

THE JOHNS MEMORIAL CHESS TROPHY

Size: 24 in x 22 in / 610 mm x 560 mm



Inscription:

IN MEMORIAM
LIONEL FAIRFAX FURNER-JOHNS
Pupil of The School 1933 – 1936
Flight Sergeant Navigator
Obit 30 May 1943 23 years of Age
Given by His Father 1979



Description: A wooden chessboard with inlaid squares and a border. On the 'bottom' is a plate attached with four panel pins. Around the border are silver shields each with the names of a winner- the best chess player in the School in that year. The first recipient was Michael Steadman who also won the trophy in 1980. Michael has won numerous New Zealand chess titles. In 2021 and 2023 the winner was Victor Coen, who received the rank of Junior Chess Grand Master in 2021 when he was a Year Nine student.

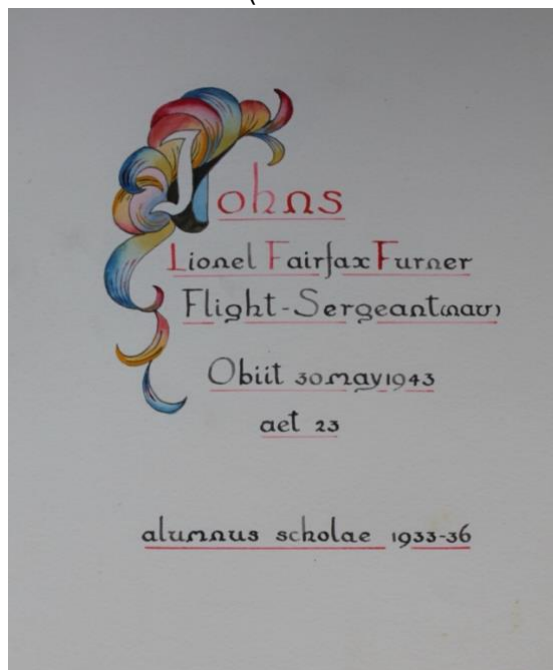
Discussion: The plate indicates that he had a hyphenated last name but his page in the Memorial Book agrees with other sources that his family name is Johns. His mother's name was Edith Maud Furner Johns which may explain the confusion over his name. Lionel Johns was a pupil at Mount Albert Grammar from 1933 to 1936. He was a keen chess player and was chosen to be secretary of the chess club in 1936, although he left school early in that year. He studied Accountancy for a year and was then employed as an Accountant by the British General Electric Company in Auckland. In January 1942 he began his training with the Royal New Zealand Airforce. After training in Canada and England he qualified as an Air Navigator. After further training he joined 90 Squadron of the Royal Air Force in early May 1943. On 29 May he took off on his first mission over Germany. The plane completed its mission successfully but on its return early on 30 May the plane crashed while attempting to land in low cloud. There was only one survivor. Lionel Fairfax Johns is buried in Haverhill Cemetery, Suffolk.

The New Zealand Herald reported his death on August 3 and mentioned that he was well known in musical circles and was a champion chess player. A year after his death his parents placed a memoriam in the Auckland Star with the following poem –

*He is staying in England
The place of his ancestors
So far from New Zealand
The homeland he loved.*

His parents were born and married in England before coming to New Zealand.

This is the entry in the book of remembrance (number one in the list of 100 objects).



It reads:

JOHNS
LIONEL FAIRFAX FURNER
Flight-Sergeant (nav)
Obiit 30 May 1943
aet 23
alumnus scholae 1933-1936

Lionel John's gravestone.



Lionel Johns MAGS Anzac memorial photo.



SGT. NAVIGATOR LIONEL FAIRFAX FURNER JOHNS
Obit. 30/5/43. Aet. 23
At the School 1933-35

Footnote: Lionel was an avid letter writer and many of his letters to his parents are now to be found in the Auckland War Memorial Museum's archives.