

Sir Keith Park *Look Skywards*

Never has such an outstanding New Zealand leader been overlooked by so many and known by so few.



Sir Keith Park was a man of unparalleled strategic and tactical genius, and with foresight in aviation. And with a strong commitment to civic duty to match. The purpose of our **Look Skywards** project is to honour his values by providing the recognition that he deserves.

Park was the ace fighter pilot and leader who saved London in the first and critical victory of WWII—the Battle of Britain. He had no taste for politics in the middle of a crisis, and it cost him his job. What Winston Churchill later called ‘. . . jealousy and cliques...’ led to Park being discredited and demoted.

Despite this unjust treatment after he had assured victory Park went on to deliver others—again and again.

Park influenced modern civil aviation and led the creation of Auckland International Airport. He was an environmentalist whose advocacy saved the Hauraki Gulf from pollution. His humanity and sensitivity changed the lives of underprivileged children, and to those afflicted with blindness and epilepsy.

We believe that none of our countrymen from this era had a more direct impact on our history and been denied more recognition. Everywhere—and all the time—Park knew he was a New Zealander.

He never failed at any task he was given

Chief of Air Staff Sir Stephen Dalton, 2010

Leadership

Leaders are not good because they are right.

Leaders are good because they are willing to trust.

Young people want to change the world by serving it. This means consensus, shared purpose and a leadership approach to match.

We believe that understanding Sir Keith Park's contribution to our history—especially his innovations in leadership—can encourage young New Zealanders to realise the new realities that will best serve them and our country. By the standards of his time Park was unconventional. He achieved extraordinary success by integrating purpose, consensus and technology. His system worked because it blended different voices and vocabularies to create a shared sense of experience.

Many young New Zealanders may seem burdened with anxiety, indifference, boredom, guilt, self-obsession, and under-achievement. They see 'leadership' as an outmoded (and male) idea that works through a hierarchy that relies on direction and negative criticism. History was then. Now is now. What is a leader anyway?

The digital world has changed the skills needed to 'lead better'. Park recognized that successful outcomes depend on initiative, teamwork, and co-ordination. He anticipated our digital generation by recognising that interconnectivity both enabled but demanded a new approach to leadership.

In the hierarchical and bureaucracy-riddled 1940's Park anticipated the value of blending multiple information sources shared across multiple locations (networks!) to make best use of the shared sense experience of everyone in the system, and of those whose lives depended on it. Using the analogue resources of the day Park created an interactive and open-loop physical network linking thousands of people in hundreds of locations without pause. Data, decisions and results were continuously exchanged for 24 hours in real time—and in minutes. The system, and Park's use of it, saved Britain.

Park viewed failure as a failure of leadership, not failure by those who provided the data for this network or for those who had to make decisions based on it. He would not allow anyone to see themselves negatively--or to be so treated by those who preferred criticism to engagement. Park's contempt was reserved for those who thought that humiliation and rote learning brought results.

Park's leadership principles are evergreen. In our age of digital networks we believe they can motivate young New Zealanders to work out what leadership means for them, and how to best exercise it to deliver their aspirations for our country. History does, after all, have something to offer them.

The linked video clip highlights Sir Keith Park's leadership qualities, expressed through the whole of his life: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=bsHQuhLg1KE&feature=share>

Recognition

Park was much praised—and little recognised. His medals were accompanied by bungled promotions, a humiliating reassignment after his greatest achievement, and early retirement at a lower rank and with fewer rewards than those who had achieved much less.

Park's contributions to the official analysis of events—the 'paper battle'—were diluted in favour of retrospective justification for the official view. Linking the success of his leadership in South-East Asia with recognition and promotion was seen as "...provocative..." to the achievements of others.

Unlike his contemporaries in rank - if not in achievement - Park received no peerage, no post-war appointment as a Governor General in the Commonwealth he served, or any post in public service. Sadly, this was also true in New Zealand, where our international airport was named after the swamp it was built on, not after the man who made it possible.

