



NZ Bomber Command Association News

NEWS October 2015

NZBCA CHARITABLE TRUST 2561560

WEB SITE: www.nzbombercommand.co.nz

Honorary Chaplain: The Venerable Neville Selwood Archdeacon Emeritus of Dunedin

President: Ron Mayhill DFC (75 Sqn)

Vice Presidents: Bunny Burrows (15, 622, 487 Sqn), Keith Boles DFC, pff (109 Sqn)

President's Address

The death of our Patron, Les Munro, was a huge loss for us, and for all NZ. Les was a remarkable man both during the war, and later in the farming community and Local Government. At 96 he was still prepared to travel considerable distances to attend our functions. He was an inspiration to all of us; one of those people you can never forget.

It is now my pleasure to welcome our new Patron, Peter Stockwell, former Chief of Air Force, who is another fine leader. He accompanied us on that wonderful RNZAF flight in 2012 to see the Queen unveil the Bomber Command statues in Green Park, London. We remember Peter as a 'real good type' who would leave his cramped economy seat at the back to mingle with us in the more comfortable seats up front. He won us over with his easy manner, charm and friendliness.

All of us in Bomber Command, know there are some good things that come out of war, notably comradeship, the close bonds between crews and lasting friendships. We also have personal memories of incredible happenings and unforgettable people.

Christmas Dinner, Westcott OTU, 1943 and at the top table was a very young looking Wing Commander, Fraser Barron, sporting a DSO, DFC and DFM. With boyish enthusiasm he deserted the VIPs and came down to sit with our crew. After several glasses which he insisted on filling, I asked what made my orange juice so pleasantly warming, and that was my introduction to double gins, an occasion I have never regretted. Fraser Barron, just 23, went missing on a Master Bomber trip in the pre-invasion operations. His medals and log book may be viewed in the Medals Section, not far from here in this museum.

Another unforgettable, but very different character was Leonard Cheshire VC, who some years later came to NZ seeking support for his over 100 Homes of Care for the Disabled. At the end of an informative address, questions inevitably turned to his wartime experiences.



MP Simon O'Connor with our late Patron Les Munro and President Ron Mayhill

"Do you regret bombing cities and killing people?"
I shall always remember his immediate response.

"Yes, I do regret it, I regret it very, very much, BUT...
(and he stared intently at his audience), imagine if a crazed gunman came on to this stage through those curtains and started shooting at you people there in front of me. What should I do? I would try to take him out as quickly as possible by any means possible; and that is exactly what we in Bomber Command were required to do and Thank God our efforts were successful."

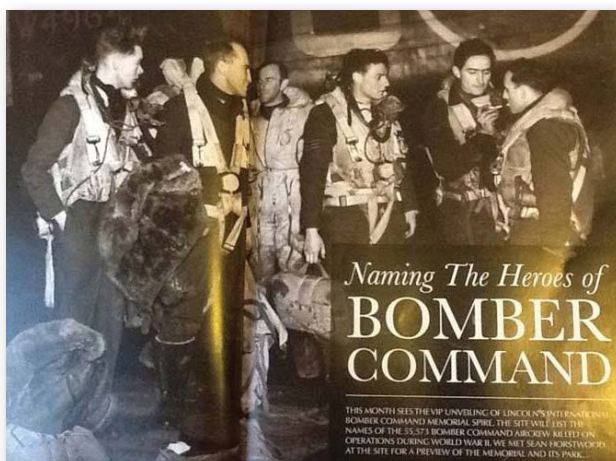
Leonard Cheshire was a great man, whose words I shall never forget. Indeed, they are words for thought.

Best wishes to you all, **Ron Mayhill**

International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln

This new four million pound centre was dedicated this month with the unveiling of the spire. NZBCA member Barbara Hunter attended and laid a wreath in memory of all New Zealand aircrew.

Ron was also interviewed on Lincolnshire radio, the morning of the dedication.



NZ Bomber Command Wreath laid beneath Les Munro's name on the wall of remembrance

What it was all about

Short Messages

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Have you applied for their new VIP programme for assistance with lawns, gardens, house cleaning, windows, gutters and exterior work. Also offered are ramps, rails, special clothing and footwear.

Note that under this scheme your need does NOT have to be related to a service injury.

