WO Robert James Frizzell 415525 RNZAF

Robert was born on 29 August 1915 in Christchurch, New Zealand, the son of George Frizzell and Ellen Frizzell nee Davison.

Educated at Cathedral Grammar School, Christchurch, Robert was employed by the International Harvester Company, Christchurch as a truck assembler when, in August 1940, he applied for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in October 1941, following basic training in New Zealand, in November 1941 Robert was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In July 1942 Robert was awarded his Air Gunner badge and, following advanced training at 34 OTU Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick where he converted to multi crew/multi engine ops on the Ventura, in November he embarked for the UK.

In December 1942 Robert was posted to RAF Feltwell, Norfolk where he joined 464 (RAAF) Sqn, before he was posted in September 1943 to 307 (Ferry Training Unit) RAF Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire for conversion to the Boston.

In December 1943 Robert transited to Italy where he joined 18 Sqn at the Foggia Airfield Complex. Throughout 1944 18 Sqn were engaged in close support for ground forces, particularly the British, and tasked with destroying airfields and transport throughout Italy, and into Southern France. In January 1944 Robert was forced to bale out of his aircraft when the Boston developed engine trouble on departure from Celone Airfield, but he was soon back on ops.

On 28 December 1944 three 18 Sqn crews were allocated to an armed reconnaissance flight of the area North of Po, and an attack on Villafranco Airfield.

At 16:35 Robert, operating as the Air Gunner, and the crew departed Falconara Airbase in Boston IV BZ557 (-Z).

Whilst attacking a bridge over the Santerno River, Robert's aircraft was hit by flak from the German Anti-Aircraft guns positioned on multiple levels near the river. The aircraft crashed 1km North of the bridge near the hamlet of Villa Pianta, and exploded on impact, killing all on board. This was Robert's 78th op.

Also killed: S/L Kenneth Graham Hart DFC (Pilot); FO John Woods (WOp/AG); FS Hyam Maurice Bluston (Nav)

Originally buried at the site of the crash, post war Robert was moved to Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Riccione, Italy

Robert is commemorated on Wall Panel - NYE