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Cover illustrations

Front cover: The Australian War Memorial commissioned an artwork, titled 'Extraordinary Incident', to commemorate the achievement of Pilot Officer John Archer in destroying a 'vaunted' Japanese Zeke fighter aircraft (aka Zero) in his Wirraway aircraft, built originally for training purposes. (Roy Hodgkinson, Extraordinary Incident; AWM ART22743).

Back cover: 'Civilisation' by Tommy McRae (Yakaduna). 'This picture represents a few natives who have been employed at the shearing time on some stations and taken their wages in "plenty good fellow clothes" and made themselves "along a white fellow swell".' (Museum of Sydney picture postcard, Moral permission Jean Morgan-Kelly.)

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Editorial

Truth, memory, and the public work of history

The closing issue of 2025 brings together five very different yet deeply interconnected studies of how Australians have told, contested, and revised their own pasts. Perhaps unprecedented, this issue also sees three authors returning to the pages of the *Journal* within two years: James Cotton,¹ Bruce Pennay² and Des Lambley.³ Each contribution within this issue reveals that the writing of history is never a passive exercise in record-keeping but a public act – a dialogue between evidence, memory, and moral imagination.

Whether situated in a museum, a pulpit, an artist's camp, or a protest movement, the authors in this issue explore the delicate balance between truth and interpretation, between individual conscience and institutional authority. The result is a collection that demonstrates, in strikingly diverse ways, the continuing vitality of historical inquiry in shaping civic understanding. It is an exciting issue.

Dr Mark Clayton's *Guarding against the guardian: Reassessing revisionism at the Australian War Memorial* opens the volume with a meditation on what it means to 'revise' responsibly. His study focuses on a single artefact – the Australian War Memorial's Wirraway aircraft, long celebrated for its supposed destruction of a Japanese Zero in 1942, and more recently the subject of controversy. He approaches the issue head on. In tracing the debate between those who sought to overturn that account and those who defended it, Clayton transforms a technical question of aviation history into a philosophical one about truth and trust at a time just when the Australian War Memorial is in the scope.⁴

Revision, he reminds us, is not a sin but the lifeblood of the historical discipline – provided that it rests on rigorous evidence and open debate. His analysis cuts to the heart of Australia's ongoing struggle to reconcile the emotional imperatives of commemoration with the intellectual rigour of scholarship. The Australian War Memorial, he suggests, embodies both impulses: a site of reverence and a repository of research. To 'guard against the guardian' is to insist that memory be held to the same standards as history itself, lest it become myth by sentiment or omission.

If Clayton's essay addresses the ethics of institutional memory, Dr James Cotton's *'One of the Few International Journalists in Australia': Andrew Melville Pooley in Tokyo and Sydney* moves outward to the cosmopolitan networks of the interwar years, when Australians first began to imagine themselves as actors on a global stage. Through meticulous reconstruction of a largely forgotten career – a particular strength of Cotton's – this article brings to life Andrew Melville Pooley: a journalist, lecturer, and early internationalist whose reporting from Japan in the 1920s helped expose corruption at the highest levels of government.

Pooley's investigations into the collusion between arms manufacturers and the Imperial Navy were sensational enough to precipitate a ministerial fall in Tokyo, yet his subsequent work as foreign editor of Sydney's *Evening News* had an equally enduring impact, reshaping how Australians understood world affairs.

Cotton's portrait of Pooley is at once biographical and historiographical: it invites reflection on the power of journalism to construct international consciousness. In an age when news could travel no faster than the telegraph and a correspondent's credibility depended on both courage and contacts, Pooley stands as a precursor to the modern foreign correspondent – simultaneously observer and participant, broker and storyteller. In recovering his voice, Cotton recovers a moment when Australian journalism began to look outward not merely as a colonial appendage but as an independent interlocutor with the world.

Dr Des Lambley's *AIF Padre, Captain Father Thomas Joseph O'Donnell: His court-martial – beyond all reasonable doubt* builds thematically off his article last year to the intimate theatre of conscience. The figure at its centre – an Irish-Australian priest who defied his archbishop to enlist, served his soldiers with pastoral zeal, and later found himself court-martialled in Ireland for supposed disloyalty – embodies the tangled loyalties of a divided empire.

Through painstaking reconstruction of military records and personal correspondence, Lambley presents O'Donnell as both patriot and suspect, a man whose faith in Australia and in his Church was tested by the politics of Irish independence. His account of O'Donnell's ordeal unfolds like a parable about identity and belonging. Yet Lambley resists melodrama. His aim is to restore complexity.

O'Donnell emerges neither martyr nor traitor but a man navigating competing duties: to God, to nation, and to moral truth. In doing so, Lambley reframes the Great War as not only a military conflict but a crucible for Australian pluralism, where questions of loyalty, ethnicity, and conscience were played out in the bodies and souls of individuals. His essay stands as a reminder that the discipline of history gains its moral depth not from abstraction but from empathy – the effort to understand another's conviction without collapsing it into stereotype.

Rhys Knapton-Lonsdale's *Protesting the End of the World: The WA nuclear disarmament movement of the 1980s*, carries this concern with conscience and creativity into the late 20th century, where history becomes an instrument of activism. His study of the People for Nuclear Disarmament (WA) traces how citizens, faced with the existential dread of the Cold War, transformed fear into political organisation. In reconstructing the movement's formation, its brief parliamentary success through the election of Senator Jo Vallentine and its subsequent fragmentation, Knapton-Lonsdale uncovers the cultural and emotional labour of protest. The activists he describes were historians in their own right: their

banners invoked Hiroshima, their pamphlets recited the lessons of Vietnam, and their marches claimed continuity with the moral protests of earlier generations.

Knapton-Lonsdale's essay reveals how social movements write history from below by reinterpreting the national narrative of defence and citizenship to include the defence of life itself. Western Australia emerges here as a crucible of ideas that would later nourish the Australian Greens. Through interviews, archival leaflets and press material, Knapton-Lonsdale captures a moment when idealism, fatigue, and conviction collided. In doing so, he reminds us that history is not merely what we remember but what we choose to repeat or resist.

Supporting the substantive articles is *Picturing Civilisation*, in which Bruce Pennay OAM and Yalmambirra – historian and Wiradjuri elder – undertake a joint reading of a drawing by the 19th-century artist Yakaduna (Tommy McRae). Their essay begins with a single image but unfolds into an argument about historical method itself. For them, McRae's *Civilisation* is more than an artwork. It is a text in visual form, a statement of cultural resilience and subtle resistance. Working together, Pennay and Yalmambirra show how McRae's line work – at once delicate and defiant – encodes commentary on the encounters between Wiradjuri communities and the settler societies along the Murray.

The paper's quiet power lies in its method: it is not written *about* McRae but *with* him, in conversation with the artist's world and with each other's expertise. The collaboration demonstrates what contemporary Australian historiography increasingly recognises – that truth-telling requires partnership, not extraction. By situating *Civilisation* within both colonial archives and living cultural memory, the authors invite readers to 'see historically' in a new way: to regard images as repositories of argument, to understand art as a mode of historical reasoning. The drawing becomes a mirror reflecting two centuries of endurance, irony and survival, its title at once critique and prophecy.

