

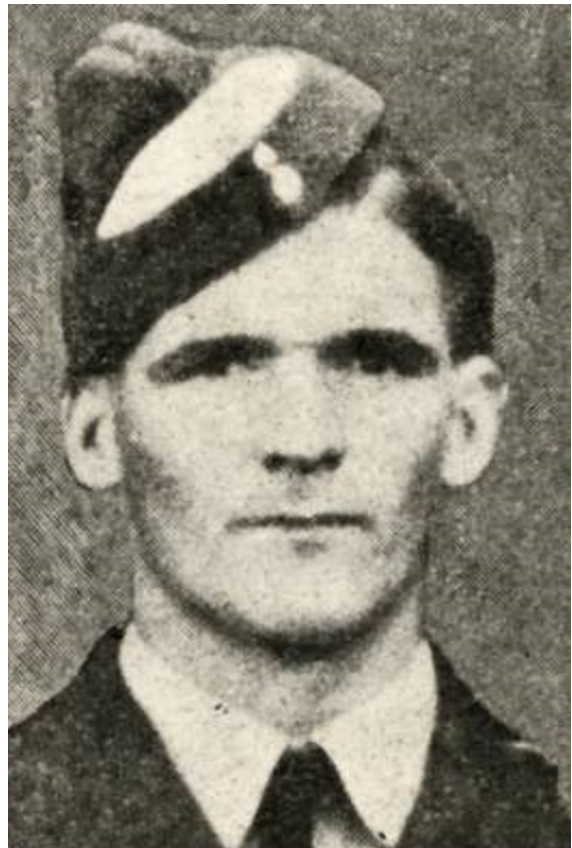
Sgt Desmond Clearwater 412314 RNZAF

Desmond was born on 24 March 1918 in Taihape, North Island, New Zealand, the son of Irwin Clearwater and Jacobina Manson Clearwater nee Bain.

Educated at Te Aroha High School, in April 1940 when he applied for aircrew service with the RNZAF, Desmond was employed by the New Zealand Dairy Company in Matangi, Waikato.

Called up in April 1941, after initial training in New Zealand, Desmond was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In February 1942, Desmond was awarded his Air Gunner badge, embarking for the UK immediately.

In August 1942 Desmond completed his advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and was posted to fly the Wellington at 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk. In November 1942 the squadron converted to the Stirling and moved to RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire.



On 28 November 1942, on return from a bombing raid on Turin, Desmond qualified for his Caterpillar Badge when he baled out of his aircraft which was running short of fuel, landing safely 3 miles N of Stradishall.

On 3 February 1943, 263 Bomber Command crews were tasked with an operation against targets in Hamburg, Germany. Nine 75(NZ) Sqn Stirlings were allocated to the task. Two squadron aircraft failed to return.

At 18:21 Desmond, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Newmarket in Stirling I R9250 (AA-W).

At 19:46 Desmond's aircraft was intercepted by Hptm Reinhold Knacke of the I./NJG1 flying a Bf110 from Gilze-Rijen Airfield, and crashed in the floodplains between Eck en Wiel and Ingen, Gelderland, 8km W of Tiel, Netherlands. Several crew members baled out, but none of the crew survived. Desmond's body was found without his parachute on the floodplains. The bodies of the Captain, the Bomb Aimer and Wireless Operator were left in the aircraft when the Germans realised that they were unable to recover it, and ordered the Dutch to bury the crashed Stirling. This was Desmond's 22nd op.

Also killed: FO Harold Lowe DFC (WOp/AG); PO Kenneth Howard Blincoe DFC RNZAF (Pilot); PO Andrew James Newell Scott RNZAF (Pilot); FS Edward McDermott RCAF (AG); Sgt Frank Arthur Boese (Nav); Sgt George Wood Cook RNZAF (AB); Sgt Desmond David Hayward (FE)

Desmond is buried in Amersfoort (Oud Leusden) General Cemetery, Utrecht, Netherlands

Desmond is commemorated on Wall Panel 145

Photo Source: IBCC