

## **No 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron RAAF: the first difficult year, 4 April 1942-10 May 1943, forming up, training and the first operations.**

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-Preliminary illustrated version-

### Introduction<sup>0</sup>

After the capitulation of the allied forces in Java on 8 March 1942 (effective the next day) part of the Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL (ML/KNIL, the Army Aviation Corps of the Royal Netherlands Indies Army) stranded outside the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) mainly with ferry detachments in British India and in Australia, the evacuated Depot Vliegtuigafdeeling (D.VI.A., the air transport squadron of the ML) in Australia and with the evacuated Flying and Observer Schools in Australia. A survey of late March showed that approximately 620 men remained. In Australia these remnants were concentrated within the framework of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). A medium-bomber squadron No 18 Squadron N.E.I. (later addressed to as 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron RAAF) was established in April 1942. In the United States the instructors, cadre and students evacuated in the first instance to Australia were, together with Dutch naval air service personnel evacuated and escaped from the NEI, concentrated in the Royal Netherlands Military Flying School (RNMFS) established in May 1942. The RNMFS was to train flying echelons, reserve pilots and crews and a core of ground personnel for Dutch and NEI combat squadrons to be established in Ceylon, the United Kingdom and in Australia. Part of the school was an Operational Training unit established in February 1943 and equipped with North American Aviation (NAA) B-25 Mitchell medium-bombers. The two ferry detachments, the ML Detachment Bangalore and the ML Detachment Archerfield, were to receive from the U.S.A. and were originally to ferry to Java NAA B-25s.

Within the framework of the RAAF apart from a short lived second medium-bomber squadron, a Pool unit for the support of the operational NEI squadrons and a fighter squadron were formed in September, respectively December 1943. Two Transport Flights were formed in Brisbane (the N.E.I. Transport Afdeeling Brisbane, Transport Unit Brisbane) and in Melbourne (the N.E.I. Transport Section Melbourne) in January 1943, respectively February 1944. One of the main elements of the Pool unit, the N.E.I. Aircraft & Personnel Pool later called Personnel & Equipment Pool (P.E.P.), was the so-called Bomber Pool. Initially only

giving refresher courses, this pool became a NAA B-25 Mitchell Operational Training unit in April 1944 for the ML as well as the RAAF. It also performed transport tasks, a number of (photographic) reconnaissance missions and to a limited extent sea reconnaissance tasks.

The paper looks (from the Dutch side) at the early history of No 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron and its NAA B-25 Mitchell aircraft and Douglas DB-7B and A-20A Boston aircraft. Besides being a descriptive detailed piece of military aviation history, the paper has a strong logistical component. Although operations flown are covered in short the focus is on organization, personnel and material (equipment) issues. The central question used was: how did the NEI Government in exile establish and kept operational a medium-bomber squadron, despite the scarcity of personnel and the difficulties with the procurement of aircraft?

### Regrouping in Australia

Just before the capitulation of the allied forces in Java a small number of NEI Government authorities and staff officers of the KNIL including lieutenant governor-general of the NEI Dr. H. van Mook and generaal-majoor (GenMaj, major-general) L.H. van Oyen, the Air Officer Commanding of the dissolved allied Java Air Command and commander of the ML, were evacuated by transport aircraft to Australia. Early March already two ML staff officers, Maj (pilot-observer) R. Roos and Kap (pilot-observer) B.J. Fiedeldij had been posted at RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne as liaison officers.<sup>1</sup> Only a few days after his arrival in Australia Van Oyen, now working from a provisional "Dutch Headquarters" in Melbourne, on orders from Van Mook, started an inventory of the personnel and equipment of the KNIL available in Australia or en route to Australia with Dutch ships or by air.<sup>2</sup> Van Mook had appointed Van Oyen as *Commandant der Nederlands-Indische strijdkrachten in Australië* (Officer Commanding the Netherlands Indies forces in Australia). This temporary appointment was affirmed by the Dutch government in exile in London and on 13 March 1942 Van Oyen also became *Onderbevelhebber Strijdkrachten Oosten* (OBSO, deputy commander-in-chief Dutch and NEI forces in the East). Schout-bij-nacht (Sbn, rear-admiral) F.W. Coster became his deputy. The *Bevelhebber Strijdkrachten Oosten* (BSO, commander-in-chief Dutch and NEI forces

in the East) was vice-admiral C.E.L. Helfrich in Colombo, Ceylon, appointed as such by the Dutch government in London on 4 March 1942 already.<sup>3</sup>

With the evacuated staff officers of the KNIL (including a number of the ML) Van Oyen also planned the regrouping of the available personnel and equipment and the transfer to the Australian armed forces or, if not interested, the American armed forces in Australia of equipment no longer needed. Proposals were then sent to and instructions were asked from the BSO and the Dutch government. Part of the regrouping plans was the formation of a NAA B-25 “escadrille” at Archerfield by further strengthening of the ML Detachment of originally 43 men already based there.<sup>4</sup>

Around 13 March the Netherlands Purchasing Commission (NPC) in New York received a telegram from Van Oyen stating that he needed 18 B-25 aircraft for an escadrille to be formed in Australia. On 15 March Dr. Van Mook signalled the Dutch government in exile about the plans to transfer the evacuated NEI Flying Schools to the U.S.A. He added that with the personnel in Australia not needed in the U.S.A. a Dutch escadrille could be manned, to be equipped with 18 B-25 medium-bombers to be delivered in Australia during March and April which had in part already arrived. The latter shortly before had been a subject in a conference with representatives of the Australian government and Chiefs of Staff and lieutenant-general G.H. Brett, the Commanding General of the United States Army Forces in Australia (CG USAFIA). The approval for the plans to establish a B-25 escadrille from London came a few days later. Van Oyen then arranged for further conferences with Australian and American authorities.<sup>5</sup>

The first provisional (incomplete) inventory of the military ground personnel available in Australia after the capitulation of Java showed: 28 mechanics of the ML, 209 aircraft mechanics of the Marineluchtvaartdienst (MLD, Dutch naval air service), 100 other ground personnel (mainly of the Koninklijke Marine, KM, Royal Netherlands Navy) and 170 men of the KNIL ground forces. Van Oyen received authorisation by telegram from London to allocate approximately 125 men for the B-25 squadron and the remaining personnel, as far as was necessary, to a Consolidated Catalina squadron of the MLD (with nine

aircraft) that was also to be formed. The very first provisional establishment of the escadrille made up by Kap Fiedeldij showed: approximately 125 ground personnel (around 80 positions to be filled with MLD personnel to be seconded to the ML) and approximately 60 flying personnel, including 14 crews of four men each.<sup>6</sup>



B.J. Fiedeldij, pictured in 1943 as a LKol, was the project officer for the B-25 escadrille to be formed in Australia from around 13 March 1942 (collection author).

Around 20 March a conference was held between Dr. Van Mook, GenMaj Van Oyen, LtGen Brett and Air Chief-Marshal (ACM) Sir Charles S. Burnett (RAF but Chief of Staff RAAF) about the regrouping of the ML in Australia. Among others, it was agreed that the Dutch would fully man and equip a squadron of 18 B-25s that would be formed at Archerfield. The B-25 squadron again was a subject during a conference on 22 March between Van Oyen, LKol C. Giebel (ML/KNIL), major-general R.B. Lincoln (USAFIA, in charge of all support of the USAAF squadrons in Australia) and colonel E.S. Perrin (USAFIA, deputy of Lincoln at the time) about the disposition and destination of the Dutch aircraft destined for the NEI which were and would be unloaded in Australia or arrive there by air. It was mentioned that the Dutch in co-operation with the RAAF would look for another location for the squadron as Archerfield was too busy. General Van Oyen mentioned that already ten B-25s were in use at Archerfield. He expected that the final aircraft of the 18 needed would not become available before mid-April and thought that it would take at least

three months before this first Dutch B-25 squadron would be completely equipped. Van Oyen confirmed in a letter to Burnett that it was the intention of the Dutch government to put the squadron under RAAF operational command when ready.<sup>7</sup>

### The squadron established

No 18 Squadron N.E.I. was established at RAAF Station Canberra (Fairbairn airfield) on 4 April 1942 as a ML heavy-bomber squadron, initially without a RAAF personnel component. During its formation and training period the squadron stood under Dutch command.<sup>8</sup> GenMaj Van Oyen sent a draft organisation for the squadron to ACM Burnett on 31 March. Van Oyen sketched the proposed organizational set-up as nine aircraft in the 1<sup>st</sup> line with three aircraft as immediate reserve (all manned) and a further 2<sup>nd</sup> line reserve of another six aircraft of which two with crews, meaning 14 combat ready aircraft with 14 crews or 28 pilots, 14 wireless operator-air gunners and 14 air gunners. As the latter were not available Van Oyen asked the RAAF for 14 air gunners and to train Dutch personnel in this capacity to be able to replace the RAAF air gunners by Dutch personnel as soon as possible. As nearly all officer pilots also held the observer license (which included bombardier training) there would be no need for observers and bombardiers. According to Van Oyen the proposed organisation and the crew composition had proven themselves in combat. Van Oyen also advised to put Kap W.F. Boot, the CO of the ML Detachment Archerfield, in command of the squadron during the formation and training period. In terms of personnel strength the proposals specified 176 NEI and 239 RAAF personnel. Within the operational framework of the RAAF the squadron had to be largely self-supporting with its own cooks and mess personnel, maintenance personnel for an encampment, radio operators and radio mechanics for a radio station etc. as well as a Defence Flight. The former causing the relatively large number of RAAF personnel asked for.<sup>9</sup>

Burnett immediately made it clear that a unit organised in this way would not fit in the RAAF operational structure. This would be necessary as it had been agreed earlier that (after a training period) the squadron was to operate under the Dutch flag and as much as possible against targets in the occupied NEI from the Darwin area as part of a RAAF Area Command. The RAAF, consequently, did not agree and the proposals

were sent to the Australian Air Board with an elaborate comment and an advice to establish the organisation in an amended form. This advice was largely followed, the RAAF circulating the “provisional war establishment” as No HD-53 in late April.<sup>10</sup> The flying echelon of the squadron was to be composed of 18 1<sup>st</sup> line aircraft manned by 18 crews with another three crews in immediate reserve i.e. 42 pilots, 21 wireless operator-air gunners and 21 air gunners. The squadron was administratively established as consisting of 176 NEI personnel and 271 RAAF personnel in the first version of HD-53, which comprised two separate sub-organizations.<sup>11</sup> Fiedeldij had been able to arrange that all personnel costs for the RAAF personnel were to be paid by the RAAF.<sup>12</sup>

No 18 Squadron N.E.I. had already been established when the HD-53 version of the amended organization reached Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne early May. During April a total of approximately 180 NEI flying and ground personnel was posted to the squadron using the original Dutch draft organisation somewhat further refined by Kap Fiedeldij. Fiedeldij, by then, was posted at the provisional Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne to take care of the formation of the squadron, including the necessary coordination with the RAAF. Also Maj Roos was posted at this combined civilian-military provisional headquarters but remained liaison officer with the RAAF Hq as well.<sup>13</sup> An organizational set-up as No 18 Squadron or rather two No 18 Squadrons, one N.E.I. and one RAAF, had never existed before and the RAAF had to adept administratively to be able to support the unit. The main part of the N.E.I. organization consisted of the operational (flying) part but this was not a RAAF unit while the RAAF, for example, had to support the aircraft operations from an Aircraft Depot, Stores Depots etc.<sup>14</sup>

Van Oyen had no problem with an organization close to the establishment of the RAAF heavy-bomber squadrons but stressed that in that case the RAAF had to post the necessary additional flying and ground personnel. There was no more NEI personnel available. This was agreed upon in principle. Four Pilot Officers and six Sergeant pilots were posted first on 25 April. They were followed by a total of 35 wireless operator-air gunners (WOAGs) posted in the period of 27 April up to and including 3 June 1942 (21 WOAGs to fill the air gunner positions plus seven the RAAF -mistakenly- thought the ML was short of wireless operator-air gunners and seven extra for unknown reasons).<sup>15</sup>

A set-back had been the withdrawal by the KM of a promised total of around 80 ground personnel of the MLD to be seconded to the new ML unit as this personnel was needed in the United Kingdom. The MLD personnel was in part replaced by ML personnel that had been evacuated to Australia but unknown to Fiedeldij at the time of his provisional inventory. There were, for example, actually 50 ML mechanics evacuated to Australia instead of 28. KNIL Infantry and Marechaussee (special forces) soldiers and some civilians who had fled to Australia from among others New Guinea and the Kei Islands and were militarised made up the majority of the replacement personnel. Also, the first Dutchmen living in Australia who could be enlisted (those not working in strategic factories or organizations) were called up for service with the ML on 29 March. Some had already volunteered for duty earlier. A few maintenance specialists from the NEI KNILM airline company (evacuated to Sydney) were contracted and militarised or drafted on 1 April. All the Marechaussee personnel including six drivers were re-posted to their original unit in the first half of June on orders from the acting KNIL commander, however. Some of the Infantry men, posted in various positions, were transferred back to the ground forces as well. Fortunately, two experienced KNIL armament technicians remained although one of the two was eventually transferred to the KNIL ground forces in October-November 1942.<sup>16</sup>



The ML Lockheed Lodestar LT9-23 after its transfer to USAFIA. Most of the D.VI.A. personnel was transferred to No 18 Squadron N.E.I. after the sale of the remaining 11 D.VI.A. Lodestars (collection Gordon Birkett).

The additional RAAF flying personnel necessitated an enlargement of the original draft establishment and the posting of more RAAF personnel but, as mentioned above, the RAAF agreed rather quickly. The B-25 squadron was urgently needed in the Darwin area which was under threat from Japanese forces and it was considered a welcome addition to the RAAF Expansion Plan. To be posted originally was a total of 271 RAAF personnel of which 38 flying personnel. But this number did present the RAAF with some problems as the service had a general shortage of ground personnel at the time. The RAAF staff officers, consequently, urged the Dutch to search for more personnel. This plea resulted in the replacement of the men transferred back to the KNIL, the posting of some additional KNIL soldiers and the posting of 24 former Bangalore personnel (see below) in June.<sup>17</sup>

The ML would equip the unit with 18 B-25 aircraft and the necessary ground equipment and vehicles, the latter to be taken over from the RAAF (in cash purchases), to be taken from Dutch ships arriving in Australia from the U.S.A., or to be bought locally. Some vehicles already casted off to the American armed forces were requested back. The former resulted in a somewhat strange mix and a consequent spare parts problem when the squadron was operational in the Darwin area. A part of the vehicles initially received from Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne in the period of April-November 1942 were later exchanged for RAAF supplied ones and sent back to Canberra by train.<sup>18</sup>

#### The six original Mitchells<sup>19</sup>

In January 1942 the NEI received a U.S. Defence Aid allocation of 60 USAAF NAA B-25C-NAs of which only the first 30 were ferried to Australia (Archerfield, 24 aircraft) and British India (Bangalore, six aircraft of which one crashed en route) in February, March and April 1942. The first four aircraft arrived at Archerfield on 3, 4 and 5 March 1942, followed by 16 more in the period of 18 March up to and including 29 March of which one crashed on arrival on 25 March and was a write off. On 28 March the destination of the aircraft was switched to Amberley, although the ML ferry detachment that originally was to fly the aircraft to Java remained stationed at Archerfield. Deliveries to the NEI in the U.S.A. were stopped on approximately 1 April but those B-25Cs already accepted by the NPC were still ferried to Australia. On 2 April, 6 April and



7 April 1942 the final, respectively one, two and one Mitchells with destination ML arrived. Again, one crashed on arrival at Amberley on 6 April and was severely damaged. Training of ML personnel at Archerfield started (with assistance of the USAAF) on 6 March.



The five original B-25s of 18 Squadron N.E.I. in the squadron hangar at Canberra in May or June 1942 (J. Schellekens, deceased, via G.J. Casius).

Twelve of the aircraft at Archerfield were to go on loan to USAFIA to be able to partly equip the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group (3<sup>rd</sup> BG) which arrived in Australia without aircraft. This was agreed in principle by GenMaj Van Oyen and LtGen Brett on 23 March. An “understanding” about the transfer was finalized two days later and on approximately 28 March Van Oyen agreed to the transfer on loan of six more of his B-25Cs. The 17 aircraft that eventually went to the 3<sup>rd</sup> BG (the 18<sup>th</sup> aircraft to be transferred crashed on arrival at Amberley on 6 April) left Archerfield for the 3<sup>rd</sup> BG base Charters Towers on 29 March, 30 March and 3 April (15) or went directly from Amberley to Charters Towers (two).

The five B-25Cs remaining in NEI hands at Archerfield, all equipped with the (secret) D-7 Norden bombsight, formed the initial aircraft complement of 18 Squadron N.E.I. They arrived at Fairbairn, Canberra in the period of 1 April up to and including 21 April. The squadron received a sixth B-25C on approximately 16 June which aircraft was, in fact, an ML B-25C

transferred to but returned by the USAAF after major repairs in Brisbane. There were no further deliveries despite the agreement between Van Oyen and Brett that the next B-25s would go to the Dutch to complete the 18 for the NEI squadron. On 1 September 1942 all six B-25Cs were transferred to the USAAF in exchange for 18 new Mitchells delivered in a special project called Project Mark I after Dutch complaints at the diplomatic level. The training of 18 Squadron N.E.I. crews on the five and later six B-25Cs on hand started on 1 June 1942 by the three provisional Flights formed by the unit.

### The Bostons<sup>20</sup>

A total of 22 Douglas DB-7B Boston light bombers on their way to Java by ship for delivery to the MLD were unloaded in Australia instead. The DB-7Bs arrived there from 6 March 1942 onwards, upon which they were handed over to the allied authorities as refugee cargo. All DB-7Bs went to the RAAF and were destined to re-equip No 22 Squadron RAAF at Richmond as the Dutch MLD had no personnel to form a Boston squadron. On 4 April 1942, however, 18 Squadron N.E.I. was established in Canberra, a unit the RAAF wanted to become operational as soon as possible. On its establishment the squadron only had five B-25Cs but, as a temporary measure, it was given a total of fifteen (RAAF) DB-7Bs and (USAAF) Douglas A-20A Bostons.<sup>21</sup>

Already in the first half of May 1942 a plan began to take shape in the Allied Air Forces Headquarters, established in April as part of the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) Headquarters structure, not to supply 18 Squadron N.E.I. with the promised supplementary B-25Cs but to equip the unit with Douglas Bostons. This plan was discussed several times in May 1942 with representatives of Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne in the presence of Maj Fiedeldij, CO of 18 Squadron N.E.I. since 1 May, and with representatives of RAAF Headquarters. As early as the middle of May it was clear that the Dutch had objections to the plan, but the RAAF wanted to have the squadron operational as soon as possible and agreed. No 18 as well as 22 Squadron was to be equipped with DB-7Bs supplemented with American Douglas A-20As up to a strength of 18 aircraft each.



Assistant test pilot Vdg A. Hagers in Douglas A-20A No 31 (40-85) at Canberra in June 1942 (via Gerard Casius).

The Dutch liaison officer with the General Headquarters SWPA on 25 May officially filed a protest against the swop, but three days later the Allied Air Forces SWPA Headquarters, nevertheless, allocated 18 Bostons to the ML, while the five B-25Cs were re-assigned. The protest was effective to the extent that the swop became a temporary one and 18 Squadron N.E.I. would be supplied with B-25s as soon as possible after all. On 11 June 1942 the protest of the Dutch was elevated to the political level by means of a memo to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington. In the meantime, on 6 June, the first four Bostons had arrived at Canberra.

American ferry crews arrived in Canberra by transport plane on 13 June to take over the five B-25Cs and fly them to Brisbane. After consulting Dutch Hq in Melbourne, however, Fiedeldij refused to hand the aircraft over. As it was, a message had just been received on 13 June to the effect that the swop had been cancelled by the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq on instructions received from Washington. The Dutch had been

waiting for the formal confirmation that the additional B-25Cs would be delivered after all. That letter arrived on 14 June upon which Fiedeldij received a message on the same day that both the B-25s and, for the time being, the Bostons were to stay with the squadron. The latter pending the re-assignment of the aircraft already received. The Americans in Canberra stayed to wait for further instructions, which they received on 15 June. They were ordered to ferry three of the already delivered A-20As to Brisbane and left the following day.

As mentioned, 18 Squadron N.E.I. was to be re-equipped with 18 Bostons, fifteen of which were delivered in the first instance. The RAAF delivered eight DB-7B reserve aircraft of its 22 Squadron that had been in combat ready storage and the USAAF seven A-20As, all re-assembled in the Melbourne area or in Brisbane after shipment from the U.S.A. The delivery of the aircraft to 18 Squadron N.E.I. in Canberra was in the period of 6 June up to and including 13 June 1942. At 18 Squadron N.E.I. the aircraft of both sub-types were designated as A-20As.

After the first eight aircraft had arrived on 6 and 7 June the training began, starting with some of the most experienced ML pilots amongst whom Elt Th.G.J. van der Schroeff, the squadron test pilot. Together with mechanic Sgt W. Mourik Van der Schroeff made a test flight on 8 June (lasting 80 minutes) in order to get an idea of the exact characteristics and capabilities of the type, as no documentation was available. The RAAF had sent along one flying instructor in order to train a few experienced pilots and that was all there was. Nor were there any spare parts. Squadron training was to begin on 14 June, but on that day the plan to temporarily equip the squadron with Bostons was revoked. Five of the A-20As left already on 16 June (three), on 18 June (one) and on 17 or 19 June (one). Pilots of 22 Squadron were to have flown over a further four aircraft from Amberley, but when the pilots arrived in Brisbane on 14 June, this plan had been cancelled.<sup>22</sup>

Although all the Bostons that had already been delivered were to be transferred Dutch Hq still tried to keep a number of them in the strength temporarily for training purposes. The attempts failed, though. Ten aircraft remained at 18 Squadron N.E.I. for a short while, one of which was parked in the hangar as a maintenance reserve. The nine 1<sup>st</sup> line aircraft were divided over the three Flights, and each day one Flight was

to be operational or on stand-by with the B-25Cs, and two Flights were to practise with three A-20s each. In the end, the training on the DB-7B/A-20A began on 19 June with six aircraft. Due to bad weather, Canberra had to be closed in the course of the day and the airfield could not be used the following two days as well. The training was resumed on 22 June when again six Bostons were flown for general training. This day was also the last day of training on the type.

Apart from a number of test flights and initial training flights made by test pilot Van der Schroeff, assistant test pilot Vdg A. Hagers and the three Flight commanders, training on the Boston did take place on two days only. Nevertheless, almost all the experienced pilots made at least one flight on the type. On 23 June 1942 the ten "A-20s" were handed over to Flight Lieutenant R.E. Bell, the CO of 22 Squadron RAAF. The Boston was generally seen as a pleasant aircraft to fly but it had a relatively high fuel consumption rate and was a short-range light-bomber. Contrary to the B-25 it was not suitable for operations from northern Australia against targets in the occupied NEI and therefore not acceptable to the so-called NEI Commission for Australia and New Zealand that represented the NEI Government. Dutch Headquarters also noted that 18 Squadron N.E.I. was already fully manned-up as a B-25 medium-bomber squadron (or heavy-bomber squadron as the RAAF still called it).

### Organised from remnants

The RAAF had taken the initiative in the organizational field and advised Kap Fiedeldij to organise the squadron in the same way as the RAAF heavy-bomber squadrons disregarding the differences between the heavy-bomber types operated by RAAF squadrons and the NEI North American B-25C Mitchell medium-bombers. This would lead to a number of corrections to the establishment later. The NEI squadron was to be attached to a RAAF Area Command and to a large part the RAAF would become responsible for its support. This led to some discussion and compromises were worked out.

The NEI personnel was posted in a separate NEI establishment while the RAAF personnel was posted to a RAAF establishment with an Administrative CO of the RAAF. This was a rather inflexible structure with dedicated NEI and dedicated RAAF positions which was later discarded. The ground echelon was largely organised the RAAF way.

The flying echelon, as a compromise, became organised as five Flights of three aircraft and crews in 1<sup>st</sup> line with another three aircraft and crews in 1<sup>st</sup> line reserve as the ML personnel had been trained to operate in Flights of three aircraft. During the training period in Canberra temporarily six Flights would be sharing the serviceable airplanes. Each Flight would have its own party of ML mechanics for pre and post flight servicing and also ML armament personnel, although in June 1942 additional RAAF armament personnel had to be requested (see below). Due to a lack of aircraft and personnel only three Flights were actually formed, A, B and C Flight. Flight CO initially (but temporary) were Elt L.J. Janssen, Tlt B. Wetters and Tlt W.F.A. Winckel. Adj G. Barendrecht, Adj E. van Aken and SM Ch.H.J. van Reesch functioned as chief flight mechanic. Kap A.J. de Vries was deputy CO.<sup>23</sup>

On 4 April 1942 a total of 105 NEI personnel, five officers and 100 NCOs, Kpls and men, arrived at Canberra from Melbourne by train. The party consisted of flying personnel, technical personnel and a few administrative and general duties NCOs and men of the ML plus a first contingent of soldiers from the KNIL ground forces seconded to the ML. RAAF Station Canberra transferred one hangar (No 48) and a number of barracks. More personnel followed during the course of April.<sup>24</sup> The ground personnel posted in April included Elt Th.J. Hoogeveen (ex NPC and former KLM), the chief Maintenance Section (or Technical Service as the Dutch called it), and six contracted and militarised or drafted civilians posted at this section. The latter all came from the NEI KNILM airline company in Sydney and apart from aircraft mechanics included one engine specialist and one aircraft electrician.

The six posted as maintenance specialists were: Sgt (soon a SM) J. Lippens (engine specialist contracted by the ML on 1 April), Kpl (later Sgt) De Haas (initials unknown), Kpl (later Sgt) Soejoed, Kpl (later Sgt) Laurens (initials unknown), Sgt Tung Sing Bie (wireless mechanic, like Lippens a contracted former KNILM employee but earlier in his career a civilian ML radio mechanic at Andir) and Kpl (later Sgt) E. Mahne. Hoogeveen had been one of the two ML officers who accepted the first group of B-25s on behalf of the NPC and had earlier been seconded to NAA for a B-25 technical orientation. Also posted on 1 April was procurement and inventory specialist Olt Th. Buys who was taken over from the KNILM on a three-year contract by the ML as well. He was

posted in Melbourne with the just established combined civilian-military Dutch Headquarters. ML mechanics initially (temporarily) posted to the Maintenance Section were: SM J.A. Eijkelenboom and Sgts G. Weertman, C.C. van Tuijn, R.B. Baert, H. Bekema, J.F. Damwijk and H.M. Bauerman.<sup>25</sup>



Two ML members of the Maintenance Section before Douglas A-20A No 38 (40-143) in June 1942 at Canberra. Left Kpl E. Mahne (formerly KNILM) and on the right Sgt J.F. Damwijk (via Gerard Casius).

The ML personnel in part came from the Flying School and the disbanded D.VI.A. of which the Lockheed 18 Lodestars had been sold to the USAAF on 17 March. Ten mechanics originally to go to Archerfield had arrived by ship in Australia and were re-posted to Canberra. Apart from three of the pilots and two of the WOAGs to go to the RNMFS the personnel from the Archerfield detachment in Brisbane was posted to 18 Squadron N.E.I. They arrived at Fairbairn from 1 April. The first six men with the first of the five B-25s on strength with the detachment (the N5-134) landed on that date at Fairbairn to prepare for the “formation and location” of the new squadron. The detachment of eventually approximately 50 men became a part of 18 Squadron N.E.I. on 4 April. Three more B-25s arrived at Fairbairn in the period of 10-12 April. The main part of its remaining personnel consisting of three officers and 20 other ranks led by Elt Janssen arrived on 17 April from Brisbane by train. Kap Boot, the detachment CO, became the first CO of 18 Squadron

N.E.I. although he remained at Archerfield for a while to await the remaining 13 B-25s still to be delivered. As mentioned, the latter did not materialise and Boot and a few others arrived at Canberra with the last of the five B-25s on 21 April.<sup>26</sup>

Small groups of ML personnel kept arriving including on 28 April Kap Fiedeldij who took over as CO from Boot on 1 May 1942, becoming a Maj at the same time. He visited the squadron one week earlier already to make up an inventory of the problems that needed urgent solving. One of those urgent problems had been Kap Boot who was not accepted by the personnel of his detachment as CO and with good reasons as an inquiry by Maj M. van Haselen, the CO of the ML Flying School in Adelaide, revealed. Kap Boot, who practised a rather authoritarian style of leadership, was transferred to Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne and was attached to an equipment and supply office headed by LKol Prof. Dr. G.J. Otten, M.Sc. the former head of the Technical Service of the ML. On 20 June 1942 he became liaison officer at the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq in Melbourne.<sup>27</sup>

More KNIL (ground forces) personnel arrived as well, the total at the end April becoming approximately 80 of which around 65 Indonesian NCOs, Kpls and men.<sup>28</sup> The KNIL personnel was to be trained at the squadron apart from a number of drivers from the Marechaussee, a few Indonesian professional soldiers and a few older enlisted soldiers who had worked as mechanic or had held useful civilian trades before the mobilisation of the KNIL. Fiedeldij, in early May, received a message that eleven pilots, six WOAGs and six mechanics and a technical officer from the dissolved ML Detachment in Bangalore were transferred to the squadron.<sup>29</sup> A general mechanics shortage would still remain after the arrival of this personnel, though.

Only on 15 May did the final personnel of those posted in April arrive at the unit, including Kap (observer) R.E. Jessurun and S/Ldr Cl. Winter Irving, the Squadron Administrative Officer RAAF (administrative CO of the RAAF Component). Winter Irving was to take over command of the RAAF personnel from the CO of RAAF Station Canberra but his posting was withdrawn. He was replaced by F/Lt (per 1 July acting S/Ldr) L.R. Dawson on 25 May. Kap Jessurun initially was assigned to the squadron staff. On approximately 3 June he became the deputy CO of the



squadron instead of Kap De Vries, the former deputy of Boot at Archerfield, who became (senior) Flight CO.<sup>30</sup>



A 1943 picture of LKol Fiedeldij (right) and S/Ldr Dawson (NIMH).

The posting and arrival of RAAF personnel started on 25 April. Dawson was Administrative Officer until 1 September 1943 and had a full-time job as there were many problems in the administrative field including differences in discipline and working hours between the ML and the RAAF personnel. The latter was a tough problem to solve as the RAAF did initially not want to give Fiedeldij the authority to decide in these matters. Only on 22 November 1942 did Fiedeldij took over a number of responsibilities from, until then, the administrative superior of Dawson, the CO of RAAF Station Canberra.<sup>31</sup> Fiedeldij copied the RAAF position and introduced a ML Administrative Officer position on approximately 3 June 1942. The first one was Kap (observer) Jessurun, who also remained deputy CO and replaced Fiedeldij when the latter was absent. He became responsible for the upkeep of ML and KNIL rules and regulations and general military standards. The administrative office in the squadron staff he headed did also keep the personnel administration and made up the schedules for guard and other duties, periodic shooting exercises etc. Jessurun had been acting director of materials at the

Technical Service of the ML until his mobilisation in December 1941 and had a sizable number of subordinates in that position from day laborers and civilian employees to professional soldiers, all with different legal positions and payments much like the personnel complement of 18 Squadron N.E.I.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of May the squadron strength stood at approximately 270 RAAF personnel (including around 44 flying personnel) and 215 NEI personnel, the latter including two technical officers, 54 mechanics, six Technical Service specialists and 53 flying personnel including the CO and the deputy CO. The latter consisted of 31 pilots/pilot-observers, 18 WOAGs and four observers.<sup>33</sup> Although the Bangalore personnel (transferred on 30 April) had not yet arrived a total of 18 crews were formed to be able to start a unit training program early June. A shortage of 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots and WOAGs was covered by the already mentioned temporary posting of RAAF pilots and WOAGs in April, May and early June. USAAF and RAAF bomber operations had further shown that a separate navigator-bombardier was needed in the crews as the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot had to act as a defensive fire coordinator during combat. The squadron establishment was consequently expanded albeit initially by means of a temporary addition. Also an air gunner in the nose proved necessary as Intelligence reported in July that the Japanese fighter pilots practised head-on attacks. The .30 machinegun in the nose could not be fitted, though, due to the size of the AFEC-Norden sight combination.<sup>34</sup>

RAAF observers or navigator-bombardiers (NavBs) were not available at the time so it was decided that five bombardiers of the 17 additional observers and bombardiers needed for the 1<sup>st</sup> line crews were to be trained at the squadron itself. The ML spoke of bombardiers as students used to be licensed after the bombing training and completed their navigation training after posting at an operational Glenn Martin 139 bomber unit. All were eventually trained to a standard comparable with that of the RAAF NavBs. The others were to be provided by the Royal Netherlands Military Flying School established in May 1942 at Jackson (Miss.) in the U.S.A. An evacuated class of 11 ML student observers and bombardiers and one bombardier to be further trained as observer were to finish their training at the school.<sup>35</sup> As was learned later the first RNMFS B-25 trained personnel could be expected only in April 1943. A number of NavBs of the RAAF were consequently requested but due to

shortages none could be posted. To fill most of the remaining vacancies eventually seven RAAF WOAGs were cross-trained in November and December 1942 to bombardier, using a shortened version of the ML bombardier training course. The ML bombardier students selected in May were Sgts G.J. Gerritsen, Ch. Verbraak, E.M. de Rood, G. Dreese and J.A. Noordendorp. Apart from professional KNIL soldiers Gerritsen and Verbraak who escaped from Java to arrive by ship at Port Darwin on 4 April, all enlisted Dutchman who fled from NEI islands to Australia or were inhabitants of Australia and were called up at 18 Squadron N.E.I. All five were licensed as bombardier on 1 October 1942.<sup>36</sup>



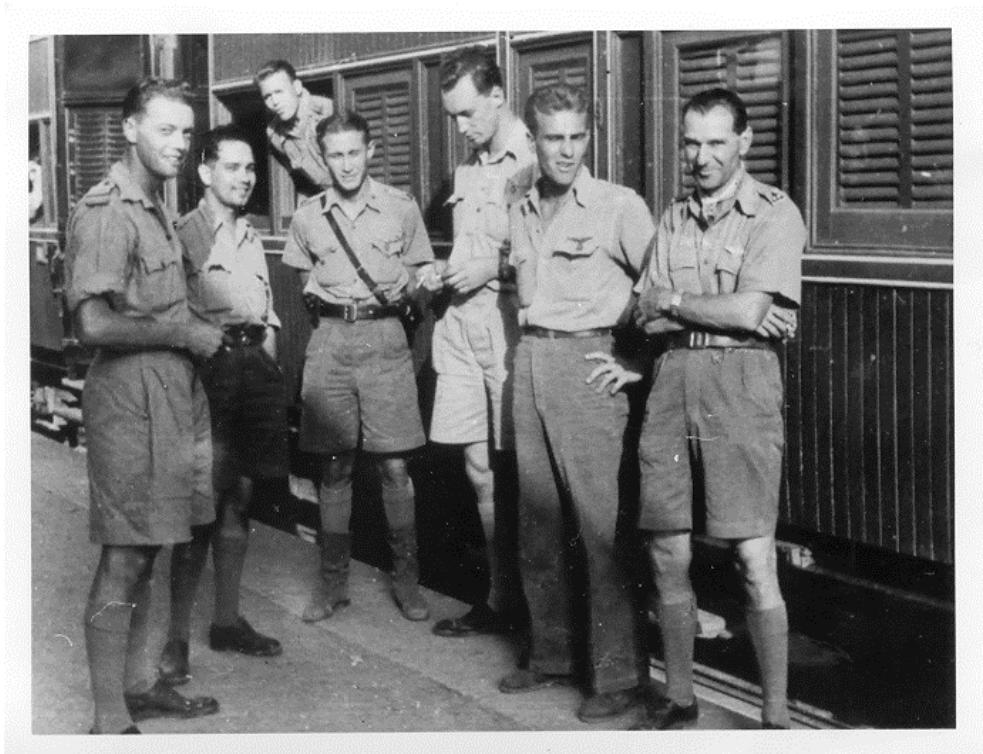
Kap (observer) R.E. Jessurun became deputy CO in May and (Squadron) Operations Officer in September 1942 (NIMH).