Use the free phone for more details 0800 483 8372

LEGION OF HONOUR

More of our members have been presented with these awards including President Ron Mayhill, Keith Boles, Hugh Findlater, Clive Escourt, Noel Sutherland, and soon Doug Smith.

Remember if you were operational during May 1 – August 30th you will qualify.

Unfortunately for our RAF men, the MoD seem to have a backlog caused by checking records and translating them into French! Fingers crossed for 2016.

OPS SCRUBBED

"Well at least we will still be alive tomorrow"

Harry Widdup

BOMBER COMMAND ASSOCIATION CARDS

We have stocks of these again at \$15 per packs of 10 including envelopes.

FACEBOOK

If you are computer minded, check our Facebook page. Just google NZ Bomber Command Facebook. It's updated every week and there are pictures and stories contributed by Bomber Command people from around the world. Such is the interest and reach that the week of our Patron's death, two million people viewed our page.

AN APPROPRIATE PRAYER TO THOSE NO LONGER WITH US:

Through the fields of destruction
and baptisms of fire
we felt your suffering
as the flames raged higher.

And though it did not hurt me
in the fear and flame
you kept faith with your brothers in arms.

Let me bid you farewell
every man has to die
It's written in your palm
and in the sky.

We will meet again
God speed our brother in arms.

After Mark Knopfler 1987

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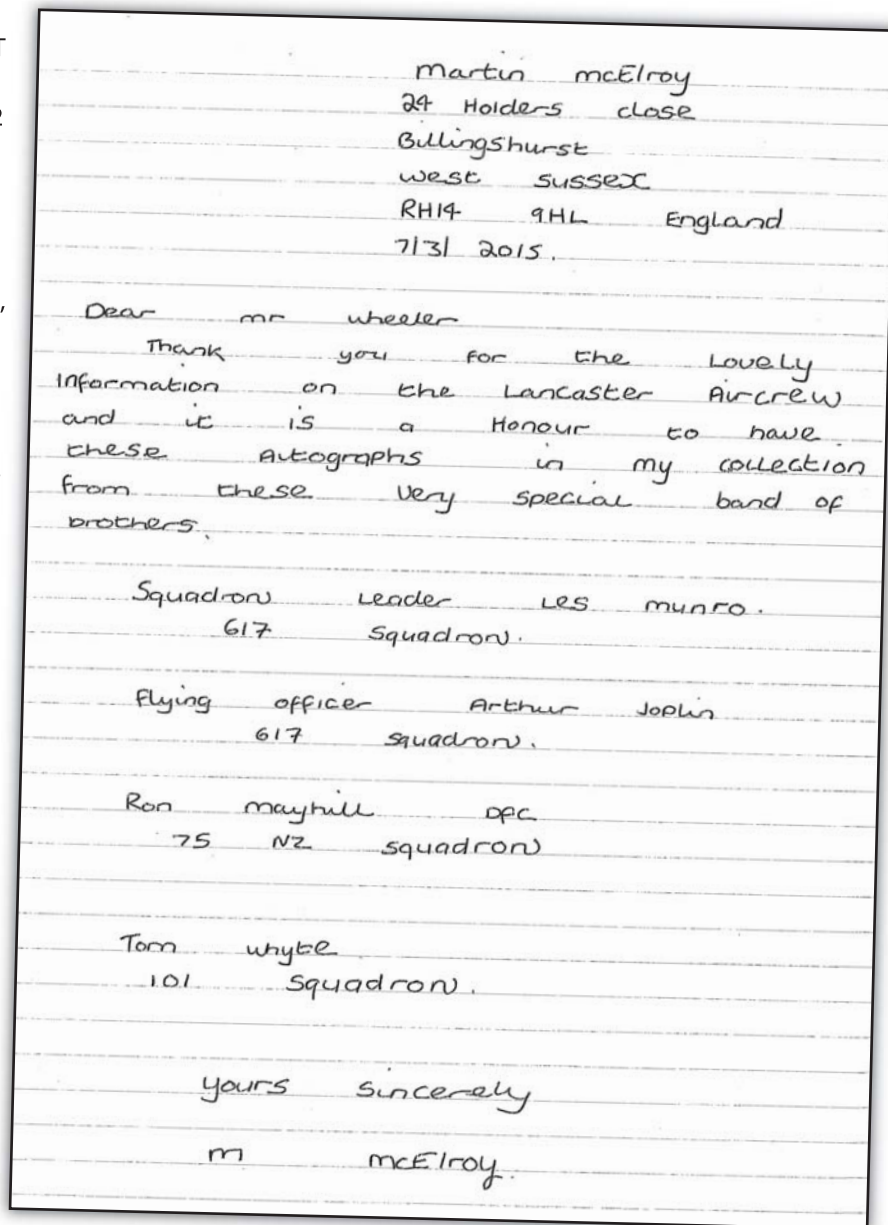
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Contributions to the NZBCA news are always welcome.

