

Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc.

Newsletter – April 2024 - #10



SKPMA Inc. – Officers:

President:	Geoff Furkert	021 833 044	[geoff.furkert@xtra.co.nz]
Treasurer:	Stuart Read	0274 770 104	[sturead@outlook.co.nz]
Secretary:	Warren Sly	021 772 351	[warren.sly@prepress.co.nz]
Committee:	Adrian Catran	0212 785 657	[adrian@twentymans.co.nz]
	Gary Brunt	0276 458 315	[gary@thorolds.co.uk]
	Cliff McChesney	0274 805 454	[freedom4life@xtra.co.nz]

THAMES BATTLE OF BRITAIN COMMEMORATIONS:

Planning is well advanced for this year's Battle of Britain Commemorations in Thames which will be held 11:00am Sunday 15th September at the Thames Airfield. The 15th September is the date universally recognised as the turning point in the Battle of Britain in 1940. As such this year, there are likely to be many other commemorative events scheduled for the same date.

This understood, and I accept that this may result in some compromises.

Group Captain Mike Cannon (RNZAF Base Commander, Auckland) has committed to at least a high-level participation from his end, even if he, personally, is not available on that day. He also commented that Thames has an outstanding request for a Black Falcons fly-over, given that they didn't make it last year!

Russell Skeet is lined up to be MC this year. Further details and VIPs will be announced nearer the time.

As a part of my visit to UK and Malta last year, I delivered letters from previous Mayor, Sandra Goudie, and current Mayor Len Salt to HE Phil Goff (New Zealand High Commissioner in London), addressed to King Charles inviting him to visit Thames when he is on tour in New Zealand and Australia later this year. The High Commissioner was totally in support of this, and wrote his own covering letter. These three were then forwarded to one of the King's Private Secretaries – one known to Phil and a kiwi!

It would be a stupendous way to get our statue of Sir Keith inaugurated – watch this space!!

MALTA:

I have a line of ongoing communication with my contacts in Malta. Specifically, there is a project there to upgrade the displays in the Lascaris War Rooms – the site from where Sir Keith commanded his successful Maltese operations 1942 – 43.

During my visit in September last year, I noticed that there was minimal reference to Sir Keith and only in regard to the development of the “Dowding” real-time, command and control system which was deployed to great effect in the Battle of Britain. I have it as a high priority to have Sir Keith better represented there.

EVENTS:

WINGS & WHEELS – Thames:

Wings and Wheels in Thames was held 27th January – Auckland Anniversary Weekend. This was very well attended, and the great majority had an exciting experience, despite some light showers in the early afternoon.

We have received wide-ranging positive feedback from people who attended the event. Planning for the 2026 Wings and Wheels will start with an introductory committee meeting in October this year!

I took the opportunity to don a set of sandwich boards and parade myself around the crowds (looking very dorky!) to spread the good word about our project and seek donations. This netted \$720 – not to be sneezed at!



WARBIRDS over WANAKA:

I made a late decision to attend Warbirds over Wanaka, partly for the sense of occasion after a break of six years due to COVID, and partly having been given introductions to a number of people who might be supportive of our project.

This entailed nearly 3,000km of driving in our Camper Van, but at least I had somewhere to sleep each night. The weather over the three days could not have been more conducive to holding an Air Show – which was stunning. An extremely high standard of aircraft and organisation, with highlights for me being: newly restored

Mosquito, American Eagles L-39s, Brendon Deere's immaculately restored and maintained World War 2 fighters and the 12-aircraft Yak aerobatic display, featuring amongst others our very own Yak owner and pilot - Stuart Read!

WoW 2024 official video

This one is quite long, but you can skip through to get the good bits. A highlight for me was the American Eagles L-39 display, towards the end.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sU0j1Rtv_G4

RNZAF video from WoW 2024

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROY8EIZkWZg>

Once again on Day 3, I donned my sandwich boards and raised a further \$636 for our project! I'll keep these in reserve for future occasions . . !!

SIR KEITH PARK MEMORIAL:

Stage 1: Hurricane Fighter:

The Stage 1 full-sized replica Hurricane Fighter is in good stead, despite a number of high-wind weather events. Secretary Warren Sly checks for any sign of problems, particularly in regard to the two wire ropes keeping the tail of the aircraft under control;

Stage 2: 2.3m Bronze Statue:

Joanne has completed the waxes (pre-requisite to the bronze casting stage), and they will be despatched to the foundry as soon as the bronze casting steps are fully funded.

