TARGET FOR TONIGHT

Kiwis in RAF Bomber Command –
Their Stories, Their Sacrifice

NEW ZEALAND BOMBER COMMAND MAGAZINE

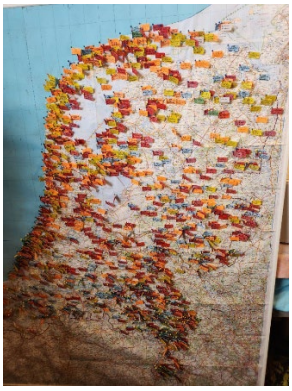
May 2026

Wing Commander Fraser Barron, DSO & Bar, DFM and DFC

The extraordinary and fleeting life of one of the most decorated New Zealand pilots has been remembered with the unveiling of a new memorial plaque in his hometown of Maheno.

Scrapping the Bombers

Across Britain, wartime airfields filled with silent bombers. Only months earlier they had thundered nightly across Europe as part of the greatest air offensive in history. Now Britain no longer wanted them.



Mapping the bombers lost over the Netherlands

A personal tribute to sacrifice by Dutch-born New Zealander Balthazar 'Balt' Bender who had lived under occupation through the war as a young boy.

Around the World in a Lancaster

The remarkable voyage of *Aries* and her crew that visited New Zealand in 1944 and went on to become the first RAF aircraft to circumnavigate the globe.

From the Cockpit

A recent business trip to Sweden coincided with Anzac Day and it was my privilege to be invited to attend this year's official service to be held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Kviberg, Gothenburg.

Here, despite Sweden's neutrality, lie 114 Commonwealth service personnel from the two world wars, more than 40 per cent unidentified.

Amongst them the grave of W/Off William Robert Tuck (NZ413516), a pilot of 489 Sq., KIA flying with Coastal Command.

Tuck's Beaufighter torpedo-bomber was one of thirteen from the squadron (along with twelve from 455 Sq.) on a shipping strike off southern Norway. In the Stavinger area, the crews were intercepted by fighters.

Tuck's aircraft was last seen taking evasive action after taking a burst of fire. His body was recovered from the sea and buried on the island of Koster and now reinterred at Kviberg.

Tuck, from Auckland was 22, on his 19th op. He had only recently been married. Tragically, his Scottish wife, a WAAF at the squadron, was on duty as a radio controller in the control tower at the time her husband failed to return.

Attending the ANZAC service, in these circumstances the ceremony moves beyond remembrance into something more personal — a quiet, immediate connection across generations. The names etched in stone are no longer distant history; they are our own, far from home, and the cost of service feels both intimate and enduring.

Meanwhile, back in New Zealand, one of the most decorated New Zealand pilots in WWII, Wing Commander Fraser Barron DSO & Bar, DFM and DFC was remembered with the unveiling of a plaque in his memory in his hometown of Maheno (see page 3). His is an amazing story of flying skill, bravery and selfless service which needs to be widely known.

Sitting comfortably in an Air New Zealand Boeing 787 on the final leg home from Europe it was difficult to reconcile just how difficult flying must have been eighty-plus years ago. My interest in this theme was piqued by learning of *Aries*, a remarkable Lancaster that visited New Zealand while circumnavigating the globe in 1944 (see page 19).

On the flight I was reading a novel based on Bomber Command experience by one of our members, Steve Culpan (see page 28). This is the second novel with a Bomber Command theme from our member community that I know of. The other was *Find Your North Star* by Rohan West. Add in those that have written histories, and it is quite the talented membership we have.

As always, we hope you enjoy this edition of *Target for Tonight*. We welcome your feedback and suggestions or contributions to future editions.

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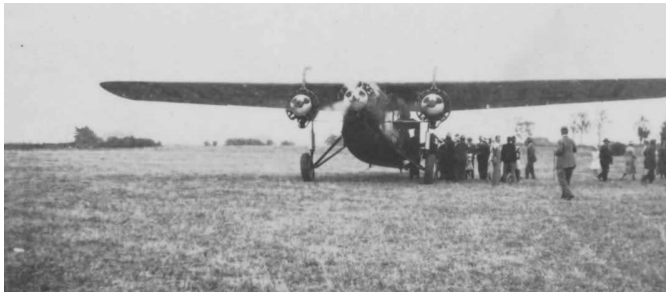
Master of the Night Sky

***"I really thought they had me that night." — Fraser Barron, after 30 searchlights held his aircraft over Cologne for fifteen minutes*. The extraordinary and fleeting life of Wing Commander Fraser Barron, DSO & Bar, DFM and DFC, one of the most decorated New Zealand pilots, was recognised in April with the unveiling of a new memorial plaque in his hometown of Maheno.**

Born on 9 January 1921 in Dunedin, Fraser Barron grew up near Oamaru where his father ran a grocery store. He was, by his own account and his teachers', an unremarkable student at Waitaki Boys' High School — interested in sport, average in the classroom. But there was one passion that set him apart: aviation.

As a young boy he was among the throng who paid for a joy flight with the legendary Charles Kingsford Smith when the aviator's famous aircraft, the *Southern Cross*, toured New Zealand in 1933. He wrote aviation stories for the school magazine. The sky, it seems, had claimed him early.



Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's famous Fokker Trimotor VH-USU, known as the "Southern Cross". People are lining up for a joyride flight, which cost ten shillings per person. The photo is believed to be from the Southern Cross's February 1934 tour visit to James Taylor's 'Bardowie' estate on Victoria Road, Cambridge. (Credit: Frank Green Collection, Cambridge Museum).

After finishing school at the end of 1937, he moved to Wellington and found work as a cadet clerk in the government's Mines Department. He was there when war broke out in September 1939, and he wasted little time applying to join the RNZAF. Accepted, he began the initial training course on 2 July 1940.

Selected for pilot training, Barron first learnt to fly De Havilland Tiger Moths at RNZAF Taieri near Dunedin. One of his fellow trainees there was James Ward, the same Jimmy Ward who would, the following year, win the Victoria Cross for climbing out onto the wing of a burning Wellington to beat out an engine fire at 13,000 feet. The two men would sail to England together on the *Aorangi* in January 1941.

First tour: learning the deadly trade

Barron arrived in England in March 1941, a sergeant not yet twenty years old. Posted to No. 15 Squadron at RAF Wyton, he found himself training on the Short Stirling, the RAF's first four-engined heavy bomber.

Wing Commander Fraser Barron. (Credit: Online Cenotaph).

The targets came thick and fast: Brest, the German battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sheltering in the harbour for repairs, Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg. The losses across Bomber Command during this period were appalling, a crew's chance of completing a full tour of 30 operations without being killed or captured hovered somewhere below one in three.

Barron pressed on regardless, flying 39 missions, the first ten as 2nd pilot, then a further 29 entrusted as captain of his own crew. By April 1942 he had finished his first tour and received the Distinguished Flying Medal. His citation described him as *"most reliable, efficient and courageous, pressing home his attacks regardless of opposition."*

The Pathfinders

After a period of instructing duties, the RAF's way of giving those who survived a tour a reprieve from operations, Barron volunteered for a second tour.

In September 1942 he was posted to No. 7 Squadron, part of the elite Pathfinder Force. The Pathfinders flew ahead of the main bomber stream, locating targets and marking them with coloured flares so the hundreds of aircraft that followed could bomb with greater precision. It was more demanding, more dangerous, and required a level of skill and nerve that the RAF reserved for its very best crews.

Barron proved himself completely equal to it. The missions multiplied - Cologne, Hamburg, Munich, Essen, Düsseldorf - and with them the close calls. On a raid to Munich in December 1942, his 56th op, a night fighter tore into Barron's Stirling, badly damaging it. Through what his records describe as heroic efforts from his flight engineer, Barron wrestled the stricken aircraft back across the Channel and landed safely in England.

By early 1943, the Pathfinder Force was equipped with the new H2S radar that could map terrain from altitude, allowing bombing through cloud cover. On the night of 2–3 February, Barron and his crew used it for the first time over Cologne. What followed was among the most harrowing experiences of his war.

More than 30 searchlights locked onto his aircraft simultaneously and held him for fifteen agonising minutes while the flak batteries poured fire into the sky. He held his course, marked the target on his second run, and brought his damaged aircraft home. "I really thought they had me that night," he wrote afterward, one of the rare moments of personal confession that found its way into the record.

The Distinguished Flying Cross followed, and then, at the conclusion of his second tour, the Distinguished Service Order. He was promoted to Squadron Leader. He was just twenty-two years old.

Barron and his first crew alongside Stirling N6044. Left to right: Larry, rear gunner; Fraser, skipper; Shep, 2nd pilot; Jacko, engineer; Bill, wireless operator; Vie, navigator. Absent: Jack, mid-upper gunner and Sam, front gunner. Larry is holding up his lucky rabbit's foot, which he claimed brought them home from each raid. (credit: Key Aero).

The compulsion to return

Another posting as an instructor. Another period of comparative safety. And then, as had happened before, the pull of operations proved irresistible. Barron arranged his own posting back to No. 7 Squadron, which was now flying Avro Lancasters.

Barron's crew during his second tour in front of Stirling 'G-for-George' of 7 Squadron, at Oakington. Left to right: unknown, Flt Sgt P R Coldwell, unknown, J W Roch, J Marshall, Barron, and W Mayson. (Credit: Key Aero).

By the spring of 1944, the Allied bombing campaign was shifting from German industrial targets to French transportation infrastructure in preparation for the D-Day landings. Barron's crew was often used as master bomber, the aircraft that orbited the target area, assessing the accuracy of the attack in real time, and directing the main force by radio.

On 7 May 1944, he directed an attack on an airfield at Nantes with a precision and skill that earned him a second citation for the DSO. His recommendation praised his "appreciation of the responsibilities entrusted to him" and the "skill and precision" with which he executed his attacks. At this point he held the rank of Wing Commander and commanded the squadron itself.

Le Mans, 20 May 1944

Twelve days later, Barron was once again acting as master bomber, this time over the railway yards at Le Mans. He was on his 79th sortie. Precisely what happened in the darkness over France that night has never been definitively established.

The most likely explanation, according to those who have researched afterward, is a collision between Barron's Lancaster and the aircraft of his deputy S/L J M Dennis DSO DFC, although this collision may have been the result of one or both aircraft being hit by flak as claimed by German records. Whatever the cause, the eight men in Barron's crew and the seven in the Dennis crew were all killed.

The loss of two deeply experienced crews was keenly felt by the squadron and pathfinders.

Fraser Barron was twenty-three years old. He was buried at Le Mans West Cemetery, where he lies today.

A final medal

In June 1944, a posthumous Bar to his DSO was gazetted, the highest honour of his remarkable collection. Of the 55 RNZAF personnel awarded the DSO during the Second World War, Barron was the only one from Bomber Command to receive the bar.

On 27 February 1948, Barron's mother accepted the medal on behalf of her son from Governor General Sir Bernard Freyberg at an investiture in Dunedin.

Anzac Day 2026

And so, the North Otago community of Maheno honoured this remarkable wartime airmen on Anzac Day when a plaque commemorating Wing Commander James Fraser Barron was unveiled at the Maheno Memorial Cenotaph site.

The project has been organised by the New Zealand Remembrance Army Waitaki upon the request of the Maheno community.

New Zealand Remembrance Army (NZRA) Waitaki regional co-ordinator Barry Gamble said the project was about making sure Barron's story was remembered in the community where he grew up.

"Fraser Barron grew up in Maheno, and he went on to become one of the most highly decorated bomber pilots New Zealand produced during the war. This plaque is the community's way of making sure his story is remembered here at home," he said.

The plaque was unveiled with the Lake family, Fraser Barron's sisters' relatives in attendance. NZBCA was represented by President Bruce Hebbard.