Read together, these five contributions trace a moral arc from authority to agency, from the guarded institution to the public conscience. Clayton's War Memorial inquiry insists on evidence as the foundation of trust. Cotton's rediscovery of Pooley celebrates the individual who brings the world home through reportage. Lambley's portrait of O'Donnell exposes the cost of integrity in a divided empire. Pennay and Yalmambirra's dialogue around McRae redefines the historian's relationship to Indigenous knowledge. Knapton-Lonsdale's chronicle of disarmament activism closes the sequence with an assertion of collective moral will. Each, in its own way, defends the principle that history is a discipline of listening – to records, to witnesses, to images, to the living and the dead.

In bringing these works together, the *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* continues a conversation that has animated it since its founding in 1901: how to connect rigorous scholarship with civic purpose. The Society has long stood at the

junction of professional and community history, of archive and public debate. That tradition is visible here in the diversity of the contributors themselves – an emeritus professor, a recent doctoral graduate, a veteran historian, a Wiradjuri elder, and a young scholar fresh from honours research. Their co-existence within a single issue speaks to a broader truth about Australian historiography: that it thrives when it draws strength from multiple generations and perspectives.

The collective message of this volume is that history's authority depends on its openness. To revise is not to repudiate; to critique is not to betray. Clayton's insistence that revisionism must remain evidence-based resonates beyond the museum. It offers a caution to every historian confronting the seductions of ideology or outrage. Cotton's reconstruction of Pooley reminds us that the first casualty of propaganda – whether in 1925 or 2025 – is curiosity itself. Lambley's patient empathy with O'Donnell invites humility before moral complexity. Pennay and Yalmambirra's shared gaze demonstrates that vision itself is historical, shaped by who is permitted to look and to speak. And Knapton-Lonsdale's chronicle of nuclear protest closes the circle by transforming fear into responsibility.

These are not simply stories about the past; they are meditations on how the past continues to authorise, constrain and inspire the present. The Wirraway and the Zero remind us that even artefacts of war can become battlefields of interpretation. The journalist in Tokyo reveals how information networks shape national identity. The chaplain's trial exposes the fragility of tolerance within the imperial order. The artist's drawing testifies to endurance beyond conquest. The disarmament movement recalls that historical imagination is not confined to scholars: it belongs equally to those who act upon their understanding of the past. History, as these authors show, is both remembrance and responsibility – a living practice of dialogue between those who came before and those who must decide what comes next.

Dr Samuel White FRHistS

Editor, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*

Notes

¹ James Cotton, 'Chungking Follies: The supporting cast of the Chungking Legation, 1941-42', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol 109, pt 2, 2023, pp 187-209.

² Bruce Pennay, 'Interpreting an Image: George Augustus Robinson's Yass to Port Phillip Road, 1840-1844', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol 110, pt 1, 2024, pp 90-99.

³ Des Lambley, 'A Retrospective of Military Law and Justice in the Australian Imperial Force', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol 110, pt 2, 2024, pp 161-180.

⁴ In 2025, a *Four Corners* episode ('Sacrifice' broadcast ABC, 10 March 2025) was aired that questioned, among other things, the propriety of a War Memorial taking funding from an arms manufacturer.

Guarding against the guardian: Reassessing revisionism at the Australian War Memorial

MARK CLAYTON

Report from P/O Archer and Sgt Coulston (Observer) that while engaged on a Tac/R in A20-103 in the vicinity of the GONA wreck at approximately 1135L hours today, at 1,000 feet they saw a Zeke below. P/O Archer reported that being in a favourable position, he delivered a front quarter attack and fired a burst of approximately 5 seconds. He reported that he observed the enemy aircraft strike the water and burst into flames. He then completed his recce. and returned to POPENDETTA.¹

Brief and unembellished, this Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) combat summary in late December 1942 describes a remarkable encounter, one of several David and Goliath-like contests subsequently used to underwrite an ever-expanding Anzac legend. Pilot Officer John Archer's Australian-made Wirraway aircraft, built originally for training purposes, had on that occasion prevailed against a 'vaunted' Japanese Zeke fighter aircraft (aka Zero), one that had consistently outperformed everything comparable the Allies had available.²

The Americans promptly awarded the pilot Archer a Silver Star medal 'for doing the impossible'.³ Back in the nation's capital, the recently completed Australian War Memorial also commissioned an artwork, titled *Extraordinary Incident*, to commemorate his achievement.⁴ Earlier that same year, in another unequal encounter, six Wirraways had been destroyed (or damaged) when forced to defend the port of Rabaul in New Guinea against an attacking force of more than 100 Japanese aircraft. Knowing the likely fate that awaited him and his fellow pilots, the officer commanding the town's aerial defenders had famously signalled a Latin gladiatorial salute to his superiors in Melbourne ... *Morituri vos salutamus* ('We who are about to die salute you').⁵

The Wirraway is significant in other respects too, its development having been a commercial rather than a government-led initiative. Its story intersects with what were then, the nation's largest mining (BHP), chemical (ICI) and car manufacturing (GMH) interests. Concerned by Australia's lack of military and industrial

preparedness, these corporations joined forces in the late 1930s to establish the first Australian aircraft factory capable of quantity military production. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation's Melbourne factory would eventually produce more than 750 Wirraway aircraft (and engines), its success helping the nation's transition from a predominantly rural to semi-industrialised economy.

These several factors, in combination, led the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in early 1950 to acquire the first production example, A20-3, for its national collection.⁶ Eight years later however, after learning that Wirraway A20-103 was being retired by the RAAF, the Memorial acted immediately to acquire Archer's famous aircraft.⁷ With display space in Campbell, ACT, then at a premium, the Memorial faced a difficult choice. Eventually it elected to tell the story of the 1940s air war using only three allied aircraft: Archer's Wirraway and two British aircraft, a Lancaster bomber and a Spitfire fighter. To make room for these the Memorial sold its other prototype Wirraway to Martin's scrapyard in Queanbeyan, other historic aircraft from its collection (including two Japanese Zeros and a unique Oscar Mk 1) suffering similar fates.⁸

Wirraway A20-103 has been privileged ever since, one of just a handful of AWM aircraft afforded a permanent place in the Memorial's innermost Aeroplane Hall sanctum. For half a century at least, using official histories, film, art, journals, exhibitions and merchandise to bolster the legend, the Memorial has retold the story of how its Wirraway had shot down a Japanese naval Zeke.⁹



Some decades ago, however, the AWM decided to tweak the aircraft's historical narrative by deleting the Zeke reference and substituting an Oscar (a Japanese Army fighter aircraft). Although this is considered a minor revision which has in no way altered the substance or significance of the encounter, its broader implications are nonetheless consequential. Mostly unnoticed at the time, this

The Australian War Memorial commissioned an artwork, titled 'Extraordinary Incident', to commemorate the achievement of Pilot Officer Archer in his Wirraway aircraft. (Roy Hodgkinson, Extraordinary Incident; AWM ART22743).

revision has been repeated and uncritically accepted ever since by a broad church of external vested interests encompassing museums, defence organisations, historians, and enthusiasts alike.¹⁰ This universal and silent acceptance, although puzzling, may owe something to the high levels of confidence and esteem that the general public has always shown for the Memorial and its work.



