

NZ42830 Warrant Officer Thomas Frederick Annear

Tom Annear started school aged 4½ and was attending high school at the age of 11, where he became involved in athletics. As a junior (under the age of 18) he was the ½ mile junior champion for Hawke Bay and Poverty Bay, and won one 2nd and two 3rd places at the New Zealand Junior Championships. He never raced as a senior as the war intervened. Tom joined the Post office as a junior at the age of 14, being the most highly educated candidate, and was promoted on his 15th birthday, thus joining the permanent staff. He returned to the Post Office after the war, but switched to administration, forging a good career and spending the last 6 years as Deputy District Commander for the Waikato King Country districts, an area 165 miles long and up to 80 miles wide in many parts. When Tom turned 55, his allowed 40-year service came to an end and he was compulsorily retired. During the war years, military service was credited and the Government paid all superannuation dues and preserved all annual leave for use on return to New Zealand. After leaving the Post Office, Tom spent 5 years working for a food warehouse before deciding to retire. A few months later, the bank of New South Wales asked him to work for three months during the winter, resulting in his staying for 18 months, before finally retiring to spend 20 years with his wife Kath.

"My service with the RNZAF would not have been much different to the experiences of those thousands of others who enjoyed a desire to fly, the anticipated adventures and the enthusiasm with which they set out.

I endeavoured to join the Air Force as soon as war broke out hoping to get into aircrew as a wireless operator or navigator. Being a qualified telegraphist with the Post Office I thought these attributes would help me. For some reason my application was returned to my local Postmaster - I presumed to verify my qualifications but I never found out the answer to that. Being only 18 and not having my parents approval I got a severe dressing down, the application torn up in front of me with the advice that my parents would be suitably informed. I doubt they ever were as they lived 45 miles away but my father did refuse to assist me and I eventually ended up in the Waikato.

In 1940 the New Zealand Government introduced a ballot system for those of 18 years and over to undergo territorial military training for an initial period of 3 months in camp, followed by periodical weekend training and a further 2 weeks in camp twice a year. I drew a marble in the first ballot and was placed in the artillery - 7th Medium Battery, Claudelands Showground's Hamilton. We had one 6-inch Howitzer and four 4-inch field guns, naturally all of First World War vintage.

I seized this opportunity to appeal to my father using the argument that I was in the army and going anyway, so why not let me have a try to do what I really wanted to do. Eventually he relented and I endeavoured to see what I could do to speed things up.

My application for training as a pilot was accepted and I was assigned to go through the educational test. I finished the course well ahead of schedule but to no avail, I still had to wait my turn to sit the examination. I passed the examination and on going through old papers was surprised to find the result - passed with credit 89%.

Now I had to wait, but got impatient and at the end January 1942 I rang Air Headquarters and said I was out of a job and no one would employ me as I was awaiting call up. I was in Whenuapai a week later as a general hand.

The circumstances that terminated my flying activities occurred on 29th October 1944 near Estaires in Northern France.

We were well on our way up to the Breskens area and were flying at 1000 feet when my engine stopped without any warning and I was compelled to put the aircraft down. With so little time I selected what looked like a ploughed field and went into land wheels up.

I got the aircraft down well and had lost a lot of speed when I struck a soft patch, which caused the aircraft to nose over and I was underneath. It was on a farm with a sealed well-used road alongside. The people on the farm came to my aid and I will always remember them saying "il est mort" - no doubt they were surprised when I contradicted that, I was able to tell them to go round to the other side where the emergency panel was and they removed this, I had managed to free myself from my harness and also pulled my parachute out of the seat to be in front of me which gave me more room. I pushed my parachute out then crawled out myself. They took me up to the farmhouse for a wash and a hot drink.

At the time a British Army Captain was going down the road and saw the latter stages of the incident so he also came over and eventually took me back to my base at Merville Airfield. I have always regretted that at the time I never asked the name of my helpers.

Although I had walked away from the plane, the squadron doctor refused to let me fly on the next sortie as after what I had done he desired a full check out. I was taken to 55 Mobile Field Hospital in Lens, which was a French hospital the forces had taken over. The general staff were mainly French though doctors, sisters etc were all English. A few hours later I felt the consequences or lack of feeling and x-rays revealed I had in fact suffered a compression fracture to my vertebrae. I was put in a full body plaster, which I wore for 4 months. I was flown back to England on 11th November and a decision was made to send me home. I left England on 23rd December 1944 for Egypt where I was placed in the New Zealand Army hospital at Helwan. I eventually had my plaster removed in Cairo and my first wish was for a decent bath. I had this but then could not get out of the bath, no support from the plaster and hot water had sapped my strength, and also I had locked the door. I removed the plug with my toes and 3/4 of an hour later when I had cooled somewhat I managed to get into a crawling position and got out of the bath. After 2 weeks I resumed my journey homeward, first to Kasfaret then back to New Zealand, after a stop over in Melbourne, arriving in New Zealand on 21-4-1 945. My arrival was not specifically advised and I rang my wife at her work place to tell her I was home. Even this was after further medical examination after disembarkation."

Service History for NZ42830 Warrant Officer Thomas Frederick Annear

Army

23rd October 1940 - 6th June 1941

7th Medium Battery Claudelands Showground's, Hamilton, New Zealand

Royal New Zealand Air Force

Medical 2nd July 1941

Commenced Pre-entry Educational Test

Passed Test with Credit November 1941 89%

4th February 1942

Entered Royal New Zealand Air Force

4th February 1942 - 1st May 1942

No.1 **G.R.** Squadron, Whenuapai, New Zealand. Maintenance Hand

2nd May 1942 - 18th July 1942

Initial Training Wing, Rotorua, New Zealand. Ground Training

24th July 1942 - 16th October 1942

No.3 Elementary Flying Training School, Harewood, New Zealand
De Havilland Tiger Moth.