The Fraser Barron plaque at Maheno. (Credit: A. Hebbard).


NZBCA President Bruce Hebbard lays a wreath at the Maheno Anzac Day Service. (Credit: A. Hebbard).


Fraser Lake (L), nephew and James Lake, great nephew of Fraser Barron. (Credit: A. Hebbard).

Reflection

It is tempting, and too easy, to reduce Fraser Barron to a list of his medals, four of the Commonwealth's great gallantry awards, accumulated in less than four years of operations.

While they are extraordinary testimony to his skill and courage, even more it is the return to operations, 79 across three tours, that stands out even more. Fraser Barron, a mighty kauri, one of the very best amongst a remarkable generation.

Winnipeg Graduation Dinner

At first glance it looked like just another wartime programme tucked away in an old family memorabilia box. But when Bev opened the faded booklet from the No. 3 Wireless School Graduation Banquet and Ball held in Winnipeg in November 1942, she realised she was holding something far more personal, a roll call of young airmen standing unknowingly on the edge of war.

The programme is covered in signatures from graduating wireless operators, including New Zealanders, Canadians and at least one Czechoslovakian. Some would survive the war. Others would not return.

This programme was uncovered when Bev was going through her mother's memorabilia boxes. She believes it was given to her parents by Rex Gower Mossman a close friend of the family. One of the autographs in the graduation programme, at the bottom of the 'Dance' page, is 'Rex' Dinkum of Wellington (see p7). Mossman was married in Auckland, while home on leave, in August 1943.

In recent years Bev has been on a mission to track down relatives of those airmen who had signed the original programme. She tells us that the family of young airman, Allan Harrington, aged 24, who died over France, were thrilled to receive a copy. For Bev, it made it all worthwhile.

Those who signed but did not return were:

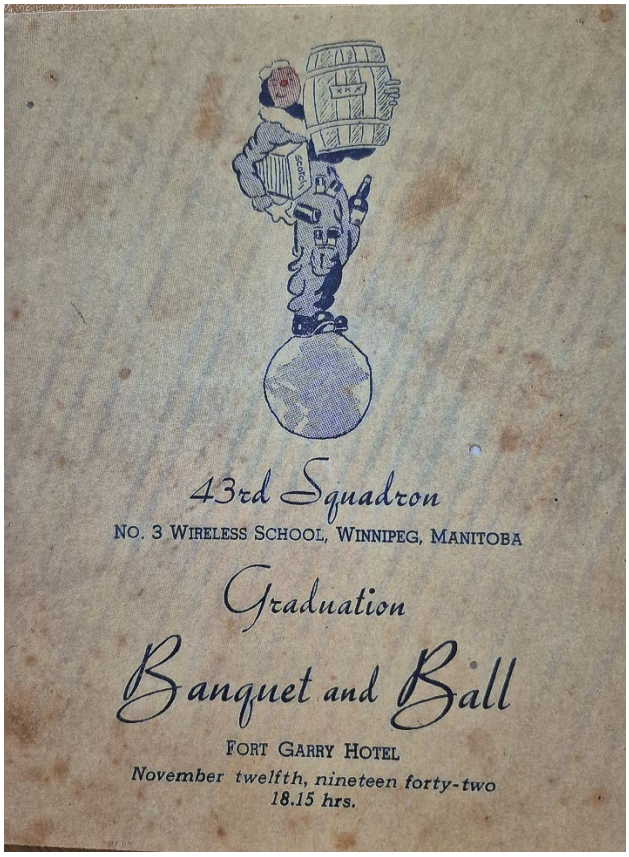
- A G Harrington. KIA 28 May 1944
- Alex James Phillips, KIA 11 November 1944
- Robert Henderson Lamason, KOAS, 23 April 1945
- Douglas Henry Skinner, KIA 6 May 1944
- Walter Hurdle, KOAS 4 November 1948
- Jack Taylor, KIA 7 August 1944

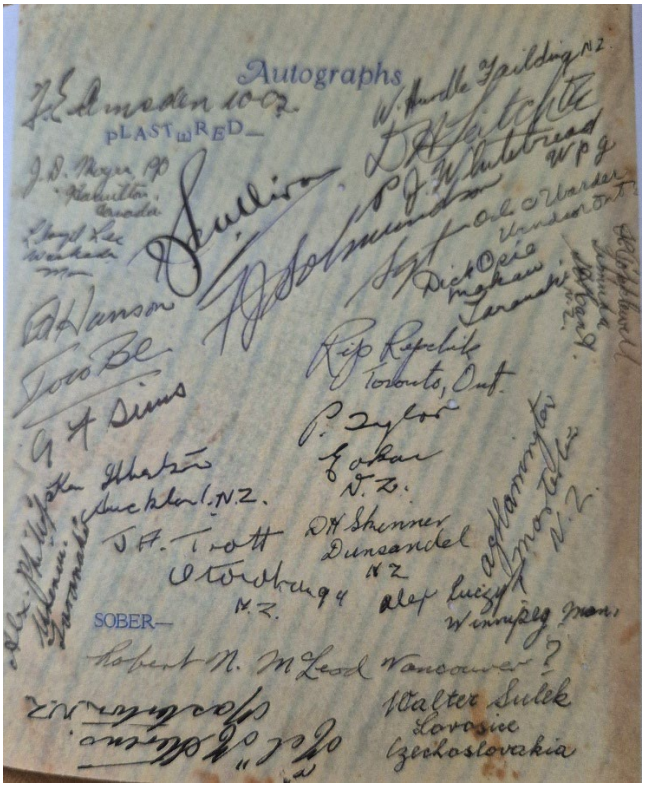
For Bev, the programme has become more than a family keepsake. It is a fragile connection to a generation whose names, handwriting and friendships still speak across eighty years.

Bev is keen to contact any family members of these, and the other signatories. She can be reached through NZBCA at nzbombercommand@gmail.com

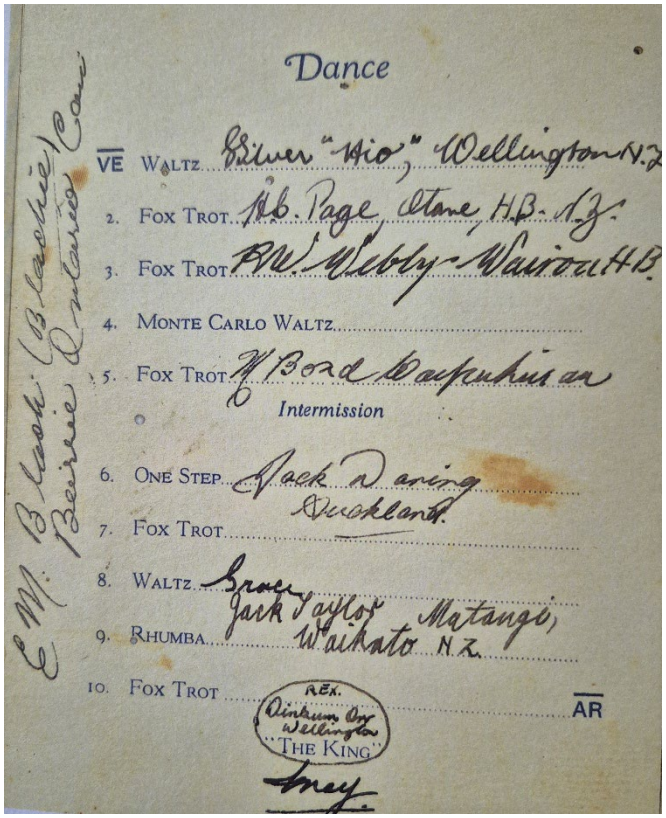
Bev had two uncles who were also in the RNZAF, Charles Weinberg and Edward Mossman (unrelated to Rex Mossman).

Edward Mossman became a POW when his bomber was shot down over Holland. He tried several times to escape and near the end of the war, managed to do so and joined the Czech partisans. Bev recalls, "Uncle Ed was a very quietly spoken, modest man and I had had no idea of his exploits until his funeral day." (We plan to have a feature on Edward Mossman in a future issue. Ed.)





Cover and autograph page from the No. 3 Wireless School Graduation Banquet and Ball programme, November 1942. (Credit: Family)


Dance

VE Waltz Silver "Hio" Wellington N.Z.

2. Fox Trot Mb. Page Otane H.B. N.Z.

3. Fox Trot R.W. Webby - Wairoa H.B.

4. Monte Carlo Waltz

5. Fox Trot W. Bond Waipukurau

Intermission

6. One Step Jack Waring Auckland

7. Fox Trot

8. Waltz Grace Jack Taylor Matangi, Waikato N.Z.

9. Rhumba

10. Fox Trot

AR

REX. Dinkum Oil Wellington "The King"

More autographs from the No. 3 Wireless School Graduation Banquet and Ball programme, November 1942. (Credit: Family)


Jack Taylor (left) and Jack Waring. (Credit: Family).

NZBCA Memorial Service 2026

The New Zealand Bomber Command Association's annual commemorative service will be held at the Auckland War Memorial Museum at 10.30am on Sunday, 14 June.

Descendants, families, and friends are warmly invited to attend as we remember the service and sacrifice of the New Zealanders who flew with RAF Bomber Command during the Second World War.

For many families, the annual service is one of the few remaining opportunities to gather with others who share a personal connection to Bomber Command's story, and in particular the service of the six thousand New Zealanders who flew the bombers.

A reception for NZBCA members will follow the service which will be followed, in turn by NZBCA's Annual General Meeting, both at the Museum.

Scrapping the Bombers

Across Britain, wartime airfields filled with silent bombers awaiting the cutting torch. Only months earlier these aircraft had thundered nightly across Europe as part of the greatest air offensive in history. Now many sat stripped of engines and equipment, lined up in long rows as Britain dismantled the vast bomber fleet it could no longer afford to keep.

The scrapping of RAF bombers after the Second World War was not simply peacetime tidying up. It reflected a country exhausted by six years of war, desperate to rebuild its economy and already looking toward a different military future.

Too many aircraft for peace

At the end of the war the RAF possessed thousands of heavy bombers. During the conflict they had been indispensable. In peacetime they rapidly became a burden.

Lancasters, Halifaxes and Stirlings required enormous resources to maintain. They needed trained ground crews, fuel, engines, tyres, spare parts, and huge airfields. Britain in 1945 was financially exhausted. Cities needed rebuilding, industry needed restarting and the government faced intense pressure to reduce military spending.

Many bombers had also flown long operational tours and were already worn out. The future seemed to belong to faster, more advanced aircraft in the emerging jet age.

A nation rebuilding itself

There was another reason the bombers disappeared so quickly: Britain urgently needed raw materials.

Aircraft contained large quantities of aluminium, copper, and steel — all desperately needed for civilian reconstruction. Wartime Britain had once collected pots, pans, and household metal to build aircraft. Now the process was effectively being reversed.

Across the country, bomber airfields became giant industrial scrapyards. Aircraft were parked wingtip-to-wingtip awaiting dismantling. Contemporary photographs show endless lines of Lancasters with engines removed, windows smashed and fuselages gradually cut apart.

