

THE TWENTY THREE

CATCHING UP WITH FAMILY MEMBERS OF...

ALFRED CHURCHILL LOCKYER

CHARLES AGNEW

GEORGE GOODALL BELL

SIDNEY WILLIAM CAINS

GEORGE GOODALL BELL



Bill Rowling is George's nephew. In the first week of January this year, Richard and I had the pleasure of meeting him and his wife Sheryll at their home in Blenheim in New Zealand's South Island when they invited us to lunch. Born David Rowling but everybody (except his close family), refers to him as Bill, was inspired by his uncle George Bell to join the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Now retired from the RNZAF but still with his 'hand in' on various projects, including the organisation of a recent deployment from Germany of Orion aircraft, Bill's mother was Susan Bell, George's sister, who later married Leigh Rowling. Susan is pictured here with George at their sister Grace's wedding. Susan was George's favourite 'little sister' and wanted the Halifax he piloted in World War II to bear her name. However, George allowed the Halifax to be called Jill. This was the name of his Australian Air Gunner David Walton's little daughter. As a tribute to her brother George, Susan called her daughter Jill, after the plane in which George died.



Not far from Nelson and, having been on a day trip to the beach at Kaiteriteri, Richard and I stopped in a small town called Riwaka where many of the Rowling family lived. There, under Bill's directions, we found his mother (and George's 'darling' sister) and father's grave – Susan and Leigh Rowling.



Having been in contact with Bill for a number of months, exchanging emails and receiving family photographs and a personal letter from George to his parents, I was quite overwhelmed when Bill showed me George's medals that had been sent to George's parents Henry and Elizabeth Bell. To celebrate, following a few tears after holding the medals, we posed for photos in the garden.



Another relative that we were delighted to meet, was Harry Bell, who is Bill's second cousin. George's father Harry had a brother called Walter who married a young lass called Mary. Walter was a champion trombone player. Now a very fit 92 year old, Harry lives in the town of Motueka, his daughter Ali living close by in Kaiteriteri. We all stood beneath Harry's father's trombone, displayed proudly on the wall of his home. With us is in the picture on the left is my daughter Sami who joined us and was kind enough to read to Harry, an excerpt of what I had written about the day that George's Halifax crashed in Yorkshire. On the right is Harry's is beside his daughter Ali.



How strange is this??? Staying with my daughter and her husband in the Marsden Valley in Nelson, I was astounded when Bill told me that his grandparents Henry and Elizabeth Bell were buried in Marsden Valley cemetery. Sitting on Sami's deck, drinking tea, I look out over the cemetery where they are buried! A view which I have enjoyed for the 10 years they have lived here! Of course, I had to visit!



THANK YOU SO MUCH TO BILL, SHERYLL, HARRY AND ALI. FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY AND YOUR KINDNESS IN DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT GEORGE AND HIS FAMILY.