Despite having never previously seen an Oscar, Brisbane-based Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit (TAIU) personnel showed no interest in the aircraft Archer shot down on Boxing Day 1942. It was not until late 1943, after Allied ground forces had captured Lae, that TAIU personnel had their next opportunity to salvage and examine several wrecked Oscars, one of which was later rebuilt by TAIU. It is seen here being tested over Brisbane in March 1944. (Credit: AWM P01097.013).

These factors may also help explain why the Wirraway's narrative amendment was never publicly foreshadowed, justified, debated or publicised as would normally occur with high-profile exhibits.¹¹ While curators in national cultural institutions routinely update collection records and exhibition text, such amendments are invariably supported by compelling evidence. Changes affecting foundational narratives, moreover, are typically preceded by public discussion.¹² Spared such scrutiny, the AWM's Wirraway combat amendment soon become an inalienable truth, amplified by newly launched internet bulletin boards and social media platforms like Facebook, where facts are still easily overwhelmed by opinions.¹³

Facilitating this revision process were two magazine opinion pieces, the first authored by the Memorial's military technology specialist, David Crotty. This appeared in a 2000 issue of the Memorial's public relations magazine, *Wartime*, and

speculated that it could have been an Oscar rather than a Zeke that A20-103 had encountered near Buna (East New Guinea) that 1942 Boxing Day.¹⁴ A more emphatic interpretation, favouring the Oscar revision, appeared 11 years later in a local enthusiast magazine, *Flightpath*.¹⁵

To varying degrees, these writers emphasised the presence that day of Japanese Army Oscars, the implicit absence of Japanese Navy Zekes, and the tendency for Allied military personnel to mistakenly describe all enemy fighters as Zekes. Since both publications were aimed at the mass consumer market, neither author was expected to provide scholarly analysis, evidence or source citations – none of which were included. As the nation's foremost centre for military historical research, the AWM has always been bound by such expectations and, yet, the only explanation it has ever publicly offered is a single sentence: 'Post-war investigation revealed that the aircraft shot down by Archer and Coulston was actually a Nakajima Ki-43-II Hayabusa "Oscar" of the 11th Sentai, rather than an Imperial Navy A6M2 Zero.'¹⁶

This paper uses direct and circumstantial evidence to challenge the published justifications for this reinterpretation which have remained constant for the past two decades, and are thought to also reflect the findings of the AWM investigations.¹⁷ It seeks in particular to demonstrate: first, that both Zekes and Oscars were operating in the vicinity that day, and for a considerable time thereafter; second, that military pilots then were able to, and more often did, easily differentiate between both Japanese fighter types; third, that this ability to differentiate was evident among allied air and ground forces engaged in combat at that time, and in that vicinity; and finally, that the direct primary source evidence supporting the original interpretation substantially exceeds both qualitatively and quantitatively, the case for reinterpretation which leans mostly on circumstantial secondary source evidence.¹⁸ It is further contended that the revision appears unjustified, and indefensible.

While this change has in no way diminished the event's contemporary or historical significance, it has raised several important concerns that, decades later, remain unanswered. If trusted national heritage institutions like the AWM can incrementally alter foundation narratives, without external discussion or compelling evidence, then what other creeping revisions might have also occurred, and remain undetected? Whereas the rewrite might itself seem inconsequential, the issues of trust, evidence, professionalism, scholarship and creeping (unaccountable) revisionism raised by this incident remain troubling. Doubts could persist, at least until the matters raised here are either appropriately refuted or redressed. The uncritical acquiescence shown by other national heritage institutions such as the RAAF Museum and the Air Force History and Heritage Branch is equally concerning.

At the end of the day, it is of little consequence if it was a Zeke or an Oscar shot down that day. That a Wirraway shot down a single-engine Japanese fighter in that vicinity, on that day, remains uncontested. What matters most is that logical

argument and compelling evidence, deriving from rigorous and transparent research, underpins both cases. As American historian Jay Martin astutely observed, it is ‘the truth-fulness of the telling [that] is valued over the truth of the told’.¹⁹

This is not to suggest that evidence has been manipulated in this instance to suit either national, institutional or political agendas. Instead, it is the absence of direct evidence, scholarly analysis, and the failure to publicly engage (vis-a-vis the revision) that are concerning, suggesting a carelessness and unprofessionalism unbecoming of a national cultural and heritage institution. Nor is this revision in any way controversial or remotely comparable say to either Lloyd Robson’s demolition in the early 1970s of Charles Bean’s mythmaking, or the AWM’s recent efforts to downplay the Frontier Wars.²⁰ Rather, it is the silent and uncontested nature of the revision discussed here, and the questionable nature of its slender and circumstantial-only evidence, that renders it disturbing. While it might seem a trifling matter, and a case of using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, the means are justified. Historians have repeatedly highlighted the dangers in allowing poorly evidenced possibilities to displace well documented probabilities. The focus here remains largely with the evidence though – its quality and analysis, its absence, and its presence.

All Japanese fighters were Zekes

Enthusiasts and historians alike have often asserted that allied military personnel were unable to distinguish between Oscars and Zekes, and would use this last term to describe all Japanese fighter aircraft.²¹ But there is scant evidence to support this sweeping generalisation, which also downplays the benefit of aircraft identification training provided then to all allied military personnel, especially aircrew. Repeating this claim has nonetheless allowed revision proponents to discredit all 1942 Boxing Day eyewitness accounts favouring Archer’s original Zeke account. Moreover, it has lent weight to their co-dependent argument that Zekes had all been withdrawn from east New Guinea by then.

Instances of misidentification by Allied pilots during stressful combat encounters certainly did occur throughout the war. Many American and Australian air force and army personnel, for example, misidentified the Oscar when it was first encountered over Pongani on Boxing Day 1942.²² But the evidence would seem to indicate that these instances were the exception rather than the rule, and that Allied pilots were acutely observant and would more often correctly identify enemy aircraft.

Furthermore, when doubts existed, they were inclined to admit uncertainty rather than risk misidentification.²³ When for example the US 9th Fighter Squadron submitted its end-of-month enemy aircraft claims for December 1942, it erred on the side of caution by not specifying the types of enemy aircraft claimed at Pongani on 26 December 1942, only the numbers.²⁴ It is unclear why Oscar proponents have

never acknowledged these same-day cautionary reports, such as that prepared by the 2/27 Infantry Battalion: 'Enemy A/c, probably Zero, shot down into sea opp B Ech by WIRRAWAY, WEST of GONA Area 1000 yds.'²⁵

It is also apparent from primary source documentation, that the Allies could quickly detect and correct such errors. By the very next day for example (that is, 27 December 1942), after encountering a mixed enemy force comprising both Army and Navy fighters, US 39th Fighter Squadron pilots accurately describe encounters with both types.²⁶ This indicates firstly that they were able to distinguish between both types and secondly, that both types were operating that day.

