

426209 : Flight Sergeant John Herbert WRIGHT.

PARENTS : Mr. & Mrs. T. P. Wright of Warkworth, North Auckland.

Born on March 18th, 1918, John Wright received his education at the Kourawhero School, Warkworth, North Auckland. His main interest in sport was football and after he left school became a member of the representative teams for Kaipara Flats and Warkworth. From 1937 until May, 1942 he was employed on his father's farm at Woodcocks Road, Warkworth.

Prior to his enlistment in the RNZAF, F/Sgt. Wright served for 2½ years in the Territorials. On the 9th May, 1941 he applied for training as an Wireless Operator Air Gunner, and eventually entered camp at Hobsonville in May 1942. Nearly five months later he was posted to the Initial Training Wing, Rotorua, and at the conclusion of his course he embarked for Canada on December 24, 1942 for training under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

On arrival in Canada in January, 1943, F/Sgt. Wright was posted to No. 3 Wireless School, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he remained until his remuster to air gunner on the 23rd June. Shortly afterward he proceeded to No. 3 Bombing & Gunnery School, MacDonald, Manitoba, to commence training on Sattle and Anson aircraft. At the conclusion of his course on October 1, 1943, he was awarded the air gunner's badge and promoted to Sergeant. He later embarked for the United Kingdom on October 22nd of the same year.

Shortly after his arrival in England, F/Sgt. Wright commenced a period of training on Wellington aircraft at No. 11 Operational Training Unit, Westcott, Buckinghamshire, and at the nearby satellite aerodrome, Oakley. On April 1st, 1944 he was promoted to Flight Sergeant and in May proceeded to No. 1653 Conversion Unit, Chedburg Suffolk, where he trained on Stirling aircraft. Early in July he was attached to No. 3 Lancaster Finishing School, Feltwell, Norfolk, for a few days, after which he was posted to No. 75 (NZ) Squadron, Mepal, Cambridgeshire.

29 d ab 1/4

With this Squadron, F/Sgt. Wright carried out a series of raids over the enemy targets of Stuttgart and Bassen, in Germany, and on the railway junction at Aulnoye, the marshalling yards at Lens and on other targets in France.

On August 12, 1944, F/Sgt. Wright was a member of the crew of a Lancaster aircraft, which took off on air operations over the German town of Russelsheim and failed to return to its base. It was later reported that the machine had crashed near Ouren, Germany, all the crew, including F/Sgt. Wright losing their lives. He was buried in the comrades grave in Ouren, near Trier, Germany.

5/15/3062/A62

210 hrs. as air gunner.

Mr. T.F. Wright (F)

Woodcocks Road,

Warkworth,

NORTH AUCKLAND.

COPY

AIR MINISTRY

(Casualty Branch)

73-77 Oxford Street,
W.1.

Ref:-P.421589/44/P.4./503H.

Officer in Charge,
Royal New Zealand Air Force,
Halifax House,
Strand, W.C.2.

Casualty:- Lancaster H.K. 564 missing
12th/13th August, 1944.

NZ.428793	F/Sgt.	Mulohy. C.D.,
NZ.429049	F/O	W.F. Hazard.
NZ.4211036	F/Sgt.	Thomson. E.L.,
NZ.426883	F/Sgt.	Elvin. W.,
NZ.426320	F/Sgt.	Johnston. H.D.,
NZ.426209	F/Sgt.	Wright. J.H.,
1892552	Sgt.	Parker. R.R.

Enclosed please find copy of letter from
A.D.G.R.E. 21st Army Group, 21Gp/33027/GR dated 29th April, 1945.

2. This incident has been traced to Lancaster
H.K. 564, crew of 7 and Lancaster N.D. 444 crew of eight, whose
names are mentioned in M.M. 5790 under file P.421588/44.

3. The enclosed copy of this department's reply to
the Graves Registration authorities explains the position.
The crew of H.K.564 except F/O Hazard are buried at Ouren.
Owing to an error the certified notification of death forwarded
to you on the 13th April, 1945, in respect of F/O Hazard, stated
that he was also buried in Ouren cemetery. (Up to the present
time the official records of the department give no place of
burial for F/O Hazard). There is no doubt that he is buried
with the crew of Lancaster N.D. 444 at Daleiden Germany. You
will note from para 3 (c) of letter to G.R. & E., that the 7th
man who fell over the frontier was buried on the 14th August,
1944, at Daleiden. F/O Hazard's identity disc is enclosed.

