

2004 EARHART PROJECT EXPEDITIONS



Niku V, the next trip to Nikumaroro, is scheduled for the summer of 2005. This year we're concentrating on trying to confirm the significance of the artifacts found during last summer's Niku Vp ("p" for preliminary) expedition. As detailed in "Dados Galore" (*TIGHAR Tracks*, September 2003), if we can establish that Lockheed Electras were equipped with components that match the dados we found on the island we'll have our first "smoking gun" evidence that the people who came to Nikumaroro in the years following the Earhart disappearance had access to wreckage from a Lockheed Electra.

Unfortunately, original Lockheed dados have proven to be illusive critters to track. Because they are nonstructural "furnishings" in the cabin, they tend to be replaced when the cabin is refurbished. Electras surviving in museums and collections have either been maintained in service for many years or have been "restored" so that, as far as we know, no example of the original Lockheed interior has survived.

Existing Lockheed engineering drawings for the Model 10 suggest that dados were present at the juncture between the cabin wall and the floor and photos confirm that dados of some kind were present but, maddeningly, we have been unable to find drawings or photos that reveal sufficient detail to confirm or deny that the dados were made just like "our" dados.

To answer the question we've turned to the only Lockheed Electras that still exist in original condition, that is, airplanes that crashed early in their careers, did not burn, and have not been salvaged or looted since. As you might imagine, there aren't very many but we've identified two candidates that will be investigated by TIGHAR research teams this summer.

One of the sites is in the northwestern U.S. and if an initial recon scheduled for July finds the site to be suitable we'll use it for this years Aviation Archeology Field School in October.



Because the fuel is in the inboard wing sections, post-crash fires often destroyed the cabin area. This is all that is left of c/n 1005 after it nosed over while making an off-airport landing in northern Canada.