Park did not write an autobiography. The official history of his decisions and actions was tastefully composed to disguise reality and avoid what was labelled "...unnecessary criticism..."

His success as a leader perhaps told against him. Park understood that, for those with aristocratic pretensions, being right in hindsight, as well as at the time, causes offence.

If any one man won the Battle of Britain, he did. I do not believe it is realised how much that one man, with his leadership, his calm judgement and his skill, did to save not only our country but the world.

Lord Tedder, Chief of the Royal Air Force, 1947

A Tribute -- and Our Ask

We are inviting you to contribute to the \$335,000 needed to complete Stage Two of the Sir Keith Park tribute *Look Skywards*.

Success with Stage One

Look Skywards began in October 2019 on the initiative of members of the Thames Lions Club – Michael and Christine Kemp – World War 2 survivors. A full-sized replica of Park's personal Hurricane fighter costing UK39,000 was erected in Thames for the Battle of Britain Commemorations on 13 September 2020. RAF Wing Commander Andy Bryant, UK Defence Advisor to New Zealand led the inauguration.

A total of NZ220,000 was raised—one third from the Kemp family, a third from Thames and regional donors, and the balance as goods and services from national and local businesses. The project was initiated, executed and delivered – including fund raising -- in ten months from a standing start.



Now--Stage Two

A life-sized 2.3 metre bronze statue of Park in his flying uniform will be mounted on a plinth under the Hurricane, with landscaping, lighting, permanent placards featuring Sir Keith's achievements, and a wall for donor recognition plaques.

We are considering relocating this tribute (Statue and Hurricane together) a short distance from the present Thames Airfield site to achieve easier public access and street appeal so that the memorial will be recognised as a 'gateway' to Park's birthplace, and to the surrounding Coromandel region.

Work on the sculpture continues, but we need to accelerate momentum to meet the inauguration target--the Battle of Britain Commemoration in September 2023.

The budget, cashflow, donation arrangements and an outline of alternatives for celebrating your involvement all follow. As a significant individual or organisational donor, we believe we can meet your needs and preferences of how you decide to participate in ***Looking Skyward.***



Establishing a memorial to Sir Keith in Thames is a fitting tribute to the heroism and courageous actions of a man without whom the history of the Battle of Britain could have been disastrously different.

Royal Air Force: Headquarters Air Command, July 2020

Heritage and the Future

On his seventieth birthday in 1962 a leading newspaper declared Sir Keith Park to be one of the ten greatest New Zealanders. It is a long time since 1962.

When the past is forgotten the cost is to our future. The achievements and the character of great New Zealanders can – should - remind us of our aspirations and our inclusive and democratic values.

We believe that **Looking Skywards** will provide encouragement to Look Forward.

Recognition Park demonstrated what one special New Zealander can achieve on the world stage at critical moments in history.

Presence The best place for a tribute is where it began. Park's birthplace is the gateway to one of the most attractive and popular recreational areas of New Zealand.

Art As a statement of our history and values **Look Skyward** deserves compelling art, crafted by an internationally recognized sculptor.

Aspiration Park's ideals, ethics, skill, humanity and achievements in international conflict and in civil society are a benchmark and a compass for young New Zealanders. This man had no easy path.

This tall, lean New Zealander displayed an unusual combination of intense individual activity and initiative with a capacity for teamwork and co-ordination.

Famous New Zealander: Eugene Grayland

Sir Keith Park showed great integrity of character, simplicity and graciousness in life. He never wavered in his steel-like sense of duty, which he exercised at whatever personal cost.

Very Rev J.O. Rymer, Dean of Auckland, 1975

Statue and Sculptor

Our sculptor is Joanne Sullivan. She lived and trained in South Africa and the United States before becoming a New Zealand Citizen in 2005 and works full time as a bronze sculptor. Her earlier nursing career and appreciation of anatomy shows in the sensitive detail she brings to her work on miniatures and large-scale bronze sculptures.

Joanne is a Signature Member of The American Academy of Equine Art where she trained, and then worked as an instructor. She is one of a small number of sculptors who complete the finishing work on waxes, fettle the bronze, and gives the work its final patina.

