

FS Matthew Roland Henderson 427204 RNZAF

Matthew was born on 3 December 1918 in Dunedin, New Zealand, the son of Matthew Cochrane Henderson and Agnes Henderson nee Findlay.

Educated at Otago Boys' High School and Otago University, in 1939 Matthew attended Canterbury Agricultural College before moving to Sydney, Australia to study for his Veterinary Degree. Whilst studying in Australia, in November 1940 Matthew enlisted in the 1st Cavalry Division, before he was discharged in May 1941 to join the RAAF; however, Matthew decided to return to New Zealand and volunteered for service with the RNZAF.

Called up in July 1942, Matthew was employed on ground duties until he commenced basic flying training in September, and in November he was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In April 1943 Matthew completed his training with the award of his Navigator badge and embarked for the UK in May.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU at RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire for multi crew/multi engine conversion on the Wellington, and 1657 HCU at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk where he converted to the Stirling, in January 1944 Matthew was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire. Matthew undertook fourteen ops on the Stirling before he converted to the Lancaster in March.

On 27/28 April 1944 Bomber Command was tasked with an op to Friederichshafen, a significant industrial hub key to the German war industry, particularly in the production of engines, tank gearboxes, aircraft components and radar development. A combined force of 323 aircraft, including sixteen 75(NZ) Sqn aircraft were allocated to the op.

At 22:05 on 27 April 1944 Matthew, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Mepal in Lancaster III ND796 (AA-J).

At 01:37 on 28 April Matthew's aircraft was intercepted by Fw Gunther Bahr flying a Bf 110 of the 3./NJG6. The aircraft crashed NW of the target, 500 metres SE of Langenhard, killing all on board. This was Matthew's 16th op.

Also Killed: FO Peter Ernest Chilman (AG); FO Euan Wilfred McLachlan RNZAF (WOp/AG); FO Robert Weir Herron RNZAF (Pilot); WO Keith Alfred Smith RNZAF (AG); Sgt John William Germing (FE); Sgt Walter Reginald Percival (AB)

Originally buried in Langenhard Cemetery, in August 1948 Matthew was moved to Durnbach War Cemetery, Bayern, Germany

Matthew is commemorated on Wall Panel 180