Prior to Boxing Day 1942 Allied pilots had only ever described Zero encounters, simply because that was the only Japanese fighter type operating in New Guinea. In all subsequent reports, beginning with the combined Japanese Army-Navy action against Buna the very next day, the Australians and Americans accurately distinguish between Oscars, Zekes (and Vals). Australian aircrew appear to have been particularly cautious with their combat reporting. Following one encounter, a week after Archer's, RAAF Beaufighter pilots cautiously refer to 'two s/e [single-engine] fighters near control tower left burning'.²⁷ If they were all one and the same, then surely these too would have read 'Zekes left burning near the control tower'.

Archer's victim was flying straight and level at the unusually low altitude of 1000 feet, close to positions occupied by Australian Army ground observers. These ideal conditions would have further diminished the potential for misidentification. Numerous eyewitness accounts were written following this encounter and without exception, these independent reports describe a Wirraway shooting down a Zeke.²⁸ It is significant, too, that Archer never chose to correct his initial identification following the Oscar's same-day debut (that is, 26 December 1942), even after the wreckage had been closely examined by Army divers during the following days, when a misidentification would have been immediately evident.²⁹

While all combatants then were inclined to overstate their successes (and understate their losses), primary source documents indicate that Allied army and air force reports, both American and Australian, were substantially accurate and change responsive. If there was a delay in adopting the term Oscar, then it can be measured in hours rather than days, weeks or months.

When Oscars were first encountered at Pongani on Boxing Day 1942 American and Australian pilots, understandably, both mistook them for Zeros. The Allied command acted immediately to correct this error by introducing a system of code names for distinguishing different Japanese aircraft. This was formally introduced a week after Archer's Boxing Day interception, its impact becoming immediately apparent.³⁰

Whereas the Oscars' existence was not unknown to the allies, its appearance in east New Guinea in late 1942 was unexpected. Australian military intelligence had,

for at least a year prior to the events discussed here, been receiving detailed reports from the US and Britain concerning Japanese military aircraft. By that stage of the war the Oscar had been operational in India and China for almost a year, and Allied intelligence was understandably keen to learn more about its technical capabilities.³¹

Intelligence indifference

The destruction of a never-seen-before enemy fighter, within Allied lines, would normally have been quickly telegraphed through official and unofficial communication channels and yet, in this instance, it appears never to have rated a single mention. Curiously, revisionists make no mention of this all-too-obvious conundrum. If as claimed, this was the first Allied encounter with a new enemy aircraft type then Australian and military commanders would have also recognised its intelligence value and notified Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit (TAIU) field operatives.

Senior RAAF personnel would have been especially aware of this obligation, the Air Board having issued Order A.233 barely 10 weeks earlier, instructing that all captured machines and equipment be sent to the Director of Intelligence in Brisbane



Pilot Officer Archer described the Zeke he shot down as having a 'light brown' fuselage and upper wing surfaces. Recent analysis of original Zeke paint samples has revealed the colour commonly applied to Zekes at that time also had a light brown appearance, as seen here on the US Air Force Museum's Zeke with Restoration Division chief Roger Deere and Japanese researcher Dr Keisuke Asai. (Credit: US Air Force Museum, photo by Ken LaRock).

where the Allies had only recently established their joint TAIU Headquarters.³² Had this been an Oscar, a first-of-type for the South West Pacific Area (SWPA), then TAIU personnel would have been quick to arrive and the equipment salvaged would have been sent direct to Brisbane for technical evaluation, rather than Archer's No 4 Squadron.³³

By that stage of the war, Australia and the United States each had dedicated aircraft intelligence units, both commanded by Australians.³⁴ Personnel from these units demonstrated a willingness to act swiftly and go to great lengths to recover enemy aircraft wreckage. The TAIU's interest in the Oscar was such that by late 1944 it was still scouring for similar wreckage, travelling far greater distances and going to greater lengths to retrieve other Oscars, from greater ocean depths.³⁵

Being in relatively shallow water 100 yards from an Allied-controlled shoreline should have made the retrieval of A20-103's victim an irresistible proposition and yet, neither the Americans nor the Australians showed any intelligence interest in the plane Archer had shot down. Indeed, within a matter of days, potentially high-intelligence value souvenirs had been salvaged and forwarded to the Wirraway's crew, presumably for war trophy or souveniring purposes.³⁶ Throughout December 1942 the TAIU's Flying Officer Norman Clappison had been extremely active in the Buna area where Archer's victim had crashed. Often he would go to great lengths, taking great personal risks, to examine crashed and abandoned Japanese aircraft. An Australian, Clappison reported at the time that, 'I seem to be the best known man on the battle front and everyone calls for me when there is a plane reported.'³⁷ One of his trusted informants was No. 4 Squadron's intelligence officer, Captain [sic] O'Loan, who was also a colleague of A20-103's pilot, John Archer.

In his official report of 27 December 1942 Clappison recounts having received a phone call 'to say they hoped to salvage the Zeke shot down by the WIRRAWAY, could I be present? I agreed'.³⁸ He continued reporting in comprehensive detail throughout this period, on an almost daily basis, and yet he never mentions either an Oscar being shot down or having visited an Oscar crash site. One all-too-obvious explanation, difficult to ignore, is that the plane shot down by Archer that day was, as widely reported, a type already well known to allied intelligence – a Zeke.

Zekes had all withdrawn

Proponents of the Oscar revision allege, without any direct evidence, that Zekes were never operating in east New Guinea on Boxing Day 1942. This remains one of the central revision justifications. Since these are alleged to have been withdrawn from the area it must, so they contend, have been an Oscar that A20-103 shot down that day.³⁹ But this reasoning relies on a fallacy of informal logic known as an 'Argument from Ignorance'. This holds a proposition to be true until proven false.

In the absence of countermanding interest or evidence, this notion has been

allowed to not only take root and flourish, but altogether displace the long-held original interpretation. No compelling evidence for this absence case has ever been presented. Personnel from the AWM's Military Technology section acknowledge that their narrative revision was influenced by official Japanese naval and army combat records, yet they concede they have no file copies (or translations) of these critical Japanese documents.⁴⁰ Particularly influential, they recently claim, were the operational records of the 582nd Air Group which, they acknowledge, was then the only Zeke-equipped unit based in New Guinea.⁴¹

There are other strong indications (and evidence) that Zekes were still based in east New Guinea that day, and for many months thereafter. Indeed, American and Australian combat summaries detail regular engagements with both Zekes and Oscars from the day after the latter's first appearance (27 December 1942) through until 17 October 1943.⁴² The AWM's own published research confirms the operational deployment of Japanese naval aircraft throughout New Guinea, for at least several months after A20-103's combat.⁴³ This is corroborated by official Japanese accounts, including the AWM's official war history translation, which repeatedly mentions 'naval fighters' operating in the vicinity during the last days of 1942.⁴⁴

Other authoritative Japanese primary and secondary sources describe 582nd Air Group Zekes still operating from Lae until early February 1943, sometimes 'in coordination with army fighter units'.⁴⁵ AWM combat photographs from early March 1943, moreover, reveal that Zekes were still based at Lae (Malahang), barely 40 minutes flying time north-west of Buna, where the Wirraway aerial combat occurred.⁴⁶ Eyewitness narrative reports prepared by RAAF Beaufighter pilots not only confirm this combat photography, but also distinguish between serviceable and unserviceable Zekes sighted on that airfield.⁴⁷

These multiple primary and secondary sources, both Japanese and Australian, leave little doubt that Zeke operations continued in east New Guinea at least until the first quarter of 1943. While this alone does not confirm that they were operating on Boxing Day 1942 it demonstrates unequivocally that this was a distinct possibility. It also demonstrates that the absence claim underpinning the revision case, a critical justification, is flawed and unproven. Other bedrock evidence used to justify the revision also appears problematic and unconvincing.