During May and early June replacements for transferred Marechaussee and KNIL personnel arrived from the KNIL in Melbourne. Four men of the KNILM ground personnel in Sydney were called into active service early June. This happened some two weeks after the sale of all remaining aircraft of the airline to the USAAF was administratively concluded on 19 May and after it was confirmed that the KNILM, despite earlier promises, would not receive American aircraft on order as replacements. In the same period also about a dozen Australians with a Dutch passport and inhabitants of NEI islands such as Celebes and Ambon who fled to Australia or came to Australia via Dutch New Guinea were drafted or volunteered for service and were taken on strength. The four KNILM men (all aircraft mechanics) and a few from the latter group with a technical schooling and background were initially all posted as (future) mechanic, specialist or reserve officer candidate (future technical officer) at the Maintenance Section. See Appendix 1 for details.

The mechanics were Sgts C.A.H. Keesmaat, J. Dijkstra, Lafontaine (initials unknown), S.R. Dijkstra and W. Bakker. Kpl (later Sld again due to a disciplinary measure) R.Z. Holleman, one of the posted older general service former KNIL soldiers, also became an aircraft mechanic. To the squadron staff went, among others, Sgt A.R. van Tricht, Sld A. Smilde, Sld I. Hmelnitsky (the former three later trained as, respectively, equipment, operations and intelligence officer), Sgt P.G.L. Hegener (radio technician, later a technical officer) and Sgt H.W. Versteeven (later a technical officer). All five were reserve officer candidates and were soon promoted to Sergeant, respectively Vaandrig (Ensign). See Appendix 1 for details.

Sixteen enlisted and professional former KNIL (ground forces) Kpls and Slds were taken into training as assistant armament technician or Armourer early June. After the first about six weeks of training only five of the trainees proved to have the right aptitude for further training as armament technician/gunsmith or Fitter-Armourer in the RAAF terminology. The training for this Sgt level position was completed on approximately 1 October 1942 by Kpls (later Sgts) Egberts, De Jong, Jansen, Proost (initials unknown) and W. Gazan. Five others remained Armourer (Kpl level). They were overviewed and directed by the Fitter-Armourers. Unfortunately, the six Indonesian Kpls and Slds in the group

of sixteen, all eager to learn but short in length and slender of appearance, proved to be not strong enough to handle the heavier types of bombs. They were all transferred to other positions in June 1942, some later becoming assistant engine mechanic. The CO asked the RAAF for six Armourers to replace them but they were still unavailable in October.<sup>37</sup>



A part of the ML Detachment Bangalore on their way from Karachi to Australia. From left to right pilots Sgt G. Tijmons, Elt H. van den Broek, Vdg F. Olsen, Tlt G. Cooke, Vdg N.J.H. Daanen and Vdg J.A. Kuneman and far right Olt W. Stolk, the technical officer of the detachment (collection author).

The Bangalore personnel (24 men) arrived on 3 June while the excess RAAF flying personnel having become redundant were withdrawn in the period of 29 June up to and including 2 July 1942. Left were 27 RAAF WOAGs (including two officers, the senior WOAG and one posted as Adjutant of the CO RAAF Component who flew as a WOAG nevertheless). The RAAF posted more WOAGs than the 18 the squadron had asked for as there would be a need for nine nose-gunners until the arrival of the RNMFS personnel. On 9 June the ML personnel strength had grown from approximately 215 at the end of May to 246, becoming 242 on 30 June. The RAAF strength dropped to 207 on 29 June. Total personnel strength ended up slightly above the original

establishment total of 447. The personnel establishment had been upped to 514, 263 NEI and 251 RAAF, by temporary additions, however.<sup>38</sup> After the arrival of the men from Bangalore the flying personnel were reassigned to the Flights. Flight CO became Kap De Vries, Elt Janssen and Elt H. van den Broek with as deputy Flight CO Tlts Wetters, Winckel and B. Hulscher. All still temporary postings as the number of Flights was to be expanded to six as soon as the remaining B-25s would be delivered, the deputies to become Flight CO.<sup>39</sup>

### Limited flying training

Apart from a limited number of test flights there was little flying activity until early June. The senior pilots not coming from the Detachment Archerfield were given basic instruction on the B-25 but the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots (including the RAAF pilots) were able to make only one flight as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot at best. This was largely due to the fact that during the larger part of May only two B-25s were serviceable. Mitchell N5-161 had a defective nosewheel assembly from its arrival at Canberra. Parts for repair had been ordered in the U.S.A. through the NPC. Two other aircraft had hydraulic problems.<sup>40</sup> Elt Hoogboom's Maintenance party did what it could but was still awaiting much of the promised equipment, had to work with hardly any spare parts and could only move to its own hangar (hangar 46) on 13 June. Fortunately, the most needed equipment was there from the start and the remainder largely arrived in the next 14 days. Jacks to test or repair the hydraulics of the undercarriage were sorely missed during the first months but arrived at the end of May.<sup>41</sup>

When the squadron was formed only a part of the ML flying personnel, those who had come from the Detachment Archerfield and were trained on the B-25 there, were "type current". The WOAGs and mechanics from the Depot Vliegtuigafdeeling, the crew members of an evacuated Glenn Martin 139 bomber and the mechanics evacuated with the Flying School, by ship and transport aircraft had followed an excellent all-round basic training, however. The WOAGs up to the civilian aviation radio operator standards instead of the appreciably lower military standards used by the RAAF and the USAAF and all had followed air gunner training on Glenn Martin bombers. The ML mechanics were all-round flight mechanics. Most had also followed air gunner training and many had flown on operations as air gunner. All quickly adapted to the B-25.

The most experienced ML crew members, who had followed B-25 training at Archerfield, were assigned in May to give a short type transition to the RAAF WOAGs. SM P. van Hoof, SM H.G.J.A. van Weezel and SM K. de Bruyn, who also instructed their above mentioned ML colleagues, did the wireless part, explaining and demonstrating the different radios in the B-25, as well as the lower turret operation. Chief mechanic Olt F. Nieuwpoort and senior mechanics Adj E. van Aken and Adj G. Barendrecht gave the upper turret ground training. P/O D.S. Cohen (born in London but with relatives in the Netherlands and some command of Dutch) assisted. After about a week of type conversion, all on the ground, operational (crew) training began in early June. The flight training was combined with further theory on and demonstration of aircraft equipment and B-25 systems.<sup>42</sup>

As there initially were only five B-25s of which one unserviceable for a longer period, the flying echelon was temporarily organised in three Flights, A, B and C Flight, as mentioned. The plan was to keep one B-25 as a maintenance reserve while each Flight would operate one B-25 for training from 1 June 1942 onwards. The serviceability did not allow that, though. Two aircraft were operated for training up to and including 4 June without a spare. Although there were only few type specific airframe and engine parts available, RAAF Stores Depots and Dutch Headquarters had supplied the unit with general items and tools and the serviceability rather quickly increased. Three aircraft were serviceable on 5, 6 and 7 June and four on 8 and 9 June, making possible realistic training combined with anti-submarine patrols.<sup>43</sup> Approximately on 16 June the American 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron in Brisbane delivered the sixth B-25, the N5-146, although without a Norden bombsight and with a non-operational lower gun turret. Apart from the turret it needed only a few small repairs and it was serviceable from 22 June. The aircraft received the new serial N5-127 on approximately 1 July 1942 while the other five aircraft were re-numbered N5-122 up to and including N5-126 at the same time.<sup>44</sup>

The Flight COs made up crew complements and the crews made a training flight in turn while the remainder of the flying personnel attended theory classes. There also was a “bombing teacher”, as it was called, a relatively simple bombing simulator supplied by the RAAF to which an improvised structure carrying one of the (far from simple) Norden D-7

bombsights was attached. Both the pilots with an observer license as well as the observers and later also the five bombardier trainees started bombing procedure training on the device and flew as bombardier on training flights and anti-submarine flights. Much time was also devoted to sports and drill. For the ML personnel there was a roll-call in the early morning and one in the early afternoon, while the personnel were off-duty every afternoon when there was no operational flying for RAAF Eastern Area Hq (see below). In the afternoon much was organised to keep the ML men busy.<sup>45</sup> A set-back was the recall early June by Dutch Headquarters of the Marechaussee personnel and a few men originally of the KNIL ground forces which robbed the squadron, among others, of six drivers. A bit of a nightmare as the RAAF had a shortage of drivers and could not help out.<sup>46</sup>



The Norden D-7 bombsight (above) fitted on the AFEC slightly to the left below it. The AFEC (seen from above at a slight angle) was mounted horizontally on the left side in the nose compartment of the B-25C. The D-7 consisted of a computing device, a gyroscope and a sighting telescope (commons.wikimedia.org IMG 6401).



## Operations for RAAF Eastern Area Command and Dutch Headquarters

On 5 June at the request of RAAF Eastern Area Hq anti-submarine missions started with two aircraft “available” on each day from sunrise to sunset. This could only be requested as the squadron during its training period fell under Dutch command of the OBSO who also was acting commander of the Netherlands Indies Forces in Australia. Sbn Coster had become OBSO as GenMaj Van Oyen had left for the U.S.A. on 8 April (see later). Normally the OBSO had to okay the request but in the night of 4 June he could not be reached and Fiedeldij decided on his behalf. The aircraft were readied in the night of 4 and 5 June, although they had to operate with non-operational machinegun armament as none of the guns had been test fired and the WOAGs had not yet been trained in the air gunner role as the necessary ammunition had only just been received.<sup>47</sup>

Fortunately, some of the pilots with an observer license were trained on the Norden D-7 bombsight by USAAF bombardiers when still with the Detachment Bangalore although none had actually dropped practise bombs. A few of the pilots and observers coming from Archerfield also received some basic instruction on the Norden sight from USAAF personnel. Others were instructed by the former in a tearing hurry at Canberra.<sup>48</sup> The squadron was asked to assist in the defence of Sydney harbour and the shipping lanes to and from it which were threatened by Japanese submarines. These early missions were combined with the training missions, crew composition per aircraft changing with every flight. The number of aircraft actually used also varied, three different aircraft were used on 5 June, two on 6 June, three on 7 June, four on 8 and 9 June, three on 10 and 11 June and two on 12 June.<sup>49</sup>

A success was the claimed destruction of a Japanese mini-submarine on 5 June near Sydney by a crew led by Tlt Winckel with 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Sgt C.J. Hiele, observer Elt J. van Loggem, WOAGs SM F.J.M. van Wylick and Sgt V.R. Weakley RAAF and Sgt mechanics J. van Oosten and J. Rienstra as flight mechanic/air gunner. The guns were cleaned and serviced and looked immaculate with the ammunition belts attached but firing them was strictly forbidden on the first day of operations. Turret operation and the tracking of targets could be trained, though. As mentioned, the nose gun could not be fitted.<sup>50</sup> The combination of

training with operational flights was practised daily during the period of 5 up to and including 12 June. One aircraft, N5-134 with 1<sup>st</sup> pilot Elt Janssen, had to make an emergency landing as it ran out of fuel after a (too) long sea search. Janssen had to put the aircraft down on a beach near Point Perpendicular (Jervis Bay). The B-25 remained undamaged although there had been obstacles on the beach.<sup>51</sup>

After 12 June the B-25s needed engine maintenance and had to be inspected due to engine problems and resulting emergency landings by 3<sup>rd</sup> BG Mitchells during May 1942. The NAA representative Jack Fox (formerly with the ML detachment Archerfield until taken over by the USAAF with the borrowed B-25s) had warned the squadron and had sent the necessary data. This led to fuel line and engine carburettor cleaning and a modification of the attachment to the fuel tanks of the fuel lines leading to the engines. The latter to enable the fitting in of a 4-inch long sieve to prevent small pieces of the fuel tank slushing compound (a rubber compound that was part of the inner covering of the fuel tanks) from entering the fuel line to the engine.<sup>52</sup>

Training flights had to be cancelled as aircraft were grounded while the inspections and modifications were going on. Two crews and the only two serviceable B-25 aircraft, nevertheless, were put on “operational stand-by” for convoy protection duty on 17 and 18 June on orders from the OBSO after a request from RAAF Eastern Area Hq. There was an alert on 18 June but the two B-25s could not take off as it had rained during the entire night making the airfield surface too soft. Flying was much hampered by bad weather with much rain causing the airfield to close down completely on 15, 19, 20 and 21 June. On many other days the airfield surface was too soft for nosewheel aircraft like the B-25. During the third week of June apart from a few radio training flights with groups of WOAGs no exercises could be flown. In the final week of June, the weather improved somewhat making bombing exercises with practise bombs possible at Evans Head (NSW, approximately 150 km south of Brisbane).<sup>53</sup>

A few bombardiers of the USAAF gave instruction on the Norden bombsight to the ML observers, student bombardiers and maintenance personnel of the ML and RAAF in the final week of June, also giving some flight training. The first flight was made by Elt Van den Broek with

2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Tlt A.J. de Wolf on 27 June with the N5-134. They flew a bombing exercise with 100 lbs practise bombs and 1Lt A. Clocksin USAAF as instructor. Trainees were Tlt (pilot-observer) J.A. Kuneman (who received some training on the Norden sight at Bangalore) and Elt (pilot-observer) A.F. Oudraad, the Squadron Armament Officer. The results were unsatisfactory and the practise bombs of 100 lbs declared unsuitable for use on the B-25. They were exchanged for 160 lbs practise bombs later.<sup>54</sup>

During June a total of 139.20 hours were flown despite the bad weather days and the fact that on average only two to three B-25s were serviceable, while the Bostons were used for a limited number of test and orientation flights and for training on just two days.<sup>55</sup> Six of the Bostons and four B-25s including the newly received N5-146 (although this serial was overpainted on the aircraft by the USAAF) were used for general crew training on 22 June, the final day on which Bostons were flown. The squadron also carried out a secret mission for Dutch Headquarters in June.

Aircraft N5-132 left on 26 June to fly “vital supplies” (mainly weapons and ammunition) to Townsville. These were to be dropped by parachute from a Consolidated LB-30 of the 435<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron USAAF (which was under operational control of RAAF North Eastern Area Command at the time) for a guerrilla force of the KNIL of over a 100 men still fighting in mid-Celebes. The crew consisted of 1<sup>st</sup> pilot Tlt J.C. Veenstra, 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot SM L.C. Reijns, observer Kap Jessurun, WOAG P/O D.S. Cohen RAAF and flight mechanic/air gunner Sgt H.W. Donk. The aircraft returned on 28 June. The mission had been cancelled, probably because there had been no radio communication with the KNIL unit after 11 June. Urgent messages sent from Australia remained unanswered, an actual location of the unit, consequently, being unknown. As was correctly guessed the KNIL unit had been on the move for advancing Japanese and had not been able to take along the transmitter. A NEFIS party had left Australia on 24 June with a small ship to gather intelligence in mid-Celebes but it also took along supplies (weapons, ammunition, cigarettes, food and money) for the guerrilla troops. The mission failed and the NEFIS personnel and the supplies fell into enemy hands. The radio messages of the intelligence party stopped after 11 July leaving no

other conclusion. The party did report the approximate position of the KNIL unit, though (see below).<sup>56</sup>



The N5-124 in the squadron hangar at Canberra in July 1942 (via G.J. Casius).

Training flights were made on 2 July with two aircraft and with three on 9 July. The three aircraft were scheduled for formation flying practise on the latter day but N5-124 (ex N5-136) had to return due to faulty instruments. The other two B-25s, N5-122 (ex N5-132) and N5-127 (ex N5-146), continued practise flying. As arranged for by Kap Boot in the previous month, aircraft N5-125 (ex N5-151) was flown to Essendon on 7 July for maintenance work on the Norden bombsight at the American depot repair squadron based there. It returned on the 11th. The Automatic Flight Equipment Control or AFEC (the classified autopilot system with a drift meter) had to be coupled to the bombsight to be able to keep the aircraft automatically on track during the bomb-run. Also a few instrument makers of the squadron went to Essendon to learn the tricks from the Americans. Aircraft N5-127 (with the bombsight of probably the N5-123, formerly N5-134, which was in inspection) went to Essendon as second on 10 July.<sup>57</sup>

AVM W.H. Anderson, Air Officer Commanding Eastern Area visited 18 Squadron N.E.I. on 7 July, expressing his appreciation for the efforts of the squadron. During July Fairbairn airfield was unsuitable for B-25

operations on 12 days as rain and snow caused a too muddy terrain surface. There further was a lack of serviceable aircraft due to spares shortages and necessary inspections after a second series of operations for Eastern Area Hq (see below). This left only a few days on which aerial gunnery and bombing practise flights could be made. From 10 July usually only one B-25 per day was in use for training. One of the B-25s (N5-122) had to go into inspection after a training flight on 13 July but training continued with another aircraft (N5-125) on the 15th. Later in July again some bombing practise flights with practise bombs to train the observers as well as shooting practise flights to train the WOAGs could be made at Evans Head. Also some gunnery practise at sea was flown from Moruya.<sup>58</sup>

The squadron flew a second secret mission on orders from Dutch Headquarters for the supply of the KNIL unit in mid-Celebes on 12 July. A radio message had been received from the NEFIS party with the approximate location of the unit and a new mission was immediately organised. Supplies were again transported to Townsville. The B-25 N5-122 with as crew 1<sup>st</sup> pilot Tlt B.J.Q. Grummels, 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Sgt J.A.M. Hoogveld, observer Kap Jessurun, WOAGs P/O Cohen RAAF and Sgt W.B. Maks and flight mechanics Sgt G.J. Wijnands and Sgt H.J. Quartel, returned on the next day. Reloaded in a LB-30 bomber of the 435<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron the supplies were dropped on 14 July some two km from the reported position of the KNIL unit and after a lengthy search. Kap (observer) Jessurun flew along in the Liberator to assist with the navigation. A success, it was thought, as the crew could see that the dropped packages were picked up by men on the ground who were waving. Unfortunately, as was discovered after the war, all supplies fell into Japanese hands. Maj Fiedeldij proceeded to Townsville by air transport to pick up Jessurun on 19 July and returned with him, several debriefings later, from Brisbane on 22 July.<sup>59</sup>

The operational flights for the RAAF (combined with training flights) were resumed on 21 July and were flown again daily but with two B-25s only. Initially used were aircraft N5-124 and N5-126 (ex N5-161) with the N5-127 as maintenance spare. On 26 July N5-124 made one final anti-submarine patrol. After this date the number of available B-25s dropped to one. In total 44 flights for submarine patrols were made during June and July plus two flights for convoy protection on 12 June. To prevent

tricky take offs at night from Fairbairn (an airfield without runway lighting often covered with a mist layer or haze) and to be able to be in the operating area from sunrise, the airstrip Moruya near the coast was used from 11 June. Three B-25s landed there for the first time on 10 June, stayed overnight and returned the next day. Aircraft N5-126 was damaged in an emergency landing during one of the flights to Moruya in the afternoon of 22 July. Elt Janssen belly landed at this operational base because of hydraulic problems. Moruya remained in use for firing practise above sea, for example on 23 and 24 July.<sup>60</sup>



The N5-126 shortly after its belly landing at Operational Base Moruya (J. Schellekens, deceased, via Gerard Casius).

During August on average one to two B-25s were available until on 22 August (one) and 23 August (five) the first new B-25s arrived. The squadron, up to and including July, had not been able to practise operational formation flying and only to a limited extent gunnery and bombing. Very little training could be done in August as well due to bad weather and necessary aircraft inspections, while the N5-126 was in repair at Moruya. It was flown to the Central Maintenance Unit (CMU) RAAF in Tocumwal on 10 August. Things improved somewhat when the N5-123 was ready after inspection, it flew again on 20 August. Apart from a few bombing practise flights some cross-country training flights

were made, the latter usually combined with the transport of squadron personnel to or from other airfields. A third secret mission started on 17 August when B-25 N5-124 the only serviceable aircraft at the time was sent to Brisbane. The plan was to load supplies and fly via Horn Island to central Dutch New Guinea to drop them. Pilots were Elt Van der Schroeff and Tlt Wetters, the other crew members are not known.<sup>61</sup>

A party led by the famous Dutch explorer, civil administrator and police superintendent (in Manokwari) J.P.K. van Eechoud, consisting largely of Veldpolitie (rural police) personnel and native men from his explorer group, had to evacuate the so-called Bernardkamp along the Idenburg river (presently called Taritatu river) in the dense jungle of central Dutch New Guinea. Japanese troops were approaching and had caused the desertion of a part of his personnel in July. The supply mission was cancelled and after a few days of waiting the B-25 crew was ordered back to Canberra. Van Eechoud and his party were picked up from the Idenburg river on 21 August by an American Catalina flying boat.<sup>62</sup>

Much had been learned from the operational flights for RAAF Eastern Area Hq which were led from the Operations Room of RAAF Station Canberra. An improvised Operations Room was later realised at the squadron when the necessary personnel had become available. It was eventually formalised in the establishment. During September one of the reserve officer candidates of the ML posted in May and early June 1943, Sgt Smilde, entered a training in operations at Hq Southern Area RAAF to help man it. Kap (observer) Jessurun was appointed (Squadron) Operations Officer in September. Newly posted F/Lt D.A. Fallon RAAF became his senior operations officer at the end of that month. The tasks of the Administrative Officer of the ML personnel complement were transferred to Elt (pilot-observer) Van den Broek who also became responsible for personnel care, the adapted position being called *Compagnie Commandant* (Company Commanding Officer). Van den Broek was one of the older officers and Flight CO.

Kap (pilot-observer) De Vries became deputy CO (again) instead of Jessurun and *Hoofd Vliegdiens* (Head of Flying) i.e. the officer responsible for all non-operational flying (training and transport) as well as the training standards of the operational flying personnel. His main responsibility for the coming months: running the B-25 operational

training. De Vries had held instructor-pilot positions with the ML earlier in his career and had organized a fighter Operational Training Unit (OTU) in December 1941 after a period as CO of the *Glenn Martin Opleiding* (Glenn Martin Training unit, responsible for the Glenn Martin 139 transition training courses for pilots). He also was a fully trained navigator-bombardier and air gunner. De Vries was succeeded as Flight CO by Elt G. Cooke.<sup>63</sup>



Elt H. van den Broek at Canberra approximately October 1942. Van den Broek was quite a modern personnel manager who, for example, regularly visited all sections and Flights to check on the working conditions (NIMH).

The *Compagnie* was named after an administrative staff office which had existed at Andir airbase, the main ML airbase in the NEI, under the title *Luchtvaartcompagnie* (Aviation Company). The *Compagnie* remained responsible for the upkeep of the relevant KNIL and ML regulations and general military standards, scheduling individual squadron members for duty, periodic shooting exercises etc. but next to the personnel administration it also was responsible for the care of the ML personnel. This included organising activities to keep the men busy and acquiring everything necessary for this. The duties were much like those of the Administration Office (Orderly Room) of the RAAF Component and in part comparable with those of a present time Personnel Office. Van den Broek had some experience as he had replaced the CO of the



*Luchtvaartcompagnie* at Andir during an illness of the latter for a number of months.<sup>64</sup>

### Moral problems

The NEI personnel complement was very heterogenous with groups of personnel from different backgrounds with different pay scales and legal status and so on. This, among others, led to different pay for doing the same job. Many of the married personnel had been temporarily in Australia and became stranded with their family still in Java. All were understandably very worried about their fate. They looked upon colleagues who had been officially posted in Australia, personnel of the D.VI.A. and the staff and instructors of the Flying School, and had been able to take along their family, with strong jealousy. There also was very little to do as only limited flying training could be done with five and later six B-25s on strength. All of this seriously affected the general morale.<sup>65</sup> The squadron staff did their very best to solve problems about pay scales and legal status and started all kind of activities to keep the ML personnel busy. However, many thought of themselves as deserted in a strange country and some preferred poker playing and drinking or showed improper behaviour which needed disciplinary action. The latter came often late and was sometimes absent.<sup>66</sup>

Maj Fiedeldij and later also Kap De Vries tackled the organizational, equipment and supply problems while Kap Jessurun and later Elt Van den Broek tried very hard to solve the various administrative and personnel problems. It resulted in some friction with the new KNIL Hq in Melbourne where the staff officers (none with an ML background) temporarily led by Infantry officer LKol N.L.W. van Straten, proved to be rather inflexible and seemingly unwilling to co-operate. It all took quite some time. Nevertheless, many issues were solved and the soccer and hockey teams organised, English language classes etc. did much good to the morale. There was even a choir formed.<sup>67</sup>

Fiedeldij and De Vries were successful in the end although they were busy almost full time for months in trying to get the squadron properly equipped and on a more operational footing. This had a nasty disadvantage. They were often away from the squadron for conferences and meetings with NEI, allied and RAAF staff officers in Melbourne and Brisbane which led to criticism from the personnel. Elt Hoogeveen, the

chief Maintenance Section, and from September 1942 Elt F. Besançon, M.Sc., the Squadron Engineering Officer, assisted Fiedeldij, with some success, in solving the technical, maintenance and (technical) supply problems. The general moral of the ML personnel improved markedly from late August-early September after the arrival of the first new B-25s. This brought a sudden jump in work load for everybody. Working relations between the ML and the RAAF personnel benefitting greatly as well. Also, the first preparations for the operational deployment in the North started in September, which provided a clear and visible goal.<sup>68</sup>



The 18 Squadron Choir travelled to Sydney on 26 September 1942 in five B-25s for a radio broadcast of a concert programme. The choir posing with their elderly bus driver in Sydney. After their return on the 28<sup>th</sup> they gave a recital on 3 October for the Governor-General of Australia at his residence in Canberra (via Ingrid Schodel).

### Spare parts problems

The B-25 serviceability was a huge problem as the RAAF was unable to supply type specific B-25C airframe and Wright R2600-13 engine parts. The squadron initially only possessed very limited amounts of these parts taken along by the personnel of the former ML Detachment at Archerfield. Remnants from the small initial spare package that had arrived with the first ferried B-25s and spares salvaged from the original N5-131 (41-12481) which crashed on arrival at Archerfield on 25 March (see Appendix 2). USAFIA, further, initially refused to authorise supply of B-25 and R2600 engine parts from USAAF depots. The USAAF units in Australia also had to live with great shortages and, contrary to 18 Squadron N.E.I., were already operational. Parts ordered timely by the

NPC with North American Aviation were still undelivered by August and, to a large part, would remain so.<sup>69</sup>

Many parts that normally would be replaced had to be repaired with much improvisation but this took a lot of time and effort. Especially the technical specialists of the ML and RAAF and the ML mechanics working at the Maintenance Section were hard pressed as they were for the most part experienced men while the majority of the RAAF ground personnel had no experience at all. Many arrived straight from a RAAF engineering or other training school.<sup>70</sup>

Kap Boot and three ML technical and supply officers posted in Melbourne, Tlt P.E. Westerveld and Vdg J. Blickman formerly of the Technical Service ML at Andir, Java and Olt Th. Buys, formerly KNILM, were posted at the so-called KNIL Detachment Melbourne but worked almost exclusively for 18 Squadron N.E.I. The Melbourne detachment was an administrative unit led by Kap J. Verwijs, M.Sc. of the ML (the former Adjutant of Maj Van Haselen, the CO of the ML Flying School) that offered services to all KNIL personnel working in the Melbourne area such as field post, medical services and quarter master services.<sup>71</sup>

Kap Boot quickly developed rather good contacts with the USAAF officers of the depot repair and depot supply squadrons and was able to check via his contacts whether a certain part was available at a depot squadron or not. But in May 1942 type specific parts for the B-25 and its engines were very scarce. The officers did what they could, receiving orders for parts and also tools from Elt Hoogeveen at Fairbairn. They scouted for Australian civilian firms which could be contracted for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> echelon aircraft and engine maintenance or could deliver engine spare parts but in vain. General items could be bought from Australian companies but no B-25C and R2600-13 type specific items. Especially the latter were a major problem. Apart from limited amounts with the USAAF depots there were no spare engines and no parts for the engines of the B-25s available in Australia. Fortunately, in early June, things improved quite a bit.<sup>72</sup>

The Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq, under pressure from the RAAF, agreed to authorise 18 Squadron N.E.I. to order parts from USAAF depots in Australia, although, as the squadron was a non-operational unit, it did not get any priority in the spares supply chain. The orders also had to be

processed via the RAAF organization which took some extra time. The allocation of USAAF depots for the delivery of spares was one of the results of conferences Maj Roos had with RAAF staff officers in May about the maintenance of the B-25 and its engines. It was agreed that the B-25 maintenance would be done according to the ML regulations with 100 hours scheduled maintenance and part of the repairs lasting over 48 hours done at the squadron instead of a Repair and Service Unit or Depot. Engine major repair and overhaul was to be done by the RAAF, as was major airframe repair. Boot, Westerveld, Blickman and Buys were immediately put to work.<sup>73</sup>



Hq office of the Depot Supply Section of the 81<sup>st</sup> Air Depot Group in Brisbane (via Gordon Birkett and Jaap Horsthuis).

The supplying unit for airframe parts was the 4<sup>th</sup> Depot Supply Squadron of the American 4<sup>th</sup> Air Depot Group (4<sup>th</sup> ADG) in West Footscray (Vic.) in the Melbourne area. This Depot Group first established a “branch supply depot” in Brisbane and on 2 October was transferred to Townsville when the so-called Depot No 2 of the U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> Air Service Command was established of which it became a part. During July the delivery of engine parts and spare R2600-13 Cyclone engines became the responsibility of the Depot Supply Section of the 81<sup>st</sup> Air Depot Group in Brisbane. Engine major repair and overhaul was to be done by No 5 Aircraft Depot (5 AD) RAAF at RAAF Station Forest Hill (Waga Waga) from 25 August onwards. The CMU RAAF at Tocumwal initially was the assigned unit for airframe major repairs as 5 AD was unable to cope with additional workload at the time. It took a while before the mentioned RAAF units

could actually do the assigned work as they had to order spare part stocks first while the personnel had no R2600 or B-25 experience.<sup>74</sup>

During the first half of June only few spares were received but in the second half of June the supply with type specific spares generally improved, as did that of the general items ordered from RAAF Stores Depots. With the supply system in a working state the situation allowed the transfer of most of the ML personnel in Melbourne. LKol Otten was transferred to the RNMFS in June, Boot that same month to the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq as mentioned. Westerveld and Blickman also went to the RNMFS and left Australia on 20 July. They left behind Olt Buys as procurement officer in Melbourne. Buys moved to Brisbane early October 1942 to stay close to the most important depots and headquarters.<sup>75</sup>

To realise acceptable results from the arrangement with Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq and the RAAF Hq took a while as the American depot squadrons initially had very few parts to supply and in case of larger orders also because of the lack of any priority with 18 Squadron N.E.I. The first small quantities of spares ordered arrived in the first half of June but larger orders from the second half of June and July did only arrive at the squadron in the second half of August and during September 1942, often in reduced numbers. However, by agreement with RAAF Hq and per 1 September 18 Squadron N.E.I. was to be treated as a USAAF unit as far as the supply of type specific B-25 parts and R2600-13 engine parts was concerned. This meant that orders could be placed directly with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 81<sup>st</sup> Air Depot Groups instead of via the RAAF, which speeded up deliveries somewhat.<sup>76</sup>

Olt Buys saved time as much as he could in his own way, carefully developing his contacts with American supply officers, “begging and bribing” for early delivery as was told at the squadron. He also developed a zero-time administrative system always having all the necessary requisition paperwork with all the necessary signatures at hand. When he located some parts be it in Townsville, Mascot or Brisbane, a B-25 was immediately dispatched to pick them up. As a back-up, some parts were also ordered through the NPC with North American, Wright and Bendix in the U.S.A. Although these would certainly end up with U.S. Depot Squadrons in Australia it was tried to earmark the parts for delivery to the NEI. In Brisbane Buys ran a small office that was a part of

the KNIL Hq in Melbourne but Elt Besançon could order the parts needed directly with him.<sup>77</sup>

By early September ordered spares still generally arrived at the squadron in small quantities despite the numbers ordered but gradually more arrived. Early October 18 Squadron N.E.I. still had not received any priority for delivery of spare parts and aircraft equipment items. It was also confirmed that Norden bombsights for the 18 new aircraft were definitely not available.<sup>78</sup> This attitude of the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq changed abruptly when the squadron started the actual preparations for the move North in November. By the end of November 1942, the 1<sup>st</sup> line stores were at the required level. There also came confirmation that the Estoppey bombsights would be exchanged for modern Sperry bombsights as soon as these would become available. In December the squadron already received the necessary technical documentation including that for the modification of the bombardier station in the B-25.<sup>79</sup>

### Aircraft availability problems

#### The N5-123

Early July 1942 Mitchell N5-123 went into inspection but it was destined to be out of service for a longer period of time because of a damaged cylinder (due to a broken oil scraper ring) found in its left engine. The 81<sup>st</sup> Air Depot Group in Brisbane, could not assist with repairs but did deliver five spare engines in the second half of July, although these lacked Eclips P-1 generators which arrived in Canberra some weeks later. The technical and supply officers in Melbourne had searched for a company that could repair the R2600-13 cylinder and eventually contracted Australian National Airways (ANA) at Mascot, Sydney. The engine was sent to ANA around 18 July but the company reported it needed some specific parts which were ordered by 18 Squadron N.E.I. on 21 July. Mid-August these parts were still undelivered despite assistance from Dutch Headquarters upon which ANA reported that it was unable to repair the engine and ended the agreement. Maj Fiedeldij talked over this unacceptable situation with RAAF staff officers during a meeting at Eastern Area Hq mid-August. This led to the agreement that the R2600 engines could be repaired by 5 AD at Waga Waga. ANA sent the engine to this Depot on 25 August, while at the same date two other engines were sent to 5 AD from Canberra. The N5-123 by then already flew

again as it had received one of the spare engines from 81<sup>st</sup> ADG. It made its first flight on 20 August 1942.<sup>80</sup>

### The N5-122

The fuel line clogging problem that had surfaced in May became more acute in July. The sieves placed in the fuel lines from tank to engine at the tank side were regularly checked and did, by July, in the majority of the 18 Squadron N.E.I. aircraft, indeed show small pieces of the slushing compound. As this layer disintegrated, it was feared, the self-sealing layer beneath it could be compromised. During July the N5-122 had been flown every day from 9 July up to and including 13 July, the aircraft then going to the Maintenance Section for inspection. Its fuel tanks were taken out for a check as this aircraft showed a more than average contamination on the fuel line sieves. The inspection confirmed that the tanks needed a new slushing compound layer. Repair was to be done by the Goodyear Rubber Company in Sydney. The company could get no priority from the Australian Department of Munitions when it ordered the “strategic goods” (synthetic rubber) needed for the repairs, however. As there were no spare fuel tanks available in Australia this resulted in the N5-122 becoming a “hangar queen” mid-July 1942.<sup>81</sup>



The N5-126 is put on its feet again. From left to right Sgts Schellekens, Lubach and SM Bögels (J. Schellekens, deceased, via G.J. Casius).

