



Trevor Hedley Roland Gray

404356

Sgt.

Trevor Hedley Roland Gray was born on 15th September in Wanganui , the youngest son of Daisy and Royden Gray.

Trevor's great grandfather William John Gray was born in Northern Ireland, attended a seminary, the Mico Institute in Glasgow, and travelled as a young man to Mauritius as a missionary teacher to newly emancipated slaves. He married a Mauritian creole girl of African and French descent, then travelled to New Zealand where he established a sheep farm in the Rangitikei area. Marie Irma and William had seven children. The Gray family continued living in this area for two generations, before Royden, Trevor's father went to work as a steam engineer north of Taranaki, at a place called Taringamotu.

Trevor attended primary school in Marton, Taringamotu and Moturoa schools. He was Dux of Moturoa School. (ie the Academic Prize).

He then attended New Plymouth Boys High School for three years where his main subject was Agriculture. Trevor had a plan to own a farm one day. (Like his great grandfather William Gray?).

After he left high school aged 16, he went to work at The Kingsway Menswear shop, New Plymouth as a sales assistant. He stayed until he enlisted in the airforce in 1940. By the time he left he was a Manager.

Trevor loved motor bikes like his two brothers and owned an AJS motor bike. He also owned a Baby Austin Car. The family lived near Moturoa Beach, in the coastal town of New Plymouth, and Trevor loved the surf and the outdoor life.

Written by Lorraine Gray, daughter of Trevor Gray



He really enjoyed participating in Athletics , winning some ribbons for Harrier (long distance running). He also was part of the YWCA gymnastics team.

He met Doreen Gray at Baptist Youth Group, at the Baptist Church in Liardet Street, New Plymouth when he was 18 years old and she was 14 years old. He married her at the same Baptist Church when he was 26 on 30th June 1940.

He had been in the volunteer territorial army before enlisting in the Airforce later in 1940. World War Two had been declared in 1939. From early records and letters it would seem that he wanted to be an aircraft mechanic. Mechanics of motor cars, motor bikes and engines always fascinated him. His two brothers later joined the airforce as mechanics. Trevor's brothers Keith and Max, survived the war. One brother became a precision engineer, the other a car mechanic later owning a car yard.

Trevor was placed instead in Pilot Training, mostly at Ohakea airbase. During this time a pregnant Doreen boarded in nearby Feilding so that they could meet each other at weekends. After gaining his wings and promotion to Sergeant he was selected to go overseas. This was not his choice. The selection process gave no choice.

So saying good bye to a pregnant Doreen in New Plymouth, his brothers and his parents took him to Auckland, where they said goodbye to him on 26th May 1941. Two days later on 28th May Doreen gave birth to Lorraine, prematurely, in New Plymouth, a six hour drive away. Trevor never saw his daughter.

Trevor discovered he had a baby daughter six weeks later, when arriving in London, he went to New Zealand House to collect his mail. He went out with some other "air force chaps", and wetted the baby's head with English cider." (Quote. letter home to his parents.)

After attending the Occupational Training Unit where he learnt to fly Wellington Bombers , he was posted to Feltwell Airbase in Norfolk. He flew 6 missions as 2nd pilot starting on 2nd September 1941. Trevor flew as a member of RNZAF 75th Squadron ,with the RAF, in the newly formed Bomber Command.

On the night of 7th November, Wellington Bomber X9976 flown by the Rainbow Crew (every crew had a nickname) was shot down and crash landed in a farmer's paddock at Soarre Moarre, just outside of the township in Akkrum, Friesland, The Netherlands. All the crew died. The plane was being pursued by the night fighter Helmut Lent, who was later awarded by Hitler. It is believed due to reports, that the Wellington Bomber deliberately avoided the town of Akkrum, while being shot at, to crash land instead in a paddock further out.



This was boggy ground and the plane sank. The farmer found it the next morning. The German occupiers came in and erected a fence around the site. On this crash site a cross was erected which said " They died heroes, peace be to their ashes". The remains of the six airmen were later reinterred at Bergen op Zoom 1982.

Trevor's body was discovered intact. In his uniform pocket they discovered a New Testament, his wedding photo, a photo of his parents and a photo of his daughter who he never saw. Lorraine thinks he took these so if he was captured as a POW he would have them to sustain him. (This information was sent in a letter to Lorraine's mother from John Van Veen of the Dutch Underground).

When Lorraine was a baby her young mother, Trevor's widow joined the New Zealand Army, (WAAC) becoming a sergeant. She gave four years of service in New Zealand. She was prevented by authorities from going to Egypt with her battalion because she had a child who could have become an orphan. They lived with Lorraine's maternal grandparents in New Plymouth.

A permanent memorial was placed at the crash site in 2010 by The Soarre Moarre Committee. Lorraine was invited to the opening and to unveil the monument along with two local school children. Lorraine and her daughter Joanne attended along with other family members. She had been discovered living in New Zealand by the Organisation Missing Airmen's Foundation.

At this time Lorraine was also able to visit her Father's grave at Bergen op Zoom where she and Joanne planted a chrysanthemum. It was a very moving experience, they stood and hugged, Lorraine shed tears as Joanne read the 21st Psalm from Trevor's own Bible. It was November and there were oak leaves covering the ground, and an aura of complete peace.

A folder is prepared full of information on Trevor including newspaper and magazine articles. Trevor has also been written about in two books:

"The Mallon Crew" by Vic Jay.

"Lest We Forget" by Jack West