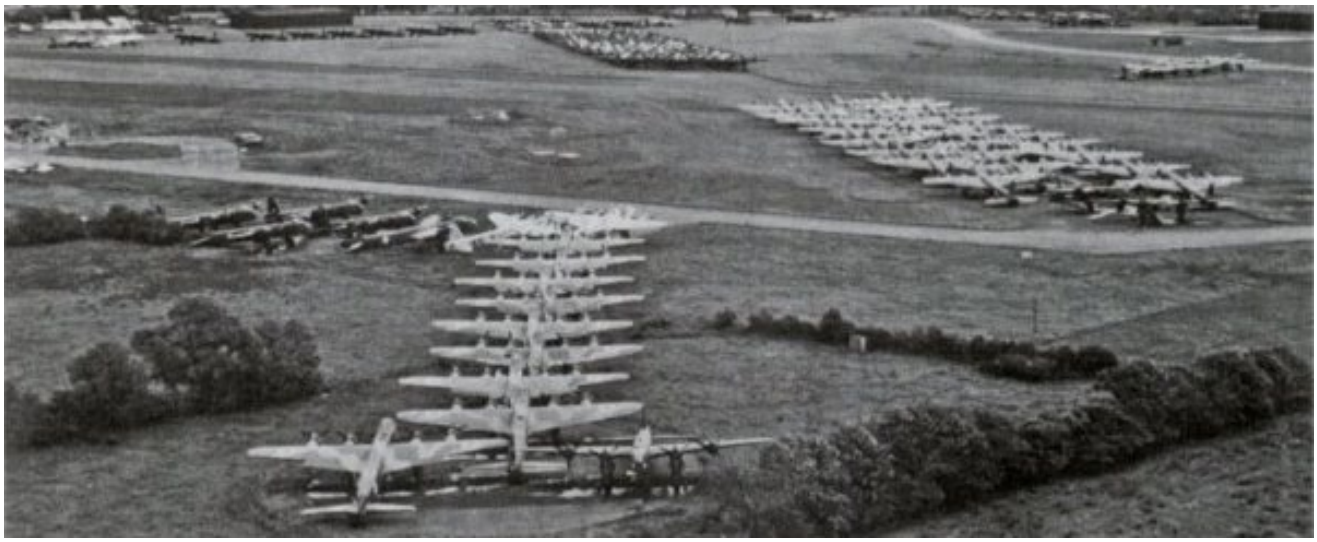
For many who had served with Bomber Command, the sight was deeply melancholy. Aircraft that had survived the war only to be broken up months later seemed to symbolise how quickly wartime life was disappearing.

The Changing Face of Air Power

The bomber force was also becoming strategically obsolete.

The war against Germany had relied heavily on large formations of piston-engined bombers flying night after night over Europe. After 1945 military planners increasingly looked toward radar-guided warfare, jet aircraft, and eventually nuclear deterrence.

The RAF still retained a bomber force, but it wanted newer aircraft and smaller numbers. Some Lancasters continued in maritime reconnaissance, transport, and training roles, while the Avro Lincoln represented an improved version of the wartime heavy bomber. But the vast wartime fleets were no longer needed.



New but unused Stirling bombers and other aircraft waiting to be scrapped at RAF Maghaberry, June 1947. (Credit: Ulster Aviation Society)

How the Bombers were Dismantled

The disposal process itself was methodical and highly organised.

Before an aircraft was broken up, anything useful was removed. Engines, propellers, radios, instruments, guns, and turrets were stripped out first. Some parts were retained for aircraft that remained in service, while others were sold or recycled.

Only then was the airframe itself dismantled. Wings and fuselages were cut apart using heavy machinery and oxy-acetylene torches. The aircraft effectively ceased to be aeroplanes and became piles of recyclable material.

Different metals were separated and sent back into industrial production. Rubber, Perspex, and fabric were discarded using disposal practices typical of the era, including burial or landfill at some sites.

As just one example, at the end of the war, over one thousand Halifax bombers were flown into RAF Clifton from all over the country to be scrapped. The resulting pile of scrap reached 80ft high (24m), becoming something of a landmark near Rawcliffe Village.

Above: Halifaxes at RAF Clifton waiting to be scrapped.

Below: Awaiting the scrap man Halifaxes at Rawcliffe December 1945. As the Halifax aircraft were being scrapped, anything deemed not to be of any use, or value was taken to the northern end of the airfield where it was piled up and set on fire. The remains were then buried.
(Credit, both photos: Clifton Local History Group).

Why New Zealand did not bring Lancasters home.

For New Zealand, the question of bringing home Bomber Command aircraft barely arose. New Zealand's contribution to Bomber Command had been made largely through aircrew serving in RAF and Article XV squadrons rather than through a separate national bomber fleet.

Returning four-engined heavy bombers to the South Pacific would have been enormously expensive and of limited military value. Priority was given to defence (fighters) and maritime / search capability.

Instead, New Zealand brought home its people, traditions, and legacy of its wartime squadrons. In 1946 the number, badge, and battle honours of 75 Squadron were transferred to the RNZAF, preserving the squadron's identity even though its Lancasters remained overseas.

The Captain's Fancy

At least one Lancaster with a New Zealand connection should have flown south**.** NE181 (JN-M), known as 'Mike' was earmarked for presentation to New Zealand, having completed 104 sorties with 75 (NZ) Squadron, including their very last operation over Europe on 24 April 1945.

Sadly, this offer was ultimately declined. The government of the day baulked at the cost, preventing its return. After the war, NE181 was moved to 5 Maintenance Unit, and this historically significant aircraft was eventually scrapped on 30 September 1947. Today the Captain's Fancy is commemorated in the livery on the starboard side of NX665 at MOTAT.

The Wood crew in front of NE181 JN-Mike 'The Captains Fancy'. Back row L to R: Arthur Taylor (W/Op), R. Johnson (Nav), Francis Wood (Pilot), Les Hurcombe (A/B)
Front row L to R: Sgt. Woolley (MU/Gnr) & Sgt. Mahoney (R/Gnr) – who is who, not known, Les Gibbs (F/E)
(Credit: Kevin King/Alf Gibbs).

Canada's different path

Canada took a different approach. By the end of the war the Royal Canadian Air Force expected to play a major role in the planned invasion of Japan through 'Tiger Force.' As a consequence, 141 Canadian-built Lancaster Mk.X bombers were ferried back across the Atlantic so that they could be prepared to add to bomber capability in the Pacific.

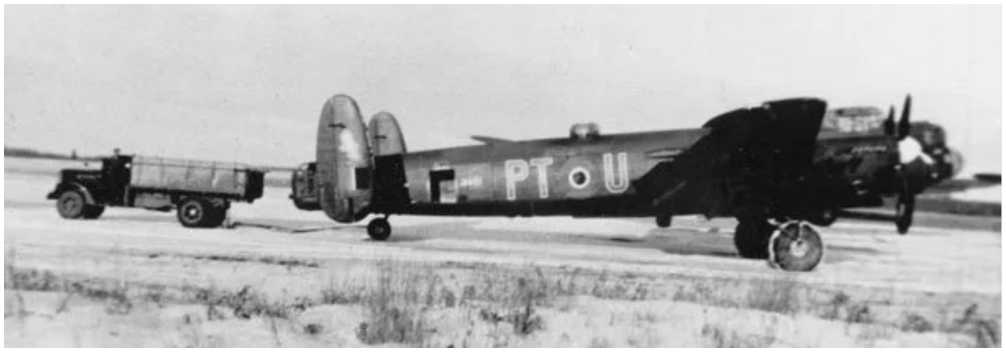
Together with Canadian-built aircraft yet to be ferried to Britain, it meant that around 230 Lancasters were retained by the RCAF. Japan's surrender changed everything. Canada soon discovered, like Britain, that it possessed more heavy bombers than it really needed.

Some were modified to patrol Canada's East Coast and the Arctic, searching for Soviet submarines during the early Cold War, and others reconfigured for long-range, over-water rescue operations, and others for photographic survey work. By 1964 they had all been replaced by newer aircraft, and the great majority scrapped.

Fortunately, some survived, and of the seventeen Lancasters in existence around the world, eight are in Canada, including FM-213 'Vera', one of just two still flying.

Royal Canadian Air Force Lancaster 10s (all built by Victory Aircraft in Malton, Ontario) line the taxiway at RAF Middleton St. George as crews assemble before their mass departure for Canada via the Azores. Over the following weeks, 141 Lancs would make the journey. (Credit: Bomber Command Museum of Canada Collection).

A jumble of Tiger Force Lancasters at the Repair Depot at Scoudouc, New Brunswick in Canada. These are mostly 420 Squadron aircraft. It was known as the Snowy Owls. (Credit: Bomber Command Museum of Canada Collection).



In 1948, Alberta rancher Victor Leonhardt poses on the running board of his farm stake truck before towing his new Lancaster back to his farm from Penhold. It appears he has also purchased a Lancaster tail wheel tow bar as well. Leonhardt bought this 420 Snowy Owl Squadron Lancaster (KB941) for $350, as well as Lancaster KB994. (Credit: Bomber Command Museum of Canada Collection).

Veteran's News

Living for more than 100 years means seeing things most humans will never experience again. For Havelock North's David Fox, a rear gunner with 75 (NZ) Sq., now 103, one of those experiences was returning from an op, flown by a badly injured pilot. David was recently interviewed by Jack Riddell (Hawkes Bay Today) ahead of Anzac Day. We are pleased to share this with our readers.

Living for more than 100 years means seeing things most humans will never experience again. For Havelock North's David Fox, now 103, one of those experiences was helping fly a Lancaster bomber with a one-eyed pilot and a hole in the cockpit.

Fox has seen many an Anzac Day. It's getting a bit harder for the World War II veteran to attend services these days, and he won't be out and about this year. But he's sharing his war story as a show of solidarity with the soldiers NZ remembers with vigour on this remembrance morning each year.

David Fox, air gunner with the 75 (NZ) Squadron, at home in Havelock North in 2026. (Credit: Jack Riddell).

Fox was born in 1923 into a farming family near Oamaru *(in the Maheno district, see Fraser Barron story, Ed.)*. When New Zealand entered World War II in September 1939, Fox wanted to volunteer for the Air Force. But because he was 16, two years under the minimum age, his parents said no.

Once he turned 18, Fox tried to join the Army but failed his medical due to "bunions", he said. So he joined the Air Force, which Fox said, "didn't want you to do as much walking as the Army did."

For his training in 1941 and 42, Fox was stationed at the RNZAF Base Ohakea, then RNZAF Rotorua. In 1943, he was shipped off to Canada, where he qualified as an air gunner.

In early 1944, Fox was sent to Britain and crewed up with members of the Moriarty crew at an Operational Training Unit. In June 1944, the crew was posted to RAF Mepal in Cambridgeshire, the base of the 75 (NZ) Squadron. The crew flew its first war operation on June 14 – a little over a week after D-Day.

On July 18, 1944, Fox was with Moriarty on the 11th operation of their tour, dropping bombs in a Lancaster on German positions near Caen during a daylight raid. The operation was in support of the Allies' attempted breakout from the Normandy beachhead.

Their aircraft was at 7500 feet (2.3km up) when a German shell burst. In an interview before his death in 2010, Moriarty recalled closing the bomb doors when a "big puff of black smoke erupted in front of the cockpit" and punched a hole "about the size of a cabbage in the Perspex cockpit hood".

Shrapnel from the explosion drove through Moriarty's left eye and exited behind his left ear. His crew slapped a field dressing on the wound, but Moriarty refused morphine to keep his "wits" about him while he remained at the controls with one working eye.

He called for a course back to Mepal rather than an emergency field because he was more familiar with the airfield and others aboard couldn't fly the bomber.
For the next 90 minutes, the bomb aimer called off instrument readers while the flight engineer worked the flaps.

Moriarty and his crew landed safely and eased to a halt as medics clambered aboard. "It wasn't a great landing," Moriarty remembered. "I didn't smoke, but I asked for a cigarette. I must have seen too many westerns."

Moriarty was awarded the rare Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for his act of bravery that day, which saved his crew.

But because of his injuries, the war was over for Moriarty. Fox and the crew had to wait for a new pilot and by mid-October 1944 had completed their allocated 30 operations, achieving tour-expired status. The crew was disbanded and Fox was sent to the air gunnery school at RAF Castle Kennedy in Scotland.

In 1945, Fox was recalled to the 75 (NZ) Squadron to join Tiger Force, the bomber command set to undertake strategic bombing against the Japanese. But before it was deployed, atomic bombs were dropped over Japan, and the war was over.