## The N5-126

Kap Boot in June 1942 arranged that original aircraft N5-129 (41-12476) which crashed at Amberley on 6 April, was left to the Dutch as it was considered a write off after all (see Appendix 2). It was salvaged for parts by the American 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron. This B-25 crashed on arrival at Amberley due to a landing gear collapse and was severely damaged, although it was initially considered reparable and to go to the USAAF. Parts from its nosewheel assembly were used to repair the N5-161, unserviceable since April, which became N5-126. It flew again on approximately 19 July. Unfortunately, this aircraft crash landed on 22 July at Moruya operational base due to a defective hydraulic system. After temporary repairs the Mitchell was flown to the CMU at Tocumwal on 10 August with gear and flaps down and fixed.<sup>82</sup> The aircraft would not return and was transferred to the USAAF on 1 September 1942 while at the CMU. Hardly any work had been done on that date as the CMU was awaiting ordered parts necessary for the repairs.<sup>83</sup>

With only six aircraft on strength the above weighted heavily on the serviceability rate. During August only few training flights could be made. Apart from bad weather largely because of the number of aircraft that were in inspection or repair. Fortunately, on 22 August, the first of the 18 promised new B-25 aircraft arrived and, on 23 August and during the first half of September, the accompanying initial spare package came in.<sup>84</sup> But also the new aircraft had to be modified with new better sieves because of the slushing compound problem and were delivered in a very sloppy way including missing equipment items in a number of aircraft. One of the new aircraft had an engine that had a very high oil consumption and which lost oil during flight. This engine went to 5 AD for repairs in the first half of September and had to be replaced.<sup>85</sup> From late-September 1942 aircraft availability problems largely, but unfortunately temporarily, were a thing of the past.

## Staff support

Maj Fiedeldij had to tackle several very complicated problems and situations at the same time and from June-July with very little support from the new KNIL Hq established in June 1942 in Melbourne. The Headquarters was focused on the ongoing ground operations by KNIL units in Timor, Celebes and other parts of the NEI. GenMaj Van Oyen



had left Australia on 8 April 1942 by MLD plane and was in the U.S.A. initially as the chairman of a commission to realise a combined ML/MLD Flying School, at a USAAF airfield with USAAF aircraft and ground personnel and with crew member training in part at USAAF schools. A complicated affair that had to be arranged in a very short period of time. In the commission were also Maj Van Haselen (former CO of the evacuated ML Flying and Observer School in Adelaide) and his MLD counterpart hoofdofficier vlieger 2e klas (commander) H.L.A. van der Kroeff. Both had left Java for Australia on 1 February 1942 to arrange the transfer of the ML and MLD Flying Schools to Australia. Elt (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot-air gunner) H. Creutzberg, LL.M., Van Oyen's Adjutant, came along on 8 April as well.<sup>86</sup>

Van Oyen took up the position of acting CO per 8 May and became the formal CO of the RNMFS about a week later with effect from 8 May. His direct military superior became the Dutch minister of the Navy in London, admiral J.Th. Fürstner, as decided by the Dutch cabinet in exile. However, also minister of the Colonies (from 25 May 1942) Dr. Van Mook remained the administrative superior of van Oyen as far as the KNIL personnel was concerned. The military hierarchical line only concerned operational issues. This sounds more complicated than it actually was. Van Oyen, in effect, was fully in charge of the ML training, while Fürstner gave him guidelines concerning the training of the MLD personnel as he also was the commanding flag officer of the KM. The planned output of the school was a Dutch cabinet matter. The BSO, vice-admiral Helfrich in Colombo, also operated directly under Fürstner but had no jurisdiction in the U.S.A.<sup>87</sup>

Van Mook and Van Oyen thought they could better try directly via the authorities in the U.S.A. and the allied supreme command structure in the U.S.A., the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Van Oyen, on instructions from Van Mook, stayed in the U.S.A. after completing his work as chairman of the flying school commission therefore. The RNMFS, thanks to the elaborate cooperation of the USAAF, was operational in June 1942.<sup>88</sup>



GenMaj Van Oyen in his RNMFS office early 1943 (authors collection).

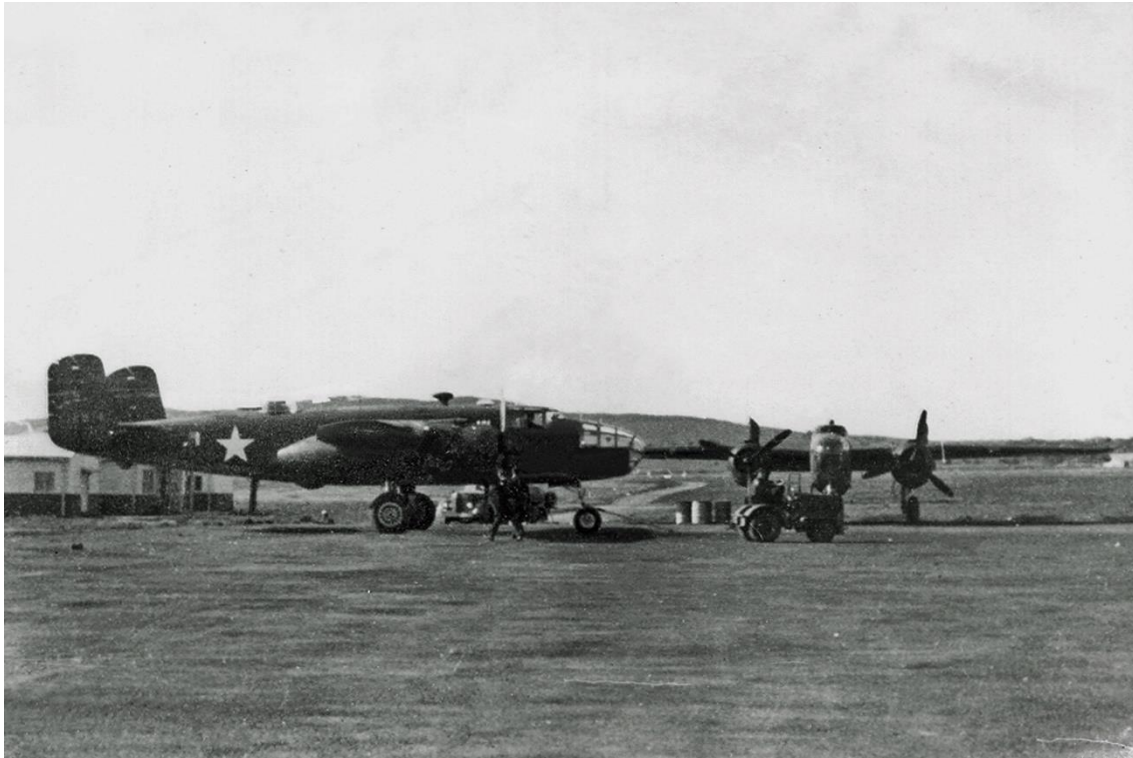
The RNMFS had most of the remaining ML personnel in its strength (initially 366 men including 316 students) and both Van Mook and Van Oyen were very eager to prevent the KM from claiming the CO RNMFS position and ML personnel trained at the RNMFS for MLD squadrons as it had done in the United Kingdom with Dutch Army Aviation personnel that had escaped the German occupation. During April-May 1942 it became clear that remaining issues about the status of 18 Squadron N.E.I. and the delivery of B-25s as well as the rebuilding of a small army air force in Australia with personnel trained in the U.S.A. could not be solved in Australia. The former due to the attitude of Brett, backed by general Douglas MacArthur, the commander-in-chief of the allied forces SWPA. Brett did not stick to his promise to Van Oyen and the 13 additional B-25s for 18 Squadron N.E.I. went to the USAAF in Australia.

With instructions from Van Mook who had arranged for support by the Dutch ambassador in Washington Dr. A. Loudon and his KNIL military attaché also head of the Netherlands Military Mission in the U.S.A. Kol F.G.L. Weyerman, meetings were held with U.S. War Office officials from among others the Air Planning staff, Joint Operations Committee and the Operations Division in the period of June up to and including August 1942. First, on 11 June, a memo was sent to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCOS) about the non-delivery of the promised B-25s for 18 Squadron N.E.I. in exchange for the aircraft borrowed by USAFIA. The ML plans and problems (the lack of ground personnel and the need for aircraft) were subsequently discussed in a CCOS meeting in September 1942. The Dutch representatives with the CCOS were Sbn C.W. Stöve of the KM and GenMaj A.H.Q. Dijkhoorn of the Koninklijke Landmacht (Royal Netherlands Army), both of whom were in regular contact with Van Oyen.<sup>89</sup>

The issue of the B-25s for 18 Squadron N.E.I. was quickly solved, the resulting project including eight attrition replacements to be (factory) delivered in January 1943 and spare parts supply. Van Oyen had also given instructions to the OBSO about the matter and had urged Sbn Coster to keep insisting on the delivery of the remaining B-25s to replace the aircraft borrowed by Brett with the General Headquarters SWPA. The OBSO reported on 15 June to Van Oyen that nine more B-25s were to arrive from the U.S.A. in June and four more in July and that he hoped that the squadron would be operational in August.<sup>90</sup> In correspondence between general MacArthur and Coster about the 13 B-25s MacArthur proved sympathetic and obviously saw the NEI requests as reasonable. After contacts between the American War Office and MacArthur the chief of staff of the latter on 14 June wrote a letter to Dutch Hq to inform that 18 B-25s were to be delivered and that re-equipment of 18 Squadron should start in July 1942.<sup>91</sup>

The proposed strength of the future ML was, in principle, not a problem either and in August even general H.J. Arnold, the CG USAAF, let know that he had no problems with American or Australian ground personnel working with NEI squadrons. CCOS concluded on 4 September that further deliberations between the U.S.A., NEI and Australia were necessary on this issue. However, CCOS would not okay the number of squadrons proposed and would not discuss the delivery of additional

aircraft before the issue of the ground personnel was settled. For decisions on that issue the future force structure and output of the RNMFS had to be more precisely planned.<sup>92</sup>



Two of the first six new Project Mark I B-25Cs and Ds shortly after arrival at Canberra on 23 August 1942 (via G.J. Casius).

The needed output to be planned and trained for was definitely presented to Van Oyen at the RNMFS during a visit and inspection by admiral Fürstner who arrived with decisions and guidelines on behalf of the Dutch cabinet on 28 September 1942. These, by now, had been carefully prepared after inputs from Van Oyen and Dr. Van Mook to safeguard the interests of the ML. Part of the RNMFS output planning became a second ML B-25 squadron of 18 aircraft and 27 crews, reserve personnel for 12 months for 18 Squadron N.E.I. and reserve personnel for nine months for the new squadron to be formed in Australia. Also 54 new B-25 bombers could be ordered, the order to be sent by the CO RNMFS to the CCOS first for approval.<sup>93</sup>

Already in April Sbn Coster in Melbourne received a telegram from Van Oyen with a base-line for negotiations with the RAAF about a future ML strength of three squadrons and a Repair and Service Unit (RSU). The OBSO reported on 29 April 1942 that negotiations with the RAAF had been taken place but that he had not received a definite advice

concerning the numbers of RAAF personnel required. Only on 15 February 1943 the Commonwealth Government of Australia approved provision for approximately 700 RAAF ground staff for two NEI squadrons on the condition that the RAAF personnel in 18 Squadron would be replaced by Dutch nationals. In June 1943 the approved total had become 740, the RAAF counting on a second B-25 squadron, one fighter squadron and an RSU.<sup>94</sup>

Van Mook and Van Oyen had been largely right, the U.S. War Department and the CCOS were the correct starting points for discussions and decisions about the future ML in Australia and its aircraft equipment. Ideas about the CO RNMFS position and the destination of the ML students had indeed circulated within the KM, as Stöve later confided to Van Oyen, but apart from making a good start solving things in the U.S.A. Van Oyen also created a problem in Australia. He delegated his authority concerning KNIL affairs to Sbn Coster who became OBSO, a calculated risk but the necessary staff personnel for a useful presence in the U.S.A. as well as in Australia simply was not available. The few older KNIL (ground forces) staff officers were all needed as liaison officer with allied staffs in Australia. Infantry officer Kap H.J. de Vries was attached to Coster for KNIL affairs but had a dual position as he also was liaison officer with Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq until Boot took over on 20 June 1942. One of the KNIL officers, Kap (later Maj) S.H. Spoor, apart from a liaison position, became the deputy head of the interservice Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS). Melbourne was left without any ML staff personnel.<sup>95</sup>

The ML staff officers available in Australia had been gradually transferred to the U.S.A. Already in the period of April-May LKOl (pilot-observer) C. Giebel, Maj (pilot-observer) Roos and Res Major F.H. Copes van Hasselt, LL.M. left Australia. Giebel was initially posted at the Dutch Embassy in Washington and in June 1942 transferred to the RNMFS as Chief of Staff. Roos and Copes van Hasselt arrived at the RNMFS in June. Roos moved to the Embassy as NEI CCOS representative and RNMFS liaison officer with the Netherlands Military Mission on 1 November 1942. Copes van Hasselt became Hoofd Personele Zaken (Head of Personnel Affairs) of the RNMFS. LKOl Otten was transferred to the RNMFS in June where he arrived in the next month. Especially in the period of May-October 1942 Van Oyen, Otten,



LKol C. Giebel when chief of staff at the RNMFS in 1942 (NIMH).

Giebel, Roos and Copes van Hasselt were very busy with the future ML to be formed in Australia, its equipment and its personnel complement. Sbn Coster in Melbourne was informed globally about the results of these efforts.<sup>96</sup> In Australia, apart from a few men with the Melbourne Detachment of the KNIL and liaison officer Kap Boot at the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq, from late July all ML personnel were either posted with the squadron in Canberra or in the U.S.A.

Van Oyen, in April 1942, trusted that Fiedeldij could arrange things as necessary with the RAAF either directly as CO of 18 Squadron N.E.I. or via the OBSO. Access of Fiedeldij to the RAAF staff officers suddenly became more difficult in June, however. LKol Van Straten, CO of the KNIL troops fighting in Timor, arrived in Australia late May 1942 and

instead of returning to Timor was appointed acting *Commandant der Nederlands-Indische strijdkrachten* (Commander of the Netherlands-Indies forces) on 23 June 1942 by Coster. His position was later called *waarnemend Legercommandant Australië* (LCA, acting Army Commander Australia). This appointment was a result of a suggestion made by Van Straten himself on 16 June to establish a separate KNIL commander position resorting under the BSO with his own Headquarters separate from the provisional combined civilian-military Dutch Headquarters led by the OBSO for the military part. He was appointed via the OBSO, BSO, Dutch cabinet hierarchical line. Both Van Mook and Van Oyen initially had confidence in Van Straten but his appointment had rather negative consequences for 18 Squadron N.E.I.<sup>97</sup>

Fiedeldij, in practise, received little support from Infantry officer Van Straten who seemingly had no interest in the ML at all for months, resulting in serious clashes between the two. It took a while before the problems in Australia reached Van Oyen who quickly concluded that an older LKol of the ML was necessary in Melbourne. By then it was very hard to free staff officers posted at the RNMFS, the Netherlands Military Mission or the NPC for Australia, though. Van Oyen, in August 1942, first gave instructions and guidelines to Sbn Coster to partly circumvent Van Straten who was soon confronted with Coster taking over things. Van Oyen's action came just in time as Fiedeldij needed more room to manoeuvre as his squadron was busy taking in its 18 new aircraft and had started the preparations for the move North. Van Straten took his revenge against Fiedeldij in November (see later), although his staff was very helpful arranging for the supply of needed additional equipment and motor vehicles as well as the posting of some additional personnel when the final preparations for the move North of 18 Squadron were made. It took until March 1943 before LKol (pilot-observer) E.J.G. te Roller of the NPC could be transferred to the KNIL Hq in Melbourne as administrative CO of Fiedeldij. He arrived in Australia in April.<sup>98</sup>

#### The establishment issues solved, most positions filled

The temporary squadron personnel establishment (the original one of April 1942 plus several temporary additions considered necessary on later dates and a lowering of the total strength by 20 in case of the RAAF) at the end of June 1942 was 514, 263 NEI and 251 RAAF

personnel. Actual squadron strength at the time stood at 242 NEI and 207 RAAF.<sup>99</sup> Numbers that presented quite a problem in the Australian winter months as the base encampment proved to be not large enough by far and the timber huts and barracks available had no heating and no warm water. As many of the ML officers as possible were moved to hotels, the majority of the Dutch NCOs temporary to the Duntroon Camp. Married personnel were allowed to live out. In August thanks to Dutch financing the living conditions in the timber dispersal huts and barracks used by the ML personnel already had been much improved.<sup>100</sup>

About 60 RAAF men were transferred in June to RAAF units.<sup>101</sup> Eighteen 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots and WOAGs were transferred during late June and early July. Some RAAF ground personnel left because there was no space in the encampment apart from unheated tents while they could be more useful elsewhere. Some as a result of disciplinary measures. Others at their own request as for many there was very little to do due to the serious lack of aircraft while some found working with the Dutch difficult. Most of the Dutch NCOs, Kpls and men had almost no command of English and even the Dutch officers had a hard time understanding the Australian slang of the RAAF men. It took a while to get used to each other while the Dutch started teaching the ML personnel English with assistance from the Dutch Consulate.<sup>102</sup>

During July the transferred RAAF personnel was in part replaced but in July and August some of personnel of the Maintenance Section, by now trained on the B-25 and its R2600 engines, was replaced by inexperienced personnel. This triggered immediate complaints by Fiedeldij and the policy was fortunately ended. More RAAF men, including a few with experience on Lockheed Hudson light-bombers arrived in September to fill vacancies, necessary in relation to the arriving Project Mark I aircraft. On 13 July Squadron Intelligence Officer P/O A.M. Cobham arrived. The RAAF strength developed as follows.

30 June 1942: 207, 31 July 1942: 225, 31 August 1942: 211 and 30 September 1942: 244.<sup>103</sup>

Apart from newly added personnel to strengthen existing sections, the aircraft Flights and the Defence Flight there also were transfers of personnel within the organization, including one important major transfer of ML personnel. Initially the majority of the ML mechanics were posted



at the aircraft Flights (or the *Gevechtsvliegdiens*, the Combat flying service, as the Dutch called it). Mid-July this was radically changed. The number of ML mechanics with the Flights was reduced and 20 mechanics were transferred to vacant specialist positions in the Maintenance Section. This rather small section with an establishment of 31 ML and 23 RAAF positions, Hoogeveen included, had a large number of vacancies and a low number of experienced personnel, while some of the just trained RAAF personnel had been transferred. With the new B-25s on their way the vacant ML positions had to be filled urgently.<sup>104</sup>

A new squadron establishment was discussed at Canberra between Fiedeldij and RAAF staff officers on 26 August as the existing one had proven to be too inflexible. This had resulted in personnel of the RAAF on NEI positions and vice versa and personnel of both services in positions that did not exist at all. There also were some lessons learned from operations for Eastern Area Command RAAF which should have personnel consequences. It was agreed that the two establishments would become one with as the posting principle that the Dutch would fill as many positions as possible in agreement with the training and experience of the men available. The RAAF would become responsible for the posting of suitable personnel on all remaining positions. This personnel would be trained on the B-25 as far as necessary at the squadron.



The new N5-144 just readied by the Maintenance Section (authors collection).

The establishment was discussed again in September and the draft adjusted where needed. The final details were discussed with the Air Board in Melbourne by S/Ldr Dawson on 22 September 1942 upon which the new HD-53A establishment version was formally published on 2 October 1942. The squadron was also labelled medium-bomber instead of heavy-bomber. The personnel strengths prescribed by the establishment became more fluid and only the grand total was fixed, although this could change somewhat from month to month by means of amendments. Also the sub-totals of ML and RAAF could change after ML personnel had replaced RAAF personnel or vice-versa. The combined establishment strength as listed on 28 October 1942 was 561, consisting of 310 RAAF and 251 NEI. Some more RAAF personnel would probably be (and actually was) needed when 18 Squadron N.E.I. was deployed in the Darwin area.<sup>105</sup>

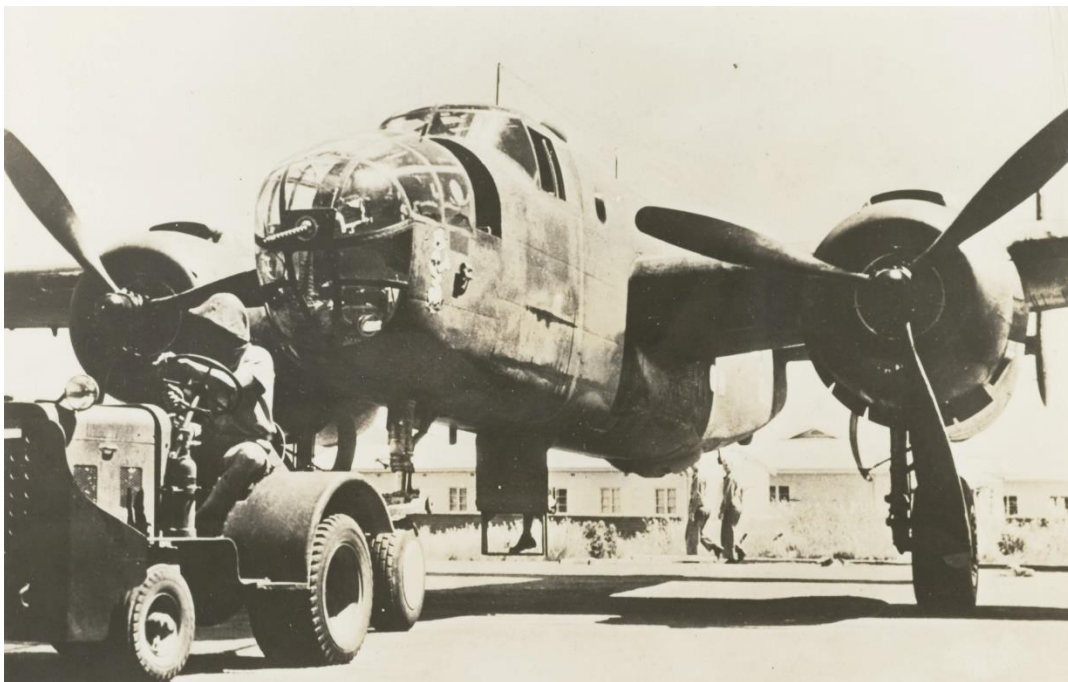
Apart from the already mentioned position of Operations Officer and personnel for the Operations Room also the position of Squadron Engineering Officer was to become part of the new establishment. The latter position was to be occupied by Elt (later Kap) Besançon, a very experienced former KLM technician who had been working for the NPC in the U.S.A. and arrived in September. Besançon became the chief of all technical personnel, ML and RAAF. One of his tasks was the further integration of the different categories of personnel into one efficient maintenance organisation. Another the streamlining of the technical support. Fortunately, in September 1942, the NPC had been able to contract a new NAA technical representative Mr A. Wtorkowski and a Bendix turret specialist, technical representative Mr Van Hooten (of Dutch ancestry and officially still called Van Houten). The latter was transferred in November on orders from Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq as he was more needed by the USAAF, although he was contracted via the NPC and paid by the NEI Commission for Australia and New Zealand. Sharp protests by the Dutch, unfortunately, did not yield results.<sup>106</sup>

Maj Fiedeldij had requested a personnel inventory (including the seconded KLM personnel) of the evacuated KNILM airline company in Sydney early on and asked for the posting of their remaining ground personnel via Dutch Headquarters. The KNILM had evacuated to Australia 40 maintenance personnel (including three flight engineers seconded from KLM) and five administrative ground personnel. Apart

from a total of 22 flight engineers there were two just out of training former student flight engineers. Six men of the maintenance personnel were already serving with 18 Squadron since early April 1942 and another four had been called into active service early June, as mentioned. One ground technician in this group of ten had to be transferred to KLM in July, however, as directed by the Dutch government in London. The flight engineers and a part of the KNILM maintenance specialists were still in Sydney. As they were also urgently needed with KLM in the West Indies authorisation had been asked from the Dutch government to be able to call them into active service too. A decision took a while but eventually posted, on 22 September and on 1 October, were 12 of the remaining flight mechanics, the two former student flight mechanics and three maintenance specialists. Some others went to the Dutch naval air service.

On 22 September KNILM maintenance specialists SM Vltgm H.M. van Herk, Sgt W. Voorwinden (electrician) and Sgt J.A. Colijn (instrument maker) were posted, as well as eleven KNILM and one KLM flight engineers of which two older sergeant-majors went to the Maintenance Section as supervisors. The two former student flight engineers had been temporarily working with the Technical Service of the KNILM and were posted on 1 October. The 17 extra technicians gave the squadron the capacity to continue performing 100 hours scheduled maintenance, engine changes and periodic maintenance on the R2600 engines and to carry out repairs on the aircraft and engines that would take more than 48 hours (not to be done at squadron level according to RAAF regulations), given a strength of 18 B-25s. Necessary as there was no RSU assistance available as yet and No 5 Aircraft Depot RAAF which did the major repairs and overhauls of the engines could not do RSU work or major airframe repairs.<sup>107</sup> On 28 September there was a total of 186 NEI ground staff (including the CO, the deputy CO, the Operations Officer and three WOAGs) and 71 NEI flying personnel. Despite the new postings the total NEI personnel strength remained around the same as the KNIL withdrew some former KNIL (ground forces) personnel to Melbourne in the second half of September. NEI strength stood at 256 on 18 September, this number having become 257 at the end of September.<sup>108</sup>

The RAAF completed the RAAF component (which had a strength of 244 on 1 October) as much as possible during October-November. In those months, among others, the Transport Section was largely brought up to strength. Additional equipment, trucks, cars, tenders, tractors etc. mostly acquired for the squadron by Dutch Headquarters, were added to the strength in anticipation of the move North.<sup>109</sup> At the end of October the RAAF strength was up to 271 and on 30 November it had reached 296 (of which 28 WOAGs including senior WOAG P/O H.J. Mc Tavish and F/O Cohen in the squadron staff), becoming 309 at the end of December. The ML strength at the end of October and November is unknown but was on 26 December (when the ML administration closed due to the transfer to the war base McDonald) 254, 182 staff (including CO, deputy CO, Operations Officer and four WOAGs) and ground personnel plus 72 flying personnel.<sup>110</sup>



Mitchell N5-134, already with the flexible .50 but still without its fixed .50, on its way to the hangar at Canberra late September or October 1942 (collection author).

Four RAAF WOAGs were transferred in September-October but five new ones were posted in the same period. The ML posted four new pilots on 1 December and a new WOAG arrived mid-December. Apart from this new flying personnel also a number of the ML and RAAF personnel already available since April-June had been unable to finish the B-25 operational training while seven of the RAAF WOAGs started with the bombardier course early November. Kap De Vries, Elt Van der Schroeff,

Elt J.J. van Balkom, M.Sc. (see below), F/O Cohen and a few others therefore ran an accelerated B-25 training until 24 December to ready as many as possible but the training would have to be continued from McDonald.<sup>111</sup>

#### The Project Mark I aircraft.

The B-25C aircraft N5-123 up to and including N5-127 were administratively transferred to the USAAF on 1 September 1942. All were at Canberra apart from the N5-126 which was with the CMU RAAF at Tocumwal and was awaiting parts for repair. The four other aircraft were taken over by USAAF crews on 2 September and left the following day. The N5-122 was readied with one wing tank and a nosewheel assembly received from the Americans and was flown to Amberley by an 18 Squadron crew on 8 December. The one wing tank was fed from a bomb-bay ferry tank. Acting KNIL commander LKOl Van Straten visited the squadron on 27 August to check on the progress of the Project Mark I and the crew training. It was his one and only visit to the unit when it was based at Canberra.<sup>112</sup>

The eighteen new aircraft received between 22 August (the first one, the lead aircraft of a group of six) and 21 September 1942 (the final two) were a mix of 11 B-25C-NAs and seven B-25D-NCs. The first aircraft with the U.S. FY serial 41-12935 became N5-128 and the new aircraft were registered N5-128 up to and including N5-145, although these serials had been used before (see Appendix 2). All aircraft were equipped with an Estoppey D-8 bombsight and were delivered without an autopilot. The difference between the C-model and the D-model was the fuel capacity and thus the range. Compared to the original B-25Cs the armament in the nose of all new aircraft was changed from one flexible .30 inch machinegun into two .50 inch (one fixed and one flexible) machineguns, the gun turrets were improved for easier operation and the fuselage plating below the gun muzzles of the top turret when in front and aft position was strengthened with blast plates. The fixed nose gun could not be mounted in the aircraft, though, as the special bolts needed for this were not delivered with the aircraft. They were eventually made for the squadron by a technical school in Canberra. The aircraft, apart from two, also arrived without ammunition containers for and ammunition

feeds to the nose guns. They were made by the Maintenance Section of the squadron in the course of November.<sup>113</sup>

Both the gun turrets and the mounted machineguns were delivered in a very sloppy way as well. Some of the guns were in a condition that looked second-hand, others showed burrs which should have been noticed during acceptance. Unfortunately, the tools needed for repairs, adjustment and fine-tuning of the turrets were not delivered with the aircraft as was hoped for. Although the aircraft came with an initial spares package, this did not include spares for the Bendix turrets. The tools needed for turret maintenance were ordered from Bendix via the NPC in May already but were still not delivered in November. The problems with the turrets were never completely solved. The airframe and engine spares problem, fortunately, was. Spare machineguns and spare parts for the .50s arrived in November.<sup>114</sup>

The range difference was to become a major problem later when the squadron operated with mixed formations from McDonald in the NW Area of operations (Northern Territory). The new B-25Cs, contrary to the original six B-25Cs, could be equipped with six extra tanks in the wing tips adding 304 U.S. gallon of fuel which facility the Ds did not have. With the auxiliary wing tanks mounted the new B-25Cs had a (theoretical) range of 1,400 statute miles (hereafter abbreviated as miles) or 1,400 miles without them but with a bomb-bay tank of 300 U.S. gallon. With both mounted they had a (theoretical) range of 2,000 miles. The B-25Ds had a normal (theoretical) range of 800 miles and 1,400 miles with bomb-bay tank. The afore mentioned ranges becoming, of course, appreciable lower when flying under combat conditions and an air-combat of 20-30 minutes had to be accounted for.<sup>115</sup>

The problem remained academic in the beginning as the Cs were delivered without the auxiliary wing tanks and with the necessary extra fuel lines only. The bomb-bay tanks still were an idea in September but could be and eventually were made by No 1 Aircraft Depot (1 AD) RAAF at Laverton. They were to give the B-25s a range suitable for missions to Japanese targets deeper in the NEI archipelago, although with a reduced bomb-load as the tank occupied half of the bomb-bay. Maj Fiedeldij discussed the possibility of the manufacture of the bomb-bay tanks on 14 October at RAAF Hq. It was agreed to make a trial tank at 1 AD and test

fly it on one of the B-25s. Mitchell N5-131 was assigned as the trial aircraft and the bomb-bay tank was successfully tested in November. The B-25s one by one were modified at 1 AD, the first two aircraft arriving at this unit on 9 December 1942. Departure for the assigned war base McDonald was from either Canberra or Laverton while the main ground party of the squadron moved to the war base at the same time by train and truck (see below). No 1 AD produced 21 of the tanks of which the final ones were delivered in January 1943, a few weeks behind schedule.<sup>116</sup>

In October 1942 Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq formally informed the KNIL Hq that 18 Squadron N.E.I. would come under operational command of RAAF Command, the “fighting arm” of the RAAF established in September 1942 in Brisbane. Kap Boot, the liaison officer at Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq (now in Brisbane) also became liaison officer at RAAF Command, his new double position being called Dutch Liaison Officer (DLO). The squadron was to become operational from a base in the NW Area from 23 November 1942. The OBSO gave his formal consent on 13 November after consulting Van Oyen but changed the date 23 November into 1 December 1942. Mid-November the operations base already had become McDonald.<sup>117</sup>

Early September, the squadron had embarked on an ambitious new training program designed by Kap De Vries in accordance with the Operations Officer and the Flight COs, the unit to be ready for a transfer to the war zone on approximately 1 December 1942. In September a cross-country training program started, followed in October by gunnery and bombing training. Also combat formation flying was practised and late October night flying training started. Delays occurred due to bad weather in October and November as well as necessary additional inspections and repairs to the new B-25Cs and Ds because of the very sloppy delivery state. Nevertheless, the schedule could be largely met by the personnel already available on 1 September 1942.<sup>118</sup>

#### B-25 operational training in the period of September-November 1942

Despite the initial aircraft availability problems all kind of training courses started early June 1942. The RAAF fitters and the ML mechanics who did not come from one of the former B-25 ferry detachments were given lectures on the B-25 systems and the R2600 engine with hands-on

training on the unserviceable N5-161. Crew training started in June too but, as mentioned, the combination of bad weather, necessary aircraft inspections and lack of spares resulted in delays, especially in July and August. Little flying could be done and also the bombing and gunnery training were much delayed.<sup>119</sup>

Training with practise bombs to be held in September 1942 at Evans Head with the new aircraft had to start later than originally planned due to the initially low availability of the new B-25s and had to be stopped earlier than planned due to a shortage of 160 lbs practise bombs.<sup>120</sup> Only two of the older pilots, Fiedeldij and Van der Schroeff, had any clue how to use the Estoppey D-8 sight. Everybody was trained on the Norden D-7 bombsight. Even the men with the oldest ML observer licenses, apart from Fiedeldij and Van der Schroeff, had only been trained with and in part had also used on operations the Austrian Goertz-R bombsight. This sight had replaced an older version of the Estoppey sight, the D-3A, in the Glenn Martin 139 bombers of the ML in 1937 already. The performance of the Goertz-R came close to that of the American Sperry S1 sight. With only Van der Schroeff available as an instructor, who first had to test fly the D-8 Estoppey version, only a few of the pilots with an observer license, the observers and the bombardier students were checked out on the D-8 sight and could train in the final week of September.<sup>121</sup>

The delivery of the 18 new Mitchells and especially making these aircraft combat ready had taken more time than anticipated while requested additional 160 lbs practise bombs were not yet delivered. Early October only about ten 160 lbs practise bombs remained and the training had to be stopped.<sup>122</sup> Although the USAAF had promised assistance of a bombardier to give instruction on the D-8 sight, there came two but only around 18 October.<sup>123</sup> The absence of a Norden bombsight in the new B-25s also had a nasty side effect for the pilots. The autopilot of the B-25, the Automatic Flight Equipment Control or AFEC, was an advanced and classified instrument coupled to the bombsight and no Norden also meant no autopilot. Autopilots were to be installed when the Estoppey bombsights would be replaced by Sperry bombsights.<sup>124</sup>



The five ML student bombardiers started early June with about one month of ground training, following theory lessons, lessons on the B-25 systems and bombing procedure training on the “bombing teacher”.



The recently arrived B-25s N5-130 (in the back) and N5-134 at Canberra (via G.J. Casius).

