



INSET: A 75 Squadron Stirling bomber.

Cyril Mora, New Plymouth, was this week reunited with a small piece of his past, a serial plate from his shot down World War II.

INSET: A 75 Squadron Stirling bomber.

Wartime episode

"Stranger than fiction" or "bloody marvellous" — that's New Plymouth man Cyril Mora's delighted response to having a small memento of a World War II incident.

Mr Mora (67) was a radio operator aboard a Royal Air Force Stirling bomber shot down in 1943.

The aircraft of 75 Squadron, the forebear of the Ohakea-based RNZAF strike squadron, was on its 28th mission when shot down on April 26, 1943, by an enemy night fighter over Holland.

Mr Mora parachuted to safety and took refuge with the Dutch underground which smuggled him back to England.

All seven crew members managed to jump free of the doomed aircraft.

Mr Mora was the only member not to be caught by the Germans.

The Stirling, 'C' for Charlie, crashed on to a farm paddock in the small town of Sassenheim, close to where Dutchman Willem van Ryn lived as a boy.

Mr van Ryn later bought the farm and earlier this year started digging up the old bomber.

On one part of the wreckage Mr van Ryn found a small serial plate with the aircraft serial number printed on it.

With the help of the Royal Air Force and an English historian in London, Mr van Ryn tracked down Mr Mora in New Plymouth and they met on Thursday.

Mr van Ryn gave the plate to Mr Mora and invited him to Holland next May.

Mr Mora says he would love to go as it would be the first time he has been to Holland since the war.

More than 8000 RAF bombers were shot down over the low countries