

Sgt Howard James Hugill 414293 RNZAF

Howard was born on 26 January 1921 in Auckland, New Zealand, the youngest son of James Hugill and Elsie Marion Hugill nee Calman.

Educated at Helensville District High School, Auckland, Howard was employed on his father's orchard when, in June 1940, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in July 1941, Howard completed his pilot training in New Zealand with the award of his wings in December 1941. In January 1942 Howard embarked for the UK.

After completing advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, in September 1942 Howard was posted to 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk.

On 24/25 October 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Milan, the main industrial and economic centre of Italy, including the home of the Caproni Aircraft Factory. This was the second op to Milan in as many days. A combined force of 71 aircraft, including five 75(NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. Two squadron aircraft failed to return.

At 19:00 on 24 October 1942 Howard and his crew departed RAF Mildenhall in Wellington III Z1652 (AA).

Whilst homeward bound, at 03:33 on 25 October, Howard's aircraft was intercepted by Major Kurt Holler, flying a Bf110 of StabIII./NJG4 from Juvincourt Airfield, France. The aircraft crashed on the south bank of the River Retourne, 20 miles NE Rheims, France, killing Howard and the Observer. Of the 3 crew that escaped, one was made POW, whilst the other 2 managed to evade. This was Howard's 7th Op.

Also killed: Sgt Edmund John Pete (Obs)

Howard is buried in the Ville-sur-Retourne Churchyard, Ardennes, France

Howard is commemorated on Wall Panel 186

Photo Source: 75nzsquadron.wordpress.com