Fox returned to his relieved parents in Oamaru around Christmas 1945. Some years later, Fox went to see the crew's bomb aimer Ian Ward, where he met Iris Ward, Ian's younger sister, and Fox's future wife.

Thank you to Jack Riddlell and Hawkes Bay Today

Mapping the Bombers Shot Down over the Netherlands

Across the Netherlands, the memory of Allied airmen who died liberating Europe remains remarkably alive. Their names appear on memorials, church plaques, and war graves in villages large and small. For Dutch-born New Zealander Balthazar 'Balt' Bender, that gratitude became a personal mission. For more than a decade, Balt painstakingly mapped every bomber aircraft lost over the Netherlands during the Second World War — thousands of individual tragedies represented by coloured pins and handwritten flags.

Balthazar (Balt) Bender was born in 1929 in Rotterdam. Growing up in Holland the war came quickly to him and his family when their neighbour's house took a direct hit on the second day of the Nazi invasion causing serious damage to the Bender family home.

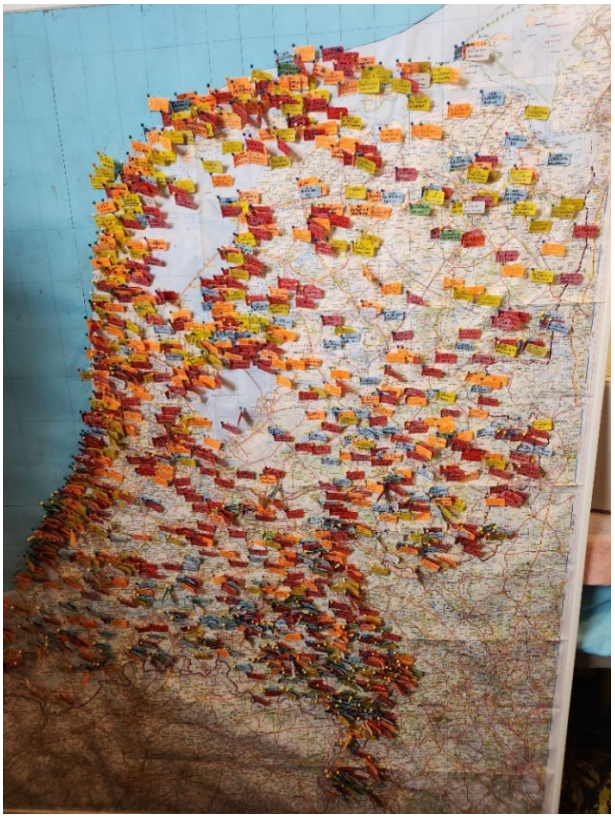
A very young Balthazar Bender. (Credit: Family)

After the war, Balt migrated to New Zealand and in later life decided he would create a map of all of the bomber aircraft that were shot down over Holland during the Second World War. It would be his tribute to those who flew to liberate his country.

Balthazar Bender proudly displaying his New Zealand certificate of Citizenship. (Credit: Family).

For more than a decade Balt researched information from a variety of sources. In particular the Chorley series, cross referencing them with different maps that he had to pinpoint the location.

He then colour-coded the flags to mark the year it went down and the colour of the pin represented the type of plane it was. The flags carry each aircraft's Identification number and a few other details on it. The result is a remarkable piece of research with such a human story behind it.



Balt's completed map of Bomber Command losses over the Netherlands. (credit: Family).

More than eighty years after the bomber crews first crossed the Dutch coast, Balt Bender wanted to ensure that they are remembered where they fell.

Balt Bender passed away this February, aged 96. His family are endeavouring to find a home for his map, so that this personal tribute is not lost.

Behind the Wire: RNZAF Prisoners of War in Europe

The experience of New Zealand Bomber Command POWs is sometimes overshadowed by the stories of those who failed to return. Yet for survivors, captivity formed a significant part of their wartime service - a reminder that survival itself could demand remarkable resilience.

Survival meant capture, interrogation, hunger, uncertainty, and long months behind barbed wire in Germany. Typical was the experience of F/O Trevor Raymond Teague (NZ427082).

Teague served as a wireless operator/air gunner during the height of the air offensive against Germany. Flying with No. 622 Squadron RAF, he took part in operations over occupied Europe and Germany before his aircraft was shot down on 28 May 1944.

Teague survived the crash and evaded capture until 5 June when he was discovered by German forces. Teague would spend 323 days as a prisoner of war.

After capture, Allied airmen were typically subjected to interrogation before being sent to prisoner of war camps. German intelligence officers tried to extract operational information, though most experienced aircrew gave only the minimum details as required under the Geneva Convention: name, rank, and number.

Teague was sent to Stalag Luft VII, Bankau, Poland, a camp for officer airmen. While the POW camps for airmen, such as the Stalag Luft camps, were generally administered differently from other internment camps, conditions could still be harsh, especially as Germany's war situation deteriorated.

POWs were a long way from home, and while with fellow airmen, typically British, Australian, Canadian, or fellow New Zealand prisoners, incarceration was still isolating and carried with it the uncertainty of whether their families even knew they were alive.

Life in the camps revolved around routine, endurance, and morale. Prisoners organised lectures, sports, and theatrical productions to combat boredom and maintain discipline. Red Cross parcels were often vital, supplementing meagre German rations.

As the war dragged into its final stages and Allied bombing disrupted transport and supplies, food shortages became increasingly severe.

As Allied armies advanced into Germany in 1945, many POWs were forced westward in bitter winter conditions ahead of the Soviet advance. These "Long Marches" became another test of endurance as exhausted prisoners. walked hundreds of kilometres through snow and freezing temperatures with limited food or shelter.

From 20 January to 8 February 1945 Teague was one of some 1500 prisoners who undertook a forced march from Bankau POW camp to Luckenwalde in Germany, a distance of around 250km. Most of the POWs were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing ill-suited to the appalling winter conditions.

The march began in a blizzard and the prisoners marched in temperatures as low as -20 degrees for nearly three weeks, sleeping in barns and factories.

Arriving at Stalag III-A in Luckenwalde, south of Belin, they found a camp already heavily overcrowded and suffering from severe food shortages. And while it was rumoured that Allied troops were approaching, they had no idea of when they might be freed.

Eventually Teague was liberated as Germany collapsed in May 1945. Like many former POWs, he returned home carrying memories very different from the popular image of wartime flying.

For them the war had involved not only operational danger in the skies over Europe, but also months of uncertainty and survival behind enemy wire.

Trevor Raymond Teague, 23 October 1945 having returned to Christchurch, with his girlfriend, later wife, Alma Coutts. (Credit: Online Cenotaph).

Len Chambers – the Quiet Kiwi Dambuster

For those with an interest in Bomber Command, May 16/17 marks a special anniversary, that of the Dams raid and the squadron and crews that became known as the Dambusters. Two New Zealanders were on that operation. While Les Munro's Lancaster was hit and damaged, forced to turn back, Len Chambers had a bird's eye view of the attack on the Mohne Dam.

Len Chambers from Karamea had qualified as a wireless operator/air gunner. After completing his training, he was posted to 460 (RAAF) Squadron, with whom he flew twenty operations before being transferred to 75 (NZ) Squadron, where he flew a further thirty-seven operations and became the Squadron Signals Leader.

When Mick Martin joined 617 Squadron, he brought most of his old 50 Squadron crew with him, but was short of a wireless operator, so Chambers was brought in, an ideal candidate for the fledgling squadron tasked with a unique and dangerous operation, destroying the dams of the Ruhr Valley which powered the German military industrial heartland.

"We had been training for this trip for six weeks. It was a beautifully clear night when we took off. It was so clear that as we flew low over the North Sea, we were able to keep perfect formation, which was maintained until we were over Hamm, where the flak caused us to take evasive action. We were so near the target that we did not bother to reform."

Theirs was the third Lancaster which bombed the Möhne dam on 16/17 May 1943. Chambers stood in the astrodome, from where he saw all the bombing. "I saw Wing-Commander Gibson, go in first to bomb. I saw a terrific splash, then an explosion.

The it was the Martin crews' turn. "There were six guns firing upwards, but not very effectively, and it seemed that the gunners lacked practice. All the same our starboard wing and starboard petrol tank were hit just as we bombed, but without serious effect.

There was no apparent breach in the dam after they had bombed, but after their bombing run both the Gibson and Martin Lancasters continued to fly around the dam to draw the guns fire. "Our air gunners replied and when we left only one gun was still firing. Once we flew within half-a-mile of the guns. They paid us some attention until the next bomber went into bomb, when they diverted the fire to it."

"After the fourth bomber had dropped his eggs the dam broke. I watched the water pouring out of it. It looked rather shallow at the time, but it must have been a terrific force, as the powerhouse just melted away.

"After a while we flew down the valley. We could see the water gradually rising. It looked slow from up above, but it must have been flowing swiftly, because we saw a bridge wiped away. There was also a village which was being gradually surrounded.

"We had plenty of time and plenty of petrol, so stayed around until we had got all the information we could, then set a course for home.

"Everything was quiet until we were above the Zuider Zee, when searchlights coned us and flak was very unfriendly, but the gunners gave them a taste in return. It was a great trip. Everyone was in tearing spirits."

Chambers, and four other members of the crew of AJ-P were awarded the DFC for their part in the raid.

The five members of the crew of AJ-P who were awarded honours for the Dams Raid pose outside Buckingham Palace. L-R: Len Chambers, Bob Hay, Mick Martin, Tom Simpson, and Jack Leggo. [Pic: Australian War Memorial].

After the raid, Chambers flew on six further sorties before leaving 617 Squadron at the same time as Jack Leggo, in order to qualify as a pilot. However, he did not, apparently, ever fly on any operations in this role.

He returned to New Zealand in November 1944 and left the RNZAF in 1945. After the war, he worked as a carpenter and builder.

Len Chambers passed away in his native Karamea on 1 March 1985.

Operation Chastise, commonly known as the Dambusters Raid, was an attack on German dams powering the Ruhr industrial valley, critical to the German military industry.

The operation was carried out on the night of 16/17 May 1943 by 617 Squadron, formed specifically for the mission.

Using special bouncing bombs developed by Barnes Wallis, the Mohne and Edersee dams were breached, causing catastrophic flooding of the Ruhr valley and of villages in the Eder valley.

Two hydroelectric power stations were destroyed and several more damaged. Factories and mines were also damaged and destroyed.

An estimated 1,600 civilians – about 600 Germans and 1,000 enslaved labourers, mainly Soviet – were killed by the flooding. Despite rapid repairs by the Germans, production did not return to normal until September.

Of the nineteen bombers on the raid, eight aircraft were lost, with 53 aircrew dead and three captured.

At the New Zealand premiere of The Dam Busters, 1955. L-R: Len Chambers, Lil Chambers, Betty Munro, Les Munro. [Credit: Chambers family].

