

FS Martin John Byrne 404529 RNZAF

Martin was born on 22 July 1910 in Cambridge, Waikato, New Zealand, the son of John and Florence Byrne. Educated at Cambridge District High School, Martin was employed as a carpenter when, in January 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in November 1940, after initial training in New Zealand, Martin was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in June 1941, he received his Observer badge. Arriving in the UK in August 1941, Martin completed his training at 23 OTU RAF Pershore, Worcestershire, and arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in July 1942.

On 28/29 July 1942 Bomber Command were tasked with an op against the industrial target of Hamburg. A combined force of 256 aircraft, including seventeen 75 (NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. This was planned to be a much larger raid but bad weather in the North of England prevented many squadrons from participating. The weather en-route was equally poor, and the 91OTU aircraft were recalled. Losses were heavy, and six 75(NZ) Sqn crews were lost.

At 22:35 Martin, operating as the Observer, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III BJ661 (AA-X). Homeward bound, at 03:05 Martin's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Wolfgang Kuthe from 5./NJG2 and crashed into the IJsselmeer, Schellingwoude, Noord-Holland. Located in the central part of the fuselage, the wireless operator and front gunner managed to escape from the Wellington and were picked up by the Germans and taken as PoW. Martin's body was recovered from the wreckage. This was Martin's 11th op.

Also Killed: FS John Edward Gilbertson RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt William Arthur Titcomb (AG)

Martin is buried in the Amsterdam New Eastern Cemetery, Noord-Holland, Netherlands

Martin is commemorated on Wall Panel 139

Photo Source: IBCC