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FROM MARTIN McELROY, SUSSEX, ENGLAND

Having written a very polite request for Bomber Command aircrew signatures on a first day cover, we obliged and this was his reply:



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**AT THE-NEW-ZEALAND-
BOMBER-COMMAND-
ASSOCIATION**

Obituary - PATRON LES MUNRO

Les was always a great supporter of the Association and more recently as Patron attended all of the events we held throughout the North. I will certainly miss his regular phone calls and his traditional answer when you phoned him; "are you there" straight out of party line King Country.

Following is the obituary the NZBCA posted for the media.



LAC Les Munro at ITW Levin and meeting his King two years later

REMEMBERING A REMARKABLE MAN

by Peter Wheeler, CEO

NZ Bomber Command Association

More than 600 family, friends and veterans gathered at Classic Flyers in Tauranga on August 8th to farewell this remarkable man. During his lifetime he served his country and community with honour and was respected far beyond these shores for his qualities of service, leadership and loyalty.

On release from the RNZAF in February 1946 Les joined the State Advances Corporation, then very busy in allocating "rehab" farms to returned servicemen. No debriefing, stress management, physiological tests in those days, perhaps thanks and then straight back to work, but there he met his future wife Bet.

Even with farming and a busy family life Les was drawn into local politics and community work.

He was elected as a councilor and later became Mayor of Waitomo District, giving seventeen years of service. Such was his standing in the community he was always elected unopposed.

As fellow veterans passed away, Les became legendary and would always sign postcards, books and paintings, write letters of support, speak to any organisation and happily talk to school classes. He was a man of boundless energy, enthusiasm and wisdom.

However the lack of official recognition for what RAF Bomber Command achieved during WWII (despite the 55,000 killed) always troubled him, so the unveiling of the RAF Bomber Command Memorial in 2012 was a particularly significant moment.

The long term maintenance of this memorial was to become a problem and Les decided that the sale of his logbooks and medals "would go some way to ensuring the memorial stands forever".

As Patron of the NZ Bomber Command Association he shared much wisdom and good common sense, and now he has gone.

His values were simple - sincerity, honesty, service, loyalty, friendship and honour, A legacy for us to continue.

God Speed Les Munro.



A display of his medals and logbook together with a portrait Les presented to the Association last year, is being installed in the Bomber Command area at MOTAT. Appropriately a large display about the 1943 Dams Raid is also on show in the Aviation Display Hangar.

Old Lags and our Lancaster

With our display Lancaster now into it's 70th year (built in 1945) and having earnt it's gold card, we are giving her a good once over. With new Health and Safety regulations in place, there are new restrictions on access and maintenance.

First off has been the removal of the asbestos used as interior lagging and thanks to Richard Newey of Absolute Buildings Maintenance, any cost has been avoided. Radiation from the instrument panels has been measured and we now await details on how this "hazard" will be managed. So remember lads it wasn't the weather or the flak that was also dangerous, it was the instruments. How times have changed.

The LAGS (Lancaster Advisory Group) are a group of aircraft maintenance engineers and aircraft design engineers.

Experienced in the nuts and bolts construction used on the Lancaster, they will survey the complete airframe to identify any problems with corrosion or wear. From this work, a maintenance plan will be set up to ensure that our Lancaster is just as good in another 70 years.

The first part involved an exterior cleaning schedule, has involved experts from the RAF

Museum, Hendon, The RAF Memorial Flight at Conningsby and East Kirbys Just Jane all who have their own Lancs to look after. The resulting forty page manual details how to maintain the surfaces and even specifies the products to use.

