

Riccarton
Branch

New Zealand Society of Genealogists

NEWSLETTER



September 2019
Vol. 34 No. 8

NEXT MEETING

7.30pm on Wednesday 11 September 2019

This month we are once again holding our popular annual

MEMBERS NIGHT

This year the subject is

FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

Come along to tell us your heirloom stories or to hear other members tell their stories.

PAPERS PAST UPDATE

- The *Ashburton Guardian* has been extended from 1922 to 1950 (it begins in 1879)
- The *Wairarapa Daily Times* has been extended from 1920 to 1938 (it begins in 1879)
- *Industrial Unionist* 19 issues, Feb-Dec 1913 (paper of the NZ Branch of Industrial Workers of the World)
- 4 new titles under the heading "Magazines and Journals" are: *White Ribbon* 1895-1960 (WCTU magazine); *NZ Police Gazette* 1877-1945; *Canterbury Police Gazette* 1863-1877; *Otago Police Gazette* 1861-1877.

Meetings: 7.30pm on the second Wednesday of each month (Feb to Nov) at the Upper Riccarton Library, 71 Main South Road. Visitors are welcome.

Postal Address: Riccarton Branch NZSG, Secretary, 4 Ashtead Lane, Sockburn, Christchurch 8042
E-mail: riccartongenealogy@hotmail.com

Riccarton Branch Committee:

Convenor: Lance Kenyon 027 848 3112

Treasurer: Anne Davison 321 7338

Committee: Judith Pay 322 6367

Win Loach 338 4316

Kathy Hill 322 6183

David Lees 3499 431

Peter Hentschel 351 5638

Alan Tunnicliffe 358 4838

Barrie Greenwood 341 2122

Bill Schoch 347 4202

Secretary: Kate Trotter 343 4501

Magazine Circulation: Win Loach 338 4316

Librarian: Kathy Hill: 322 6183

www.librarything.com/catalog/riccartonnzsg

Financial Reviewer: Keith Sharp

Archivist: Jan Sharp 351 5951

Editor: Alan Tunnicliffe alant@snap.net.nz

Members Interests: Peter Hentschel

Projects Officer: Bill Schoch

Programme Organiser: Alan Tunnicliffe

FROM THE CONVENOR'S DESK

As I write this, I have just returned from Ōnuku Marae on Banks Peninsula after two days of a Te Reo course. The serenity and peace of the bay and the group of passionate learners reminded me of our group of passionate genealogists and what you can achieve as a like minded group. Your own experiences, knowledge and family histories may be able to help someone else in our group, or as in Anne's case, a complete stranger who turns up to the library for assistance in connecting with their past, whakapapa or family history in other parts of the world. Please share your combined knowledge from your own genealogy journeys, wherever you can for our new or older group members. That brings me to this month's topic and sharing of your own heritage - Heirlooms. Even if you haven't sent through any photos or details, please don't feel like you can't contribute. Just let me or Alan know before the meeting. This is one of our great nights of the year and the passion, knowledge and sharing of your own journeys is both inspirational and can provide other practical ways of researching our ancestors. As always good luck with your search for the elusive photo, name or information that brings together your stories. I look forward to catching up.

Noho ora mai - Hei te Rāapa.

Lance

REPORT OF AUGUST MEETING

The topic was once again DNA test results. Kathy Hill spoke about her experiences with Gedmatch; Judith Pay told us about what she has found out by testing with AncestryDNA; Alan Tunnicliffe, who had tested only in February this year, shared what he had found out by uploading his AncestryDNA results to four other databases: Gedmatch, FamilyTree DNA, My Heritage DNA and Living DNA. He has nearly 50,000 DNA matches from Ancestry and a further 21,000 from the other databases. He was pleased that his traditional paper-based genealogy research has been confirmed and is now hoping to break down some brickwalls.

LIBRARY NEWS

Books currently borrowed

February 2018:

The Press: first with the news

March 2019:

UK4 Basic Sources for Family History

July 2019:

RES24 Guide to Genetic Testing

NZ127 Skippers

NZ274 Settlers in Canterbury

Issued in August 2019:

RES25 How Our Ancestors Died

UK49 Tracing Your Pre-Victorian Ancestors

RES 12 Penguin Dictionary of Surnames

RES 24 FT Guide to DNA Testing

I am experimenting with buying books on Trade Me. The first success was with a recommendation from Lance to purchase "Tales of 3 Campaigns" a record of some campaigns in WW1. Currently I am waiting for it to arrive in my mailbox. It could have cost me \$US112 plus postage from Abe Booksellers, but I got it for \$NZ29.92 plus postage from a bookseller in Lyttelton. Three cheers for Trade Me. Lance assures me it is a very good resource. I have also bought a small history of Christchurch Girls High School, and have bids on a couple of other school history books. Some histories available contain complete school registers. Please let me know if there is any school you are particularly interested in.

The books are continuing to be borrowed but I would like to see even more going out each month, so please take a little time at the meetings to check out the library book table.

Cheers,

Kathy Hill

WORLD WAR TWO ANNIVERSARY: PART 7

by Judith Pay (on behalf of Ken Mulvey)

Alfred (Alf) Thompson, Part 1

I grew up in awe of my older cousin Alf Thompson who served in the RAF in WW11 as an air bomber and was shot down and killed on 23 June 1943 which was also my 4th birthday. We had been evacuated to Carlisle from Liverpool because of the intense bombing of the ship yards and I vaguely remember Alf coming to visit us while he was on leave, resplendent in his RAF uniform. I was told that Alf had sacrificed himself trying to free his best friend Colin McNair who was the pilot when their plane was shot down after a sortie over Germany. Three of the crew managed to parachute out of the damaged plane but four crew died when the plane crashed.

