However the way have a fell to get 43 Herterh Greek with another will boy over in Invertargiel, knew allow and he has broken fealand. me what appears to be terriby \$20.8.44 Dear hors Shaver, Some like hime ago I received your address from our his air Deph, as the mother of Wo. for Shaver who was one of an air chew lost on operations on how &" last they sow alaw was captain of that Bomber and Spell that I would like to write to here of law of all members of the erew but have been waching in the hope that more definite news than I had received would come to hand I do not know what information you have received but Shave had nothing officially apart from the first cable announcing the pack that they were missing . I have just reherred from a visit to wellington where I had an wherever with the air Deft, hat they could give me no further information and so for death has not been presumed

43 Herbert Street Invercargill New Zealand 20.8.44

Dear Mrs Shaver,

Some little time ago I received your address from our N.Z. Air Dept. as the mother of W/O Joe Shaver who was one of an air crew lost on operations on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> last. My son Alan was captain of that Bomber and I felt that I would like to write to next of kin of all members of the crew but had been waiting in the hope that more definite news than I had received would come to hand.

I do not know what information you have received but I have had nothing officially apart from the first cable announcing the fact that they were missing. I have just returned from a visit to Wellington where I had an interview with the Air Dept., but they could give me no further information and so far death has not been presumed.

However Thave been able to get in contact with another h. 3. boy over in africa who Knew alaw and he has been able to get me what appears to be terribly final hero. This boy was not with the Same Squaron as our lado but got his information from an English lad 7/5gs Haddock who was I will quote what Jack Burhall, the his boy above referred to has to say -"I I have found an English lad . Tys/Sgs Haddock who was one his Squadron at the hime and he has given me the following account, but owing to lapse of hime since in happened, his story may not be streetly accurate purhicularly in regards to the name of the crew the date. Here it is - He thinks is was on the negle of hoo 11/12" and they were in a wellington Escarling a convoy about 150 to 200 hules S.E of their Base. They carried out their duly and left the convoy approximately on schedule to return to Base - this was within a few hours of day break truly big was apparently alugar han only were

However I have been able to get in contact with another N.Z. boy over in Africa who knew Alan and he has been able to get me what appears to be terribly final news.

This boy was not with the same squadron [221 Squadron] as our lads but got his information from an English lad F/Sgt Haddock who was. I will quote what Jack Birchall, the N.Z. boy above referred to, has to say ---

"I have found an English lad Fgt/Sgt Haddock who was on his squadron at the time and he has given me the following account, but owing to lapse of time since it happened, his story may not be strictly accurate, particularly in regards to the names of the crew & the date. Here it is — He thinks it was on the night of Nov 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> and they were in a Wellington escorting a convoy [probably KMS 30, Gibraltar to Port Said] about 150 to 200 miles S.E. of their Base [Luqa, Malta]. They carried out their duty and left the convoy approximately on schedule to return to Base. This was within a few hours of daybreak. Everything was apparently alright then & they were

haced for some distance on a direct course for Bose. From there they just disappleared. to signals of any sort were received howing was heard at all. It was a very wild night, sitch dark, frequent showers and would of almost face force. The sea was exceptionally rough. Haddock says there were heavy foot waves and Thrown that stress of sea fairly week Thank no reason to doubt hum. Search planes were out within three hours of them being overdue and although the Search was continued for there days, Here was no have. tweet can be presumed but what marky hippened no one can beel. The fact that no S.O.S. was preted up seems to indicate that it trust have been over very seedenly, with sugar sea running a successful dischip would have been almost impossible. As I few those accorage I could suggest four or five deffered things that could be

traced for some distance on a direct course for Base. From there they just disappeared. No signals of any sort were received, nothing was heard at all. It was a very wild night, pitch dark, frequent showers and wind of almost gale force. The sea was exceptionally rough. Haddock says there were twenty foot waves and knowing that stretch of sea fairly well I have no reason to doubt him. Search planes were out within three hours of their being overdue and although the search was continued for three days, there was no trace.

Much can be presumed but what really happened no one can tell. The fact that no S.O.S. was picked up seems to indicate that it must have been over very suddenly. With such a sea running, a successful ditching would have been almost impossible. As I flew those aircraft I could suggest four or five different things that could have

happened by as they are mainly beatiment I will not deal with them here \_ has is de story I have been fiven and I am afraid Here I nothing knew aging in it. all that I can add is that there much have been little or no suffering . It would have been all over within a few seconds if not uncansoneously. The possibility of them getting lost can be ruled out but like other remarks in this letter I Currot say anything more about that at present owing to clusuship regulations Rechaps in the feture something and the washed up which wire provide conduce as total happened and in that case I think the Squadron C.O. would gove you more information. this crew consissed of - alan captain. 2 and Alor Mo-Keeble, on his second were so he amos have been well experienced. Inglish. havingaion. For/Sqs. Thompson. Englise 1 Wap, a.S. W/O Shaver comme 2" . A G W/O Swife. Two gealand Real Eume 730 / Sys. Hart English, "

happened but as they are mainly technical I will not deal with them here. --- That is the story I have been given and I am afraid there is nothing encouraging in it. All that I can add is there must have been little or no suffering. It must have been all over within a few seconds if not instantaneously. The possibility of them getting lost can be ruled out but like other remarks in this letter I cannot say anything more about that at present owing to censorship regulations.

Perhaps in the future something may be washed up which will provide evidence as to what happened and in that case I think the Squadron C.O. would give you more information.

This crew consisted of Alan, captain;

2<sup>nd</sup> pilot P/O Keeble, on his second tour so he must have been well experienced, English;

Navigator Fgt/Sgt Thompson, English;

1<sup>st</sup> WopAG W/O Shaver, Canadian;

2<sup>nd</sup> WopAG W/O Swift, New Zealand;

Rear Gunner Fgt/Sgt Hart, English."

