

Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc.

Newsletter – July 2025 - #18



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HEADLINES:

- Statue of Sir Keith will be in Thames 6th August;
- Memorial Precinct works;
- Grand Opening of the Keith Park Retirement Village;
- Spreading the word;
- Battle of Britain Commemorations;
- Still need \$20,000 to complete.

SIR KEITH PARK BRONZE STATUE - UPDATE:

The statue of ACM Sir Keith Park, which will complete the Memorial in his honour at the Thames Airfield, has been on temporary display at the Officers'/Northern Club in the Auckland (March – late-May), then at the Vero Centre (late May – early August).

Whilst this has exposed ACM Sir Keith Park and his legacy to many, it has not had a great impact on inflating the project coffers!

On Tuesday 5th August, the statue will be uplifted from the Vero Centre and transported by Kiwitrans to Thames the next day. Then follows a few weeks of preparation before the statue is installed with the Hurricane Fighter to complete the Memorial to Sir Keith.

The target finish date for the completion of the Memorial is a week in advance of the Battle of Britain Commemorations (see below).

MEMORIAL PRECINCT WORKS;

As well as working to complete the Memorial, a number of lesser projects are being progressed so as to present the Memorial precinct and the Hauraki Aero Club in the best light.

Around the Memorial we now have a concrete mowing strip under the fence. This will soon be complemented by a concrete kerbing strip demarcating the boundary between the grassed Memorial area and the car park (this courtesy of funding by TCDC).

Fences will be cleaned and painted in the next few weeks, gardens replanted in the HAC Courtyard, information posters cleaned and updated, and a floodlight for the completed Memorial installed. TCDC has also agreed to do their share with adjacent lawns, roadways and the car park, so as to have these presented in the best way possible.

KEITH PARK RETIREMENT VILLAGE:

On Wednesday 16th July, Prue and I were invited to attend the Grand Opening of the Ryman Healthcare's latest venture, the Keith Park Retirement Village in Hobsonville. And what a grand opening it was too!! You may be aware that Ryman gives SKPMA Inc. an annual grant of \$5,000, inflation adjusted since 2020. There are two other beneficiaries for the use of the Keith Park name.

The opening gambit was a multi-pass fly over by three Harvards – with smoke trails – whilst guests were outside in the sunshine, on the bowling green! Then inside and seated for some well-presented speeches by Marsha Cadman, Ryman COO from Australia; Kim Dawson, Village Manager; Sir Keith's great nephew Brian Park; and Adam Claasen, Senior Lecturer in History, Massey University. One of the speakers (no names . . .) referred to **Saint** Keith Park, which many thought most fitting!

The after-match refreshments were most welcome and well received. A wonderful networking opportunity, with a mix of guests and residents.

If you would like to visit and check out this marvellous facility, it is: Keith Park Retirement Village, 3 Scott Road, Hobsonville, Auckland 0616.

The photos below were items featured at the Grand Opening.



Stunning painting of ACM Sir Keith Park, unveiled at the Grand Opening of the Ryman Keith Park Retirement Village.



An amazing presentation of Sir Keith's multifarious decorations and awards, on display in the reception area.

SPREADING THE WORD:

Since the beginning of the project, I have delivered presentations at/to:

- RAF Commemorations, Malta;
- Unveiling of portraits of Lord Dowding and Sir Keith Park at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London;
- U3A, Parnell;
- Royal Aeronautical Society - Bay of Plenty Branch;
- Officers'/Northern Club;
- History Group – Northern Club;
- Vero Centre, Tenants Forum, Auckland CBD;
- Floreat Semper meetings (aged 70+ Old Boys), King's College;
- Thames ANZAC Parade, April 2025;
- King's School ANZAC Commemorations;
- and other smaller, but significant groups.

For me, spreading the word about Sir Keith and his legacy, is as important as the creation of the Memorial, although both are closely linked. His aspirational legacy, based on leadership, integrity, courage, commitment, yet compassion and humanity, empowered him to complete the great and varied achievements of his lifetime, both in peace and war times. Qualities that we should be promoting to all young New Zealanders.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN UPDATE;

Commemorations this year will be held at the Thames Airfield Sunday 14th September 2025 starting at 11:00am. The event will include the unveiling of the 2.3m bronze statue of Sir Keith and the inauguration of the completed Memorial, and is open to the public.

VIPs this year include: Minister of Defence, Hon Judith Collins; RNZAF Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal Darryn Webb; RNZAF Base Commander, Auckland, Group Captain Brett Clayton; several other RNZAF Officers; Anglican Bishop of Auckland, Rt Rev'd Ross Bay; Hon Scott Simpson, MP for Thames-Coromandel; Mayor Len Salt, TCDC. Others may yet confirm acceptance.

Invitations will also be sent to all donors, those who have provided goods and services and those who have provided support in various ways through the project.

FUNDING TO COMPLETE:

About \$20,000 is still needed to bring this Memorial project to a successful conclusion.

Please – donate now !!! Bank details below.

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