

FS John Frederick Blank 422175 RNZAF

John, known to his crew as Jack, was born on 7 November 1922 in Oxford, North Canterbury, New Zealand, the son of German born Julius Charles Blank and Ada Blank nee Brown.

Educated at Oxford Primary and High Schools, John was employed as a labourer by Oxford County Council when, in March 1941, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in April 1942, John completed his basic flying training in New Zealand before he was sent to Canada in July to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In December 1942 John was awarded his Observer badge, and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott Buckinghamshire and 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk for conversion to the Stirling and Air Bomber training, in June 1943 John was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire.



On 22/23 June 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Mulheim, a major centre of manufacturing in the Ruhr industrial region. A combined force of 557 aircraft were allocated to the task, including fifteen 75(NZ) Sqn crews. Four crews failed to return.

At 23:47 on the 22 June 1943 John, operating as the Bomb Aimer, and the crew departed RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire, in Stirling III BK810 (AA-G).

On the return leg and in the Hülse area, near Krefeld, Germany, John's aircraft was hit by flak and set on fire. The crew managed to get the fire under control and continued on course home. Shortly afterwards, the aircraft was intercepted by a night fighter that fired into the wings from underneath the Stirling. The fuel in the wings ignited and the Captain ordered the crew to bale out. Six of the crew, including John, escaped from the aircraft before, at 02:12 on 23 June, it crashed at Oostrum, 1 mile E of Veldray, Holland. Although John left the aircraft, for unknown reasons he did not survive. This was John's 1st op.

The remaining 5 crew were taken as PW, although two managed to evade for a few weeks.

Post war analysis confirmed this was a very successful attack, with 64% of the town reported as destroyed.

Also killed: PO Francis Max McKenzie RNZAF (Pilot)

Originally buried in the Osterath Communal Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, in November 1947 John was moved to the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 132

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com