

Harry – RAF Bomber Pilot

No. 78 Squadron (4 Group) Royal Air Force

England and Europe

World War 2

Killed in Action



Armstrong Whitworth AW38 Whitley Mk.V – 78 Squadron in flight c.1940.

Harry Wright MORGAN

43708 Pilot Officer (Pilot) H. W. MORGAN, Royal Air Force (RAF), was killed on air operations over Hesseweg, Netherlands, in 1940 aged 27 years.



Harry Wright MORGAN was born at Mount Somers, Ashburton (south Canterbury) on 8 April 1913. The only son of William Arthur MORGAN and Florence Jenny Myra WRIGHT, Harry had one sister (Florence Barbara MORGAN) and the family farmed at Ashburton, South Canterbury.

Harry's father (William Arthur MORGAN) had served with the New Zealand forces in South Africa (1899-1902)¹, retiring his military career with the rank of Captain² and his great grandfather (Thomas WRIGHT) was a gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery.

Our great-grandfather, William Edmund (Ted) MORGAN, and Harry's father were 1st cousins, making Harry a 2nd cousin (2x removed) to our generation.

Not much is known about Harry's early life. His parents owned and worked a sheep farm, Evandale, Mount Somers (Ashburton) when he was born. It is assumed that he attended primary school at Mount Somers and in 1927 he started his secondary education at Ashburton High School.

During his time at secondary school both of his parents died - his father in 1928 and mother in 1929. After the death of his parents, Harry probably then went under the care of his older sister Florence, who was 22 and married when their mother died.³

In 1929 he continued his secondary education at Christ's College (Christchurch); being a public school it is reasonable to presume that he boarded here, where he obtained the University Entrance Examination and the Engineering Preliminary⁴. The sports in which he was actively interested were football and tennis, and later golf, finishing his time here in 1931. A newspaper article reports that Harry was admitted to the Ashburton Public Hospital when he suffered from a fracture of the right hip as the result of falling over a cliff at Mesopotamia Station⁵ during the summer of 1932.

He furthered his studies in engineering at the Canterbury University College⁶. In 1935, aged 22, Harry was a student in Wellington living at 17 Grass Street, Oriental Bay. It is not known what or where he studied, although at a guess it may have been engineering to follow in his grandfather's footsteps. I cannot find any record of him graduating.

Around his time in Wellington, Harry's interest in flying was piqued. During the 1930s civil aero clubs were popular across the main regions, including Wellington and Canterbury. Harry applied for the RNZAF in 1937 but was declined entry. Possibly feeling dejected, he went to work on his sister and brother-in-law's farm at Oxford, Canterbury (50km northwest of Christchurch). By 1940 the electoral roll had his residence listed as Ashburton (farmer, Mount Somers) – for some reason he was not interested in furthering an engineering career.

¹ First contingent No. 1 Company. Embarked on ship (first tour) Waiwera, 21 October 1899 and (second tour) Surrey, 1 February 1902.

² He remained with the military on the 'Retired List' until his death in 1928.

³ Florence married Thomas Henry PILBROW and in 1927 and they were then residing on a farm in Temuka.

⁴ Harry's maternal grandfather, Edward George WRIGHT, had extensive land holdings in the Ashburton area. He was also a prominent engineer and politician, serving on the provincial government between 1879-1899 and holding positions on the Lyttelton Harbour Board and the Ashburton County Council (this may explain the family connection to politician Sir William Nosworthy and Mesopotamia Station).

⁵ Mesopotamia Station is a high-country sheep station located at the headwaters of the Rangitata Gorge. It was owned at this time by Sir William Nosworthy, a Member of Parliament who served in the Ashburton electorate until his retirement in 1928.

⁶ Established in 1873, Canterbury College was renamed Canterbury University College in 1933 before becoming the University of Canterbury in 1957.

RNZAF Early Days

In 1923, New Zealand's first military aviation base was established at Christchurch (Wigram) and by 1928, construction work begins on a second airbase at Hobsonville, west of Auckland.

