

Long-term resident

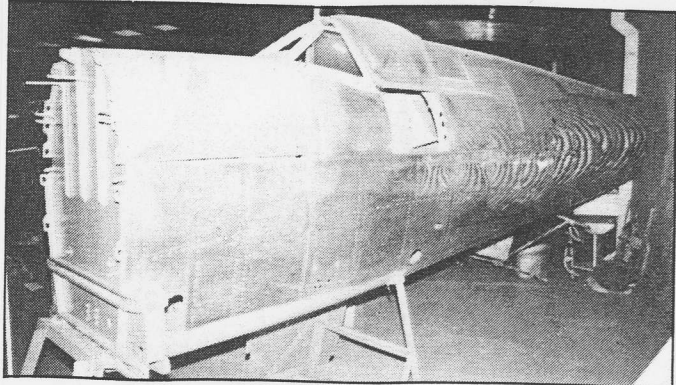
WITH IAN WHITNEY'S association with the recovery of many aircraft from Papua New Guinea, principally for the California based Yesterday's Air Force, it had been assumed in some circles that his Spitfire project came from this source. In fact Mk V MA863 has never left Australia since its arrival in October 1943.

After some damage, sustained whilst landing at Alice Springs, had been repaired, its initial service in Australia was with the British 54 Squadron in Darwin allocated to 1 Wing RAAF. It is said to have been the personal aircraft of S/L Gibbs with the code 'DL-K'.

After some four months service it was transferred to the Australian 452 Squadron on April 22, 1944. With a good supply of Mk VIII's coming on-stream with the more powerful two-stage engine '863 was transferred to second line

duties with the Central Gunnery School at Crecy coded 'F' and later 'K'. Here it served out the war before going into storage in October 1945 and finally consigned to scrap a year later.

When the pieces were first acquired the serials MA863/A58-246 were not known, and it was only during the complete dismantling of the aluminium structure that crayoned legends were revealed, applied by the original Castle Bromwich work force. To date the fuselage has been totally reconstructed by Ian himself, who is an aircraft engineer, to airworthy standards and is now proudly on display at Ballarat Airport, Victoria. Most of the required remainder has been obtained or earmarked, but an immense amount of work remains to be fitted into a collecting and restoring programme.



Rebuilt fuselage of MA863 on view at Ballarat. (Author)

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