Instructors were Kap (observer) Jessurun and Elts (observer) Van Loggem and K. Akkerman, the three most experienced ML observers. USAAF bombardiers gave training on the Norden bombsight (designed by engineer Carl Norden of Dutch ancestry) at Canberra to ML and RAAF flying and maintenance personnel in the final week of June. During July and August the ground training of the students was combined with flight training, all bombing procedure training being done on the Norden sight. The flight training began with terrain orientation and position determining followed by a lot of ‘dry’ bombing runs in combination with the former. Also during August there still was a lot of ground training to compensate for a lack of air time due to the low serviceability of the B-25s. During September 1942 the Norden sights were no longer available as the original B-25s were transferred to the USAAF. The students followed a training as nose gunner using the new

N5-128 and N5-134 (the only two delivered with containers and feeds for the nose guns) as trainers and started with the navigation training during cross-country flights. Late September the conversion to the Estoppey D-8 sight took place, including a few flights with practise bombs.<sup>125</sup>

All students received the ML bombardier license on 1 October 1942, embarking on a navigation and practise bombing training program in October. The group of trainees also included two junior officer pilots, Tlt P. Kruyne and Vdg C. Fisscher, who had not been able to finish the flying part of their (mandatory) observer training. Apart from some long-range navigation training they only needed a conversion to the Estoppey sight and practise bombing training. They were licensed as observer on 1 October as well.

About one month later the instructors started a new class consisting of the seven RAAF WOAGs who had to be cross-trained as bombardier. They did not need part of the theory (as all had followed a comprehensive course at No 1 Initial Training School RAAF) and the air gunner training and already knew everything about the B-25 they needed to know. All qualified for the ML bombardier license and were ready on 24 December, although it was (for the RAAF) out of the question that the license was officially awarded. This second class was trained directly on the D-8 sight. Apart from bombardiers the squadron also trained five of the former KNIL (ground forces) soldiers as Fitter-Armourer (armament mechanic) and another five as Armourer (assistant armament mechanic).

The Fitter-Armourer position, among others, included the repair of (parts of) machineguns, gun mounts, gun turrets and bomb-bay equipment but also the assembling of bombs and the handling of bomb-fuses and other explosive materials. The job of the Armourers was 1<sup>st</sup> line maintenance mainly consisting of cleaning and loading the machineguns, cleaning the gun turrets and to transport the bombs and load them into the bomb-bay. Instructors during the basic training (completed on 1 October) were observers Jessurun and Van Loggem and former KNIL armament technicians/gunsmith Adj A. Brouwer and SM Mutsaarts (initials unknown). The latter was transferred back to the KNIL in Melbourne in October-November 1942.<sup>126</sup>



Elt (observer) K. Akkerman giving instruction in the nose compartment of a B-25 (NIMH).

Apart from Tlt Kruyne and Vdg Fisscher, the other ML officer pilots of the squadron already held an observer license and most could also fly in that capacity on operations. None of the officers holding an observer license were trained in celestial-navigation, however, which had not been part of the training for the ML observer license. KLM pilot Elt Van Balkom (seconded to the KNILM), a quite famous Dutch navigation specialist and reserve officer pilot, was called up into active service and posted at the squadron in June as an instructor. All observers received theory and ground instruction and made at least one practise flight using a sextant for position fixes on stars.<sup>127</sup> Van Balkom stayed with the squadron after completing the training to become a B-25 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in July and a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot in November. He then became a B-25 instructor-pilot, instructing former KNILM/KLM pilots together with Elt Van der Schroeffer from approximately 9 December, and also remained the squadron navigation instructor. In

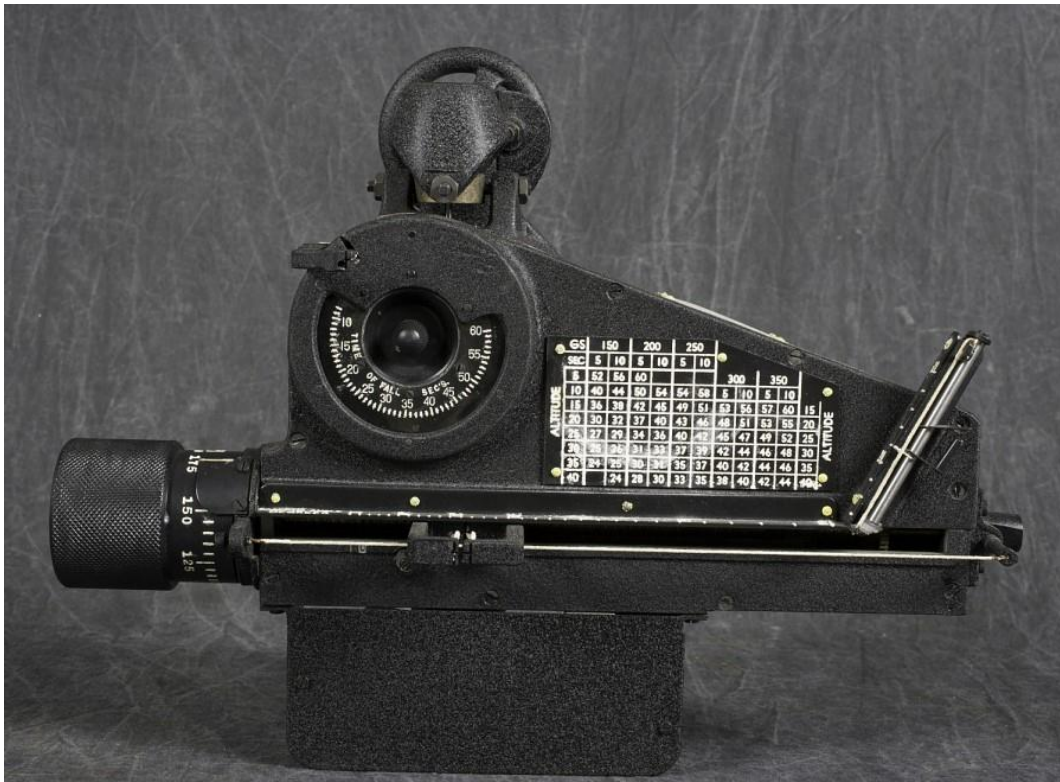
the latter capacity Van Balkom became one of the instructors of the WOAG class, while Van der Schroeff explained the workings of the D-8.

Van Balkom did hold a ML military pilot license as all KNILM and seconded KLM pilots in the Indies did but strangely enough, none had ever been issued an observer license. This was rectified on 9 February 1943 when all KNILM and KLM pilots serving with the ML were issued this license. Before the Pacific war broke out, they had been periodically called up for training periods on the Glenn Martin 139 bomber and all already were expert navigators. The former KNILM/KLM pilots with 18 Squadron received bombardier training on the Estoppey sight when at McDonald.<sup>128</sup>

Eventually the squadron gained another two ML observers both coming from Timor. The first one arrived at the squadron on 20 August 1942. Res Tlt C.L. Begeman, M.Sc. was a civilian engineer who had worked for the NEI Government in Bandoeng and during the war with the KNIL Engineering Corps in Timor. He escaped from Timor by boat and arrived in Australia on 7 August. Having earned an observer license in the Netherlands before coming to Java, he was re-licensed on 1 October after a much accelerated training. The second one came to the squadron in January 1943 after the NEI/Australian guerrilla force in Timor had been withdrawn to Australia. This was Elt M. Horstink, who had flown as a pilot-observer and later as an observer with the ML in 1938-39 and was re-licensed on 1 April 1943.<sup>129</sup> The available number of ML observers and bombardiers in October only totalled 11 excluding Operations Officer Kap Jessurun and including the temporarily assigned pilot-observers.<sup>130</sup>

Around 18 October the two USAAF bombardiers arrived and gave training on the D-8 sight for about three weeks to groups of pilot-observers and maintenance personnel. Bombing training with practise bombs of 160 lbs could only be restarted on 27 October after a sufficient number of these bombs were received on the day before.<sup>131</sup> Bombardier-pilot coordination was a part of the training. The flying training was done from Canberra (procedure training without bombs) and from Nowra (NSW) which RAAF base had a bombing and gunnery range and was much closer to Canberra than Evans Head. By then, however, a period of bad weather with much rain had begun which hindered the training during October and November. The airfield Nowra was unserviceable in

the periods 20-26 October and 30 October-4 November. Low ceilings on other days, further, frustrated high altitude bombardier training, as it had earlier done during the training from Canberra. The few high altitude flights that could be made proved that the D-8 sight indeed was a very rudimentary bombsight not suitable for precision bombing above 1,200 metres. The bombsight could also not be used at night unless flares would be used. Only advantage compared to the Norden sight was its smaller size allowing the .50 nose gun to be fitted.<sup>132</sup>



The Estoppey D-8 bombsight as used in the Project Mark I Mitchells (NASM).

Former observer students Tlt Krayne and Vdg Fisscher were reassigned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot on approximately 1 November but two 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots without experience at an operational Glenn Martin bomber unit (where the ML had done the operational bombardier training) were temporarily assigned as observers. They were pilot-observers Elt H.A.H.M. Tander and Tlt C. Busser, who had flown Curtiss-Wright CW-22 reconnaissance aircraft, respectively Lockheed L212/L12A communications aircraft and Brewster 339 fighters after their Glenn Martin 139 type transition training.<sup>133</sup> This kept the number of available ML observers and bombardiers at eleven, excluding Kap Jessurun. Training continued in November-December and also in 1943 from McDonald as bombing results from all the observers

and bombardiers, instructors included, were less than satisfactory. With the newly trained RAAF bombardiers the minimum of 18 1<sup>st</sup> line observers and bombardiers was reached on 24 December, however.<sup>134</sup>

As Norden bombsights were a very scarce piece of aircraft equipment in Australia the squadron tried to get the Sperry S1 or its British version the Sperry Mark IX but initially in vain. Eventually the confirmation that Sperry Mark IX bombsights would be delivered from a RAAF allocation was received in November 1942 but it soon became apparent that Sperry sights were scarce as well and actual delivery would take some months. The first Sperry Mark IX bombsight indeed was received only in July 1943.<sup>135</sup>

The ML and RAAF WOAGs were also in part trained at Nowra as they had to operate the gun turrets of the B-25. Although individual crews and student bombardiers already trained from Moruya in September, the Flights started with “splash and shadow shooting” near Moruya in October. Two Flights practised for the first time on 6 October, “shadow shooting” at sea. This training was followed by air-to-air firing on towed targets at Nowra.<sup>136</sup> The ML and the RAAF WOAGs were trained to operate both the upper and the lower gun turret each equipped with two .50 machineguns. Although the ML men were the dedicated lower turret gunners as they were used to operate the belly gun in the Glenn Martin 139, they had to be able to operate the top turret in an emergency. The RAAF WOAGs were mainly trained as top turret gunner but had to be able to operate as wireless operator as well and in an emergency also as lower turret gunner. The lower turret gunner had to kneel over a sight coupled to a mirror system to operate the guns. This system could cause air sickness and some of the WOAGs were unable to operate it for longer periods of time. Of the five new RAAF WOAGs posted in September-October Sgts G.J. Littlehales and K.B. McPhee became student bombardier and three started an accelerated operational training which could only be completed in December by Sgt E.D. Low. Instructors were F/O Cohen plus an unknown RAAF WOAG from the group posted in April 1942.<sup>137</sup>

A road party of the squadron had already left for Nowra on 12 October to prepare for an air-to-air firing course. On 17 October the first Flight with three of the B-25s flew to Nowra for bombing and gunnery practise. The

gunnery results were rather poor initially due to difficulties with the turrets. The gunners often were unable to keep the target into their sight because the turrets trembled during firing, especially during longer bursts. Heavy rain in October and November often made Nowra unsuitable for B-25 operations and the gunnery training, consequently,



B-25D N5-143 bogged down due to the muddy airfield terrain (collection author).

saw a delay. Two Flights trained successively in the period of 18 October-15 November but the training of the air gunners could not be fully completed. The fixed forward firing machinegun was tested at Nowra in the same period as were the “home made” feeds.<sup>138</sup> Only during the second half of November the remaining 16 B-25s received their flexible .50 and all 18 B-25s had their fixed .50 fitted, all with squadron made ammunition containers and feeds. The guns had been delivered separately and had to be built in at the squadron. The training of the pilots and the further training of the observers and bombardiers who had to operate the guns also was delayed. Some of the pilots received no training at all before their transfer to the war base.<sup>139</sup>

Pilot Tlt A.D.M. Moorrees in the meantime had developed a firing control system using clock (hour) and height reporting to guide the defensive fire of individual aircraft as well as that of an operational formation of three or four B-25s. This was trained from approximately 1 October and concluded with three days of exercises from Canberra in co-operation with the RAAF School of Army Co-operation also based at Fairbairn. Wing Commander Pell of the School arranged for aircraft support of a number of CAC Wirraways which arrived at Canberra on 15 November for exercises with the B-25s. The Wirraways flew dummy attacks while the B-25s flew in combat formations of three or four although with reduced speed to allow the Wirraways to keep up, making the training a bit too easy for the air gunners. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots controlled the defensive fire from the blister dome above the navigator station behind the pilot seats and the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the lead aircraft coordinated formation defensive fire. The system was also taught to the 1<sup>st</sup> pilots, observers and bombardiers and the WOAGs who had to communicate with the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots/Firing Control Officer (FCO). Tlt Moorrees continued the training at McDonald.<sup>140</sup>

When the exercises were concluded pilot Tlt N.J.H. Daanen and senior WOAG P/O Mc Tavish were sent to RAAF Station Williamtown on 18 October for a firing control course. The former to compare the ML system with that of the RAAF. Both officers were sent back after a short while with the message that 18 Squadron N.E.I. could not be taught anything new in the field of firing control.<sup>141</sup> As not all of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots could be sufficiently trained in the available time, during the first months of operations from McDonald an extra pilot was sometimes taken along in the lead aircraft of a formation or Flight to act as FCO. A Flight CO also flew on occasion along as FCO, for example when a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot was being checked-out as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot.<sup>142</sup>

Night flying was practised, from approximately 26 October, on a number of days at the end of October and during November. Only the 1<sup>st</sup> pilots and a few of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots (reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilots) were trained as there was no time to do more. The former mainly due to the loss of training days because of bad weather. During the same period combat formation flying and also bombing and gunnery training were continued. The results of the training in formation flying could be shown already on 27 October.



Twelve of 15 aircraft flown to Laverton on the previous day flew an air parade at Melbourne when seven KNIL soldiers were decorated.<sup>143</sup>

### RAAF RSU support after all and a pilot shortage

NEI personnel strength stood at 254 on 26 December 1942 after a total of ten men (including a SM mechanic and a SM armament technician/gunsmith and three of the pilots) were transferred to Melbourne and two junior flight engineers, four pilots and one wireless operator of the KNILM/KLM were posted in the period of 1 October up to and including 26 December. On 27 December 1942, just before their transfer to McDonald, all 12 experienced KNILM/KLM flight engineers and technical supervisors were transferred to the N.E.I. Transport Afdeeling Brisbane (N.E.I.-T.A.B., eight) or the Detachment Melbourne of the KNIL to be demobilised for service with KLM in the West Indies (two) or in the U.S.A. (two). The N.E.I.-T.A.B. was a Flight attached to a USAAF Troop Carrier Squadron that operated American Douglas C-47 aircraft for the USAAF.

Maj Fiedeldij had already advised the KNIL Hq in September that the KNILM/KLM technicians were trained to a level far above that needed at his squadron when it would be active in the operational area. He proposed a transfer of a part of this personnel to a RAAF Aircraft Depot or RSU when 18 Squadron was transferred to a war base.<sup>144</sup> The actual transfers made RSU assistance from the RAAF necessary which was immediately asked for by the CO. To keep the NEI part of the unit on strength the KNIL Hq posted a total of twelve KNIL soldiers (all general duty Kpls and Slds) late December 1942 also just before the final part of the squadron was to embark a ship for Darwin on 29 December. They were a mix of recently enlisted Slds who had followed a basic training with the KNIL in Melbourne and KNIL Infantry men in part just evacuated from Timor. A few became a mechanic trainee with the Technical Service at McDonald in January 1943.

In November one of the ML WOAGs, Sgt H.J. Burgers, had been arrested and he was transferred late December (see below). Burgers was replaced by SM D.K.R. Sweitser of the KLM seconded to the KNILM who arrived mid-December already.<sup>145</sup> Total NEI personnel strength on 31 December 1942, less Burgers, became 253. The personnel posted late December were sent directly to McDonald and arrived in January

1943. Total NEI strength on 31 January 1943 was 252. The RAAF strength on 31 December was 309, becoming 311 on 31 January 1943.<sup>146</sup>

On 1 November 1942 the NEI part of the squadron organization only counted 40 pilots, including the CO and the deputy CO of which the CO could not be part of a crew and according to still standing ML regulations should not fly on operations at all. Nevertheless, Fiedeldij, in the period his squadron was at McDonald, flew along on a number of larger raids as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot, for the first time on 23 January 1943 to Timor (Dilli) in the lead plane of a formation of nine B-25s.<sup>147</sup> As there were 42 pilots needed for the 21 crews in the organization there was a shortage of three pilots. It was known by now that the RNMFS in the U.S.A. would not be able to deliver newly trained pilots to fill vacancies. Maj Fiedeldij, via the KNIL Headquarters in Melbourne, requested the posting of three of the KNILM/KLM pilots still available in Sydney or otherwise arrange for the posting of three RAAF pilots.<sup>148</sup> After a call for volunteers four KNILM/KLM pilots (Elts M.S. Rab, P.A. Deenik, A.G. Ekels and J. Hofman) were posted on 1 December.<sup>149</sup> Also radio operator SM Sweitser volunteered and arrived in December, as mentioned. All started with the B-25 conversion shortly after arrival. The transfers also covered the temporary loss as an operational pilot of SM Reijns, who had been grounded by the flight-surgeon in October.<sup>150</sup>

The pilot shortage seemed solved but not for long. After an investigation by Maj Spoor, the deputy head of the NEFIS with assistance of an "agent-provocateur" of 18 Squadron N.E.I. SM (mechanic) A.A. Scholte, three pilots of the squadron were arrested. Spoor did not do a great job to say the least. His rather superficial inquiry resulted in arrests on 11 November 1942 in the office of Fiedeldij in hangar 48. Fiedeldij had not been informed in advance and did not get the chance to look into the case himself and advise the KNIL Headquarters on the matter first. He was shocked while Spoor interrogated pilots Tlt W.J. Burck, Sgt H. Kelder and Sgt E.H.J. de Lyon with a loaded gun in front of him. The threesome was suspected of plans to fly a B-25 to occupied Java and surrender it to the Japanese in exchange for their families (although one of the Sgt pilots did not have family in the occupied NEI at all).<sup>151</sup>

Maj Fiedeldij later that day phoned LKOl Van Straten in Melbourne. He asked Van Straten to investigate the matter himself and allow him to give a formal advise as the CO of the pilots involved first. Fiedeldij wanted to prevent fierce reactions from other flying personnel and renewed morale problems in his unit. Van Straten said that Spoor was the right person for the investigation and did not want to discuss the case. He also did not allow Fiedeldij to advise in the matter first as he allowed or ordered Spoor to report directly to him. Fiedeldij, nevertheless, investigated anyway and wrote a formal letter to Van Straten who answered on 24 November 1942 but in a rather negative way. Already on the next day Van Straten remitted the matter to the only active Dutch court-marshal, the Sea Court-Marshal in Ceylon. SM Scholte, by then, had already been posted away from the squadron to the KNIL Hq in Melbourne as arranged by Spoor.<sup>152</sup>



Part of a line-up of 12 of the Project Mark I Mitchells at Canberra in September 1942, the second in line, the N5-128, already with the flexible .50 fitted (authors collection).

The handcuffed pilots were flown to Melbourne on 14 November by B-25. Sgt H.J. Burgers, WOAG in the crew of Tlt Burck, who had not been involved but who had supposedly known of the plan, was called to Melbourne for an interview with Spoor on 29 November and was arrested as well. He had neglected to inform his superiors. Burgers, as others in the squadron, had thought that the wild plans of the three (and, as was thought, of SM Scholte) were nothing more than tough language

largely during a binge. He was released almost a year later but transferred to the Dutch army special forces unit in Ceylon in 1943. Burck, Kelder and De Lyon were convicted to long sentences. Spoor wrote a report on the moral at 18 Squadron for Van Straten which at least in part proved to be an opinion based on only a very small number of interviews with squadron members and mentioned causes for a low moral which were simply untrue. It looked a suspicious way to justify the arrests as a necessary example. Fortunately, the general moral in the ML personnel contingent was not affected all that much as the negative reactions were strongly focused at the “incompetent leadership in Melbourne”.<sup>153</sup>

Tlt J.C. Veenstra due to health problems was lagging behind in the B-25 training. Both Reijns and Veenstra came along to the war base McDonald. Reijns flew again in January becoming a reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot. He flew his first operation as a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot on 3 February 1943. Reijns was then taken off operations for a while as it was concluded that he needed additional training. Kap De Vries (responsible for training and standards) reported to Kap Jessurun that Reijns was a very good pilot and navigator but scored only marginal in formation flying on the wing while he still had to do the night flying training. Reijns was consequently down rated to 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot. He regularly flew as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in a dedicated reserve crew from April 1943 and also occasionally as a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot (first on 20 May 1943) on solo missions or as lead of a pair. Veenstra was ready to fly operations after finishing his training early April 1943 but he fell ill during that same month. This time he was definitely declared unfit for all flying postings. Just posted Elt Hofman showed signs of a serious illness shortly after his arrival at McDonald and had to be re-posted to a non-flying position. He went to Sydney for medical treatment on 2 March. Definitely declared unfit for flying postings in April he was transferred to the KNIL Hq in Melbourne in September 1943. After serving in several administrative postings, Hofman was eventually hospitalised and died in Sydney on 18 January 1946.<sup>154</sup>

In November 1942 there also were two older pilots who had serious problems which would nowadays be classified as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They were Elt Van der Schroeff and Elt Van den Broek. Both came to McDonald with the squadron and were initially listed as a reserve pilot. During January 1943 at McDonald the squadron flight-

surgeon and chief Medical Service Kap Storms declared both Van der Schroeff and Van den Broek unfit for operational flying for three months. As he had agreed with Fiedeldij, he did not revoke their medical approval so they could continue their B-25 operational training which both had been unable to finish, although Van der Schroeff almost did.<sup>155</sup>

Van der Schroeff was the squadron test pilot and was assigned this task already in April 1942 as he was the only ML pilot in Australia trained as a test pilot at the Technical Service of the ML. He flew as such for over two years until 31 December 1940, becoming a flying instructor the next day. Although Van der Schroeff had come to Australia with wife and child he had lost several close friends above Tarakan in January 1942 and had been very lucky himself as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot of a Glenn Martin 139 bomber after the ML mobilisation. On approximately 9 December 1942 he was assigned as a B-25 instructor-pilot next to the test work. Van der Schroeff kept flying as a test pilot and on non-operational flights from McDonald. He also assisted Kap De Vries with the training of newly posted flying personnel and personnel who had been unable to finish the B-25 training. Van der Schroeff started to fly operations again in April 1943 as a reserve crew member, first flying as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and later also as a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot and observer. By mid-April he had already trained a few of the more experienced pilots as assistant test pilot to share the test work with himself and his assistant Tlt Hagers.<sup>156</sup>

Van den Broek had become *Compagnie Commandant* when the squadron was in Canberra. He had seen his Flight dissolved after the disbandment of the Burck crew in November 1942. Already suffering from the loss in combat over the NEI of several of his friends the arrests of three of his subordinates became a relatively heavy burden for him. He kept flying B-25, nevertheless, right up to his transfer to McDonald as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot of one of the B-25s of the Flying Echelon. As he had been rather busy in his part-time ground position, he had been unable to fully complete operational training when at Canberra and also had not followed the night flying training program. Van den Broek continued his B-25 training at McDonald and completed it in April 1943. He flew his first operation on 16 June after recovering from an illness.<sup>157</sup>

Deputy CO Kap De Vries, although his position was not operational, had himself listed (with Fiedeldij's consent) as a reserve pilot early on and

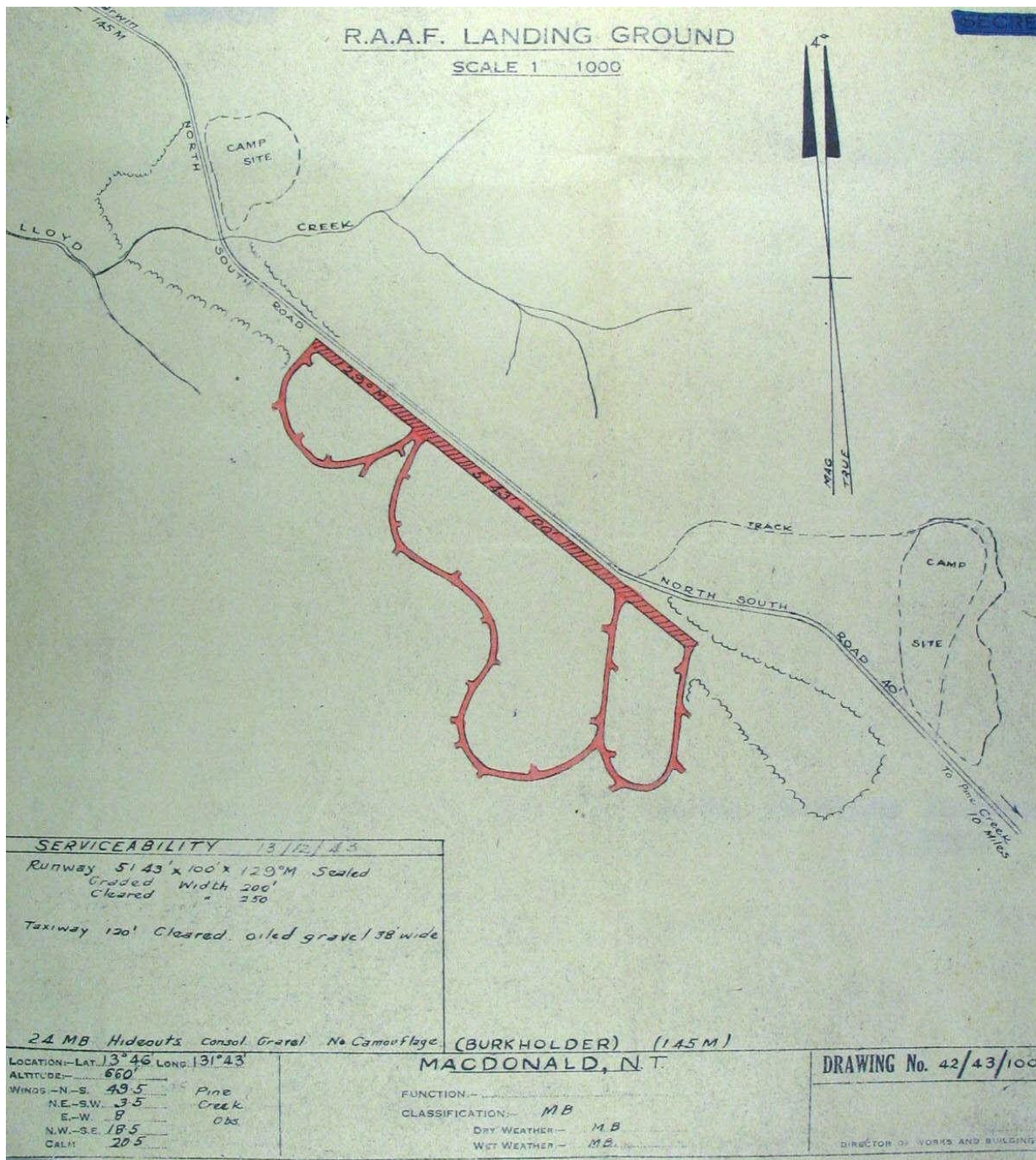
became a reserve crewmember immediately after his arrival at McDonald on 21 January 1943 because of the pilot and observer shortage. He was taken off operations by Fiedeldij two days later, however, and remained responsible for the B-25 operational training which was given priority (see later). Due to the pilot shortage and the number of flying personnel that had not been able to finish operational training the squadron could only form 15 1<sup>st</sup> line crews instead of the required minimum of 18 in January 1943.

Tlt Busser, one of the two pilots temporary flying as observer, was reassigned as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in one of the crews. The crews were divided over five Flights, numbered I to V, with as Flight CO, respectively, Elt Janssen, Elt Winckel, Elt Moorrees (who succeeded Elt Van den Broek), Elt Cooke and Tlt Wetters. They were led in combat by Operations Officer Kap Jessurun and deputy Operations Officer Elt Winckel. The chief mechanics of the Flights were, respectively, Adj Barendrecht, Adj Van Aken, SM J.H. Groeneveld, SM Van Reesch and SM Th. van den Dolder.<sup>158</sup>

#### No 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron operating from McDonald strip, January 1943-May 1943

##### The move to the North

The OBSO in a conference at Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq in Brisbane on 8 September with MajGen G. Kenney, the successor of Brett, talked over the future operational deployment of 18 Squadron N.E.I. It was decided that the Dutch squadron would come under operational control of RAAF Command as soon as it was ready. In September 1942 the RAAF already expressed its wish to base the unit at Fenton for coast patrol work but this idea was strongly opposed by both the squadron and the Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne. First of all, the range of the B-25 was too limited for sea patrol work while the Commission that represented the NEI Government in Australia and New Zealand wished to employ the squadron as much as possible against Japanese targets in the occupied NEI. Although Fenton was fine, this base allocation was soon withdrawn and after some discussion the war base of the squadron in mid-November 1942 definitely became McDonald near Pine Creek.



Map of McDonald (wrongly spelled MacDonal) from AAF Form No. 63 dated 1 February 1944. It shows the airfield as it was after 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron had left it for Batchelor, with the sealed bitumen runway LK01 Fiedeldij had asked for, but in vain, several times. The status of the field had become emergency landing ground (NAA, A9716 783 record 3027439, with thanks to Peter Dunn OAM).

A scouting party was immediately assembled and dispatched. It reported on 17 November that there was no base, only a landing strip. The party reported that McDonald was situated in the middle of nowhere, had one landing strip that was not long enough for loaded B-25s which was

connected with two “loupes” of taxiway on the westside with only 12 pens all too small for B-25s, that there was no encampment at all and also, worst of all, that there was no drinking water. The Dutch liaison officer at Port Darwin reported likewise.<sup>159</sup> After this initial investigation a movement plan was made up and an Advance Party, commanded by Elt P. Schelling of the ML, consisting of 56 men of the ML and 74 of the RAAF, 43 vehicles and quite a lot of equipment, materials for the encampment and building materials (a total of 109 tons) left Canberra with two trains on 26 November.<sup>160</sup>



The Advance Party during the first part of the voyage North by train (via G. Barendrecht, deceased and Fred Pelder Jr.).

Only on 24 November No 54 Operations Base Unit (54 OBU) RAAF moved from Coomalie Creek to McDonald and started preparing the camp site and building the basic requirements for the encampment. A party of squadron staff and Operations Room personnel left Canberra for McDonald in the N5-142 on 4 December to check on their work and make an inventory of everything that was needed to be able to finish the encampment, given what 54 OBU was ordered to do, as well as the operational and communications equipment that had to be brought in. The personnel were left at McDonald and the aircraft returned to Canberra. Maj Fiedeldij and some of the officers including Kap (flight-



surgeon) Storm flew to McDonald in the N5-131 two days later to check on the situation themselves. An advance Air Party led by Kap Jessurun landed at McDonald on 9 December also with the N5-131 to ready the base for the Air Echelon. Fiedeldij again came along to be able to welcome the Advance Party, returning to Canberra with the N5-131 on 11 or 12 December. The first part of the Advance Party arrived in the very early hours of 11 December 1942. They arrived by truck from Pine Creek after a difficult journey, first by train from Canberra to Alice Springs, then by truck to Birdum and from Birdum by train again to Pine Creek.<sup>161</sup>

The Advance Party started with putting up 120 tents and additional buildings, digging extra latrines etc. as all 54 OBU could do for the squadron was the building of three latrine complexes, three shower complexes, four storage sheds, three kitchens, a canteen, one shed for the squadron headquarters, a building for the Operations Room and a hut for the meteorology section plus a small water tank of 2,000 gallon. All almost ready on 11 December but insufficient for a squadron of about 560 men. No 54 OBU turned over its water tender to the squadron enabling it to haul water from a well 10 miles SW of McDonald at Katherine. There was a shortage of lumber, road materials and other essential building needs which had to be taken along by the Rear Party. There was almost nothing in the isolated area so much had to be brought up from the south by the squadron itself. Radio and telephone connections were ready late December, No 54 OBU assisting by making temporarily available a Signal Clerk, a Telephone Operator and a Fitter IIE (electrician) to keep the electricity generators running. On 21 December the Advance Party started building the drainage of the crushed stone strip which was completed two days later. Two additional water tenders were improvised by putting a 400-gallon tank on a couple of trucks while pipelines and a water storage of 6,000 gallon on a hill were built. No 54 OBU left on 15 February 1943, leaving one man behind to assist the squadron with the water well that was being excavated. This yielded water eventually but it proved to be not suitable for human consumption. A few dozen of squadron members fell ill after drinking the water.<sup>162</sup>



A water well was excavated but the water caused acute intestines problems (Alford/AHSNT Collection)

The Main Party, 60 men of the ML and 125 of the RAAF plus approximately 200 tons of equipment, started the move on 4 December, left Canberra by train on the next day and arrived on 22, 23 and 24 December with some delay because of bad weather. After its arrival a new taxiway with several curves was levelled in the thin Eucalyptus wood with 12 more pens while all 12 existing pens were enlarged to enable a B-25 to turn on its own power. The Air Echelon comprised 162 men in the 18 aircraft, flying to McDonald in two days via an easterly route (via Cloncurry) or a westerly route (via Alice Springs). The first part of the echelon departed Canberra for McDonald on 26 December with nine B-25s (all equipped with the bomb bay tank at 1 AD in Laverton

first) of which N5-133 made a forced landing 80 miles north of Cloncurry after the crew got lost and due to a lack of fuel. Although he had not been flying the plane Flight CO Elt Janssen took over as he had forced landed a B-25 twice before. He put the B-25 down without any damage. The first six aircraft arrived at McDonald on 27 December (N5-128, N5-129, N5-130, N5-132, N5-137 and N5-138). Maj Fiedeldij and S/Ldr Dawson arrived with the N5-134 on 30 December, followed by another four B-25s (N5-135, N5-143, N5-144 and N5-145) the next day, on 2 January 1943 by the undamaged N5-133 plus the N5-141 and N5-142 coming from Laverton and on 4 January by the N5-140 also ex Laverton. The N5-131 had returned to Canberra and arrived back at McDonald on approximately 8 January.<sup>163</sup>



The N5-139 and N5-140 on their way from Canberra to No 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton on 23 December 1942 (collection Edward Rogers).

