WO Jack Finlow 40561 RNZAF



Jack was born on 26 February 1920 in Auckland, New Zealand, the only son of John Henry Finlow and Elizabeth Goodison Finlow nee Howard.

Educated at Seddon Memorial Technical School, Auckland, Jack was employed as a carpenter and coachbuilder when, in August 1939 he joined the Air Force Civil Reserve and in January 1940 he applied for war service.

Called up in February 1940, Jack was employed on ground duties until December 1941 when he was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In August 1942 Jack was awarded his WOp/AG badge and, after completing further training at 36 OTU RCAF Greenwood, Nova Scotia, in January 1943 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at No.1 (Coastal) OTU, RAF Thornaby, Yorkshire, in August 1943 Jack was sent to North Africa where he served on 500 Sqn and 52 Sqn before, in November 1943, he was posted to 13 Sqn at RAF Sidi Amor Airfield, Tunisia and then to Kabrit Airfield, Egypt where the squadron was engaged on coastal patrols and convoy escort duties. In February 1944 the squadron converted to the Baltimore and were deployed to Biferno Airfield, Campobasso, Italy. By July, the squadron was based at Cecina.

On July 1944 seven 13 Sqn crews were tasked with an armed reconnaissance over the Gothic Line, the last line of defence for the Axis forces in Italy. Situated in the northern parts of the Apennine Mountains, it was used during the fighting withdrawal of the Axis forces as they retreated from the advancing Allied offensive.

At 22:15 on 26 July 1944 Jack, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Cecina, Tuscany in Baltimore V FW317 (AN-Z).

At 23:18, for unknown reasons, the aircraft crashed at farmland near Firenzuola, 12km NNE of Florence killing all on board. This was Jack's 50th op.

Also Killed: Flt Lt David Drexel Laird RCAF (Pilot); FO James Phillips McCarter (Nav/AB); WO Frank Wallace West RAAF (WOp/AG)

Originally buried in an isolated grave near Firenzuola, Jack is now buried in the Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio, Italy

Jack is commemorated on Wall Panel - NYE

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com