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3 Squadron (NZ) PV-I Ventura NZ4564 P/O. Colin Campbell Baird

Operation: Training

Date: 09th June 1944 (Friday)

Unit: No. 3 Squadron (NZ) (motto: Maori-Kimihia Ka Patu - 'Seek and Destroy')

Type: PV-I Ventura

Serial: NZ4564

MSN: 6092

Base: Pallikulo Field, Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides

Location: At airfield

Pilot: P/O. Colin Campbell Baird NZ/416438 RNZAF

Nav: W/O. Ron Payne NZ/416152 RNZAF Age 25. Killed

W/Op/Air/Gnr: W/O. Ryder Basil Inglis Wakely NZ/414900 RNZAF Age 27. Killed

Air/Gnr: Sgt. Alec Ian Miller NZ/4215747 RNZAF Age 20. Killed

Air/Gnr: W/O. Roy Maurice Tarrant NZ/40729 RNZAF Age 28. Killed

REASON FOR LOSS:

Taking off from Vila on the island of Efate at 16:00 hrs on a Navigation radio aids training and familiarisation flight and return to base at Pallikulo Field.



They touched down at 16:47 hrs on an uneven part of the strip. The Ventura bounced and the port wing dropped and the aircraft swung to port. The pilot attempted to go around again and retracted the undercarriage but the port wing struck some trees, causing the aircraft to crash into a reventment **(1)** where it caught fire and burned out.

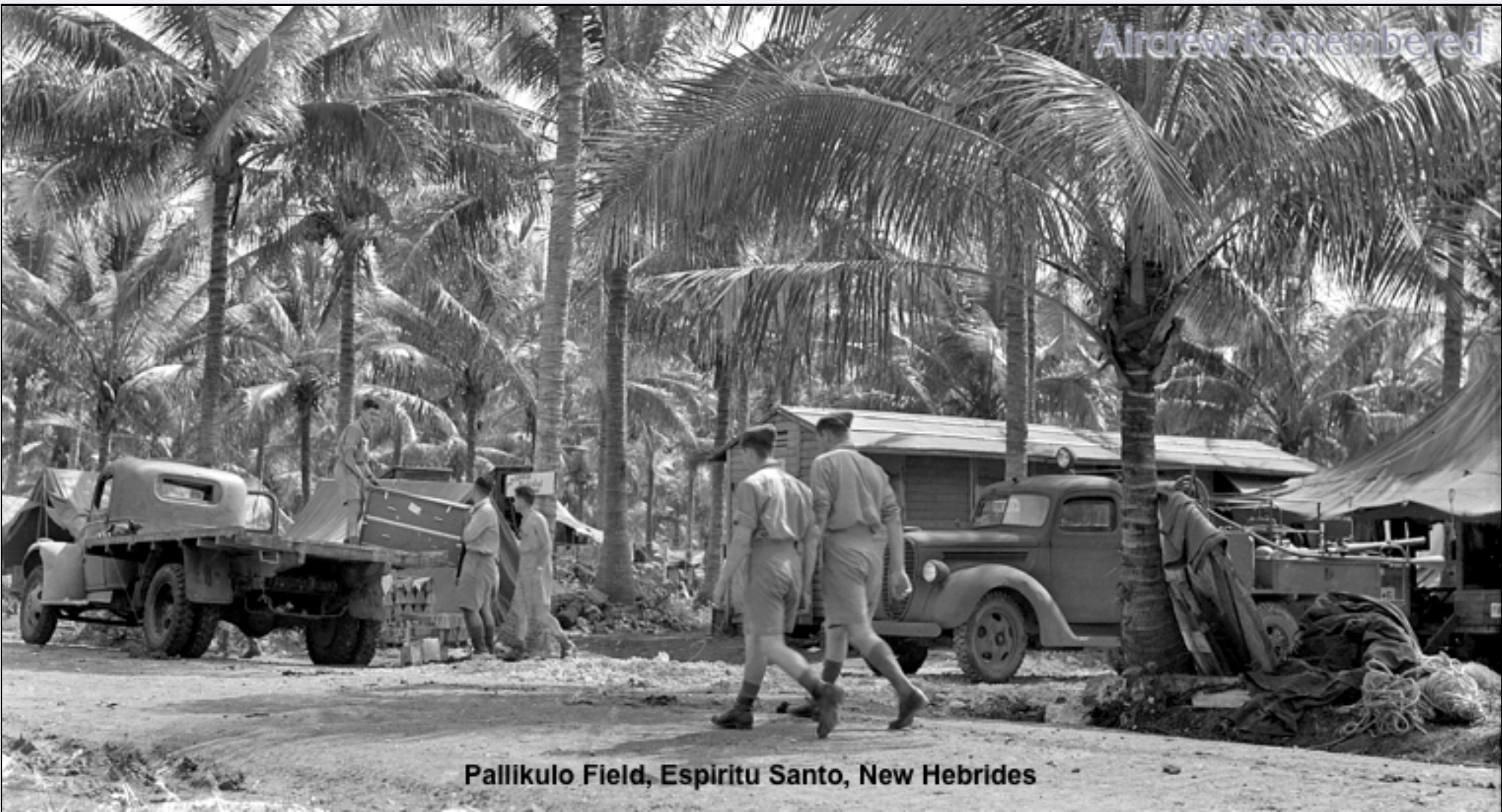
The pilot and two passengers of 12 Service unit personnel, LAC. Jack Bligh NZ/4211641 (an armourer) and LAC. Eric Laurence Mills NZ/422127 (the regular Flight Rigger attached to NZ4564) all survived with various injuries.

Three Corsairs were also destroyed in the fire - NZ5344, NZ5345 and NZ5346.

The post accident reported that the bad condition of the strip was a contributing factor to the accident.



