

F/O Mervyn Gillard Hutchinson 416862 RNZAF

Mervyn was born on 17 December 1915 in Christchurch, Canterbury in New Zealand, the son of James Gillard and Rosine Jane Hutchinson (née Gerry). Educated at Christchurch Technical School, prior to joining the RNZAF Mervyn was employed as a Branch Manager with a Grocery Company.

Mervyn joined the RNZAF in December 1941 and commenced pilot training at Rongotai, Wellington, in May 1942. In July 1942 Mervyn, having failed to complete his pilot training, re-mustered to Observer and was sent to Canada the following month to train under the Empire Training Scheme. Gunnery, Observer and Navigational training was completed and Mervyn was badged as a Navigator in March 1943; he was commissioned the same date.

After arriving in the UK in March 1943, Mervyn completed his conversion training and was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire, on 15 March 1944. Mervyn had a total of 332 flying hours and had completed just one op before he was killed.



On the night of 30/31 March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies that night. Twenty-six 101 Squadron Lancasters participated in the raid.

At 2150 hours on 30 March 1944 Mervyn, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster III LM463 (SR-K2), tasked with ABC duties for the raid. At 0036 hours, whilst outbound, the aircraft was engaged East of Siegen at 18,000ft by a night fighter flown by Uffz. Bruno Rupp of 4./NJG3. The aircraft crashed near Dillenburg, Hessen, killing 6 of the 8 crew; the pilot (P/O Albert Lander RNZAF) and wireless operator (Sgt. W G Clapp) survived and were captured. Seven 101 Squadron aircraft were lost on this raid, with 47 men killed.

The raid was a major disaster for Bomber Command with the loss of 105 aircraft, Bomber Command's heaviest loss of the war. There were 721 casualties: 542 men died, 6 injured, 161 POWs, with just 12 airmen evading capture. The damage to Nuremberg itself was slight - 256 buildings destroyed and 75 enemy dead.

Also killed were the air bomber F/Sgt. Raymond Cato RNZAF, air gunner F/Sgt. Cyril Parkinson RNZAF, special duties operator Sgt. Alfred Clayton, air gunner Sgt. Erod Johnson and flight engineer Sgt. Alexander Johnston.

Originally buried in Dillenburg Cemetery, Hessen, Mervyn and the crew were moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, in April 1947.

Mervyn is commemorated on Wall Panel 53.

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com.