



THE WHEEL

NZ Ex-RAF APPRENTICES ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 16

FEBRUARY 2011

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Vice President Monty Firmin

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EDITORIAL

Another six months have gone by and I have to say that I have had very little correspondence or feedback from you, the members.

This issue contains a report on the Commemorative window plus two responses to articles in the last issue and details of the 2011 reunion from Sam West. My thanks to Sam as without his input this would be a very slim Newsletter but then perhaps that is how you like it!

Gus Smart 80th Editor

Obituary.

Laurie Lawless (68th Entry) passed away peacefully on the 10th June. His family reported that in the usual Laurie style, he put up quite a fight until the end. Thankfully, he is now at peace and no longer suffering.

We extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family and friends.

Runneymede Memorial Commemoration

Further to the article published in the last issue Sam West has provided the following comment.

“During my last visit to Sydney I met up with Dutch Holland again and over a

few beers we spent time remembering our time as Brats. To us although the actual service was solemn

and serious, we remembered more the build up at RAF Uxbridge where we were based for a week of drill to prepare us for the occasion. Apart from us and other Commonwealth Apprentice groups, there were also Australian and Canadian parties. Despite several full parades there was only one in which we three groups attended. If we and the Canadians were there then the Australians were in Uxbridge shopping???

Also during our stay there the Kiwis instead of using the main gate and Guardroom to exit or enter Base we had found a rear gate watched over by Provosts. Since we had our issue raincoats and most had leather gloves and some white scarves, they assumed we were Officers and would give us a suitable salute to which we would kind of wave back. They finally cottoned on and we were forced to use the main Guardroom to check in and out.

Final memory was that of leaving Runneymede. The exits were grid-locked with traffic and Dutch and I had the memory of Bill Howell hanging out of the coach door shouting to the points men that we had an aircraft

waiting for us at Heathrow and could they expedite us through. It certainly worked

as we cleared the area quite quickly.

Sam West 68th

2011 Reunion New Plymouth 25th-27th March

An update from Sam West is at Page 7 of this Newsletter. The program looks pretty good to me and I don't see the need to worry about the Friday night. From my experience with you lot, as long as there is a bar then all's well. I note the Autolodge has a very comfortable looking bar and it is on Devon Street where I also note there are a lot of restaurants and fast food joints so I don't see a problem Sam.

There is still time for those out there that are procrastinating about whether to attend or not to get on board so come on, bite the bullet, and give it a go. I have deliberately bought this issue of the Newsletter forward a bit in the hope that we may get a few more to attend. *Editor*

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Further to the RNZAF Austers

The Austers were purchased by the RNZAF in 1947 as six J/5 Auster Airframes at \$2400 each. Only the airframes were acquired as there was a surplus of Gypsy Major engines available in New Zealand at the time. The first assembled was NZ1701 during Nov 1947 at Ohakea and by Oct 1948 five had been assembled there.

First allocations to Units were as follows:

Group Flight Ohakea	3 aircraft	NZ1703, NZ1704 Nz1705
Communications Flight Rongotai	2 aircraft	NZ1701, NZ1702
Unassembled at Ohakea	1 aircraft	NZ1706

These aircraft were used for Forestry Fire Patrol, Communications and training Army Officers for Air Observation Duties. Later some were fitted with floats for training prospective Flying Boat Pilots, Another Auster C4 NZ1707 was a converted T7 and was a reserve aircraft for the British Antarctic Expedition. Together with a DHC 2 Mk1 Beaver (NZ 6001) they it made up the RNZAF Antarctic Flight.

“At right is a picture of NZ 1701 in flight as a floatplane. This was after Auster Aircraft Ltd carried out floatplane trials in North Wales in February 1951. The then CAS, AVM Carnegie (an ex-RAF flying boat test pilot) carried out the Test Flight on NZ1710. It was allotted to Number 6 Maritime Sqn at Hobsonville in May 1952. NZ1705 and NZ1706 also wore floats at later dates”.....*Editor*



Sam continues....My association with the Austers was with my posting to No 3 Sqn at Hobsonville. The Light Aircraft Flight No 3 Battlefield Support Squadron was made up of a Harvard NZ1013, Austers NZ1702 and NZ1704 and Sioux 47G Helicopters as required. I worked with the flight quite often when I was not with HMNZS Waikato at sea. The Austers were good to work with and had few vices as I remember. The most memorable instance with them was during an exercise south of Auckland with NZ1704 and a Sioux Helicopter. We had despatched the Auster with an Army pilot and were waiting its return when we heard on National Radio that it had crashed. The pilot rang Papakura to inform them of the accident but we were told that the girl on the exchange refused the call as she had no authority to accept a Collect call. During the recovery the Airframe was further damaged and then written off.

