



TALES FROM A LOGBOOK

ELIOT MILLAR KING: A KIWI IN THE RNAS

by Ian Burns

At the commencement of the First World War, New Zealand had a population of approximately 1.1 million (including around 50000 Māori). Armed forces comprised a universal service Territorial Force, the small New Zealand Naval Force was a division of the Royal Navy, and there was no air service. Yet this small population was to provide 120000 service personnel, the majority of whom served overseas. Of this number less than a thousand served in the aerial services, approximately 80 joining the RNAS, of whom around half were aircrew. Of these many served in scout (including three RNAS aces; Harold Beamish, Thomas Culling and Forster Maynard.) and bomber units on the Western Front. Less flew seaplanes and flying boats. Eliot Millar King was one of these few.

Eliot Millar King's Royal Naval Air Service, Pilot's Flying Log Book, is a rare survivor. The wonder of a logbook is that it opens a window on the non-operational flights. Operations were covered by reports and these can usually, but not always, be located in the archives. If a flight were non-operational it often disappears from the record. King also used the pages of his logbook to records details of the raids he flew. Oddly, he rarely recorded take-off or landing times. So, whilst the following tales are based on his logbook, they are confirmed and enhanced from other sources as available.

As King's Egyptian service closely paralleled that of Guy Duncan Smith additional details may be found in the latter's memoir *The Aerial Crusader* published in Volume 44, Issues 2 and 3 of this Journal.

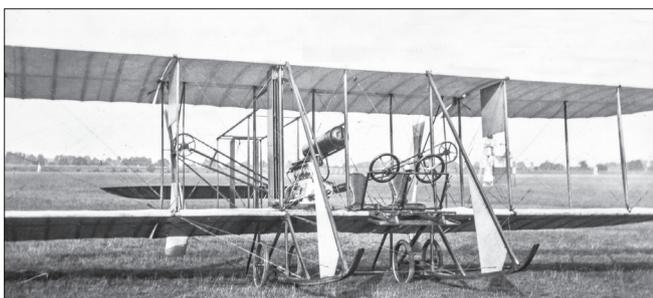
The Kings of New Plymouth

Thomas King, a sickly 18-year-old from London, was aboard the first ship to bring settlers to New Plymouth in 1841, today the major city of the Taranaki Region on the west coast of North Island. The climate obviously suited him as he married and raised four children to adulthood. He twice served in the New Zealand parliament. Thomas died on 28 April 1893.

One of his sons, Newton King, born on 21 July 1855, became an auctioneer, later founding a stock and station agency serving the needs of local farmers. The company long survived its founder, finally closing in 1987. Newton married Mary St George at New Plymouth on 13 December 1884, they raised three sons and two daughters.

Beatty-Wright at Hendon, an approved copy of a Wright Model B with a Beatty engine. Eliot wrote on the original: This is the machine I went up in. Note the two seats side by side – no straps of any kind. I sat next to the engine consequently I got all the benefit of the row it made.

:Adrienne Tatham



The youngest son was Eliot Millar King, born at New Plymouth on 5 April 1892. Eliot was educated at Waimataitai School, Timaru (1901-1903); Central School, New Plymouth (1903-1905); Nelson College (1905-1910). During this period Eliot is described as smallish in stature, standing five feet seven inches., with blue eyes, fair hair and a ready wit. He was a keen sportsman throughout his life and a wily tennis player. He served in the Nelson College Cadets for three years. On graduating in 1910, Eliot joined the family firm, becoming its Chairman in 1946.

Newton King together with his wife, Eliot, an elder brother Waldyve and sister Betty, embarked on a business and pleasure trip to Britain in 1914. The party left Auckland on the RMS *Niagara*, Union Steam Ship Company, for Vancouver, Canada, on 3 July. Sailing via Suva and Honolulu, the ship arrived in Vancouver by 19 July. Further passage to the UK was to be by rail across Canada, then steamer to the UK. They arrived in Toronto before the end of July. The war in Europe brought the trip to an end, the family returning to New Plymouth as quickly as possible.¹

Early Service in the RNAS

The New Plymouth, *Taranaki Daily News*, in its 1 June 1915 edition carried the following:

Mr Eliot King, youngest son of Mr and Mrs Newton King, leaves on Friday for Auckland, en route for England, where it is his intention to qualify for a commission in the army. He will sail by Riverina on Tuesday, and at Sydney he will join the P and O boat Egypt for Home.²

The *Riverina* sailed from Auckland on 8 June 1915, and the *Egypt* arrived London on 26 July.

A three-guinea extravagance at Hendon shortly after Eliot's arrival changed his intentions. He took a 10-minute flight, possibly a trial lesson, in a Wright Type B at the Beatty Flying School. Following the flight the flying bug had bitten hard, and he abandoned his intention to join the army and applied to join the Royal Naval Air Service. Appearing before a selection committee on 2 September 1915, he was appointed Probationary Flight Sub-Lieutenant with effect from 18 September 1915. On the same day he commenced a month -long, hands-on, engineering course at the Artificers Training School, *Fisgard*, Portsmouth. On completion of the course he was posted to the Preliminary Flying School at Eastbourne.

Eastbourne had been an active aerodrome prior to the war, with two flying schools and a nascent aircraft factory, that of the Eastbourne Aviation Company. The aerodrome was taken over by the Admiralty in October 1914, and the Preliminary Flying School established the following April. The School had two Flights; a basic training flight with an assortment of types, including Maurice Farman and Grahame White pushers, and the advance flight equipped with Curtiss JN-3 biplanes. Only pilots intended for landplanes flew the Curtiss, floatplane pilots were sent to a different station to continue their training.

At Eastbourne, Eliot's first flight was on 18 October 1915 aboard Grahame-White XV Boxkite 3157. He noted on the first page of his logbook, *Partial Temporary charge of the controls for 1st time*. His instructor, Mr Hugh Henry Macleod Fraser, had been a trainee himself until very recently. On 3 November,