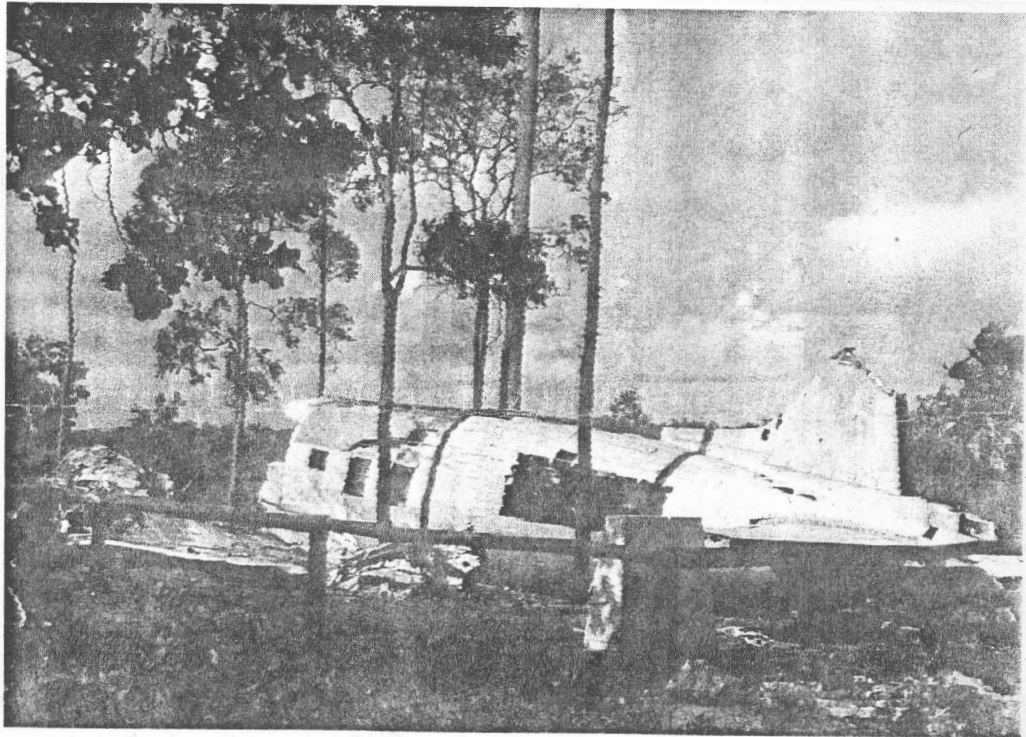


DC-3 VH-CXD which was operated by the RAAF in World War 2 and crashed at Bamaga airport in Queensland on 5 May 1945. (P Howard)

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THE Cape York Peninsula forms the extreme north-east corner of Australia, a sparsely populated area even by the standards of this vast country. The wrecks of many wartime aircraft can be found there including, I am told, a number of abandoned P-39 Airacobras. There is also a B-24D of the 90th Bomb Group which crashed in 1942 and is still substantially complete. From Queensland, Paul Howard reports another wreck which has its own memorial.

He writes: 'At the tip of Cape York Peninsula in far north Queensland lies the settlement of Bamaga. Lying just short of the runway at Bamaga Airport (once known as Jacki-Jacki and Higgins Field) is the fuselage of a DC-3 whose service life came to an abrupt halt in World War 2.

'It was early on 5 May 1945, crewed by USAAF pilots and loaded with meat, that RAAF DC-3 VH-CXD/4483228 of No 33 Squadron attempted to land at Bamaga in foggy conditions to obtain some fuel. However, this was not to be; the aircraft undershot the approach by half a mile, striking the ground nose first and destroying the cockpit. The crew perished as the rest of the aircraft disintegrated.

'It finally came to a halt amongst the eucalyptus trees, its wings having been severed. The rear portion of the fuselage held together fairly intact with the fin still attached. Operated by ANA as VH-CXD and seconded to the RAAF, the DC-3 c/n 1941 was originally KLM's PH-ALT, named 'Toenvalk'. It operated for KLM-Netherlands Indies as PK-ALT before coming to Australia when war disrupted the latter's operations. A plaque in memory of the crew has been placed at the site.'