

A65-115 was discovered in 2006 by Mr Shaun Uden.

## Significance

The service this plane provided is historically significant, both as an achievement in Australian aviation history and for its wider political meaning.

As part of the RAAF 36 squadron, this plane serviced an extensive military air link between Australia and allied occupied Japan. These planes were required to 'island hop' to Japan, also providing services to allied outposts. This post-war period saw Australia take a new assertive and confident position in the Asia and Pacific region, which would lead to engagement in humanitarian efforts and further conflicts.



**Port propeller**  
Courtesy of Heritage Branch

The site also retains a valuable artefact assemblage consisting of movable onboard equipment.

## Location

The wreck is located at  
12 ° 25.514 minutes south  
130 ° 48.104 minutes east

Front cover images **Hardy's Aviation's historic and operational C-47, Darwin Airport**  
Courtesy of Heritage Branch

**Radio Set (stolen)**  
Courtesy of Heritage Branch

The wreck is a protected historic shipwreck under the *Heritage Conservation Act*. You are welcome to dive this site, however please remember it is illegal to damage, interfere with or remove any of the structural remains or movable objects. Please maintain the 'look but don't touch' policy. Fishing is also permitted.

Under the *Darwin Port Corporation Act* it is illegal to anchor on the site. A mooring buoy has been placed near the wreck to facilitate fishing and dive boats.

## The Theft of Objects – June 2008

In June 2008 parties unknown dived on this wreck and removed many of the items shown in the site plan. This amounted to a deliberate and destructive salvage of this wreck, and constituted a serious breach of NT law. Overall the local diving community should be commended, as this site has been open for public access since September 2007 without incident. This act has seriously diminished the ability for archaeologists to address significant recent questions, and diminished the experience of visiting divers.

## Contact

For further information on the heritage, conservation and management of this site, contact:

### Heritage Branch

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport

**Phone: (08) 8999 8981**  
**www.nt.gov.au/heritage**



**Mooring buoy on A65-115**



# A65-115

A C-47 plane wreck in Darwin Harbour



A collaborative product of the Heritage Branch and Darwin Port Corporation

**A65-115, a RAAF C-47(Dakota) aircraft,** was undergoing a test flight at 3500 feet above Darwin, in September 1946, when the starboard engine burst into flames. Unable to make it back to the airport the plane was downed in the waters of Fannie Bay.

## Operational history

A65-115 was built by the Douglas Aircraft Company which had successfully adapted its ground breaking civilian aircraft the DC3 into the military transport vessel known as the C-47. The C-47 was a popular plane for allied forces during WWII and was instrumental in many major campaigns.

A65-115 was a C47B. The term Dakota, which is also sometimes used, signified a C-47 in the service of the Commonwealth.

A65-115, first operated by the US Army Air Force, was handed over to the RAAF following the war in 1945. Attached to 36 Squadron, at a time when the squadron was involved in returning Australian prisoners of war, this plane may have been involved in this important work.

At the time of its crash A65-115 and other planes of this squadron were providing an air service between Australia and Japan for the Commonwealth occupying forces, known as the British Commonwealth Occupying Force (BCOF).



