

## Harry Leister BURT



411789 Sergeant

H.L.BURT

Air Gunner

Royal N.Z. Air Force

214 Squadron RAF

29<sup>th</sup> March 1943 Age 25



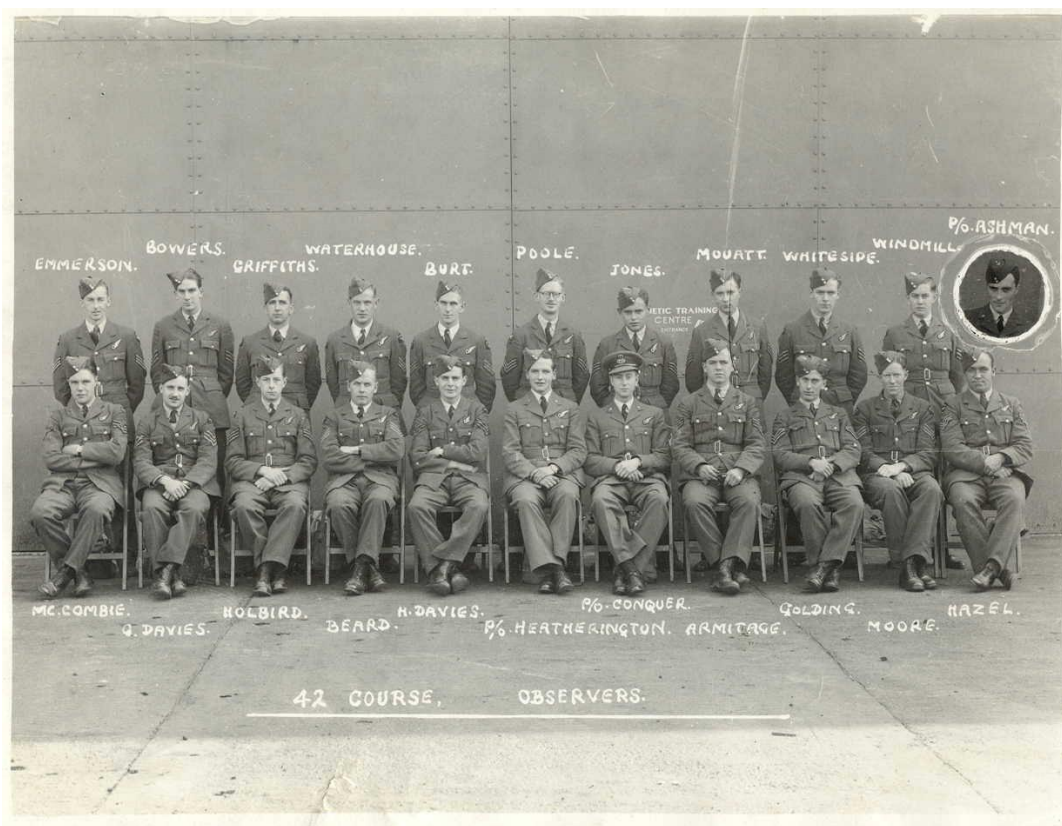
Harry Leister Burt was born on 15 August 1917 in Camberwell, the son of Harry Burt and his wife Bertha nee Garland. It is not known when the family moved to New Zealand.

Prior to his enlistment, he was employed as a factory hand. After joining the RNZAF Harry completed a course at No. 3 Wireless School, RCAF in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, graduating on 14 December 1941.

It might seem strange to think he trained in Canada but as part of a British Commonwealth joint military aircrew training programme, an agreement between the countries of the Commonwealth had been reached whereby New Zealand would supply the RAF with Pilots, Navigators, Bomb Aimers, Wireless Operators and Gunners.

Elementary training took place in New Zealand, with advanced training in Canada, where a network of training schools had been set up, and where the climate and geography were ideal for year-round flying training.

Wireless School provided a 28-week training programme; theoretical technical training, followed by 32 hours of flying. Training included air experience, list watch, two-way communications, channel change, D/F (Direction Finder), bearing requests, and synth-QDM.



Harry undertook further training at RCAF Station Macdonald, Manitoba operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force as No. 3 Bombing & Gunnery School as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The station opened on 10 March 1941. It was located close to Lake Manitoba so its bombing and gunnery ranges would be over water. RCAF Station Macdonald was equipped with hangars, asphalt runways, H-hut barracks blocks, mess halls, a recreation centre and a base theatre.

After completing his training, he was posted to England and served with 214 Squadron (RAF) which was based at RAF Stradishall. With the stage set for a night bomber offensive with all its unknowns, RAF Stradishall truly entered the war when No.214 Squadron, a Wellington unit, arrived from Methwold in February 1940.



214 Squadron RAF converted to the mighty Stirling at Stradishall in April/May 1942, and after only a few operations, flew on the first 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne on 30/31 May. Three Group Stirlings flew ahead of the main force successfully illuminating the target with incendiaries for the following bombers.

