

## **FS Thomas Kerr Durie 427967 RNZAF**

Thomas was born on 15 December 1907 in Law Junction, near Carluke, South Lanarkshire, Scotland, the son of Andrew Gilroy Durie and Catherine Scott Durie nee Kerr. In 1926 the family emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Napier, Hawke's Bay. In 1935 he married Myrtle Ruby Adams in New Zealand.

Thomas was employed by the State Mine's Department, Greymouth when, in December 1941, he volunteered for service in the RNZAF, although lying about his age to be considered (1911).

Called up in July 1942, Thomas was employed on Aerodrome Defence Duties until October when he commenced basic flying training in New Zealand. In December Thomas was sent to Canada to continue his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Thomas completed his aircrew training in Canada in October 1943 with the award of his WOp/AG badge and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 4 (O) Advanced Flying Unit, RAF West Freugh, Dumfries, Scotland, 84 OTU RAF Ossington, Nottinghamshire, 1653 HCU RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk and 31 Base RAF Feltwell, Norfolk, on 10 July 1944 Thomas was posted to 514 Sqn at RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire.

On 20/21 July 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to target the Steinkohlen- Bergwerk Rheinpreussen plant located in Mors-Meerbeck, Nordrhein-Westphalia, Germany, near the Rheinpreussen coal mine, where it converted coal into petroleum and other oil-based products. A combined force of 158 aircraft, including twenty-four 514 Sqn aircraft, was allocated to the op. Four 514 Sqn crews failed to return.

At 23:08 on 20 July Thomas, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster I LM181 (JI-E).

Several claims were made for the loss of Thomas's aircraft. Between 01:16 and 01:34 on 21 July Thomas's aircraft was reported as intercepted by Fw Klaus Moller of the 12./NJG3, Fw Hubert Allemeier of the 8./NJG2 and Ofw Heinrich Schmidt of the 2./NJG3. An additional claim was made by the anti-aircraft unit, Flak Abt.401, at Neukirchen at 01:22.

Thomas's aircraft crashed at Neukirchen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, killing all on board. This was Thomas's 1st op.

Also Killed: FO Lamont Weir McLean RNZAF (pilot); FS William Simpson McIlraith RNZAF (AB); FS Arthur Thompson Stone RNZAF (Nav); Sgt George William Bumstead (FE); Sgt Ronald Ernest Digby (AG); Sgt Malcolm Duncan (AG)

Originally buried in Neukirchen Communal Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, in June 1947 Thomas was moved to Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Thomas is commemorated on Wall Panel 158

Photo Source: [www.aucklandmuseum.com](http://www.aucklandmuseum.com)