In his same-day combat report Archer describes the aircraft he shot down as having a 'light brown' fuselage and upper wing surfaces.⁴⁸ Oscar advocates have seized on this, arguing that Navy Zekes then deployed in New Guinea were only ever painted overall grey, rather than light brown.⁴⁹ But Archer's description of the enemy plane's camouflage is wholly consistent with recent results obtained by analysing original Zeke paint samples. This research indicates that the colour commonly applied to Zekes at that time closely matches the US Federal Standard



Wirraway A20-103 photographed at Port Moresby's Bomana satellite airfield, three weeks after its Boxing Day combat. (AWM P02885.001).

colours FS24201 and FS16350.⁵⁰ These standards do in fact have a distinctly light brown appearance, sometimes also described as amber, tan and bronze.⁵¹ Evidence of this similarity can still be seen in several aviation museums displaying Zeke survivors.⁵² These recent technical evaluations help corroborate the Australian pilot's claim of having shot down a Zeke.

A further consideration here is the timing of the first Oscar combat which, according to contemporary US Air Force records, took place in the Dobodura area between 1112 and 1115.⁵³ Revisionists reason that Archer's victim was also involved in this melee. But this was fully 20 minutes before the Wirraway's interception, by which time, assuming no headwinds, the remaining Oscar aircraft would have been well on their way home. Moreover, they would have then been flying a reciprocal north-westerly course. Multiple contemporary reports, however, describe A20-103's victim flying south-east towards Buna (from the direction of Mangrove Island).⁵⁴ Reconciling this discrepancy is problematic and complicated by the knowledge that this crash site is almost 50 kilometres north of the Pongani airfield where the initial combat occurred.

Source veracity

While both these cases honour the alleged authority of their sources, the quality, quantity, and veracity of those documents supporting the original claim (that is, Zeke) appears overwhelming. Whereas revisionists rely mostly on secondary sources, there is a great weight of primary source documentation and evidence, both direct and circumstantial, supporting the original claim. In some instances, this is also backed further by independent written eyewitness statements.⁵⁵

The eyewitness accounts of the two Wirraway crewman who survived this close encounter, for example, are corroborated by numerous eyewitness reports submitted by Army observers.⁵⁶ Nothing comparable has ever been presented by Oscar advocates whose arguments are un-helped, either, by surviving 582nd Air Group combat records. While the latter, for example, do not record any Zeke losses for 26 December 1942, they do describe a B-17 interception that day.⁵⁷ However, since no corresponding account of B-17 operations (or interceptions) can be found in Allied records, these Japanese official sources, which underpin the AWM's revision, must be regarded with circumspection. When convenient, Oscar proponents reference the Japanese official history (and its variants), particularly the following passage describing the Army Air Forces involvement that morning:

Though the weather had not entirely cleared on 26 December, 15 fighters led by the commander of the 1st Squadron of the 11th Sentai were able to advance at 6.55 am and attack the airfield to the south of Buna. Some of the fighters destroyed a number of large planes on the ground, while the main strength of the squadron was engaged in fierce aerial combat. There were reports that four P-40s (one unconfirmed) and two Lockheed bombers were downed, for the loss of two Japanese planes.⁵⁸

Launching at this time however, even allowing for weather delays and enroute diversions, would have put the Japanese squadron over Buna by around 8am, an impossible three-and-a-half hours before A20-103's interception. Conceding that this could have been a transcription error, still leaves some reason for mistrusting this source's reliability.⁵⁹ If similar quality evidence were ever presented in a pre-trial hearing it would be swiftly discredited.

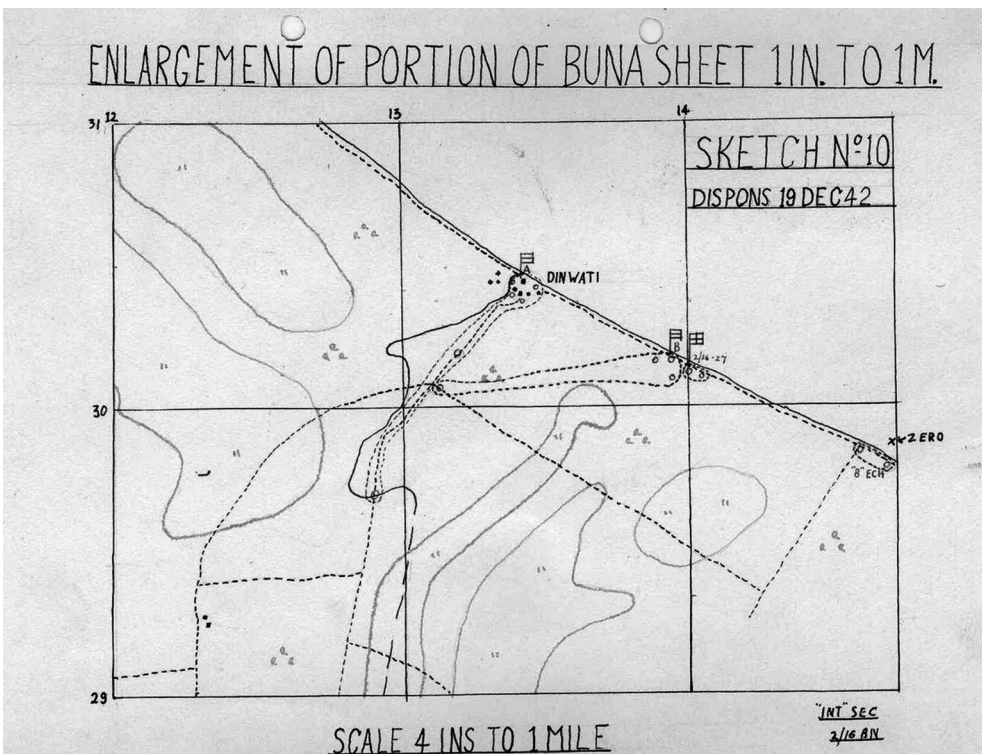
Since the evidential standards demanded by the historical profession are equally rigorous, the pro-Oscar case should have been dealt with in much the same manner. That it was not, and that it has been allowed to stand, unchallenged and unsupported by little more than a circumstantial inference, threadbare secondary source evidence, and flawed logic, remains a matter of concern.