By 1930, the strength of our permanent air force (Royal New Zealand Air Force - RNZAF) was only eight officers and 42 other ranks. Our air force had a strong reliance upon a volunteer Territorial Air Force (TAF) to make up its numbers, which at this time, had a strength of 90 officers, and 19 other ranks. At Wigram, the permanent air force had in its service three Gloster Grebes and six Bristol Fighters, four Avro 504K and four De Havilland Moths for training.

Training and refresher courses for the TAF were carried out at Wigram. Civil aero clubs were also actively training pilots. At the outbreak of war, the Royal Air Force (RAF) estimated need for each year of the war was 20,000 pilots and 30,000 other crew. Britain asked the Commonwealth for help in training pilots, and the New Zealand government committed itself to providing the RAF with 880 fully trained pilots a year. This number later increased to more than 2,000.

Pilots had their first flying lessons at bases throughout the country, including Whenuapai, Palmerston North, Harewood, Wigram and Taieri. In all, more than 2,700 pilots completed their training in New Zealand before heading for England and the RAF.

Prior to the outbreak of war, the RNZAF had sent 81 trained pilots to the RAF for short service commissions in Britain, and an additional 267 selected candidates from New Zealand had been taken on for training directly in RAF schools. The strength of our air force (both RAAF and TAF) at the outbreak of war was 93 planes, most of which were obsolete and/or trainers.

From April 1940, 7,000 more New Zealanders sailed for Canada as part of a new Empire Air Training Scheme.⁷ The scheme was established to keep up the flow of aircrew from Commonwealth countries to the RAF. New Zealanders trained in Canada as pilots, navigators, wireless operators, air gunners and bomb aimers. The first draft of 40 pilots was scheduled to leave for Canada under the new scheme in March 1941.⁸

Once in England, the New Zealanders were posted to Operational Training Units before being assigned to squadrons. The average age of the men when they began their operational careers was 21 years and they were expected to fly a 'tour' of 30 sorties, or combat flights, before being given time out.

Although there were eventually seven squadrons with a New Zealand identity in the RAF⁹ (manned largely by New Zealanders) the majority of New Zealand airmen in the RAF were not in the New Zealand squadrons but flew alongside men from Canada, Australia, South Africa and the United Kingdom. New Zealand was represented, at some stage, in almost all RAF squadrons.

By the time Harry died, a report in the New Zealand Herald on 4 October 1940 stated a total of 187 casualties¹⁰ have been suffered by New Zealanders in the Royal Air Force in Britain since the war began. Of these, 79 were confirmed killed and 23 missing (believed killed). The outbreak of war provided the momentum for New Zealand to not only do its job in the event of war coming to its own shores, but interest itself in the defence of the British Commonwealth. The RNZAF was to play a key role.

⁷ Also referred to as The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

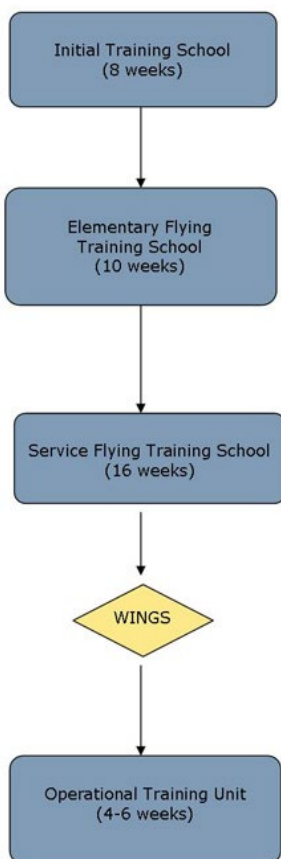
⁸ Harry was killed in October 1940, so did not participate in this scheme.

⁹ Two were in Bomber Command (75 and 487), three were in Fighter Command (485, 486, 488), and two were in Coastal Command (489 and 490).

¹⁰ Official figures quoted from a statement released by the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, in the House of Representatives.

Enlistment

Harry was 26 years of age when he enlisted in the RNZAF on 20 September 1939 at Wellington and immediately commenced his service training.



Harry had initially applied for the RNZAF in 1937 shortly after his 24th birthday but was declined on medical grounds [eyesight was the reason provided on his Attestation]. He re-applied, and was accepted, on 19 March 1939 with full knowledge that war was looming.

