

What's happening at PIONEER AVSPECS

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Hi everyone

Last month's newsletter started with a picture of the "business end" of the premises at Ardmore. This is great to recognise us if you arrive by car, however if you arrive by plane you need to know what the other end looks like. So here's the airside.



1 - Airside at Ardmore

Once again, on to more interesting things, our progress to date.

Jerry Yagen's P-40E

Jerry's LH wing is moving ahead rapidly. The wing has now been completely trial-fitted, and the trailing edge aligned. The ribs aft of Spar 3 and back to Spar 5 are now all riveted on. Work is progressing with skinning this section. Give us another month and this wing should be close.



2 & 3 The LH wing

Components are continuing to be rebuilt and completed for Jerry's RH wing. These include the production of one bare leading edge skin and the gun port doubler. Meantime work is continuing on systems components and the new instrument panel is completed and mounted, the new electrical panel is also made and fitted and the lower panel is rebuilt and trial fitted. Work on new electrical junction boxes is proceeding and the rear fuselage main junction box is now completed.



4-Components for RH wing



5-Instrument & electrical panels



6-Junction box complete

As part of our 2-seat conversion, we fit the original adjustable front seat (as fitted to P-40D through N1s) in the rear (so it can be adjusted up and down for various size passengers). In the front this is replaced with a new build seat that is a duplicate (in alloy) of the P-40N5 and later fixed wooden seat, which is mounted to a frame that hinges forward allowing access to the back seat. As both Jerry's and Tony's aircraft are having this conversion, we have produced both new front seats.



7-Two new-build front seats



8-Front cowlings

Finally, for Jerry's aircraft the front cowlings have arrived from Australia. It will be a little while before we get to use them but it's nice to have them on hand.

Tony Banta's P-40E

Tony & Simon Brown came to visit about 4 weeks ago and we were able to go over in detail each item on the aircraft to determine exactly what Tony's wishes were. The fuselage skinning, while sound and in all probability original, cosmetically had suffered the ravages of time, and at some time in its life, neglect. As it's Tony's wish to have the "perfect" P-40, the decision was made to reskin the whole fuselage. This is being done with the fuse mounted on our "rotisserie" and three skins at a time are being removed and replaced. This is progressing well and by the end of this month the lower third of the fuselage will be completely reskinned.



9-Reskinning the fuselage



10-RH wing leading edge



11-Structure from Spars 3 to 5

Tony's RH wing leading edge is now completely riveted up to Spar 2 and the ribs from Spar 2 to 3 are being riveted in place.

As pointed out in the previous newsletter, most of the structure from Spars 3 to 5 has been completed, and once the main wing jig is free from Jerry's wing, this wing will be into the main jig and final assembly will be underway. This should progress reasonably rapidly. The flap bay area is also now completed and is ready to be fitted once this wing is up to Spar 5.



11-Flap bay area



12-Rebuilt spinner

Other systems and component work is proceeding and including the spinner which has been rebuilt and is now awaiting final assembly.

Still looking good for Wanaka 2002!

Ray Hanna's Lavochkin La-9

Progress on the Lavochkin continues at a good pace. Maybe Wanaka 2002 for this one also! For insulating and sealing joints, the Russian's used old style wool felt. We have managed to source this from India and the oil tank bay is now lined and the oil tank fitted. The new bullet-proof front windscreen as depicted in the last issue is now fitted, as are the new plexiglass side windows (the originals were plexiglass also). Originally the La-9 had what we believe was a gun camera mounted in the top section of the windscreen assembly and as such had no vision up through that area. Ray thought he'd like some better visibility here (something to do with flying close to other airplanes' bottoms in a formation fighter display!). We've therefore removed the gun camera mount and replaced this with a plexiglass window. The gun camera mount is on hand to be refitted if desired some time in the future.



14-Oil tank & windscreens



15-Wheel bay areas

The felt material is also used to seal around the wheel bay areas where it is wrapped around a rubber tube and screwed along the edges. This is all now made and in place and the wheel bays are awaiting some legs and wheels and tyres. Good news - the undercarriage legs and retract cylinders have all proved to be in usable condition and have now been rebuilt, along with the brakes by Colin Denholm.

We haven't managed to come up with any of the original sized tyres and unless this happens in the next couple of weeks, we will be doing some wheel modifications to allow us to fit readily available tyres.

Canopy work is proceeding and the mould has been made from the old canopy plexiglass and a new one is at hand. The canopy has been rebuilt, however one half of the rollers and latching mechanism is missing and this is having to be duplicated.



16-Canopy



17-Systems & plumbing fitted

More of the systems and plumbing at the front of the aircraft have been completed and are being refitted.

The Lavockin's really starting to look like an airplane and Ray advises that good progress is being made on the engine and prop in Europe.

Warren Russell (from Invercargill, New Zealand) specialises in researching paint schemes for aircraft modellers and we have just received his extremely well researched and detailed report on Lavochkin, as it was in the Chinese Air Force during the Korean War. Thought you might like to have a look at what it's going to have a look like.



The underside shows as white, but in fact it's light blue.

Other projects

There's a couple of other projects in the shop which are getting attention but there's nothing really visual to show. As soon as there's something worth looking at we'll include it in a newsletter.

Recent Visitors' Register

- Keith Wakeman (P-40 pilot from No. 4 OTU Ardmore)
- Ray Howarth (4 SU Seagrove and Ardmore plus Pacific Islands WWII)
- Dave Gibson (Eagle pilot, Blenheim)
- Keith Skilling (Alpine & Breitling Warbird pilot)
- Trevor Bland (President, NZ Warbirds)
- John Alexander (Dorset, UK)

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, Tony Banta and Simon Brown came to visit and stayed a few days. Tony got to start our P-40 and then go for a ride - unfortunately for him he was in the back seat. But he was smiling quite a bit afterwards (despite Garth's attempt at a cross wind landing).



Warbirds Magazine



Have you seen the latest copy of Warbirds? Dick Thurman's P-40K is featured on the cover - full story inside...

After all the great photos of Dick's TF-51 and the P-40 in the previous issue, we're beginning to think that maybe he has some shares in this organisation!

Oshkosh 2001

At last we're both going to make it. Would love to catch up with any of you that are also going to be there. You'll undoubtedly find us hanging around where the Warbirds are and we'll be wearing either shirts and/or caps with our logo.



Warren & Garth