WO Frank Wallace West 405987 RAAF



Frank was born on 13 October 1919 in Ipswich, Queensland, Australia, the son of Archibald Harold West and Lydia Sarah West nee Love.

Educated at Glen Innes Primary and High Schools, Queensland Frank was employed as a radio mechanic when, in July 1941, he enlisted in the RAAF.

Following basic training in Australia, in November 1941 Frank was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In August 1942 Frank 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 Frank 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, Tuscany.

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 Frank, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Cecina 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.

Also Killed: Flt Lt David Drexel Laird RCAF (Pilot); FO James Phillips McCarter (Nav/AB); WO Jack Finlow RNZAF (WOp/AG)

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

Frank is commemorated on Wall Panel - NYE

Photo Source: naa.gov.au