Edmund Murray CORLETT (1909 – 1942)



412207 Flight Sergeant
E.M.CORLETT

Pilot
Royal N.Z. Air Force

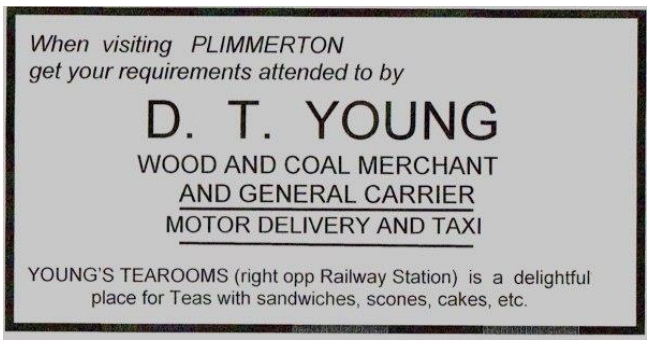
21st November 1942 Age 33

214 Squadron



Edmund Murray Corlett (later known as Ray) was born 4 September 1909 in Carterton, a small town in the Wellington Region of New Zealand, the eldest child of Rubina Gladys and Henry Murray Corlett.

Edmund went to Masterton Technical School and was a member of the Cadet Territorial, 1st Battalion Hawkes Bay Regiment for six years.



When he enlisted on 13 April 1941, Edmund was living in Steyne Avenue, Plimmerton where he was employed as a truck driver for D T Young. The people he worked with here knew him as Ray.

His parents were living in Tokomaru, 20kms from RNZAF Levin.

On 16 August 1941, NZ412207 Airman Corlett gained his 'wings' and on 27 September 1941 he was promoted to Sergeant RNZAF. On 25 October 1941, Edmund departed for overseas service arriving in England on 29 November 1941. He was posted to 214 Squadron.

No 214 Squadron (Royal Air Force) was a heavy bomber squadron flying four engine Stirling bombers. In September 1941, the squadron had been honoured by being adopted by the British Malayan Federation and had “Federated Malay State” officially incorporated in its title. The Federated Malay States had provided the funds to raise and equip the squadron.

For most of the Second World War, the squadron served in No. 3 Group and was involved in some of the bloodiest missions of the war against naval, industrial and other targets in Europe. Many never returned. From May 1940, 214 Squadron provided completely unbroken service throughout the war in Bomber command and had the highest percentage of losses of No. 3 Group. It played an active role in gardening or minelaying operations. In April 1942, 214 Squadron converted to Stirlings. By the time of his last flight in November 1942, he had logged 343 hours, 66 of these in Stirlings.

On 1 September 1942, Sergeant Corlett was promoted to Flight Sergeant. On 23/24 October 1942 he and his crew had a close shave. At 1915 hrs Edmund and his crew took off from RAF Chedburgh in Stirling I W7631 as part of an operation over Genoa. On their return they ran out of fuel and crashed at 0446 hrs while trying to land at Base.
The crew of Stirling I W7631 was:
Sgt E M Corlett +, Sgt A H Bradley RNZAF, Sgt E J Wrigglesworth, Sgt F H Dix, Sgt N Hammond, Sgt R R Shipley, Sgt G Cruikshank.

Less than a month later, Edmund was the pilot of Stirling I W7584/D that took off from RAF Chedburgh at 1844 hrs on 20 November 1942 to join 231 other aircraft, 86 Lancasters, 54 Wellingtons, 47 Halifaxes and 45 Stirlings on a raid of Turin, Italy.
The crew for this operation was:
F/S E M Corlett +
Sgt A H Bradley RNZAF
Sgt F R Woodger
Sgt E J Wrigglesworth
Sgt R R Shipley
Sgt H Brookfield
Sgt G E Webber

On their return, Stirling W7584/D experienced difficulties with the extractor controls which eventually led to failure of the port inner and starboard engines. In bad weather they found themselves short of fuel and with the base and nearby alternatives closed with low cloud, Flight Sergeant Corlett instructed his crew to bale out at 0342 hrs. Fellow New Zealander, Navigator Sgt AH Bradley, and five other of the crew did so successfully and all six landed with only minor injuries. Flight Sergeant Corlett remained with the plane and although he did eventually bale out he was too late. He managed to leave the plane but his parachute only partially opened and he was killed on impact. W7584 crashed near Thurlow.



Edmund Murray Corlett was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 245, section U. He was 33 years old.

At home in New Zealand he is remembered on the Carterton War Memorial, Wairarapa, and Corlett Road, Plimmerton, New Zealand was named in his memory.

Edmund Murray Corlett's name is also inscribed on the Porirua War Memorial (2018) in Te Rauparaha Park, Porirua.