

FO William Leonard Harvey 405487 DFM RNZAF

William was born on 6 February 1920 in Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand, the son of William Robert Harvey and Helena Harvey nee Ashcroft. Educated at St Andrew's College, Canterbury, William was employed as a labourer in Dunedin when, in January 1940, he volunteered for aircrew service in the RNZAF. Called up in December 1940, William completed his basic aircrew training in New Zealand before he was sent to Canada in January 1941 to complete his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In August 1941 William was awarded his WOp/AG badge and immediately embarked for the UK. Following advanced training at No.1 Signal School, RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, No. 9 Air Observer School RAF Penrhos, Anglesey, Wales, 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire and 1651 HCU RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, in September 1942 William was posted to 149 sqn at RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk.



On 15 February 1943 William was the Wireless Operator on a minelaying op to Bordeaux, France, when the aircraft was intercepted and damaged by an enemy aircraft. Several of the crew, including William, were injured; however, the pilot was able to return to the UK where William was admitted to RAF Hospital Ely, Cambridgeshire. As a result of his actions on this flight, William was awarded the DFM. His Citation read:

"One night in February 1943, FO Drummond and FS Harvey were captain and wireless operator respectively of an aircraft detailed for a mine-laying mission in an area close in to shore. During the run-in, the aircraft was subjected to considerable searchlight activity and intense opposing fire which raked the bomber from front to rear. Much damage was sustained and three of the crew were hit, including FS Harvey who suffered a deep wound in the head. Despite this, FO Drummond held on his course and released his mines exactly as planned. On the return flight, FS Harvey, although in pain and bleeding profusely, remained at his post, continuing his duties. He obtained a number of fixes and bearings which proved of great assistance to his captain who eventually flew the badly damaged aircraft to base. Both these members of the aircraft who have completed many sorties have always displayed great determination, skill and devotion to duty."

William completed 21 ops with 149 Sqn and in April 1943 was posted to 1651 HCU at RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire for his rest tour. Commissioned in July 1943, in November William was posted to 1678 HCU at RAF Waterbeach for Lancaster conversion before he was posted to 514 Sqn, also at RAF Waterbeach in December. On 14/15 January 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to Brunswick, the first major raid on this town of the war. A combined force of 498 aircraft was allocated to the op, including 23 squadron aircraft. At 17:06 on 14 January William, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL685 (J1-G2). The German controller tracked the bomber stream from just off the English coastline and many German fighters entered the stream over Bremen, continuing to claim aircraft until the stream left the Dutch coast on the return leg. On approach to the target, at 19:05 William's aircraft was intercepted by Hptm Walter Barte of the Stab III./NJG3, flying a Bf110 from Stade Airfield. William's aircraft crashed 3 miles South of Celle, and ½ mile West of Bennebstel, Lower Saxony, Germany, killing all on board. This was William's 25th op.

Also Killed: S/L Ernest Frank Sly DFC AM (Pilot); FO Philip Pullyn Boulter (FE); FO Edwin Horton Thomas DFM RCAF (AB); FO John Livingstone Martin RCAF (Nav); FO Frank George Rosher DFM (AG); FO James Allan Sneddon DFM (AG)

Originally buried in Westercelle Cemetery, Lower Saxony, Germany, in October 1946 William was moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

William is commemorated on Wall Panel 178

Photo Source: IBCC