4. It is requested that you will amend the certified
notification of death of F/O Hazard to read "buried at Daleiden
Germany".

Sgd. C.H.C. Hardy F/Lt.,
for Director of Personal Services.

COPY

Subject:- Graves Registration.

21 AGP/33027/GR.

To:-War Office,
A.G.13.

29th Apr. 1945.

Two British planes collided over the Belgium - Germany - Luxembourg frontier on the 12/13th Aug. 44. One plane fell in OUREN, Belgium and the other at WEISWAMPACH, Luxembourg.

From the first plane of the crew of 9, 7 were buried in OUREN Communal Cemetery and the other two, who fell on the other side of the Luxembourg frontier, were taken to WEISWAMPACH. Here the 7 members of the crew of the other plane were collected by the German Military Police and, with the two bodies from the first plane, were taken to DALEIDEN inside Germany for burial.

This grave of 9 "UNKNOWN" British airmen was located in the Communal Cemetery at DALEIDEN, the date of death being given merely as August 44.

One of the motors of the planes which crashed at OUREN, bore the following Nos:-

D.172.
T.R.P. 118.
L 13 B one end of the casing and
D 18174
MHH 286
FM 1524
M 22
166697
B - GR on the other.

It is stated by the Parish Priest at OUREN that records of persons interred at both places were destroyed by the retreating Germans in January.

Graves Registration Report will be furnished in due course.

If from the above information, identification can be established of any of the nine "UNKNOWNNS" in DALEIDEN or the seven "UNKNOWNNS" at OUREN, and you will advise us, the graves will be re-registered accordingly.

(Sgd).....?

for Lt. Col.
A.D.G.R.E.

Graves R. & B.
Rear H.Q.,
21 Army Group.
B.L.A.

RCF

B. Feb

21588/421589/P.4./503.H

18th July, 1945.

Sir,

I am directed to refer to your letter RAF/Gen/44/AG13 dated 10th May, 1945, enclosing report from A.D.G.R.E. 21 Grp/33027 GR dated 29th April, 1945.

2. The two crews have been identified as follows:-

(a) Lancaster H.K. 564 missing 12th/13th August, 1944 the crew of seven comprising:- (File.P.421489/44).

R.N.Z.A.F.	{	NZ.428793 Flight Sergeant Mulcahy C.D.	}	C.C.L. No. 1724.
		NZ.429047 Flying Officer W.F. Hazard.		
		NZ.4211036 Flight Sergeant Thomson E.L.		
		NZ.426883 Flight Sergeant Elvin W.		
		NZ.426320 Flight Sergeant Johnston H.D.		
R.A.F.	{	NZ.426209 Flight Sergeant Wright J.H.	}	
		1892552 Sergeant Parker R.R.		

The number 166697 quoted in A.D.G.R.E.'s report is the number of the port inner engine of H.K. 564.

(b) Lancaster N.D. 444 missing 12/13th August, 1944, the crew of eight comprising:- (File.P.521588/44).

R.A.F.	{	84918 Squadron Leader C.C. Hemmings.	}	C.C.L.1721.
		126893 Flying Officer S.J. Richards.		
		147998 Flying Officer P.A. Taylor		
		983777 Flight Sergeant R. Seddon		
		122983 Flight Lieutenant T.J. Pye.		
		185129 Sergeant Green A.		
		146617 Flying Officer T.H.A. Hill.		
		174918 Pilot Officer G.B. Stone.		C.C.L.1535.
		Death presumption action in course of being taken.		

3. (a) Lancaster H.K. 564. German official totenlist No. 238 states F/Sgt. Wright, F/Sgt. Mulcahy, Sgt. Parker, F/Sgt. Thomson (Quoting their service numbers) and two "unknown" were buried in Comrades Graves in Ouren Cemetery, 5 metres from the Church choir in the Childrens Cemetery.

(b) Official German records held in this Department confirm this and add that one man from this crew fell over the frontier. This man is F/O Hazard, see para 4 (b) below. It follows therefore that the two unknown mentioned in 3 (a) above must be F/Sgt. Elvin and F/Sgt. Johnston.

(c) The 7th member of the crew who fell over the frontier was buried on 14th August, 1944, at Daleiden.