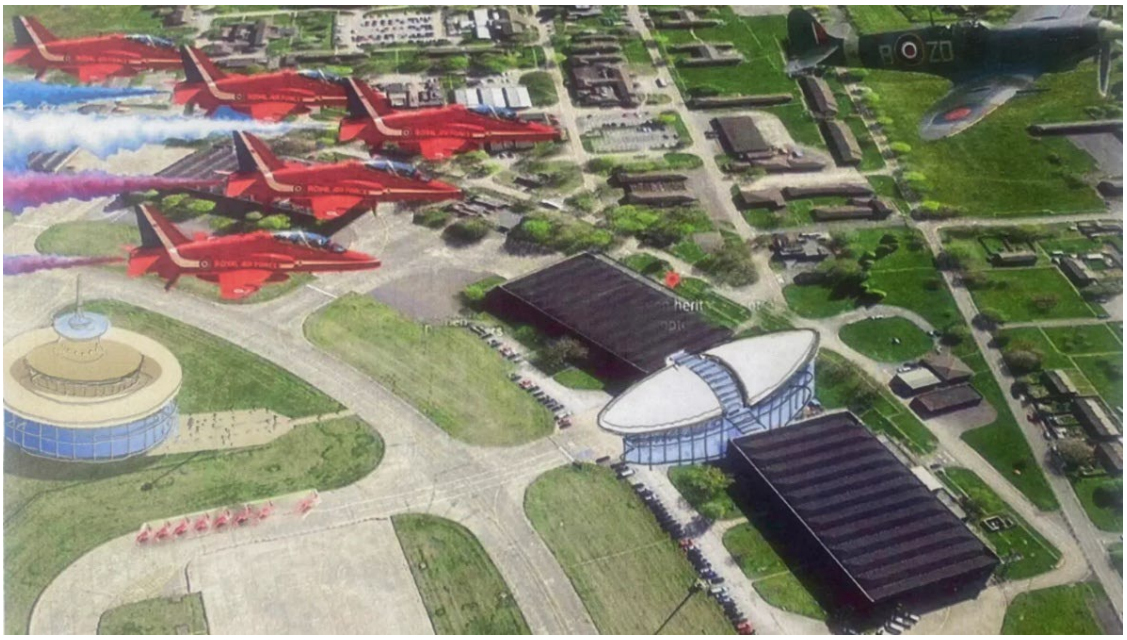
RAF Scampton Saved?

There is encouraging news for supporters of RAF Scampton, one of the most historic stations associated with Bomber Command.

The former home of 617 Squadron and later the Red Arrows is now expected to be placed on the open market after plans to convert the site into asylum accommodation were dropped.

West Lindsey District Council hopes to develop the site as a centre for aviation heritage, education, and regeneration.

For many Bomber Command families, Scampton remains one of the most symbolic surviving wartime RAF stations.



An artist's impression of how the former RAF Scampton could be redeveloped. (Credit: BBC).

The Squadron: The Beating Heart of Bomber Command

For New Zealanders who volunteered to fly with Bomber Command, the squadron was everything. It was the unit they trained with, ate with, and grieved with. Where did it sit within the vast machinery of Bomber Command?

Bomber Command was a large and complex organization, but it was built around a clear chain of authority that ran from the Air Ministry in London all the way down to the individual aircrew climbing into their aircraft at dusk.

At the top sat Bomber Command Headquarters at High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, where the Commander-in-Chief — most famously Air Marshal Arthur Harris from 1942 onwards — oversaw the entire strategic bombing campaign.

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Travers Harris, GCB, OBE, AFC. (Credit: BBC).

Below him, the command was divided into numbered **Groups**, each responsible for a geographic area of England and, later in the war, a particular type of aircraft or role. No. 5 Group, based in Lincolnshire, operated Lancasters. No. 4 Group in Yorkshire flew Halifaxes. No. 6 Group, which held particular significance for New Zealanders, was the Royal Canadian Air Force group and operated alongside British units across the north of England.

Below the Group sat the **Wing**, a relatively thin layer of administration that coordinated two or three squadrons sharing a station or nearby bases. Wing commanders handled logistics, discipline matters, and liaison upward to the Group. The Wing did not have an operational flying role in the same way as the squadron.

And then came the **Squadron** — the unit that actually mattered. It was here that New Zealanders found their identity, their mates, and their purpose.

Anatomy of a squadron

A standard Bomber Command heavy bomber squadron in the middle and later years of the war operated between twenty and twenty-six aircraft, though the number actually serviceable on any given night could be considerably fewer. The squadron was commanded by a Wing Commander, a rank that, by the standards of a conflict that consumed officers at a brutal rate, represented significant experience and seniority. Many squadron commanders were still in their mid-twenties.

The squadron was divided into two **Flights** — A Flight and B Flight — each commanded by a Squadron Leader. Each Flight held roughly ten to twelve aircraft, and it was at the Flight level that the day-to-day administration of aircrew was managed. Your Flight commander knew your name, your record, and your state of mind. The Flight was your immediate community.

Each aircraft had its own crew of seven men in a heavy bomber like the Lancaster or Halifax: pilot, flight engineer, navigator, bomb aimer, wireless operator, mid-upper gunner, and rear gunner.

The crew operated as a self-contained unit, selected largely by a process of informal mutual choice during Operational Training. They flew together, bunked in proximity to one another, and developed the kind of tight-knit trust that comes from depending on each other absolutely in extreme conditions.

It was entirely common for a crew to include men from several different countries — a New Zealand pilot might fly with a Canadian navigator, an English wireless operator, and an Australian gunner. The RAF's multinational character was woven into the squadron's fabric at crew level.

Life on the station

A Bomber Command station was a small, largely self-contained world, typically situated in the flat agricultural country of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, or East Anglia. The airfield itself dominated everything — three concrete runways in a triangular pattern, surrounded by dispersal points where aircraft were parked to reduce the risk of a single bomb destroying several at once.

Around the perimeter sat the technical infrastructure: the hangars, engine testing bays, bomb stores, and fuel points. Separate from this, usually a mile or two away, were the domestic sites — the Nissen hut sleeping quarters, the mess buildings, the briefing block, the parachute store, and the station sick quarters.

A squadron might share its station with one other squadron, for example at Skellingthorpe where Nos. 50 & 61 Squadrons operated side-by-side but independently.

The station itself was commanded by a Group Captain, who held authority over all units based there. This meant that the Wing Commander commanding the squadron was not the most senior officer on the base — the station commander sat above him, responsible for administration, welfare, and discipline across all resident units.

Daily life followed a rhythm that alternated between tedium and acute anxiety. On non-operational days, aircrew attended lectures on navigation, bombing theory, or aircraft systems; completed training flights; inspected their aircraft with the ground crew; attended parades; and spent their evenings in the mess or, if they could get transport, in the nearest town.

The ground crew — fitters, riggers, armourers, wireless mechanics — worked long hours keeping aircraft serviceable, and the relationship between an aircrew and their ground crew was often a close one. A rear gunner who knew that his turret had been carefully maintained by men who took a personal pride in his survival was a slightly less anxious rear gunner.

The operational day began with the appearance of the battle order — a list posted at the squadron, naming which aircraft and crews were detailed for operations that night.

For those named, the day contracted immediately. There was an initial briefing in the afternoon where navigators, bomb aimers, and pilots received specialist instruction. Then came the main briefing, held in the station's dedicated briefing room: a formal gathering of all operational crews where the target was revealed — often to a collective groan if it was heavily defended — and where the intelligence officer, meteorological officer, signals officer, and commanding officer each addressed the assembled men in turn.

Briefing for 408 Sq. RCAF.
(Credit: Bomber Command Museum Archive Canada).

Routes, altitudes, timing, radio frequencies, recognition signals, escape procedures, and the latest intelligence on enemy defences were all covered. The atmosphere in a briefing room the evening before a raid on Berlin was, by all accounts, something that stayed with survivors for the rest of their lives.

After briefing came the meal — traditionally egg and bacon, a luxury ration reserved for operational aircrew — then transport to the aircraft dispersals for pre-flight checks.

As darkness came down, the crews waited by their aircraft for the signal to start engines. Then the long taxi out to the runway, the queue of heavily laden bombers waiting their turn, and the take-off that committed them to the night ahead.

High Wycombe

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, the Air Ministry sought a safe location for RAF Bomber Command away from London. The site had to be in the South of England, in the country and well screened by trees.

“Why not hide it among the beechwoods of the Chiltern Hills,” suggested Wing Commander Alan Oakeshott. Subsequent investigation suggested that land around Walters Ash was ideal for this purpose.

Buildings were designed to resemble other uses, such as the Officers' Mess which was built to look like a manor house. The original Air Staff Block was built with *Dormer Windows* in the style of a Town Hall.

The fire station was built with a tower to resemble a village church. Trees were preserved as much as possible to maintain the camouflage they provided; so roads were laid out so as to avoid felling trees.

A network of underground tunnels allowed staff to move from block to block without surfacing. The key building of this network was the Operations Block built 55 feet (17 m) below ground. The roof slabs alone were over 5-ft thick. Over that was a layer of ballast, another 2-ft of concrete covered with a 4-ft cushion of earth and another 5-ft layer of reinforced concrete extending way beyond the walls of the building.

This “burster slab” would ensure the detonation of any bomb in the event of a direct hit without it reaching the bunker. Last of all came a considerable depth of earth mounding, on top of which were laid Grass Turfs.

When work started on the original WWII bunker in 1938, each tree that was dug up for the construction was marked and labelled with a number. They were then replanted elsewhere.

When the bunker was completed in 1940 the trees were put back into their exact position to disguise any change in the landscape from the air. For the duration of the war, the bunker’s precise location was a secret.

The building work required some five hundred workmen and specialists involved. Tunnels were dug to connect each block on the station, linked to an Operations Block.

To preserve secrecy, the station was known as "Southdown" as part of a directive by the Air Ministry.

Whilst High Wycombe was not an official flying station, a small airfield was used in the nearby village of Lacey Green. The airfield was unpaved and was used for small aircraft into and out of RAF High Wycombe and was only used between June 1944 and late 1945.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Bomber Command, studies aerial reconnaissance photographs of a recent raid in the Bombing Interpretation Room at Bomber Command Headquarters, High Wycombe. With him are photographic interpretation officers. (Credit: IWM).

RAF and WAAF intelligence officers and their staff at work in the Map Section in the Operations Block at Headquarters, Bomber Command, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. (Credit: IWM).

Around the World in a Lancaster: The Remarkable Voyage of *Aries*

Visiting New Zealand in 1944, while the war still raged Lancaster PD328 become the first RAF aircraft to circumnavigate the globe. A record-braking journey to this country by a remarkable aircraft and crew.

On 21 October 1944, a Lancaster bomber rolled down the runway at RAF Shawbury in Shropshire and climbed into an overcast English sky. Not unusual for the times. But this was different as this aircraft was not heading for German targets.

Instead, it was heading on a journey that would take it to New Zealand and back. Fifty-three days later, on 14 December 1944, it returned home becoming the first RAF aircraft to fly around the world.

The aircraft was Lancaster Mark I, serial number PD328, and it bore a name that has echoed through RAF aviation lore ever since: *Aries*.

Born for Bombing, Sent to Navigate

The first *Aries* was built as a standard Mark I bomber, but it was modified and assigned to the Empire Air Navigation School at RAF Shawbury for a very specific and strategic purpose.

By the autumn of 1944, it was clear to Allied planners that Germany was losing the war. Attention was already turning to the Pacific, where Japan remained undefeated. Churchill had committed RAF resources to this theatre, once victory in Europe was achieved, but the vast distances of that theatre presented formidable challenges for heavy bomber operations, amongst them navigation.

Lancaster 'Aries' at Shawbury shortly before the round-the-world flight. (Credit: David Broughton).

A round-the-world operational exercise was planned as part of RAF preparations to deploy heavy bombers to the Pacific. The mission was navigational in character. Not a propaganda stunt but a serious operational research exercise.

To give the aircraft the range needed for such an epic undertaking, it was fitted with additional fuel tankage and stripped of its military armament, with a second astrodome replacing the mid-upper turret.

Flying the aircraft from RAF Shawbury would be Wing Commander David McKinley. He had spent most of his RAF career with Coastal Command and already had a remarkable aviation career.

Perhaps his most dangerous operation had been a 20-hour flight from Britain to north Russia in June 1941 to ferry a special representative of US President Roosevelt to meet Russian leader Josef Stalin and assess the situation before the US came out in support of the Soviet Union in the war.

