



Mustang Stampede

A whistlestop roundup of T-51 Mustang projects

IT HAS BEEN a very busy year for Titan T-51 builders. Several shiny suited replica Mustangs are starting to bring big smiles to their owner's faces as they begin flying or come very close to flying. It is certainly going to make a great spectacle in the not too distant future when a stable of Titan Mustangs fly together over New Zealand.

Canterbury

In Canterbury at Campbell Aviation, two T-51 aircraft are nearly ready to head off to their new owners at opposite ends of NZ. Both aircraft have Suzuki V6 engines and Autoflight gear drives.

Len Thompson, one of the new owners had a long and distinguished career in the RNZAF, culminating in his appointment as Director General of Defence Medical Services as an Air Commodore. From there he went to

Air New Zealand as the Principal Medical Officer for 14 years. Len's aircraft features the markings of Otago 4 (I) Squadron which is where he first flew P-51s in the NZ Territorial Air Force. This aircraft will be based in Kerikeri and has a glass cockpit and autopilot, custom seats and drop tanks.

The second T-51 is for Dave Hughes who has taken the markings and name of the much-loved P-51 'Miss Torque' which had its home for many years in the Wanaka area. It is most fitting that Dave will be flying in the Wanaka / Te Anau area and bringing back a local icon. Dave's aircraft has been fitted with the heavier gear legs now available from Titan.

Waikato

On a recent trip to Auckland and Hamilton we were able to visit several hangars where the efforts of T-51 owners and their helpers were in abundance.

At Hamilton airport, John Shuttleworth's T-51 is close to completion. John's aircraft is based on the 'F' model, with its 3 bladed propeller. John's engine choice is a 200 hp Mazda rotary engine, and is fitted with an earlier re-drive from Neil Hintz at



Above: Len Thompson's T-51 in the markings of the squadron he first flew P-51s - Otago 4 Squadron TAF. Below left: John Shuttleworth's T-51 project at Hamilton. Below right: Kerry Millar's project at Canterbury.

Autoflight. John's inner gear doors from Warren Sly's design certainly look the part. His aircraft has a beautiful paint job, in Canterbury TAF colour scheme, right down to the original stencilling. John admits his pursuit of excellence has somewhat over-extended his build time and budget! We look forward to seeing John's T-51 ready for test flying very soon.

We then headed south to Matamata airfield and visited Mike Crene's hangar housing Mike's and Pete Walton's T-51s. Pete's T-51 is currently undergoing test flying. This T-51 is fitted with the heavier gear legs and Warren Sly's gear door design. It has a V6 Suzuki engine, an Autoflight gear drive and Titan 84" Whirlwind propeller. The red checkers and silver paint job certainly give it the 'wow' finish. Mike's own grey liveried DBG was also in the hangar and his is now flying with a Titan 84" propeller and Autoflight gear drive.

Contributed by Sandy Campbell

Auckland

We visited the Warbirds Syndicate in Auckland where there was a buzz of activity, with syndicate members busily shining up the metal panels. This build has a number of custom modifications, including English wheeled panels, solid flush riveting, etc, etc. The team are looking to this aircraft having a pre-Christmas first flight. This T-51 is running the Rotax 912S engine option.

Travelling further north to Dairy Flat, we visited Gary Mitchell's T-51. The shiny finish on Garry's Mustang is going to be impossible to beat. Every panel has been painstakingly shined to mirror-like status. Gary is not too far off completion and is looking to the New Year for his first engine run of the Rotax 914 turbo engine. Gary has been instrumental in making ducting and custom fairings which he has shared with other builders.

Tauranga

In the Tauranga area there are four Titan T-51 projects. ZK-TVG was built in Tauranga by Vaughan Peters and Geoff Pascoe. Over the three years she took to complete, Vaughan travelled every weekend from Auckland. The first flight was in September 2008 with test pilot Phil Hooker at the controls. After some initial overheating problems, the radiator has been moved and the test flying is about to resume. Built pretty much exactly to the plans with every effort made to keep her light and powered by a Rotax 912S she is registered as a Class 2 Microlight.

The name 'Isobel' is Geoff's wife Julie's late mother's name, which seemed fitting to put on the aircraft because WW2 Kiwi Pilot Jack Cleland named his Mustang 'Isobel' after his wife. The colour scheme comes from Mustang Double Trouble 2. Geoff can't wait to get into the pilot's seat.

