

Sgt Douglas Noel Tonkin 413285 RNZAF

Douglas was born on 17 November 1919 in Hastings, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, the son of Daniel Benjamin James Tonkin and Annie Frances Tonkin nee Musgrave.

Educated at Hastings Convent School, Douglas was employed as a shop assistant by F.W. Woolworths, Wellington, when, in May 1940, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in June 1941, after basic training in New Zealand, Douglas was sent to Canada for training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In March 1942 Douglas was awarded his WOp/AG badge and embarked immediately for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, in September 1942 James was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk.

On 24/25 October 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Milan, the main industrial and economic centre of Italy, including the home of the Caproni Aircraft Factory. This was the second op to Milan in as many days. A combined force of 71 aircraft, including five 75(NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. Two squadron aircraft failed to return.

At 19:00 on 24 October 1942 Douglas, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Mildenhall in Wellington III BJ725 (AA).

Whilst homeward bound, at 02:54 on 25 October, Douglas's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Ludwig Meister, flying a Bf110 of Stabl./NJG4 from Florennes Airfield, Belgium. The aircraft crashed at Wargnies-le-Grand, Nord, France, killing all on board. This was Douglas's 9th Op.

Also killed: Sgt Vallance Albert Oliver Dimock RNZAF (AG); Sgt James Allison McConnell RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Arthur Quinn (WOp/AG); Sgt Selwyn Clarence Smith RNZAF (Obs)

Douglas is buried in Valenciennes (St. Roch) Communal Cemetery, Nord, France

Douglas is commemorated on Wall Panel 255

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com

