

War Hero Remembered

A plaque dedicated to the memory of Pilot Officer James Stellin was unveiled at Stellin Memorial Park on 19 August 2007 - exactly 63 years after his heroic death in France.

The plaque came about after John Bickerton, a member of the Friends of the Wellington Town Belt, had researched the history of Stellin Memorial Park.

He found that the park had been gifted to the Wellington City Council in 1964, on the death of James Stellin Sr, a well-known Wellington property developer. The land at the southern end of Tinakori Hill had originally been part of the Wellington Town Belt and it is not known how it came into Mr Stellin's ownership.

However, Mr Stellin gifted it in memory of his son, James, who had been killed in France during World War II. The sum of \$2,000 was also gifted for a plaque, which never eventuated until John Bickerton reminded the council about its long-overdue obligation.

Pilot Officer James Hill Stellin (Jnr) sacrificed his life on 19 August 1944 to avoid crashing his damaged plane into the village of St_Maclou-la-Briere in Normandy. He was preparing to bail out but, instead, stayed on board for long enough to divert his Hawker Typhoon away from the village. By the time he bailed out, he was too close to the ground for his parachute to open and he fell to his death.

France later recognised James Stellin's heroism with an award of the Croix de Guerre avec Palme medal. The villagers of St_Maclou-la-Briere still honour his memory to this day.



John Bickerton (left) and Sven Stellin, Pilot Officer Stellin's nephew, beside the memorial plaque at Stellin Memorial Park.

To visit:

Turn up Orangi Kaupapa Road from the intersection of Pembroke and Northland Roads. Drive-on access is sign-posted beyond the turn-off to Mataroa Ave.