**First flight of the Australian - Japan postwar service**  
Courtesy Australian War Museum

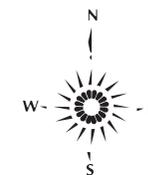
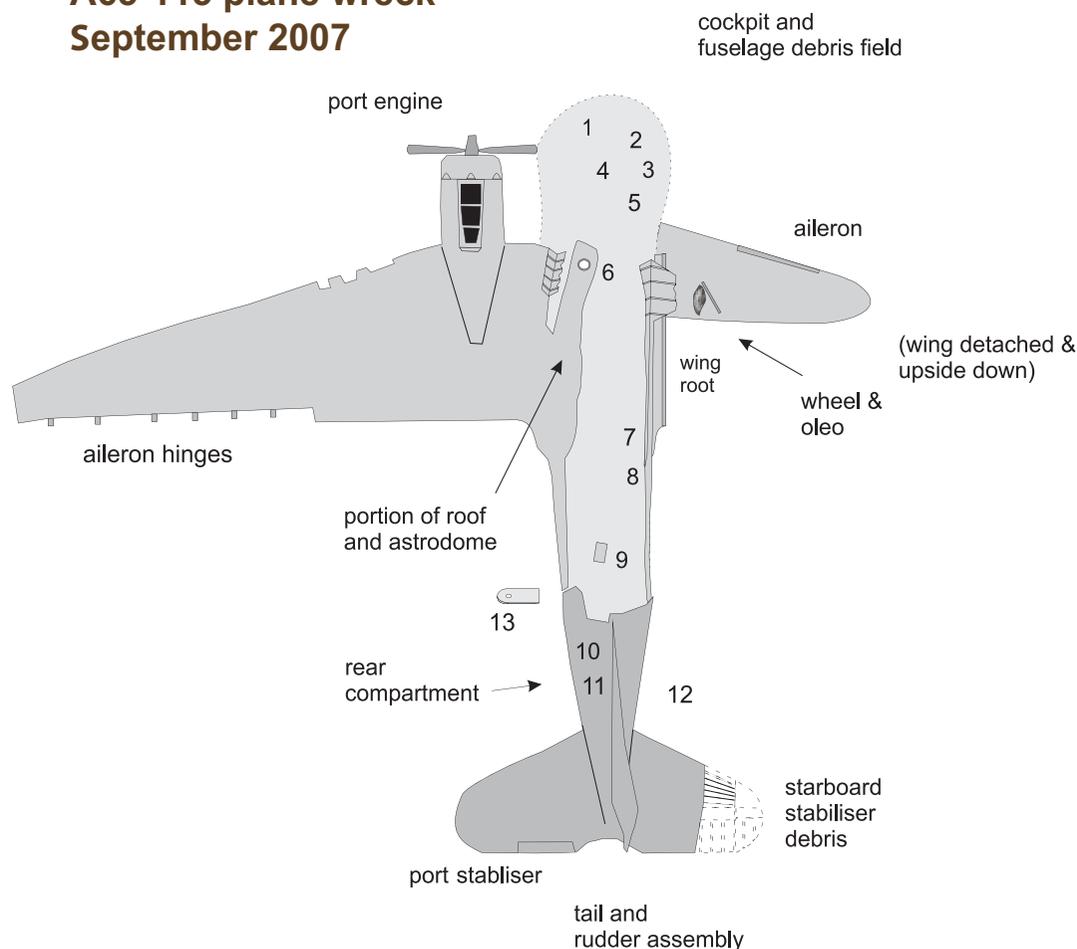
## The crash event

On 5 September 1946 Flight Lieutenant Lang and four crew were at 3500 feet when fuel was seen pouring out of the starboard engine's cowling. Soon afterward the engine burst into flames. At the enquiry into the crash the crew argued that various emergency procedures failed including the fire extinguisher. The port engine was put in full throttle to carry the plane, but that then began to lose power. Then the fire spread from the starboard engine to the wing, buckling its surface.

With a starboard engine and wing on fire, and a port engine failing, the Captain was convinced that they would not make it to the runway and so ditched the plane into the water.

The plane remained floating for sometime burning before it sunk. The crew managed to escape and clung to failing life vests and boats. They were soon rescued by Catalina flying boats based in the harbour.

## Aerial perspective of A65-115 plane wreck September 2007



5 metres

## Table of Moveable Objects (most stolen from site in June 2008)

1. Insulators
2. Pilots rudder pedal
3. Instrument panel with instruments
4. Flap lever
5. Pilot control column and wheel hub
6. Empty life raft canister
7. HF radio set
8. Power supply
9. Escape hatch with window and handle
10. Toilet entry door
11. Aluminium hand basin and light
12. Fire extinguisher
13. Main door and fixed handle