My information regarding the disposal of the Austers is:

NZ1701 Sold by tender 27 Feb 1956 to Piako Aero Club as ZK- BQL.

NZ1702 Sold by tender 1969 to J F Crandle and Partners, Ardmore 1970.

NZ1703 Crashed in Bush Eyre River Oxford 20 Aug 1959. Written off.

NZ1704 Badly damaged at Maugatawhiri on 4 Dec 1968. Written off but later sold by tender.

NZ1705 Sold by tender 1956 to Gordon Greig (Australia). Sold on to Macquarie Air as VH-ADS and Fitted with floats (ex NZ1701)

NZ1706 Sold by tender 1954 badly damaged Papakura 5 Dec 1953 and became ZK-BGT

NZ1710 Crashed Kaipera harbour 22Aug 1966. Presented to MOTAT Auckland for restoration and display. It is now at the RNZAF Museum Wigram.

Information taken from NAPA F RNZAF Aircraft Colour Schemes Vol.1 by Warren P.Russell.

Sam West 68th

Commemorative Window Done & Dusted



W/C G. Gowthorpe AIRCDR G. Howse S/L Lorena Thomas W/C Ian MacPherson

Above is the NZ party headed by DCAF, Air Commodore Gavin Howse who represented us and the RNZAF at the Dedication Ceremony for our window in St Georges Chapel at RAF Halton. The service was held on Thursday 16th November 2011 in conjunction with the Annual Halton Remembrance Service. I hope I have the names, ranks etc correct as spelling of some of them varied in the various sources I gleaned them from and despite a request for confirmation from Air Staff none was forthcoming. From all reports the day was clear and sunny but very cold and the event went off very well. On the following pages there a few extracts from the Order of Service plus a photograph of DCAF delivering a speech on behalf of the NZ Ex-RAF Aircraft Apprentices Association. A copy of the speech that I prepared also follows but I cannot guarantee that it is exactly what was delivered as there was strong pressure (from the Museum I think) to turn it into a politically correct “aren’t we so good” event. After many attempts from me I finally got a verbal undertaking from Lorena Thomas, the day before she left for the UK, that DCAF would deliver our speech as submitted. From reports received the speech, whatever it said, went down well. I have also requested a copy of the actual speech but it has been ignored so far. As I say in the heading above, it’s ‘Done & Dusted’ now so I’m not too bothered any more. Very big thanks to Ian Cochrane who provided the email from which I extracted the following picture and extracts from the “Order of Service”. I understand that Lorena Thomas is submitting an article for the next RNZAF News so keep your eyes peeled. I have requested a copy, but I won’t hold my breath.

Hymn

O Valiant hearts, who to your glory came
through dust of conflict and through battle flame;
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
your memory hallowed in the land you loved.

Long years ago, as earth lay dark and still,
rose a loud cry upon a lonely hill,
while in the frailty of our human clay
Christ, our redeemer, passed the self-same way.

Still stands his Cross from that dread hour to this,
like some bright star above the dark abyss;
still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes
look down to bless our lesser Calvaries.

These were his servants, in his steps they trod,
following through death the martyred Son of God:
Victor he rose; victorious too shall rise
they who have drunk his cup of sacrifice.

O risen Lord, O Shepherd of our dead, whose
Cross has bought them and whose staff has led,
In his glorious hope their proud and sorrowing
land commits her children to thy gracious hand.



RNZAF Apprentices on the occasion of the 71st Entry Graduation being greeted at the Finlay Gym RAF Halton by the NZ High Commissioner Mr H E Clifton-Webb April 1955.



FS A A Thompson with fellow NZ Brats (not in order) Annan, Blewett, Cochrane, Stormont, Bell-Syer



ORDER OF SERVICE

Introduction and Welcome

Chaplain: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Chaplain: The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Collect

Chaplain: Maker of all, you have created the heavens and the earth and made us in your own image: may we discern your hand in all your works and serve you with reverence and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns supreme over all things now and forever.

All: Amen.

The Speech!

The brief from the HAAA was: “A short talk, 10 minutes max, about the NZ brats. Why they came, what they achieved, their sports, attainments, crimes, where they went and what they achieved on their return. What they thought of Halton”.

New Zealand & the Royal Air Force Apprentice Scheme

The first New Zealander to become a ‘Trenchard Brat’ is believed to have been Fredrick Cramp who entered Halton in August 1929. He was followed by at least 16 others during the 1930’s. At this time, which was before the RNZAF was formed, there was an annual quota of 12 apprentices from NZ. This was never achieved because of the lack of funds or the inability to meet the medical or educational requirements. Entrants not only had to pay their own fares but also in some cases were required to meet the course fees. These youths went on to serve with the RAF and some were posted to the RNZAF during WW 11 and subsequently transferred.

