

FS George Thirlwell Brown 411364 RNZAF

George was born on 13 March 1917 in Nelson, New Zealand, the son of Thomas John Brown and Agnes Johnston Brown nee Thirlwell.

Educated at Nelson College, George was employed as a grocer when, in June 1940, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in March 1941, George completed his flying training in New Zealand with the award of his wings in July 1941. In August 1941 George embarked for the UK.

In July 1942 George completed his advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire. In August the squadron transferred to RAF Stradishall, Suffolk.

On 27/28 August 1942, 306 Bomber Command crews were tasked with an operation against the industrial city of Kassel, home of the Henchel aircraft company. Thirteen 101 Sqn Wellingtons were allocated to the task, two failed to return.

At 20:45 George and his crew departed RAF Stradishall in Wellington III X3649 (SR).

Whilst outbound and flying over Holland, one of the engines burst into flames, probably as a result of anti-aircraft fire. George cut the motor and applied the fire extinguishing apparatus, successfully subduing the blaze and ultimately putting it out completely by diving. The use of the extinguisher made the restart of the motor impossible, so the op was abandoned and course was set for home on the one serviceable engine. To lighten the load, the bombs, and every possible removable item, were jettisoned, but height was gradually lost and George ordered the crew to prepare for ditching.

At 22:40, about 20 miles from the English coast, George made a successful ditching; however, the rubber dinghy appeared to have been damaged, probably by the fire, as neither the manual or the automatic releases had any effect, leaving just the individual "Mae West" for survival. After 70 minutes, a trawler picked up 3 survivors, George and the Wireless Operator were lost, presumed drowned. This was George's 9th op.

Also killed: Sgt Alfred Kenneth Bonser (WOp/AG)

George has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

George is commemorated on Wall Panel 137

Photo Source: aircrewremembered.com

