

## THE PARAFIELD MESSERSCHMITT



*Undated photo of the dark blue Messerschmitt Bf 108. (Image from author's collection)*

Of the hundreds of aircraft designers active in the 1930s and 1940s, one of the most successful was Willy Messerschmitt (1898-1978) whose military aircraft designs during the Nazi period of Germany's history remain the M.37 two-seat tourer, which first flew in June 1934. Website pilotfriend.com notes that this design, given the new designation of Bf 108, "was a considerable advance on contemporary touring aircraft . . ." whilst warbirdsalley.com indicates that its "performance made it a popular choice for record flights". Improvements to the design were incorporated in the production version, the Bf 108B, which, in the meantime, had been altered to a four-seater. Its power plant had been changed to a 240 hp Argus As 10C engine, a tail wheel replaced the earlier skid, the fin and rudder were modified and it had been given the name *Taifun*, German for typhoon.

The earliest reference I have been able to find to one of these aircraft coming to Australia was in *Pacific Islands Monthly* for May 1936 where it was reported that Guineas had shipped two recently-received Stinson planes (these were VH-UGC and VH-URC, both Stinson Reliants) to New Guinea whilst orders had been placed for a *Taifun* and two Lockheed airliners. The total cost of the five new planes was in excess of £40,000 but the individual costs were not reported.

The *Taifun* was then evidently somewhat of an unknown quantity (it was mentioned in the May article, however, that it had "a pay-load capability similar to the Stinsons") and unfortunately, perhaps due to the gradually worsening situation in Europe, was not promoted or publicised much (for example, I could find no record in Adelaide newspapers, via trove, website nla.gov.au, to the arrival of the plane in South Australia).

Why then was the *Taifun* purchased? Guinea Airways success in New Guinea had been achieved thanks to German aircraft, particularly those built by the Junkers company and in the course of regular contact between the two businesses it seems likely that some promotion of Messerschmitt's *Taifun* had led to Guinea's interest. In addition, as already mentioned, the *Taifun* had a similar load carrying capability to the Stinson (the two types had similar range and service ceilings too), suggesting that it may have been seen as a back-up for the Stinsons. Certainly by around the end of 1936 when New Guinea work had reached its zenith Guinea's were looking to expand their business into mainland Australia, but for most of that work it was more passenger liners that were needed and whether or not four-five seaters like the *Taifun* and Reliants could still prove to be useful was not known.

Research by Australian Aviation Historical Society member John O’Leary into Guinea Airways aircraft used in Australia concluded that the *Taifun* was “acquired” on 24 May 1937 and given its Certificate of Airworthiness on 14 June 1937 and whilst it is said to have been used initially in New Guinea (one of the Reliants, VH-URC, did crash in New Guinea on 27 August 1937 but it is not known whether the *Taifun* was used at the time as a replacement or not) within a short time it was sent to Guinea Airways’ Adelaide facility at Parafield. Pilots who flew it were



*Captain “Nobby” Buckley, left, checking out the Taifun at Parafield circa 1938. Guinea’s Electra VH-U XI (named Moresby) at right. (Image Tom Wood via author)*

identified by John as P. I. Donegan “in the early stages” (in New Guinea?), later N. S. D. “Nobby” Buckley, while Harold Cook flew it in October 1938 on “perhaps its longest charter . . . to Western Australia for a mining survey.”

Paul Divett’s SAAM History Group biography of “Nobby” Buckley, who joined Guinea’s in 1938, notes that the *Taifun* was not trouble-free; while being flown by “Nobby” it suffered landing gear failure on 8 March 1939 and two forced landings, the first a fortnight after the landing gear failure, the second on 13 June 1939.

By the end of 1939, undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the British Empire was by then at war with Germany, the decision was made to sell the plane (see advert (right) taken from *Aircraft* magazine January 1940). As noted in the advert the total airframe time amounted to only 180 hours at that time.



## FOR SALE MESSERSCHMITT “TAIFUN”

Cabin type 4-place aircraft flown 180 hours only  
 Engine — 10 hours since new  
 Top Speed — 187 miles per hour  
 Cruising Speed — 163 miles per hour  
 Landing Speed 52.7 miles per hour  
52.7 miles per hour is the official quotation from “Jane’s” but our pilots state that the machine lands at approx. 40 m.p.h. with full flaps.

Complete with £400 worth of engine spares.  
 Retractable landing gear, hydraulic brakes, full aerobatic harness and licence, wing flaps and wing slots.

This is a very desirable type of aircraft for a private owner

*Further Particulars :*

**Apply GUINEA AIRWAYS LIMITED**

**Austral Chambers,  
 Currie Street, ADELAIDE, South Australia.**

The eye-catching advert paid off and led to a sale soon after to Java-based business *Soerabajasche Motorenhandel*. Initial interest was followed up by Guinea Captains K. R. Horn and Eric Chaseling flying the *Taifun* to Sydney for an inspection and testing by the prospective purchaser’s local representative and, after its purchase was agreed to, it was crated for shipment to its new home. In the East Indies it was repainted and re-registered PK-SAD and was later used by the Dutch military.

The East Indies fell to Japanese forces in March 1942 but the exact fate of the *Taifun* remains unknown given that the curtain came down on both civil and military aviation in the country whilst under enemy occupation.

The (now) little-remembered Parafield Messerschmitt had few claims to fame, but it was the first Messerschmitt design to find a home in Australia and the last aircraft of German design added to our Civil Aircraft Register pre-WW2.

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**SOURCES:**

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*Aircraft* magazine, Vol 18 No 8, May 1, 1940

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*Pacific Islands Monthly* Vol VI No 10, May 22, 1936, via trove (nla.gov.au)

*Pacific Islands Monthly* Vol VI No 11, June 17, 1936, via trove (nla.gov.au)

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