Circumstantial evidence

Perhaps the strongest primary source evidence supporting the Oscar proposition, albeit circumstantial, concerns the retrieval of a rupee, 10 dollars and 10 Dutch guilders among the deceased Japanese pilot's personal effects.⁶⁰ Since Oscars from

the Army's 11th Sentai are known to have recently redeployed from the Dutch East Indies to New Guinea, along with other Army Air Force units, the discovery of Dutch guilders leaves open the possibility that it could have been an Oscar that A20-103 intercepted the day after Christmas. However, this 11th Sentai detachment is said to have been based at Malahang airfield near Lae, where Japanese naval and army units were co-located, as they were in Rabaul.⁶¹ As some of these co-located units were equipped with Zeros, the interchange of currency between Navy and Army personnel also cannot be discounted, especially as the Japanese Army's Sixth Air Division had only begun deploying to New Guinea the previous month.⁶²

Currency collecting was universally practised by Axis and Allied personnel alike, the recovery of multiple denominations indicating the possibility that these salvage items were souvenirs (or talismans) traded between Army and Navy personnel.⁶³ Wisely, the Australian War Memorial's curator, David Crotty, stops short of drawing any further inferences from this single piece of primary source evidence, concluding only that the vanquished 'may have been a Nakajima Ki-43 "Oscar"'.⁶⁴



Site of the action: The best possible outcome, in the absence of an AWM rejoinder, might be for a recreational diver or marine archaeologist to visit the wreck site and deliver incontrovertible evidence, one way or the other. (2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, Appendix C, Sketch 10, RCDIG1021187, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1362069?image=88>).

Curiously though, Oscar proponents have consistently overlooked other important circumstantial evidence mentioned in the same primary source describing this currency. Also retrieved by Australian Army personnel from the wreckage at that time was ‘a gun similar to our vickers’ [sic], clearly referring to the Japanese licence-built copy of the British Vickers Class E machine gun.⁶⁵ Zekes were fitted with two of these Vickers (known as Type 97s) while Oscars would more often only be fitted with one (known in Army parlance as the Type 89).⁶⁶ Since both types of aircraft were fitted with what was essentially the same gun, this primary source circumstantial evidence leaves open the possibility that it was salvaged from a Zero. It also indicates a higher probability of this being the case, since Zekes were fitted with two Vickers whereas Oscars usually only carried one. It is unclear why this important consideration has never been addressed.

Conclusion

Using Orwellian logic, and seemingly little more than secondary source evidence (cited within another secondary source) Oscar proponents appear to have inverted the burden of proof rules that usually guide historical research. It is the absence of evidence to the contrary that underpins the Oscar proposition. Since some secondary sources mention Oscars operating in the area that day (and do not also mention naval fighter operations) it must, *ipso facto*, have been an Oscar that A20-103 destroyed. The same inverted logic is again used to prove that this must have been so, since only one of the 11 Japanese Army fighters (that is, Oscars) deployed that day was unaccounted for. It is a brave proposition which, once again, can only be sustained by discounting or ignoring all other possibilities, and probabilities. Their approach, in effect, is more justificationist than verificationist.

A more rational explanation for this missing Oscar can be found in the contemporary RAAF and USAAF combat reports of this engagement. These collectively detail eight Japanese aircraft destroyed that morning with another two probably destroyed, and another damaged. Any one of these claims could also explain that which failed to return and yet, no account to date has addressed these alternatives.⁶⁷

Permitting reinterpretation without compelling evidence or analysis, as seems to have happened with this revision, is akin to ‘sanction[ing] a dangerous attitude of “anything goes”. A slippery slope [which] leads to the utter conflation of fictional narratives, peopled by invented characters engaging in invented acts’.⁶⁸ It would be a grave miscalculation, however, to dismiss this as the well-intentioned but misguided work of barefoot historians, ‘whose unvetted work appears in unauthorised venues, which have proliferated mightily with the growth of the internet’.⁶⁹

In a comparatively short time, the county’s foremost military history institution has not only embraced this revised interpretation, but permitted its amplification. This has occurred without any marshalling or analysis of evidence in a form that

might have allowed for ongoing scrutiny and discussion. Discreetly replacing one long-standing and well-documented account with an assertion, propped up by little more than what resembles a sliver of circumstantial secondary source evidence, would seem to indicate something less than confidence. While neither case has yet been proved, the evidence supporting the original (that is, Zeke) account far exceeds that favouring the revision (that is, Oscar).

Historians are often implored to avoid presentism and block out the intervening history in assessing the past.⁷⁰ The AWM's revision, however, appears to lean almost entirely on post-war sources and reinterpretations. The risks inherent in this approach are evident, because 'without that commitment to truthfulness, we have no way of preventing the triumph of "fake news" and "alternative facts" or surviving the threat posed by Orwell's ominous warning in 1984: "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past".'⁷¹ The best possible outcome in this instance, in the absence of an AWM rejoinder, would be for a recreational diver or marine archaeologist to visit the wreck site and deliver incontrovertible evidence – one way or the other.⁷²

This case study has used little more evidence than was available to the Memorial when it decided earlier this century to make the change discussed in this paper. The study finds, nonetheless, that there has never been sufficient justification for the AWM's narrative change. The Memorial's proposition still resembles a house of cards built using flawed foundational arguments, its walls rendered with just a thin veneer of circumstantial and secondary source evidence.

While this instance of unilateral revisionism may appear trifling, its implications may not be. Our collective historical knowledge and understanding are underpinned by many such minor details wrought through processes of ongoing contestation and reinterpretation. Uncritically altering and accepting these building blocks can potentially compromise the integrity of these foundations, and the broader interpretations that derive from them.

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Notes

1 Signal received from RAAF Popenetta, 26 December 1942, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book – Forms A50 and A51] Number 4 Squadron Jun 40-Mar 48, National Archives of Australia (NAA) A9186, 12, 1339926, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=1339926&T=P&S=13>. The 'Gona wreck' was a Japanese armed transport ship, the *Ayatosan Maru*, sunk near the coastal village of Gona, New Guinea, in July 1942.

2 'Army Co-Op', *RAAF Log: The RAAF at war*, Australian War Memorial for the Australian Air Force, 1943, vol 55; Number 5 Squadron (RAAF) Wirraways had tried unsuccessfully to intercept a Japanese submarine-launched plane conducting a reconnaissance flight over Melbourne on 26 February 1942. See 26 February 1942, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book – Forms A50 and A51] Number 5 Squadron Jan 41-Feb 46, NAA

A9186, 13, 1158626, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=1158626&S=31&T=P&R>.

3 20 January 1943, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book – Forms A50 and A51] Number 4 Squadron Jun 40-Mar 48, NAA A9186, 12, 1339926, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=1339926&S=156&N=345&R=0>.

4 Roy Hodgkinson, *Extraordinary Incident*, 1943, Australian War Memorial Accession Number ART22743, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C171481>.

5 Names of Wirraway pilots at Rabaul, 1942, NAA A9695, 844, 30045813 (d), <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=30045813&S=7&T=P&R>.

6 A20-3, Aircraft status cards – Wirraway A20-1 to A20-305, NAA A10297, Block 107, 3007860, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=3007860&S=6&T=P&R>.

7 A20-103, Aircraft status cards – Wirraway A20-1 to A20-305, NAA A10297, Block 107, 3007860, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=3007860&S=185&T=P&R>.

8 ‘Where Does It End?’, *Aviation Museums*, no 6, November 1993, pp 2-3, <https://assets.aeromuseums.org/2015/01/AAMA-Newsletter-Number-6-November-1993.pdf>.

