

PO Mervyn Oliver Clark 404895 RNZAF

Mervyn was born on 14 July 1922 in Lincoln, Canterbury, New Zealand, the son of John Clark and Ann Liddle Clark nee Bootten.

Educated at Christchurch Technical College, Mervyn was employed as a mechanic when, in February 1940, he applied for service with the RNZAF as a pilot.

Called up in December 1940, Mervyn commenced pilot training in New Zealand. However, in July 1941 his training was terminated and he re-mustered as Observer and was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In December 1941 Mervyn was awarded his Observer badge and embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU at RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, in August 1942 Mervyn was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn, flying the Wellington, at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk. In November 1942 the squadron converted to the Stirling and moved to RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire. Mervyn was commissioned the following month.

On 17 December 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with a minor op against Fallersleben, Lower Saxony, Germany, home of the Opel works. A combined force of 22 aircraft, including five 75(NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. This type of limited op proved to be a costly failure 8 crews were lost, and only 3 aircraft successfully bombed the Opel Works. Four 75(NZ) aircraft failed to return.

At 18:00 on 17 December 1942, Mervyn, operating as the Observer, and the crew departed RAF Newmarket in Stirling I R9247 (AA-W).

Whilst outbound, Mervyn's aircraft was intercepted by Hptm Walter Milius, Fw Werner Blasius and OFw Ernst Maas of the I./NJG 3, flying a DO217 from Vechta Airfield. The aircraft crashed near Vechta Airfield, 30 miles SW Bremen, Germany, killing all on board. This was Mervyn's 15th Op.

Also killed: FS John Fellows RCAF (AG); FS Henry Edward Rousseau (Pilot); Sgt Christopher James Kendal RNZAF (WOp/AG); Sgt Reginald Crosby Moccock (AB); Sgt William Wilson Morton (FE); Sgt Henry Welsh Pullar RNZAF (AG)

Originally buried in the Russian Cemetery, Vechta, Germany, in October 1947 Mervyn was moved to Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

During property development in 2019 at Vechta Airfield, the wreckage of a Stirling aircraft with human remains were found. The serial number of the aircraft was recovered and found to be R9247. DNA sampling was completed and compared with those of surviving family, allowing the remains to be positively identified and placed with those originally laid to rest.

Mervyn is commemorated on Wall Panel 144

Photo Source: www.aucklandmuseum