Two B-25s which were equipped at Laverton with the bomb bay tank as well as auxiliary wing tip tanks arrived as the final two on 13 January (N5-136) and on 21 January 1943 (N5-139). They were the very first equipped with wing tip tanks but seven other B-25Cs would follow in the coming months. The move of 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron (as the unit was now called by RAAF Command) was finally concluded and without aircraft losses and no casualties apart from one seriously wounded. LAC

Wilcoxon, a RAAF Guard, on 3 December had to be hospitalised with severe head wounds after loading goods for shipment.<sup>164</sup> There was one other wounded. ML WOAG SM Van Weezel arrived at McDonald with a concussion as the exhausted driver of the radio tender he travelled in with the Advance Party missed a bend.<sup>165</sup>

Instead of going by rail and truck, the Rear Party of the squadron (ten ML and 59 RAAF men with approximately 200 tons of equipment and additional building materials plus 11 vehicles including three water tenders with a 400-gallon tank just bought by Dutch Hq) embarked in Sydney to travel to Darwin by ship. The ship left harbour on 31 December 1942, arrived at Darwin on 12 January and the Rear Party arrived at McDonald by truck on 14 January 1943.<sup>166</sup> The war base was more or less ready by then with a lot of tents and a number of in part improvised buildings all spread out in two locations called North and South in the Eucalyptus wood. The *Compagnie* and the staff of S/Ldr Dawson had also sent along to McDonald goods and equipment necessary for canteens and messes plus articles necessary for leisure and spare-time activities. But, as yet, nobody had any spare-time, there was no electricity in the tents, barely enough food and water was rationed. Nevertheless, moral was high, finally operational!<sup>167</sup>

No 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron had become a part of North-Western Area Command RAAF. The first mission, a sea reconnaissance, was flown on 19 January (local time) on orders from the Air Operations Room (AOR) of North Western Area Headquarters at Coomalie Creek. The main tasks of the squadron were officially defined as follows:

- A. Reconnaissance flights in three sea sectors of the occupied NEI.
- B. Day and night attacks on Japanese installations.
- C. Anti-shipping for which a stand-by Flight was to be held ready 24 hours a day.
- D. Photo reconnaissance of special targets (although this task could not be carried out by the first crew shift due to the lack of photographic equipment, although some limited photo work could be done during search/reconnaissance missions).
- E. Supply flights in support of NEI guerrilla troops.
- F. Defence of the Australian mainland in case of a Japanese invasion.<sup>168</sup>

The requested RSU support had been arranged by the RAAF and No 1 Repair and Salvage Unit (1 RSU) at Manbulloo received the job to support the squadron with repair and inspection work. Ordered B-25 and R2600 Cyclone spare parts and spare engines were redirected to 1 RSU from 26 December. The RAAF also took over the requisitioning of spares and 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron when at McDonald had to obtain its parts for aircraft and engine maintenance from 1 RSU. Unfortunately, the personnel at this RAAF unit had never seen a B-25 before and in January 1943 had not yet received any B-25 or R2600 parts. No 1 RSU also was not yet equipped properly and under-staffed. After 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron had sent its first aircraft to Manbulloo for repairs and 100 hours inspections, starting with the N5-128 for landing gear repairs on 2 February, the squadron for many weeks had to send parties of technical personnel to 1 RSU to assist. Worse, 1 RSU was unable to keep its B-25 and R2600 part stocks at the required levels. The squadron was operational now and the parts supply should have priority but the aircraft availability was quickly worsening instead of improving in part due to the lack of sufficient RSU support. General items and supplies were delivered by No 9 Stores Depot RAAF at Gorrie also in the NW Area, which gave no problems. Major repair work was done by Depots out of the area, including No 3 Aircraft Depot RAAF at Amberley, Brisbane.<sup>169</sup>

### Training continued

When the squadron was transferred to the war zone it had not yet completed the B-25 operational training. In January 1943 it started with 42 pilots not counting SM Reijns but in the second half of that month eight of them (Kap De Vries, Elts Van der Schroeff, Van den Broek, Hofman, Rab, Ekels and Van Balkom and Tlt Veenstra) were declared non-operational for various reasons. Reijns started flying again in January to become a reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot, resulting in 35 operational pilots. Reserve (operational) pilots per 19 January were: Tlt Hulscher (1<sup>st</sup> pilot), Sgt G.D. Brinkman (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot), Tlt A. Rijnberg (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot, also the squadron dentist), SM Reijns (1<sup>st</sup> pilot) and Elt Tander (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot). Most of the reserve pilots of which Tander was temporarily flying as observer in an operational crew had not fully completed their training on the B-25. There also were not enough trained crew members yet to make up additional crews. The squadron started operations with only 15 crews therefore. There were two reserve bombardiers, one ML and one RAAF, but no

fully trained reserve WOAGs. A group of approximately 20 ML and RAAF flying personnel still had to finish B-25 training (excluding 1<sup>st</sup> pilots who had not been able to finish the night flying training).<sup>170</sup>



Post war photograph of A.J. de Vries when he served in the RNLAF. His efforts during the war days were appreciated by his superiors and he eventually rose to the rank of generaal-majoor (major-general), retiring in 1965 (NIMH).

This necessitated some changes in the top of the flying echelon. Kap (observer) Jessurun remained Operations Officer but also became chief bombardier and observer in one of the crews while Elt (later temporary Kap) Winckel became deputy Operations Officer also remaining a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot in one of the crews and Flight CO. Fiedeldij, a temporary LKol now, remained the squadron CO during the larger part of the first operational period of 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron (until 11 June) but deputy CO Kap De Vries who had been *Hoofd Vliegdiens*t (Head of Flying) already at

Canberra remained responsible for the B-25 training and standards of the flying personnel. Although he had been a reserve pilot De Vries was taken off operational flying by Fiedeldij and temporarily became a full-time instructor on 23 January 1943. De Vries replaced Elt Van Balkom as instructor-pilot but much of his work was on the ground as the planning of the B-25 training and especially organizing the flying training from McDonald was a very complex affair. De Vries also did a part of the ground instruction and made final check-out flights with 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots who had to become (reserve) 1<sup>st</sup> pilot. He received much assistance from Engineering Officer Kap Besançon who always knew when a B-25 was available. Test pilot Elt Van der Schroeff, apart from giving assistance as a B-25 flying instructor when needed and completing his own operational training, also took trainee crew members along on test and travel flights.

With the shortage of three crews plus another three “immediate reserve” crews Fiedeldij gave the B-25 training a high priority. Apart from De Vries, also assigned as a full-time instructor were pilot Elt A.G. Ekels (as a navigation and meteorology instructor, who succeeded the transferred Elt Van Balkom in this role), WOAG SM F.J.M. van Wylick (who succeeded the transferred SM Sweitser in January) and RAAF WOAG/radio officer F/O Cohen who switched places with F/O Mc Tavish on 23 March to become operational (as Squadron Wireless Leader) again. Van Balkom and Sweitser were transferred in January 1943 as they were needed at the N.E.I.-T.A.B. in Brisbane. De Vries, despite the lack of facilities and under very difficult circumstances at McDonald, successfully started a B-25 OTU.<sup>171</sup>

RAAF flying personnel had to follow a full operational training as nobody had followed an OTU course, although some came from a squadron or from an improvised squadron at a Service Flying Training School. They had flown a number of months on Avro Ansons for anti-submarine patrols. The training on the B-25 was largely done when at Canberra but in the period of 1 September to 1 December 1942 bad weather had hindered the flying training.<sup>172</sup> One of the ML bombardiers, one ML observer following a refresher training since his posting in January (Elt M. Horstink) and approximately ten of the ML and RAAF WOAGs had either to finish their B-25 training or had to follow the full B-25 operational training. The RAAF started to post additional and replacement flying personnel in February, first one WOAG (Sgt A.J. Cheek), then on 8 and

9 March air observers F/O W.J. Stevens and F/O A. Simson and Sgts R.L. Morrison and N.G.W. Morris, followed on 21 March by two F/Sgts WOAG (R. Flower and C.H. Looney) and four Sgts WOAG (B.L. Cox, A.W. Coffin, R.W.J. Enright and J.A. Laves) and finally on 31 March navigator-bombardier (NavB) F/Sgt W.J. O'Keeffe. O'Keeffe was the only one with operational experience as he had already flown 50 operational sorties in the NE Area with No 7 Squadron RAAF at Ross River near Townsville (Qld). He had flown on Department of Aircraft Production Beaufort medium-bombers albeit for convoy escort only. All had to follow a B-25 type transition and operational training at 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron.<sup>173</sup>



N5-131, on its way to Brisbane for instalment of the auxiliary wing tanks, on 7 February 1943 at Charleville with its crew and passengers. Front row on the left Sgt V.N. Jansen (WOAG), standing 2<sup>nd</sup> from left P/O H.J. Mc Tavish (top turret gunner), 4<sup>th</sup> from the left Elt L.J. Janssen (Captain, instructor pilot), 5<sup>th</sup> from the left Sgt H.W. Donk (mechanic), second from the right Sgt H.J. Quartel (mechanic) and 3<sup>rd</sup> from the right Tlt F. Pelder (then trainee 1<sup>st</sup> pilot) (V.N. Jansen, deceased, via Ingrid Schodel).

The pilot training was largely concluded but three of the KNILM/KLM pilots and some of the reserve pilots had not been able to complete the B-25 training. The 1<sup>st</sup> pilots in the crews had, apart from a number who

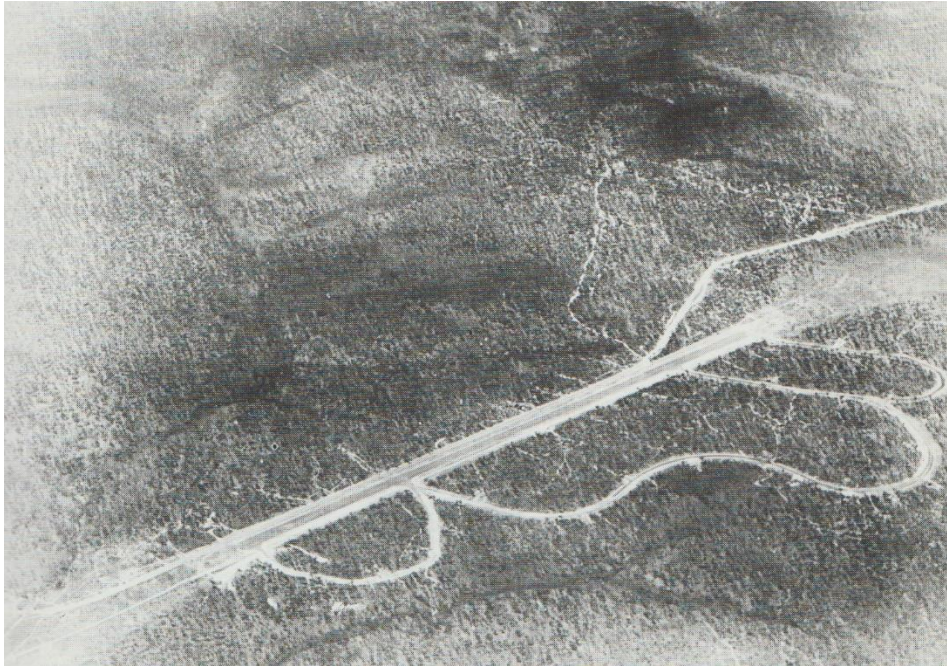


had not completed the night flying training due to the weather conditions in October and November 1942. As all were considered to have been current in night and instrument flying when they came to Australia this had no priority, however. Although the squadron had pressed on the RAAF CO of Canberra, an airfield without runway lighting, had eventually forbidden night take-offs with flare paths. In November 1942 a few came very close to becoming a serious accident. To get some more flexibility some of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots were trained as (reserve) 1<sup>st</sup> pilot, a few already when the squadron was still at Canberra, a few more at McDonald.<sup>174</sup>

Training with a spare B-25 whenever one could be missed for a day continued from McDonald, Darwin, Coomalie Creek (where a bombing and gunnery range was available) and a few other airfields in the Darwin area. Most of the training was combined with test and ferry flights or transport flights for example to pick up fresh vegetables or spare parts, or to fly personnel from McDonald to Darwin. Training was also done on operational flights during the flying out to and the return flight from the target area back to Darwin, the trainees flying as (an extra) crew member or as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot. The training was concluded with an operational flight on a mission selected with the Operations Officer. For example, on 3 March 1943 on a mission with eight B-25s to Toeal in the Kei Islands five of the trainees flew along, the WOAGs Sgt C. van Ginkel and Sgt J.B. Franklin RAAF, the NavB Sgt G. Dreese and the pilots SM G. Tijmons (a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot cross-trained as a reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot) and Elt Rab (who just finished his initial B-25 training as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and was to be further trained as a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot in April). SM Van Wylick also flew along to become an operational crew member again. SM Tijmons, SM Van Wylick and Sgt Dreese were formed into a new (temporary) crew with Sgt K. van Bremen as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and trainee F/Sgt T.E. Williams as top turret gunner for further crew training and flew their second mission on 12 March.<sup>175</sup>

Instructor Elt Ekels was loaned to the 319<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron (319<sup>th</sup> BS) USAAF at Fenton (Consolidated B-24 heavy bombers) as a navigation and meteorology instructor about a week earlier to return on 21 March. He continued B-25 training immediately to earn an initial rating as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot, being ready in a couple of days, but was then seconded to Fenton for a second time late March. The secondments were arranged via the Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq at the request of the USAAF which was confronted with navigation problems on long range missions to

targets in the NEI archipelago and Dutch New Guinea. Elt (observer) K. Akkerman of the crew of Flight CO Elt Moorrees, which crew was split up, temporarily replaced Ekels as an instructor. Akkerman was subsequently seconded as liaison officer/bomb aimer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> BG in April to study the tactical use of the B-25 by this unit, to return to the squadron on 15 May.



McDonald as photographed in March 1943 from a B-25 during a training flight by probably Elt M. Horstink (NIMH).

The B-25 training of the initial group of trainees was concluded in April 1943 and most of the instructors and a large part of the remaining trainees were put on the operations schedule in that month. Instructor Elt Ekels returned from Fenton on approximately 17 April to become 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the crew of Flight CO Elt Wetters. The 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot of the latter had been a reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot and now got his own crew. Elt Moorrees also occasionally gave instruction but left the squadron for the Melbourne Detachment KNIL to be transferred to the RNMFS on 10 April 1943. He became Firing Control instructor with the B-25 Operational Training of the school.<sup>176</sup>

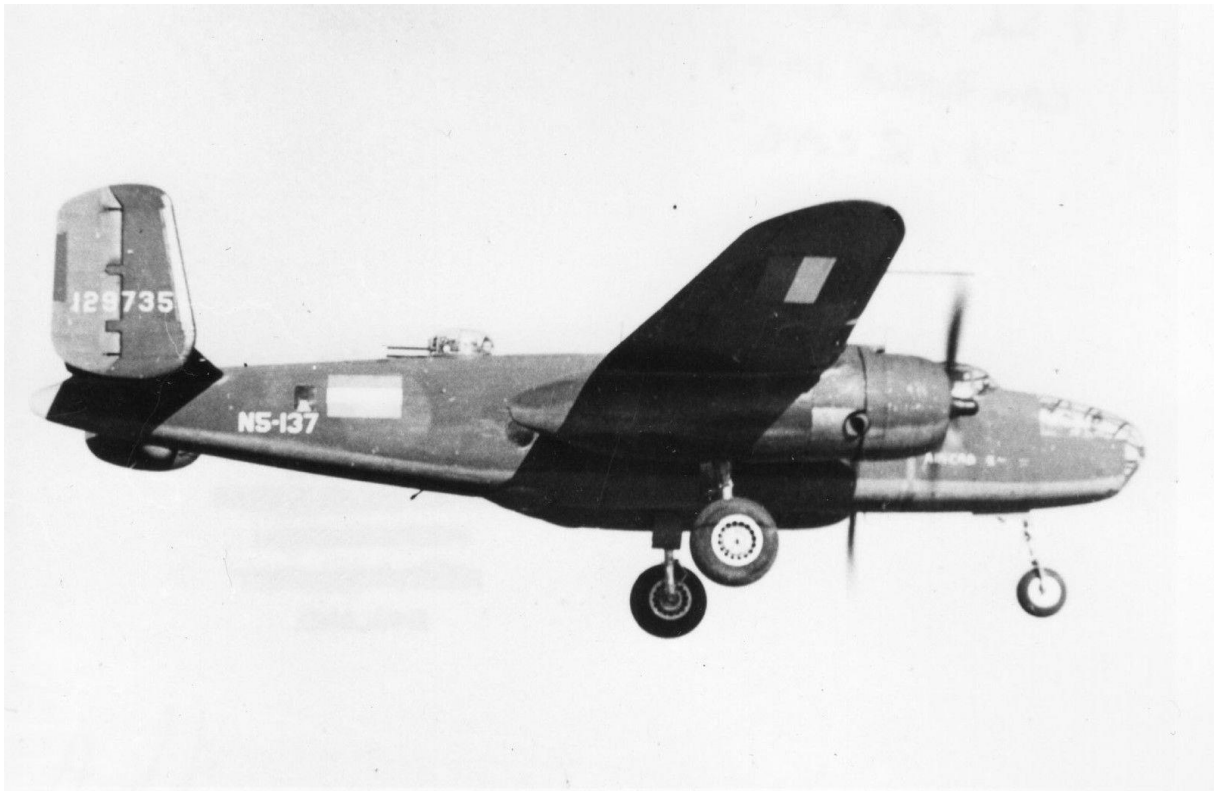
In the period of 15 to 25 April three dedicated reserve crews were formed with as Captain Elts Hulscher (a reserve pilot from 19 January 1943), Rab and Deenik, the three crews including a total of ten of the trainees. They temporarily formed the new Flight VI (reserve) with as Flight CO Elt

Janssen. Rab had become a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot and became Captain of former trainees Sgt Morrison RAAF (observer) and F/Sgt Flower RAAF and Sgt Enright RAAF (WOAG, respectively top turret gunner). Elt Deenik (in an operational crew from the start) also had been further trained from 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot to 1<sup>st</sup> pilot and became Captain of former trainees SM Reijns (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot), Sgt Morris RAAF (observer) and Sgt P. Rozema and Sgt Coffin RAAF (WOAG, respectively top turret gunner). Elt Hulscher had followed a combat gas course with the USAAF in the second half of February and during March and became Captain of a reserve crew shortly after his return in April as well. Former trainees assigned to his crew were F/O Stevens RAAF (observer) and Sgt A. Maas and Sgt Cox RAAF (WOAG, respectively top turret gunner). He flew with Elt Janssen as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot, who also was reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot. Elt Wetters (CO Flight V) took over Flight III of Moorrees mid-April and a new Flight V was formed led by Adj J.E. de Jongh with apart from his own crew those of Captains SM W. Eikelboom and SM H. van den Berg. Trainee Sgt G.F. Prichard and Sgt Williams (formerly temporary crew Tijmons) became WOAG, respectively top turret gunner in the crew of SM Van den Berg.<sup>177</sup> Also six RNMFS trained pilots were included in the crews as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots (see below).

When the training of the initial groups of pilots and crew members was almost completed Kap De Vries left on 12 April for Batchelor, just assigned as the new squadron base, for a one day visit as a member of a group of staff personnel that was to take over command and prepare for the arrival of an advance party. Former trainee Elt Van den Broek, just ready with the B-25 training and to command the advance party, also came along and was 1<sup>st</sup> pilot of the B-25 used for transport. The squadron staff group further consisted of LKol Fiedeldij, S/Ldr Dawson and Kap Besançon. Van den Broek was transferred to Batchelor on the next day and left on 13 April as head of the 47 men strong advance party (in fact a working party) that had to ready "War Base II", as the Dutch called it.<sup>178</sup>

De Vries was back on the operations schedule mid-April as a reserve crew member but first made two operational flights on 21 and 29 April 1943 combined with check rides to check-out two newly trained 1<sup>st</sup> pilots. He first flew as instructor in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot seat with Elt Rab, Elt Hulscher acting as FCO. This was a formal second check-out at the request of Hulscher and Janssen (both instructor-pilots) but Rab passed with some

advices. De Vries again combined an operational flight with a check ride to formally check-out Elt Ekels during a night mission on 29 April with Elt Wetters acting as FCO. Van der Schroeff flew as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with mission lead Janssen and formally passed as operational (reserve) 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot. He became a reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot in May. With these flights the original OTU effort aimed at reaching 18 operational 1<sup>st</sup> line crews with a few reserves in April had been completed. LKol Fiedeldij reported the KNIL Hq in Melbourne already on 28 April that his squadron had 18 crews.



The N5-137 AIRCAB II on 24 February 1943 when returning from 1 RSU to McDonald, a flight (as a few on the next day from McDonald) also used for the B-25 training of crew members. The aircraft was again used for training on 8 March just before an inspection and on 11 March 1943 just after the inspection, one of the flights combined with a test flight on the latter date (collection Edward Rogers).

De Vries fairly regularly flew on operations as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot or 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and sometimes as observer (for example on 4 May during the search for a number of missing RAAF Spitfire pilots) from then on. He still had a part-time operational training job to do as new flying personnel of both the ML and RAAF arrived in April. The already available personnel also had to be regularly checked and the pilots rated on their night flying, formation flying and navigation ability. De Vries remained the squadron training officer and chief flying instructor and with a rising sick rate among the

pilots, reaching alarming proportions in May, had to make ever more training flights himself as there were very few pilots left fit enough to fly his trainees next to operations.<sup>179</sup>

A sizable instruction effort was still needed in the period of April-June 1943. The squadron suffered relatively high losses in the first months of operations from McDonald and the number of crews had to be kept at a minimum of 18. On 21 and 25 April 1943 the first groups of RNMFS trained pilots and observers arrived at McDonald which had followed a B-25 type transition only at the B-25 OTU of the RNMFS. Six pilots (Tlts H.E. Moquette, J. Ketting and J.B.F. de Knecht and Sgts C. Visser, A.J. van der Heiden and A. Bouwman) and two observers (Tlt L.W. Hansen and Tlt P.L. Zeydel) of the ML were posted. The two ML observers were trained on the Sperry S1 bombsight and were also Sperry bombsight instructors. They had to be converted to the much inferior Estoppey bombsight first and were not ready for operations until mid-May. It would take until July before the squadron received the first Sperry sight from the RAAF. After a few days of acclimatisation, lectures and briefings the six pilots were quickly shown the ropes, all initially flying as a 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot.<sup>180</sup>

In April also WOAGs SM Van Weezel (grounded with a concussion in December 1942), SMs Van Hoof and De Bruyn (who had been temporarily posted in a staff position), Sgt F.M. Trijnes and Sgt L.H. Qayle RAAF started training. One more RAAF WOAG was posted on 23 April (Sgt Cameron, initials unknown). On 24 April four Sgts air gunner (AG) of the RAAF arrived. Two more observers, F/O W.G. Sapsford and F/O T.G. Edwards and one NavB F/Sgt J.W.P. Mac Carthy followed on 29 April 1943. Apart from the air gunners they were ready in May and June, although Sgt Qayle would never fly on operations because of medical reasons. During April also the night flying training of the (reserve) 1<sup>st</sup> pilots was continued.<sup>181</sup>

The first week of May, the final week of operations from McDonald, postings of flying personnel continued. The RAAF posted one Sgt WOAG (Sgt W.H. Tonkin) and two Sgts AG while one Sgt AG departed on 3 May. All remaining air gunners were transferred later in May as their training proved insufficient to be able to successfully follow the B-25 operational training. Eight new B-25C-15-NAs arrived at the squadron between 31 March and 4 May 1943 while six of the original aircraft were

lost resulting in slightly more hours available for training flights. The organization of the flying echelon was changed on approximately 7 May. The temporary Flight VI was dissolved and its crews were assigned to Flights I, II and III. The Flights gained, respectively, the crew of Hulscher, Deenik and Rab as a dedicated reserve crew.<sup>182</sup> The main party of 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron moved to Batchelor on 8 and 9 May where the B-25 training was continued.

### Living and working conditions, ML personnel shortages

The Main Party had taken along to McDonald many materials and equipment for the canteens and the messes and also quite a lot of articles and goods for leisure and spare time activities. The latter,



Morning roll-call of the ML flying personnel allocated for operations during the day. The Flights at attention (sort of) at McDonald approximately February 1943 (NIMH).

perhaps, in part a waste of money as the circumstances and climate at McDonald largely restricted leisure to drinking the beer ration, chatting, gambling or playing poker in a mess, sleeping, reading and for some playing music or throw a volleyball. McDonald also was an unhealthy place to be with its usual temperature of 35 plus degrees Celcius and the large number of flies spreading deceases. The sick rate of both the RAAF and the ML personnel, all living in tents, exploded soon after arrival. The number of operational crews due to the high number of pilots

and crew members on sick leave for a longer period of time even had to be reduced from 18 to 12 during May 1943. Often also operational crews had to be taken off a mission at the last minute because of illnesses of members that came to light when on standby at Darwin. The squadron soon after arrival at McDonald started to utilize all travel flights to Brisbane, and later a regular weekly flight to Brisbane, to buy fresh vegetables, fruit and eggs to be able to make the food rations (largely tinned beef and pumpkin) for the personnel somewhat healthier. The encampment also was blacked-out regularly, whenever a warning came in about a Japanese bomber formation approaching Darwin, making it harder to get enough sleep which further enlarged the health problems. McDonald was never attacked, though.<sup>183</sup>

Apart from the sick rate there was a shortage of both flying and ground personnel with the ML personnel contingent to begin with. In April, fortunately, the RNMFS started to deliver the first B-25 trained flying personnel and on 28 April the squadron reached the minimum of 18 1<sup>st</sup> line flying crews. There were two Vdgs (future technical officers) and five mechanic and assistant mechanic trainees working at the Technical Service and the aircraft Flights. All were formally posted as technical officer, respectively (assistant) mechanic in May. A new sergeant-major arrived at McDonald and was posted at the Technical Service in February 1943. Enlarging the ML ground personnel strength any further was difficult, though. Via the KNIL Hq in Melbourne it was tried to get the transferred KNILM and KLM personnel back but this effort failed. Dutchmen living in Australia who could be enlisted were no longer available and it were only the occasional few men who volunteered after an escape from NEI islands or KNIL personnel that opted for a position with the ML who were posted to 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron. Small additions at best although the KNIL Hq did try hard to find more personnel. The first groups of new ML ground personnel, to be trained by the RAAF, were recruited in May-June 1943.<sup>184</sup>

The ML personnel strength decreased from 253 on 31 December 1942 to 243 on 1 April 1943, of which a total of 71 was flying personnel (including the CO, the deputy CO and the Operations Officer).<sup>185</sup> The strength had decreased by operational losses, a flying accident and the transfer of some personnel, although two officers and one NCO of the KNIL could be posted in the period of January-March. Due to operational

losses and the transfer of a pilot to the RNMFS the ML strength on 1 May still stood at 243 of which 73 flying personnel (including the CO, the deputy CO and the Operations Officer), despite the arrival of eight men from the RNMFS. The number of mechanics was 68, the original 61 mechanics minus three killed in a flying accident and the ten armament mechanics and assistant armament mechanics (Fitter-Armourers and Armourers). The RAAF personnel strength on 1 April 1943 was 345 and 366 (probably including around 20 men from 1 RSU, see below) one month later.<sup>186</sup>



LKOl Fiedeldij in front of his tent approximately May 1943. His personnel usually shared a tent with the number of inhabitants depending on rank and status. One to 12 persons and a maximum of four for flying personnel (NIMH).

Communication with the KNIL Hq, fortunately, became a lot easier after the office of the *Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten* (CL, air forces CO) became operational on 21 April 1943. The head of this office was LKOl (pilot-observer) Te Roller who became the administrative CO of the operational ML units with the RAAF and USAAF. He later became the (full) CO of the N.E.I. Personnel and Equipment Pool (established on 1 September 1943) and the N.E.I. Transport Section Melbourne (N.E.I.-T.S.M., established on 1 February 1944) as well. The latter two units were not under RAAF operational command. The activation of the CL position, especially for LKOl Fiedeldij, was a great relief. No more micro-management by LKOl Van Straten who knew nothing about flying



operations and the B-25 and created an additional administrative workload next to the already quite large amount of RAAF Forms that had to be filled in regularly and the existing scheduled correspondence with Dutch Headquarters and NW Area Hq.<sup>187</sup> Te Roller came over to McDonald at the end of April, visiting Fenton and Batchelor with Fiedeldij on 1 May. He flew as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot along with Kap Winckel on an operational mission on 3 May.<sup>188</sup> Te Roller was rather shocked by the harsh conditions at McDonald and promised more support from Melbourne. He also discussed the personnel policy concerning the assignment and training of flying personnel with Fiedeldij, who had discussions with LKol Van Straten via telegrams and letters about this subject during April. Te Roller agreed with Fiedeldij's choices.<sup>189</sup>

### Serviceability problems again and aircraft modifications

Aircraft serviceability when operating from McDonald quickly became a problem. The B-25s had to make travel flights between McDonald and Darwin from where the operations were flown. The aircraft, consequently, quickly reached 100 hours and had to be sent for inspection to 1 RSU at Manbulloo. The first B-25 that went to 1 RSU for its 100 hours inspection was the N5-145 on 2 March, the second one, the N5-129, followed two days later.<sup>190</sup> Interceptions by fighters during operations caused damage which often could not be repaired within 48 hours at the squadron and therefore had to be repaired at 1 RSU as well. This unit was under-staffed and had problems keeping the B-25 and R2600 Cyclone part stocks at the required level, however.

Serviceability was 75% on 17 January but dropped to 50% on 21 January and 31% on the next day, becoming 6% on 31 January. The latter extremely low percentage was caused by the fact that the six serviceable aircraft had flown a mission on 30 January after which one of the six crashed while the remaining five all needed maintenance on 31 January. The serviceability percentage varied greatly, during February between 21% and 86%, due to war damage repairs, scheduled maintenance and modifications.<sup>191</sup> The modifications concerned the B-25Cs which were not yet modified with auxiliary wing tip tanks and apart from one were so, one at a time, with No 3 Aircraft Depot RAAF at Amberley. On 6 February the N5-131 was the first unmodified B-25C that left for Amberley to return on 21 February. The seventh and final aircraft

modified at 3 AD was the N5-128 which left on 1 May and returned on 22 May 1943 (see Appendix 2 for details).

The Bendix turrets remained troublesome, air gunners having to limit the length of bursts because the trembling caused a large “spread”. Mr Sooms the factory representative posted in Brisbane at Allied Air Forces Hq visited McDonald for advice on 21 February, arriving with the N5-131. He returned to Brisbane on 5 March. His visit did not help much as there were no spare parts and no special tools for turret maintenance available in Australia.<sup>192</sup> Spare parts were first taken off the N5-142 which plane was declared unserviceable per 16 January and robbed of all operational equipment including both turrets. A representative of General Kenney’s Hq inspecting 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron in February noted the difficulties in acquiring spares via the RAAF and arranged on 15 February that spares necessary for maintenance could be drawn directly from USAAF stores.<sup>193</sup> Although it took about a month before this arrangement was implemented it overcame the difficulties to a great extent. When the 43<sup>rd</sup> Service Squadron at Fenton actually started to deliver spares and started to repair airframe and engine parts for the squadron the serviceability slowly improved.<sup>194</sup> The N5-142 could be restored to flying condition in April but remained a non-operational trainer/transport as there were no spare turrets.<sup>195</sup>

The average daily aircraft strength and average daily serviceability (in brackets) developed as follows,

February 1943: 15.3 (6.5),

March 1943: 11.2 (5.1),

April 1943: 14.9 (5.7)<sup>196</sup>

During April serviceability quickly worsened due to battle damage and necessary inspections and repairs (including much work on the turrets) until only two B-25s were available for operations. The former despite the arrival of seven of the eight promised new B-25C-15-NA attrition replacements. On 30 April from a total strength of 19 aircraft, 12 were in maintenance at McDonald, four were with 1 RSU (where 100 hours inspections usually took around ten days) and one B-25 was serviceable but unfit for operations (the N5-142).<sup>197</sup> Fortunately, four Mitchells were operationally serviceable again on 3 May and the final new B-25C-15-NA

arrived the next day.<sup>198</sup> The new C-15-NA aircraft were popular with the crews, especially as they were the only aircraft of the squadron equipped with an autopilot. As the C-NA aircraft, they had the fuel lines for the instalment of auxiliary wing tip tanks. They also had factory fitted flame dampening engine exhaust stacks.<sup>199</sup> The latter were retrofitted to the other B-25s with 3 AD at Amberley. First aircraft retrofitted was the N5-138 which left for Brisbane on 12 April.<sup>200</sup>

Although 1 RSU was not all that quick in inspecting and repairing B-25s mainly due to personnel shortages its effort could not be missed. In April 1943 there were, however, plans to transfer 1 RSU to the NE Area. As there would be no replacement RSU directly available it was decided to form a small RSU with 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron itself as an interim solution and to transfer 20 RAAF personnel from 1 RSU to this detachment. This was no real solution as the squadron had very little equipment available for the RSU job and could not get any additional equipment such as cranes from the RAAF or the USAAF. The squadron could only hope for the best as No 1 RSU RAAF would stop all support per 1 June 1943.<sup>201</sup>

The first operations from McDonald.



Forming up during the travel flight from McDonald to Darwin approximately January 1943 (collection author).

Flying from McDonald started on 10 January and until 17 January 28 sorties were flown for orientation, training and transport. From 11 and until 14 January four Curtiss P-40 fighters of the RAAF were at McDonald for firing control exercises with the B-25s. In January also several sea reconnaissance (orientation) sorties were flown. Initially three Flights were active or on stand-by for operations at Darwin, one Flight on stand-by for shipping targets at Darwin and one Flight training at McDonald.<sup>202</sup>

The first mission was flown on 18 January (Zulu time, as are all mentioned dates of operations in this section; local time=Zulu plus nine and a half hours). Three B-25s of the Flight commanded by Elt Winckel searched for ships at Dobo (Aroe Islands, to the south of western Dutch New Guinea) but no ships were found.<sup>203</sup> The next day two Flights flew a reconnaissance/attack mission. Three Mitchells led by Tlt Wetters successfully bombed Toeal harbour (Kei Islands) and three others led by Elt Janssen, but without success, Fuiloro harbour (also called Lautem, Portugese Timor). During the latter attack two out of five intercepting Mitsubishi Navy Os (called *Zekes* by the allies at the time) were probably shot down. In the Flight of Wetters the crew of Tlt B.J.Q Grummels had Sgt (mechanic) J.Th.C. Rombouts (former flight mechanic D.VI.A. who had flown many hours in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot seat on Lockheed Lodestars) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot seat. 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Vdg Ch.M. Fisscher had fallen ill and had to be taken to hospital at Darwin. Attached to this crew also was Cpl N.L. Harvey (photographer RAAF) who flew along to photograph harbour installations and individual ships.

Two Flights on 20 January bombed the Fuiloro harbour (the Flight of Elt Moorrees), respectively the harbour of Dobo (Elt Winckel), the bombs of both Flights missing the target. On the return flight to Darwin a Japanese float plane was shot down by the latter Flight. A first major raid with nine B-25s (the flights of Elt Winckel, Elt Janssen and Elt Cooke) was flown on 23 January to Dilli airbase (Timor). LKoi Fiedeldij flew as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the lead aircraft with 1<sup>st</sup> pilot Elt Winckel and with Tlt N.J.H. Daanen as FCO. Unfortunately, the target was obscured by heavy cloud formations. One Japanese fighter attacked on the return flight but did not cause any harm despite several attacks at close range.<sup>204</sup>

Other attacks against Timor (shipping and airstrips) followed, all being carried out from Darwin but in most cases the weather prevented finding reported ships or did not allow bombing. The Mitchells often had to operate in bad weather with tropical storms, heavy rain and immense cloud decks. It was the wet monsoon season with pretty extreme weather phenomena, things a part of the crews still had to get used to. Six B-25s carried out another attack at dawn against Dilli on 31 January but after an uneventful night flight no bombs could be dropped on the target because of the weather. Two of the returning aircraft had to be forced landed due to fuel shortage, both without casualties and one without damage on the emergency landing strip at Port Keats. Mitchell N5-139, one of the two B-25Cs with auxiliary outer wing tanks and which had carried extra bombs instead of an operational bomb-bay tank, had to be forced landed in a marshy field near Port Keats. It was a write off. During January (in 13 days) a total of 34 operational sorties were flown, 18 day bombing attack and 16 (armed) ship search sorties. A major problem was the quality of the American Estoppey bombsight and the use of British "sharp nose" bombs in combination with this sight, for which combination there were no bombing tables.<sup>205</sup>

Four Mitchells, the Flight of Elt Winckel plus the N5-133 (of the Flight of Elt Moorrees temporarily led by Tlt F. Olsen) flown by a makeshift reserve crew with as Captain reserve pilot SM Reijns, attacked the town of Dobo on 3 February. Installations and buildings were left on fire. The next day the squadron was visited by Air Commodore F.M. Bladin, the AOC NW Area, who wanted to be briefed about the serviceability problems. The attack on Dobo was repeated on 5 February with eight Mitchells from the Flights of Tlt Wetters and Elt Cooke plus two aircraft of the Flight of Elt Winckel, resulting in big fires. As during the first attack, no fighters were encountered. Although the previous attack encountered intense anti-aircraft fire (AA) this time there was no AA at all. Dobo, Dilli, Fuiloro and other targets were attacked regularly and without losses but on 5 February a second Mitchell, the N5-132, Captain SM L. Schalk, was lost in an accident. The B-25 crashed shortly after take-off from McDonald for a travel flight to Darwin, preceding the afore mentioned mission to Dobo. Nine men including three ML mechanics and a RAAF passenger were killed.<sup>206</sup> Dobo was attacked again by nine B-25s of the



Remnants of the crashed N5-132, three miles north of McDonald. Due to exploded bombs and burning fuel very little was left of the aircraft. The presumed causes were the overload take-off weight in combination with the premature withdrawal of the flaps by the pilot. Casualties, apart from the crew of which the top turret gunner died en route to the hospital, were three ML mechanics (see Appendix 1). Also a passenger, RAAF telephone operator LAC M.T. Palamountain, was killed (Chr. van Reesch, deceased).

