

# Dutch recall Waiuta hero

By Laura Mills



A stone from Waiuta will be laid over the grave of a West Coast airman shot down over The Netherlands during World War Two.

The memorial follows years of painstaking research by his relative, former Reef ton man, Nelson artist Darryl Robertson.

Andrew McEwin, is one of 18 air crew remembered on the Fallen Airmen Memorial to be unveiled this month in the village of Markelo, in the eastern Netherlands.

Mr McEwin was the son of the Waiuta Mine manager at the time.

Mr Robertson said his father had asked him to visit his cousin Andrew's grave, if possible.

"Many years later I was doing family research and I got very interested in the crash, but nobody left alive six years ago could add any information, so I went looking."

He turned up a full body of information and searched for other New Zealand families to share it with. The people of Markelo then asked him to help find the other families. To date he has located 20 families in the United States, France, Scotland, England, Australia, and New Zealand.

About 21 people from this country will travel to Holland this month, and many others from other countries, for the unveiling.

"I decided to help as it was clear so many people would find healing and bonds in this memorial," Mr Robertson said.

He also tracked down the family of the Austrian fighter ace who shot down Mr McEwin's plane, and has been invited to meet the family.

Friends of Waiuta chairwoman Frances Hunter has given Mr Robertson a special polished stone from the mill

at Waiuta to place at Mr McEwin's grave.

It was a summer's night in 1943 when the Stirling bomber with Mr McEwin on board set off from Newmarket, England. It was one of 500 Allied planes that headed for Mulheim, Germany, that night, Scottish newspaper the Daily Record recently reported. When the plane EF399 turned for home its low, lumbering form made it a sitting duck for retaliation and it was hit by flak.

Captain Burbridge was preparing for a crash landing when the plane began to break up, burning as it fell to the ground.

The planes were part of a two-day bombardment of Mulheim — the RAF sent 242 Lancasters, 155 Halifaxes, 93 Stirlings, 55 Wellingtons, and 12 Mosquito Bombers. On the ground, 578 people were killed and 1174 wounded. At least 64% of Mulheim city was destroyed.

Three bombers of the Royal Air Force crashed in Markelo: the Halifax W7877 at the Tichelweg, the Lancaster W7877 at the Witterietsweg and the Stirling EF399 at the Traasweg.

Eighteen of the 21 crew members were killed and 17 were identified and buried at the Algemene Begraafplaats (general cemetery) in Markelo.