

FS Paul Eugene Mason 415771 RNZAF

Paul was born on 23 September 1920 in Oamaru, Otago, New Zealand, the son of George Harold Mason and Brigid Ann Mason nee O'Connor.

Educated at Sacred Heart College, Auckland, Seddon Memorial Technical College and Banks' Commercial College for Accountancy training, in early 1938 Paul was employed by Wallace Bruce, Duthie and Vyce, Public Accountants in Auckland. In March 1941 Paul volunteered for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in October 1941 Paul completed basic aircrew training in New Zealand and, in January 1942, he was sent to Canada to complete his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Completing his pilot training in Canada in June 1942 with the award of his Wings, Paul was posted to flying instructor duties in Toronto. In January 1943 Paul embarked for operational duties in the UK.



Following a refresher course at 29 Elementary Flying Training School, RAF Clyffe Pypard, Wiltshire and advanced training at 15 (P) Advanced Flying Unit RAF Greenham Common, Berkshire, 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire and 1651 HCU, RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire for Lancaster conversion training, in December 1943 Paul was posted to 514 Sqn, also at RAF Waterbeach.

On 14/15 January 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to Brunswick, the first major raid on this town of the war. A combined force of 498 aircraft was allocated to the op, including 23 squadron aircraft.

At 17:22 on 14 January Paul and his crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL679 (J1-J2).

The German controller tracked the bomber stream from just off the English coastline and many German fighters entered the stream over Bremen, continuing to claim aircraft until the stream left the Dutch coast on the return leg.

Paul's aircraft crashed in the woods, one mile East of Lauenberg, near Dassel, Lower Saxony, Germany, having broken up in mid-air. Other 514 Sqn aircraft had bombed the target at around 19:15, and the location of the loss suggests that Paul's aircraft was attacked between 19:30 and 19:35. Hptm Erhard Peters of 9./NJG3, flying a Bf110 from Stade Airfield, claimed a Lancaster shot down at an unstated location at 19:33 and this claim is the most likely match for the loss of Paul's aircraft. This was the crew's first op on the squadron and Paul's 3rd op.

Also Killed: FS Arthur Edward Dimock RCAF (AB); FS James Stanley Gallagher RNZAF (Nav); FS Lancelot Kell RNZAF (Wop/AG); Sgt John William Hennis (AG); Sgt Ronald Frederick Laishley (FE); Sgt Ernest James Oakley RCAF(AG)

Originally buried in Lauenberg Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in June 1947 Paul was moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

Paul is commemorated on Wall Panel 205

Photo Source: Auckland museum