Joanne's sculptures are in private collections, and her public works include the bronze sculpture of athlete Sir John Walker in Auckland, a statue of the racehorse 'Phar Lap' in Timaru, and 'Balance'—an out-sized sculpture of a rooster toppling a chair at the entrance to the Albany public library.

"A statue of Park would be looking up into the battlefield that shows no trace now of where the young men fought. Their condensation trails were only water crystals and they faded in a few hours. The battlefield where he led his pilots to a victory that cost so much, and you could say cost too much, except that defeat would have cost everything."

Clive James



Keith Rodney Park

– His Story

Born in Thames, New Zealand 1892.
Died in Auckland, New Zealand
on Waitangi Day 1975.



Gallipoli, the Somme and the Air Ace

An artillery officer in Gallipoli – allocated only two shells a day for his guns. Park was injured after being blown off his horse in the battle of the Somme in France and was declared unfit for service. He joined the new Royal Flying Corps and soon became a fighter ace over northern France with 20 victories and was awarded the Military Cross and Bar. Park began a lifelong battle for the resources, respect and improved conditions for his fellows. He learned by watching British officers that a pompous manner earns contempt.

Representing--and Defending-- the Realm

Increased responsibilities and rank 1920-30's; developed technical training; made risky-record-breaking flights to encourage civil aviation; graduated from RAF Staff College; managed Middle East technical and staff operations from Egypt; UK Air Attaché for South America from Buenos Aires, promoting the export of civil and military aircraft against American competition. Already recognised as someone who could bring order out of chaos, this last assignment awakened Park's interest in business and civil aviation.

From 1938 Park worked with Sir Hugh Dowding, the Chief of Fighter Command, Reginald Mitchell the designer of the Spitfire, and Robert Watson-Watt --the developer of modern radar--to create the strategy, day-to-day tactics and the communications and control system for the air defence of the UK.

The Battle of Britain

Park flew the last fighter over Dunkirk. He was Commander-in-Chief of the fighter defence of London and South-East England which took the brunt of the German fighter and bomber attacks. His problem was the choice, timing, and positioning of his inferior numbers of resources and a lack of co-operation from the Air Ministry and from critical sections of the RAF.

Sir Winston Churchill paid a visit to the Group 11 underground Headquarters at Uxbridge at the height of the Battle of Britain, September 1940.

Churchill: 'There appears to be many enemy aircraft coming in.'

Park: 'There will be someone there to meet them.'

Churchill: 'What reserves have we?'

Park: 'None.'

Park's burden was waiting every hour of every day to see if he had been right. Churchill and Lord Beaverbrook (in charge of aircraft production) admired Park and never interfered with his independent decisions and improvisations. Others did.

Betrayal

Despite Park's Battle of Britain victory he was 'sandbagged' at a conference on fighter tactics in October 1940 by what Park later called ". . . the scheming and deceit of envious officers anxious for their own advancement ..." The alternative tactics insisted on by his so-called colleagues soon failed. History showed that Park's use of scarce aircraft and even scarcer pilots was the right and only approach.

Side-lined to Air Training Park discovered that fewer pilots were being trained than in peacetime--a situation he quickly moved to correct. He continued his campaign against pointless paperwork, confusion, resistance to change, and condescension toward anyone of lower rank.

Malta

More bombs were dropped on this tiny Mediterranean island than on England during the whole of the Battle of Britain. Malta could only be defended from the air and was the essential base for Allied attacks on the shipping of fuel and supplies intended for the enemy in North Africa Park completed the defence, then switched his air force to attack.

Facing negativity from Army and Navy commanders resenting his insistence on freedom of action, Park used the same methods that won the Battle of Britain--and with the same success. On the fuel-starved island he was the first Air Vice Marshall anyone had seen doing his rounds on a bicycle, learning more from his aircrews and the battered civilians than from the parade of visiting VIPs.

