

**Sgt. James Ronald Browning 413376  
RNZAF**

James was born on 18 June 1915 in Cambridge, Waikato, New Zealand, the son of James Browning and Julia Mary Browning (née Frick).

Educated at St. Heliers Bay Primary and Auckland Grammar, James completed a short course at Ruakura State Farm before commencing work as a sheep farmer in Waipawa.

James joined the Volunteer Rifles in Waipukurau before he enlisted in the RNZAF in June 1941 as aircrew. Completing his pilot training in New Zealand, in October 1941 James was awarded his wings.

In January 1942 James arrived in England where he completed further training before he was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Yorkshire, in April 1943.

On 4 May 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with "Operation Sprat", the largest non-thousand plane raid of the war to date, and the first major attack on Dortmund as part of the Ruhr Offensive. Of the 596 aircraft despatched on the raid, 101 Squadron contributed 18 crews. Two squadron aircraft failed to return and 4 crash landed killing a further 7 crew members.

On the evening of 4 May James and his crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, Yorkshire, in Lancaster I W4863 (SR-G). The crew successfully bombed the target area, however, as the squadron aircraft started to return to base the area around Holme-on-Spalding-Moor was covered by fog. After two aircraft had crashed near the base, the rest were diverted north to land at other airfields. James was ordered to divert to RAF Scorton, 5m ESE of Richmond, Yorkshire.

James made one low circuit of RAF Scorton, passing over the control tower. The aircraft was then seen to make a much wider, but still low, circuit of the airfield and struck a tree with the port wing, damaging both the port engines. The aircraft swung to port, losing height, and crashed onto a dispersal pan at Scorton where it caught fire. Four of this crew, including James, were killed and three admitted to hospital with injuries.

Also Killed: Flt. Sgt. Martin David Davis RCAF (AG); Sgt. Richard Allison (Nav); Sgt. James Hornby Stretton (FE).

James is buried in Catterick Cemetery, Richmond, Yorkshire.

James is commemorated on Wall Panel 14.

Photo Source: [www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial).

