

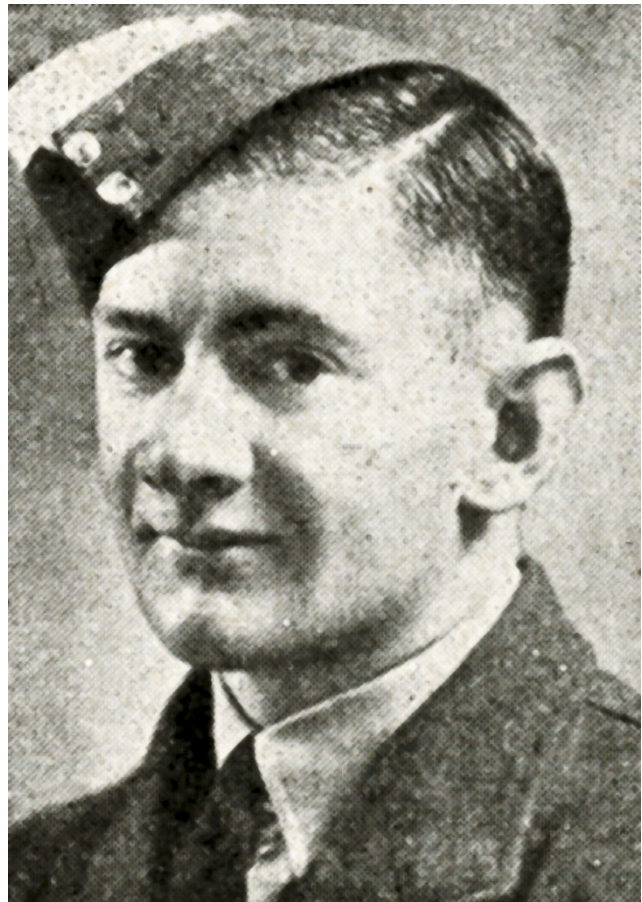
PO George Vincent Helm 416113 RNZAF

George was born on 23 February 1920 in Invercargill, South Island, New Zealand, the son of Harry Vincent Helm and Beatrice Euphemia Helm nee Smith.

Educated at Southland Technical College and Canterbury Agricultural College, George was employed as a farmer when, in December 1940, he applied for service with the RNZAF.

Called up in November 1941, George commenced basic flying training in New Zealand before he was sent to Canada to complete his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In August 1942 George was awarded his wings, and embarked for the UK immediately.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Wescott, Buckinghamshire, and 1667 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, in May 1943 George was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire. In July 1943 George was awarded his commission.



On 31 August 1943, Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Berlin. A combined force of 622 aircraft, including eighteen 75(NZ) Sqn crews were allocated to the Op. Four aircraft failed to return

At 20:32 on 31 August George and his crew departed RAF Mepal in Stirling III EH905 (AA-R). Moderate to heavy flak co-operating with searchlights, together with enemy fighters in great prominence were reported in the target area by returning crews.

In the early hours of 1 September whilst in the target area, George's aircraft crashed at Genshagen near Ludwigsfelde in the grounds of the DB factory, 11 miles SE of Potsdam, killing five of the crew. The Rear Gunner baled out, and the Mid Upper Gunner was blown out, both were taken POW. This was George's 20th Op.

There are two claims to the loss of George's aircraft. It is known that the Stirling was struck leading to a catastrophic failure of the flight controls. Initially, the intelligence received by 75(NZ) Sqn suggested the aircraft was hit by a bomb load released by an allied aircraft flying above. However, a post war investigation into the loss of a Bf110 from 5./NJG 1 concluded that this aircraft struck George's aircraft with full force, separating the wing of the fighter, leading to the crash of both aircraft.

Also killed: FS Joseph George Arkless Fisk RNZAF (AB); FS Donald Mackay Stewart RNZAF (Nav); Sgt Arthur John Bishop (WOp/AG); Sgt Oliver McCoo (FE)

Originally buried in the Russian Prisoner of War Cemetery, Ludwigsfelde-Heide, Brandenburg, 20 miles South of Berlin, in April 1947 George was moved to the Berlin 1939 - 1945 War Cemetery

George is commemorated on Wall Panel 180

Photo Source: IBCC