9 B7/77 ‘Wirraway Downs Zero’, *RAAF Log*, Australian War Memorial, 1943, p 4.

10 CA-5 Wirraway Serial Number A20-103 Code D, Pacific Wrecks, <https://pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/wirraway/A20-103.html>, last updated 4 February 2024; Royal Australian Air Force, ‘On this day in Air Force history: 19421226, 26/12/1942 Wirraway’s only combat success,’ Facebook, 25 December 2010, <https://www.facebook.com/AusAirForce/photos/a.10151215943927639/477293477638/>; CAC Wirraway, Wikipedia, updated 10 September 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAC_Wirraway; Last of the Wirraways Photo over Sydney (Moorabbin Air Museum), Victorian Collections, <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/66da62f2aa3e471512b4a79b>, accessed 12 October 2024.

11 AWM staff have a long tradition of publicising and publicly presenting their aircraft research findings. See for example Michael V. Nelmes, *A Unique Flight*, New Holland, 2009, and Jamie Crocker and John Kemister, ‘The conservation of two First World War German aircraft’, *AICCM Bulletin*, 32, no 1, 2011, pp 15-24, <https://doi.org/10.1179/bac.2011.32.1.004>.

12 Only in recent years, for example, after almost half a century of public debate, has the Australian War Memorial grudgingly agreed to enhance its treatment of the Frontier Wars. For an overview of the circumstances preceding this 2022 change see Henry Reynolds, ‘Recognising the warriors: Henry Reynolds on the War Memorial’s surprising change of direction’, *The Conversation*, 6 October 2022, <https://theconversation.com/recognising-the-warriors-henry-reynolds-on-the-war-memorials-surprising-change-of-direction-191861>.

13 Luig, ‘Did Wirraway Shoot Down An Oscar Or A Zero?’, [adf-messageboard.com](http://www.adf-messageboard.com), 22 July 2008, 08:41, <http://www.adf-messageboard.com.au/invboard/index.php?showtopic=1083>; ‘On This Day – Australian Military History’, Facebook, 26 December 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=3934223753283975>.

14 David Crotty, ‘One Wirraway’s war’, *Wartime: official magazine of the Australian War Memorial*, no 11, Spring 2000, pp 20-23.

15 Michael Claringbould, ‘Precious commodity: the Zero that never was’, *Flightpath*, vol 23, no 1, August-October 2011, pp 50-55. An abridged version of this has since appeared in Michael John Claringbould and Peter Ingman, *South Pacific Air War, Volume 1: The Fall of Rabaul*,

December 1941-March 1942, rev ed, Avonmore, 2022, pp 210-211.

16 'CA5 Wirraway Mk II Advanced Trainer A20-103: RAAF', Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C2715780>, accessed 27 February 2024.

17 The author of the 2011 *Flightpath* article has suggested it was his representations, and evidence, that led the AWM to amend its Wirraway narrative. Vide, pers comms Michael Claringbould to Mark Clayton, 9 February 2024, 14:16.

18 The 2/14 Battalion War Diary includes two eyewitness accounts of the incident (Appendix 5), written and signed by senior battalion officers. Vide Statements by Captain W. B. Russell and Lt Col F. H. Sublet (CO 2/16 Bn), 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary, vol XXXII, appendix 6, AWM52 8/3/14/60.

19 Martin Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', in Christian B. Miller, and Ryan West (eds), *Integrity, Honesty, and Truth Seeking*, Oxford University Press, 2020; online ed, Oxford Academic, 20 April 2020, 267; <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190666026.003.0009>, accessed 7 February 2024.

20 L. L. Robson, *The First AIF: a study of its recruitment 1914-1918*, Melbourne University Press, 1970; L. L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF', *Historical Studies*, vol 15, no 61, 1973, pp 737-749; For an insight to these ongoing debates see <https://www.defendingcountry.au/>.

21 See for example Norman Franks, *RAF Fighter Pilots Over Burma*, Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Aviation, 2014, chapter 4, first page; Crotty, 'One Wirraway's war', p 23.

22 'Enemy Information Review No 26 for 24 hrs to 1800L/26', 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary, vol XXXII, appendix 6, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1023970/screen/4546740.JPG>.

23 On 8 January 1943, for example, 30 Squadron pilots described encountering either '6 Zekes or Oscars', vide January 1943, WAR 21, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book – Forms A50 and A51] Number 30 Squadron Jun 42-Aug 46, NAA A9186, 59, 1358944.

24 26 December 1942, 'Monthly Return of Enemy Aircraft Casualties Claimed in Combat', 9th Fighter Squadron, 'All 5th Ftr Command Confirmed Victories, 7 Dec 1941-14 Aug 1945', Call no 731.375, US Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), IRISNUM 00258639, reel A7501, frames 1029-1030.

25 26 December 1942, 2/27 Infantry Battalion War Diary, AWM52 8/3/27, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1022121/large/4428876.JPG>.

26 'All 5th Ftr Command Confirmed Victories, 7 Dec 1941-14 Aug 1945,' AFHRA, Reel A7501, Frame 717.

27 On 8 January 1943, for example, 30 Squadron pilots described encountering either '6 Zekes or Oscars', vide January 1943, WAR 21, 30 Squadron (RAAF) Unit History sheet s (Form A50) [Operations Record Book – Forms A50 and A51] Number 30 Squadron Jun 42-Aug 46, NAA A9186, 59, 1358944.

28 Footnote number 56 details a selection of these Army reports.

29 Lt Col F. H. Sublet (CO 2/16 Bn), 2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, AWM52 8/3/16/20 – November-December 1942, sheet 19, 31 December 1942, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1021187/large/4334577.JPG>. This refers to J. M. Hearman (WX1593), 2 I/c 2/16 Bn.

30 USAAF Informational Intelligence Summary No 43-5, 'Code Names of Japanese Aircraft', 7 January 1943, cited in D. Ford, 'Informing Airmen? The US Army Air Forces' Intelligence on Japanese Fighter Tactics in The Pacific Theatre, 1941-45', *International History Review*, vol 34, no 4, 2012, p 731, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2012.675214>.

31 A descriptive overview of Nakajima's latest fighter, later code-named Oscar, appeared in the *Basic Field Manual FM 30-38: Identification of Japanese Aircraft*, Washington DC, War Department, 1941, p 22. See for example 'Intelligence Report Serial 21-42: Japan Aircraft Material', 2 February 1942, Directorate Technical Services (DTS) – Japanese aircraft components – technical examination and report, NAA A705, 9/36/58, 164399, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=164399&S=44&N=61&R=0>.

32 Air Board Order 'A.233 – Captured Machines and Equipment', Disposal – Enemy Salvaged Aircraft and Components, NAA A1196, 1/501/462, 199081, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=199081&S=14&T=P&R=0>.

33 30 December 1942, 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary, p 15.

34 Air Commodore Joseph Hewitt (RAAF) was the first director of intelligence for the Allied Air Forces, South-west Pacific Area (AAFSWPA), vide D. Ford, 'Informing Airmen?', p 731.

35 ATAIU, Salvage operations – Oscar Mk2, Boekisi, 17 September 1944, NAA A9696, 657, 3312995, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=3312995&T=P&S=1>; ATAIU, Operational Report No.4, 21 September 1944, NAA: A9696, 659, 3312997, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/NAAMedia/ShowImage.aspx?B=3312997&S=1&T=P&R=0>.

