

Wg. Cdr. James Fraser Barron DSO and Bar DFC DFM 401749 RNZAF



James Barron was born on 9 January 1921 in Dunedin, New Zealand. He was the son of James and Winifred Barron of Palmerston, Otago, New Zealand. An average student, he was educated at a primary school in Oamaru and then Waitaki Boys' High School. In 1939 he was working in Wellington as a cadet clerk in the Mines Department.

James enlisted in the RNZAF in June 1940 and commenced training early the following month. He sailed on the *Aorangi* in January 1941 and was stationed at 20 OTU Lossiemouth, in Scotland.

After leaving 20 OTC, where he and his crew survived a ditching in a Vickers Wellington, James was posted to No. 15 Squadron, stationed at RAF Wyton, flying Short Stirlings. Through late 1941 and early 1942 James was quickly promoted to flight sergeant and then pilot officer. In May 1942, after 42 operations including the thousand bomber raids on Cologne and Essen, he won his first decoration, the Distinguished Flying Medal.

In September 1942 he joined No. 7 Squadron. James would fly 16 sorties on this tour and at the end of his tour, in February 1943, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for "courage, skill and determination". A fortnight later he was awarded his first Distinguished Service Order for "exceptional gallantry and devotion to duty". James was sent to 11 OTU but, tiring of the training environment, he eventually persuaded the group captain to approve his return to operations.

James was promoted to wing commander in February 1944 and on 28 April was appointed Commanding Officer 7 Squadron. He and his crew were now often used as Master Bomber to control bomber attacks and for one such attack on Nantes, on 7 May 1944, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and on 16 June 1944 he was awarded a Bar to his DSO.

On the night of 19/20 May 1944, while acting as Master Bomber (his 79th sortie), James was directing an attack on railway yards at Le Mans, France. What exactly happened is debated, but it could have been a collision or flak. James was buried at Le Mans West Cemetery; he was 23 years old.

Wg. Cdr. James Fraser Barron DSO & Bar DFC DFM RNZAF – Pilot (killed)
Sqn. Ldr. John Baker DSO DFC – 2nd Pilot (killed)
Flt. Sgt. Derek William Wood – Flight Engineer (killed)
Sqn. Ldr. Philip Robert Coldwell DSO DFM - Navigator (killed)
P/O Albert Price – Bomb Aimer (killed)
F/O Jack William Walters DFC RNZAF – Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (killed)
F/O Robert Lorne Weatherall DFM RCAF – Air Gunner (killed)
WO Joseph Lamonby – Air Gunner (killed)

James is on panel 127