South-East Asia--from Destruction to Construction

Park's final posting was to another muddled situation in Ceylon and Singapore. He immediately arranged to supply the army in Burma from the air and to attack a still-dangerous enemy.

With no time for formalities in the heat, dust, rain and mud he was highly visible and demanded that as well as military supplies the personal needs of his men--razor blades, soap, beer--were met. By ignoring what he called "...bellyaching signals..." and making no secret of his preference and admiration for American energy and methods, Park irritated more senior officers in Britain.

At the end of the Pacific war Park had to deal with the unrest of troops scornful of the political promises to get them home—and they listened to him—and ran mercy missions for tens of thousands of civilians and prisoners of war.

Park achieved this because he had the foresight to establish air routes throughout Asia and to secure air bases—notably Changi in Singapore--to make room for the civil aviation services that he knew would follow. The term 'supply chain' could have been made for Park.

His First and Best Country

After being prematurely retired from the RAF in 1946 Park again lead commercial negotiations for British aircraft sales in South America, and then returned to New Zealand as the Australian and NZ representative for the Hawker Siddeley Aircraft Group. He served three terms as an Auckland City Councillor—always in the top three of votes cast—and was a leading advocate for a new Auckland sewage system and the preservation of the Waitemata Harbour.

Park's insistence on results, his direct and informal personality and his concern for people as individuals was expressed in his trusteeship on the Board of the New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, the preservation of heritage buildings, housing and treatment for epileptics, and the Health Camp movement for underprivileged children

Park's main achievement was as Chair of the Committee which won the struggle to persuade the Government to buy land and to develop an International Airport for Auckland. His contribution to the development of New Zealand civil aviation was significant—but Park was not surprised that his outspoken views were not recognised or liked in official quarters.

Such is the patriot's boast, wherever he roam, his first, best country ever is at home.

Oliver Goldsmith, 'The Traveller'

[The biography 'Park' by Vincent Orange is an excellent and full description of his achievements and character. We relied extensively on this book for our presentation.]



Look Skywards: Funding and Budget

Funding

Stage 1 – Replica Hurricane Fighter in Sir Keith’s Battle of Britain presentation. This has been successfully completed and was inaugurated as the Battle of Britain Commemorations in September 2020. The memorial is at the Thames Airfield, 395A Ngati Maru Highway on the approaches to Thames Township.

This stage was fully funded at approximately \$220,000 with three equal contributions:

- Principal donor;
- Public donations; and
- Goods and Services in kind.

Stage 2 – Statue of Sir Keith in his flying uniform placed under the Hurricane Fighter. The Stage 2 budget is \$335,000 as shown in the breakdown overleaf. The completion of the statue (Stage 2) is now proceeding progressively. The current funding position will be presented to you at the time you are considering your donation.

Donations will be appropriately and formally acknowledged, with those \$10,000 and above acknowledged by negotiation by case.

Budget

These estimates are based on the experience of completing Stage 1 and current industry information.

1	Civil Engineer: consulting fees	\$ 4,000	✓
2	TCDC Consent fees	\$ 5,000	
3	Statue, complete ex-Joanne's studio	\$ 245,000	
4	Transport statue to site	\$ 2,000	✓
5	Craneage on site	\$ 2,000	✓
6	Plinth, installed	\$ 3,5000	✓
7	Plaques for plinth	\$ 2,500	
8	Landscape design	\$ 5,000	
9	Landscape implementation	\$ 10,000	
10	Lighting	\$ 6,000	
11	Signage	\$ 6,000	✓
12	Administration expenses	\$ 4,5000	
13	Contingency ~14%	\$ 40,000	

Donations

The vehicle for *Look Skywards* is Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc., which has applied for Charitable Status as a charitable incorporated society—not as a trust.

Once granted, the charitable status reference number will be on the receipt to enable donors to claim the appropriate tax relief.

Bank Account Name: Sir Keith Park Memorial Airfield Inc.
Bank Account Number: 38-9022-0151185 – 00
Charitable Registration: CC60152

Contact: Geoff Furkert FEngNZ

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Thank you