

# A-4K Skyhawk NZ 6209 Arrives at Ardmore

**IT'S SUNDAY** the 11th of March and I have just finished signing for receipt of Skyhawk NZ 6209 on loan from the RNZAF Museum, not a bad morning's work.

When I first got involved in the NZ Warbirds Association Committee some ten years ago, there was discussion on the 'mothballed' Skyhawks. I recall President of the day Trevor Bland writing to the 'Ministry People' suggesting the Association could look after one or two. The Committee Minutes don't reflect whether Trevor received a reply!

It was with some interest that we received a call from Defence about 12 months ago asking of the Association's interest in being 'considered' for the loan of an aircraft for 'display'. The reply was obviously 'yes please', however the process was not that straight forward. The Association first had to be vetted to confirm our capacity to care for and display the aircraft appropriately. This included a visit from Minister of Defence, the Hon. Dr. Wayne Mapp.

Suffice to say NZ Warbirds was accepted as a worthy recipient. For the record the aircraft remains the property of the RNZAF Museum Trust and is on loan to the Association. This is partly to ensure the continued care and presentation of the aircraft in a suitable environment.

For NZWA this is a change in direction from our norm of presenting ex military and classic aircraft in an airworthy state. We had made initial moves down this road with the development of the Visitor Centre in our main hangar. To re-iterate, this centre was created to enable the Association to put on display some of the memorabilia, books and models which have been entrusted to us



NZ 6209 arrived at Ardmore on 7th March and had been re-assembled (minus one part) by the 9th.

over the years. It is also seen as a means of lifting the Association's profile within the local and aviation community. We believe we have succeeded in these aims, nonetheless, the development of the Visitors Centre is an ongoing project, the latest 'instalment' being the development of a dedicated shop to present our range of memorabilia and gifts.

Warbirds Executive see the inclusion of a Skyhawk as an important addition to the Visitor Centre, an opportunity for school groups, tour parties, casual visitors, and of course Association Members to see a real jet fighter up close and personal.

Contributed by Frank Parker

## The Delivery

With the confirmation of an allocation, a 'Skyhawk Group' was selected to oversee the administration and logistics for delivery. This has been simplified by Defence being responsible for the aircraft's delivery and assembly in our hangar. This was at some cost which was met by one of our members with a generous donation.

Delivery was scheduled for April-May, no panic, until a call from the Delivery Team a few weeks back; "We have an issue downstream, can you take your aircraft in a couple of weeks?" – The reply "Of course, no problem", and so the panic starts. Once again our band of tireless volunteers came to the party to prepare the hangar space and complete a myriad of other jobs.

And so to Wednesday 7th March. The clock turns to 1200 hrs and with military precision (of course), Skyhawk NZ 6209 arrives at our hangar. 6209 was one of the initial purchase of Skyhawks for the RNZAF in 1970. I can (vaguely) recall their arrival on USS Okinawa, at the Port of Auckland before being towed to Whenuapai. The trip to Whenuapai was accompanied by a group of protestors, some of whom became prominent politicians, one of whom oversaw their demise.

Back at our NZWA hangar, the Defence Team, led by John Manning from Safe Air and assisted by Warbirds volunteers sprang into action. It was a three day job to turn the pieces into an aircraft which is now assembled and resident in the hangar. The job is not complete with display stands and supporting media yet to come, however we have reached first base. As they say, 'Watch this Space'.

## Checking the Logbooks

At least three of our NZWA Auckland based members have laid claim to having NZ 6209 in their logbook.

CFI Dave Brown has recorded 30 flights in NZ 6209, the first on 26/1/84, the last on 18/7/86 for 47.1 hours. This included a transit from Ohakea to Paya Lebar (Singapore) via Richmond (Sydney), Townsville, Darwin, and Bali – not all in one day no doubt.

Mark Helliwell has 72.8 hours logged in NZ 6209, including an endurance record of five hours on 24/2/84. This was a flight to prove drop tank feeds prior to deployment. As 'Squadron Planning Officer' Mark picked himself for the flight from Ohakea, New Plymouth, Cape Reinga, East Cape, Stewart Island, Puysegur Point, Farewell Spit, Ohakea. The flight included two air to air refuels (and a very resilient bladder !)

San Diego based member Pete Hunt quietly admits to having 'maybe 1000 hours A-4 time' achieved in the US Navy Aggressor Training Role (think Tom Cruise and Top Gun). Pete says it was challenging to fly the aircraft using Soviet tactics and only 75% of its capability. Equally it was fun to cut loose and surprise the 'good guys' with some new (or is that novel) tactics.

Member Roger Kyle recalls his mission as a young (weren't we all) AC (Aircraftman), of removing the protective coating from the aircraft after their arrival in Whenuapai.

No doubt further essential trivia will surface – there are already whispers of 2x 300 hundred gallon drop tank 'releases' and a dead 'stick' of six 'High Explosive' 500lb bombs (inadvertently unarmed – so no BANG !) dropped at a Defence fire power demo at Waiouru.

**Footnote:** With the aircraft being provided on loan for 'display' purposes, KiwiFlyer enquired as to just which component the RNZAF had retained to prevent flight. Alas it is the engine.





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