

# Skyhawk 880

N13-154911



## **Brief History** (courtesy [ADF Serials](#)):

- First flight July 21, 1967 piloted by Douglas Aircraft test pilot Jim Stegman at Long Beach California.
- Accepted July 26, 1967 in a ceremony at the Douglas plant.
- Delivered to RAN 11/67.
- Unloaded from HMAS Melbourne onto Navy barge in Jervis Bay 23/11/67 then by road to Nowra.
- With VF805 10/01/68.
- Displayed at QANTAS open day 1982.
- One of the last four A-4s flying – 30/06/83 to 30/06/84 with VC 724.
- Withdrawn from RAN service 30/06/84.
- To RNZAF 07/84 as NZ6255,
- Converted to TA4K specification. Later upgraded under Project Kahu
- Donated by RNZAF to RAN Fleet Air Arm Museum, Nowra.
- Transported from New Zealand by RAAF C-17A A41-206 arriving at Nowra 23/04/2012
- Repainted in RAN 724 Squadron colours and returned to (visually) TA4G spec and currently on display in the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Nowra. Only surviving TA4G.

In 1984, following their withdrawal from service, the Skyhawks were sold to the Royal New Zealand air force who undertook to return one aircraft to Australia for heritage purposes on their decommissioning.

The NZ government honoured this promise and the last Skyhawk was returned to albatross in April 2012 in RNZAF livery. The pictures below show its arrival, the initial welcoming ceremony and how the aircraft looked once it had been repainted in its original RAN colours. The aircraft now has pride of place in the FAA museum. (all images courtesy of defence)



*Above and LEFT. The Air Movements Training Development Unit (ATDU) team unload the TA4K Skyhawk after the C-17 Globemaster lands HMAS Albatross.*





*The late Lieutenant Commander Peter Marshall RAN Rtd. sits in the cockpit as Warrant Officer Max Poole looks on at the hand over ceremony to the Fleet Air Arm Museum. **Below.** Retired Skyhawk Pilots, Current serving Australian and New Zealand Defence Force members and Civilian staff involved in the A4 Skyhawk outside J Hanger HMAS Albatross at the hand over ceremony of the A4 Skyhawk to the Fleet Air Arm Museum.*



*Below: In its freshly painted RAN (724 Squadron) livery, TA4 Skyhawk awaits delivery to its new home at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, HMAS Albatross.*



Director Naval Heritage Collection, Captain David Michael RAN, welcomes invitees to the official handover of the TA4 Skyhawk ceremony, held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Nowra, NSW.

*Below: From South Coast Register 23 September 2013.*



## Commodore first and last to fly the Skyhawk



**OLD HAND:** Retired Commodore John Da Costa was the first Australian to fly a Skyhawk in the RAN.

SEEING Skyhawk 880 on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at HAMS Albatross on Thursday bought back vivid memories for retired Commodore John Da Costa.

Commodore Da Costa was, in fact, the first commanding officer of the then 724 squadron which flew the Skyhawks.

He was also the first Australian to fly a Skyhawk in Australia.

The 880 aircraft was the first Skyhawk to fly in Australia and Commodore Da Costa was at the controls.

"It was an exciting time and a great honour to undertake the first flight," he said.

He didn't remember much about that first flight out of Albatross, being "a little busy at the time".

"I do remember Lieutenant

Jim Lamb was the first air engineer officer and Reg Elphick the first air electrical officer," he said.

"We spent a lot of time in the United States working up to the point where we could come back here and put these aircraft together and get them in the air.

"It was an honour to be associated with the aircraft and an honour to serve with those at that time."

The 880 aircraft was also the last Skyhawk in the RAN colours to fly in Australia, with the commodore also given the honour of undertaking the plane's final flight in Australia.

"The then CO, Lieutenant Commander John Hamilton, did me the courtesy of inviting me to fly in the backseat of that particular flight, which was on June 30, 1984," he said.