McKinley made the 2,000-mile flight in a Catalina flying boat, with much of the route lying parallel with the coast of German-occupied Norway, exposing the aircraft to the risk of interception from enemy fighters. The operation went off without a hitch.

McKinley on his return from his round-the-world flight in 1944. (Credit: Times of Malta)

Across the World in Wartime

Aries initially headed for Prestwick, Scotland, to clear customs before leaving for Reykjavík in Iceland. The following day, the 2,300-mile (3,700km) flight to Montreal's Dorval Airport was completed.

After flying to Washington DC to brief the RAF Delegation based at the US capital, *Aries* set off for San Francisco. An engine fault was to force a diversion to Omaha, Nebraska. Although soon made serviceable, the crew had to explain the reason for their unexpected arrival to the US authorities.

This resulted in a day's delay, during which clearances for the Pacific transit were obtained. Finally, at midnight on October 28, they were able to take off on the next sector, 2,400-miles (3860km) to Hickam Field at Honolulu.

The next leg was to Auckland, with a refuelling stop in Samoa. The crew arrived in New Zealand on 31 October to be welcomed by Air Commodore Arthur Nevill, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff of the RNZAF.

Now at the halfway point of the operation, the crew would spend the next twelve days visiting RNZAF bases. *Aries* was displayed and lectures were given to squadrons and training units. McKinley and his team received a great reception, generating "exceptionally keen interest." Many local dignitaries visited the Lancaster, and the crew attended multiple civic receptions.

For the many New Zealanders who saw it, *Aries* offered the first sight of the aircraft type that was, at that very moment, pounding German cities by night from bases in England, an aircraft many of their own servicemen were flying in.

Avro Lancaster Bomber Aries, Whenuapai Airport, 1944. (Credit: NZ Herald).

On 13 November *Aries* was flown to Fiji, where more talks were given to the resident RNZAF squadrons, before being flown on to Australia for another warm welcome.

Over the next two weeks, visits were made to both operational and training units across Australia in addition to briefings with senior RAAF and intelligence staff. A short journey to New Guinea was included before flying to Darwin and Perth for preparation for the return to Britain.

By the time Aries left Australia on 11 December 11, the crew had visited 24 bases in New Zealand, Australia, and New Guinea. The visit was not merely symbolic; it was a demonstration of navigational precision across the vast distances of the Pacific, proving that the Lancaster could find its targets reliably even in an ocean theatre where there were no landmarks.

After final refuelling at Learmouth in Western Australia, PD328 began the long journey home with a 2,680-mile (4310 km) non-stop stage to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) arriving at first light. After just two hours on the ground, the Lancaster took off to cross the Indian Ocean heading for Masirah Island in the Arabian Gulf. Again this was a brief stop, with just enough time to refuel and eat, the crew were airborne again bound for Cairo in Egypt.

After 90 minutes on the ground in Cairo, PD328 left for Malta. Here, as well as taking on fuel, the plugs in the starboard outer engine were changed and the sand filters were removed. The Lancaster took off at midnight to head for Northolt, Middlesex.

Over France the crew received a message to divert to Lyneham in Wiltshire and on arrival were redirected to Northolt only to find the weather unsuitable for landing. They went back to Lyneham where they were not expected and had trouble being serviced – all of this after 70 hours' continuous operation with only sufficient time on the ground to refuel and freshen up.

Eventually, McKinley was given permission to head for his base at Shawbury arriving on December 14, 1944, some 71 and ½ hours after leaving Australia.

The entire circumnavigation had taken 53 days with total flying time was 202 hours covering some 36,000 nautical miles; the longest stage was 2,710 with the greatest airborne time just over 15 hours, on the Australia to Ceylon leg. An operation of remarkable endurance and professionalism by the entire crew.

Wing Commander McKinley was awarded an Air Force Cross for the mission, but perhaps oddly, the crew were not recognised in the same way.

McKinley (left) and his crew visiting the Air Ministry after the global sortie. (Credit: Graham Pitchfork).

A Very Special Machine

A remarkable journey but the story of *Aries* did not end there. Not only did it circumnavigate the earth, but it also went on to a series of further pioneering flights in the Arctic, pushing the boundaries of aviation and navigation.

In April 1945, the aircraft was modified again ready to tackle a new and perhaps even more demanding mission. This time *Aries* would be used to study navigation in polar conditions and to examine the behaviour of equipment in these extreme conditions. Again, the expedition was headed by Wing Commander McKinley.

PD328 was modified at Waddington, Lincolnshire. The nose and tail gun turrets were replaced by smooth fairings, giving it the appearance of a Lancastrian airliner. A Lincoln undercarriage was fitted to support the increased wight and four fresh Merlin XXIVs replaced with old engines. Additional fuel tanks were added, giving a full load of 4,000 gallons, increasing range to 5,000 miles.

Radio altimeters were fitted, as were various types of gyro-stabilised and non-stabilised compasses for testing. Special instruments for measuring the dip as well as horizontal and vertical forces of the Earth's magnetic field were fitted together with a special thermometer to establish the outside temperature.

For the crew, arctic survival kits were added to the standard survival gear. And specially prepared dehydrated rations were provided to sustain the crew for up to four weeks.

Between 17 and 26 May 1945, *Aries* flew over both the geographic and magnetic North Poles, the first aircraft to do so in a scientific capacity, logging 110 hours of flying on those polar sorties alone.

Later that year, *Aries* made a long-distance non-stop flight between the UK and Canada, and then in 1946 set a record time for the England–Cape Town route, during which it made the first Cairo–Cape Town non-stop flight.

Aries returns to New Zealand

One of the recommendations resulting from the round-the-world flight was to make regular liaison visits to the RAAF and the RNZAF. It was decided to try to break the record times to Australia and New Zealand. Utilising the Lancaster's built-in long range fuel tanks, just three refuelling stops were scheduled using Bombay, Colombo (Ceylon), and Darwin.

And so, on the afternoon of 26 August 1946 *Aries* took off from Blackbushe in Hampshire again headed for New Zealand, this time under the overall command of Air Commodore N H D'Aeth CBE, Commandant of EANS. With him was Sqn Ldr J S Aldridge, the captain along with three navigators and two wireless operators who made up the rest of the crew and a servicing party of three and an Air Ministry representative were also on board.

The final meteorological briefing at Blackbushe on the morning of 21 August had forecast heavy cumulonimbus clouds with severe icing up to 30,000ft on the intended track to the Greek island of Rhodes. It was agreed to make a diversion of 170 miles to avoid the area.

Aries took off at 12:39 and headed for Marseille, France. The aircraft was forced to climb higher than planned, and when over the Persian Gulf it became clear that fuel consumption was greater than expected it was decided to land at Mauripur, Karachi.

Aries at Whenuapai in 1946. (Credit: Walsh Memorial Library, The Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT).

The turn-round and refuelling were carried out in 66 minutes and then PD328 was on its way to Ceylon at 15,000ft. For the last two hours, the starboard generator failed to charge. The night landing, refuelling and repairs at Negombo, Colombo, took 2 hours 18 minutes, after which *Aries* was away on the sea leg of 3,250 miles to Darwin. The accumulation of heavy cloud over Sumatra and Java made it necessary to divert from the great circle track.

Another night touchdown and turn-round at Darwin was accomplished in an hour, before *Aries* took off for a track of 2,873 miles at 20,000ft to the RNZAF base at Ohakea on New Zealand's North Island. It arrived 59 hours, 50 minutes after leaving England, having spent just 4 hours 28 minutes on the ground for refuelling and support.

Observers of the Royal Aero Club were present at the staging posts, and three records were recognised as official by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale: London to Karachi – 19 hours 14 minutes; London to Darwin – 45 hours 35 minutes; London to Wellington – 59 hours 50 minutes.

The crew spent the next three weeks in New Zealand and Australia attending meetings, visiting air force training establishments and giving lectures. They left Melbourne on 24 September for the return flight and arrived back at Shawbury on 2 October, having covered 32,094 miles in 165 hours, 34 minutes.

The Legacy of Aries

For New Zealand, the visit of *Aries* in late 1944 was a small but genuine moment of connection to the wider war effort. A Lancaster, perhaps the most celebrated British bomber of the conflict, the aircraft in which thousands of New Zealanders had served, landed here not on its way to a target, but on a mission of knowledge.

Regrettably, like so many historically significant aircraft of the era, it was not preserved. On 11 August 1948 Lancaster PD328 was struck off charge by the RAF and sold for scrap. A sad end for a remarkable aircraft.

Wings Over New Zealand is 21

Congratulations to NZBCA friend Dave Homewood whose *The Wings Over New Zealand Forum* (WONZ) celebrated its 21st anniversary earlier this year.

And 'WONZ' is still going strong. In a message to followers Dave said "It has been such an amazing place for learning, sharing, meeting new friends, and finding great contacts. The WONZ Forum has enriched so many lives, solved so many mysteries, and progressed our wider understanding of virtually all aspects of the New Zealand aviation scene."

"It has also helped the different sectors of the NZ aviation community to all come together as one friendly, helpful family. When it comes to researching information the WONZ Forum has developed into an amazing hive mind where there are always people here who have the answers that people are seeking."

For those interested in Bomber Command, WONZ has a wealth of information, from interviews with veterans to visits to historic sites.

A great example is Episode 339 which marked the 85th Anniversary of the first flight of the de Havilland Mosquito. To celebrate the occasion, Dave released a never before heard interview from his archive that he recorded in 2013 with four Kiwi Mossie veterans. They were pilots Reg Mitchell and Keith Boles DFC, and navigator-wireless operators Harold "Bunny" Burrows and Martial "Sonny" Gaspard.

Left: ***from left to right:*** *Keith Boles, 'Bunny' Burrows, Reg Mitchell, and Sonny Gaspard in front of the MOTAT Mosquito. (Credit: Dave Homewood).*

The recording was made at the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland, and the guys share memories and tell stories from their days flying one of the greatest aeroplanes of all time.

These interviews and many more that can be found on WONZ, together with hundreds of fascinating discussion threads are real gold for anyone with an interest in our country's contribution to the war effort or New Zealand aviation in general. They really are worth searching.

While the number of daily posts on WONZ are fewer than in the site's pomp, Dave knows that thousands of people are still reading there every day. "Recently I saw a stat of over 5,000 visitors to the forum in a single 24-hour period".

In many ways this is the nature of online forums the world over, with other once-bigger international forum now either dead and gone, or close to it. But Dave is determined that WONZ shall carry on.

Anyone interested in aviation will find something here and in the WONZ Show archive that will interest them, for sure.

Well done Dave on creating an amazing resource for New Zealand aviation fans. Happy 21st Birthday!

Dave Homewood

You can find WONZ at rnzaf.proboards.com/ and use the search function to unearth all sorts of Bomber Command related material. Well worth exploring.

Airborne Cigar

Tim Carter from the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre explains the story of one of Bomber Command's most highly classified secrets developed to combat night-fighter attacks.

Many visitors to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre are aware that regular heavy bomber crews of RAF Bomber Command consisted of 7 men. Fewer are aware of some crews consisting of 8 crew members with a significant modification to the Lancaster aircraft in a specific highly classified role, which put these crews at increased danger from Luftwaffe night fighters.

These crews of Number 101 Squadron, based at RAF Ludford Magna from 15 June 1943 until the end of the war, had additional equipment on board their aircraft known as "Airborne Cigar".

As German night fighter tactics evolved, they relied increasingly on ground controllers to direct them towards interception of enemy aircraft within the bomber stream. Initially the Luftwaffe used 2 frequency bands for ground control, one in the High Frequency (HF) range of 3 to 6 Megahertz (MHz) and the second in the Very High Frequency (VHF) range between 38 and 42 MHz.

