

Peter Wynn Mason West

Nationality: New Zealand
Rank: Squadron Leader
Regiment: RAF
Unit: 61 Squadron
Service No: 40670
Awards: DFC and Bar
Date of Death: 4th July 1942
Cemetery: Esbjerg (Fourfelt) Denmark



Squadron Leader P M W West

Peter gained his private pilot's license before joining the RNZAF in 1937 and was posted to Tairāhira Air Force Base Dunedin New Zealand for basic training. He soloed in a DH 82 Tiger Moth progressing to multi engine Oxford's before joining the RAF via the Empire Pilot's Scheme in the same year. He was posted to RAF squadrons flying Handley Page Hampden's and Bristol

Blenheim's. During an R & R in the Middle East to get over a failed romance he met his bride-to-be Eileen Hawkins and they married on their return to the UK. He was a handsome RAF pilot, she was an attractive well-spoken English woman, he drove an MG TC sports car, she had the regulation Terrier "Mascot" and they were expecting their first child. On that fateful late summer's day he flew his Lancaster low over their country cottage, waggled the wings so she would know it was him, and unfortunately never returned. He had just completed a full tour and had volunteered for a "gardening assignment" (laying mines in shipping lanes) in the channel. His body was washed up on the shores of Denmark, the country that his Grandfather emigrated to New Zealand from as a young man in 1858. Squadron Leader West was 25.

Eileen journeyed to New Zealand to be near her in-laws and to give birth to their daughter Elisabeth. She returned to England a short time later and she met and married Wing Commander Gordon Gedge. They had postings in Germany and ironically he accepted a posting as C/O of NZRF Ohakea Air Force Base only 16 miles from the birth city of Peter in New Zealand.

