

DOUGLAS ARMITAGE:

Douglas was born on 10th November 1923. He followed his father's trade as a hand compositor (printer) and worked for the West Yorkshire Police, his name is included on a wooden plaque in the entrance hall of Police Headquarters, Wakefield, the town where he lived. He was a member of the Air Training Corps, which trained young men for a future career in the Air Force and on the 19th May 1941 he enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was quite small in stature, 170cm tall with my family's blue eyes. On his records there is a note that he was "not to be called for aircrew training", I can only guess that this was ignored due to the high losses amongst our bomber crews.

He joined 75 New Zealand Squadron, Bomber Command on the 4th May 1943 and lived for 53 days. According to my father he had completed several of his 30 missions and planned to go to Canada to be trained as a pilot after he had completed his required missions. Also according to my father, he took part in at least one 1000 bomber raid. He was promoted to Sergeant on 6th February 1943.

His seven man crew in EH902 (K) included three New Zealanders, Sergeant J B Cocksey, Navigator, NZ416460, Pilot Flight Sergeant N B Bluck, NZ40364 and Air Bomber Sergeant G W Strong, NZ413905.

He took off from Newmarket at 23.27 on the 24th June 1943 in the role of upper turret gunner. According to RAF records his aircraft was shot down by a night fighter but I understand that no claim has been made for this kill and that the large number of flak batteries on the plan's route caused several casualties.