

Flt Lt Laurence St. George Dobbin 401375 RNZAF

Laurence was born on 9 November 1912 in Oaonui, Taranaki, North Island, New Zealand, the son of George Hill and Alice Dobbin. In 1941 he married Marjorie Stainland in Taranaki.

Educated at Opunake District High School and Auckland Teacher Training College, Laurence was employed as a school teacher and was a member of the Territorial Army, serving with the Queen Alexandra Mounted Rifles, the Auckland Regiment and the 1st Taranaki Regiment.

In October 1939, Laurence applied for a Short Service Commission with the RNZAF and was called up in June 1940 for flying training. In October 1940 Laurence completed his flying training in New Zealand with the award of his wings.

Arriving in the UK in February 1941, Laurence was posted to 20 OTU at RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland, where he completed his operational training. After detachments with the OCU to RAF Lakenheath and RAF Elgin, Laurence was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in July 1942.

On 11 August 1942 Bomber Command were tasked with an op against Mainz, Rhineland-Palatinate Germany. This raid followed the Area Bombing Directive of 5 February 1942 which ordered RAF bombers to attack the German industrial workforce and the morale of the German populace through bombing German cities and their civilian inhabitants. A combined force of 154 aircraft, with nine 75(NZ) Wellingtons, was allocated to the op. Three squadron crews failed to return.

At 22:15 Laurence and his crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III BJ767 (AA-V). Whilst outbound, Laurence's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Hans Autenrieth & Uffz Rudolf Adam of the Stab II./NJG1 flying a Bf110 from St Trond Airfield, Belgium.

With the Wellington on fire, Laurence gave the order to jettison the bomb load and bale-out. The crew were unable to release the bombs, but three crew members were able to leave the aircraft safely, although they were to become PoWs. At 01:33, before Laurence and the Front Gunner were able to escape, the Wellington exploded above the village of Vaals, Limberg, Netherlands, killing Laurence and his Air Gunner. This was Laurence's 4th op.

Also Killed: Sgt Jack Leslie Jury RNZAF (WOp/AG)

Originally buried in Venlo British Cemetery, in August 1947 Laurence was moved to Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Nijmegen, Gelderland, Netherlands

Laurence is commemorated on Wall Panel 156

Photo Source: www.aucklandmuseum.com

