



# NZ Warbirds Association Open Day at Ardmore



Some of the NZ Warbirds collection on display outside the hangar at Ardmore, Mustang, Spitfire and Kittyhawk centre stage.



Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk and North American P-51 Mustang in formation.



Roaring Forties Harvard Display Team at work.



The latest resident at Ardmore: Aero Vodochody L-39 Albatros.



Supermarine Spitfire.



A familiar site over Auckland on weekends: Douglas DC-3 Dakota.



Consolidated PBY Catalina.

Contributed by Frank Parker

ON SUNDAY 5th December, the NZ Warbirds Association held a further Open Day at their Ardmore Airfield Base. The theme of the day was twofold; firstly in Remembrance to Pearl Harbour, and secondly to record 75 years of the Douglas DC-3.

The prototype of the DC-3 first flew on December 17th, 1935. (This date is itself aviation history; the Wright Brothers first flew at Kitty Hawk on December 17th 1903.) At the time this new aircraft was a quantum leap in design, size, speed and capability and it soon eclipsed its rivals. With the advent of World War II and a requirement for transport aircraft, the 'rest' is history. There were 10600+ DC-3 variants produced in the USA. Peak production was in 1944 with over 4800 delivered. That's 92 aircraft per week, 13 aircraft a day, or one aircraft every two hours, for 365 days of the year! Additionally 5000 aircraft were license built in Russia as the Li2 and 500 odd in Japan as the L2D2 'Transport'.

After the war these aircraft were demobbed and were the basis for many start up civilian airlines, among them Air New Zealand and Cathay Pacific. And the Dak is still flying in the far corners of the world. I can't recall any transport vehicle with a functional service life of over 75 years – it is indeed an iconic aircraft.

The 7th of December marks the day the USA joined hostilities in World War II following the surprise attack on its Naval Base at Pearl Harbour Hawaii by the Japanese Imperial Navy. The ensuing US actions in the Pacific halted the Japanese advance and probably saved New Zealand and Australia from this onslaught. It is fitting that this day is recognised and acknowledged to the younger generation by events such as the Open Day.

And so, to the Open Day. For our previous Open Day (Battle of Britain remembrance in September) the weather all but caused cancellation. After a promising week, Sunday turned out to be a wonderful early summer's day. Our band of volunteers had worked hard on Saturday to set up spectator areas and facilities; all that was required was an audience. Approximately 5000 appreciative folk were treated to a fine display of Association aircraft, military vehicles, and Ardmore business displays.

More than 20 aircraft, from the venerable Tiger Moth, Harvard's, Beaver, Chipmunk, four WWII fighters, to an L-39 Albatross jet (the latest Ardmore resident), were on static display for enquiry and comment.

The highlights were three 45 minute flying displays during the day. These included appearances by the Roaring 40's Harvard's, Spitfire, P-40 Kittyhawk, Zlin aerobatics, Tiger Moth, DC-3 and a guest gliding aerobatic flight by the Auckland Gliding Club which is based at Drury. The air race (figuratively speaking folks) was won by the Albatros with a 400+ knot (740 km/hr) opening pass to its demonstration.

At the completion of flying the Association held a Children's Xmas Party for members' young ones with 35+ future members delighted by Santa's arrival in a helicopter! (I seem to recall the Jolly Fellow arriving by Fire Engine in my childhood – and they weren't horse drawn!).

The Day's finale was a Members Xmas function with a sumptuous dinner arranged by the Entertainment Committee.

NZ Warbirds holds these Open Days to give our Members an opportunity to participate within their Association and to present ourselves to the local Community. With the success of this Day we achieved both of these aims with merit. The next event was planned for ANZAC day, however in 2011 this clashes with Easter so details are yet to be decided. Watch this Space!



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