[WopAG = Wireless Operator/Air Gunner]

That completes the information in the letter and if you have been able bottom any further information in Camada I would be so glad to hear from you. When in weelington the other day I wen W/o Swift's tooker . her address is two h. Swift, 38 Rosburgh St, wellington h.S., Should you at any him wish to write her. by lad had only recently formed cop with his crew - be had had a speel in Hospital with a form of healand that only been back in duly a week as how shad woh described his new crew to The . On habituely wonders what the toys were like the doubt you were have de same peeling and an taking the liberty of posing you aphoto of alan taken just before leaving home to finish his harning in Canada By theway he hained at Dunoice where is in your province of outario, his your provinces are so tig over there that is protates were thires from

That completes the information in the letter and if you have been able to obtain any further information in Canada I would be so glad to hear from you.

When in Wellington the other day, I met W/O Swift's mother. Her address is Mrs W Swift, 38 Roxburgh St, Wellington N.Z., should you at any time wish to write to her.

My lad had only recently joined up with this crew — he had had a spell in Hospital with a form of malaria & had only been back on duty a week or two & had not described his new crew to me. One naturally wonders what the boys were like & no doubt you will have the same feeling and I am taking the liberty of posting you a photo of Alan taken just before leaving home to finish his training in Canada. By the way he trained at <a href="Dunville">Dunville</a> which is in your province of Ontario, but your provinces are so big over there that it is probably miles & miles from

for credit. I have not been able to bick your borow on the map - women y it to anywhere near St. Catherines. alon had some wenderful forend there. hur this affleck of 56 alters Si, St Catherines. If you would like to find out the hype of lad he was I would be so slad if you would get in buch with them one hese fals to say loo will about ones own boy but one thing I will say whatever may have happened in was not the to any muche risk being taken by alan. He was a most careful cleap - he best amin of a motor car I have sat beside and I know he was a food prob he always use losay " Safely first is my wollo when flyup. He was very conscious of his responsibility as captain of his plane of he was given time to think I am afraid the articles things went corresp with them boreate a very terrible one for him. I feel rather certain that he would "

Port Credit [Toronto, Ontario]. I have not been able to pick your town on the map & wonder if it is anywhere near St Catherines [St Catharines, Ontario]. Alan had some wonderful friends there. Mr & Mrs Affleck of 56 Albert St, St Catherines. If you would like to find out the type of lad he was I would be so glad if you would get in touch with them. One hesitates to say too much about one's own boy but one thing I will say, whatever may have happened it was not due to any undue risk being taken by Alan. He was a most careful chap – the best driver of a motor car I ever sat beside and I know he was a good pilot. He always used to say "Safety first" is my motto when flying. He was very conscious of his responsibility as captain of his plane & if he was given time to think, I am afraid the moment things went wrong with them would be a very terrible one for him.

I feel rather certain the he would be on

very friendly terms with your son . he had a behandons lot of hime for consiscens I have a very nice come from a commercia her officer - Flogs woolf - who had been in a previous tren with alan the had some Telly generous things to may about him. yen know you people of comade have been wonderful to our boys, one lad to whom I gave the afflices address wron back when he contacted them, that he would have have fetered felicied que hospitality could be shown to any one. Am afraid we hew gentenders one a debt to you canadians that we can use hope to regay. how I will be so glad to hear from you sometime . so for I have not been able to get the addresses of the word of kin of the three English boys, he I have another From in England there asterd him to get down for me from Mank A.F. This war is very terrible what a pracrique of all diese fine young had of ours had they would not have it attractionse it was conformable to hold then back even if we

very friendly terms with your son. He had a tremendous lot of time for Canadians.

I have a very nice letter from a Canadian Pilot Officer — Floyd Woolf — who had been in a previous crew with Alan & he had some very generous things to say about him. You know you people of Canada have been wonderful to our boys, one lad to whom I gave the Afflecks address wrote back when he contacted them, that he would never have believed such hospitality could be shown to any one. Am afraid we New Zealanders owe a debt to you Canadians that we can never hope to repay.

Now I will be so glad to hear from you sometime - so far I have not been able to get the addresses of the next of kin of the three English boys, but I have another son in England & have asked him to get them for me from the R.A.F.

This war is very terrible. What a sacrifice of all these fine young lads of ours but they would not have it otherwise – it was impossible to hold them back even if we

hed tried to do so. When alon had completed his haining in England for Coasial Commend he was advised of his appromised to his Brown on his 31th Burthday and be work out to me -" Hebest furthers, gift I have ever received". That was the sperie of our splanded tops Albah is the Speris that will win in the land, but how hard it will be when all is over swefinely realise that our own boys well not come tack, we father feel it body severy in but it is four moners who refer de mod by lost alan's hother over be years ago so she is not here to known his sourcefice, but I would rive you to know how much I feel for you in your great loss - unquestionally it is the two there who make the great sacrefice. with my kundist regards orgupathy Very seneerely yours low Feward

had tried to do so. When Alan had completed his training in England for Coastal Command, he was advised of his appointment to his Bomber on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and he wrote out to me – "the best birthday gift I have ever received".

That was the spirit of our splendid boys & that is the spirit that will win in the end, but how hard it will be when all is over & we finally realise that our own boys will not come back. We fathers feel it badly enough but it is you mothers who suffers the most. We lost Alan's mother over ten years ago so she's not here to mourn his sacrifice, but I would like you to know how much I feel for you in your great loss. Unquestionably it is the mothers who make the great sacrifice.

With my kindest regards & sympathy,
Very sincerely yours
Wm Stewart