

## Mosquito in New Zealand on its maiden flight after a rebuild



Tech Ops' Auckland base saw a world first today, welcoming the World's only flying Mosquito on its maiden flight from Ardmore aerodrome. Most of Tech Ops Auckland personnel popped out to see the Mosquito land, escorted in by a Trojan and taxi onto the Tech Ops hardstand for a quick checkover. The pilot, Cathay pilot David Phillips, is one of New Zealand's most experienced pilots in vintage and classic aircraft. He owns and flies his own Hawker Hunter jet. He said the Mosquito was quite unlike anything he's flown before. "Kind of heavy and light and the same time. It's hard to describe. The controls are light; it's responsive but you are conscious of the inertia. You can feel the rudder is a long way back. It flies like a very well designed, 15,000lb twin-engined strike aircraft." He says he wasn't really nervous, just concentrating hard, "conscious of what you would be remembered for if anything went wrong." "It was lovely. They did a fantastic job of building it." His observer on this historic first flight was Warren Denholm who runs Avspecs, the Ardmore-based restoration company that has been rebuilding the aircraft since its American owner since 2005. He was also concentrating hard on the gauges. "It's my first time in a Mosquito; it's the pilot's first flight in a Mosquito, it's the first time the plane has flown; it's the first time anyone has flown a Mosquito anywhere in the World for decades so you don't have much time to smell the roses. But when you finally stop gritting your teeth and look out the window over South Auckland and realise no-one else can do this, in the only flying Mosquito anywhere in the World, life is pretty good." They picked a couple of items they wanted their engineers to look at before the flight back but Warren was well satisfied with the first flight. "It went very, very well."

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It's good to see this wonderful aeroplane flying again.



KA 114 was built in Canada and saw brief service in 1945 before going into reserve storage. It was sold to a farmer and it lay in a field for 30 years before it was moved to the Canadian Museum of Flight awaiting a proper restoration. Jerry Yagen of the Fighter Factory Collection in Virginia bought it and sent it to Warren's team to restore. What makes the Mosquito so special and so rare is its wooden balsa-core sandwich construction. It was the world's first composite construction aircraft. Like almost every other Mosquito, KA114's body had rotted – it broke in two when being rescued from a farmer's field. So this and several other Mosquito projects around the world owe their existence to Kiwi Glyn Powell and his Mosquito Aircraft Restoration team who undertook the task of building the two 11m moulds needed to lay up the new fuselage halves, with the precision needed to get the bulkheads and pick-up points in exactly the right place. They also built the 16.5m wing. The first Mosquito was delivered in 1941 and was used in many different roles, as a low-level daytime bomber, as a reconnaissance aircraft, as a bomber escort and was particularly successful as a U-boat hunter. [KA 114] will be the main attraction at Ardmore Aerodrome this weekend where it will fly in company with a Spitfire, Mustang and Kittyhawk.