When war was declared on 3 September 1939 the RNZAF was mobilised and volunteers were called for to serve in either the RNZAF or the RAF. From September 1939 to April 1940 more than 2,700 pilots completed their training in New Zealand before heading for England and the RAF.¹¹

Recruits for aircrew were posted on enlistment to the Ground [Initial] Training School at Rongotai.¹² It was here on 20 September 1939 that Harry was formally attested, kitted out, and given a four week's course of basic service training and drill. He was given the rank of Acting Pilot Officer.

After completing his basic service training Harry was posted to the No.1 Elementary Flying Training School (No.1 EFTS) on 21 October 1939. No.1 EFTS was officially formed at RNZAF Station Taieri, Dunedin on 16 October 1939 and reportedly sixteen acting pilot officers arrived on the opening day, so it is possible that Harry was to have been one of first recruits to pass through here.

After two months at Taieri Harry was posted to No.1 Flying Training School at Wigram¹³ (Christchurch) on 19 December 1939 where he trained on Vickers Vildebeest¹⁴ and Fairy Gordon¹⁵ aircraft. On 13 February 1940, he graduated and was awarded his Flying Badge [Wings].

The time taken to qualify as a pilot could vary. At the start of the war, it could be as little as six months, but on average it took between 18 months to two years. The diagram pictured reflects the amount of training a RAF pilot received in 1941. From Ground [Initial] Training School to his posting to an operational unit (78 Squadron), it took Harry was 11 months to fully train as a pilot.

Obtaining Pilot's Wings did not mark the end of training.

On 26 April 1940, Harry embarked from Auckland on S.S. *Rangitiki*¹⁶ bound for the United Kingdom. Arriving in England on 8 June 1940, he was posted to No.1 RAF Depot, Uxbridge and immediately promoted to Pilot Officer. Before a posting to an operational squadron, pilots were sent to Operational Training Units to keep them abreast of new technical developments and changes in operational procedure.

Over the next few weeks, Harry had postings to No.4 (C) Ferry Pilot's Pool, Kemble (Gloucestershire) where he continued his training, flying Anson and Wellington aircraft; No.12 Operational Training Unit at Benson (Oxfordshire) training on Fairy aircraft; and No.10 Operational Training Unit at Abingdon (Berkshire) where he flew and trained on Avro Anson and Whitley aircraft.

¹¹ From April 1940 New Zealand aircrew were trained as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme in Canada.

¹² Rongotai is a suburb of Wellington, located southeast of the city centre. It is known mostly for being the location of the Wellington International Airport.

¹³ An advanced flying training school (SFTS) at Wigram was operational at the start of the war.

¹⁴ A three-seat general reconnaissance, advanced pilot trainer, target tug biplane in service between 1935-1944.

¹⁵ A two-seat bomber, advanced pilot trainer, target tug biplane in service between 1939-1943.

¹⁶ In November 1940, the *Rangitiki* sailed as part of Convoy HX84 from the USA to the UK which came under attack from the German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer. The *Rangitiki* was able to escape along with thirty one other members of the convoy.

Bomber Command

RAF Bomber Command was created in 1936 and comprised the RAF's light and heavy bomber squadrons.

Over the course of the war, it developed from a limited and relatively ineffective force into a weapon of immense destructive power. In 1939 RAF Bomber Command had 23 operational bomber squadrons, with 280 aircraft. This modest force gave Britain the means to immediately strike back at Nazi Germany, but only against strictly military targets at first.

Early raids against warships and airfields were conducted in daylight, but bomber aircraft were easy targets for enemy fighters and losses were heavy. The bombers also flew over Germany at night but dropped only propaganda leaflets. In 1940, after Hitler's invasion of France, the RAF began a night-time bombing campaign against German industry, especially synthetic oil production.

But plans to hit specific factories proved impractical as crews invariably failed to identify individual factories and refineries in the darkness. Their bombs were scattered far and wide. Bomber Command lacked the strength at this stage to do any serious damage.



In 1942 Bomber Command received a new aircraft – the Avro Lancaster, and a new leader – Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur (Bomber) Harris.

Accepting that precision bombing was proving impossible, the War Cabinet sanctioned 'area bombing' – the targeting of whole cities to destroy both factories and their workers.

