

PO James Third 422671 RNZAF

James was born on 30 March 1909 in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, the son of William Third and Mary Ann Third nee Noble.

Educated at Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen, in 1923 the family emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Wellington.

James attended Wellington Technical College for a year before taking up employment within the Account's Department of the Wellington City Council. In April 1941, James volunteered for service in the RNZAF.

Called up in April 1942, following basic training in New Zealand, in June 1942, James was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In October 1942 James was awarded his Air Bomber badge and embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire and Stirling conversion at 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, in June 1943 James was posted to 75 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Newmarket, Suffolk, moving to RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire later in the month. In July 1943 James was awarded his commission.

On 23/24 August 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Berlin, Germany. A combined force of 727 aircraft was allocated to the op, including twenty-three 75(NZ) crews.

At 21:04 on 23 August James, operating as the Bomb Aimer, and the crew departed RAF Mepal in Stirling III BF465 (JN-K).

In the early hours of 24 August, James's aircraft crashed 3 miles south of Lanke, near Bernau, Germany, 4 miles SW Biesenthal, Brandenburg, NNE of Berlin, killing six of the seven-man crew. The Mid Upper Gunner was able to bale out and was taken as a POW. This was James's 18th op.

Also killed: PO Mervin Arthur Ericksen RNZAF (Nav); PO Andrew Rankin (Pilot); FS Frederick William Thorstensen RNZAF (WOp/AG); Sgt Frank Morris Freeman (FE); Sgt George Ogden (AG)

Originally buried in Friedhof Biesenthal, Brandenburg, Germany, in November 1946 James was moved to the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery, Germany.

James is commemorated on Wall Panel 252

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum

