

# Battle of Britain Flypast

contributed by Frank Parker

**THE FIRST** Sunday following 15th of September is a busy day for the NZ Warbirds Association (NZWA). This day is the remembrance day of the Battle of Britain, that epochal battle fought in the skies of England in 1940 to stem the Nazi advance.

The RNZAF Association and Brevet Club has held a Remembrance Service at the City Cenotaph for many years on this day and NZWA has participated in a fly past for the event since 1985.

This is the first activity for the coming flying season, a time to ready the 'fleet' from winter maintenance and dust off the flying skills.

Sunday 20th of September was the 'Flypast' day for 2009. As a contrast to the past several years Mother Nature was in a benevolent mood and turned on some perfect flying weather. The early birds were at the Hangar by 0730 to start the day, the first task to tow the aircraft out of the hangar and ready them for flight. Next on the agenda is a comprehensive briefing for all participants and then individual formation briefs before final aircraft inspections.

For this years event, members from New Plymouth, Tauranga and North Shore joined with the Ardmore Base.

The first engine starts at 1035 for the staggered takeoffs to briefed holding areas. Typically the leading Warbird aircraft assemble at Rangitoto and other groups at St Heliers and Music Point for the flypast at 1115 following the completion of the Memorial Service. NZWA members were represented by 18 aircraft. These included, the P-51 Mustang, six Harvard's, four Yak 52's from New Plymouth, plus the DC-3. An assembly of Tiger Moths, Chipmunks and Beaver represented the De Havilland stable. Cessna got a look in with the L-19



Harvard 57 frames the Cenotaph, Auckland Museum and Domain in the centre of the picture during the return flight to Ardmore after the 2009 Battle of Britain flypast.



Getting everyone into place over Rangitoto Island. Harvards followed by Yaks and the P51 Mustang in the distance as it passed by (like the rest of us were standing still) to lead the formation.

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## BE PART OF THE ACTION!



# A brief history lesson

Bird Dog. Additionally the Auckland Aero Club was represented by a Grumman formation and several other aircraft to give a combined fleet of some 22 aircraft.

Following the Cenotaph Flypast the fleet completed an orbit of the central city including Sir Keith Park Memorial Park at MOTAT, and North Head, followed by a sequenced recovery to Ardmore. This part of the operation is particularly important as there is considerable scope for conflicts with 20 or more aircraft converging back on Ardmore.

By midday the flypast is complete and it is time for a debrief on the days events, an essential part of the operation.

Following the flypast NZWA held an Open Day in the afternoon to showcase the Association and Aircraft. An appreciative audience of 2000 plus locals were treated to a mini airshow by Association aircraft, all for a 'gold coin' donation. Warbirds plans to hold three similar open days each year on appropriately significant days, the next being planned for December 6th in remembrance of the Japanese attack on the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii and a further one on ANZAC Day.



With more than 20 aircraft participating, the briefing is a particularly important part of the day.



Congestion on the taxiway at Ardmore. The Harvards are on the grass, as are the CT4 and Grummans. The Mustang is about to line up and behind it is the DC3 and several more beyond. KiwiFlyer thanks John Kelly for the back seat ride in Harvard 53. Very much enjoyed.



An aircraft spotter on the roof of a building in London. St Pauls Cathedral is in the background. (US National Archives and Records Admin picture)



German Heinkel He 111 bombers over the English Channel in 1940. (German Federal Archive picture)

**THE BATTLE** of Britain is acknowledged as the first ever battle fought solely in the skies. Following the Nazi Conquest of Europe in the opening phase of World War II, England was next on Hitler's shopping list. First though, the Nazis had to gain control of the air to enable a sea borne invasion.

At the time, following the fall of France and the debacle of Dunkirk, Sir Winston Churchill said "It is not the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning".

And so it was in the autumn of 1941. The might of Hitler's Luftwaffe bomber force intent on destroying England's severely depleted war machine was pitched against the stubborn Royal Air Force fighter defenders. Latter day historians have

debated whether the British won the battle or the Germans lost. With hindsight the Nazi tactics were questionable and they squandered several strategic opportunities early in the Battle.

Nonetheless the defeat of the Nazi aerial armada was the Germans first strategic loss. The preservation of Britain's sovereignty enabled the eventual Allied return to Europe in the D Day landings of 1944.

Of the Battle, where the beleaguered RAF fighter squadrons bore the brunt of the action in defeating the Nazi Attack, Churchill summed up in the words; **"Never in the field of human conflict, was so much owed by so many to so few"**.

## 20 years of participation

**PETER HOUGHTON**, NZWA Manager has participated in the Battle of Britain Flypast for the past 20 consecutive years, all but three times as PIC of a Harvard.

Peter's interest in aviation began at an early age. He went solo in a Piper 90hp Cub at Nelson aged 17 and achieved his PPL at Thames in 1961. As he moved about the country with his career as an agricultural project manager this passion followed and Peter was one of the founding members of the Central Otago Flying Club in 1971.

Peter's introduction to NZ Warbirds was in Whangarei where he had met Barry Keay, the Northern Districts Club Captain and NZ Warbirds had a weekend 'fly-in'. Subsequently when Peter moved to Auckland he visited Warbirds at Ardmore, showed an interest and got 'Schroedered' (met Warbirds stalwart Eric Schroeder) and bought a share in Harvard 1092 (ZK-WAR) syndicate.

In 1989 he was able to fly 'back seat' in his new 'investment' with President TT Bland on the Battle of Britain Fly past and has been in every flypast for this event since.

Peter has been an enthusiastic supporter of NZWA since this time. He became a committee member in 1991, Vice President in 1993 and has been Manager for the past 8 years. In this role Peter is involved with many behind the scenes facets of General Aviation administration including CAA rules and Industry advisory groups.

On the flying side Peter was the CT-4 display pilot in 1991 and became involved with the Harvard Aerobatic Team in 1998, being a member of the Roaring 40's Team from 2000 until 2004 He still regularly flies the CT-4 and Harvard and is looking forward to flying a Titan P-51 under construction at Ardmore for a syndicate group.