

AIR CREW REMEMBERED



PILOT - SERGEANT 404393 VERNON CHARLES AKES - RAAF

Charles and Vera Akes were from Rosewood in Queensland. It was here in Rosewood that their only son Vernon was born on the 2nd June 1918. A keen rugby player when he attended Ipswich Grammar School in Queensland, Vernon went on to work with his father in the family plumbing business. With flying experience gained through the Queensland Aero club, Vernon enlisted on the 16th August 1940, aged 22 years and started pilot training at Lindfield before moving to the Service Flying Training School in Amberley. Vernon eventually embarked for the United Kingdom from Sydney on the 4th June 1941 where he was later assigned to no.20 Operational Training Unit at Lossiemouth where he trained on Wellington bombers.

Transferred to 15 Squadron, Vernon was the pilot of Short Stirling N6066 that took off with a total of eight crew from RAF Waterbeach in the afternoon of Christmas Eve 1941 on a training exercise. Just ten minutes after take off, the Stirling, flying low, struck a tree. Vernon initially survived the crash near Bedford but died shortly afterwards in the hospital. Five other members of the crew died from injuries but two survived. An enquiry into the crash concluded that Akes had not followed orders, was flying too low, rendering the aircraft uncontrollable and consequently struck a tree.

Pilot Sergeant 404393 Vernon Charles Akes was buried at Wyton (St.Margaret and All Saints) Churchyard in Cambridgeshire on the 1st January 1942. He was 23 years old. An ANZAC cross was laid to honour him by CWGC Volunteer, Stewart McGeoch.



IN LIFE UNDAUNTED, IN DEATH UNAFRAID



SERGEANT PILOT 40651 FRANCIS MERVYN MCCAFFRY - RNZAF

Francis was born in Petone, Wellington on the 14th May 1917 to James and Eliza who came from Bunnythorpe. As a young lad, Francis attended Palmerston North Boys High School where he enjoyed golf and swimming and also played for the First XV rugby. When Francis left school, he moved north to the town of Whanganui where he took up employment as a car salesman for Merewether Motor Company.

On the 13th February 1940, Francis enlisted at the Initial Training Wing in Levin where he commenced basic training before being transferred around the country for flying instruction. He received his flying badge on the 19th August 1940 and some six weeks later embarked for the United Kingdom on the 6th October. By the 8th March 1941, Francis was at the Coastal Operational Training Unit in Yorkshire before eventually being transferred in May 1941 to 236 Squadron at Carew Cheriton in Pembrokeshire. With 236 Coastal Command as the pilot of a Blenheim, he undertook 54 operational missions.

On the 23rd October, Francis was the pilot of Blenheim Z6301 escorting a convoy. On return to base and making his final approach, the Blenheim struck high ground near Hayes Farm. His Observer Sergeant Lamerton died alongside Francis but the Air Gunner Sergeant Buck survived.

Pilot Sergeant 40651 Francis Mervyn McCaffry was buried at Carew St. Mary New Churchyard, Pembrokeshire. He was 24 years old. An ANZAC cross was laid to honour him by RAFA member, Deric Brock.



ANDOVER CEMETERY

Thanks to the efforts of serving RAF officer Tim Thorogood, seven ANZAC crosses have recently been laid at Andover Cemetery in Hampshire on the graves of these aviators.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

Sergeant 417055 KENNETH WALTER DEACON Died 7th June 1943 aged 22



Kenneth was born on the 29th January 1921 to parents Walter and Florence Deacon of Mile End in Southern Australia. He attended Adelaide High School before leaving school and taking up work as a clerk. Kenneth enlisted with the RAAF on the 6th December 1941 before embarking to England. There he eventually joined No.15 Advanced Flying Unit training on Oxford aircraft. It was on 7th June 1943 whilst carrying out a solo training flight that Kenneth crashed on his return to base.

**Sergeant 402570 EDWARD WILLIAM DAVIES GRAHAM
Died 22nd September 1941 age 25**



**Sergeant 414282 ROY CHARLES MORGAN WEBSTER
Died 2nd March 1943 aged 29.**



ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE

Sergeant 403006 RONALD CRAWFORD HUNTER

Died 30th March 1942 age 22



Sergeant 421745 PETER ROBERT SHAW MILLER

Died 27 May 1943 age 22



Flying Officer 414383 ROBERT LESLIE EWERT

Died 8th December 1942 age 26



Flying Officer 413095 THOMAS JAMES ALBERT LONG

Died 8th October 1942 age 23



Thomas Long was born in Hastings in the Hawkes Bay area of New Zealand on the 19th April 1919 to Robert and Mary Long who hailed from Clive. He was educated at St. Joseph's Convent School in Hastings and enjoyed rugby and cricket. On leaving school he was employed in Gisborne building trucks. He enlisted on the 24th May 1941 to commence training and by September he had embarked to Canada. Arriving in the UK in March 1942, Thomas then completed training on Blenheim aircraft. On the 8th October 1942, Thomas and his colleague and fellow pilot were taking part in a routine exercise when their Blenheim L1140 saw the tailplane detach. The Blenheim crashed near Clatford and both pilots died.

NEWARK-UPON-TRENT CEMETERY

A big thank you to Mayor of Newark Barbara Corrigan for placing our ANZAC crosses on ANZAC day when they held a ceremony at their cemetery. There are four RAAF and three RNZAF aviators buried in the CWGC area. They are...

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

Flying Officer- Pilot 408968 ROY LESLIE CLARKE Died 1st September 1943 age 26

Sergeant 401508 HUGH HERBERT LLOYD Died 1st February 1943 age 29

Sergeant 14855 FRANK DUNKIN (DURKIN) Died 9th April 1943 age 21



Frank was born on the 26th July 1921. His parents were George and Henrietta Durkin from Armidale in New South Wales. Frank enlisted with the RAAF in April 1940 where he commenced training. Embarking to England for further training, Frank was at the Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Winthorpe. On the night of the 10th April 1943, together with seven other crew members, Frank was the Flight Engineer on board Lancaster ED823. The Lanc took off for a final night training exercise before being assigned to operations. Almost immediately after take off it appears that a fire that quickly spread, broke out on one of the engines. Attempting to find flat land,

the Lancaster evidently clipped trees and crashed near the village of Halam. All seven crew died including Frank's pilot...

Flight Sergeant Pilot 411919 LEONARD WENTWORTH LEAN- Age 22



ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE

Flight Sergeant 402874 JOHN BERNARD KENNEDY Died 13th February 1942 age 26

Flight Lieutenant 411861 JAMES COWAN

Died 12th March 1943 age 30



Sergeant 401801 DESMOND GEORGE BRADLEY Died 21st October 1941 age 22



Desmond was a Whanganui lad born on the 5th December 1918. His parents were from Waipukarau and they sent their son to be educated at the prestigious Wanganui Collegiate School where he excelled in sporting achievements including running and representing the College in the First XV rugby. Later working as a farmer, enlist in July 1940 for the RNZAF. Desmond trained on the Avro Anson before converting to the Handley Page Hampden. In July 1941 he took up his posting with 408 Squadron carrying out operational sorties into Europe. On the night of 21/22 October 41, returning from a raid against Bremen, his Hampden aircraft crashed at Coningsby, Lincolnshire.

Some individual photos credited to Auckland War Museum

THANK YOU TO ALL VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE CROSS LAYING PROJECT AND SENT PHOTGRAPHS – ALL NOW KEPT ON FILE