F/L James Athol Gunn 402866 RNZAF



James, known as “Jimmy”, was born on 12 February 1920 in Gisborne, New Zealand, the son of James Gunn and Ivy Ada Frances Gunn nee March. In 1943 James married WAAF Daphne Beatrice Bell.

Educated at Gisborne High School, James was employed as a mechanic by Cook County Council in Gisborne when, in August 1940, he enlisted in the RNZAF. Completing his flying training in New Zealand in January 1941 with the award of his wings, in March James embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 54 OTU RAF Church Fenton, Yorkshire, James was posted to RAF Hunsdon, Hertfordshire and flew with 1451(F) Flight and 1459(F) Flight operating on the Boston and Havoc. In December 1941 James was granted a commission. In August 1942 James was posted to 488 Sqn at RAF Ayr, Scotland.

In August 1943 488 Sqn commenced conversion to the Mosquito and moved to RAF Bradwell Bay, Essex the following month.

At 20:15 on 15 September 1943, James and his navigator departed RAF Bradwell Bay in Mosquito XII HK203 (ME-) tasked with a “Foreness” defensive patrol.

Whilst patrolling at 16,000ft James was informed of enemy aircraft approaching the coast at 3000ft. Diving to 4000ft, James closed in quickly and shot down a Heinkel III. Unfortunately, at 21:38, the Mosquito crashed into the sea.

James’s body was recovered and his injuries, bullet wounds to face and body, confirmed he had been killed in the air combat. This was James’s 43rd op.

Also Killed: FO James Affleck (Nav)

James is buried in Margate Cemetery, Kent

James is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com