Sgt Hugh Francis Rochford 40947 DFM RNZAF



Hugh was born on 14 December 1916 in Kumaru, Westland, New Zealand, the youngest son of James Patrick Rochford and Ethel Kennedy Rochford nee Vallance. Following his mother's death in 1927, he was raised by his Aunt and Uncle, Mr & Mrs Duncan in Te Rapa, Hamilton.

Educated at Hamilton High School, on leaving Hugh was employed as a farm hand in Waitako. Hugh applied to enlist as aircrew in March 1939, and on the outbreak of war he was called up.

Following initial training at Levin, in April 1940 he was posted for Air Observer training at Ohakea. On 23 August 1940 he was awarded his Air Observer badge and was posted to England, arriving in November. After advanced training at 15 OTU, Hugh was posted to 214 Sqn at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk. On completion of his first tour of ops, in October 1941 Hugh was awarded the DFM. His citation read:

" Sgt Hugh Francis Rochford has set a very fine example as an Air Observer throughout the many operational sorties in which he has participated, and has displayed great energy, fortitude and endurance, which have had a beneficial effect on other members of the crew and helped to sustain them through a series of sorties which included a high proportion of very difficult targets. He has made himself a competent astronomical navigator entirely by his own efforts, and has at all times shown great coolness and courage"

In September 1941 Hugh was posted to 138 Sqn.

On 30 October 1941 Hugh was on board Whitley V Z9223 (NF), a re-positioning flight from RAF Newmarket to RAF Stradishall, Suffolk. Just before mid-day, when on final approach, the aircraft stalled and crashed, killing all on board.

Also killed : Flt Lt Albert John Oettle DFC (Pilot); LAC Walter John Lee (Ground)

Hugh is buried in Haverhill Cemetery, Suffolk

Hugh is commemorated on Wall Panel 234

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com