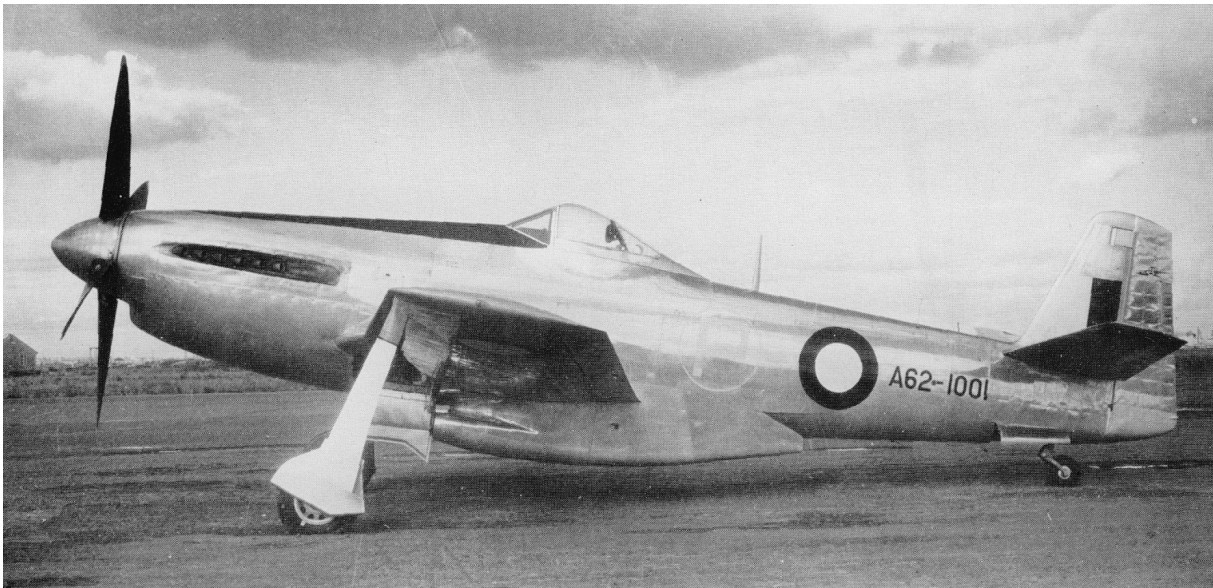


CAC CA-15

History: The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation was formed in 1936 by a bunch of Australian industrialists who looked at the situation in Europe, guessed there was a war coming and came to the conclusion that it would be good for Australia to have its own aircraft manufacturing industry. They were assisted in their endeavours by Lawrence Wackett who had been struggling to start up a respectable aircraft manufacturing business in Australia since the early 1920s. They started with the Wirraway which was deliberately chosen as something to get experience on. Then they converted the Wirraway into the Boomerang, and then what ... The trouble was that they had created a company, but there turned out to be not too much use for it. Of the vast number of Wirraways that went down it's production line, a great many were produced simply to keep the production line open. Later they made Mustangs and Avon Sabres, aeroplanes that could just as easily have been bought from overseas if it had not been for the desire to keep the company in business. In retrospect, it is easy to wonder if there really was a use for the Corporation. The same could be said for one of its most elegant products, the CA-15.

Things began well enough with a RAAF specification for a new long range, medium altitude, high performance fighter that initially led CAC to think about upgrading the Boomerang. When that proved to be unworkable the Corporation started work on a new design that would incorporate all the latest innovations. The trouble was that the proposed powerplants kept on disappearing. In August 1944 more than half of the work on the prototype had been completed, but it lacked an engine. Initially the CA-15 was to be powered by a Pratt and Whitney R2800 engine but the Americans stopped making the -10W version and then CAC decided to use the -57W version but it turned out they wouldn't be able to get as many as they would need. By September 1944 the Corporation and RAAF were reduced to considering the Rolls Royce Griffon 125 but in 1945 they decided to produce the prototype using the earlier Griffon 61, and two were obtained from Britain on lend-lease.



Things potted on slowly until 1946 when the prototype was ready. Taxying trials began on 12 February 1946 and the first flight occurred on 4 March that year. In general the test pilots considered it a very nice aeroplane and they all remarked on the excellent visibility from the elevated cockpit. After CAC had completed its test flights the aeroplane was transferred to the

RAAF on 27 June 1946. During a test flight on 10 December 1946 the hydraulics system failed and the CA-15 had to be crash landed. The damage was extensive and since the CA-15 project had little priority by this time, repairs were not completed and the CA-15 returned to the RAAF until May 1948. By this time, however, it was obvious that there was no future for the CA-15 and test flights continued sporadically until May 1950 when the project was cancelled. The aeroplane was 'reduced to components' and the Griffon engines sent back to Britain. Many people lament the CA-15 as one of the last and perhaps the finest of the line of piston engined fighters that was ended by jet engines. Perhaps it was like CAC, an interesting idea with little practical use.

Data: Single-seat fighter. *Engine* one Rolls Royce Griffon 61 12 cylinder engine of 2035 hp. *Wing span* 10.97m (36ft). *Length* 11.03m (36ft 2½in). *Maximum take-off weight* 4882kg (10,764lb). *Maximum speed* 721km/h (448mph). *Range* 4088km (2540miles). *Armament* six 12.7mm (.5in) Browning machine guns.

The kit: Czech Master Resin 1:72

Among my several weaknesses is a certain fondness for aircraft with A- numbers. It is not the full blown obsession that many Australian modellers have but, given the option between a version with an A- number and one without, my model will usually end up in Australian colours. But the CA-15 is something different and what red-blooded Australian modeller doesn't want to include one of those in his lineup of local aeroplanes? (That's a rhetorical question, it's quite a few in reality, I suppose.) I have had a decent vacform kit of the CA-15 for many years but somehow never quite got around to putting it together. Then, one day when I was cruising through the NKR website I noticed that there was a resin kit available. The price was fair - shall we say - and so I decided to splurge.

This is the second resin kit I've made this year. One of these days one of the injection moulding companies might get around to making a model of the CA-15, but it is unlikely to be any better than a good resin kit like Czech Master Resin. Since Earl was coming into town he dropped off a copy the next day and one look at the quality of the parts and I lost all control. This kit isn't as easy to put together as your top line injection moulded kit, but the parts are as fine as anything you are likely to see in the best short run kits. The only area that needed any serious work was the radiator bath inlet and outlets. The parts have simple flat surfaces where there should be nothing, so a few hours carefully cutting and scraping away the resin in those areas made the model look a bit better and me feel incredibly virtuous. The only improvement to the kit that I would have liked was separate engine exhausts, but a little bit of work on what you get in the kit turns out fairly well. The rest is standard model construction.



The CA-15 was bare aluminium so that should have been the easy part. I messed it up by deciding to try a polished aluminium finish which means a coat of gloss black and then a coat or two of Alclad II's 'polished aluminium'. The finished model looked magnificent, except that the finish was so polished you had to wear shades to look at it. Consequently I had to do the finish again in standard Alclad II aluminium, which is easier to say than do and tended to fill in some of the finely engraved detail. Finally on with the excellent decals and the model was completed. It looks as good as it does in the photos, and reminds me of a P-51 on steroids. I put it alongside a Mustang model and the CA-15 does look much bigger, tougher and meaner.