

Sgt Leslie Ian Stewart 411785 RNZAF

Leslie was born on 8 March 1917 in Auckland, New Zealand, the son of Ernest Charles and Anne Elizabeth Stewart.

Educated at Rongotai College, Wellington, Leslie was employed as a mechanic when, in March 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in March 1941, after initial training in New Zealand, Leslie was sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in December 1941, he was awarded his Air Gunner's badge.

Arriving in the UK in January 1942, Leslie completed his training with 11 OTU, RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and arrived on 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in May 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 Leslie, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk in Wellington III Z1570 (AA-B).

Homeward-bound, at 02:35 Leslie's aircraft was intercepted by Lt August Geiger of the 8./NJG 1, flying a Bf 110 from Twente airfield, Netherlands. The aircraft crashed at Haftenkamp, Gölenkamp, Lower Saxony, Germany, killing all on board. This was Leslie's 20th op.

Also killed: FS Arthur Grahame Johns RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Mark Kraljevich RNZAF (Obs); Sgt Ronald Ellis (WOp/AG); Sgt Laurie Albert Frampton RNZAF (WOp/AG)

Originally buried in Lingen New Cemetery, Lower Saxony, Germany, in June 1947 Leslie and his crew were moved to Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Leslie is commemorated on Wall Panel 248

Photo Source: 75nzsquadron.wordpress.com

