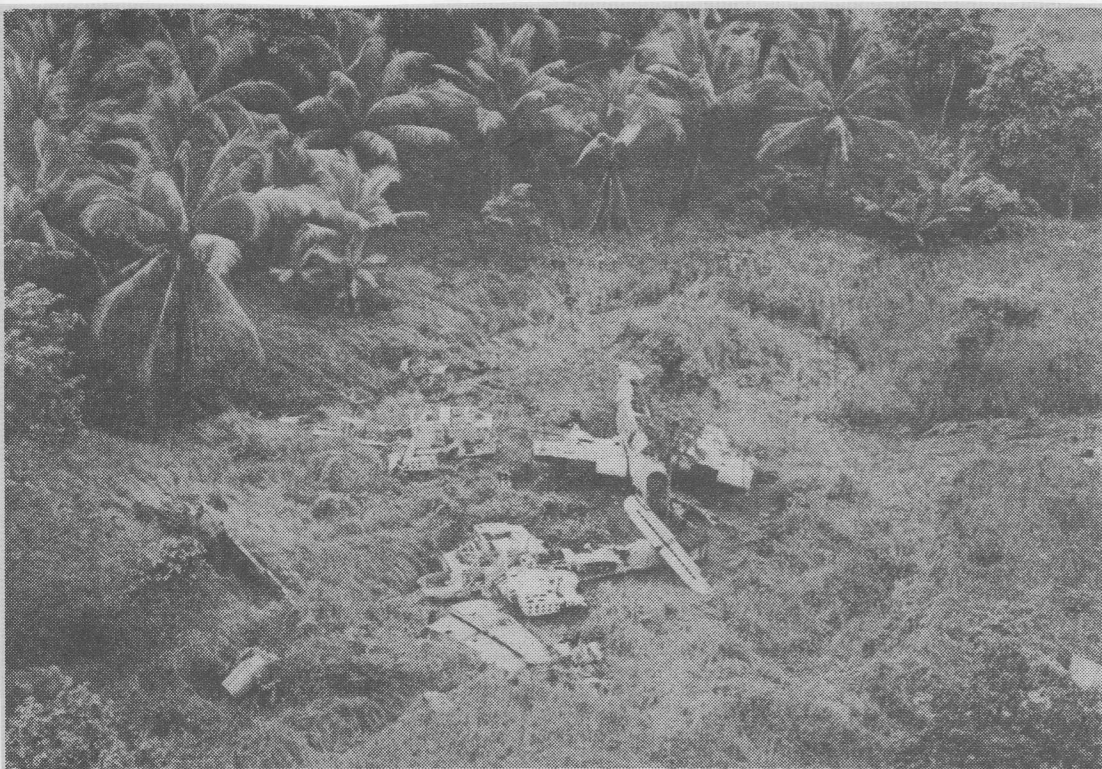
When airborne again Jessica was still fickle, not flying a straight course, and on being lowered to the ground rolled several times and had the eight-man recovery team running for safety.

With a special stabilising parachute on her tail Jessica eventually took off for the last time from Goodenough Island.

Wreckage from several Boston bombers has been recovered during Wg-Cdr Kelly's previous trips to Papua New Guinea, with the aim of restoring one by the end of the year.

One man keen to see Jessica again is former Flying Officer Harry Rowell, who managed to fly the crippled aircraft — badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire — to Goodenough Island before crash-landing the bomber with no injury to his crew.

Another looking forward to renewing an old friendship is former WO Doug Lyons, who was aboard when Jessica crash-landed.



★ **ABOVE:** The WW2 aircraft graveyard on Goodenough Island. Jessica is pictured top right.



★ **LEFT:** Lcpl Greg Vinton dons his goggles as the Kelly Gang prepares to lift Jessica out of the steamy jungle on Goodenough Island.



★ **RIGHT:** Lift off — 44 years after last touching down on Goodenough Island, Jessica is airborne once again on the first leg of her journey back to Australia.

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