

Service History of
78266 (RNZAF) WOOA Thompson. R B (Kiwi)

7th May 1956 to 30th November 1964

**** -1956	RNZAF	Initial Training	
1956-1959	RAF Halton	Technical Training Command	Apprentice Training (Airframe Fitter)
1959-1962	RAF Cranwell	Flying Training Command	Flying Cadetship / Graduated as a Pilot with the Sword of Honour
1962-1964	RNZAF	14 Sqdn	Canberra B (I) Mk 12 & 13
Sept. 1964	Tengah, Singapore	Deployed on detachment for Op. "Confrontation" against Indonesia.	Crashed on 30 th November 1964 whilst flying a Canberra B (I) Mk 12 (NZ6104) in a 6 ship formation and carrying out a simulated low level rocket attack on a target at China Rock Bombing Range (not bombing practice as reported elsewhere). The aircraft completed its low level run-in and was pulling away in a banked turn when a wingtip hit the water. Flying Officer Russell Thomson and Flight Lieutenant James Southgate were killed.

RANK WHEN KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Flying Officer

SOME RECOLLECTIONS AND MEMORIES

Ken Butcher (RNZAF) recalls that he was a Corporal Engine Fitter on the same squadron as Kiwi Thompson and was also in Singapore on the same detachment at the time when Kiwi was killed during a practice FRA on China Rock. Neither Kiwi nor his navigators' bodies were recovered. A memorial service was conducted at sea aboard a Royal Navy minesweeper in the approx location in the South China Sea and Ken and most of the detachment were on board for the occasion along with "Tommy" Thompson, "Kiwi's" older brother, an ex brat and also a Cranwell Sword of Honour.

Ivor John (RAF) recalls that he was one of about eight 83rd Entry members who were posted to RAF College Cranwell straight from Halton. Ivor notes that despite the regime at Cranwell where officer cadets were seriously not encouraged to engage with the “erks”, when Kiwi could, he would stop for a chat. He was a great character who we all remember with respect as our senior apprentice.

Brian Spurway (RAF - 81st Entry) recalls starting off at Halton in 3 Wing, 2 Squadron but, a term and a half into his time he ended up in 1 Wing, 1 Squadron after the entries were split up and distributed throughout the nine squadrons that made up the three separate Wings. He goes on to say: “A great pal of mine in that squadron was Russell (aka "Kiwi") Thompson of the 83rd.

Later, some time round about 1962 / 3, I was a Sergeant rigger at Colerne when a RNZAF Hastings dropped-in piloted by Kiwi's elder brother, another brainbox of a Halton apprentice who had gone on to do a Cranwell cadetship, plus Sword of Honour, before returning to NZ. On board the Hastings, if my memory serves me well, were members of Kiwi's family who had all come over to see him, in his turn, pass out from Cranwell, also with the Sword of Honour. It was a couple of years later that I heard that Kiwi had been killed in a Canberra crash somewhere in Malaya”.

Seeing that Kiwi's death is recorded on the 83rd Entry website but without any details, Brian directed me to another website (www.adf-serials.com/nz-serials/nz6101.shtml) which contained brief details of the accident.

This scant information should bring closure for many of us who knew about the accident, but not the details.