

A distinguished life, both in war and peacetime roles

FRANCIS WILLIAM Davison, who died in Adelaide, South Australia, recently, was a Timaru-born and educated man who had a distinguished war and peacetime record in the Royal Air Force (RAF). He was 87.

The son of a well-known carrier, William Davison, and his wife Anne Grace, he was educated at Timaru South and Timaru Boys High Schools and was learning the watchmaking and jewellery business in Stafford Street when he left home in 1941 to join the Royal New Zealand Air Force as a pilot trainee.

After gaining his wings and commission at Wigram, he shipped to England and spent the next four years on active service, principally as an all-weather

night fighter and ground attack pilot in Beaufighter and Mosquito aircraft. At just 21 he held the rank of squadron leader. After commanding a gunnery training squadron, he returned to 488 (New Zealand) Squadron as a flight commander and flew on operations until the end of the war.

Back in Timaru, Mr Davison resumed his trade as a watchmaker and was a foundation committee member and pilot of the newly formed South Canterbury Aero Club in 1946. But in 1947, he chose to return to Britain and take up a permanent commission in the RAF, beginning a distinguished career spanning more than 20 years.

His first posting, as a flight commander in the famous 29



Americans in night and all-weather tactics, he was reassigned to a fighter test squadron at USAF Elgin. For the next three years, he helped to evaluate various types of fighter aircraft, including the then new F69 Scorpion jet.

On his return to Britain in 1952, he spent time at the Central Fighter Establishment before

(Night Fighter) Squadron, was followed by a tour of exchange duty with the United States Air Force. After a year during which he helped to train

attending a year-long course at the RAF Staff College, Bracknell. When he graduated with distinction, he was promoted to wing commander and appointed to command the RAF's 68 Squadron, based in West Germany and equipped with Meteor NF11 all-weather fighters.

After completing his service in Germany in 1958, he returned to the UK, for a tour of duty at Fighter Command headquarters, a course at the Joint Services Staff College and a term on the college tutorial staff. In 1963, he was posted to London, to join the planning staff of the Ministry of Defence in Whitehall, and two years later became senior RAF officer at the Weapons Research Establishment in South Australia. In 1968, Mr Davison

chose to retire from the RAF and remain in South Australia because conditions suited his younger son's special needs.

After seven years in an executive role with an Adelaide company he became chief executive of Minda Incorporated, a large charitable and welfare organisation in the state, in 1975, staying in the role until his retirement in 1986.

Two years later, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of his long and valuable service to a host of special needs bodies, and in 1989 was promoted to the rank of commander in the Order of St John which he had served since the 1960s. Mr Davison is survived by his wife, Betty, whom he married in England in 1943, and two sons. - D E Drake

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DEATHS

DAVISON Francis William, Wing Commander RAF (ret'd), Am, Cmdr St Johns: At Adelaide, South Australia, on July 17, 2009, I his 88th year, dearly loved and loving husband of Beatrice (Betty) for 66 years, loved and devoted father of Antony and Julian and grandfather.