

Sgt Graham Stuart Walker 401817 RNZAF

Graham was born on 20 May 1916 in Auckland, New Zealand, the son of Ernest Graham Walker and Mary Jane Waker nee Stewart.

Educated at Te Kuiti District High School, Graham was employed as a grocery assistant by the Co-op Stores, Te Kuiti when, in September 1939, he applied for service with the RNZAF.

Called up in July 1940, Graham completed his training in New Zealand in August 1940 with the award of his Air Gunner badge, and he embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 20 OTU RAF Lossiemouth, Scotland, in April 1941 Graham was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk.

On 24 July 1941 Bomber Command was tasked with a daylight attack against the German Battleship Gneisenau and heavy cruiser the Prinz Eugen which were moored at Brest, France. A combined force of 100 aircraft, including six 75(NZ) crews, were allocated to the op. The 75(NZ) Sqn crews were to attack the Gneisenau.

At 10:40 on 24 July Graham, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell in Wellington Ic N2854 (AA-U).

Brest was heavily defended by a balloon barrage, anti-aircraft guns and fighters. On approach to the target Graham's aircraft was hit by flak and, with the bomb doors open, they began to lose speed and dropped out of formation, becoming a prime target for the fighters. As Graham's aircraft was engaged, the accompanying squadron aircraft endeavoured to give covering fire and Graham and the Front Gunner were able to destroy a Me110 before they were critically hit by a Me109 and crashed in the sea, killing all on board. This was Graham's 21st op.

Also Killed: Sgt Rodney Patrick Carling (Obs); Sgt Robert Samuel Carson Craig (AG); Sgt William Owen RCAF (Pilot); Sgt Donald Frederick Streeter RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Reginald James Turner (WOp/AG)

Graham has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

Graham is commemorated on Wall Panel 258

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com

