

FS John Edward Gilbertson 41894 RNZAF

John was born on 9 July 1920 in Waipawa, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, the eldest son of Ernest Edward Hindmarsh Gilbertson and Laurie Isabella Gilbertson nee Lethbridge.

Educated at Wanganui Collegiate School, John was employed as a clerk when, in March 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in February 1941, John completed his flying training in New Zealand with the award of his wings in June 1941. Arriving in the UK in September 1941, John completed his training at 23 OTU RAF Pershore, Worcestershire, and arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in June 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.



At 22:35 John and his crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III BJ661 (AA-X). Homeward bound, at 03:05 John's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Wolfgang Kuthe from 5./NJG2 and crashed into the IJsselmeer, East of Schellingwoude, Noord-Holland. Located in the central part of the fuselage, the wireless operator and front gunner managed to escape from the Wellington and were picked up by the Germans and taken as PoW. John's body was recovered from the wreckage. This was John's 8th op.

Also Killed: Martin John Byrne RNZAF (Obs); Sgt William Arthur Titcomb (AG)

John is buried in the Amsterdam New Eastern Cemetery, Noord-Holland, Netherlands

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 169

Photo Source: IBCC