Still in Tauranga, business colleagues Mike and Marty joined forces and purchased a large hangar at the airport, then went about a complete makeover of the premises in order for them to house their two T-51 projects - and you can now eat your dinner off the hangar floor. Both aircraft are well advanced, there being over 2,500 hours spent to date on each plane with another 3 to 400 predicted hours to completion. Both aircraft have been fully assembled and all systems tested. Final detailing is being completed now, prior to final assembly and inspection. Mike's has a Suzuki 2.7 engine with an Autoflight gear drive and Whirlwind propeller. Marty's is running a 3.5 Honda with an Autoflight gear drive and Whirlwind propeller. The plan is for both aircraft to be taxiing before the SAA event at Tauranga in February 2010 and on display at the Campbell Aviation stand.

New Plymouth

Pip Hellier, based close to New Plymouth has been working diligently away and he is well advanced on his project. Pip visited Classic Fighters in 2007, saw 'MSY' and that was it, he was smitten. He is going to be fitting a Honda V6 engine. Pip says 'Princess Alina' is one third of the way to take off after 18 months work.

Finished aircraft

So the tally of finished and flying aircraft grows, adding to those already completed including Bill McWilliam's 'WWM' - Masterton, 'DGB' - Mike Crene in Matamata and of course Campbell Aviation's - 'MSY' which has now clocked up over 200 hours.

Another Canterbury project 'DGM' is owned by Kerry Millar and has been finished for some time. This was another Rotax 912S build - don't miss the stunning 'Linda Lovelace' nose-art. With his steely determination, perseverance and diligence, Kerry worked away night and day at his project, assisted by his wife Lynda, and one day out of the blue he told us "it's all finished". 14 months from start date, and fewer than 2,000 hours all done and dusted.

Congratulations to all the builders of Titan T-51 Mustangs. We know how much time, focus, effort, diligence, patience,

studying of plans, kiwi ingenuity and innovation and DIY skill, late nights, early mornings, and more goes into the building of these aircraft.

Some builders have found quite different ways to do things or have opted for other innovations, which at times has considerably extended the build time. There has been considerable sharing of experiences and knowledge as the kits



Pete Walton's T-51 is currently undergoing test flying at Matamata.



Dave Hughes' ZK-MST is almost ready to begin test flying.



Mustang Stampede - Possibly caused by the threat of this lion hearted Spitfire, travelling soon to Wanganui for engine fitment.

progress and some of the builders have used their professional background to come up with some very nice enhancements.

Every aircraft is unique and each one has its own personal stamp and story, with the markings often relating to a personal association with an area, an aircraft or a pilot. Each build also has had its fair share of hurdles to be worked through - challenges and satisfactions that everyone who has ever built an aircraft will well understand.

Options and improvements

Of the 34 sales of T-51 kits Australasian wide, the Rotax 912 'Microlight' option has proved equally as popular as the 'Experimental' option with the Suzuki or Honda engines.

Many of the kit modifications are a result of Kiwi ingenuity and added to this is the New Zealand made gear drive produced by Neil Hintz at Autoflight giving

the V6 options a very professional finishing touch. As enthusiasts would be aware, the P-51 with its Merlin engine ran with a gear drive PSRU. The Hintz gear drive is now the Titan factory recommended reduction drive, which is coupled with the Whirlwind Hydraulic CSU 84" propeller.

The kit continues to undergo improvements from the factory and there are a number of after market custom optional extras available now such as drop tanks, custom seats and heavy-duty undercarriage (more closely replicating the original).

There is also now a razorback "B" model Mustang kit and Titan aircraft are currently working on a full size replica Mustang. For those new to a Titan project, there is lots of help widely available with the assistance of Campbell Aviation who are now into their fifth build, the Campbell Aviation Construction CD (with over 1,000 photos, building sequence, tooling and other general information) and the wealth of knowledge accumulated by other enthusiastic builders around the country who are very willing to share their knowledge and experience.

And a Spitfire

And to finalise this roundup, Supermarine Spitfire 'SPT' has also now rolled out of Campbell Aviation's facility. This aircraft is heading north to its new owner

Richmond Harding in Wanganui. It is complete apart from the engine installation which is being carried out in Wanganui. We look forward to ZK-SPT flying in 2010.

For more information

Replica Warbirds are The Affordable Alternative - Strap Yourself into the Fighter's Seat Today. Contact Ivan and Sandy Campbell at Campbell Aviation on 03 312-8008, or visit www.campbellaeroclassics.com