It was judged necessary to defeat an enemy that seemed on the brink of victory. Harris believed it could win the war and gained much public support when he sent 1,000 bombers against Cologne.

In 1943 new tactics and technology enabled crews to find and hit their targets with increasing precision. An elite Pathfinder Force guided the bombers using coloured marker flares. Major attacks were launched against Germany's industrial heart in the Ruhr Valley. Hamburg was devastated by a firestorm (pictured above).

In 1944 the combined Allied bomber force began to overwhelm the Germans. American escort fighters shot the Luftwaffe out of the sky. A successful offensive was launched against Germany's vulnerable fuel supplies. Bombers also flew in support of D-Day, softening up coastal defences and hitting railways to block German reinforcements.

By 1945 the bomber offensive reached the peak of its destruction. The RAF alone now had 108 squadrons with over 1,500 aircraft. Raids against oil and communications proved the most effective.

Whitley Bomber

The Armstrong Whitworth AW38 Whitley was one of three British twin-engine, front line bomber types that were in service with the Royal Air Force at the outbreak of the Second World War.

The aircraft was named after Whitley, a suburb of Coventry, home of one of Armstrong Whitworth's plants, and was a twin-engine cantilever monoplane with a retractable undercarriage. The AW38 Whitley as a bomber usually carried a five-man crew made up of pilot, navigator, nose gunner / bomb aimer, wireless operator and rear gunner.

Following the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Whitley participated in the first RAF bombing raid upon German territory and remained an integral part of the early British bomber offensive. In 1942 it was superseded as a bomber by the larger four-engine "heavies" such as the Avro Lancaster. It took part in many night operations over Germany, but it was gradually withdrawn as more four-engine bombers became available.



An air-to-air photograph of an AW38 Whitley showing its characteristic nose-down attitude in flight.

The AW38 Whitley was used in widespread "leaflet raids" and night bomber operations. Later, it also served as a glider tug and took part in delivering Airspeed Horsa gliders during the Battle of Normandy and the D-Day landings. It was also used in support of clandestine operations of the resistance groups in occupied Europe, as well as taking on a maritime reconnaissance role with Coastal Command.

No. 78 Squadron

By the outbreak of the Second World War, No. 78 Squadron was based at RAF Dishforth in Yorkshire as part of No. 4 Group of RAF Bomber Command.



No. 78 Squadron was reformed in November 1936, originally flying Heyford night bombers. By the start of the Second World War, the squadron was flying the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley and was acting as a reserve squadron taking on pilots who had passed out from the Group Pool training units. The Squadron identity code was EY.

In the summer of 1940, the group pool training units were merged in the Operational Training Units, and No. 78 was freed to begin operations. The squadron flew its first mission on 19 July 1940. The squadron remained part of Bomber Command's main bomber force until the end of the war. In March 1942, the Whitley was replaced by the Halifax, and the squadron retained that aircraft until the summer of 1945.

Dishforth opened in 1936. At the beginning of the Second World War, it became part of 4 Group, Bomber Command, and was used for recruit training. Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bombers were flown from there in 1940. Between 1943 and 1945 the station was used by No. 6 (RCAF) Group RAF Bomber Command and was a sub-station of RAF Topcliffe. Immediately after the war the station was used to convert aircrew to the Douglas Dakota transport aircraft.

It was here, on 1 September 1940, Harry was posted to No.78 Squadron where he would only survive another four weeks of the war.



A Whitley crew preparing for a night raid, November 1941. Final adjustments are made to the pilot's flying clothing.

Bombing Berlin

Flying was physically and mentally demanding and constant concentration was needed for many hours at a time.

The everyday lives of most aircrew, unlike other servicemen, were a unique mixture of danger and normality. At one moment the men were on a bombing raid, a few hours later they were safely at home in the pub. Bomber operations were extremely stressful and frequently perilous, with a random chance of death or horrific injury.

Airmen had to not only fight the enemy, but also a hostile environment in which they might encounter many kinds of adverse weather conditions and extreme cold. Occupational hazards such as lack of oxygen, frostbite and lower pressures at high altitude meant they needed equipment to keep them warm and breathing. These problems were increased by operating at night.

