FO Colin Leo Malcolm Forsyth DFC DFM 40607 RNZAF



Colin was born on 11 February 1914 in Tauranga, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand, the son of Kenneth Malcolm Forsyth and Eva Forsyth nee Robinson, husband of Jean, nee Clarke. They had one child. Educated at Te Kuiti District High School, Colin was employed as a timber worker in Oropi when, in October 1939, he applied for service with the RNZAF.

Called up in February 1940, Colin completed his aircrew training in New Zealand in April 1940 with the award of his Air Gunner badge, and immediately embarked for the UK. Following advanced training at 5 OTU RAF Aston Down, Gloucestershire, in September 1940 Colin was posted to 23 Sqn, serving in the SE of England on Blenheims flying night intruder ops during the Battle of Britain, thus qualifying for the Battle of Britain Clasp. The squadron then converted to the Havoc.

On the night of 25/26 July 1941, a Havoc struck a parked aircraft on takeoff and crashed. Colin pulled the pilot and Navigator from the burning wreckage, and all three were taken to Margate Hospital and RAFH Halton where they were treated for burns. Although he later rejoined the squadron, Colin was rested from ops before he was posted in December 1941 to 418 Sqn at RAF Ford, Sussex flying the Boston and Mitchell.

In October 1942 Colin was awarded the DFM. His citation read:

"FS Forsyth has participated in numerous sorties. he is an outstanding air gunner, while his wireless skill has proved of the greatest assistance to his pilot. He has at all times displayed courage and determination in the performance of his duties."

Commissioned in December 1942, in July 1943 Colin was posted to 180 Sqn at RAF Foulsham Norfolk before the squadron moved to RAF Dunsfold, Surrey where they operated the Mitchell. In February 1944 Colin was posted to 98 Sqn, also based at Dunsfold.

On 8 May 1944, twelve 98 Sqn aircraft were tasked with a Noball Op against a target at Bois Coquerel, Pas de Calais, France. "Noball" was the designator for attacks against the launching sites for the V-1 flying bombs in Northern France and the Low Countries. At 17:05 on 8 May 1944 Colin, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Dunsfold, Surrey in Mitchell II FW109 (VO-D). After a successful bombing run, the crew had turned the aircraft for home when it was hit in the fuselage by anti-aircraft fire, blowing the nose off. The aircraft entered a spin and crashed in flames in a field at Cambron, near Abbeville. This was his 102nd op.

Colin was posthumously awarded the DFC with effect 7 May 1944. His citation read:

"FO Forsyth has been engaged on operational flying for a long period. As an air gunner he has participated in numerous attacks against heavily defended and important enemy targets. He has displayed, at all times, great courage and devotion to duty, while his skill, keenness and reliability have been an inspiring example to the other members of the crew".

Also Killed: WC Roderick Keith Faulkner Bell-Irving MiD (Pilot); FO Victor Charles Phipps (Nav); FS Kenneth John White (WOp)

Colin is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France

Colin is commemorated on Wall Panel - Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com