

Flt. Lt. William Alexander Irwin DFC 414632 RNZAF

William was born in April 1915, the son of William John and Ellen Irwin, of Dannevirke, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand. He had four sisters. He was interested in the technical side of flying prior to the war, but in 1940 applied for war service as part of an air crew.

He was a Pilot on 7 Squadron and had been awarded the DFC. The citation included "he has set a fine example by his outstanding keenness, devotion to duty and the thorough way in which he pressed home attacks under great difficulties or in the face of enemy opposition. He carried out many operational sorties with determination and courage".

Lancaster ND590 MG-B took off from Oakington at 0002 hours 24 June 1944 on a mission to Coubronne. Nothing was heard from the aircraft after take-off and it did not return to base. "Post war enquiries by a Missing Research & Enquiry Unit established the aircraft crashed at approximately 0100 hours in a field near Warhem (Nord), and all the crew were killed. The village of Warhem (Nord) is 12km south east of Dunkirk".

It was part of 412 aircraft from No 3, 4, 6 and 8 Groups attacking 4 flying-bomb sites, which were all hit. 5 Lancaster's were lost.

William is buried at Warhem Communal Cemetery, Nord, France. Row A. Coll. Grave 48. He was 29 years old.



Flt. Lt. William Alexander Irwin DFC RNZAF, Pilot (killed)
Sqn. Ldr. Reginald Wiseman Brown DFC, Navigator (killed)
Flt. Lt. Clifford Harris Drewer RAAF, Air Bomber (killed)

P/O Charles Adrian McCarthy RAAF, Wireless operator/Air Gunner (killed)
Flt. Sgt. Ralph Nixon, Air Gunner (killed)
Flt. Sgt. John Thomas Ward, Air Gunner (killed)
Flt. Sgt. Eric Cornish, Flight Engineer (killed)

William is commemorated on Panel No 187
Picture taken from nzwargraves.org.nz