

Sgt William Clerken O'Shea 411096 RNZAF

William was born on 7 January 1914 in Port Chalmers, South Island, New Zealand, the son of John and Margaret O'Shea, husband to Ann.

Educated at Arrowtown Convent School, William was employed as a timber worker in Dunedin when in January 1940 he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in February 1941, after initial training in New Zealand, William was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in September 1941, he was awarded his WOp/AG badge.

Arriving in the UK in October 1941, William completed his training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk on 7 July 1942.

On 28/29 July 1942 Bomber Command were tasked with an op against the industrial target of Hamburg. A combined force of 256 aircraft, including seventeen 75 (NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. This was planned to be a much larger raid but bad weather in the North of England prevented many squadrons from participating. The weather en-route was equally poor, and the 91 OTU aircraft were recalled. Losses were heavy, and six 75(NZ) Sqn crews were lost.

On the night of 28 July William, operating as the Front Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III BJ599 (AA-U). At 01:26 James's aircraft was coned by searchlights and shot down by heavy (schwere) flak, crashing near Steinbeck, Buckholz in der Nordheide, Niedersachsen, about 20 miles NW of the target. All on board were killed.

Also Killed: PO Murray Ellis Carncross RNZAF (Observer); FS George Alister Hutt RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt James Gordon McMurchy RNZAF (WOp/AG); Sgt John Henry Savage RNZAF (AG)

Originally buried in Stade Communal Cemetery, Lower Saxony, Germany, in September 1946 William and the crew were moved to Becklingen War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

William is commemorated on Wall Panel 221