Flights of Elt Moorrees, Elt Hulscher and Tlt Wetters on 8 February amidst moderate AA with large fires as a result. An attack on Dilli when fired at. All aircraft harbour followed on 15 February. Seven B-25s led by Elt Moorrees and Tlt Wetters found no ships and successfully bombed the airfield amidst moderate AA. One fighter attacked twice on the return flight but broke off its attack both times when fired at. All aircraft returned undamaged.<sup>207</sup>

Two Flights of three B-25s each in turn attacked a ship in the harbour of Dilli on 18 February but without scoring any hits on the 6-8,000 tons freighter. Some damage by near-misses was thought likely, though. During this attack two *Zekes* intercepted, each attacking a Flight. The one attacking the Flight of Elt Winckel was probably shot down as it dived away smoking and was not seen again. Three more fighters took off from Dilli and joined the attack. The Flight of Tlt Wetters (FCO in the lead aircraft flown by pilots Elt Oudraad and Tlt J.A. Hartevelt) for over

30 minutes endured a fierce fight. The air gunners shot down the lone original fighter but Mitchell N5-144 was badly shot up by the three newly arrived *Zekes*. With 1<sup>st</sup> pilot Tlt Grummels killed, 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Vdg Fisscher had to ditch the plane which was flying on one engine and had a damaged tail. The other five B-25s closed-up and turned back to draw away the fire of the fighters which then disappeared. The final attack before the ditching probably took the life of nose gunner/bombardier Sgt R.G. Tyler RAAF, one of the seven cross-trained WOAGs. The remaining crew members, two seriously wounded and two lightly wounded, were rescued by the Australian destroyer HMAS *Vendetta*.<sup>208</sup>



Readying a 500 lbs bomb during loading procedure testing and training by Kap Jessurun (right) and Elt Oudraad (just visible in the back) in February 1943. On the left side LAC R.C. Harrison RAAF (AWM, NWA 0152 via Ingrid Schodel).

A major raid against Toedal (Kei Islands) with nine Mitchells from the Flights of Elt Winckel, Elt Moorrees and Tlt F. Pelder (who replaced Elt Cooke and was one of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilots cross-trained as reserve 1<sup>st</sup> pilot) was flown on 23 February. No ships could be seen and Toedal could not be bombed and not even be reached by a part of the B-25s due to very bad weather. LKoi Fiedeldij was to fly along as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the lead aircraft but he had to attend a conference at the Air Operations Room of NW Area Hq in Coomalie Creek. One of the returning aircraft picked him

up. No further attacks could be flown in February as the B-25s were dispersed to Daly Waters and Manbulloo (apart from one Flight) on 26 and 27 February in connection with an expected Japanese attack on the southeast coast of New Guinea. During February 43 operational sorties were made, all on bombing missions. The attacks had all been carried out in day light, although during January one night training flight was made, a try-out of one hour.<sup>209</sup>

The B-25s returned from their dispersal on 2 March. Eight Mitchells, all the serviceable aircraft at that time, bombed harbour installations and ships in Toeal harbour on 3 March, operating in three Flights led by Elt Winckel, Tlt L. Bal (who replaced Elt Cooke, two aircraft only) and Elt Moorrees. LKol Fiedeldij came along as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot with Tlt Bal, 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot Sgt J.A.M. Hoogveld flying as FCO. A successful attack this time. As no ships were seen portions of the town were bombed as ordered. Fires and rising black smoke suggested a possible hit on a gasoline dump. Two of the aircraft could not release the bombs and one other a part of the bombs. All were dumped above sea. The attack was repeated on 7 March with six B-25s led by Tlt Bal and Tlt Wetters of which the N5-141 had to turn back en route with engine trouble. The northern portion of the town was bombed following an attack by Lockheed Hudsons of No 2 Squadron RAAF (based at Batchelor Field also in the NW Area). All bombs fell into the target area but no damage assessment could be made due to dense smoke. As on 3 March there was only moderate AA and no intercepts.<sup>210</sup>

A mission that was intercepted was an attack with six Mitchells led by Elt Winckel and Tlt Wetters against the airstrip at Fuiloro on 12 March. The Mitchells were escorted by six Bristol Beaufighters of No 31 Squadron RAAF from Coomalie Creek amidst very bad weather. One Flight turned back due to the weather and a defective artificial horizon in the lead aircraft flown by Wetters. The three that came through, with two of the Beaufighters, bombed through clouds. All bombs fell into the target area but due to the clouds no results were visible. Four Zekes intercepted of which one was shot down and one probably so. Sgt Hutchison flying as top turret gunner in the N5-137 with as Captain Tlt Hagers was wounded. The crippled N5-137 was flown back to Darwin on one engine where it made an emergency landing resulting in minor damage.<sup>211</sup>





A Mitchell above the crushed stone runway of McDonald. Tire life was very short due to the rough surface which was only sealed with bitumen after 18 Squadron had left for Batchelor (authors collection).

Three days later two B-25s searching for ships between Dobo and Kaimana Bay (southwest Dutch New Guinea) attacked and hit a ship near Dobo on their return flight. The crews also discovered a small convoy escorted by a destroyer. A Flight of three Mitchells led by Elt Moorrees was sent out to bomb the convoy. It attacked three Japanese freight vessels in the vicinity of Dobo together with four Beaufighters of No 31 Squadron RAAF. As the fighters were going in first, strafing, the Mitchells could bomb at low level attacking individually at mast height.<sup>212</sup> No bomb hits were scored, though. Not a strange thing as the crews were not yet trained in this kind of attack.

Vice-admiral Helfrich, the Dutch BSO from Ceylon, visited McDonald on 17 March and spoke with LKol Fiedeldij about the operations, the living and the working conditions.<sup>213</sup> Started during March was an intensive training in mast height attacks, a method of attack to be used on operations by the squadron from April. Japanese shipping had top priority with NW Area Hq and this Hq consequently looked for better ways than horizontal pattern bombing to attack ships. Bombardiers in 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron had also passed some shipping targets knowing that

they could only score hits by pure luck with the Estoppey bombsight. The official order to start mast height attack training was given on 21 March. F/Lt Morcombe of No 2 Squadron RAAF arrived to assist in the training for which a wreck at Bathust Island was used as a target. Results were very poor at first but improved to a satisfactory 35% of hits at the end of March. The training was continued during April.<sup>214</sup>

Several searches and attacks by one or two B-25s were flown on 24 March, one almost resulting in the loss of the N5-131 (a B-25C with auxiliary wing tip tanks) with Captain Elt Janssen. After a solo search mission to the Etna and Kaimana Bays in southwest Dutch New Guinea a successful attack was carried out on a ship and harbour installations at Kaimana Bay, the N5-131 then being attacked by three fighters for 25 minutes. The crew made it back in a severely damaged aircraft with only the Captain lightly wounded by a grazing bullet through his hair. The aircraft landed at Darwin with only 120 U.S. gallon of fuel remaining, 30 U.S. gallon below the RAAF prescribed safety limit.<sup>215</sup> LKoi Fiedeldij on 26 March, among others requested to limit the range of the B-25C equipped with auxiliary wing tanks to 1,400 miles and on missions liable to interception to 1,300 miles. As he did not get nor expected a swift answer and in view of the danger of interception during solo long range B-25C missions, Fiedeldij asked to allow take-off at night and to carry out the searches at dawn.<sup>216</sup> This mission set-up was first tried out on 28 March when the N5-133 with Captain Elt Oudraad flew a search to Kaimana Bay again. The aircraft was not intercepted but the crew did not find any ships. The bombs were dropped above Langoer airstrip on the return flight.<sup>217</sup>

Four Mitchells already bombed the airstrip at Langoer on 24 March at low level, bombing individually, but no hits were reported. Six days later the N5-133 (the only serviceable B-25C with auxiliary outer wing tanks at the time) with as Captain Tlt R.L.M. Swane returned on one engine after a solo search for ships in Kaimana Bay (at a range of 1,250 miles from Darwin). Swane was unable to reach Darwin and had to crash land his aircraft at Melville Island some 80 miles north of Darwin due to fuel shortage. After an attack on one of the ships of a discovered convoy two Japanese fighters had intercepted of which one was shot down, its pilot using his parachute. The crew of the N5-133 was safe but one was wounded and all lived from air dropped supplies until rescued on 1 April.

The belly landed N5-133 was a total loss. Fiedeldij personally reported the events at Hq NW Area on 2 April. He also sent a copy of the accident report made up by Swane on 6 April showing that the fuel consumption of the B-25 when cruising on one engine proved to be higher than expected. During March 47 operational sorties were flown, 32 day bombing attack (of which four aircraft had to return en route to target), 12 shipping attack and three search sorties.<sup>218</sup>



The results of a flat main wheel tire caused by the rough surface of the runway (authors collection).

The squadron aircraft strength on 1 April was 16 including two new B-25C-15-NAs which arrived on 31 March. The first attack of the month was on 1 April with three B-25s against Saumlaki but failed as all bombs fell into the sea. The attack was repeated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> by again three B-25s of which one had to return en route to target with engine trouble. As the target was covered by clouds the bombs were dropped by dead reckoning and probably nothing was hit. Several times a search to the north coast of Timor or to Kaimana Bay was flown for Japanese ships, usually with three and once with five Mitchells, but ships were only found once. On 5 April the N5-140 (Captain SM Tijmons) crashed into the sea after take-off from Darwin with two other Mitchells for a search to Timor, killing the crew of five. Two Japanese freighters were found on 14 April during a search with three B-25s to Kaimana Bay but were bombed without any hits. This mission was repeated one week later but no ships

were seen. Coastal facilities were bombed instead resulting in a number of explosions.<sup>219</sup>

During the first months of operations the squadron had problems explaining to NW Area Hq the range differences between the B-25C and the B-25D in the different configurations. Operational experience dictated the use of lower range limits for especially the B-25Cs than had been prescribed by the Hq. Despite advises and requests, the Hq on 20 March wrote to 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron that the following range figures were to be used.

B-25D with full main and operational bomb-bay tank: 1,100 miles for seaward reconnaissance and 966 miles for strike operations liable to intercepts.

B-25C with full main, wing and operational bomb-bay tanks: 1,550 miles for seaward reconnaissance and 1,450 miles for strike operations liable to interception.

The above was based on theoretical figures from the NAA B-25 manual.<sup>220</sup>

However, to make possible operations with mixed formations (necessary as there were only five B-25Cs modified with auxiliary wing tanks on 20 March of which one crashed late January and on average 1.5 were not serviceable) the B-25Cs with auxiliary wing tanks also operated without a bomb-bay tank to carry extra bombs instead. NW Area Hq changed the range for the B-25C in a letter dated 30 March into 1,500 miles, respectively 1,400 miles, disregarding the data Fiedeldij had supplied after the fighter attack on the N5-131 on 24 March and his request for a 1,300 miles limit for missions liable to interception. Only his plea to carry out the searches to the area Etna Bay and Kaimana Bay on the southwest coast of Dutch New Guinea with three aircraft instead of one was honoured whenever possible.<sup>221</sup> That same day, 30 March, the B-25C N5-133 (equipped with auxiliary wing tanks) had to be forced landed at Melville Island due to a lack of fuel.

Both Kap Jessurun and Kap De Vries urged Fiedeldij to formally refuse to fly solo missions in excess of 1,200 miles, De Vries even calling the long range solo searches to Dutch New Guinea suicide missions. He refused to train flying personnel and crews for suicide missions, he said.

Jessurun warned for personnel who would refuse to fly these solo missions.<sup>222</sup> Fiedeldij fully agreed and wanted a stop to all missions with B-25Cs, solo or otherwise, in excess of 1,200 miles. On 8 April, referring to the accident of the N5-133, he requested to further limit the range figure for B-25C missions liable to interception to 1,200 miles.<sup>223</sup> There came no response, the CO eventually (with back-up from Dutch Headquarters in Melbourne) writing a letter dated 12 April stating: "...any orders issued from AOR in excess of the above stated mileage [1,200 miles] cannot be carried out."<sup>224</sup> That message was finally understood and the 1,200 miles for B-25C missions liable to interception was confirmed to Fiedeldij later, although it took a fuel consumption test flight (flown on 16 April with the N5-136) to convince the RAAF staff officers that Fiedeldij had been right all along.<sup>225</sup>

In his letter of 12 April Fiedeldij also referred to modifications carried out by the USAAF to make the B-25s tactically suitable for mast height attacks and strafing by strengthening the frontal armament, installing armament in aft fuselage windows, introducing a special gunsight for the pilot and exchanging the lower turret for a 300 U.S. gallon droppable fuel tank. He mentioned that the Americans were willing to modify the NEI Mitchells too and suggested to rebuild the B-25Ds into "strafers". On 25 April Fiedeldij during a conference at NW Area Hq suggested to rebuild all remaining original B-25C-NAs and B-25D-NCs.<sup>226</sup> It was eventually decided that seven of the then 12 remaining original B-25Cs and Ds were to become "strafers". They would lose their bombardier station and get an armament of four .50 machineguns in the nose, four additional .50 machineguns in blisters on the sides of the front fuselage, two .50 machineguns in waist windows in the aft fuselage and a droppable 300 U.S. gallon fuel tank instead of the lower turret. The first Mitchell, B-25C N5-145, went to Eagle Farm near Brisbane for modification by the 44<sup>th</sup> Air Depot Squadron of the 81st Air Depot Group USAAF on 15 May 1943.<sup>227</sup>

The transfer of 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron to Hughes was discussed on 2 April because of the difficulties with the water supply at McDonald and the danger of heavily loaded B-25s (topped up and bombed up) having to make travel flights from McDonald to Darwin before operations could be flown. The former due to the lack of bombs, large capacity fuel tenders and RAAF support personnel at Darwin. Hughes was much closer to

Darwin and would enable the squadron to operate directly from base. A few days later Batchelor, close to Hughes, was agreed upon.<sup>228</sup> Early April a night flying refresher training program started. McDonald, by now, was suitably equipped for night operations and night bombardments were to be carried out to prevent losses. Used for the training in April were aircraft N5-141 and N5-145 which were unfit for combat and were both sprayed matt black all over (an experiment later repeated on a few operational aircraft including the N5-153). The two B-25s were used for gunnery and bombing training as well. The night flying training was continued during May.<sup>229</sup>



The crew of Elt Winckel after their return from a armed reconnaissance with three B-25s to Kaimana Bay (Dutch New Guinea) on 21 April 1943 in the N5-131 Pulk. From left to right Elt Van Loggem, Elt Winckel, Tlt Daanen, Sgt Weakley RAAF and Sgt Maks (NIMH).

The first major night attack was flown against Penfoei (Timor) on 18 April with nine B-25s. Thirteen Hudsons attacked the same target but no ships were found in the harbour. The second night attack followed on 23 April against Dilli airbase with again nine B-25s of which two had to return after take-off with malfunctions. Fiedeldij flew as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot in the lead plane with Elt Winckel as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot and Tlt Daanen as FCO. Amidst moderate anti-aircraft fire the bombs were dropped causing large fires.

On 28 April four Mitchells attacked two Japanese ships between Dobo and the west coast of New Guinea at mast height. One of the ships received a direct hit but the N5-135 (Captain Elt Oudraad) was shot down by fire from the ship with the loss of its crew of five and the N5-146 and the N5-129 returned damaged. Additional frontal armament to suppress fire from the usually armed ships proved absolutely necessary. A third night attack was flown on 29 April with four B-25s led by Elt Janssen (flying with test pilot Elt Van der Schroeff as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot) against Koepang but one of the aircraft returned with defective flying instruments and autopilot. Deputy CO Kap De Vries flew along in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot seat to check-out Elt Ekels as a 1<sup>st</sup> pilot, Elt Wetters flying as FCO. Due to defective flares the target was bombed by dead reckoning and probably nothing was hit.<sup>230</sup> The final operations in April were flown with American “short nose” bombs for which the bombing tables belonging to the Estoppey bombsight were designed. This improved bombing accuracy somewhat.<sup>231</sup>

During April a total of 61 sorties were flown, 15 day attack (of which one aircraft returned en route to target), 22 night attack (three aircraft returned), seven shipping attack and 17 search sorties. The number of aircraft had risen to 20 on 12 April after the arrival of the new N5-152 but the N5-135 was lost on 28 April. The number of crews became 18 on 28 April. The organization of the flying echelon remained the same but with Elt Wetters in charge of Flight III due to the transfer of Elt Moorrees to the RNMFS on 10 April. Adj De Jong commanded the reformed Flight V from mid-April. Three newly trained reserve crews forming the temporary Flight VI (reserve) were attached to Flight I, II, respectively III on approximately 7 May 1943. With the flying echelon in good order also the number of sorties flown and the results of attack sorties had reached quite acceptable levels.<sup>232</sup>

In the first week of May 27 operational sorties were flown, the first one an armed search on 2 May by four Mitchells led by Elt Cooke. Five ships were discovered southeast of Roemadan Island and attacked. No direct hits were scored although some of the vessels were probably damaged. In the night of 2 and 3 May four B-25s led by Elt Winckel flew (from Batchelor) a mission to Penfoei, the crews attacking individually, causing large fires. The bombers returned from Batchelor to McDonald in the



The recently received N5-152, a B-25C-15-NA with autopilot, at McDonald. On the right Air Vice-Marshal George Jones, Chief of the Air Staff, who visited 18 Squadron on 19 April 1943 (via Fred Pelder Jr.).

morning of 3 May.<sup>233</sup> A day bombardment on Toeal with six B-25s led by Elt Winckel and Elt Cooke on 5 May also resulted in large fires, all bombs falling in the target area. A night mission was flown on the same day (attack time 19:10 Z) with three B-25s led by Elt Janssen against Dilli, the crews attacking individually. As far as could be observed the attack caused just two small fires. Five Mitchells led by Elt Winckel and Adj De Jongh on 7 May 1943 attacked Penfoei airfield at night, the crews again attacking individually. All bombs fell into the target area and three explosions could be observed, also some small fires were started.<sup>234</sup>



The main party of the squadron moved to Batchelor on 8 and 9 May, operations being resumed from there on 11 May 1943. The final one of the eight new B-25C-15-NAs arrived on 4 May and on 11 May of the 20 B-25s on strength 18 were at Batchelor (including trainer/transport N5-142), the N5-128 was with 3 AD at Amberley and the N5-143 was unserviceable at McDonald. On 11 May all the ML pilots from the RNMFS and most of the RAAF personnel taken into training in February-March were ready for operational missions, although a few had fallen ill after completing training.<sup>235</sup>

McDonald had proven to be a unhealthy place to serve in the wet monsoon season with high sick rates among the ML as well as the RAAF personnel. Apart from duty elsewhere such as courses followed, the sick rate among the flying personnel reduced the average daily available number of crews compared to the average total of crews on strength (given in parentheses) appreciably. The monthly averages were as follows,

February 1943: 10,4 (14),

March 1943: 8,2 (14),

April 1943: 8,6 (13).

Crew losses were relatively high. With 17 men killed and two seriously wounded, two crews were effectively lost in February and another two during April. This kept the total number of crews relatively low despite the replacement personnel posted and the continuing training effort. The crew position much improved in the second half of April, though. On 28 April 12 of the 18 crews were available and six were unavailable as a number of the pilots and crewmembers were ill.<sup>236</sup>

### Conclusions

The establishment and formation of 18 Squadron N.E.I. had been a far from easy process, especially as the new squadron had to be a NEI unit but with a personnel complement which was in part RAAF. The latter was necessary as there were insufficient numbers of NEI personnel available in Australia after the fall of Java. The needed number of RAAF personnel was quickly agreed upon, however. The Dutch had the B-25 bombers and wanted to fight on from northern Australia while the RAAF

wanted a B-25 squadron to strengthen the threatened northern part of Australia, a classic win-win. Although there were sufficient numbers of ML and RAAF personnel in June 1942 already, getting the squadron fully operational took a full year until April 1943. There was a lack of aircraft during the first five months (as the CG USAFIA did not stick to his promise to deliver additional B-25s), an initial shortage of NEI personnel (as the MLD withdrew its offer to second technical personnel and the KNIL ground forces needed its seconded Marechaussee elsewhere) and of facilities (as especially the technical support of the squadron took some months to organise while the cooperation of the RAAF initially proved somewhat problematic). Nevertheless, the squadron started training early June 1942 and flew its first operations in June and July for Eastern Area Hq RAAF and Dutch Headquarters.

GenMaj Van Oyen and a small group of staff officers in the U.S.A. in cooperation with the OBSO in Australia succeeded in arranging the delivery of 18 new B-25s in exchange for the six B-25s the squadron had on strength from mid-June 1942. The so-called Project Mark I aircraft were delivered during August and September 1942. Their arrival gave a solid boost to the rather low morale among the ML personnel and a boost to the co-operation between the ML and RAAF personnel. It also made possible an intensive operational training program. The requisitioning of B-25 and R2600 Cyclone type specific spare parts remained problematic although these parts could be ordered directly from USAAF Air Depot Groups from 1 September 1942. No 18 Squadron N.E.I. only received a priority status in the spares supply chain when the move to its war base McDonald started in November 1942.

From late June 1942 the KNIL was able to keep the NEI personnel strength in the squadron between 242 and 259. Trained NEI personnel was scarce and many had to be trained at the squadron itself, including bombardiers, armament mechanics and assistant armament mechanics. The RAAF had a shortage of observers and NavBs resulting in the cross-training of seven WOAGs of the RAAF for the ML bombardier license. A new squadron establishment was agreed upon in September 1942. Especially the new posting principle, the Dutch to fill as many positions as possible, the RAAF becoming responsible for the posting of personnel on the remainder of positions, solved a lot of administrative and personnel problems. The squadron establishment became somewhat

fluid only prescribing the grand total of personnel (561 on 28 October 1942) while the prescribed numbers of ML and RAAF personnel (251, respectively 310 on 28 October 1942) could vary somewhat from month to month. The RAAF Component was completed as much as possible in October-November 1942. The number of RAAF personnel was somewhat enlarged at McDonald as some additional RAAF personnel proved necessary to run that war base.

Training with the new B-25s was to a large part but far from completely finished in December 1942 by which time the squadron was already moving to McDonald. This austere base was one of the worst a squadron could be sent to in the NW Area of operations. It was relatively far from Darwin, had no well for the supply of drinking water and the climate and unhygienic living conditions led to a high and rising sick rate among the ML as well as the RAAF personnel due to tropical deceases. The first operational mission was flown on 19 January 1943 (local time). B-25 training had to be continued from McDonald as a group of approximately 20 pilots and crew members had not yet completed B-25 training. Newly posted flying personnel of the ML and the RAAF enlarged this number further and 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron (as the squadron was now called by RAAF Command) out of necessity ran a small B-25 OTU next to the operational tasks. The operational crew strength was only 15 from 19 January 1943 but on 28 April it reached the RAAF prescribed minimum of 18 1<sup>st</sup> line operational crews. However, also in the period of April to June 1943 a smaller but still sizable replacement training effort was necessary as crew losses were relatively high.

The operations flown from McDonald often were not very successful because of the adverse weather during the wet monsoon season which lasted until May and the old-fashioned Estoppey bomb sight the B-25s of 18 (N.E.I.) Squadron were equipped with. Contributing factors for an initial relatively low effectiveness of the unit were the number of crews the squadron started operations with, 15 instead of the minimum of 18, the high sick rate amongst ML and RAAF personnel, technical problems with especially the gun turrets of the B-25s and the lack of sufficient technical support from No 1 RSU RAAF at Manbulloo, which was understaffed and under-equipped.

LKol Fiedeldij, further, had his problems with KNIL and RAAF staff officers. From June 1942 LKol Van Straten was his administrative CO, an Infantry officer with no knowledge of air operations and ML rules and regulations who seemingly had no interest in the ML at all for months, resulting in little support from the KNIL Hq in Melbourne. Things much improved after the posting as CL of LKol (pilot-observer) Te Roller. He arrived only in April 1943, however. The staff officers of NW Area Hq RAAF also proved to be rather inflexible and initially prescribed range figures to be used on operations with “long range” B-25Cs which were much too high. The B-25 was an aircraft type not used by the RAAF and the RAAF staff officers had no experience with the type. Unfortunately, they did not take the advises and requests of LKol Fiedeldij seriously until 12 April 1943 which cost two B-25 aircraft in emergency landings. Nevertheless, by the end of April 1943 the squadron delivered quite an acceptable output in terms of sorties flown and results achieved while the number of aircraft and crews had grown to 20, respectively 18. LKol Fiedeldij, Kap De Vries and Kap Jessurun had proven to be excellent choices to lead the squadron in the first difficult year.

## **Appendix 1: ML staff, ground personnel and flying personnel McDonald period, 26 December 1942-10 May 1943.**

(rank in Canberra, rank at McDonald in brackets if applicable, name, position, way of reaching Australia or previous posting, arrival or posting date 18 Sq, mentioned as far as known; all dates mentioned as month year or day month year, xx-xx or xxx-xxx means up to and including)

### **Staff and General Service personnel (total 28, not counting nr. 4 Reijns; not mentioned are five European ex KNIL General Service soldiers who became assistant armament mechanic or Armourer, see p 118)**

1. Maj (pilot-observer, later LKol) B.J. Fiedeldij (per 010542 CO, ex liaison officer RAAF Hq), arrived 280442.
2. Kap (pilot-observer) A.J. de Vries (0442-0542 deputy CO, from 0942 again deputy CO, ex Det Archerfield), posted 0442.
3. Kap (observer) R.E. Jessurun (0642-0842 Administrative Officer ML/Deputy CO, from 0942 Sq Operations Officer, evacuated by transport ac), arrived 150542.
4. SM (pilot) L.C. Reijns (Operations, ex Det Bangalore, temporarily unfit for flying) [counted twice in the official strength figures of 26 December 1942, see pilots nr. 42].
5. Sgt (later SM, WOAG) P. van Hoof (Radio Service, ex Det Archerfield), posted 0442; 0143 not yet fully trained, 0443 resumed B-25 training.
6. Sgt (later SM, WOAG) H.G.J.A. van Weezel (Radio Service, ex Det Archerfield, 1242 wounded in car accident on its way to McDonald, concussion), posted 0442; 0143 non-operational and not yet fully trained, 0443 resumed B-25 training.
7. Sgt (WOAG) J.A. van Zanten (Radio Service, ex D.VI.A.), posted 0442, 010343 transferred Det Melbourne KNIL.
8. Sgt (later SM, WOAG) K. de Bruyn (Radio Service, ex Det Archerfield), posted 0442; 0143 not yet fully trained, 0443 resumed B-25 training.
9. Elt W.F.M. Schuurman (ex KNIL, initially Adjutant, later MT officer), posted 0442.

10. Kap (flight surgeon) G.J. Storm, MD (head of Medical Service, evacuated by transport ac), arrived 160442.
11. Adj A. Brouwer (armament technician/gunsmith, ex KNIL; Technical Service), posted 0442.
12. Tlt (later Elt) G. van Rijn (initially intelligence officer, later cypher officer, evacuated by transport ac, ex Det Archerfield), posted 0442, arrived Canberra 010442.
13. Sgt (later Vdg) A.R. van Tricht (enlisted in Australia, reserve officer candidate, became equipment officer), posted c. 0542, Equipment Section, became Sq Equipment Officer and promoted to Tlt 010443.
14. Sgt (later Vdg) A. Smilde (enlisted in Australia, reserve officer candidate, became operations officer), posted c. 0542.
15. Sgt (later Vdg) I. Hmelnitsky (enlisted in Australia, reserve officer candidate, became intelligence officer), posted c. 0542.
16. Tlt W.F. Kniestedt (ex KNIL, fled from Amboina; Equipment Section up to and incl. 0343, position per 010443 unknown), posted c. 0642.
17. Sgt (MT driver) Kleinhuis (ex KNIL), posted period 0642-1142.
18. Sgt C.A. Willemse (paymaster, ex VWS Det *Abbekerk*), posted 0442.
19. Adj (later Olt) J. Hiskemuller (head of administration, ex KNIL Timor), posted c. 0842.
20. Sgt M. Bakker (administration, ex VWS Det *Abbekerk*), posted 0442.
21. Elt P. Schelling (ex KNIL), posted period 0642-1142.
22. Sgt (medical orderly) Hudepohl, posted period 0642-1142.
23. Sgt (later Vdg) P.G.L. Hegener (enlisted in Australia, reserve officer candidate, to Technical Service, became technical officer), posted c. 0542.
24. Sgt (later Vdg) H.W. Versteeven (enlisted in Australia, reserve officer candidate, to Technical Service, became radio technical officer), posted c. 0542.
25. Sld (later Kpl) Koetzer (ex KNIL, to Equipment Section), posted c. 0542.
26. Sld (later Kpl) P. Servaes (ex KNIL, to Equipment Section), posted c. 0542.

27. Sld (later Kpl) Van Tongeren (ex KNIL, to Equipment Section), posted c. 0542.

28. Sld (later Kpl) L. Viot (ex KNIL, to Equipment Section), posted c. 0542.

29. Sld (later Kpl) J. Engeland (ex KNIL, to Equipment Section), posted c. 0542.

Remarks: Sgt (later SM) Mutsaerts, armament technician/gunsmith, ex KNIL, was transferred to KNIL, Melbourne in 1042-1142. Vicar Visser, posted in period 0642-1142, not counted in strength figures as not in military service. Two other civilians on strength were "techreps" Mr A. Wtorkowski, NAA representative posted 0942 and Mr Van Hooten, Bendix representative also posted 0942 but transferred to USAAF 1142.

### **Flying personnel (total 72)**

#### NCO pilots and officer pilot-observers (total 42)

#### Ex Det Archerfield (posted 0442)

1. Elt L.J. Janssen
2. Tlt (later Elt) B. Hulscher
3. Vdg (later Tlt) J.A. Hartevelt
4. Vdg (later Tlt) B.J.Q. Grummels, KIA 180243.
5. Vdg (later Tlt) A. Hagers
6. Tlt B. Wetters
7. Vdg (later Tlt) L. Bal
8. Vdg (later Tlt) R.L.M. Swane
9. Sgt (later SM) L. Schalk, killed in B-25 accident 050243.
10. Sgt (later SM) W. Eikelboom
11. Sgt H. van den Berg

Remark: Vdg (later Tlt) W.J. Burck, arrived 18 Sq Canberra 160442, arrested 1142 and transferred to KNIL Hq Melbourne 1142.

#### Ex D.VI.A. (posted 0442)

12. Tlt (later Elt) W.F.A. Winckel

13. SM J.E. de Jongh

14. Tlt J.C. Veenstra

Ex Det Bangalore (all transferred 300442, arrived 18 Sq 030642, excl. SM Reijns, see 42.)

15. Elt H. van den Broek (also Compagnie Commandant).

16. Tlt (later Elt) G. Cooke

17. Vdg (later Tlt) J.A. Kuneman

18. Tlt (later Elt) A.D.M. Moorrees

19. Vdg (later Tlt) F. Pelder

20. (Vdg (later Tlt) F. Olsen

21. SM G. Tijmons, KIA 050443.

22. Vdg (later Tlt) N.J.H. Daanen

Remark: Sgt E.H.J. de Lyon and Sgt H. Kelder, arrested 1142 and transferred to KNIL Hq Melbourne 1142.

Evacuated to Australia by transport ac (all by KNILM)

23. Elt H.A.H.M. Tander, posted 0442 (1142-0443 temporarily assigned as observer, reassigned pilot 0443).

24. Elt A.F. Oudraad (also Sq Armament Officer), posted 0442, KIA 280443.

25. Tlt P. Kruyne (also ML Finance Officer), arrived 210442 (0942 bombardier training and 011042 licensed observer, temporarily observer but c. 011142 reassigned 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot).

26. Tlt L.J. Frouws, posted 0442.

27. Vdg (later Tlt) Ch.M. Fisscher, arrived 18 Sq Canberra ex Parafield 140442 (0942 bombardier training and 011042 licensed observer, temporarily observer but c. 011142 reassigned as 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot).

28. Vdg (later Tlt) C. Busser, posted 18 Sq Canberra 0442, arrived Det Archerfield ex Parafield 0342 (temporarily assigned as observer 1142-0143, 0143 reassigned as pilot).

29. Sgt C.J. Hiele, arrived 18 Sq Canberra ex Parafield 140442, killed in B-25 accident 050243.



30. Sgt K. van Bremen, arrived 18 Sq Canberra ex Parafield 140442, KIA 050443.

31. Sgt J.A.M. Hoogveld

32. Sgt G.D. Brinkman, arrived 18 Sq Canberra ex Parafield 140442.

Evacuated by ship (all on *Zaandam*, all posted 0442)

33. Vdg (later Tlt) W.J. Heikoop, arrived 18 Sq Canberra ex Parafield 140442.

34. Tlt A.J. de Wolf

35. Vdg (later Tlt) A. Rijnberg (also dentist).

36. Elt Th.G.J. van der Schroeff, arrived 18 Sq Canberra 160442, (evacuated without official orders).

Ex KNILM/KLM pilots (posted 011242)

37. Elt M.S. Rab

38. Elt P.A. Deenik

39. Elt A.G. Ekels

40. Elt J. Hofman (0143 to non-flying position at McDonald, medical reasons).

Ex KLM (seconded KNILM, posted 0642)

41. Elt J.J. van Balkom, M.Sc., arrived 18 Sq Canberra 0642 (initially navigation instructor, 1242 also instructor-pilot B-25), 0143 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.

