

WORLD WAR TWO RELICS & HISTORY

USA MITCHELL BOMBER B-25H

Over 800 Allied and Japanese aircraft came down over New Britain Island or in its surrounding seas during World War 2. The jungles of Papua New Guinea had been littered with the wrecks of Allied and Japanese aircraft in varying stages of disintegration. Brian Bennett tells the story of a North American B-25H at Talasea, on New Britain Island, which is believed to be the last of this version left in original configuration. It is the last of the so called ship busters with a forward firing 75 mm cannon. Copies of the article outlaying the history of the nearby Talasea Mitchell Bomber are available to interested guests at the Walindi Resort office.

LOCKHEED VEGA VENTURA PV1 ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE NZ4522

Close by the Mitchell Bomber at Talasea is a New Zealand Lockheed Vega Ventura. Where these two aircraft have come to rest was a short airstrip constructed for small aircraft on the top of a ridge about 100 metres above sea level. The strip was approximately 550 metres long and 40 metres wide. Both landings occurred in emergency life or death situations. The story of the Lockheed Ventura available at the Resort office is a summary from information gathered by Charles Darby and makes interesting reading.

JAPANESE A6M2 MODEL 21 MITSUBISHI ZERO

The Japanese Zero regularly dived by guests in 17 metres of water was only discovered in 2000. Investigations by Harumi Sakaguchi from Japan has revealed the aircraft was flown by Honda Tomiharu of the Air Group 204. This is the Air Group who lost Admiral Yamamoto, over Bougainville. Yamamoto was the Japanese Commander who attacked Pearl Harbour, thus bringing America into WW2. On December 26th 1943, Honda flew as part of a force of approximately 80 Zeros and Vals to combat the US Marine landings at Cape Gloucester (the western end of New Britain) where the Japanese Forces were strongly defending their position. The air battle which followed was an intense and bloody struggle. Of the 19 aircraft of Air Group 204, 17 returned to Rabaul. Honda did not and was officially posted as missing. It is still unclear why the Zero was ditched but there are local stories of the pilot surviving. Talasea area was still under Japanese control at the time the aircraft landed in the sea. Further investigation of this story is continuing.

AUSTRALIAN BEAUFIGHTER ENGINE/PROPELLOR

The RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) 30 Squadron Beaufighters played an essential role in the Battle for New Britain particularly from the Battle of the Bismark Sea (March 1943) through to the landing of the US Marines at Cape Gloucester and later Volupai Plantation, at nearby Talasea 5/3/1944. Famous for their ability to strafe and sink enemy

shipping, the aircraft had two sleeved Hercules engines of 1,750 HP each. Known as the Whispering Death because of their quiet but deadly approach, they sunk barges supplying fuel and materials to Japanese outposts on New Britain including Cape Gloucester. The engine displayed at Walindi is from the aircraft of 30 Squadron Commander Clarrie Glasscock and Navigator John Cain who were shot down and killed while strafing what is now Hoskins Airport on the 19th Sept 1943.

Information concerning other aircraft such as an Australian RAAF Spitfire, 2 other Beaufighters plus other aircraft including Fred Hargesheimer's P-38 described in his book, "The School That Fell From the Sky" are also available.