16th October 1942 - 4th March 1943

Course No.32B. No.2 Service Flying Training School, Woodbourne,
New Zealand. North American Harvard.

6th April 1943

Embarked on U.S.S. Wharton to San Diego - San Francisco, North America
By rail from San Francisco - Vancouver - Moncton

30th April - 28th May 1943

No.3 Personnel Despatch Centre. Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

28th May 1943

Embarked on Louis Pasteur (French) for Liverpool, England

5th June 1943 - 27th July 1943

No.12 Personnel Reception Centre. Brighton, England

27th July 1943 - 27th December 1943

No.17 **Pilots** Advanced Flying Unit. Calveley, Cheshire, England
Miles Master

27th December 1943 - 20th January 1944

No.59 Operational Training Unit. Milfield, Berwick-on-Tweed, ?
Hawker Hurricane.

24th January 1944 - 20th March 1944

Course No.59. No.57 Operational Training Unit. Eshott, Northumberland,
England. Supermarine Spitfire

21st March 1944 - 18th April 1944

No.57 Operational Training Unit. Boulmer, Northumberland, England
Supermarine Spitfire

2nd May 1944 - 6th June 1944

No.3 Tactical Exercise Unit. Annan, Scotland.

6th June 1944 - 13th June 1944

Hawker Hurricane

No.555 Squadron. Acklington, Northumberland, England

13th June 1944 - 1st July 1944

Hawker Typhoon

No.3 Tactical Exercise Unit. Honily, Warwickshire, England

1st July 1944- 4th July 1944

Hawker Typhoon

No.555 Ground Support Unit Gloucestershire, England

5th July 1944 - 10th July 1944

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron, 123 Airfield, 2nd Tactical Air Force.

10th July 1944 - 20th July 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron. B.10 Plumetot, Normandy, France.

20th July 1944 - 2nd September 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron B.7 Martragny, Normandy, France.

2nd September 1944 - 6th September 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron. B.23 Morainville, Normandy, France

6th September 1944 - 11th September 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron B.35 Baromesnil, Normandy, France

11th September 1944 - 29th October 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.609 (West Riding) Squadron B.53 Merville, Normandy, France

29th October 1944 - 11th November 1944

Rocket-firing Hawker Typhoon

No.55 Mobile Field Hospital, Lens, Belgium.

11th November 1944 - 21st December 1944

Royal Air Force Hospital. Wroughton, Wiltshire, England

21st December 1944 - 22nd December 1944

No.12 Personnel Reception Centre. Brighton, England

22nd December 1944 - 30th December 1944

I.N.M.H.S. Oranje, **country?** to Egypt

30th December 1944 - 26th February 1945

No.5 New Zealand General Hospital, Helwan, Egypt

26th February 1945 - 14th March 1945

No.21 Personnel Transit Centre. Kasfareet, Egypt

14th March 1945 - 21st April 1945

His Majesty's Transport. Moreton Bay, Australia to New Zealand

21st April 1945 - 4th May 1945

Embarkation Leave

5th May 1945 - 26th June 1945

No.1 Convalescent Depot. Rotorua, New Zealand.

27th June 1945

Transferred to Central Non-effective pool (leave)

29th September 1945

Discharged

La Voix.
11th & 12th July 1999
Local History
55 years after the crash of a Typhoon
The rescuers identified.

At the bottom of a black and white photo is written: photograph taken by Rene Lombard, beginning of November 1944, of a group of English mechanics posing with some Frenchmen on the Hawker Typhoon of Adjutant Thomas F Annear

Fifty-five years after a strike force entered Le Doulieu and Steenweerck, the New Zealand pilot has received with some emotion the image of his rescuers, thanks to Jocelyn Leclerq, a fan of aviation history. In the past issue of March 11, an appeal was put out for information on the circumstances of this incident. In the 2 weeks that followed, Jocelyn Leclerq was able to piece together the parts of the puzzle.

I received by mail a piece of correspondence and a picture as a bonus, he recalls. Today, it is possible to explain what happened on that Sunday afternoon on the 29th of October 1944. At the Merville airbase, several bomber pilots prepared for a new mission. Among the pilots was one Thomas Annear. During his flight, the engine failed and he did a belly landing in the field of Marcel Loos. The nose of the plane caught on a slope and the Typhoon rolled over.

The neighbours from the vicinity gathered to see what happened. Thomas Annear remembers having heard, "he's dead" and he shouted out to prove the contrary. Among the people gathered on the spot were Madeleine and Albert Hocedez and Marcel Thouilly. The men then dug in under the cockpit. The New Zealand aviator crawled out of the exit and was led to a nearby farm by a white dog followed by the Loos Family.

Several days after the incident, a group of English mechanics returned to the site to dismantle the plane. It was at this point that the photograph was taken. Thus, on the print of the photograph, from left to right in a line are Madeleine Hocedez, an Englishman, Jeanne-Marie Hocedez, and 3 English mechanics. In the second row, are Cecilte, Gaston and Albert Hocedez, an Englishman, Rene Lombard and another Englishman.

In future, Jocelyn Leclerq hopes to resolve some other mysteries: the crash of a flying fortress (Boeing B 17) at Morbecque on the 27th of August 1943 and that of 2 others on the 1st of December 1943 at Boeschepe and Steenvonde.