

TO:-

Date Stamp

Mrs. Geo. Peers
 Duart Road
 Havelock Nth.
 New Zealand.

Cockfosters, Barnet
 Herts. 22 DE. 44

SENDER'S NAME AND ADDRESS C.H. Lightoller, Cockfosters, Barnet, Herts.

My darling old girl ... Words just simply cannot even nearly express our sorrow and sympathy with you in our mutual loss of Dick. Both Sylvia and I were just stunned when I got the message from his C.O... I didn't write you then as I wanted to find out some of the details first hand. Now as I write I have just got back from the funeral. Dick as you know was second pilot of his station. He had taken up a practice flight. Very quickly the weather, always treacherous up there, grew rapidly worse. The wind got up to an extraordinary degree and visibility closed right down. Apparently Dick's machine was driven a long way north as it went dark and by the direst bad luck he struck an isolated high hill, a thing that could happen to the very best pilot in those circumstances and death was instantaneous. Thank God it wasn't the result of fire. He had with him his Gunner and Observer, the latter would I think have been responsible for the navigation. Not that one can attach any blame to him in those conditions which I gather grew so perfectly appalling in such a short time... It is an out of the way spot and my train was two hours late. I arrived just three minutes before they moved off from his station. Rosskeen in a little graveyard in the hills a few miles away. There were assembled everyone of the station from the Captain down. Six ratings took the coffin from the hearse and they were immediately followed by the officers of his squadron carrying the wreaths. Next came the WREN officers, then the duty officer and myself. Behind again were all the other officers including the captain, with the firing party marching with arms reversed bringing up the rear. Everyone formed up and the service was read. The bugle then sounded, the firing party loaded and fired the first volley. Again the bugle sounded and the second volley was fired. The bugle call and the third and final volley was fired. The party then fixed bayonets and came to the 'Present' whilst with everyone at the

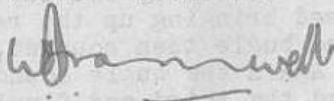
salute, the 'Last Post' was sounded... It was all very impressive - but does little to soften our sorrow... I talked with them all after we returned and it would really have done your heart good to listen to the high tributes they one and all paid to Dick, despite the fact that he had not been long on the station. As an officer and as a man they seemed as if they could not speak too highly... Now Alice dear, I have suggested they should send all effects to us, but the decision rests with the Admiralty. If they do send them here, we will let you have a complete list and you will let us know what you want done with everything in detail - whether to dispose of some here (as we did with Brian's things) or to return everything to you. I also took a camera with me thinking I might get something as a remembrance for you, but I found they had appointed an official photographer and they have promised to let me have some prints which I will send on as soon as I get them... I was away on a voyage last time Dick was here but Sylvia says he then seemed to be in the best of spirits and amused himself sawing logs. He had two other N.Z. chums with him, but I am not sure they did not come from Crail. In any case there are three other New Zealanders at Fearn and I have left a cordial welcome for them to come and stay with us, if they want a bed whilst on leave in London. If I find out any further details from them I will of course let you have them, though I think there is little more they can add to what I have already told you - and those details I guessed you would like to have... Its a sorrowful time for us all for Old Dick was a favourite everywhere. He had grown so much older, more responsible and self assured of late. He was no longer the boy we used to know and Sylvia said she could even notice a difference this last time since he had been appointed second pilot with his own squadron, this despite that no less than four were senior to him by a couple of months. I had a letter from him only a week ago telling me this and other news, such as two New Zealanders in the squadron from Crail - one he says, a particular friend of Les's. He also says he has had a couple of air letters and surface letters from home, the last one being the 6th November and everyone seems in top form. Margaret seems to be putting in for a nurse as Mother was mentioning training in March. One letter was dated 15th February 1943 and it has ... certainly travelled about"... Please give Margaret and Doreen Sylvia's and my love. We know what a devoted family you all are and just what this loss

must mean to you. Margaret was often in his thoughts and often we used to talk about her. There's no doubt you tell them, they had a brother who kept a very warm spot in his heart for his 'little' sisters out there waiting for him to come back... Its a hard row to hoe and, as we know only too well, time is the only consoler and a long long time it takes. Sorrow and loss seems always to draw others closer to one and that is how Sylvia, Claire and I feel to you, your husband and Margaret... God bless and keep you.

HERBERT

(Sylvia gave him the photo of Anthony & Suzanne. He was very proud of them.)

This is the copy of the letter marked with the letter "D" referred to in the annexed Affidavit of George Peers sworn at Hastings this 6th day of July, 1945. Before me:-



A Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand