PO Roland John Wright 421131 RNZAF



Roland was born on 31 January 1920 in Christchurch, New Zealand, the son of Roland Spencer and Christine Elizabeth Spencer nee Ayres. In 1942 he married Norma Daphne Constance Miles in New Zealand. They had one daughter.

Educated at Mount Albert School, Auckland, Roland was employed as a clerk by the Farmers Freezing Company when, in March 1941, he applied for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in February 1942, Roland completed his pilot training in New Zealand in November with the award of his Wings, and in March 1943 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 7 (P) Advanced Flying Unit RAF Peterborough, Cambridgshire, 56 OTU, RAF Tealing, Dundee and 59 OTU RAF Milfield, Northumberland, in January 1944 Roland was posted to 486 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Tangmere, Sussex.

Roland moved with the squadron to RAF Beaulieu, Hampshire, RAF Drem, Edinburgh, RAF Ayr, Scotland, RAF Castle Camps, Cambridgeshire, before his final move in April 1944 to RAF Newchurch, Kent. Roland was posthumously commissioned, backdated to May 1944.

On 28 June 1944 Roland was tasked with an anti-diver (V-1) patrol. ‘‘Op Diver” was the British code name for the V-1 flying bomb campaign launched by the German Luftwaffe in 1944 against London and other parts of Britain. Diver was the code name for the V-1, against which the defence consisted of anti-aircraft guns, barrage balloons and fighter aircraft.

At 21:50 on 28 June, Roland departed RAF Newchurch, Kent in Tempest V JN804 (SA-R).

At 22:35 Roland’s aircraft crashed into the sea south of Beachy Head after successfully intercepting a V-1. The aircraft was believed to have been damaged by pieces of the rocket breaking off and hitting the elevators. This was Roland’s 32nd op.

During the day, the squadron successfully intercepted seven V-1s.

Roland is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey

Roland is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: findagrave