

Wings over Wairarapa to honour ace and RAF



Alex Mitchell

The Trust House Wings Over Wairarapa airshow to be held at Hood Aerodrome, Masterton, on the weekend of 17–18 January 2009 will feature a tribute to Colin Gray, New Zealand's highest scoring fighter pilot of World War II. Doug Brooker's two-seat Spitfire IX (see June 2008 *Aviation News*) will appear in the desert colours and marking of one of Gray's aircraft.

Colin Gray left New Zealand to join the RAF in 1938. He fought in the Battle of Britain, then in late 1942 was posted to North Africa to command 81 Squadron, the first unit to fly the Spitfire IX in the Middle East. By the invasion of Sicily in July 1943 he was a Wing Commander. Returning to the UK with 27 confirmed victories, he held two successive commands in training units before, in July 1944, being appointed Wing Commander Flying of the Detling Wing operating in support of the army in Europe and against V-1 flying bombs. Colin Gray retired from the RAF in 1961 as a Group Captain, and died aged 80 in Waikanae in 1995.

The Spitfire will be only one of the of the airshow highlights. A unique formation of historic British biplanes will fly in honour of the 90th anniversary of the Royal Air Force as well as paying tribute to World War I aviators: three replica SE5As (top), a Sopwith Camel (below), a Sopwith Triplane and a Bristol Fighter (bottom).

This will be the first time since the start of the modern Warbirds displays that three SE5A fighters have flown together, anywhere in the world. This will also be the first time the Sopwith Triplane has been on display at Hood aerodrome. The Camel is now well known at the Wings over Wairarapa airshows, where its maneuverability and "blipping" engine make it a crowd favorite.

Tickets for Trusthouse Wings Over Wairarapa 2009 are on sale now through all Ticketek outlets, by phoning 0800 TICKETEK or on-line through www.ticketek.co.nz.



Alex Mitchell

Vintage Aviator Air Display and open days

The Vintage Aviator Limited will be holding several air displays at Masterton's Hood aerodrome this summer.

The first, on 15 November, is to celebrate Armistice Day. It will feature spectacular handling displays and mock dogfights by the World War I original and replica aircraft in TVAL's collection. The air show will commence at 3.00pm and conclude at 6.00pm.

Entry fees: adults \$20.00; school students \$10; under 5 years free. Visiting pilots please refer to NOTAM and also observe caution, as many display aircraft will be operating without radio.

The very successful open days that operated last summer on Saturdays and Sundays will recommence on 1 November. They give visitors, for a small charge, an opportunity to obtain close-up views of TVAL's and The Old Stick and Rudder Company's aircraft, with a guided tour of the facilities. Also on offer on these weekends are trial flights in TVAL's de Havilland Tiger Moth or the OS&R Co's 1946 de Havilland Chipmunk. For more information contact 06 377 7999.

Report by Clive Wilkinson



Summer airshows

Omaka Italiano

Classic Fighters 2009 at Omaka during Easter, 10–12 April, will be going Italian. This gives organisers the chance to take advantage of a bond between the Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre and the Ferrari Owners' Club, so the event will be graced by classic Ferrari survivors — not to mention some other great Italian machinery. It also means visitors to the show can expect to eat and drink well.

Then, of course, there are the planes.

A Le Rhone rotary engine Sopwith Pup built in the US in the 1960s by World War I replica pioneer Joe Pfeiffer (who also built the Nieuport 11 that appeared at Classic Fighters last year) is expected to be one of six early aircraft types permanently based at Omaka.

They will be part of a Great War air battle, with the staff of seven New-Zealand-based Fokker Triplanes ganging up on SE5s and Sopwiths, while ground forces mix it with an original Krupp's cannon and a World War I tank. The Second World War will be represented by a Spitfire, Mustang and Kittyhawk, along with a PBY Catalina, DC3, Harvards, a taxiable Stuka replica and several mystery types from overseas.

Tickets can be purchased on-line at website www.classicfighters.co.nz, with an Early Bird



Above: a sheep in wolf's clothing — or is that a wolf in sheep's clothing? — a Harvard in the colours of the Regia Aeronautica 1942.

Below: Jagdstaffel Omaka.



special of \$250 for a three-day Gold Pass available until October 15. After that the price goes up to \$300.



Alex Mitchell