(d) According to the Germans the plane crashed 1 km. west of Ouren at 23.30 hours. 12/8/44, after being hit by anti-aircraft fire.

4. (a) Lancaster N.D.444. International Red Cross telegram states S/Ldr. Hemmings, F/Lt. Pye, F/O Richards, F/O Taylor, F/O Hazards, see para 3.(b) above, F/O Hill, F/Sgt. Seddon, Sgt. Green were killed on 13th August, 1944, but no place of burial was given.

(b) Official German Records held in this Department state aircraft crashed 800 metres east of Weiswampach. 8 dead found near aircraft and another dead body was found which came from an aircraft which crashed in Belgian territory. The names of S/Ldr. Hemmings, F/O Hazard, F/O Richards, F/O Taylor, F/Sgt. Seddon, Sgt. Green, F/O Hill, F/O Pye were quoted. The ninth body therefore by elimination P/O Stone.

P.T.O.

(c) The aircraft is stated to have crashed at 00.58 hours on the 13th August, 1944.

5. The report from A.D.G.R.E. states that one aircraft had a crew of nine. This must be a mistake as no aircraft is missing from operations on 12th/13th August, 1944, carrying a crew of nine. What probably happened was two airmen were seen to parachute to earth. One was F/O Hazard and the other may have been from another aircraft.

6. I am to ask that you will be good enough to register the graves of the nine airmen buried at Daleiden in accordance with para 4 (b) above and the graves of the six at OUREN as the crew of H.K.564 omitting F/O Hazard. If these are seven R.A.F. buried at Ouren may the seventh be exhumed for identification purposes.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

S.H.C. Hardy,

for Director of Personal Services.

AIR DEPARTMENT,
WELLINGTON C. I.

17th. Feb., 1947

Mr. T.F. Wright,
Woodcocks Road,
Warkworth,
NORTH AUCKLAND.

Dear Mr. Wright,

Further to my letter of the 26th. September, 1946, concerning your son, Flight Sergeant John Herbert Wright, I have to advise that additional information has been received from Air Ministry. This states that the Missing Research and Enquiry Service recently conducted searches in the area in which your son's plane crashed, and the following is a copy of the report forwarded by the Investigating Officer:-

"In the company of F/Lt. Nadeau and a Gendarme, I visited the scene of a crash near Ouren. The aircraft, a Lancaster, had crashed at approximately 2340 hours on 12.8.44, after having been attacked by a fighter over Leiler. It had exploded on hitting the ground and wreckage was scattered over a wide area. The only piece of wreckage which could possibly assist in identification of the aircraft was an airscrew. The engine number plate of the only reasonably intact engine had been removed, presumably by the Germans.

The bodies of six of the crew were found by M. Thelen, farmer of Ouren, lying in the vicinity of the crash, having apparently been blown out of the aircraft by the explosion, and were not badly burnt. The body of another man, believed to be the pilot, was found inside part of the aircraft. M. Thelen believed that the crew contained some New Zealanders judging by their shoulder flashes. The seven bodies were taken to Ouren by M. Thelen and were buried in a communal grave in the local cemetery on 19.8.44 by the German Gendarmerie, who were believed to have passed all relevant papers to the Red Cross. The grave has been kept in excellent condition by the local inhabitants of Ouren, and fresh flowers are still frequently placed on it.

On learning that another member of this crew had baled out over Leiler, I visited the Cure of that village and learned that this had been the case. The airman had landed in a pine tree near the village at about 1235 a.m. on 13.8.44, and although his parachute had opened, was unfortunately dead. The Cure had managed to salvage a photograph from the body before the Germans arrived on the scene, and had noticed that he was a New Zealander from his shoulder flashes. He believed that the body of this man, had been taken to Daleiden, Germany, together with the victims of another crash near Weiswampach which occurred on the same night. This will be the subject of a report which will deal with the night victims of the crash near Weiswampach together with the New Zealand airman who baled out at Leiler".

It has subsequently been proved that the airman who baled out over Leiler was Flying Officer W.F. Hazard.

I am fully aware of the distressing nature of this news, Mr. Wright, but I am sure you would rather be given all the information received by this Department.

On behalf of the Air Board, I once again desire to express my deepest sympathy in your great loss.

Yours faithfully,

T. A. Barron

AIR SECRETARY