

FS Thomas Alexander Peevers 417232 RNZAF

Thomas was born on 29 November 1914 in Otikaieke, South Island, New Zealand, the son of David Peevers and Mary Anne Peevers nee Brown.

Educated at Waitaki Boys' High School, Thomas was employed on the family orchard when, in December 1940, he enlisted in the RNZAF.

Called up in December 1941, following basic training in New Zealand, in March 1942 Thomas was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In December 1942 Thomas was awarded his Air Gunner badge and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Oakley, Buckinghamshire, where he converted to multi crew/multi engine ops on the Wellington, 1483 Gunnery Flight, RAF Marham, Norfolk, and 1651 HCU RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire for conversion to the Stirling, in July 1943 Thomas was posted to 15 Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk. In October 1943, following recovery from an aircraft crash in August, Thomas was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire, converting to the Lancaster in April.

On 1/2 May 1944, 120 Bomber Command crews, including sixteen 75(NZ) Sqn Lancasters, were tasked with an operation against the railway marshalling yards at Chambly, France. The aim of this raid was to disrupt the German supply lines and were part of the broader strategy to prepare for the Normandy landings.

At 22:44 Thomas, operating as the Mid Upper Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Mepal in Lancaster I ME689 (AA-Y).

On return, at 00:45 on 2 May, Thomas's aircraft was intercepted by a night fighter, and crashed at Saint Arnoult, Seine-Maritime, France, killing all on board. A joint claim was made by Hptm Martin Drewes of the Stab III./NJG1 and Ofw Karl-Heinz Kamp of the Stab III./NJG4.

Also killed: S/L Euan Wilfred Sachtler RNZAF (Pilot); FO Allan Gleave Heron (Nav); PO Michael Ferdinand Lombard (AB); FS Douglas John Mackenzie RAAF (WOp/AG); Sgt John Gilbert Pettifer (AG); Sgt Piers Trevor Stevens (FE)

Thomas is buried in Poix-de-Picardie Churchyard, Somme, France

Thomas is commemorated on Wall Panel 224

Thomas's brother, Pte James Peevers, 23rd Battalion NZ Infantry, was killed on 16 December 1943 serving in Italy.

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com

