

FO Ian Robert Menzies 415002 RNZAF

Ian was born on 25 February 1922 in Tolaga Bay, Gisborne, New Zealand, the son of Douglas Grayson Menzies and Violet Marguerite Menzies nee Reid.

Educated at Gisborne High School, Ian was working as an automotive electrician when, in November 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in September 1941, following initial training in New Zealand, Ian was sent to Canada for training under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in April 1942, he was awarded his wings and granted a commission. Ian was employed as a flying instructor in Canada until January 1943 when he was posted to the UK. At the end of August 1943, following advanced training, Ian was posted to 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire

On 8 September 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against the port area of Boulogne, including the specific target of a long-range gun battery. A combined force of 257 aircraft, including seventeen 75 (NZ) crews, were allocated to the op.

At 21:55 Ian and his crew lined up for departure from RAF Mepal in Stirling III BK809 (AA-T). Whilst on the take-off run, the heavily laden aircraft was caught by a slight cross wind and veered sharply to starboard when Ian was believed to have overcorrected. The aircraft struck a petrol bowser, and finally came to rest on the far side of the perimeter track between two houses in the village of Sutton where it burst into flames., killing one civilian.

Quickly on the scene were members of the local civilian National Fire Services, personnel from RAF Mepal and two off duty service personnel, a WAAF and a 75 (NZ) Sqn Navigator who was on local leave helping with the harvest. Despite knowing of the dangers from the heavily armed aircraft, all of the rescuers approached the crash site and endeavoured to free the trapped aircrew and the civilians from the houses. Unfortunately, part of the bomb load exploded, killing Ian, the Bomb Aimer and three rescuers - the WAAF, off duty Navigator, and a civilian fireman. The Flight Engineer succumbed to his injuries later that day. This was Ian's 6th op.

Also killed: FO Norman Hathway Gale (Air Bomber); Section Officer Joan Marjorie Easton MiD (WAAF); FS Peter Gerald Dobson MiD RNZAF (Nav); Sgt Albert Leslie Mellor (FE)

Ian is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Ian is commemorated on Wall Panel 211