

FO Harold Thomas Crampton 416861 RNZAF

Harold was born on 20 November 1916 in Cheviot, Canterbury, New Zealand the son of Robert Marlborough Crampton and Eliza Crampton nee Waters. In 1942 he married Betty Hope Lewis in New Zealand.

Educated at Cheviot High School, Harold was employed on the family farm when, in September 1940, he volunteered for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in December 1941, Harold was employed on ground duties until March 1942 when he commenced pilot training. In May 1942 Harold's pilot training was terminated, and he re-mustered as Observer and was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In June 1943, following additional training in Canada, Harold was awarded his Air Bomber badge, was granted a commission and departed for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at No. 4 (O) Advanced Flying Unit RAF West Freugh, Scotland, 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire, 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk and 3 Lancaster Finishing School RAF Feltwell, Norfolk for Lancaster conversion training, in April 1944 Harold was posted to 514 Sqn, also at RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire.

On 11 August 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to Lens, Pas-de-Calais, France to bomb railway installations and the Etaples Railway Bridge. A combined force of 459 aircraft was allocated to the op, including thirteen 514 Sqn crews.

At 14:30 on 11 August Harold, operating as the Bomb Aimer, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL697 (AZ-B2).

At 16:33 whilst over the target at 14,000 ft, Harold had just given a "Steady" call when the aircraft was hit in the nose by a bomb from a Lancaster above. The nose of the aircraft, with Harold inside, was sheared from the aircraft. Harold was recovered for burial by the local French population. This was Harold's 22nd op.

Harold is buried in Loos British Cemetery, Pas-de-Calais, France

Harold is commemorated on Wall Panel 150

Despite the extensive damage to the Lancaster, and with only a functioning altimeter, the rest of the crew were able to make it back to RAF Woodbridge, Suffolk for a safe landing and were all uninjured. The Lancaster never flew again.

Photo Source: IBCC