Temporarily in squadron staff

42. SM L.C. Reijns (ex Det Bangalore, became medically unfit for flying 1042, returned to flying as a pilot 0143)

Observers and bombardiers (total nine)

Officer observers (four; first three evacuated by D.VI.A. Lodestar)

1. Elt K. Akkerman, posted 0442, seconded 3<sup>rd</sup> BG 0443-150542.

2. Elt J. van Loggem, posted 0442 (originally also cypher officer).

3. Vdg (later Tlt) A.B. Andela, posted 0442.

4. Tlt C.L. Begeman, M.Sc. (ex KNIL Timor), posted 200842 (licensed observer 011042).

NCO bombardiers (five, all licensed bombardier 011042; first three enlisted or volunteered in Australia)

5. Sgt J.A. Noordendorp, posted c. 0542.

6. Sgt G. Dreese, posted c. 0542.

7. Sgt E.M. de Rood, posted c. 0542.

8. Sgt G.J. Gerritsen (ex KNIL), posted 0442.

9. Sgt Ch. Verbraak (ex KNIL), posted 0442.

WOAGs (total 21)

Ex KLM, seconded KNILM (1) and D.VI.A. (11)

1. SM D.K.R. Sweitser (ex KLM), posted 1242, transferred N.E.I.-T.A.B. 0143.

2. Sgt J.J.L.M. Jansen, killed in B-25 accident 050243.

3. Sgt W.B. Maks, posted 0442.

4. Sgt D. Stellema, posted 0442.

5. Sgt C. van Ginkel, posted 0442.

6. Sgt J. Kieft

7. Sgt J. van Doorn, posted 0442.

8. Sgt F.C. Weber, posted 0442.

9. Sgt V.N. Jansen

10. Sgt (later SM) F.J.M. van Wylick, posted 0442, KIA 050443.

11. Sgt J.H. de Kat

12. Sgt A.H. de Jongh, posted 0442, KIA 280443.

Ex Det Archerfield

13. Sgt P. Rozema, posted 0442.

14. Kpl (later Sgt) A. Maas

Ex Glenn Martin 139 (M585)

15 Sgt R. Timmermans, posted 0442.

Ex Det Bangalore (all transferred 300442, arrived 18 Sq Canberra 030642)

16. Kpl (later Sgt) J.H. Rouvroye

17. Kpl (later Sgt) P.F. Breekveldt

18. Kpl (later Sgt) C.J. van der Weert

19. Kpl (later Sgt) F.M. Trijnes, 0143 not yet fully trained, 0443 resumed B-25 training.

20. Kpl (later Sgt) H.J. Burgers (1142 arrested, c. 271242 administratively transferred to KNIL Det. Melbourne).

21. Kpl (later Sgt) H.F. van der Heijden

**Technical Service personnel and mechanics (total 93; see for the two armament technicians/gunsmith and the two Vdgs reserve officer candidate Staff and General Service personnel; for the five assistant armament mechanics/Armourer, see p 118)**

Technical Officers

1. Elt (later Kap) F. Besançon, M.Sc.(Squadron Engineering Officer, ex NPC), arrived 18 Sq Canberra 0942.

2. Elt Th.J. Hoogeveen (head Maintenance Section, ex NPC), arrived 18 Sq Canberra 0442.

3. Olt W. Stolk (ex Det Bangalore), transferred 300442, arrived 18 Sq Canberra 030642.

4. Olt F. Nieuwpoort (ex Det Archerfield), posted 0442.

Mechanics ex Det Archerfield (posted 0442)

1. SM (later Adj) E. van Aken

2. SM (later Adj) G. Barendrecht

3. Sgt L.J. van Beek

4. SM F.H. Bögels

5. Sgt H. van Cornewal

6. Sgt H.W. Donk

7. SM J.A. Eijkelenboom
8. SM Ch.W.J. van Reesch
9. Sgt P.J. Hos
10. Sgt E.J. Lantang
11. Sgt R.C.J. van Lieshout
12. Sgt Rudolf
13. Sgt J.A.F. Willemsen
14. Sgt J. Rienstra
15. Sgt J. Zutt
16. Sgt H.D.W. Samson
17. Sgt Van Welie

Remark

SM A.A. Scholte, transferred to KNIL Hq Melbourne c. 151142.

Mechanics ex D.VI.A. (posted 0442)

18. Sgt G.F.D. Abeleven, killed in B-25 accident 050243.
19. SM P. Borgmeijer
20. SM P.J. Bouten
21. Sgt H.L. Borghuis
22. Sgt F.C.A. Dehnen
23. Sgt M. Drost
24. Sgt Th. Inkenhaag
25. Sgt W.H.P. Linders
26. Sgt J. van Oosten
27. Sgt J.Th.C. Rombouts
28. Sgt J.A. Rijks
29. Sgt C.C. van Tuijn
30. Sgt A.W. Hovens

Mechanics ex *Zaandam* (posted 040442 ex Parafield)

31. Sgt H.M. Bauerman
32. Sgt Ch. Bijlsma
33. SM J.H. Groeneveld
34. Sgt W. Mourik
35. Kpl (later Sgt) D.A. Romviel
36. Sgt J.W.F.R. Schellekens
37. Sgt G.J. Wijnands
38. Sgt G. Weertman
39. Sgt G. Brookman
40. Sgt R. Hoogtij

Mechanics ex V.W.S. Det *Boissevain* (posted 0442)

41. Sgt R.B. Baert
42. Sgt H. Bekema
43. Sgt T. Buehre
44. Sgt J.F. Damwijk

Mechanics evacuated by transport aircraft and Glenn Martin 139 (posted 0442)

45. Sgt H.J. Quartel
46. Kpl (later Sgt) Th.G. Versnel
47. Sgt D.J. Limbeek
48. Sgt G. Pilger (evacuated per Glenn Martin 139, M585).

Dispatcher (student mechanic) ex D.VI.A. (c. 0642 reposted as mechanic)

49. Kpl (later Sgt) J.E. Leidelmeijer

Mechanics ex Det Bangalore (transferred 300442, arrived Canberra 030642)

50. SM N.W.M. Kessels, killed in B-25 accident 050243.

51. Sgt D. Lubach
52. Sgt W.M. Hoek
53. SM B. van Garrel
54. SM Th. den Dolder
55. Sgt A. Maarschalkerweerd, killed in B-25 accident 050243.

Mechanics ex KNILM contracted and militarised or drafted (five), ex KNIL ground forces (one), volunteered in Australia (one)

56. Sgt Lafontaine (ex KNILM aircraft mechanic, 1242 to ac Flight), posted 0662.
57. Sgt J. Dijkstra (ex KNILM aircraft mechanic, 1242 to ac Flight), posted 0642.
58. Sgt C.A.H. Keesmaat (ex KNILM aircraft mechanic), posted 0642.
59. Sgt De Haas (ex KNILM aircraft mechanic), initially posted Technical Service 0442 (as a Kpl), c. 011042 transferred to aircraft mechanic position (then Sgt).
60. Sgt Laurens (ex KNILM aircraft mechanic), initially posted Technical Service 0442 (as a Kpl), c. 011042 transferred to aircraft mechanic position (then Sgt).
61. Sgt W. Bakker (former civilian mechanic, volunteered in Australia), posted c. 0542.
62. Kpl (later Sld) R.Z. Holleman (ex KNIL, civilian mechanic before called up into active service), posted c. 0542 but general service, to Technical Service c. 0642 as student mechanic, already posted as mechanic with an ac Flight 1242 (then a Sld due to a disciplinary measure).

Remarks. Sgt mechanic S.R. Dijkstra (ex KNILM), posted 0642, was transferred to the RNMFS 0742 but with final destination KLM (arrived RNMFS 140842, transferred to KLM in the UK 111042, remained in active military service). Sld Holleman was still listed as general service on 261242 although already working as a mechanic on that date.

Technical Service specialists ex KNILM (four), posted 0442, and contracted or drafted civilian (one), posted c. 0542

1. Sgt (later SM) J. Lippens (engine specialist, per 1 April 1942 contracted by ML ex KNILM).
2. Kpl (later Sgt) Soejoed (ex KNILM, probably aircraft electrician).
3. Sgt Tung Sing Bie (radio mechanic, per 1 April 1942 contracted by ML ex KNILM, former civilian radio mechanic of the ML at Andir, Java).
4. Kpl (later Sgt) E. Mahne (ex KNILM).
5. Sgt Van Dijk (volunteered or drafted in Australia, possibly trained as parachute maintenance specialist), posted c. 0542.

Armament mechanics trained at Canberra (posted c. 0542)

1. Kpl (later Sgt) Egberts (ex KNIL, to Technical Service).
2. Kpl (later Sgt) De Jong (ex KNIL, to Technical Service).
3. Kpl (later Sgt) Jansen (ex KNIL, to Technical Service).
4. Kpl (later Sgt) Proost (ex KNIL, to Technical Service).
5. Kpl (later Sgt) W. Gazan (ex KNIL, to Technical Service).

Flight mechanics ex KNILM (nine) and KLM seconded KNILM (one), posted 220942, transferred 271242

1. Sgt J.H.W. Belie (KLM seconded KNILM), 271242 transferred KNIL Det Melbourne, demobilised, destination KLM in West Indies (left Australia 050143).
2. Sgt G. Elleman, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
3. Sgt J. Gijzemijter, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
4. Sgt C. Kop, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
5. Sgt J.A.J. Meyer, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
6. Sgt J.N. van Onselen, 271242 transferred KNIL Det Melbourne, demobilised, destination KLM in West Indies (left Australia 050143).
7. Sgt A.F. van Rassel, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
8. Sgt A.C.J. Reus, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
9. Sgt H. Schultz, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.
10. Sgt J.W. Swart, 271242 transferred to N.E.I.-T.A.B.

Technical Service specialists (ex KNILM, first five posted 220942 and final two 011042)

1. SM Vtgm H.M. van Herk (airframe/engine maintenance specialist).
2. Sgt W. Voorwinden (aircraft electrician).
3. Sgt J.A. Colijn (instrument maker), 010343 transferred to KNIL Det Melbourne (preceding demobilisation and transfer to KLM in West Indies).
4. SM H. Veen (former flight mechanic), transferred to KNIL Det Melbourne 271242, demobilised, destination KLM in U.S.A. (left Australia 0243).
5. SM A. van 't Riet (former flight mechanic), transferred to KNIL Det Melbourne 271242, demobilised, destination KLM in U.S.A. (left Australia 0243).
6. Sgt A.J. Bruins (former student flight mechanic, initially posted as maintenance specialist).
7. Kpl E. van de Graaf (later Sgt, former student flight mechanic, initially posted as engine maintenance specialist).

**Indonesian ex KNIL soldiers and militarised civilians (total 56, posted period 0442-0842)**

(clerks general, medical orderlies, aircraft hands, mess men/mess stewards and cooks, names largely unknown, a few were trained as assistant engine mechanic)

1. Sld (170242 promoted Kpl) Leatemia
2. Sld Sabari
3. Sld Sinay
4. Sld Mollij
5. Sld (170242 promoted Kpl) Rumawir
6. to 56. Unknown.

**European ex KNIL General Service soldiers (total 17; five posted 0442-0542 became assistant armament mechanic/Armourer with the Technical Service, of 12 posted late 1242 a few became mechanic trainee with the Technical Service, others were posted as "General Service" in Sq staff and several sections)**



1. Sld Pfaff, possibly Armourer.
2. Sld Leurs, possibly Armourer.
3. Sld Bauer, possibly Armourer.
4. Sld Schürmann, possibly Armourer.
5. Sld Leijen, possibly Armourer.
6. Sld Koolmees
7. Sld Rademaker
8. Sld Engeland II
9. Sld Bode
10. Sld (170243 promoted Kpl) F. Markus (ex KNIL Timor).
11. Sld (170243 promoted Kpl) Th. Elink Schuurman (ex KNIL Timor).
12. Sld Hollander, possibly mechanic trainee.
13. Sld Van der Capellen
14. Sld or Kpl Fries, possibly mechanic trainee.
15. Kpl Krüger Mossembekker
16. Kpl Andinga
17. Kpl Hoorn

### **ML personnel posted in the period January-May 1943**

#### Posted 0143

Elt M. Horstink (ex KNIL, Timor), refresher training as observer, licensed again 010443.

#### Posted 0243

Sgt T.A. van Deill (ex KNIL, 090343 promoted SM with effect from 200243), to Technical Service.

#### Posted c. 0343

Elt L. Labruyere (ex KNIL, Korps Insulinde Ceylon), to Sq Staff.

Posted 0443, arrived 18Sq 210443 and 250443

Pilots: Tlts H.E. Moquette, J. Ketting and J.B.F. de Knecht (KIA 280443) and Sgts C. Visser, A.J. van der Heiden and A. Bouwman (all ex RNMFS).

Observers: Tlts L.W. Hansen and P.L. Zeydel (both ex RNMFS).

## **RAAF personnel: staff, ground personnel and flying personnel Canberra and McDonald (April 1942-May 1943, as far as known)**

### **Staff personnel**

1. S/Ldr Cl. Winter Irving (CO RAAF Component/Administrative Officer RAAF, posted 150542, transferred 250542).
2. S/Ldr L.R. Dawson (CO RAAF Component/Administrative Officer RAAF, posted 25 May 1942).
3. P/O (later F/O) A.L.F. Smelcher (Adjutant CO RAAF Component from c. 1142).
4. P/O (later F/O) A.S. Foster (Squadron Equipment Officer until 010443)
5. P/O (later F/O) C.H. Middleton (Squadron Defence Officer).
6. P/O H.P. Lough (cypher officer until 040343).
7. P/O (later F/O) A.R. Talbot (intelligence officer from 110343).
8. P/O (later F/O) A.M. Cobham (intelligence officer, posted 130742, transferred 140343).
9. F/Lt W.T.H. Scales (health officer until 010343).
10. P/O ... Ahwood (?).
11. P/O ... Rice (operations officer).
12. P/O ... Wilson (operations officer).
13. F/Lt D.A. Fallon (operations officer, posted 300942).

### **RAAF ground personnel**

Unfortunately, only a very small portion of the approximately 350 RAAF men posted in ground positions are known by name. I was unable to find any listings of names in Australian or Dutch archives. Making up an informative Appendix part as for the ML ground personnel was impossible therefore.

**RAAF Flying personnel posted April-June 1942, in part transferred period June-October 1942 (as far as known)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Pilots (all posted 250442, most transferred period 290642-020742, a few earlier on unknown dates)

1. P/O J.M. Gallager (240642 1<sup>st</sup> ops)
2. P/O R.N. Carmichael, transferred 300642.
3. P/O S. Pitten
4. P/O L.B. Mitchell (240642 1<sup>st</sup> ops)
5. Sgt H.W. Bates
6. Sgt D.J.O. Miller, transferred 300642.
7. Sgt A.R. Gregory
8. Sgt F.G. Cook
9. Sgt J. Docherty
10. Sgt L. Flood

Replacements (as far as known)

1. P/O ... Robinson (120642, 1<sup>st</sup> flight)
2. F/Lt D. Wolfe (270642, 1<sup>st</sup> flight)

WOAGs (36 posted period 270442-030642; one posting cancelled, eight transferred period 290642-020742, one 0842, four transferred 0942-1042, 22 retained)

1. Sgt H. Pitman, posted c. 0542, 260742 still on strength, probably transferred c. 1042
2. F/Sgt V.H. Semler, posted 270442, 0942 reported seriously ill and in hospital in Canberra, transferred 011042.
3. Sgt T.H. Burns, posted 050542, transferred 020742.
4. Sgt ... Blundell, posted c. 0542, transferred period 290642-020742.
5. Sgt L.G. Stanley, posted 270442, transferred 020742.

6. Sgt F.T. Quested, posted 270442, transferred period 290642-020742.
7. P/O ... Bolin, posted c. 0542, transferred 0842.
8. Sgt D.R. Cullen, posted 270442, transferred period 290642-020742.
9. Sgt M.A. Limb, posted 270442, transferred period 290642-020742.
10. Sgt D.G. MacDiarmed, posted c. 0542, transferred period 290642-020742.
11. Sgt T.H. Straker, posted 050542, transferred 111042.
12. Sgt V.R. Weakley, posted 050542.
13. Sgt T.E. Williams, posted c. 0542.
14. Sgt L.H. Qayle, posted c. 0542.
15. Sgt ... Saggars, posted c. 0542, transferred c. 1042.
16. Sgt L.B. Willis, posted 050542.
17. Sgt W.C.D. Moore, posted 050542.
18. Sgt R.G. Tyler, posted 050542.
19. Sgt R.G.H. Richards, posted 050542.
20. Sgt G.A. O'Hea, posted 270442.
21. Sgt C.W. Hutchison, posted 050542.
22. Sgt R.P. Leehy, posted c. 0542.
23. Sgt J.H. Lodge, posted 050542.
24. Sgt W.J. Virgo, posted 050542.
25. Sgt R.S. Horridge, posted 190542.
26. Sgt R.J. Hill, posted 030642.
27. Sgt V.A. Brooker, posted 270442.
28. Sgt V. McLean, posted 090542.
29. P/O D.S. Cohen, posted c. 0542, 150642 Adjutant CO RAAF Component.
30. Sgt C.I.H. Donovan, posted 270442.
31. Sgt G.B. Weller, posted 050542.

32. Sgt W.J.T. Western, posted 270442, transferred 020742.
33. F/Sgt G. Wiburd, posted 270442 but posting cancelled.
34. Sgt H.O. Walton, posted 050542.
35. Sgt D.L. MacPherson, posted c. 0542.
36. Sgt ... Morris (I), posted c. 0542.

### **RAAF Flying personnel (26 December 1942-10 May 1943, as far as known)**

#### WOAGs

1. Sgt (later F/Sgt) V.R. Weakley, posted 050542
2. Sgt R.P. Leehy, posted c. 0542, KIA 210543
3. Sgt L.H. Qayle, posted c. 0542, non-operational 0143 (not yet fully trained on B-25), 0443 resumed B-25 training, 280543 already listed as reserve crew member but never flew on operations (medical reasons), 0843 no longer in the sq strength.
4. Sgt (later F/Sgt) V. McLean, posted 090542
5. Sgt (later F/Sgt) W.C.D. Moore, posted 050542
6. Sgt (later F/Sgt) C.W. Hutchison, posted 050542
7. Sgt (later F/Sgt) V.A. Brooker, posted 270442
8. F/Sgt R.J. Hill, posted 030642, KIA 050443
9. F/Sgt (later WO) R.S. Horridge, posted 190542, seriously wounded 180243 (0343 reassigned ex hospital, 0443 operational again).
10. Sgt G.A. O'Hea, posted 270442, KIA 280443
11. Sgt (later F/Sgt) L.B. Willis, posted 050542.
12. Sgt (later F/Sgt) J.H. Lodge, posted 050542
13. Sgt (later F/Sgt) W.J. Virgo, posted 050542
14. P/O (later F/O) D.S. Cohen, posted c. 0542, per 150642 Adjutant CO RAAF Component, 1142 Sq Staff, also instructor B-25 operational training courses (wireless, gunnery and FCO), 230343 operational again (Squadron Wireless Leader) as a reserve crew member.

15. F/Sgt (later WO) C.I.H. Donovan, posted 270442
16. F/Sgt T.E. Williams, posted c. 0542, reserve crew member 0143 (not yet fully trained on B-25), 0443 to crew Van den Berg (top turret gunner), KIA 020643.
17. Sgt (later F/Sgt) R.G.H. Richards, posted 050542, 1142-1242 cross-trained as a nose gunner/bombardier, first ops as such 0143 initially as a reserve crew member, 0443 in crew Oudraad.
18. Sgt G.B. Weller, posted 050542, 1142-1242 cross-trained as a nose gunner/bombardier, 0143 to crew De Jongh, KIA 050443.
19. Sgt R.G. Tyler, posted 050542, 1142-1242 cross-trained nose gunner/bombardier, 0143 to crew Grummels as such, KIA 180243.
20. P/O (later F/O) H.J. Mc Tavish, posted 300742, 150942 already senior WOAG, 230343 to Sq Staff (also instructor B-25 operational training courses, wireless, gunnery and FCO).
21. F/Sgt G.J. Littlehales, posted 091042, 1142-1242 cross-trained nose gunner/bombardier and to crew Kuneman as such, 0443 as such in crew Frouws.
22. F/Sgt K.B. McPhee, posted 091042, 1142-1242 cross-trained nose gunner/bombardier and 0143 to crew Eikelboom as such.
23. Sgt (later F/Sgt) E.D. Low, posted 091042, 0143 to crew Eikelboom (top turret gunner).
24. Sgt (later F/Sgt) J.B. Franklin, posted 280942, 0443 to crew Busser (top turret gunner).
25. Sgt G.F. Prichard, posted 0942, 0443 to crew Van den Berg (WOAG), KIA 020643.
26. Sgt A.W. Coffin, posted 210343, 0443 to crew Deenik (top turret gunner).
27. Sgt (later F/Sgt) R.W.J. Enright, posted 210343, 0443 to crew Rab (top turret gunner).
28. F/Sgt R. Flower, posted 210343, 0443 to crew Rab (WOAG).
29. Sgt (later F/Sgt) A.J. Cheek, posted 270243, 0443 crew Bal (top turret gunner), then reserve crew member.
30. F/Sgt (later WO) C.H. Looney, posted 210343.

31. Sgt (later F/Sgt) J.A. Laves, posted 210343.
32. Sgt (later F/Sgt) B.L. Cox, posted 210343, 0443 to crew Hulscher (top turret gunner).
33. Sgt ... Cameron, posted 230443, first ops 080643 (top turret gunner crew Deenik), probably transferred 0643.
34. Sgt W.H. Tonkin, posted 010543
35. Sgt H.O. Walton, posted 050542, killed in B-25 accident 050243 (top turret gunner crew Schalk).
36. Sgt D.L. MacPherson, posted c. 0542, 1142-1242 cross-trained nose gunner/bombardier and 0143 to crew to crew Schalk, killed in B-25 accident 050243
37. Sgt ... Morris (I), posted c. 0542, 1142-1242 cross-trained nose gunner/bombardier and 0143 to crew Oudraad, 0243 transferred (medical reasons).

#### Air Gunners

Four posted 240443, two posted 030543, but their training proved insufficient and they were unable to follow B-25 operational training at the squadron. All transferred 0543, the first one on 030543 already.

#### Observers and NavBs

1. Sgt N.G.W. Morris (II), posted 090343, 0443 to crew Deenik, KIA 280443
2. F/O W.J. Stevens, posted 080343, 0443 to crew Hulscher.
3. Sgt R.L. Morrison, posted 090343, 0443 to crew Rab, KIA 020643.
4. F/Sgt W.J. O'Keeffe, posted 310343, 0443 to crew Hagers
5. F/O. A. Simson, posted 080343, 0443 to crew Busser.
6. F/Sgt (later WO) J.W.P. McCarthy, posted 290443
7. F/O W.G. Sapsford, posted 290443.
8. F/O T.G. Edwards, posted 290443.

## Photographers

1. AC1 (later Corp) E.S.P. de Brabander (of Dutch descent but RAAF), posted 071142.
2. AC1 (later Corp) E. Beckhouse, posting date unknown but already with 18 Sq NEI 1142, still posted 0343.
3. Cpl (later Sgt) N.L. Harvey, posted 050542.
4. Sgt Ch.J. Robinson, posted 020543.

## Acknowledgement

Many thanks to Ingrid Schodel, without her the listing of the RAAF flying personnel would not have been as accurate and complete as it is.

## **Appendix 2: Aircraft used by 18 Squadron N.E.I. 4 April 1942-11 May 1943, NEI B-25 aircraft crashed on delivery in Australia and NEI B-25 aircraft borrowed by USAFIA**

ML/KNIL North American B-25C-NAs crashed on the ferry to Australia, loaned to USAAF or retained for 18 Squadron NEI  
(mentioned are ML/KNIL serial, USAAF FY serial, place and date received by ML/KNIL, details on use)

**N5-123** 41-12442 rec. Archerfield 210342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG 1942-1943; 301143 transferred to 345<sup>th</sup> BG, transport ac (hack) from c. 0244; 1044 accident at Tadjji airfield (Aitape, Papua New Guinea) and abandoned; 041144 condemned.

**N5-124** 41-12444 rec. Archerfield 040342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, probably lost 240442 on a transit flight from Charters Towers to Port Moresby.

**N5-126** 41-12462 rec. Archerfield 180342; 250342 damaged in take-off accident but transferred to USAAF on same day; 030442 ferried to Charters Towers after repairs; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 230542 shot down at Lae (Papua New Guinea).

**N5-132** 41-12437 rec. Archerfield 170342 or 180342; 0442 to 18 Sq NEI Canberra; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-122**; 010942 transferred to USAAF; condemned 041144 (salvaged).

**N5-133** 41-12455 rec. Archerfield 210342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 210442 crashed Mt. Bartle Frere (Qld) and written off.

**N5-134** 41-12464 rec. Archerfield 040342; arrived Canberra 010442, to 18 Sq NEI Canberra; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-123**; 010942 transferred to USAAF; missing 180244, details unknown.

**N5-135** 41-12466 rec. Archerfield 050342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 250542, missing after combat at Lae (Papua New Guinea); condemned.

**N5-136** 41-12439 rec. Archerfield 030342; 0442 to 18 Sq NEI Canberra; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-124**; 010942 transferred to USAAF; fate unknown.



**N5-137** 41-12443 rec. Amberley 280342; c. 290342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG 1942-1943; was used as a transport ac (hack) 1945, unit unknown; condemned 230147, scrapped at Manila, Philippines.

**N5-138** 41-12472 rec. Archerfield 250342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 040942 missing in combat, crashed into the sea between Hood Point and Kepple Point (Papua New Guinea); condemned.

**N5-146** 41-12494 rec. Archerfield 210342; transferred to USAAF on loan 250342; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 300342 major damage in landing accident Charters Towers on arrival from Archerfield; repaired to flying status and ferried to Brisbane wheels down for major repairs; c. 160642 to 18 Sq NEI Canberra on completion of repairs; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-127**; 010942 transferred to USAAF; fate unknown.

**N5-147** 41-12496 rec. Archerfield 210342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 030543 lost in non-combat accident; 030543 condemned.

**N5-?** 41-12480 rec. Amberley 020442; 030442 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG; 070942 condemned, details unknown.

**N5-151** 41-12482 rec. Amberley 290342; to ML/KNIL Det Archerfield; 0442 to 18 Sq NEI; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-125**; 010942 transferred to USAAF; fate unknown.

**N5-?** 41-12483 rec. Archerfield 250342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 070143 missing on flight from Charters Towers to Port Moresby.

**N5-?** 41-12511 rec. Archerfield 210342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 100542 crash landed on a coral reef off Samurai; 261142 condemned.

**N5-?** 41-12441 rec. Amberley 290342; 300342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 250542 shot down at Lae (Papua New Guinea).

**N5-?** 41-12485 rec. Amberley 070442; 070442 transferred to USAAF on loan; 080143 missing Mt. Strong (Papua New Guinea).

**N5-159** 41-12476 060442 severely damaged on arrival at Amberley; transfer to USAAF on loan cancelled 0642; ac left to the Dutch, although initially considered reparable it was salvaged by 30<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron; 0642 written off at the expense of the NEI (parts and components all to 18 Squadron NEI at Canberra, nosewheel assembly used to repair N5-161).

**N5-160** 41-12481 250342 damaged beyond repair on arrival at Archerfield (salvaged by personnel of the ML/KNIL Det Archerfield).

**N5-161** 41-12501 rec. Archerfield 250342; 0442 to 18 Sq NEI Canberra; c. 010742 renumbered **N5-126**; 220742 crash landing at Moruya; 100842 to CMU RAAF for repairs; 010942 transferred to USAAF (when with CMU); crashed 131042, details unknown; condemned 151042.

**N5-?** 41-12498 rec. Archerfield 250342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 250542 ditched after attack by fighters at Lae (Papua New Guinea).

**N5-?** 41-12499 rec. Amberley 060442; 060442 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 250842 missing on flight from Port Moresby to Milne Bay; condemned 270842.

**N5-166** 41-12514 rec. Archerfield 240342; 250342 transferred to USAAF on loan; 3<sup>rd</sup> BG, 300342 damaged beyond repair on arrival at Charters Towers.

Sources: <https://www.pacificwrecks.com/aircraft/b-25/index.html> ; USAAF ac record cards (Smithsonian/NASM); e-mail correspondence Edward Rogers to author 2017-18; P.C. Boer, "Early NAA B-25C Mitchells of the ML/KNIL, February 1942-June 1942", published on line at [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) (search Peter Boer, select military history).

Douglas DB-7B/A-20A Bostons temporarily used by 18 Squadron NEI

(mentioned are USAAF FY serial or RAAF serial and previous MLD and RAF serials, details on use as far as is known)

**40-77** (45 in yellow on nose) arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, left 160642 for Amberley (returned USAAF).

**40-82** (15 in yellow on nose) arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, left 160642 for Amberley (returned USAAF).

**40-101** (22 in yellow on nose) arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, left 160642 for Amberley (returned USAAF).

**40-155** (276 in white on vertical tail, probably a shipping number); arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642, left 180642 for Richmond (22 Squadron RAAF) and ferried to Melbourne (US Air Depot Group) from there.

**40-143** (38 in small black numbers on nose) arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, left 170642 or 190642 and ferried to Melbourne (US Air Depot Group) by RAAF.

**40-85** (31 in yellow on nose) arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, flown for training 220242; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF, ferried to Melbourne (US Air Depot Group).

**40-3160** (2 on vertical tail, possibly an assembly number, no nose number); arrived 18 Sq NEI 120642 or 130642, flown for training 190642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF, ferried to Melbourne (US Air Depot Group).

**A28-5** ex MLD D-70, ex AL895, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-7** ex MLD D-73?, ex AL899, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-9** ex MLD D-66, ex AL891, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-11** ex MLD D-55?, ex AL364, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-15** ex MLD D-58?, ex AL361, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-16** ex MLD D-59?, ex AL362, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-18** ex MLD D-57?, ex AL366, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

**A28-22** ex MLD D-72?, ex AL898, arrived 18 Sq NEI 060642 or 070642; 230642 transferred to 22 Sq RAAF.

Sources: Dr. P.C. Boer, Aircraft of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Corps in crisis and war times, February 1937-June 1942 (Batavian Lion International, Amsterdam/Berlin, 2016), pp. 135, 143-144.

Project Mark I NAA B-25C-NA (11 ac) and B-25D-NC (7 ac) Mitchells in use 18 Squadron N.E.I. from August-September 1942 (ML serial, USAAF FY serial, details on use until 11 May 1943)

**N5-128** 41-12935 arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 220842.

**N5-129** 41-12916 [41-12936 in Memorandum Nr. 4 but serial corrected on ac status card] arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 230842.

**N5-130** 41-29713 arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 230842.

**N5-131** 41-12936 [41-12916 in Memorandum Nr. 4 but serial corrected on ac status card] arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 230842.

**N5-132** 41-12919 arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 230842; 050243 crashed after take-off from McDonald strip, total loss after part of the bomb load exploded.

**N5-133** 41-12914 arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 230842; 300343 forced landing Melville Island, written off 020443.

**N5-134** 41-12885 arrived Brisbane 290842, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 020942.

**N5-135** 41-12912 arrived Brisbane 290842, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 050942; shot down in mast height attack 280443.

**N5-136** 41-12933 arrived Brisbane 290842, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 050942.

**N5-137** 41-29735 arrived Brisbane 290842, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 050942.

**N5-138** 41-12934 arrived Brisbane 030942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 050942.

**N5-139** 41-12913 arrived Brisbane 080942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 150942, 310143 crashed Port Keats, major damage, 140243 authorised for reducing to spares.

**N5-140** 41-29723 arrived Brisbane 090942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 110942, lost in action 050443 (Darwin Sea en route to Timor).

**N5-141** 41-29725 arrived Brisbane 100942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 110942.

**N5-142** 41-29716 arrived Brisbane 110942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 140942.

**N5-143** 41-29722 arrived Brisbane 110942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 140942.

**N5-144** 41-29717 arrived Brisbane 150942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 210942, 180243 lost in action, ditched at sea after fighter attack.

**N5-145** 41-12798 arrived Brisbane 170942, arrived 18 Sq NEI Canberra 210942.

NAA B-25C-15-NA attrition replacement aircraft (8) received March-May 1943

**N5-146** 42-32512 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 310343.

**N5-147** 42-32484 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 310343.

**N5-148** 42-32338 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 040443.

**N5-149** 42-32511 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 040443.

**N5-150** 42-32337 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 060443.

**N5-151** 42-32485 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 060443.

**N5-152** 42-32483 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 120443.

**N5-153** 42-32339 arrived 18 (NEI) Sq McDonald 040543.

Sources: Aircraft status cards (NAA), Memorandums Maj B.J. Fiedeldij Nr. 1 up to and including Nr. 6 (NIMH) and RAAF A50 Forms (NAA). Arrival dates Canberra and McDonald are taken from the A50 Forms (unit history sheets, ANA) as these are considered to be the most accurate.

Remark. The above ac were modified with wing tip auxiliary tanks from 0643.

Modified with wing tip auxiliary tanks were the following B-25C-NA aircraft:

**N5-136** modified at 1 AD, Laverton, arrived McDonald ex Laverton 13 January 1943.

**N5-139** modified at 1 AD, Laverton, arrived McDonald ex Laverton 21 January 1943.

**N5-131** 6 February 1943 to 3 AD, Amberley (received 8 February), returned at McDonald 21 February 1943, also returning some personnel that had been on leave and the Bendix factory representative Mr Sooms.

**N5-135** 16 February 1943 to 3 AD, Amberley, returned at McDonald on 4 March 1943 [A50 Form wrongly says N5-134].

**N5-133** 5 March 1943 to 3 AD Amberley (received 7 March), returned at McDonald on 18 March 1943.

**N5-129** 18 March to 3 AD, Amberley, returned at McDonald on 4 April 1943.

**N5-134** 30 March 1943 to 3 AD, Amberley (received 1 April), returned at McDonald on 15 April 1943.

**N5-138** 12 April 1943 to 3 AD, Amberley (received 13 April), returned at McDonald on 29 April 1943.

**N5-128** 1 May to 3 AD Amberley (received 3 May), returned at Batchelor on 22 May 1943.

Sources: Aircraft status cards (NAA) and A50 Forms RAAF (unit history sheets, NAA).

Remark. There were no strafe conversions at Eagle Farm, Brisbane in the period covered. The very first ac converted was N5-145 which on 15 May 1943 went to Eagle Farm.