To counter this communication, the UK developed a number of different systems. Widely fitted to RAF Bomber Command aircraft, "Tinsel" was used by standard crews against the HF frequencies from December 1942 and consisted of a microphone mounted inside one of the bomber's engine nacelles (later mounted in different locations) with the output fed into the Wireless Operator's standard T1154 radio transmitter. If the Wireless Operator found a ground control frequency, he could transmit amplified engine noise on the same frequency to jam the enemy transmission.

Later, Tinsel could also be broadcast in the VHF range through the TR1143. However, it had limited impact on the night-fighters, and the ground controllers would move to alternate frequencies.

As the Luftwaffe increased its frequency spectrum to counter the RAF Tinsel jamming, "Ground Cigar" was introduced from 30/31 July 1943. Utilising 15 ground-based transmitters in the UK, Ground Cigar would put up a barrage over the 38-42 MHz frequency range.

However, on 6 May 1943, and before Ground Cigar became operational, Air Commodore Bufton had already directed that a version of Cigar should be fitted to aircraft; this naturally became known as Airborne Cigar or routinely abbreviated to ABC.

Developed by the Telecommunication Research Establishment at Malvern under Airborne Radio Installation (ARI) 5558, ABC was designed for use on bombing raids over enemy territory to interrupt enemy communications by jamming particular frequencies on which radio telegraphy messages were being sent to night fighters from ground control stations.

The ABC equipment consisted of power supplies, one receiver, three transmitters, control panels, a junction box, an indicator, and a switching unit, largely located in the mid-section of the Lancaster between the main and rear spar.

Externally, the only noticeable difference to a standard Lancaster was the addition of a 5 foot receiver aerial (to the rear of the mid-upper gunner) and three 8 feet 9 1/2 inches transmitter aerials; two located on the upper fuselage (one behind the cockpit and the other in front of the mid-upper gunner both slightly on the port side of centre) and one under the nose (adjacent to the bomb aimer position). The complete installation weighed 604 ¼ lbs (274kgs).

Avro Lancaster B Mark I, NG128 'SR-B', of No. 101 Squadron RAF bombs over the target during a daylight raid on Duisburg on 15 October 1944. The large aerials on top of the Lancaster's fuselage are the antennas for the Airborne Cigar system. (Credit: IWM).

Once power was applied from two 80V 1200-watt alternators and the aircraft DC supply, the transmitters were in standby with valves alight and suppressed while the panoramic superheterodyne receiver swept over the full frequency range 38.3 to 42.5 MHz, 25 times a second. Any signals detected were displayed on the Cathode Ray Tube indicator appearing as a blip on the trace at the intercepted frequency.

The operator then set a strobe on the blip and threw a switch, which stopped the panoramic sweep of the receiver on the frequency of the intercept and strobe. Via the intercom, he was connected to the receiver frequency to listen to the signal. If he identified it, through his German language skills, as an enemy ground transmission, he switched on a transmitter and turned the tuning control until the jamming signal covered the received frequency.

Using the three transmitters, he could jam three communications channels simultaneously. Effective range of the jamming was around 50 miles and, to provide jamming protection for the entire bomber stream, 101 Squadron provided ABC equipped Lancasters at regular intervals within the stream. As the ABC aircraft of 101 Squadron would accompany the bomber force to apply the jamming, they would also carry a normal bomb load which amounted to about 1000lbs less than a standard load due to the additional weight of the ABC equipment and the operator.

ABC was first used operationally by 101 Squadron Lancasters on 7/8 October 1943 over Stuttgart, having been trialled since 4 September 1943 and was operated by a German speaking additional crew member, known as a Special Operator, Spec Op or SO.

These SOs were of many nationalities, including German Jewish origin, and a mixture of qualifications and were trained on the Squadron under conditions of great secrecy. The other Squadron aircrew were strictly forbidden to question them about their work. Many of the Jewish operators changed their names to hide their origins and the risks the Jewish operators took were, arguably, higher than non-Jewish SOs.

There was so much secrecy, that many of the operators had little idea of what they had volunteered for until they arrived at RAF Ludford Magna. Many were trained for verbal jamming, issuing contradictory instructions to the Luftwaffe fighters as if they were the ground controllers as well as pure noise jamming on the control frequencies, although it is likely this type of deception was not used significantly.

The initial 1943 requirement was for 30 SOs to operate the ABC equipment and, in the first instance, they were recruited from within Bomber Command itself. Groups were asked to nominate aircrew of any flying category of quick intelligence and with a working knowledge of the German language. Amongst the first SOs posted to 101 Squadron were navigators, flight engineers, wireless operators, and air gunners. They were trained on two courses over 2 weeks, initially at "Y" control station in West Kingsdown followed by manipulation of the equipment with a ground trainer designed by TRE.

Subsequently, a training centre was established at Ludford Magna where all SO training was completed. The SO had to recognise German codewords, such as *Kapelle* for 'target altitude,' and would log any German transmissions for passing on to Intelligence at the post-flight debriefing. Sat with the equipment between the wing spars, the SO would isolate from intercom to focus on the German frequencies and would be contacted by the pilot using a call light. The rest of the crew had little idea of what the SO was doing, such was the secrecy surrounding his task.

101 Squadron losses were higher than any other Bomber Command squadron during their time at Ludford Magna and this is possibly due to direction finding of their transmissions by the enemy resulting in a higher rate of interception by night fighters, although there is little evidence of this. SO veteran Ken Lewis, DFM, described how the SOs were nicknamed 'Jo's or 'Jonah's' by the other crew members due to the Squadron's high loss rate.

The Germans tried to counter the jamming via different means, and they referred to ABC as "dudelsack", German for bagpipes, due to the jamming signal's warbling sound. Swapping frequency would quickly result in the new frequency being jammed and women were brought in by the Germans to try and disguise the ground control. Nonetheless, this was quickly picked up by the RAF and jamming continued. One story even describes the use of German opera singers to sing out instructions to try and keep their controllers in contact with the fighters whilst trying to sound like radio stations. Another subterfuge was to transmit a musical programme, breaking off suddenly to snap out an order, with the music then resuming.

Number 100 (Special Duties) Group was formed in November 1943 and had many squadrons flying different aircraft types operating various radio countermeasures equipment. B-17 Fortresses of 214 (Special Duties) Squadron were fitted with ABC from April 1944. In October 1944, Bomber Command proposed transfer of the ABC commitment from 101 Squadron of Number 1 Group to Number 100 (Special Duties) Group, a Halifax III squadron being transferred from the main bomber force for the purpose. However, it was not until March 1945 that the task was taken on by 462 Squadron RAAF with Halifax aircraft and fitted with the latest ABC equipment; but they only carried out 16 ABC sorties before the end of the war and, by this time, the war was nearly over and radio countermeasures activity had almost ceased.

101 Squadron flying from RAF Ludford Magna between 7/8 October 1943 and their final offensive ABC operation on 25 April 1945 carried out 2,477 ABC sorties with a total loss of 77 aircraft. Despite the high losses of 101 Squadron aircraft and crews, there is no doubt that their work saved the lives of many aircrews within Bomber Command operations that would have otherwise been lost to Luftwaffe night-fighters.

From the NZBCA Facebook Page

Not thought through very well ... ideas that "bombed."

The recollections of a Feltwell airman have helped us answer a couple of nagging questions. In 1939, Bill Marshall was an electrician with 37 Squadron at Feltwell, and some of his memories are recorded on the Feltwell.net website.

When war was declared, the squadron was ordered to disperse their Wellington bombers and other vehicles to minimise damage from an enemy attack from the air.

37 Squadron chose to disperse some aircraft to the adjacent grass airfield at Methwold, utilising nearby trees for cover. Methwold had been used pre-war by 214 Squadron and was often described as Feltwell's "satellite" airfield.

However, when it came time to operate out of Methwold there was a problem. Bill recalled "a train load of bombs being pulled by tractor up to Methwold. These were loaded onto a Wellington bomber, but it was too heavy to take off, the wheels had sunk into the ground!"

This was experiment number one. Which explains why pilots would fly Wellingtons from their Methwold dispersals a few minutes across to Feltwell for bombing-up and only used Feltwell airfield for operational take-offs and landings.

Bombing-up at Feltwell, 1940.
(Credit: Air Force Museum of NZ ref. MUS090236).

Experiment number two involved loading a Wellington with bombs in a pit, shown in two further photos. The first, dated 13 July 1939, shows a large sunken enclosure or pit, with concrete walls and floor. It was an experimental blast-proof bombing-up pit, designed to protect nearby aircraft in case of an accident.

Blast-proof bombing-up pit, Feltwell, 13 July 1939.
(credit: M.W. Buckley collection).

The second (below), dated 22 August 1939, shows the same pit with a Mark 1 Wellington bomber parked in the middle. The aircraft probably belonged to 37 Squadron which had been operating Mark 1 Wellingtons from Feltwell since May 1939. The caption on the reverse says, "Looking from left lower bank."

Mark I Wellington (L4337?) in blast-proof bombing-up pit, Feltwell, 22 August 1939. (Credit: M.W. Buckley collection).

Sixteen 250lb bombs were loaded but no available tractor was strong enough to pull the plane up the slope of the pit! No other choice existed but to load the planes on the airfield where they stood.

The fact that official photos were taken and that Buckley kept copies suggests that it may have been a 3 Group initiative. But the idea obviously never caught on, and now we know why.

From the Archives

A Hole in One

On a similar theme to that of 'ideas than bombed' (see p25), Roy Montrowe (692 Sq.) recalled how HQ dreamt up the idea of blocking railway tunnels with a 'cookie' – a 4000lb bomb.

"Unluckily a straight release didn't work so the plan was modified to use a toss and run technique. Just how we could toss 4000 lbs of thin-walled high explosive at 300 mph (480 km/h) into a railway tunnel could be solved by training, the RAF golden solution!"

During very low-level practise on a railway tunnel somewhere in the Midlands, Montrowe recalled that "the pilots became exhilarated, the navigators nervous and the locals disconcerted."

To everyone's relief the plan was called off for the squadron.

"Just as well as we were told to drop the cookie from just 1000 feet. The concussion would have been enormous and even at 300 mph the blast wave would have been faster than my Mozzie".

"If it got the timing wrong and missed there would have been a bloody big bomb flying in formation with us. No thank you!."

F/Lt Roy Montrowe DFC (NZ411925) flew 42 operations on Wellingtons in the Middle East with 205 Group, before returning to the UK and converting to Mosquitoes.

By the time Roy had completed his second tour of fifty operations all over Germany he and his navigator, F/Off Harry Hughes (RAFVR) DFC DFM, had personally delivered 200,000 lbs of high explosive (90 tonnes) an impressive total for two men, two engines and a wooden air frame.

Left: F/L Roy Montrowe (left) with navigator F/Off Harry Hughes with Mosquito B XVI P2-0 (PF455) at RAF Graveley. (Credit: NZBCA Archives).

A Shaky Start

As a sprog crew, Des Andrewes' first op with 622 squadron was to Stuttgart on 15 March 1944. Early in the trip they lost their port in her engine, and with that height. That was just the beginning.

"At 14,000 feet and over the target we copped a couple of incendiaries through the starboard wing. We were too low and well below the main force as 18,000 feet".

However the crew completed their bombing run, but on their return, their Lancaster attracted a nightfighter. Fortunately the planned corkscrew manoeuvre worked and they finally headed home for Mildenhall but with parachutes strapped firmly on.

Andrewes recalled that "the skipper was pretty concerned that the incendaries may have wrecked the starboard undercarriage wheel, so he let down very gently on the port side. As soon as the starboard touched, it's burst tyre sent us into an almighty ground loop. Boy were we glad to get back".

Des Andrewes' crew after their final op, 18 July 1944.
L to R: Les Hillford (Bomb Aimer), Bill Joy (Rear Gunner), Denis Swilt (M/U Gunner), Burt Dawkins (Engineer), Andrewes (Navigator), Chook Stuthers (Pilot), and Peter Brook (W/Op).
(Credit: NZBCA Archives).

