

Sgt Thomas Eric Crarer 405475 RNZAF

Thomas was born on 14 January 1921 in Wairoa, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, the son of Thomas Stewart and Barbara Elizabeth Crarer.

Educated at Wairoa District High School, Thomas was employed as an office assistant when, in January 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in December 1940, after initial training in New Zealand, Thomas was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in November 1941, he was awarded his Air Gunner's badge.

Arriving in the UK in December 1941, Thomas completed his training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in May 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.

On the night of 28 July Thomas, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III X3452 (AA-A).

At 01:57 Thomas's aircraft was coned near the target by searchlights and shot down by heavy (schwere) flak, ditching near Grothusenkoog, Schleswig-Holstein. Thomas was the only casualty, the remainder of the crew were taken PoW. This was his 18th op.

Originally buried in Tonning Cemetery, Nord Friesland, Germany, in November 1946 Thomas was moved to Hamburg Cemetery, Germany.

Thomas is commemorated on Wall Panel 150

Photo Source: 75nzsquadron.wordpress.com