### **Abbreviations used**

AA—Anti-aircraft (fire)

Ac—Aircraft

ACM---Air Chief-Marshal  
AD—Aircraft Depot  
ADG—Air Depot Group  
Adj---Adjutant (Adjutant, Warrant Officer Class 1)  
AG—Air Gunner  
ANA—Australian National Airways or Australian National Archives (presently NAA)  
AOC---Air Officer Commanding  
AOR—Air Operations Room  
A&P—Aircraft & Personnel Pool  
AVM—Air Vice-Marshal  
AWM---Australian War Memorial  
BG—Bombardment Group (of the USAAF)  
BS—Bombardment Squadron (of the USAAF)  
BSO—Bevelhebber Strijdkrachten Oosten (Commander-in-Chief Dutch and NEI Forces in the East)  
C—Circa (approximately)  
CCOS—Combined Chiefs of Staff  
CG—Commanding General  
CL---Commandant Luchtstrijdkrachten (Air forces CO)  
CMA---Commandant Marine Australië (Commander Navy Forces Australia)  
CMU—Central Maintenance Unit  
C/n—Construction number (manufacturer serial number)  
CO—Commanding Officer  
DAP---Department of Aircraft Production  
Det---Detachement (Detachment)  
D.VI.A.—Depot Vliegtuigafdeeling (air transport squadron ML/KNIL)  
Elt---Eerste luitenant (1st Lieutenant)  
FCO—Firing Control Officer  
F/O—Flying Officer  
F/Lt—Flight Lieutenant  
F/Sgt—Flight Sergeant (Sergeant-major)

FY—(U.S.) Fiscal year  
GenMaj---Generaal-majoor (Major-General)  
Hq---Headquarters  
IWM---Imperial War Museum  
Kap---Kapitein (Captain)  
KIA---Killed in action  
KLM—Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (Royal Dutch Airline)  
KM—Koninklijke Marine (Royal Netherlands Navy)  
KNIL—Koninklijk Nederlands-Indisch Leger (Royal Netherlands Indies Army)  
KNILM—Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Luchtvaart Maatschappij (Royal Netherlands Indies Airline)  
Kpl—Korporaal (Corporal)  
LAC—Leading Aircraftman  
LtGen---Luitenant-generaal (Lieutenant-General)  
LKol---Luitenant-kolonel (Lieutenant-Colonel)  
Maj---Majoor (Major)  
MIA---Missing in action  
ML—Militaire Luchtvaart (Army Air Corps of the KNIL)  
MLD---Marineluchtvaartdienst (Naval Air Service of the KM)  
MT—Motor Transport  
NAA—North American Aviation or National Archives of Australia  
NavB—Navigator-bombardier  
NCO—Non-commissioned officer  
NEFIS—Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service  
NEI—Netherlands East Indies  
NIMH—Netherlands Institute for Military History  
NPC—Netherlands Purchasing Commission  
OBU—Operations Base Unit  
OBSO—Onderbevelhebber Strijdkrachten Oosten (Deputy BSO)  
Olt—Onderluitenant (Sub-Lieutenant)  
OTU—Operational Training Unit

P.E.P.—Personnel & Equipment Pool  
P/O—Pilot Officer  
RAF—Royal Air Force  
RAAF—Royal Australian Airforce  
Rec---Received  
Res---Reserve  
RNMFS—Royal Netherlands Military Flying School  
RSU—Repair & Service Unit or Repair & Salvage Unit (of the RAAF)  
Sbn—Schout-bij-nacht (Rear-admiral)  
SFTS—Service Flying Training School (of the RAAF)  
Sgt---Sergeant  
SM—Sergeant-majoor (Sergeant-major, Warrant Officer Class 2)  
Sld—Soldaat (Private)  
S/Ldr—Squadron Leader  
Sq---Squadron  
SWPA—South West Pacific Area  
T.A.B.---Transport Afdeeling Brisbane (Transport Unit Brisbane)  
Techrep—Technical representative (of a factory)  
Tlt---Tweede luitenant (2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant)  
Vdg---Vaandrig (Ensgn, reserve officer candidate)  
Vltgm—Vliegtuigmaker (Aircraft technician=maintenance specialist)  
WOAG—Wireless operator/Air gunner  
USAAF—United States Army Air Force  
USAFIA—United States Army Forces in Australia  
V.W.S.---Vlieg- en Waarnemersschool (Flying and Observer School)  
Z—Zulu time or Greenwich Mean Time

## **Acknowledgements**

Apart from the veterans of the ML/KNIL (all mentioned in the endnotes but, sadly, all deceased now) who were kind enough to supply information for this paper I would like to thank the following persons (in random order): Gordon Birkett, Edward Rogers, Jan Hagens, Gerard Casius, Ingrid Schodel, Gerrit Zwanenburg (deceased), Guus van Oorschot, Henk Schakelaar and Nico Geldhof (deceased). Their most

appreciated help in most cases was received over the many years (my first writings are dated 1974) I was busy collecting data for and writing parts of this paper. The research I did with the NIMH was done largely in the eighties and nineties of the previous century before the recently completed electronic index of the record collection. Thanks to Henk Kauffman and Rob van der Kruyk for their assistance and efforts to locate interesting files and documents.

## Endnotes

<sup>0</sup> All dates are day, month year or month, year; - between dates or months means up to and including. Geographical names are spelled as they were at the time.

Data from military records ML personnel referred to in endnotes was received via the Directorate-General of Personnel, Dutch MoD, period 1994-1998, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> P.C. Boer, "The depot squadron of the Netherlands East Indies Army Aviation Corps and the Java-Australia airlift and evacuation flights in the period February-March 1942 ([www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) search Peter Boer, select military history), pp 13, 25-32.

<sup>2</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>3</sup> See for example O.G. Ward, *De Militaire Luchtvaart KNIL in de jaren 1942-1945* (Weesp, 1985, hereafter Ward, 1942-1945), Ch 2.

<sup>4</sup> As described to author by B.J. Fiedeldij and H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>5</sup> P.C. Boer, "Early NAA B-25C Mitchells of the ML/KNIL, February 1942-June 1942" ([www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), search Peter Boer, select military history, hereafter Boer, Early Mitchells), p 13.

<sup>6</sup> Extracts from correspondence and telegrams received from B.J. Fiedeldij and interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid (copy main part letter Van Oyen to Burnett, 26 March 1942); Boer, Early Mitchells, pp 13-16.

<sup>8</sup> Letter No. 18 Squadron N.E.I. Nr. 17 (Geheim), 28 May 1942, Appendix Memorandum Nr. 1 (NIMH, hereafter Memorandum Nr. ...); Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Unit history sheets (A50 Form, NAA; if not mentioned otherwise unit history sheets are those of 18 Squadron NEI); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij. The RAAF initially assumed that the squadron would come under RAAF command from the start and only arranged administratively in August 1942 that the new unit, from 4 April 1942, was Dutch (Airforce Command Order Nr. 230, 22 August 1942, NAA).



<sup>9</sup> Letter OC NEI Forces to ACM Sir Charles S. Burnett, Nr. 25, 31 March 1942, Appendix (NAA); Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>11</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942 and Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.

<sup>12</sup> Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>13</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942; Air Force Command Order Nr. 230, 22 August 1942 (NAA); Unit history sheet (A50 Form, 6 July 1942, NAA); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>15</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942. Planned were 36 WOAGs but one posting was cancelled; see Appendix 1.

<sup>16</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942 and Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942, pt. 1 and 2. See also Appendix 1. It is remarked that the ML WOAGs were officially addressed to as Luchtvaart-radiotelegrafist (aviation wireless operator) but in 18 Squadron the RAAF title WOAG was normally used.

<sup>17</sup> Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942.

<sup>18</sup> Cf <sup>12</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Boer, Early Mitchells.

<sup>20</sup> P.C. Boer, *Aircraft of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Corps in crisis and war times, February 1937-June 1942* (Batavian Lion International, 2016), Ch 2.3. The A-20A and the DB-7B were similar apart from its internal aircraft equipment items (USAAF versus RAF) and the calibre of its armament (0.3-inch versus 0.303-inch).

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.

<sup>22</sup> It is remarked that one aircraft was to replace a A-20A of which the engines were close to overhaul. All A-20As were in a rather bad state of maintenance with much rust from their sea voyage which had not been removed.

<sup>23</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>; Interviews author with A.J de Vries and G. Barendrecht, telephone interview author with W.F.A. Winckel. It is remarked that the HD-53 establishment originally prescribed six Fitter-Armourers and 12 Armourers, all ML positions.

<sup>24</sup> Unit history sheets (A50 Form, NAA). The KNIL (ground forces) soldiers were initially seconded to the ML but were later transferred to the ML.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid; Appendix letter 31 March (see endnote <sup>9</sup>); Nominative listing ML personnel, January 1943 (actually made up 26 December 1942, with some later additions, NIMH); military records mentioned personnel.

- <sup>26</sup> Unit history sheets (NAA); Military records personnel posted April 1942; Boer, Early Mitchells, pp 18-19.
- <sup>27</sup> Unit history sheets (NAA); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Military record W.F. Boot; Telegrams nr. 0506-0605-17, 6 May 1942, CMA to Embassy attn. Van Oyen and nr. 0626-0705-47, 26 June 1942, CMA to Embassy attn. Van Oyen (NIMH).
- <sup>28</sup> Estimates received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).
- <sup>29</sup> Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942, Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942 (wrongly mentions five WOAGs instead of six ex Bangalore); Boer, Early Mitchells, pp 11-12.
- <sup>30</sup> Unit history sheets (NAA); Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.
- <sup>31</sup> Korpsorder 22 November 1942 (via B.J. Fiedeldij); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Unit history sheets (A50 Form, NAA), September 1942.
- <sup>32</sup> Military record R.E. Jessurun; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.
- <sup>33</sup> Personnel strength data received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).
- <sup>34</sup> Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke and A.D.M. Moorrees. See also Appendix 1 (RAAF flying personnel). It is remarked that several options were studied for the relocation of the .30 machinegun in the nose as was the replacement of the .30 by a .50 but the resulting modification plans were probably cancelled as 18 new B-25s were to be delivered.
- <sup>35</sup> O.G. Ward, P.C. Boer and G.J. Casius, The Royal Netherlands Military Flying School 1942-1944 (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, Marinestaf, Den Haag, 1982), p 70. It is remarked that the 12<sup>th</sup> student was Vaandrig bommenrichter (Ensign bombardier) G. Paalman, escaped from Java with Glenn Martin 139 bomber serial M585.
- <sup>36</sup> Military records mentioned ML personnel; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942 and Nr. 6, 31 December 1942; Unit history sheets (NAA). See Appendix 1 (RAAF flying personnel) for the cross-trained WOAGs.
- <sup>37</sup> Nominative personnel listing ML personnel 18 Squadron, January 1943 (actually made up 26 December 1942, with a few later additions, NIMH); Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, January 1943 and 1 May 1943 (see patrouille monteurs, via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942, pt. 1-2; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, G. Barendrecht and Chr. Bijlsma. See also Appendix 1.
- <sup>38</sup> Unit history sheets (A50 Forms, NAA); Military records personnel Bangalore Detachment; Personnel strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942, p 2, wrongly states that posted ex Bangalore were 11 pilots, seven mechanics and five WOAGs. This should be 11 pilots, seven mechanics (including one Olt) and six WOAGs.

- <sup>39</sup> Interviews author with G. Cooke, A.J. de Vries and B. Hulscher.
- <sup>40</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942; interviews author with G. Barendrecht and Chr. Bijlsma. It is remarked that the unserviceable N5-161 is wrongly mentioned N5-151 in the memorandum.
- <sup>41</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Interviews author with G. Barendrecht, H.M. Bauerman and Chr. Bijlsma; Unit history sheets (NAA).
- <sup>42</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries, B. Hulscher, K. de Bruyn and G. Barendrecht; Unit history sheets (NAA). Descriptions of the WOAG training are by K. de Bruyn and G. Barendrecht.
- <sup>43</sup> Unit history sheets (NAA); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.
- <sup>44</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Boer, Early Mitchells, pp 19, 27, 32; Unit history sheets (NAA).
- <sup>45</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke, B. Hulscher and J. van Loggem.
- <sup>46</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.
- <sup>48</sup> Interviews author with J. van Loggem, G. Cooke and R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M and the diary of the former.
- <sup>49</sup> Unit history sheets (A50/51 Forms, NAA).
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid. It is remarked that the mechanics from Archerfield were trained as upper turret gunner and some also as lower turret gunner (Interview author with G. Barendrecht).
- <sup>51</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.
- <sup>52</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942; Interview author with G. Barendrecht.
- <sup>53</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with J. van Loggem and C. Busser.
- <sup>54</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Interview author with J. van Loggem.
- <sup>55</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.
- <sup>56</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; J.J. Nortier, "De guerrilla in midden-Celebes, April 1942 tot Augustus 1942" in *Mars et Historia*, 15-5 (September/October 1981), pp 129-139.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interview author with J. van Loggem; Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942.
- <sup>58</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942 and Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke and J. van Loggem.
- <sup>59</sup> Cf <sup>56</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942 (incorrectly speaks of two B-25s); Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and G.J. Wijnands. After the war it was

concluded that the NEFIS party probably had received the approximate position of the KNIL unit from a traitor who had contacts with the Japanese. The NEFIS men were taken prisoner by the Japanese on 12 July (possibly 13 July) 1942.

<sup>60</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942; Unit history sheets 22 July-26 July 1942 11 Operational Base Unit (via Gary Traynor, with thanks to Gary Traynor).

<sup>61</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>62</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Dr. L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, IIC, *Nederlands-Indië III* ('s-Gravenhage, 1986), p 182; Information received from Th.G.J. van der Schroeff (via G.J. Zwanenburg, with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased).

<sup>63</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries and G. Cooke.

<sup>64</sup> As described by B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>65</sup> As condensed from discussions with groups of veterans during reunions organised by Kees Merkelbach in the 1980s.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid; Information from the Technisch Journaal 18 Squadron NEI (Collection Veuger/De Smalen, NIMH at the time of my research but no longer available, same information via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.)

<sup>69</sup> Information from the Technisch Journaal 18 Squadron NEI (Collection Veuger/De Smalen, NIMH at the time of my research but no longer available, same information via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid; Interviews author with G. Barendrecht and Chr. Bijlsma.

<sup>71</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum Nr. 1, 28 May 1942; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid; W.F. Craven and J.L. Cate (editors), *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol One: *Plans and Early Operations*, January 1939 to August 1942 (Chicago, 1950), p 422.

<sup>75</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 Sept 1942; Military records mentioned personnel.

<sup>76</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Nr. 3, 15 August 1942 and Nr. 4, 15 September 1942.

<sup>77</sup> Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Military record card Th. Buys (NIMH).

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942 and Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Extract letter AAF SWPA Hq to OBSO, 5 October 1942 (via O.G. Ward).

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942 and Nr. 6, 31 December 1942; Interviews author with J. van Loggem and B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>80</sup> Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942 and Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Unit history sheets (NAA); Boer, Early Mitchells, p 32.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Boer, Early Mitchells, pp 16, 27; Interview author with G. Barendrecht.

<sup>83</sup> Boer, Early Mitchells, p. 32; Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Interview author with G. Barendrecht.

<sup>84</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942 (it is remarked that the N5-serials of the 41-12913 and 41-29723 and probably also the N5-serials of the 41-12916 and 41-12936 are switched and N5-143 41-29722 is not mentioned); Aircraft status cards (NAA); Interview author with G. Barendrecht.

<sup>85</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>86</sup> Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.; Military records mentioned personnel.

<sup>87</sup> Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.; H.L. Zwitter, "Het Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger in Australië, 1942-1945" in Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Vol. 8 ('s-Gravenhage, 1985), pp 76-77.

<sup>88</sup> Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.; O.G. Ward, P.C. Boer, G.J. Casius, The Royal Netherlands Military Flying School (Afdeling Maritieme Historie, Marinestaf, 's-Gravenhage, 1982), ch V, VI and VII.

<sup>89</sup> Verslag vergadering op 23 juli 1942, Public Health Building kamer 221- Departement van oorlog te Washington DC (via O.G. Ward).

<sup>90</sup> Telegram OC Netherlands Forces Australia to Embassy Washington, attn. Van Oyen, 15 June 1942 (NIMH); Boer, Early Mitchells, p 19; Interviews author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M. and B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>91</sup> Boer, Early Mitchells, p 19.

<sup>92</sup> Telegrams Embassy Washington to London, Nr. 1409, 5 August 1942 and Nr. 1439, 8 August 1942 (via O.G. Ward); CCS 39<sup>th</sup> Meeting: minutes of meeting, held in room 240 CCOS building on Friday Sept 4<sup>th</sup> 1942 (via O.G. Ward).

<sup>93</sup> Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.; Aantekeningen bespreking met de BDZ gedurende diens inspectiereis te Jackson op 16 en 17 September 1942 (Zeer Geheim, NIMH).

<sup>94</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>; Telegram OC Netherlands Forces Australia to Embassy Washington, attn. Van Oyen, 29 April 1942 (NIMH).

<sup>95</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>96</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>97</sup> H.L. Zwitser, "Het Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger in Australië, 1942-1945" in Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Vol 8 ('s-Gravenhage, 1985), pp 70-71, 74; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>98</sup> Interviews author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M., B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>99</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942.

<sup>100</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>101</sup> Unit history sheets (A50 Form, strength figures end of month, NAA)

<sup>102</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries and several of the mechanics at the time incl. G. Barendrecht, T. Buehre and G.J. Wijnands. See also Appendix 1 (RAAF flying personnel).

<sup>103</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 3, 15 August 1942 and Nr. 4, 15 September 1942.

<sup>104</sup> Cf <sup>99</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Actual strength and establishment figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Copy of parts of HD-53A (via RAAF Historical Section, 1977).

<sup>106</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Military record F. Besançon, M.Sc.; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; Information about the career of Besançon received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens).

<sup>107</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Nr. 4, 15 September 1942 and Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij; E-mail correspondence with Jan Hagens 2019-2020 (with thanks to Jan Hagens); Military records former KNILM/KLM personnel; Kort verslag aan aandeelhouders van de N.V. Koninklijke Nederlands-Indische Luchtvaart Maatschappij (periode van Mei 1940 tot 1 Augustus 1946, Netherlands National Archives, Inv. Nr. 143, Regeringscommissarissen van het Ministerie van Kolonien 1904-1952), p 5.

<sup>108</sup> KNIL strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier). See also Appendix 1. The strength of 256 was reported by Sbn Coster to RAAF staff officers on 18 September 1942 (Memorandum, 18 September 1942, unnumbered, via O.G. Ward).

<sup>109</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Unit history sheets (A50 Form, end of month strength figures, NAA).

<sup>110</sup> Unit history sheets (A50 Form, end of month strength figures, NAA); ML strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Nominative listing ML personnel, January 1943 (actually 26 December 1942 with some later additions, NIMH).

<sup>111</sup> Interview author with A.J. de Vries. See Appendix 1 for ML pilot and WOAG postings and RAAF flying personnel.

<sup>112</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942 and Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>113</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942. It is remarked that in the Memorandum, pt. 8, two serials are switched (N5-139 and N5-140) and two probably switched (N5-129 and N5-131), while N5-143, 41-29722, taken over 11 September 1942, is not mentioned. The ammunition feeds and containers for the nose guns were eventually made by the Maintenance Section but the material needed only was delivered on 29 October 1942, see Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942, pt. 9 and pt. 11b.

<sup>114</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with G. Barendrecht.

<sup>115</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid; Unit history sheets (NAA); Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries. De Vries took delivery of the final modified aircraft and tried, in vain, to speed up delivery of the final bomb-bay tanks.

<sup>117</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Extracts from correspondence and telegrams received from B.J. Fiedeldij (correspondence and telegrams from OBSO to Allied Air Forces SWPA Hq and Embassy Washington, attn. Van Oyen); Interview author with H. Creutzberg, LL.M.

<sup>118</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke and A.D.M. Moorrees.

<sup>119</sup> Interviews author with G. Barendrecht, G.J. Wijnands, T. Buehre and P.J. Bouten.

<sup>120</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942 and Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interview author with J. van Loggem.

<sup>121</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries and J. van Loggem.

<sup>122</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Interviews author with A.D.M. Moorrees, C. Busser and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>125</sup> Memorandum No 5, 31 December 1942. It is remarked that the memorandum incorrectly states that practise bombings were held in June, July, August and September with Norden sights. In fact, there were none in September while there were relatively few practise bombing flights in July and August. Bombing practise in September had to be done with Estoppey bombsights as the original B-25s were transferred to the USAAF on 1 September 1942.

<sup>126</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Description of the bombardier training by J. van Loggem and C. Busser; Interviews author with J. van Loggem and C. Busser; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Military record cards RAAF of the cross-trained WOAGs (NAA), see also Appendix 1; Military records mentioned ML personnel. It is remarked that the squadron establishment initially mentioned six Fitter-Armourer and 12 Armourer positions to be filled by the ML. Of the latter six became vacancies in June upon which RAAF replacements were requested. On 28 October 1942 the six by now RAAF positions were still vacant. The eventual number of RAAF Fitter-Armourer and Armourer positions was further enlarged in November 1942 at the request of the ML.

<sup>127</sup> Memorandum Nr. 2, 18 July 1942; Military record J.J. van Balkom; Information concerning J.J. van Balkom via Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens); Information of Th.G.J. van der Schroeff via G.J. Zwanenburg (with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased).

<sup>128</sup> Military records mentioned personnel.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid; Interview author with J. van Loggem

<sup>130</sup> ML functional strength break-down, 28 September 1942 (via J.J. Nortier, with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Interview author with J. van Loggem.

<sup>131</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid; Interview author with J. van Loggem.

<sup>133</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Interview author with C. Busser.

<sup>134</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 November 1942; Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and J. van Loggem.

<sup>135</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 6, 31 December 1942; Interviews author with J. van Loggem and L.W. Hansen.

<sup>136</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>137</sup> Interviews author with V.N. Jansen and K. de Bruyn. See also Appendix 1 (RAAF flying personnel).

<sup>138</sup> Cf <sup>131</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942; Interviews author with J. van Loggem, C. Busser, G. Cooke and A.D.M. Moorrees.



<sup>140</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interview author with A.D.M. Moorrees.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>142</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries. Several letters about operations from CO 18 Squadron mention an extra pilot flying as a dedicated FCO, see for example letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 71 (Geheim, Eigenhandig), 19 February 1943, pt. 20 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot, Tlt Wetters flew as FCO with pilots Lts Oudraad and Hartevelt).

<sup>143</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942.

<sup>144</sup> NEI personnel strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier); Nominative listing ML personnel, January 1943 (NIMH, actually 26 December 1942 with some later additions); Data on KNILM/KLM personnel received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens).

<sup>145</sup> Interview with H.J. Burgers and his military record; Information concerning D.K.R. Sweitser received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens).

<sup>146</sup> NEI personnel strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier). It is remarked that the NEI personnel strength break-down made up on 26 December 1942 gives a total that is one too high (SM pilot Reijns is counted twice, once with staff personnel and once with flying personnel).

<sup>147</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, F.R. Lettinga, A.J. de Vries and G. Cooke. The CO of 18 Squadron N.E.I. according to KNIL regulations was *Korpscommandant* (Corps CO) or in terms of ML regulations *Vliegtuiggroep commandant tevens Vliegkampcommandant* (Aircraft Group CO also Airbase CO) i.e. Administrative CO. The *Gevechtsvoorschrift ML* (Combat regulation ML) prescribed that an *Afdeulingscommandant* (Squadron CO) should only fly along and command an operational mission if the full 1<sup>st</sup> line strength of his *Afdeeling* was deployed (as explained to me by F.R. Lettinga, former CO of Glenn Martin 139 squadron 1-VI.G.III). Fiedeldij referred to this ML regulation and to the accepted custom in the RAAF to fly along occasionally for the morale of the crews, when the KNIL Hq in Melbourne remarked in February 1943 that he should not fly on operations as he was *Korpscommandant*. Deputy CO A.J. de Vries also held a posting that was not operational but had permission from Fiedeldij to fly as a reserve pilot/crew member due to shortages of pilots and observers when the squadron was at McDonald, which permission Fiedeldij revoked on 23 January 1943, however.

<sup>148</sup> Memorandum Nr. 5, 15 November 1942 (actually describes the situation on 28 October 1942).

<sup>149</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Military records mentioned personnel; Information received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens).

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke and G. Barendrecht.

<sup>152</sup> Letter wnd. LCA to CO No. 18 Squadron NEI, No. 3229/NI (Persoonlijk), 24 November 1942 (NIMH); Beschikking tot verwijzing naar de Zeekrijgsraad, No. Int. 8/11/11 (Zeer Geheim), 25 November 1942 (via O.G. Ward); Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries, G. Cooke and G. Barendrecht.

<sup>153</sup> Enquête Commissie Regeringsbeleid 1940-1945, Deel 8A en B: Militair Beleid, Bijlage 13, p 32; Interviews author with H.J. Burgers, P. van Hoof, K. de Bruyn, Th. van den Dolder, A.D.M. Moorrees, G. Cooke, C. Busser, F. Pelder, J. van Loggem, G. Barendrecht, Ch. Bijlsma, T. Buehre, P. Borgmeijer, P.J. Bouten, G.J. Wijnands and B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>154</sup> Information received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens); Military records mentioned personnel; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>155</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>156</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Ward, 1942-1945, p. 212. It is remarked that Ward incorrectly states that Van der Schroeff never trained a second test pilot and that Fiedeldij did not take action to correct this. Van der Schroeff had, in fact, an assistant test pilot from the start of the squadron in April 1942 (A. Hagers). He had, by mid-April 1943, trained a few of the more experienced pilots (who already had experience with acceptance test flying) as a Technical Service test pilot to share the test work. Van der Schroeff had a meeting with Fiedeldij and flight surgeon Storm in March to prepare his return to operational flying and during this meeting the need for a few more test pilots was discussed. An arrangement was then made up for a short training at the Technical Service for two or three of the pilots (interviews author with G. Cooke and A.J. de Vries, both mentioned as one of the trained pilots B. Wetters; information of Th.G.J. van der Schroeff via G.J. Zwanenburg, with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased).

<sup>157</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries; Letter No. 18 Squadron to Headquarters, North Western Area, Ref. 3/1/AIR (16A), 31 May 1943, Appendices, RAAF, Historical Section, 1977). Van den Broek had already completed his B-25 training when sent to Batchelor on 13 April 1943 as CO of the Advance Party, having passed his bombing test at Coomalie on 6 April. He fell ill in May at Batchelor but was back on the operations schedule as a reserve 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot and observer in late May and first flew along on a mission on 16 June as observer. He regularly flew as observer and 2<sup>nd</sup> pilot (from 20 June) until 11 July, also flying as 1<sup>st</sup> pilot on non-operational flights until 13 July, then falling ill again. He had to be taken off operations because of medical treatment and was not to return to operational flying. Van den Broek remained *Compagnie Commandant* at McDonald.

<sup>158</sup> Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, januari 1943 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.); Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries (remembered that he was “operationally grounded” on the same day Fiedeldij flew

along on an operational mission for the first time), G. Barendrecht, C. Busser, G. Cooke, A.D.M. Moorrees and telephone interview with W.F.A. Winckel.

<sup>159</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij. It is remarked that Ward, 1942-1945, p. 186, incorrectly mentions that there was no scouting party. I verified with several veterans that there had indeed been a scouting party, including L.J. Janssen, G. Cooke and K. de Bruyn.

<sup>160</sup> Memorandum Nr. 4, 15 September 1942; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij. See also the remark in endnote <sup>159</sup>.

<sup>161</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Unit history sheets 54 OBU (NAA); Memorandum Nr. 6, 31 December 1942.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Memorandum Nr. 6, 31 December 1942.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid; Interview author with A.J. de Vries (responsible for rounding up at Canberra).

<sup>166</sup> Memorandum Nr. 6, 31 December 1942.

<sup>167</sup> Conform descriptions by G. Cooke, A.D.M. Moorrees and G. Barendrecht.

<sup>168</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.; Interview author with G. Barendrecht; Information from Th.G.J. van der Schroeff (via G.J. Zwanenburg, with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased).

<sup>170</sup> Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, B.J. Fiedeldij, B. Hulscher and C. Busser. See also Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, januari 1943 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.).

<sup>171</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij (confirmed that he had taken De Vries off operational flying as a reserve pilot as the training of additional flying personnel and crews had priority) and A.J. de Vries (confirmed that Fiedeldij instructed him to realise a minimum of 18 crews in April 1943); Information concerning J.J. van Balkom via Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens); logbook and other information from Th.G.J. van der Schroeff (via G.J. Zwanenburg, with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased).

<sup>172</sup> Interviews author with A.J. de Vries, B.J. Fiedeldij and (telephone) interview with W.F.A. Winckel; Military record cards mentioned ML personnel (via NIMH) and RAAF flying personnel (NAA).

<sup>173</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with J. van Loggem and A.J. de Vries; Military record card M. Horstink (via NIMH); Military record cards mentioned RAAF flying personnel (NAA).

<sup>174</sup> Interview author with A.J. de Vries. See also Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, januari 1943 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.).

<sup>175</sup> Interview author with A.J. de Vries; Information from Th.G.J. van der Schroeff (via G.J. Zwanenburg, with thanks to Gerrit Zwanenburg, deceased); Unit history sheets (NAA). See Appendix 1 for details about the trainees.

<sup>176</sup> Military records mentioned personnel; Information concerning A.G. Ekels received from Jan Hagens (with thanks to Jan Hagens); Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, 28 april 1943 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.).

<sup>177</sup> Cf <sup>175</sup>; Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, 28 april 1943 (via R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M.).

<sup>178</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interviews author with A.J. de Vries and B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>179</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Letter CO No. 18 Squadron to acting LCA Nr. 167 (Geheim), 12 April 1943 (NIMH). LKOl Fiedeldij wrote this letter to the acting KNIL CO in Melbourne to explain why a number of pilots mentioned in an earlier listing had not or had flown only few operational missions. Fiedeldij, unfortunately, wrote his letter in a hurry as he was busy with the move of his squadron to Batchelor and he actually flew to Batchelor on that same day. This resulted in a letter with short explanations which were hard to understand and not acceptable for Infantry officer LKOl Van Straten. For instance he wrote that Kap De Vries was *Hoofd Vliegdiens* (Chief of Flying) and could not be missed in this ground position (Fiedeldij had meant a staff position), without explaining what De Vries actually did and why he could not be missed. The answer from Van Straten, letter acting LCA to CO 18 Squadron Nr. 73/GA-5 (Geheim), 14 April 1943 (NIMH) resulted in a not very friendly correspondence which was ended by LKOl Te Roller, the newly posted CL (from 21 April) in Melbourne. Te Roller visited McDonald on 30 April and the early days of May and found that Fiedeldij had taken adequate measures in the personnel field. After discussing the matter of the pilots with Fiedeldij, De Vries, Jessurun and later also Winckel, Te Roller concluded that the personnel policy of Fiedeldij was quite acceptable (he praised De Vries for running the B-25 courses so efficiently) which findings he conveyed to Van Straten (interviews and telephone interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij, A.J. de Vries and W.F.A. Winckel).

It is remarked that Ward, 1942-1945, pp 210-212, suggests that De Vries, Van den Broek and Van der Schroeff were unwilling to fly operations or refused to do so. I discussed the mentioned pages with Otto Ward and showed the material I had collected. We agreed that he had jumped to conclusions and should have done more research on the subject. Ward also incorrectly says on p 211 that Fiedeldij and De Vries flew along on only a few operations [my translation from Dutch] “as an extra pilot and certainly not as a crew member”. A further remark by Ward that in an interview [my translation from Dutch] “...one of the oldest observers...said he thought it would be better to keep silent about De Vries as deputy CO” (p 211) actually concerned De Vries as deputy CO of the Det Archerfield as he did not intervene when Kap Boot bullied his subordinates around (interview author with J. van Loggem; actually De Vries did have a talk with Boot but this did not help much). The

conclusions of Ward on p 212, final paragraph, are completely at odds with my own research findings. De Vries actually gave a far from bad example, many of the veterans I asked (over 30 former flying and technical personnel) confirmed that nobody worked harder than De Vries to get crews ready and that he was taken off operations against his will. (Ward admitted to me that he did not know of the operational training courses ran by 18 Sq next to the operational tasks). My research also shows that Fiedeldij did an excellent job as CO in the difficult first year of his squadron in the eyes of the vast majority of the veterans.

<sup>180</sup> See Appendix 1 for details; Interviews author with L.W. Hansen and A.J. van der Heiden.

<sup>181</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup> (See also Appendix 1 for details on the new trainees); interview author with K. de Bruyn.

<sup>182</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Indeling bemanningen 18 Squadron NEI, 1 mei 1943 (NIMH, via O.G. Ward); Interview author with A.D.M. Moorrees. See Appendix 1 for details on postings and Appendix 2 on aircraft details.

<sup>183</sup> Interviews and discussions author with groups of veterans as arranged by the late Kees Merkelbach and George Cooke.

<sup>184</sup> Interviews author with G. Barendrecht, G.J. Wijnands, T. Buehre and B.J. Fiedeldij. See also Appendix 1 for personnel postings.

<sup>185</sup> Personnel strength figures received from J.J. Nortier (with thanks to J.J. Nortier).

<sup>186</sup> Ibid; Unit history sheets (RAAF personnel strength figures, NAA).

<sup>187</sup> Military record data E.J.G. te Roller (via NIMH); Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>188</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>189</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries. See also the remarks in endnote <sup>179</sup>.

<sup>190</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>191</sup> Letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, No 57 (Geheim, Eigenhandig, Spoed), 16 February 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>192</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 022 (Zeer Geheim), 23 January 1943 and Ibid. Nr. 038 (Zeer Geheim), 30 January 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>193</sup> Letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 57 (Geheim, Eigenhandig, Spoed), 16 February 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>194</sup> Information from Technisch Journaal 18 NEI Squadron (Collection Veuger/De Smalen, NIMH at the time of my research but no longer available, same information received from R.W.C.G.A. Wittert van Hoogland Esq, LL.M).

<sup>195</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Information from E. van de Graaf (at the time the mechanic/flight engineer of the N5-142).

<sup>196</sup> RAAF A.123 Forms 18 Squadron (RAAF Historical Section, 1977; average daily strength, average daily serviceability and average daily unserviceable).

<sup>197</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; RAAF A.123 Forms (RAAF Historical Section, 1977).

<sup>198</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>. See Appendix 2 for details on B-25 aircraft.

<sup>199</sup> Interviews author with A.D.M. Moorrees, C. Busser and B. Hulscher.

<sup>200</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>201</sup> Cf <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>202</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>. As all official documents on the operations use Z-time (=GMT) I have decided to use Z-time instead of local time in the text on operations from McDonald to avoid confusion.

<sup>203</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Letter No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 022 (Zeer Geheim), 23 January 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. <sup>49</sup>; Letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 40 (Geheim, Eigenhandig, Spoed), 3 February 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>206</sup> Letter CO No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 45 (Geheim), 8 February 1943 (report on the visit of AOC NW Area, via NIMH);

<sup>207</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.; Letter No. 18 Squadron NEI to acting LCA, Nr. 71 (Geheim, Eigenhandig), 19 February 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>209</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Interview author with B.J. Fiedeldij.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Cf <sup>209</sup>.

<sup>214</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Letter No. 18 Squadron NEI to AOC NW Area, Nr. 3/1/Air, 26 March 1943 (NIMH).

<sup>217</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid; Letter CO No. 18 squadron NEI to acting LCA, No. 154 (Geheim, Eigenhandig), 3 April 1943 (via Guus van Oorschot, with thanks to Guus van Oorschot).

<sup>219</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>220</sup> Letter Hq NW Area to No. 18 Squadron, Ref. 7/51/Air, 20 March 1943 (NAA).

<sup>221</sup> Letter Hq NW Area to No. 18 Squadron, Ref. 7/51/Air, 30 March 1943 (NAA).

<sup>222</sup> Interviews author with B.J. Fiedeldij and A.J. de Vries.

<sup>223</sup> Letter CO 18 (NEI) Squadron to AOC NW Area, Ref. 7/1/Air, 8 April 1943 (NAA).

<sup>224</sup> Letter CO 18 (NEI) Squadron to Hq NW Area, Ref. 3/1/Air, 12 April 1943 (NAA).

<sup>225</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>; Letter CO No. 18 (NEI) Squadron to LCA Melbourne, Nr. 188 (Geheim), 24 April 1943 (NIMH, findings were also sent to RAAF Command and Hq NW Area).

<sup>226</sup> Cf <sup>224</sup>.

<sup>227</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid. (Fiedeldij inspected Hughes on 4 April 1943).

<sup>229</sup> Photographs of the trainers (via H.J. Horsthuis, M.Sc. with thanks to Jaap Horsthuis).

<sup>230</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.; RAAF A.123 Forms 18 Squadron (RAAF Historical Section, 1977).

<sup>233</sup> Cf <sup>49</sup>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> RAAF Forms A.123 18 Squadron (RAAF Historical Section, 1977; see average daily crews effective and average daily crews non-effective).