Harry arrived in England in June 1940. On arrival, he was posted to various Operational Training Units including No. 10 OTU operating from RAF Abingdon in Berkshire (southern England) on 11 August 1940. Here he undertook intensive training for night bomber crews flying the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley aircraft to hone skills he had learned in his initial training, how to work together as a crew, and familiarise himself with the type of aircraft he would be flying operationally.

On 1 September 1940, Harry was posted to an operational unit - No.78 Squadron.

His first foray on active operations was on the night of 11-12 September 1940. The targets being Berlin and Bremen, Germany. This did not go so well as the aircraft returned to base, operation uncompleted, owing to the rear gunner suffering from frostbite. His second mission to target oil tankers in Antwerp (Belgium) did not go much better as it resulted in no bombs being dropped due to cloud coverage making it impossible to identify the target.

On his second mission he teamed up with Pilot Officer Neville Halsey Andrew (21), whom he would fly with for the remainder of his service. Another crew member, Sergeant Arthur Roscoe (19), was also on this flight and would stay with them for the remainder of their service. Pilot Officer Andrew was the senior pilot, due to him having more experience (this was his 11th operational sortie versus Harry's second).

Interestingly, Harry's crew did not always fly the same plane for each mission. On his recorded operations, he flew P.4996 (5), P.4950 (1), N.1393 (1), and P.4964 (2) including their fateful mission on the night of 1-2 October 1940. Since his first operational mission on 11 September 1940, Harry flew on 9 operations (nearly 70 flying hours) in 22 days, he was flying every second or third day - when not flying the Squadron was on 'standby'.

By his third operation on 18 September 1940, he was embedded with a regular crew which included Harry, Andrew, Matson, Martin, and Roscoe. These five would stay together for the next 5 missions. On their last mission, Sgt. H W Martin was replaced by Sgt. P H Richmond. In all, Harry's operational flying missions would take him from England across Europe - including Germany, Holland, and Belgium.

The next page details Harry's operational flying missions as recorded in No. 78 Squadron's 'Operations Record Book – Detail of Work Carried Out' for the months of September and October 1940. I have complemented [\[in blue\]](#) further detail provided from the 'Summary of Events' for the same period. These are from official RAF documents held in the UK National Archives.

Operations Record Book – No. 78 Squadron (11 September to 1 October 1940)

- 1 11-12 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4996
Crew: PATERSON/MORGAN/WAGLAND/MARTIN/IRVING
Aircraft returned to base, operation uncompleted owing to rear gunner suffering from frostbite. Take-off 2003hrs - landed 00.25hrs. [\[note primary targets were BERLIN \(Charlottenburg Power Station\) and BREMEN \(shipbuilding yards\)\]](#).
- 2 15 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4996
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/TETLEY/HILL/ROSCOE
No bombs dropped owing to the weather making it impossible to identify the target: - ANTWERP oil tankers. Light flak was encountered over the target area. Weather 10/10 cumulus clouds and thunderstorms. Flight up 0100hrs – landed 0640hrs.
- 3 18 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4996
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
ZEEBRUGGE was bombed at 0350 hours from a height of 5,500 feet, but the result was not observed. We encountered a lot of flak fire and a fair amount of A.A. fire. Weather 10/10 cloud over target. Cloud base 5,500 feet. Take-off 0120 hrs – landed 0640 hrs. [\[note primary target was shipping and barges at OSTEND\]](#).
- 4 19-20 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4950
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
KOBLEHE Railway Station was the target attacked at 0245 hours from a height of 11,000 feet. The result was not observed. Two 250lb and one 500lb G.P. bombs hung up. Light and heavy flak fire was encountered over the target area. Weather 5/10 cloud. Take-off 2235 hrs – landed 0715hrs. [\[note primary target was MANNHEIM Marshalling Yards\]](#).
- 5 21-22 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4996
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
Bombs were released over BOLOGNE harbour resulting in direct hits on barges and the quayside starting several fires. Little opposition from the ground defences was encountered. Weather good over the target area. Take-off 2056hrs – landed 0235hrs.
- 6 23-24 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4996
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
Bombs were dropped on some gasworks in the BERLIN area from a height of 9,500 feet. Several fires were started. Heavy A.A. fire was encountered. Weather 3/10 cloud with ground haze. Take-off 1940hrs – landed 0620hrs. [\[note primary target was BERLIN \(Charlottenburg Power Station\)\]](#).
- 7 25-26 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4964
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
Bombs dropped over WAR---DE Docks from a height of 9,000 feet, but the result was not observed. The usual amount of flak fire was encountered. Weather 9/10-10/1 cloud, with frequent breaks in the cloud. Take-off 1955hrs – landed 0530hrs. [\[note primary targets were KIEL Scharnhorst and ANTWERP Town Quay\]](#).
- 8 28-29 September 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. N.1393
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/MARTIN/ROSCOE
The primary target could not be located owing to 10/10 cloud over target area. WILMSHAVER Docks were bombed from a height of 9,500 feet. No result was observed. Intense A.A. fire encountered, weather 5/10 over target attacked. Take-off 1946hrs – landed 0516hrs. [\[note primary targets were BERLIN and AMSTERDAM \(Fokker Aircraft Factory\)\]](#).
- 9 1-2 October 1940 Aircraft: Whitley Mk. V No. P.4964
Crew: ANDREW/MORGAN/MATSON/ROSCOE/RICHMOND
This aircraft failed to return to base. Take-off 1906hrs –
[\[note primary targets were STERKRADER \(Holten oil works\) and ROTTERDAM \(barges and shipping\)\]](#).

Killed in Action

Harry was killed in the early hours of 2 October 1940 when his Whitley bomber was shot down by a night fighter over Holland when returning from a bombing raid on Germany.

Harry was one of two pilots of an Armstrong Whitworth AW38 Whitley V bomber. The crew of five included Pilot Officer N H Andrew (21), Pilot Officer H W Morgan (27), Sergeant G E Matson (20), Sergeant P H Richmond (19), and Sergeant A Roscoe (19). The plane's serial number was P.4964. The crew were a mix of British, Canadian and New Zealanders - the pilots were both Kiwi, from Canterbury (N H Andrew was from Ellesmere).¹⁷

Leaving the RAF Dishforth base in Yorkshire at 19:06 hours on 1 October 1940, their mission was directed against synthetic oil installations in Sterkrade (Holten Oil Works). Sterkrade lies in western Germany, near the city of Oberhausen, in the industrial Ruhr Valley area. The target was bombed from 10,000 feet with incendiary bombs, however, there is no information on the success of this operation.



Crash wreckage of Harry's plane (P.4964) October 1940.

The Whitley bomber P.4964 left the target area and started on its return leg of the operation. The plane was picked up by radar guided searchlight batteries based at Giesbeek and Vorden and then attacked by a Messerschmitt Bf 110^{18 19} and shot down. The Whitley exploded in the air - killing all crew.

At 01:30 hours on 2 October 1940, the bomber crashed and burned out alongside the sand road from Hummels to Doetinchem, on land owned by Mr Demmink of Hessenweg Hummelo (Gelderland) 21km east of Arnhem, Holland.

On Friday, 4 October 1940, at 15:00 hours the five crew members were buried in a communal grave at the cemetery in Hummelo with full military honours. Hundreds of people from Hummelo and surrounding villages stood outside the gate during the funeral. At the time of his death, Harry had logged 366 flying hours and was on his 9th operational mission.

Official records indicate that his death 'presumably' occurred on 1 October 1940.

¹⁷ Newspaper reports of the time have Pilot Officer Andrew's mother (Mrs. E. A. Andrew) living in Eccleston, Wanganui Road, Marton.

¹⁸ Commonly referred to as the Me 110, it was a twin-engine heavy fighter, crewed by a pilot and radio operator, in the service of the Luftwaffe throughout World War 2.

¹⁹ The Me 110 was flown by Lt. Hans Georg Mangelsdorf and his radio operator Hubert Winter of 2/NJG-1 [a Luftwaffe squadron]. Mangelsdorf and Winter were both killed a fortnight later when they were shot down by a 44 Squadron Hampden I X2910.

Hummelo General Cemetery

Hummelo General Cemetery is a civilian cemetery located in Hummelo, Holland - a village in the Dutch province of Gelderland.



The commune of Hummelo-en-Keppel takes its name from the two villages of Hummelo and Keppel. Hummelo is situated 21 kilometres east of Arnhem and 6 kilometres north-west of Doetinchem. At the time Harry was killed, Holland was under Nazi Germany occupation²⁰ hence he was buried in a civilian cemetery.

Hummelo General Cemetery contains the graves of five Commonwealth airmen of the Second World War, including Harry. His grave details are Cemetery: Hummelo-En-Keppel (Hummelo) General Cemetery, Netherlands. Collective Grave 1-5.



Harry is buried alongside the four other members of his crew: Pilot Officer N H Andrew (21), Sergeant G E Matson (20), Sergeant P H Richmond (19), and Sergeant A Roscoe (19). At age 27, Harry was the granddaddy of the crew; a mix of 2 British, 1 Canadian and 2 New Zealanders.

Harry is also memorialised in New Zealand.

His name appears on the on the Ashburton War Memorial (pictured left) which memorialises those killed in the First and Second World Wars and later conflicts from Ashburton and surrounding area. There are 432 names listed on this memorial, which was unveiled on 4 June 1928.

²⁰ The German invasion of the Netherlands was a military campaign part of Case Yellow., the German invasion of the Low Countries and France during World War II. The battle lasted from 10 May 1940 until the surrender of the main Dutch forces on 14 May 1940.

Decorations

Ten British medals were issued to recognise service during the Second World War - nine campaign stars, the Defence Medal and the War Medal.



Harry, being on active service in Britain and Europe, qualified for the 1939-45 Star with clasp (Bomber Command), Air Crew Europe Star, War Medal 1939-45, and New Zealand War Service Medal.

The 1939-45 Star was issued for service between 2 September 1939 and 8 May 1945 in Europe²¹ and awarded for six months service on active operations for Army and Navy, and two months

for active aircrew. The Air Crew Europe Star²² was a campaign medal for British and Commonwealth forces awarded for operational flying from the UK over Europe. The War Medal 1939-45 was awarded to all full-time personnel of the Armed Forces or Merchant Navy for at least 28 days service between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. In the Merchant Navy, the 28 days must have been served at sea. The New Zealand War Service Medal was also instituted to recognise those who served in the New Zealand armed forces between 1939 and 1945. Many members of the Home Guard qualified for this medal.

Harry arrived in England in July 1940 on a short service commission with the Royal Air Force. He would have been immediately posted to an Operational Training Unit (OTU) for a 4-6 week advance training course. Early September 1940 he was posted to RAF No. 78 Squadron to commence his operational service, his first 'sortie' (mission) being on 11 September 1940.

Before his death, Harry had accumulated 60 flying hours over 8 operational missions by the end of September 1940 (a three week period). In total he had logged 366 flying hours and was on his 9th operational mission. Enquires into Harry's service records indicate that his service medals are "unclaimed" (October 2022). This deeply saddens me as I believe his bravery and sacrifice should never be forgotten – especially by family.



His sister, Florence, would have received the New Zealand Memorial Cross²³ as a "small tribute of gratitude from the government and people of New Zealand in memory of those who gave their life for their country" in acknowledgement of their grief and sacrifice.

The Cross was awarded to the families of the more than 11,671 personnel who died while serving in the New Zealand Armed Forces during the Second World War. In particular, many mothers and spouses received the Cross hence it was often referred to as 'the Mother's Cross'. It came with a note reading:

[This Memorial Cross is forwarded to you by the Prime Minister on behalf of the Government and people of New Zealand in memory of one who died in the service of his country.](#)

²¹ Or 2 September 1945 for service in the Pacific.

²² The Air Crew Europe Star was awarded for two months of operational flying from the UK over Europe. The Air Crew Europe Star may not be awarded until the 1939-1945 Star has been qualified for by two months service in an air operational unit. The total requirement to earn both stars is four months.

²³ The King George VI New Zealand Memorial Cross was instituted on 12 September 1947 for the relatives of New Zealand servicemen and women who lost their lives on active service between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. Eligibility included both those serving with New Zealand forces and New Zealanders serving with other British Commonwealth forces, including the merchant navy.

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