

OUT AND ABOUT IN SHROPSHIRE

With Dusty and Keith



On the road and thoroughly enjoying their mission of laying ANZAC crosses are RAFA Sud Ouest France members Dusty Wells and Keith Daniels. Having now covered cemeteries in the county of Shropshire, the pair are now looking forward to ploughing on through Cheshire and Staffordshire.

Dusty has rung me several times during their outings, including a call when she was at the cemetery in Shrewsbury Cemetery to lay crosses for three RAAF aviators who were on the same crew when they died. Their Lancaster was on a training exercise and had taken off from RAF Brighton. Unfortunately, poor weather conditions on their approach for landing caused the airplane to crash. All seven crew died on 3 March 1943.



Sergeant 411312 Wireless Operator Ross Clive Graham - Age 28

HIS THE SACRIFICE, OURS THE PRIDE AND GLORY



Sergeant 401457 Bomb Aimer Edward Francis Murphy – Age 25



Sergeant 411890 Pilot Edgar Claude Fulton – Age 23

When Dusty called me from Shrewsbury that late afternoon, she was more than excited... "I was laying the cross and found this picture. We had a look at it but we've put it back in it's place" she said. Although we have no idea who the lady is in the picture... this most certainly is a picture of Australian Pilot Edgar Fulton.



Born in New South Wales in 1919, Edgar worked as a Junior Clerk in the Public Service sector but also studied physics at night school. He then undertook training in order to enter the RAAF when war arrived. Accepted in 1941, age 21, Edgar qualified as a pilot, completing his training in Calgary, Canada. On arrival in England, Edgar flew Wellingtons before converting to the Halifax and then the Lancaster. When he arrived at 460 Squadron, he only had four hours of solo night flying experience on the Lancaster. On the evening of 2 March, Edgar was the Captain of Lancaster W4864 that was carrying out an exercise. Due to a navigational error and bad weather, the Lancaster flew into a tree that was on top of a 300ft hill, exploding on impact. With the high turnover of crews due to losses in combat and training accidents, very inexperienced crews were pushed into learning 'on the job'.



Dusty and Keith have also been laying crosses in a number of cemeteries around Shropshire. They visited Oswestry Cemetery which Dusty explained when she called me... "This is the most beautiful cemetery I've ever visited".



Oswestry Cross of Remembrance



Picture credit to Helen Wong

RNZAF Pilot Officer Pilot 416423 Willie Lee – Aged 28

Willie Lee was born in the town of Dannevirke, New Zealand on 12 January 1914 but received his education in Canton, China. By the time he returned to New Zealand in 1938, aged 24, he was a qualified pilot. Until enlistment in December 1940, Willie worked on a fruit farm in Auckland. He undertook pilot training for the RNZAF and was awarded his Pilot officer badge on 13 June 1942. By 7 October, Willie was in England and posted to No.61 Operational Training Unit where he began flying Spitfires. Just five weeks later on 14 November whilst piloting a Spitfire, Willie crashed near the town of Ridley in Cheshire. He was 28 years old.

Although I don't think that Dusty and Keith actually did take a picnic on their cross-laying mission in Shropshire, I do know they thoroughly enjoyed catching up with a New Zealander and an Australian buried at Atcham St.Eata Churchyard.



Atcham St.Eata Church

Dusty and Keith laid the crosses for these two men who lie together. One Australian and One New Zealander. The only commonwealth war graves in the cemetery



RNZAF Sergeant 405421 Pilot Leslie George Raymond Donaldson – Aged 23



RAAF Sergeant 402962 Horace Albert Metcalf – Aged 24

And then to take a weight off their feet, Dusty and Keith sat on the bench beside the River Severn that edges onto the cemetery. With or without a picnic!!



THANKS DUSTY AND KEITH



Lest We Forget