

Sgt Walter Foch Kelcher 411908 RNZAF

Walter was born on 9 April 1919 in Waimate, South Island, New Zealand, the youngest son of Leonard Kelcher and Isabella Mary Kelcher nee Kelcher.

Educated at Waitiki Boys High School, Walter was employed as a tractor and lorry driver when he volunteered for aircrew duties with the RNZAF in March 1940.

Called up in March 1941, Walter commenced pilot training, but when his training was terminated he re-mustered as Observer and in October 1941 was sent to Canada for training under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In March 1942 Walter was awarded with his Observer badge and, following advanced navigator training in May 1942 he was transferred to the UK.

Walter completed advanced training at 11 OTU, RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and in August 1942 he was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk.



On the night of the 10/11 September 1942, 479 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Dusseldorf. Thirteen 75(NZ) Sqn Wellingtons participated in the raid.

Shortly after 21:00 on 10 September Walter, operating as the Bomb Aimer, and the crew departed RAF Mildenhall in Wellington III BJ974 (AA).

In the early hours of 11 September, the aircraft crashed at Klasheider Weg in the Königsforst, 15km East Cologne, killing all on board. This was Walter's 2nd op.

The op was considered a success, with the city hit in all areas other than the North. The industrial area was heavily damaged, limiting production for a considerable time; however, the raid took its toll on Bomber Command with 33 aircraft lost, 60 crew killed and 13 taken POW. Three 75(NZ) Sqn aircraft failed to return with the loss of 15 men.

Also Killed: Sgt Kevin John Devlin RNZAF (Obs); Sgt Alexander John Lock (AG); Sgt Thomas Otto Metcalfe RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Desmond James Walshe RNZAF (WOp/AG)

Initially buried in Cologne South Cemetery, Germany, in May 1946 Walter was re-located to the Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Walter is commemorated on Wall Panel 192

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com