

Sgt Wilfred Hubert Smeaton 405331 RNZAF

Wilfred was born on 9 November 1913 in Kumara, South Island, New Zealand, the son of Smith Hadfield Smeaton and Lucy Edith Smeaton nee White. In May 1941 he married Heather Hinemoa Wynyard in New Zealand.

Educated at Wellington Technical College, Wilfred was employed as a film booker for Paramount Films Ltd, Auckland when, in January 1940, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in December 1940, Wilfred commenced pilot training in New Zealand; however, when his training was terminated, Wilfred re-mustered as Observer and was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In December 1941, Wilfred was awarded his Observer badge and, following advanced navigator training, in February 1942 he embarked for the UK.

After completing additional training at 9 Air Observer's School, RAF Penrhos, Gwynned, Wales, on 12 May 1942 Wilfred was posted to 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk.

At 03:15 on 22 May 1942 Wilfred, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk, in Wellington III Z1566 (AA) on a night cross country training flight.

Flying into unforecast bad weather, whilst descending through cloud to ascertain their position, the aircraft struck ground near Grindon in the Peak District, Staffordshire, killing 5 crew members. The Rear Gunner survived.

Also killed: PO Andrew Donald Mackay RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt James Wilfred Beaven RNZAF (WOp/AG); Sgt John William Bode (Obs); Sgt Cyril Hayton (WOp/AG)

Wilfred is buried in Buxton Cemetery, Derbyshire

Wilfred is commemorated on Wall Panel 243

Photo Source: IBCC