The second stage, to lubricate and operate all control systems is underway so look up any data you have on daily inspections or pre flight checks and let us know.



Today at MOTAT

At Whenuapai – 1964

Displays at MOTAT

Ever since the reopening of the new ADH at MOTAT, the Bomber Command displays have been meagre, and not utilising the vast stock of material donated over the past decades and not telling any story. That's about to change with the MOTAT displays team together with designer Brett Whyte (Tom Whyte was a gunner on 101) getting set to relay to cabinets telling the story from ITW to post war. Included in the items are Ernest Davenport's flying helmet, Harry Camerishs' Sidcot suit, wire from Stalagluft 1 and even a lump of shrapnel, plus tickets to West End shows.

Calendar

- November 22: Luncheon at Commerce Club 12.30pm (invitation enclosed).
- Early 2016: Unveiling of Thomas Frederick Duck at MOTAT display.
- 2016: Rededication of NZBCA Memorial and reception.

NZBCA Memorial

You will all remember the trials and tribulations that surrounded having our memorial installed at the Auckland War Memorial Museum in 2009 – 2010.

President Bill Simpson's drive saw Sir Richard Taylor (Weta Workshop) produce a stunning design for the RNZAF alcove in the Hall of Memories. Generous donations totalling \$120,000 allowed the bronze and marble design to be produced and in 2010 before over 500 guests and public the memorial was unveiled and dedicated.

However, internal problems at the Museum meant that the complete memorial was never installed and it has languished in an unlit corner of the military area.

Following some 'encouragement' by member Norm Taylor (also Richard's father and Avro design engineer) the current Museum Board have agreed to the permanent installation of the complete memorial in the RNZAF alcove it was originally designed for.

Thanks to all involved for a final and fitting outcome.

A rededication service will be held early in 2016 and invitations will follow once a date has been set.