On 1 October 1942, the squadron moved to nearby RAF Chedburgh.

Further operations were to all the main targets plus mine-laying sorties off the enemy coast. On 29 March, 1943, the crew of Stirling Mark III BK663 made a second trip dropping mines near Texel (an island off the Dutch coast). They had instructions to be sure to positively identify their target from nearby landmarks or bring the mines back. Apparently they had on board two mines of a very important new type which were not to be dumped anywhere other than on target. When they got near to the target all they could see was fog, so they brought their mines back.

On return to base, and whilst in circuit at 2000 feet over Chedburgh, they collided in the dark with another Stirling, losing their port tailplane and rear gun turret where Harry was situated. The aeroplane went into a dive but managed to crash land on the grass alongside the runway.

The gun turret and Harry's body were found the next day near Rede Farm. Sgt Air Gunner Harry Leister Burt was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 196, section U.

The crew of Stirling Mark III BK663 consisted of :

Harrold Bennett, Wireless Operator

Sgt Harry Leister Burt, 411789, Rear Gunner, Royal New Zealand Air Force

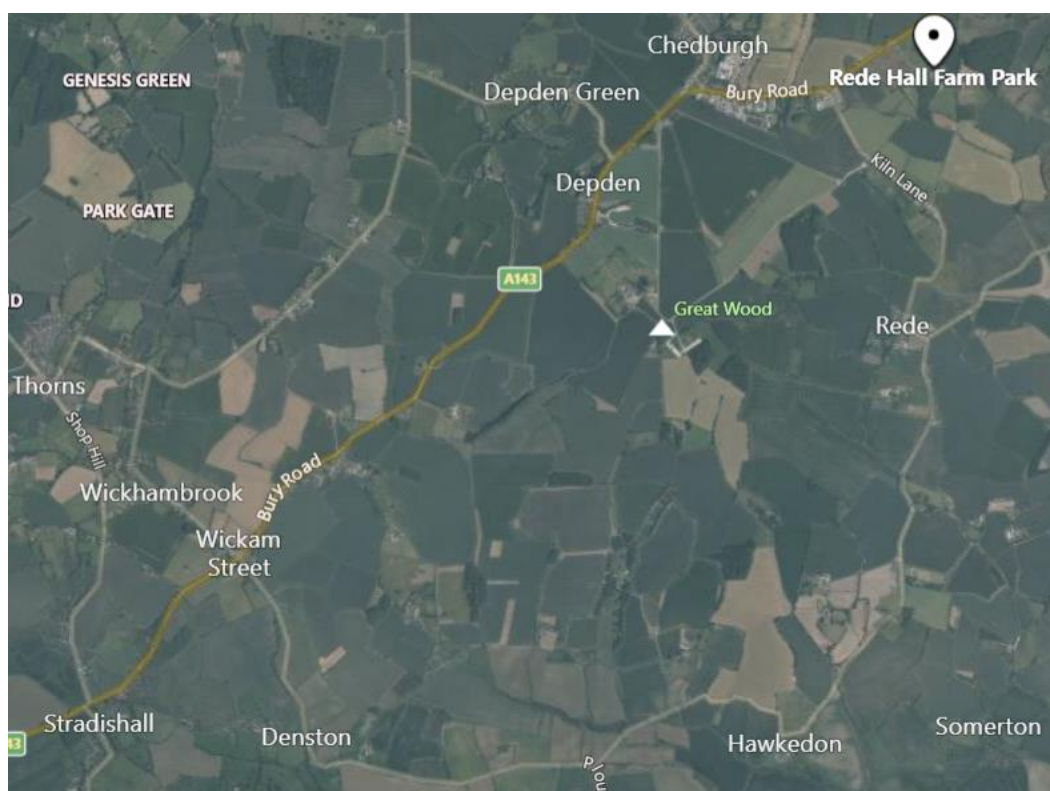
Sqn/Ldr Jack Dixon DFC, Pilot

Ted Drew, Mid Upper Gunner

Fg/Off R F 'Bob' Jewsbury, Bomb Aimer

'Paddy' McShane, Flight Engineer

Fg/Off Walter Rowley DFC, 128492, Navigator



*The other Stirling, also from 214 Squadron had taken off from RAF Chedburgh. It is believed that they had to return from an operation due to severe icing problems. Flying Officer Cooper remained at the controls while his crew baled out safely. He flew the aircraft away from built up areas but was killed when the plane crashed.*

The Gisborne Herald issue 21163 7 April 1943 reported the death of six fliers, one of whom was Sgt Harry Leister Burt.

### KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Ackroyd, Sgt. Vivian James, Temuka.  
**Burt**, Sgt. **Harry Leister**, South Melbourne  
Helme, Pilot Officer Jack, Christchurch.  
O'Neill, Sgt. Leslie John, Waimate.  
Shroff, Pilot Officer Owen M., Takaka.  
Smith, Pilot Officer Maurice V., Wellington