Following the war the RNZAF approached the 1950’s with a view to modernising its aircraft. This called for a higher degree of skill and specialist knowledge. To help meet this need, from 1951 to 1958 it sponsored especially selected young men between the ages of 16 and 17 for the Royal Air Force Apprentice training scheme. The successful applicants were inducted into the RNZAF and after a short period of basic training set sail for the United Kingdom to arrive in time to start training with the summer entry which commenced in early May each year.

The first such entry was the 68th. 12 young men attended No 1 School of Technical Training here at Halton and a further 2 went to No 6 Radio School at Cranwell. They subsequently transferred to Locking in December 1952 when the Radio School relocated there. In all, 67 young men were selected for training with the 68th, 71st, 74th, 77th, 80th, 83rd, 86th and 89th entries. 50 of them attended Halton and the remaining 17 went to Locking. Two apprentices did not complete training and were returned to NZ. One for a medical problem and the other for disciplinary reasons. The rest all graduated, with many filling the top academic positions in their entry. A number of Cranwell and Henlow cadetships were awarded and three ex Halton Apprentices from NZ subsequently graduated from Cranwell with the ‘Sword of Honour’. Because of financial constraints the RNZAF was unable to take up a number of the cadetships and those recipients were offered the choice of transferring to the RAF, taking aircrew training with the RNZAF, or, in the case of the Henlow cadetships, continuing to serve their original contracts. Of the three Cranwell cadetships taken up by the RNZAF (in 1954, 1955 and 1959) two were brothers, one of whom went on to achieve Air Vice Marshall rank in the RNZAF. Tragically his younger brother was killed in an aircraft accident.

The NZ trainees were very active in the sporting and cultural activities of the Station with some representing both Halton and Group. Many of the apprentices went on to serve full careers in the RNZAF with over 50% being commissioned in the General Duties, Engineer or Education Branches. A number just served out their initial 12 year engagement and went on to have successful careers in Civvy Street.

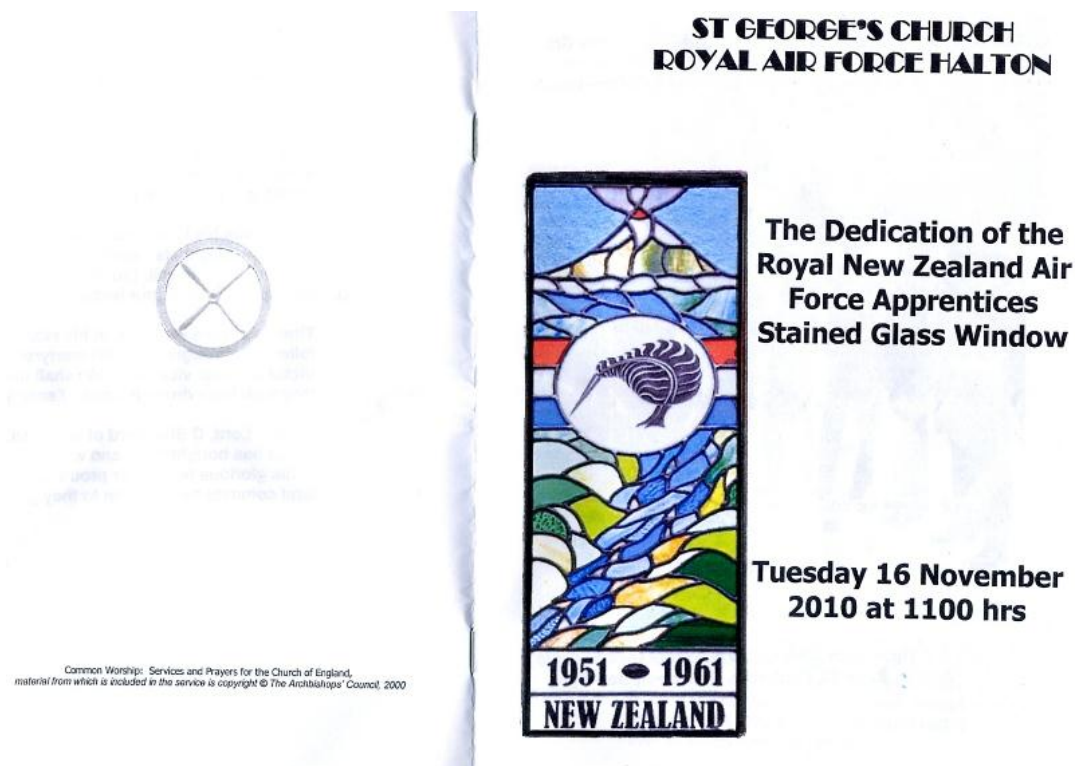
The Kiwi apprentices had some difficulty in accepting the Public School type ‘Bulling’ regime which was part of the Halton culture and was particularly strong during the early fifties. Fortunately the authorities made an earnest attempt in the mid fifties to stamp out the excesses by breaking up entries and mixing them throughout the three Wings. Generally the Kiwis managed to distance themselves from the excesses and the senior members tended to look after the new arrivals. As with any group of apprentices there were those who pushed the boundaries and the Kiwis had their share of cars and motorcycles squirreled away in local farmers barns.

