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## Wanaka farewell for Spitfire TB863



Geoff Sloan photo

Making its last public appearance in New Zealand was the Alpine Fighter Collection's Supermarine Spitfire Mk XVI which was due to be shipped to its new owners at the Temora Aviation Museum in New South Wales after the air show. The Mk XVI Spitfire will join the other only airworthy Spitfire in Australia. Built in late 1944 at the Castle Bromwich factory near Birmingham it was issued to 453 Squadron RAAF in March 1945. It was struck off in 1951 following a take off accident. Prior to arriving in New Zealand in 1989 the aircraft had lead a varied life in the hands of a number of private owners. TB863 currently is finished in a World war II paint scheme and wears RAAF markings when serving in Europe.



It's late in the day but Alpha Aviation R22160 ZK-FXY makes its maiden flight overhead Hamilton Airport with Noel Kruse and Steve Lange on board. Waikato Times photo

## Alpha No. 1 is airborne

Nothing is so sure in aviation than the maxim 'hurry up and wait'. The first Alpha 2000 series 160A two-seat aerobatic training aircraft took to the skies above Hamilton in the late afternoon of April 12. The wait for first flight was longer than Alpha Aviation anticipated as production techniques experienced hold ups through a number of production drawings being either missing or modifications had been made to existing French manufactured aircraft and not annotated on the drawing. The result was some reverse engineering by Alpha Aviation and contract design staff. It was put through its first flight paces by highly experienced Australian aerobatic and test pilot, Noel Kruse. Noel, a retired RAAF test and development pilot has an affection for the Robin 2160 series aircraft having over a period of time had ten of the type on line with the Sydney Aerobatic School (SAS) since 1984. Steve Lange convinced Noel at the Alpha Aviation factory opening in August 2005 that he would be the best bet to fly the first aircraft off the line. This particular aircraft, ZK-FXY, will be a development aircraft for Alpha Aviation. Alpha Aviation, located in Hamilton, New Zealand, secured the sole world wide rights to manufacture and market the Alpha 2000 series training aircraft (formerly known as the Robin R2160 and Robin R2120) from Apex Industries, based in Dijon France, in 2004.

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