"We all thought, this is just the first of 30 trips, how do we do it! We did of course but never again had to face anything like that first op!"

Desmond (Des) Andrewes (NZ427174) was navigator for the Charles 'Chook' Struthers (RAAF) crew of 622 Sq. Andrewes' brrother, Lancelot Andrewes (413802) also served with the RNZAF in WW2.

Bomber Command Memorials

Stirling EH955 of 75 (NZ) Squadron was shot down over Denmark shortly after midnight on 19 April 1944 while returning from a mine-laying operation in Kiel Bay.

It was the penultimate Stirling lost by 75 (NZ) Squadron as the unit completed its transition to Lancasters. The Murray crew had already retrained on the new aircraft and had taken part in the Squadron's first Lancaster operation — a bombing raid to the Paris area — before reverting to a Stirling for their 13th operational sortie.

The aircraft was piloted by P/O James Murray (NZ415820) of Timaru, Canterbury. The remainder of the crew comprised two other New Zealanders, a Canadian, two Englishmen and an Irishman.

Gordon Irwin (NZ415698), the wireless operator, and Douglas Hill (NZ415761), the bomb aimer, were captured soon after parachuting to safety, although Hill suffered serious injuries when his leg became entangled in his parachute cords during the descent. John "Paddy" McFarland RAFVR also landed safely and managed to evade capture for several days before being betrayed to the Germans and taken into custody.

James Murray, Hyman Kahler RAFVR (flight engineer), Peter Woolam RAFVR and John Mulligan RCAF (air gunners) were killed and are buried at Gram, Denmark. Initially, German authorities refused permission for the men to be buried in the churchyard at Gram but eventually relented on the condition that the burial take place privately and at night. By morning, local Danish residents had covered the graves with flowers.

For the Murray family, James Murray's death was another devastating blow. Two of his brothers had already been killed while serving with the New Zealand Army. David Murray died in captivity from wounds received during the defence of Crete in May 1941, while Gavin Murray was killed during the German counterattack following the New Zealand capture of the El Mreir Depression during the First Battle of El Alamein in July 1942. Their sister, Alice Murray, also served overseas during the war.

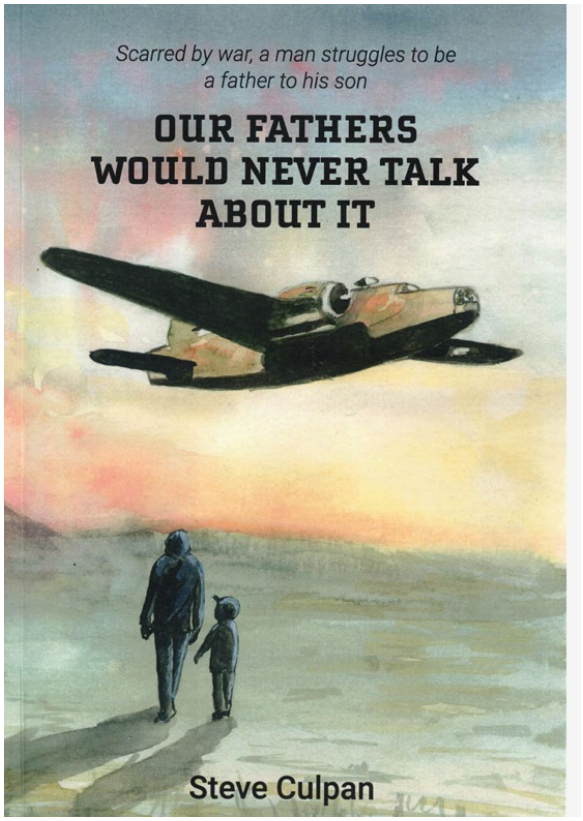
Above: Crew graves at Gram churchyard after 70th anniversary ceremony April 2014.
Below: Memorial grove Gram churchyard. (Credit: Online Cenotaph).

Below (L) Stirling (EH955) of 75 (NZ) Squadron and (R) P/O James Murray. (Credit: Online Cenotaph).

Bomber Command in Books

Our Fathers Would Never Talk About It

A novel by Steve Culpan



One of the pleasures of associations such as NZBCA is discovering the remarkable talents and dedication of our own members.

A newly published novel by NZBCA member Steve Culpan brings together family drama, wartime service, and the enduring legacy of Bomber Command in an ambitious and deeply researched work.

Set across two generations of an Auckland family, the novel follows Frankie, a young New Zealander who volunteers for the Air Force during the Second World War as a means of escaping the hardships and tensions of Depression-era family life.

What follows is not simply a wartime story, but a broader exploration of love, loyalty, trauma, and survival. Frankie's journey takes readers from pre-war New Zealand to bombing operations over Germany, and eventually into the harsh reality of German prisoner-of-war camps after his aircraft is shot down.

What particularly distinguishes the book is the depth of its historical research. The author notes that the novel contains extensive endnotes and was the product of many months of careful investigation into Bomber Command operations, POW camps, and the experiences of New Zealand airmen.

The result is a work that combines fictional storytelling with an authentic historical backdrop familiar to many NZBCA families.

Importantly, the book also carries special dedications to 60 New Zealand Bomber Command aircrew who were shot down and became prisoners of war during the conflict. That personal commitment to remembrance comes through strongly in the writing.

Readers with an interest in Bomber Command, wartime New Zealand, and the long shadow cast by the war on families and relationships will find much to engage with.

How to Buy

You can order the book from the website www.steveculpan.com for delivery within New Zealand ($40 including postage). Or if you prefer you contact Steve direct at drsteveculpan@gmail.com

On the web site Steve offers to sign the book if wished and can also manage gifting with a short message on their behalf to the gift receiver.

For those with a Kindle e-reader, the book is also available via Amazon.

Steve is also keen for feedback from the members - which they can send by email or phone him directly.

The Great Men of 106 Squadron: Gibson's Lancasters at RAF Syerston

As we went to print, we learn that Clive Smith's latest book is now available from Amazon Australia. The book is a collection of accounts written by those who served with 106 Squadron, at RAF Coningsby for six months in 1942 when Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC DSO & Bar DFC & Bar, later of 617 Sq. fame was in command.

Of particular interest to readers is that with the assistance of some NZBCA members the book covers material related to a number of New Zealanders who served in the squadron in that time including John Badley, Mel Banks, Rob Caskey and Terry Clark.

The Great Men of 106 Squadron: Gibson's Lancasters at RAF Syerston is priced at NZ$67 link here

We will have a full review in the next edition.

Bomber Command in Scale

For New Zealand modellers, it is always pleasing to see a kit release carrying a genuine RNZAF connection — even when the aircraft itself was not part of Bomber Command's main offensive.

Czech manufacturer Kovozávody Prostějov (KP) has reissued its 1/72 scale Handley Page Hampden TB Mk.I, including markings for No. 489 (NZ) Squadron under RAF Coastal Command. The scheme provided represents aircraft "XA-L," identified by the kit as a 1944 machine, although the markings more likely reflect service during 1942 or 1943.

No. 489 Squadron was formed in August 1941 under Article XV of the Empire Air Training Scheme and began operations the following year flying the Hampden torpedo bomber. Although designed originally as a medium bomber, the Hampden found a second life with Coastal Command in anti-shipping and anti-submarine operations.

Flying long patrols over the North Sea and along the Norwegian coast, 489 Squadron crews attacked German shipping and escorted strikes against enemy convoys. These operations were often conducted at low level in difficult weather against heavily defended targets.

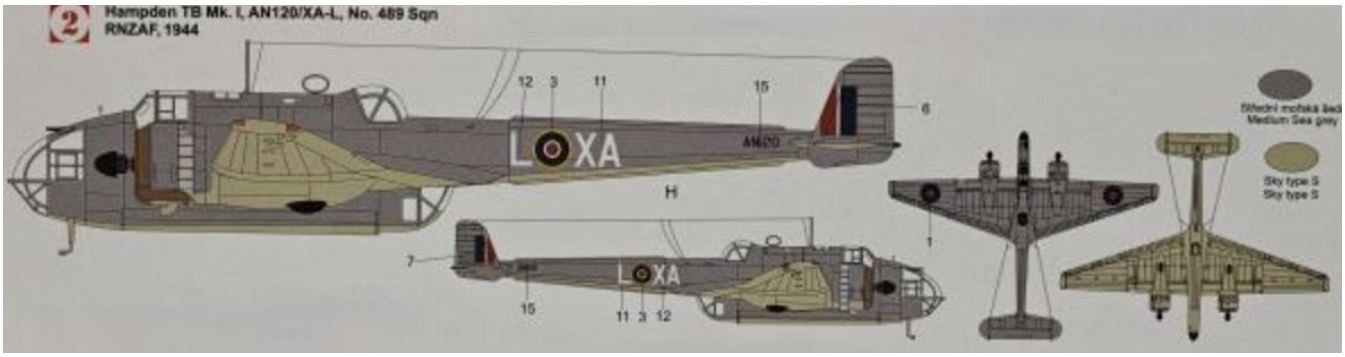
In late 1943 the squadron converted to the Bristol Beaufighters and resumed operations in early 1944. Together with No. 455 Squadron RAAF, it later formed part of the famous ANZAC Strike Wing, attacking German coastal shipping in the lead-up to and aftermath of the Normandy landings.

The KP release itself is not a completely new tooling. The moulds originated with Valom in 2008 as a Hampden B Mk.I, followed shortly afterward by the torpedo-bomber TB Mk.I variant with additional parts. Despite its age, it remains one of the better options for modellers wanting to build the distinctive torpedo-carrying Hampden.

The kit is available in New Zealand through specialist retailers including Plastic Models New Zealand and Mini Kiwiland Shop

Hampden TB Mark I, AN127 XA-Y of No. 489 Squadron RNZAF, on the ground at Thorney Island, Hampshire. (Credit: IWM).

A group of No. 489 Squadron pilots. Unknown location. L-R: Flight Lieutenant Reynolds DFC & Bar, Squadron Leader Moynihan DFC, Flying Officer Lynch, Wing Commander Dinsdale DFC, Commanding Officer of No. 489 Squadron. (Credit Air Force Museum of New Zealand).



Rear Gunner

Cartoons and the War Effort

On 15 February 1940, the New Zealand Herald reported on an item published two days earlier in a Berlin daily newspaper, the ‘Lokal Anzeiger’, about the arrival of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) in Egypt:

BERLIN JIBE
" POOR COUNTRY LADS "

The first German comment on the Anzacs' arrival in Egypt appears in the ‘Lokal Anzeiger’, which says: *"It is just as well that the New Zealand soldiers are, as it were, just poor country lads, who do not know what it is all about, otherwise the whole Continent would be rocked with laughter."*

Legendary cartoonist Gordon "Min" Minhinnick was quick to respond, publishing this "Now We Know" cartoon (below) in the same issue.

The German attitude was somewhat misplaced, not least because of the efforts of HMS Achilles, part of the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy just months earlier.

In December 1939, the Royal Navy heavy cruiser HMS Exeter and light cruisers HMS Ajax and HMS Achilles had attacked and badly damaged the German pocket battleship Graf Spee, forcing her into the port of Montevideo for repairs and to disembark the dead and wounded.

The action that would later become known as the Battle of the River Plate, was a huge early boost to public morale in New Zealand as the Achilles carried a crew that were 60% New Zealanders.

Along with the arrival of the Anzacs in North Africa and the early exploits of New Zealanders in the RAF, great pride was developing in our capabilities as a nation. Minhinnick captures this beautifully.

When the Achilles returned to Auckland on 23 February, to a heroes' welcome and "triumphal march up Queen Street", a large-scale copy of this cartoon was displayed in a shop window.

Chris Newey