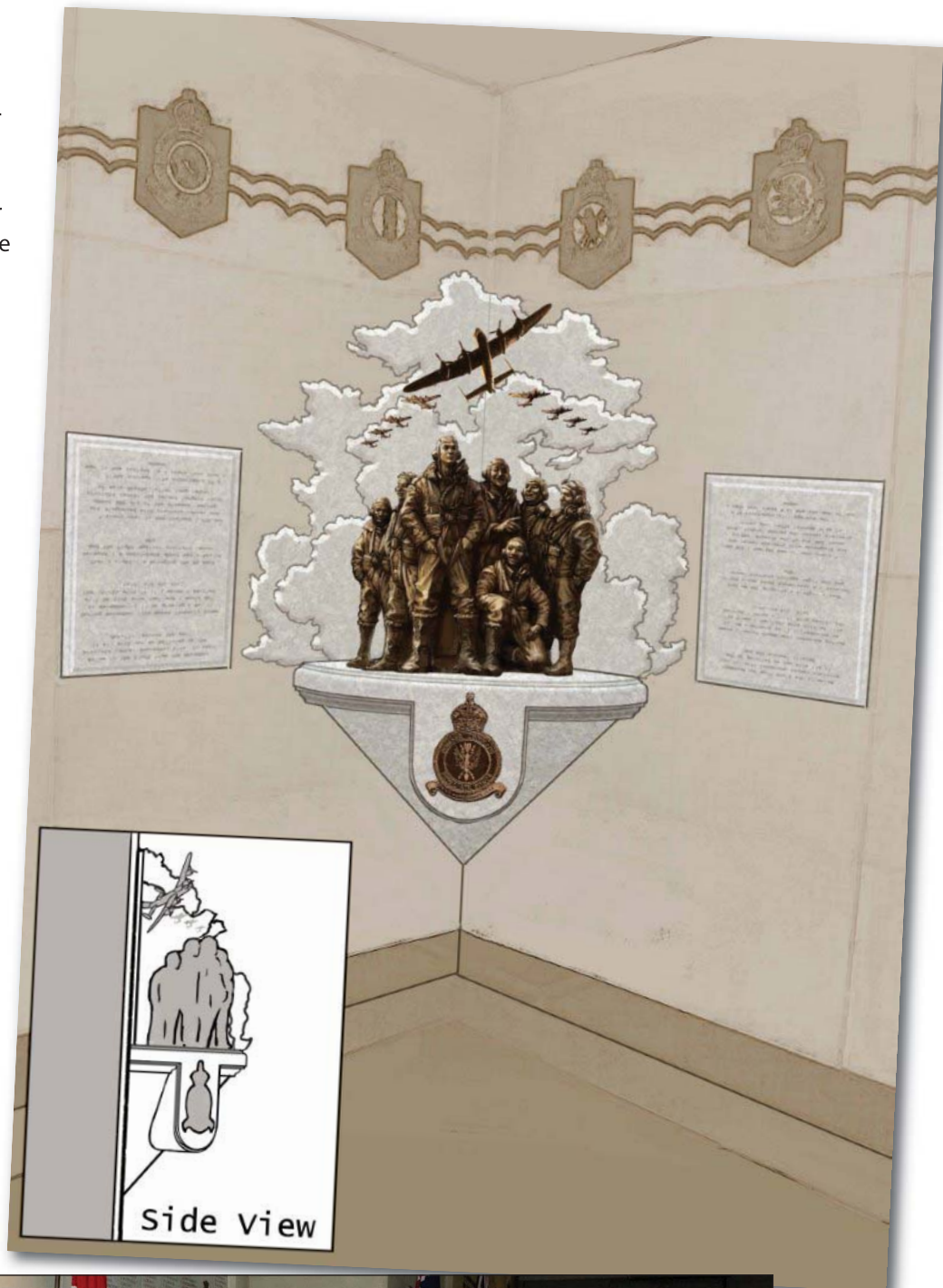
JULY 2007 INDOOR MUSEUM

SCULPTURE MK4

1.2 x 1.2m and 1.8m high

Marble Base Shelf 370kg

Clouds 20kg



Address to the Air Training Corps at the Auckland War Memorial Cenotaph, 20th September 2015 (abridged)

Dr Jonathan Pote, MBE, AE (RAF Squadron Leader) NZBCA Executive

Honoured veterans, everyone here thanks you for your service and sacrifice, and think especially today - but also often - of your comrades who either did not make it home or have passed away since, often without coming to terms with what they experienced. We owe you much – in fact we owe you our pleasant and peaceful way of life.

Young cadets, you have a lot to live up to. But I know that you can do it, as your parade shows. That I expected it to be so professional in no way detracts from the pleasure and pride of being a part of it.

By volunteering for the cadets, you have already proven yourself a leader in society. Cadet corps take the best and improve them so they really stand above the crowd. There's no harm in being a tall poppy if you are in a field of poppies.

You have learnt useful knowledge, skills and attitudes that will serve you well later. Some, such as navigation, are of a military bias. Others, such as first aid, are of more general application, but all are valuable. Very valuable.

This week as you know, is the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

New Zealand is well known for having put a greater percentage of its population into uniform during the Second World War than any other country. No less than one hundred and thirty five New Zealanders were awarded the 'Battle of Britain' clasp, a number behind only the United Kingdom itself and the brave Polish airmen. However, compared to population numbers, New Zealand was equal to the United Kingdom and second to none.

The Commanders of four fighter squadrons were Kiwis, and of course their leader, the man who made the critical minute by minute decisions, came from Thames. Air Vice Marshal (as he then was) Keith Park. Inevitably there was a price - twenty were killed in action, and a further five in flying accidents, and let us not forget Bomber Command. Omitted as always from the wider picture, in fact Bomber Command (carrying out the vital night time attacks on German invasion vessels and troop concentrations) lost more aircraft, and more men, than Fighter Command. A total of thirty-two New Zealanders in Bomber Command gave their lives.

And what did the Air Training Corps do in the Battle of Britain and later on in the War? The answer is; "A great deal".

Formed as the Air Defence Cadet Corps in 1938, renamed the 'AIT Training Corps' in 1941, the international organisation is now 74 or 77 years old.

In New Zealand, the NZATC continues the national tradition of boxing above its weight: With around 4,500 cadets here compared to 33,000 in the United Kingdom, numbers are double in population terms.

