

PO Bryan Manssen Cook 40736 RNZAF

Bryan was born on 15 October 1919 in Wellington, New Zealand, the son of Albert Ernest Cook and Mary Ethel Cook nee Manssen.

Educated at Wellington College, Bryan worked as a clerk with the advertising department of WD & HO Wills Ltd, and the Social Security Dept in Wellington.

In May 1938 Bryan applied, and was rejected, for a Short Service Commission but was finally accepted for aircrew training in October 1939. Commencing training in March 1940 in New Zealand, Bryan was awarded his Observer badge in September 1940 and travelled to the UK immediately. After advanced training, in January 1941 Bryan was posted to 18 Sqn at RAF Great Massingham, Norfolk.

In June 1941 Bryan was posted to 17 OTU at RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire as a navigational instructor. In May 1942 he returned to ops on 18 Sqn at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk, and was granted a commission the following month.

On 23 July eight squadron crews were tasked with Night Intruder Operations against the airfields of Vechta, St Trond, Twente and Venlo.

At 22:45 Bryan and the crew departed RAF Wattisham in Blenheim IV Z7428 (WV), their target was Vechta.

At 01:46 Bryan's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Hans-Joachim Witzleb of the I./NJG 3 flying a Bf110 from Vechta Airfield. The Blenheim crashed in the Dreiecks Moor swamps to the east of Vechta killing all on board. This was Bryan's 25th op.

Also killed : Flt Lt Fred Martyn Thorne (Pilot); PO William Smith Blackadder (WOp/AG)

Originally buried in the Russian POW Cemetery, Vechta, 50km SW of Bremen, in September 1947 Bryan and his crew were re-interred in the Sage War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany

Bryan is commemorated on Wall Panel 147