

Name: Willis Stewart BROWN



Service No: 40505

Armed Force: RNZAF

Enlistment: 1937

Training:

Embarkations: 23rd October 1937

Rank/s: Flying Officer, Flying Officer Military, Royal Air Force, No. 20 Service Flying Training School (Cranborne, Southern Rhodesia)

Royal Air Force, No 38 Squadron

Service:

CIVILIAN LIFE

Next of Kin on Mrs. F J Brown 170 Hastings St Christchurch

Embarkation:

Relationship Status: Mother

MILITARY DECORATIONS

Medals and Awards: War Medal 1939-1945 New Zealand War Service Medal

OTHER DETAILS

Date of Birth & Place: 23 May 1915, Mataura Southland

Date of Death & Place: 30 October 1940 Salisbury Republic of South Africa

Cause of Death: Killed in Action

Burial/Cremation: Salisbury Republic of South Africa, Harare Cemetery, Zimbabwe

Age: 25

Memorial: Ashburton War Memorial

MILITARY SERVICE BIOGRAPHY: <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/search?n=Willis+Stewart+Brown&srt=relevance>

RAF 40505 Flying Officer Willis Stewart BROWN.

PARENTS: Mr & Mrs D.C. Brown of CHRISTCHURCH.

Willis Brown was born at Mataura on the 23rd of May 1915. He matriculated at Waimate High School in 1931, afterwards attending Christchurch Boys High School where he was awarded a Higher Leaving Certificate. He played cricket and football for Waimate High School, also being a member of the School Swimming Team, and taking a leading part in rifle shooting. After leaving school he was the leading player with Waltham Tennis Club

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

and also a member of the Canterbury College Gymnastics Team. In 1933 he accepted employment with the Christchurch Gas Coy. and was engaged in research work on the blending of Aero fuels. He enrolled at Canterbury University College in 1936 and was studying there for his Bachelor of Science degree at the time of applying for a Short Service Commission in the Royal Air Force in April 1937. On acceptance he embarked on the 23rd of October 1937 for the United Kingdom.

Shortly after arrival at No. 1 Depot, Uxbridge, Middlesex, he was posted on the 6th of December to No. 8 Elementary and Reserve Training School, Reading, Berkshire to commence his flying training, then in March 1938 to No. 5 Flying Training School, first at Sealand, Chester and then at Penrhos, Wales, where he trained on Hawker Hart and Audax aircraft. Here on the 3rd September he was awarded the flying badge and appointed to the Acting Rank of Flying Officer (Bomber), afterwards joining No. 38 (B) Squadron at Marham, Norfolk, where he flew Hendon aircraft. Late in October 1938 he was posted to No. 8 Flying Training School, Montrose, Scotland for instructor duties, serving there until he crashed on the 17th of April 1939.

On recovering after the crash Flying Officer Brown commenced flying again at No. 6 Service Flying Training School, Little Rissington, Gloucestershire as an instructor on Anson aircraft, and afterwards on similar duties at Kidlington, Oxford, flying Oxford and Harvard aircraft.

In June 1940 he was posted overseas to South Africa and commenced flying as an instructor at No. 20 Service Flying Training School, Salisbury, Rhodesia on the 16th of July 1940.

Flying Officer Brown was the pilot of a Harvard aircraft engaged on a training flight, which crashed at Salisbury, Rhodesia, on the 3rd of October 1940, Flying Officer Brown losing his life. He was buried in the Salisbury Cemetery, Southern Rhodesia.

5/2985AS2.

850 hours as Pilot

Mrs. F.J. Brown (Mother)

170 Hastings Street,

CHRISTCHURCH.

OBITUARY. FLYING OFFICER W. S. BROWN

WAIMATE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL MAGAZINE. 1940 Page 39

Born at Invercargill in 1915, Flying Officer Willis Stewart Brown, R.A.F., received his primary education at Waihopai School. His secondary course was begun at Southland Boys' High School, continued at Ashburton High, and Waimate High School, where he matriculated, and completed at Christchurch Boys' High School.

On leaving school he entered into the employment of the Christchurch Gas Coy., successfully continuing his studies in the evenings at Canterbury College. In 1937 he proceeded to England to join the Royal Air Force, and in the following year he was appointed to the instructional staff. For two years he had been engaged in that service when he was transferred as instructor to the Training School at Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. Some few weeks after entering upon his new duties he lost his life in a flying accident which occurred on October 3.

This is a cold summary of the career of Stewart Brown. We find it hard to put into words our own feelings towards him. He was such a splendid sport. We hesitated over the use



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of that word. But that word sums him up so well. He was popular with the boys and with the staff. He was in every bit of fun and mischief that was going and trusted to his ingenuous smile to carry him through which it often did. He was a keen swimmer and a beautiful diver.

We can see him now-a slip of a lad poised on the high diving board. A lean over, a flash of white, and the noiseless entry into the water.

When at school, whatever he did he did thoroughly, and he carried on in the same way in the Air Force. We can only offer to his parents and to his family our very deepest sympathy with them in their sad loss.

AIR CASUALTIES Press, Volume LXXVI, Issue 23144, 7 October 1940, Page 8 KILLED IN FLYING ACCIDENT CHRISTCHURCH PILOT IN RHODESIA

Cabled advice was received yesterday that Flying Officer Willis Stewart Brown, son of Mr and Mrs D. C. Brown, 178 Hastings Street, Christchurch, has been killed in a flying accident at Rhodesia. He was a pilot instructor with the Royal Air Force at Salisbury. Flying Officer Brown was aged 25. He was educated at the Waimate High School and at Canterbury University College, which he left in 1936 to join the Royal Air Force.

Aircraft Havard 1 Serial P 5963

Base Cranborne, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)

Location 10 miles East of Harare (Salisbury)

Reason for loss:

During a dual instruction training exercise control was lost in cloud. It is not known who was flying the aircraft at the time. Although partial recovery was made the aircraft struck the ground killing both instructor and pupil.

HARARE (PIONEER) CEMETERY

Eur. War Graves Plot. Grave 8.

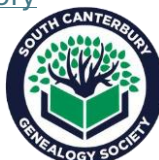
Zimbabwe

Grave inscription 'If Death, I Shall Die at Last, Strong In My Pride and Free'

<https://aircrewremembered.com/brown-willis-stewart.html>

USEFUL WEB LINKS FOR REFERENCE:

1. [Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph](#)
 - A comprehensive database of New Zealand service personnel.
2. [New Zealand War Graves Project](#)
 - Contains images and information about New Zealand war graves and memorials around the world.
3. [New Zealand History - NZ Wars and Conflicts](#)
 - Provides detailed accounts and images of New Zealand's involvement in
 - various wars, including WW1 and WW2.
4. [Archives New Zealand - War History](#)



Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

- Access to war-related records and images held by Archives New Zealand.

5. [Te Papa Tongarewa - Collections Online](#)

Features war-related collections, including personal stories and photographs of New Zealand soldiers

DATA SOURCE AND COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

All information and images included in this document have been sourced from various archives, databases, and personal contributions. The primary sources include:

- Lois Shears
- South Canterbury Genealogy Society
- Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph
- New Zealand War Graves Project

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