I fully support the thoughts of President John F. Kennedy who said in his inaugural speech; "Ask not what your Country can do for you, ask what you can do for your Country" but I would add a little to that:

Your motto is "we train to serve" and that is a fine motto to live up to. But add in the motto of Sir Edmund Hillary, namely; "Nothing ventured, nothing gained".



Off to Sheffield

Not everyone's cup of tea, and not by choice, although I did know one bolshie Navigator who went twice on an "Aircrew Refresher Course", RAF speak for disciplinary 21 days. Logbooks just note RAF Norton (and some have Waverer. The course ran July 43 until closed 25 July 1945.

There aren't many records available but in May 1944 22 were judged being awol and by that time 4059 aircrew had visited the camp, 2720 for what was deemed lack of moral performance all of whom were NCO's. 389 officers were also sent there for retraining.

The 75 Squadron Association website records on F/O being sent to Sheffield for flying above the nominated height on a raid. Probably just keeping out of harms way.

In the 21 day course there were 21 days of 'Square Bashing'.
Each week which included:

- 42 hours drill
- 12 hours running
- 6 hours barrack work
- 30 hours airmanship
- 15 hours PT
- 9 hours games
- 6 hours arms training
- 3 hours gun camera

So 'now refreshed' the airmen returned to their squadrons as spare bods, their crews either gone on with new members or dead. A sobering thought.

Questions were raised in the House of Commons in 1945

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR
(SECRETARY FOR AIR)

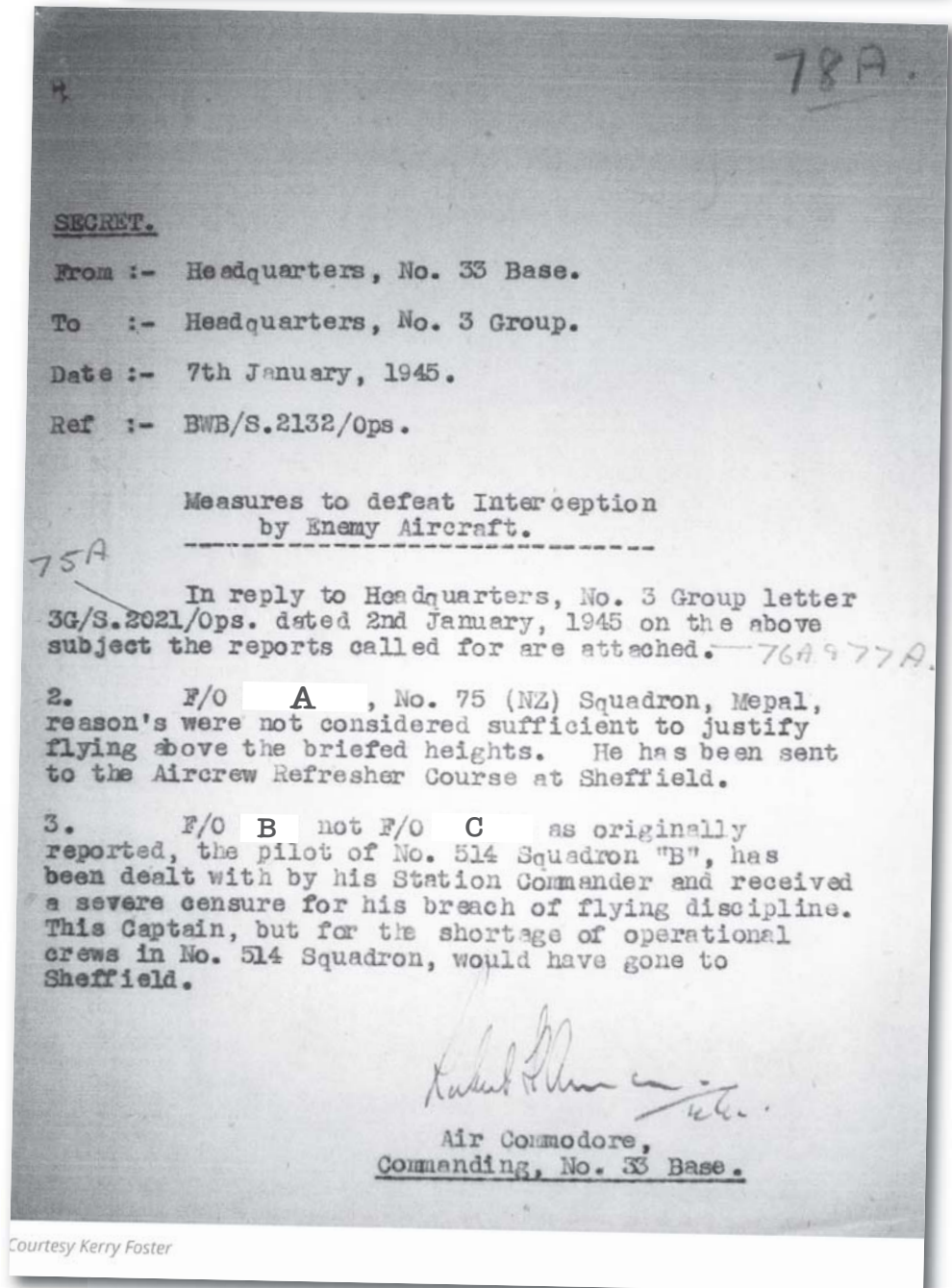
"The purpose of the Air Crew Refresher course is to assist in the elimination of tendencies likely to contribute to avoidable flying accidents. The course forms part of a general scheme of accident prevention."