A full set of replicas of Sir Keith's medals have been procured, and Joanne has incorporated impressions of these into the base plate on which the statue sits. At a later stage, these replica medals will be returned to the supplier to be cleaned and professionally mounted. This set will be presented to the Thames Museum to complement the developing Sir Keith Park display there. (see below).

PRESENTATIONS:

Royal Aeronautical Society, Bay of Plenty Branch:

I presented to the Royal Aeronautical Society, Bay of Plenty Branch Friday 26th January. Well received on the day, but has not resulted in any significant donations.

One of their members – Gary Benner – provided me with the video clip below: one recently released, but Gary’s version is without breaks or advertisements. Feel free to share this as widely as you like. It is a great overview.

<https://videos.goodas.nz/raes/HistoryBriefsKeithPark.mp4>

King’s College Old Collegians:

I was given the opportunity to deliver a short presentation to a King’s College Old Collegians gathering (Floreat Semper) at the College Thursday 21st March. Although again well received on the day, this has not resulted in significant donations. At least the good word and the greater exposure of our project is always worthwhile.

Ryman Keith Park Retirement Village:

I will be making a presentation to residents of the Ryman Keith Park Retirement Village, Hobsonville, at a date to be confirmed in June 2024.

Other:

I would be happy to do presentations to any group, and hope that you will send me the details of possible audiences and/or venues. Hopefully such presentations may result in donations but a significant objective is to gain exposure of Sir Keith’s amazing, aspirational lifetime achievements – and of our memorial project.

Please let me know . . .

THAMES MUSEUM:



I have been working with Carolyn McKenzie at the Thames Museum to create a display featuring Sir Keith. It seems a huge oversight that such a display has not been established well before now.

The first item for display was passed to me by Paul Fahey (New Zealand racing car driver of note, particularly 1965 -75), and with his agreement, presented to the Thames Museum by Mayor Len Salt. Photo Credit: Valley Profile.

The second item was a photo of Sir Keith and Lady Dol Park taken in 1941, which I acquired from an auction at Art+Object, Auckland with the help of friend Graeme Lockery. This is currently on display on the right-hand side of the foyer of the museum.



Two other items are in the pipeline but will need discussion with Carolyn about the necessary space to accommodate these! One will be the full set of Sir Keith’s medals, appropriately mounted, once Joane has finished with incorporating these into the statute. The second will be a mounted replica of Sir Keith’s Heraldic Proclamation, the digital image of which was given to me by Simon Wetherall, Head of Library and Archives at MOTAT. The image below is mine, and the display image – of much high quality – is presently being framed. Sir Keith’s crest is shown enlarged on the right-hand side.



The Museum’s display includes a copy of Sir Keith’s biography, “Park” by the late Prof. Vincent Orange.

INCORPORATED SOCIETY:

Membership:

We now have our first international member of our incorporated society. Paul Waite, Support Manager (and only paid employee) at the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum, Tangmere, West Sussex, UK. I had previously been in contact on previous visits with David Coxon at the Museum, who arranged for me to have an experience in the Tangmere Lightning simulator.

I didn't crash it . . !! Welcome aboard Paul, and I urge any of our members or associates to call on Paul when visiting UK.

Our Rules:

Under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 (the "new Act"), every incorporated society must re-register under the new Act and has 2½ years (between 5 October 2023 to 5 April 2026) to complete this process. An incorporated society will continue to be subject to the old Act until it re-registers as an incorporated society under the new Act. Any incorporated society that does not re-register by 5 April 2026 will cease to exist.

Our Secretary, Warren Sly, has graciously agreed to guide us through this re-registration process.

FUND RAISING:

Fund raising continues to be my highest priority. It is most unlikely that even with a significant funding injection within weeks, that there will be a statue erected for inauguration at this year's Battle of Britain Commemorations.

But we will complete the memorial and the project.

We are currently seeking in the order of \$40,000 - \$50,000 to complete. Anything that you can do to achieve this goal will be greatly appreciated.

NEXT STEPS:

- Fund-raising;
- Fund-raising;
- Fund-raising;
- Greater media and general coverage in support of this very significant memorial project. Please spread the word!!

Geoff Ferkert

W: www.sirkeithparkmemorial.org.nz
M: 021 833 044
E: [geoff.ferkert@xtra.co.nz]

Bank Account Name:	Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc.
Bank Account Number:	38 9022 0151185 – 00
Charitable Registration:	CC60152