36 30 December 1942, 15, 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary.

37 F/O N. O. Clappison to Capt F. T. McCoy Jr, Routine Report, 27 December 1942, Allied Technical Air Intelligence Unit – [General history compiled by Flt Lt L. Irwin RAAF Command, 18 April 1945, mostly from operational reports by F/O N. Clappison], 10, NAA A9696, 603, ID 3312710.

38 Clappison, Routine Report, 27 December 1942, p 9.

39 Michael Claringbould, text message to author, 3 May 2020, 10:34; Justin Taylan to author, e-mail, 4 February 2024, 12:57.

40 Pers comms, Cameron Ross (curator, Military Heraldry and Technology) to author, 19-26 March 2024, concerning AWM Research Centre online request RCIS109383, submitted 6 January 2024, 20:54.

41 Pers comms, Cameron Ross (curator, Military Heraldry and Technology), 19 March 2024; Tactical operation records November to December 1942, Flying Squad, 582nd Air Unit (2), Reference code: C08051684000 (trans Tom Hall), Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan, <https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=eng&BID=F2008061910223430129&ID=M2008061910223530132&REFCODE=C08051684000>.

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43 Hiroyuki Shindo, 'Japanese air operations over New Guinea during the Second World War', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no 34, June 2001, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/journal/j34/shindo>.

44 Steven Bullard (trans), *Japanese Army Operations in the South Pacific Area: New Britain and Papua Campaigns, 1942-43*, Australian War Memorial, 2007, pp 187-190, [http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/WebI/JpnOperations/\\$file/JpnOpsText.pdf](http://ajrp.awm.gov.au/ajrp/ajrp2.nsf/WebI/JpnOperations/$file/JpnOpsText.pdf).

45 Tactical operation records November to December 1942, Flying Squad, 582nd Air Unit (2), Reference code: C08051684000 (trans Tom Hall); Ikuhito Hata and Yasuho Izawa, *Japanese Naval Aces and Fighter Units in World War II*, United States Naval Institute, 1989, pp 158-159, <https://archive.org/details/japanesenavalace00hata/page/158/mode/2up>.

46 Accession no P01275.016, photograph, 'Lae, New Guinea. 1943-03-04. Black smoke and flames rise from a Japanese Zero fighter aircraft', Australian War Memorial, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C296595>.

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49 Pers comms, Michael Claringbould to author, 3 May 2020, 10:34; Appendix A, 'Combat (Fighter) Report No 1', No 9 Operational Group RAAF, Papua 1/9/1942 to 31/10/1942, AWM 64, 8/1, 638240, <https://pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/wirraway/A20-103/report/combat-report-appendix.html>.

50 Federal Standard 24201, 'AMS Standard 595 Color', federalstandardcolor.com, accessed 9 March 2024, <https://www.federalstandardcolor.com/>; Sergio Portabales, ame iro [sic], flickr.com, accessed 9 March 2024, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/137367653@N07/46595403972/>.

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52 See examples in the National Museum of the United States Air Force, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Sep/16/2002182984/2000/2000/0/190913-F-IO108-004.JPG>, accessed, 4 March 2024; and the Virginian Military Aviation Museum <https://www.scramble.nl/military-news/new-zero-restoration-ready-for-delivery>, accessed 4 March 2024.

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54 2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, sheet no 18, 26 December 1942, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1021187/large/4334576.JPG>. Mangroves Islands are south-east of Gona, vide Allied Geographical Section, 'Papua: Buna-Gona and Coastal area', Monash Collections Online, <https://repository.monash.edu/items/show/32379>, accessed 13 February 2024.

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56 'Enemy Information Review No 26 for 24 hrs to 1800L/26', 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary, vol XXXII, appendix 6, AWM52 8/3/14/60, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1023970/screen/4546740.JPG>; 2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, sheet no 18, 26 December 1942, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1021187/large/4334576.JPG>; 26 December 1942, 2/27 Infantry Battalion War Diary, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1022121/large/4428876.JPG>; December 26, 1942, Wallet 1 of 1 – 'Diary of William Riggall', Australian War Memorial accession number AWM2023.6.24, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/AWM2023.6.24/screen/9417958.JPG>. Lt Riggall (VX80932) was serving then with 7th Division Headquarters; Signal received from RAAF Popendetta, 26 December 1942, RAAF Unit History sheets (form A50) [Operations Record Book Diary of William Riggall, forms A50 and A51], NAA A1196, 1/501/462, 199081; Number 4 Squadron Jun 40-Mar 48, NAA A9186, 12, 1339926, <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Gallery151/dist/JGalleryViewer.aspx?B=1339926&S=143&N=345&R=0>.

57 Tactical operation records from November to December 1942, Flying Squad, 582nd Air Unit (2), (trans Tom Hall).

58 Bullard (trans), *Japanese Army Operations in the South Pacific Area*, p 190.

59 Claringbould claimed in a recent communication that this deployment was led by Major Tanaguchi Masayoshi, the 11th Sentai's Deputy Commanding Officer and Executive Officer. According to Claringbould, who cites Masayoshi's diary (source unspecified), this flight of 15 Ki-43s departed Malahang airfield (several miles north-west of Lae) at 0953 on 26 December 1942. Pers comm, Claringbould to author, 9 February 2024, 14:16.

60 2/14 Battalion Adjutant (HQ TELO) to HQ, NANI, 'Personal Effects – Japanese Airman', 28 December 1942, 2/14 Bn AIF War Diary, vol XXXII, appendix 6, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1023970/large/4546732.JPG>.

61 Michael Claringbould, 'Precious commodity: the Zero that never was', *Flightpath*, vol 23, no 1, 2011, p 51.

62 The Army-Navy Central Agreement on Operations in the South Pacific Area was formalised on 18 November 1942. Vide Hiroyuki Shindo, para 15.

63 For an American perspective see 'Money Matters: The Short Snorter Saga', The National WWII Museum (New Orleans), 29 December 2021, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/short-snorter-military-money>.

64 Crotty, 'One Wirraway's war', p 23.

65 Lt Col F. H. Sublet (CO 2/16 Bn), 2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, sheet 19, 31 December 1942, <https://s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1021187/large/4334577.JPG>. This refers to J. M. Hearman (WX1593), 2 I/c 2/16 Bn.

66 Richard L. Dunn, 'Nakajima Ki-43-I Armament – A Reassessment', *j-aircraft.com*, accessed 3 March 2024, https://j-aircraft.com/research/rdunn/nakajima_ki43arm.htm.

67 26 December 1942, 'All 5th Ftr Command Confirmed Victories, 7 Dec 1941-14 Aug 1945', AFHRA, reel A7501, frame 716. See also Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force, 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial, 1962, series three, vol 1, pp 663-664, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1417628>.

68 Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p 253.

69 Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p 266.

70 Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p 248.

71 Jay, 'Historical Truth and the Truthfulness of Historians', p 268.

72 2/16 Infantry Battalion War Diary, appendix C, sketch 10, RCDIG1021187, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1362069?image=88>.

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