

CROSS LAYING IN CUMBRIA



Having moved from Scotland where she laid ANZAC crosses in Leuchars, Mathilda is now living in the Lake District with her partner. Once more out and about for the charity, Mathilda and Freddie headed to Silloth Cemetery in Cumbria. This is their report.



On 22 August, Freddie and I took a lovely sunny drive to the Silloth Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Causewayhead, Cumbria. The local Royal Air Force Station was used by RAF Coastal Command at the start of WWII, opening in 1939 as a training base for Allied pilots. This cemetery was set aside for 61 aviators from around the world who served at RAF Silloth, or who lost their lives in crashes over the nearby Solway.

Commissioned by Cumberland Council, Cumbria Community Foundation, Silloth Airfield Project, and Tale Trails, this Commonwealth Graves site is part of the Cumbria Military Trail. It is dedicated to honouring those lost during WWII.



Freddie and I enjoyed a leisurely stroll around the cemetery and the local St. Paul's Churchyard, stopping to place crosses on behalf of ANZAC Remembrance CIO, for the 12 Royal New Zealand Airforce and Royal Australian Airforce aviators who are buried there.



In particular, we would like to commemorate the lives of two pilots who are buried in this plot, Pilot Officer Bruce Oswald Bown (Royal Australian Air Force, service number 413950), and Officer Owen Ernest Dudley Loudon (Royal New Zealand Air Force, service number NZ.427044).



RAAF PILOT OFFICER – 413950 BRUCE OSWALD BOWN

Born in Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia on October 27, 1912, Bown worked and lived in the Kew/Hawthorn area and was married to Winifred Moore Bown. He enlisted in the RAAF on 10 October 1941 in Melbourne, Australia and was sent to the United Kingdom to complete advanced crew training as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS).

Bruce trained as a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner rather than as a pilot and was posted to No.1 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit 1 (1 OAFY), operating out of RAF Station Wigton, in southwest Scotland. This unit specialised in training navigation and wireless officers in realistic, non-operational night environments before they were assigned to frontline bomber or patrol squadrons.

On the night of 01 January 1943, Bown was assigned as a crew member aboard an Avro Anson Mk I for a night navigation training flight. The twin-engine training aircraft

departed RAF Wigton into poor, limited-visibility weather, where the crew's last known wireless communication was logged at 1900 hours, likely by Bown himself. Unfortunately, the aircraft veered off course into heavy clouds and crashed into the snow-covered slopes of Mount Skiddaw, just north of Keswick, in the Lake District and only a 20-minute drive from where Freddie and I live.

Due to the remote, mountainous terrain and foul weather, the wreckage was not discovered until nearly a month later on 29 January 1943. All five crew members-comprising GAAF, RAF, and RCAF airmen perished instantly on impact. Bown was 30 years old and was buried alongside his fellow crewmates. His service is permanently commemorated in Panel 119 of the Commemorative Area at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. █



RNZAF PILOT - 427044 OWEN ERNEST DUDLEY LOUDEN

Born on 19 January 1924, in Hamilton, New Zealand, Owen Ernest Dudley Loudon was the son of John Frederick and Elsie Loudon and brother to Rona.

Working as an assistant draughtsman for Waikato EPB of Hamilton, Loudon enlisted with the RNZAF on 11 July 1942.

With 378 flying hours logged, Owen had trained out of RAF Annan, in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. On 27 December 1943, as pilot of a Hurricane, he undertook sector reconnaissance and dog fight training. Also training that day was 19-year-old RCAF Pilot Officer Stanley Franklin Cleworth from Toronto Canada.

After completing one successful dog fight training exercise, at about 1030 hours, the two pilots collided midair, upon which they both lost their lives.

Owen was 18 years old and is buried alongside Cleworth in Silloth Cemetery as an honoured New Zealand airman.