One notorious member of the 74th entry vied strongly amongst his peers to accumulate the record for jankers. His pranks and misdemeanours were many. One notable effort was when he stole the brass door handles from the Henderson Barracks Guardhouse from under the eyes of the ‘Snoops’ while attending a jankers parade. Needless to say the ‘Snoops’ had a very good idea who the perpetrator was when they found they couldn’t enter the Guardhouse after the parade was dismissed.

The 80th entry was the first to be allowed to hold their pass out dinner off Station. Some 6 members, including 2 Kiwis and a Rhodesian thought it would be a good idea to liberate the Dinner Gong from the Officer's Mess for the occasion. Unfortunately it was away undergoing repairs after the junior officers had damaged it by using it as a toboggan on the Mess stairs. The raiding party, determined not to leave empty handed, made an on the spot decision that Lord Trenchard's Bust, which reposed splendidly on the staircase landing, would look good on the top table for their dinner. After all they had 'voluntarily' donated a shilling each, from their seven shillings and sixpence a week pay, towards the cost of the Bust so considered they did have some minor claim to ownership! It is believed that the presence of the three 'Colonials' who of course did not appreciate the gravity of their offence, saved the groups bacon.

There is an Ex NZ-RAF Aircraft Apprentices Association in NZ and it came to their attention during 2009 that NZ was one of the few countries associated with the Scheme that was not represented by a window in St Georges Chapel. It was decided to rectify the oversight and the window being dedicated today has been provided by the NZ Association. A number of Ex RAF members also contributed to this window. It depicts an active volcano above mist shrouded foothills from which a river flows under a stylised kiwi and red, white, and blue flashes representing the RNZAF. The river continues flowing through the verdant rolling hills and plains to the sea. The rugby football (separating the years that New Zealand apprentices trained at Halton and Locking) is self explanatory.

Unlike the majority of the other windows in this Chapel our window is in a contemporary style and it was the intention that it would stand out and immediately be identified as being from New Zealand. We believe that this has been achieved.



(Above) Cover of Dedication Order of Service

Footnote:

I discussed the above speech notes with Monty and we both thought it covered the brief provided by the RAFHAA. We both agreed that it was an occasion for a personal message from the RNZAF Brats to the RAF Brats and not an RNZAF to RAF event as such. We think the RNZAF speech writer had a little difficulty appreciating this point. Anyway it is over and done with now and I am sure that whatever was said would have been most appropriate.

Editor

NZ Ex-RAF Apprentice Association 2011 Reunion Update

New Plymouth March 25th-27th

Sam West has advised as follows:

Progress is good for the weekend with the dinner booked at Cobb & Co. They provide a wider and better priced menu for the evening. We have a separate room booked for the evening.

The coach trip for the Saturday is set with costs as follow:

Coach approx \$15 per head.

<u>Tawhiti Museum</u>	Museum	\$10	{ Note: You only need to see
	Railway	\$5	{ the parts you want to.
	Traders & Whalers	\$10	{ A café is no site.

Internet address is (Tawhiti museum Hawera)

The Friday night get together is a little fluid as the RSA is still not operating. Depending on what is wanted I will have a van if required. This can be decided on the night if need be.

Confirmed Bookings are:

Graham Eves	2
Derrick Hubbard	2
Don Gray	2
Ian Martin	2
Monty Firmin	2
Bryon Beames	1
Jim Butler	1
Curly Francis	2
Gus Smart	2
Kevin Mangnall	2
Roly Oliver	2
Peter Cornelius	2
Ed Austin	1
Bill Cowham	1
Bill Howell	2
David Sykes	2
Don Lamason	1
Bill Mattock	1
Maurice Raven	2

I look forward to seeing you all here in New Plymouth and hope you all have an extremely good time here. After all this is what Reunions are all about.

Sam West (68th Entry)