Above L-R: P/O. Colin Baird, W/O. Ron Payne, W/O. Ryder Wakely, Sgt. Alec Miller and W/O. Roy Tarrant (Courtesy Air Museum of New Zealand)



Above as described (Courtesy Air Museum of New Zealand)

(1) Reventment - a barricade of earth or sandbags set up to provide protection from blast or to prevent aircraft from overrunning when landing.

Burial and other details:

All were buried at 14:30 hrs on the 10th on Espiritu Santo, but were later reinterred at Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery.

W/O. Ron Payne. Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery. Grave 5.21. Born at New Plymouth on the 05th July 1918. Educated at Gisborne and at Eketahuna District High School. Worked as a grocery assistant at P.R. Hazlewood of Karori. Enlisted at Levin on the 09th November 1941. Air Observers Badge and promoted to sergeant on the 04th December 1942. Joined 3 squadron on the 01st November 1943, A total of 649 flying hours logged. On his second South Pacific tour.

Son of Ruapehu (died 26th July 1968, Age 79) and Edith Violet Bearman Payne (née Bougen - died 29th April 1959, age 66) husband of Gwenda Alice Payne (née Murgatroyd - later Gordon), of Marton, Wellington, New Zealand.

W/O.. Ryder Basil Inglis Wakely. Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery. Grave 5.27. Born on the 06th January 1917 in Wanganui. Educated at Wanganui East Technical College. Worked as a carpenter for the New Zealand Railways. Enlisted at Levin on the 31st August 1941. Wireless Operator/Air Gunner and promoted to Sergeant on the 22nd June 1942. Joined 3 squadron on the 10th January 1944. A total of 831 flying hours logged. On his second South Pacific tour.

Son of Richard Rider Wackily and Lilian Ivy Alpine Wakely (née Ingis), of 92 Nixon Street, Wanganui, Wellington, New Zealand. (note CWGC incorrectly state his service number as NZ/421547.

Sgt. Alec Ian Miller. Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery. Grave 5.24. Born on the 02nd August 1924 in Palmerston North. Educated at the Auckland Normal School and at Kings College. Worked as a clerk for South British Insurance, Auckland. Enlisted at Levin on the 04th December 1942. Air Gunners Badge awarded on 31st March 1944 and promoted to sergeant on the same day. Joined 3 squadron on the 03rd April 1944. A total of 81 flying hours logged.

Son of William George Miller and of Alice Margaret Miller (née Aitchison), of 58 Victoria Avenue, Remuera, Auckland, New Zealand.

W/O. Roy Maurice Tarrant. Bourail New Zealand War Cemetery. Grave 5.26. Born at Hamilton on the 12th November, 1915. Educated at Te Rapapa School and Seddon Memorial Technical College, Auckland. Enlisted on the 12th March, 1940 in Levin. Awarded the Air Gunner's Badge and promoted to Sergeant on 27th May, 1940. Joined 3 squadron on the 03rd January 1944. A total of 640 flying hours logged. Flown 39 operational sorties with 38 and 15 squadron, in Britain and the Middle East.

Son of Fred Rudman Tarrant (died 02nd June 1972 age 95) and Edith Mary Tarrant (née Gray), of 40 Spring Street, Onehunga, Auckland, New Zealand; husband of Hilda Adelaide Tarrant (née Thomas), father of 2 children, of Taunton, Somerset, England.

The survivors:

P/O. Colin Campbell Baird - no further information.

LAC. Jack Bligh - no further information.

LAC. Eric Laurence Mills - Died on the 20th July 1991 age 67. Grave: Plot 54, Row 200, RSA Block, Feilding Cemetery, New Zealand. His wife, Lois Carol Mills (née Locke) who shares the same plot died on the 30th January 2022, age 96.

Researched and dedicated to the relatives of this crew with thanks to the extensive research by Errol Martin and his publications: "For Your Tomorrow Vols. 1-3", New Zealand **Cenotaph**, Weekly News of New Zealand, **Air Museum** of New Zealand, Museum of Transport and Technology, Auckland, **Wings over New Zealand** and to David Mills, son of LAC. Eric Laurence Mills.

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Acknowledgements

Sources used by us in compiling Archive Reports include: Bill Chorley - 'Bomber Command Losses Vols. 1-9, plus ongoing revisions', Dr. Theo E.W. Boiten and Mr. Roderick J. Mackenzie - 'Nightfighter War Diaries Vols. 1 and 2', Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt - 'Bomber Command War Diaries', Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Tom Kracker - Kracker Luftwaffe Archives, Michel Beckers, Major Fred Paradie (RCAF) and Captain François Dutil (RCAF) - Paradie Archive (on this site), Jean Schadschaj, Major Jack O'Connor USAF (Retd.), Robert Gretzyngier, Wojtek Matusiak, Waldemar Wojcik and Józef Zieliński - 'Ku Czci Poległych Lotników 1939-1945', Andrew Mielnik: Archiwum - Polish Air Force Archive (on this site), Anna Krzystek, Tadeusz Krzystek - 'Polskie Siły Powietrzne w Wielkiej Brytanii', Franek Grabowski, Polish graves: <https://niebieskaeskadra.pl/>, PoW Museum Zagar, Norman L.R. Franks 'Fighter Command Losses', Stan D. Bishop, John A. Hey MBE, Gerrie Franken and Maco Cillessen - Losses of the US 8th and 9th Air Forces, Vols 1-6, Dr. Theo E.W. Boiten - Nachtjagd Combat Archives, Vols 1-13. Aircrew Remembered Databases and our own archives. We are grateful for the support and encouragement of CWGC, UK Imperial War Museum, Australian War Memorial, Australian National Archives, New Zealand National Archives, UK National Archives and Fold3 and countless dedicated friends and researchers across the world.

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