

FS Peter Gerald Dobson MiD 439022 RNZAF

Peter was born on 29 December 1914 in Blenheim, Marlborough, New Zealand, the son of Henry Bruce Dobson and Emily Daisy Dobson nee Cawte.

Educated at Marlborough College, Peter worked as a farm labourer and on the outbreak of war as a member of the Wellington General Reconnaissance Squadron he was mobilised for active service.

Peter was employed on ground duties until November 1941 when he re-mustered for aircrew duties and commenced pilot training. When his training was terminated in February 1942 he re-mustered as Observer and was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In September 1942 Peter was awarded his Observer badge and was posted to the UK.

Following advanced training, in March 1943 Peter arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn, at that time at RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire. The squadron moved to RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire in June 1943. Having completed 28 ops, at the beginning of September Peter was taking some local leave and was helping to bring in the harvest in the fields next to the airfield.

On 8 September 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against the port area of Boulogne, including the specific target of a long-range gun battery. A combined force of 257 aircraft, including seventeen 75 (NZ) crews, were allocated to the op.

At 21:55 the crew of Stirling III BK809 (AA-T) lined up for departure from RAF Mepal. Whilst on the take-off run, the heavily laden aircraft was caught by a slight cross wind and veered sharply to starboard when the pilot was believed to have overcorrected. The aircraft struck a petrol bowser, and finally came to rest on the far side of the perimeter track between two houses in the village of Sutton where it burst into flames, killing one civilian.

Quickly on the scene were members of the local civilian National Fire Services, rescue personnel from RAF Mepal, and two other service personnel - a WAAF, and Peter who was nearby. Despite knowing of the dangers from the heavily armed aircraft, all of the rescuers approached the crash site and endeavoured to free the trapped aircrew and the civilians from the houses. Unfortunately, part of the bomb load exploded, killing the pilot, the Bomb Aimer and three of the rescuers - the WAAF, Peter and a civilian fireman. The Flight Engineer succumbed to his injuries later that day.

For their bravery, in January 1944 Peter and the WAAF were posthumously Mentioned in Despatches.

Also killed: FO Norman Hathway Gale (Air Bomber); FO Ian Robert Menzies RNZAF (Pilot); Section Officer Joan Marjorie Easton MiD (WAAF); Sgt Albert Leslie Mellor (FE)

Peter is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Peter is commemorated on Wall Panel 156

Photo Source: 75nzsquadron.wordpress.com