I was reading a *Family Tree* magazine and noticed how much information is now available about both world Wars so I thought I would try to find out if our family "story" about Alf's heroism was true.

I started out by looking for any descendants of Alf's siblings that might have trees on Ancestry without any luck. Then I found a web page called Air Crew Remembered.org that gave me the list of the crew that served with Alf. The name Smy was the most unusual and led me to a person in England that had posted the Smy family-tree on Ancestry.co.uk. Fortunately for me he was willing to correspond with me and even better was able to access The Forces records and a lot of valuable information which has enabled me to follow Alf's journey in the RAF.

Alfred Thompson was born in Carlisle, England in March 1920, the second son of Alfred Thompson Sr and Elizabeth, née Mulvey. In the 1939 Register Alf was living with his family at 66 Sybil Street, Carlisle and would have been 19 years old.

Just when he enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserves or trained is unknown at this stage but by 1943 he was in 90 Squadron flying Stirling aircraft out of Wrating Common, Cambridge, Suffolk.

From Wikipedia I discovered 90 Squadron was reformed on 7 November 1942 as a night bomber squadron, part of No.3 (Bomber) group at RAF Bottesford.. It was equipped with its first Stirling on 1 December and moved to RAF Ridgewell on 29 December 1942. The months following saw the improved version Stirling Mk111 introduced and moved to RAF Wrating Common on 31 May 1943.

As a 3 flight unit, the squadron was capable of providing 24 aircraft to the Groups Operational Battle Order with a further 6 aircraft held in reserves and a total of 33 crews. The unit's reserves were thrown into the Battle of Ruhr and sent to many of the German targets that were heavily defended including Berlin.

The Battle of the Ruhr of 1943 was a 5-month British campaign of strategic bombing against the Ruhr Area in Nazi Germany, which had coke plants, steelworks and synthetic oil plants. The Campaign bombed 26 major Bomber Offensive targets including Essen and Dusseldorf. 90 Squadron suffered considerable losses over an eight-month period. The Stirlings suffered from deficiencies in design and had to fly at lower altitudes to meet Air Ministry Specifications.

After suffering heavy losses their operations were restricted to Special Duties such as dropping sea mines and dropping supplies to the French Resistance. To attack the valuable industrial targets in the Ruhr, only the de Havilland Mosquitos of the Pathfinder Squadron flew high enough to be visible to the ground stations. Such operations began in 1942 when Mosquitos using the new Oboe navigation system were used to mark the targets for the heavy bombers which came in behind them.

My informant sent me a copy of the records of the following 3 raids by Squadron 90:

1. "Detail of work carried out by Crew BK 665 No.90 Squadron on the night 11/12 June 1943."

Pilot PC McNair, Navigator JS Porter, Air Bomber A Thompson, Wireless Operator FA Hamer, Mid Gunner DC Davids, Rear Gunner BT Smy and Flight Engineer GW Lawson.

"Attacked Dusseldorf as ordered at 01.5hrs dropping 1x20000hc. 2x500MC.40x30,689x4+21x4'x' (presumably bombs) from 11,000ft. Smoke and haze below. Tonight's target identified by Reds and green T.I's seen. Reds and greens seen from 01.40 to 01.55hr. Red in sights. Good red flares in fairly wide area. I package of G.33 dropped in Dusseldorf area. One photo taken, Route as ordered."

2. "Detail of work carried out by BK 665 No.90 Squadron on the night of 21/22 June 1943."

Attacked Krenfeld at 01.52hrs from 12,000ft. Weather was good. Red markers identified and bombs 01.51hrs. Wide spread fires of good intensity mostly north of markers. 1 package of G24 dropped Krenfeld area. One photo attempted. Route as ordered.

3. From the "Summary of Operations carried out against Mulheim on the night of 22/23 June 1943"

Crew BK665 left at 23.18hrs. Carried 88x30lb incendiary and 95x4lb incendiary.

Details from the Bomber Command show that 557 aircraft took part in the raid on Mulheim including 93 Stirlings. 35 Aircraft were lost, including 11 Stirlings (one of which was BK665).

Postwar British Bombing Survey Unit estimated the raid on the night 22/23 June 1943 destroyed 64% of Mulheim.

Crew BK665:

Killed:

1 Pilot CP McNair aged 22

2 Air Bomber A Thompson aged 22

3 Navigator JS Porter aged 22

4 Flight Engineer GW Lawson aged

Survived, but were POW's:

1 Wireless Operator FA Hamer

2 Mid Gunner DC Davids

3 Rear Gunner BT Smy

From the war records I know the men that parachuted to safety were captured at Kehrum which is north-west of the night's target Mulheim which suggests they had dropped their bombs and were on their way home when they were shot down. Also the fact that the three who survived were positioned in the middle to the rear of the plane suggests the plane was damaged in the forward part.

Those killed are buried in the Rheinberg War Cemetery.

From the Aviation Safety *Network* records BK665 was shot down by night-fighter pilot Hauptmann Heinrich Wohlers of the Stab IV/NJG 4 (detached to 3/NJG 1), flying a Bf 110 from Venlo airfield, the Netherlands.

Maybe my family "story" is true. It is very possible that the pilot was injured and Alf being in the bottom of the plane did try to free his friend? I'll never know for sure but I like to think of him as my hero and to marvel at the fact that these young men who were flying these planes were only aged 22.



Stirling MkIII