

TRAGEDY IN THE SKIES OVER SECKFORD HALL.

NZ/391841 Flying Officer George Montgomerie Marshall was a 23 year old Hurricane pilot from Wellington, New Zealand.

He was serving with 258 Squadron based at Martlesham Heath and was killed on 30th July 1941 when his Hurricane IIB Z.3256 crashed at Seckford Hall near Woodbridge after suffering engine failure. He had achieved 410 hours flying as a service pilot and was on his 96th sortie.

Martlesham Heath Aviation Society were recently approached by an employee at Seckford Hall who had heard that a Martlesham aircraft had crashed in the grounds during the Second World War.. This has prompted us to look further into the tragic incident and maybe persuade the owners of Seckford Hall, now a hotel and restaurant with a golf course, to put a plaque up in the memory of this young man.

The following is an extract from "For Your Tomorrow", a record by Errol W Martyn of New Zealanders who have died serving with the RNZAF and Allied Air Services.

"He was born at Marton 5th July 1918; Wanganui Collegiate (1st XV); farmer - father's farm. Greenbank, Marton.

NZ Army/Territorial Force, (4th Waikato Mounted Rifles), Royal new Zealand Air Force Civil Reserve Pilot Wanganui Aero Club mid-1939, flew 20 hours prior to RNZAF);RNZAF Levin Gunnery Training School as Airman Pilot u/t 18 Dec 39, 2EFTS 15 Jan 1940, 2 FTS 8 Apr 1940, Pilots Badge (wef 10.6.1940) and Commissioned 27 July 1940 attached to RAF and embarked for UK 11 August 1940, 1 Depot 30 September 1940, 7 Operational Training Unit (OTU) - re designated 57 OTU 1st November 1940 (Spitfire) 18 October 1940.

Flew in 258 Squadron (Hurricane), 97 operations from 7th January 1941.

Killed on Operations 30 July 1941.

Buried Ipswich Cemetery plot XH436C Suffolk, England

Son of George Leheup and Helen Margaret Marshall (nee Anderson), Greenbank, Marton, New Zealand.

According to our archivist, Alan Smith he reported aileron trouble immediately he was airborne.

I emailed George Marshall's old school, Wanganui Collegiate and received a prompt reply from Richard Bourne who is the chairman of Wanganui Collegiate School Museum Trust.

Richard tells me that the school certainly remembers George Marshall and indeed one of the display cabinet's in the school museum is the "Marshall Memorial Cabinet."

The cabinet was donated by his brother John, in memory of George and his brother, Hugh who was also killed in WW2.

How tragic that young men from the far corners of the then British Empire left their peaceful countries to fight our European wars. That one family in a peaceful village in North Island New Zealand should have sacrificed two sons. Tragic indeed.

All this was more than seventy years ago and back then Britain was frequently referred to as "home" by Kiwis and Aussies alike. After all, a treaty between the indigenous Maori's and the British was only signed 100 years before WW2 and I guess most people who had emigrated from Britain had probably been in New Zealand for less time than has elapsed between WW2 and the present day.

Richard Bourne has sent a couple of photos of George Marshall. One as a prefect at Wanganui Collegiate School and one in his RAF pilot's uniform.

Alan Powell - from information supplied by Alan Smith.