MR IVOR THOMAS, MP

"Is my Right Hon. Friend aware that very gallant officers sent on this course, under the plea of increasing their mental alertness, find that they are in the atmosphere of the "glass house," and that it is very much resented?"

SIR ARCHIBALD SINCLAIR

"I do not know what my Hon. Friend means by being sent there "under a plea." This is a most valuable school. It is natural that some of the even the most gallant officers have tendencies to slackness and to disobedience of orders at times. A course at this school has enabled many of those officers to take a grip of themselves and to render splendid service to the R.A.F. and to the country. It is a most valuable school and I ask my Hon. Friend's support for it."



Courtesy Kerry Foster

A Navigator's Story With Three Airforces

ROBERT GEORGE ALBERT BURGESS [SHORTY]

Bert to his family and 'Shorty' in the Air Force, commenced his RNZAF Service in 1940 in the RNZAF. After he did initial training at Levin then as a Navigator/Observer in Canada at London (Ontario) and Rivers (Manitoba).

After arriving in England and other training on Wellingtons, then converted to Whitley's in 10 Squadron RAF. He flew his first operation to Dunkerque [spellings as per his log] on the 3rd October, 1941. He crewed with John Kenny and they flew 31 ops together in Europe and the Middle East.

'FRIDAY 12TH DECEMBER 1941

Cool day 5-8/10ths stratus 1-3000'

Nothing much doing all day.

Our two machines crashed on return. John Kenny hit a hill just West of Ripon and 2nd Pilot went for a burton – plane caught on fire but Shorty Burgess and Jack Taylor 2 N.Z'ers Obs and W/Op resp. put it out and saved Kenny who was jammed in pilots seat.

Other plane Sgt Captain landed in funnel instead of on flare path – all ok.

Going back to A flight tomorrow – good.'

Upon Shorty's return to 10 Squadron converted to Halifax's operations.

Shorty flew 20 operations out of the UK and then on 5th July, 1942 half of 10 Squadron flew to the Middle East via Malta, where they picked up crews and flew on to in Heliopolis, Egypt. On 8th October 1942, this section of 10 Squadron became 462 Squadron RAAF. At this stage 462 Squadron had one Australian in its ranks! Shorty flew nine operations in the Middle East in 10 Squadron and seven operational missions with 462 Squadron.

The trail of his return to New Zealand through England is unknown and his next log entry is 17th May 1943 back in New Zealand when he was posted to 1 Squadron RNZAF (who operated Hudsons and Venturas).

Shorty had his 19th birthday in Canada, his 20th in the UK and his 21st in the Middle East. He flew 36 operational missions, returning to the RNZAF and served in Whenuapai, Ohakea and Wigram, mainly in air traffic control and flight checks, rising to the rank of Squadron Leader.

Thus my faithful father served in three airforces. The RNZAF, the RAF and the RAAF.

***As compiled by his son
Martyn Burgess.***

***Halifax B Mk 1,
10/462 Squadron.***



Shorty Burgess in the UK



Halifax crashed in the desert

