

Name: Bruce APPLEBY



Service No: 40955

Armed Force: RNZAF

Enlistment: 9 April 1940

Training:

Embarkations:

Rank/s: Flight Sergeant

Service: Far East (Air Force), Royal Air Force No 100 Squadron. Royal Air Force No 36 Squadron

CIVILIAN LIFE

Next of Kin on Embarkation: Mr. & Mrs. R Appleby Main North Road Geraldine, South Canterbury
Relationship Status: Parents

MILITARY DECORATIONS

Medals and Awards: Mentioned in Dispatches June 1940
War Medal 1939-1945, New Zealand War Service Medal

OTHER DETAILS

Date of Birth & Place: 21 March 1919 Waimate, South Canterbury
Date of Death & Place: 6 March 1942
Cause of Death: Killed in Action
Burial/Cremation: Singapore, Southeast Asia
Age: 22
Memorial: Singapore Memorial, Kranji Cemetery, Singapore

MILITARY SERVICE BIOGRAPHY:

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph>

40955 Flight Sergeant Bruce APPLEBY. M.I.D.
Parents; Mr. & Mrs. R. Appleby of Geraldine.

Bruce Appleby was born at Waimate on the 21st of March 1919. He received his secondary education at the Timaru Boys' High School, reaching University entrance standard, and afterwards completed a course in Journalism with the International Correspondence School. At the time of applying for enlistment in aircrew on the 4th of October 1939 he was the Christchurch representative of the "Press" at Waimate. Flight Sergeant Appleby was enlisted at the Initial Training Wing, Levin, on the 9th of April

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

1940 and posted to Taieri early in May for his elementary flying training. After completing this he proceeded to Wigram on the 2nd of July where he was awarded the flying badge on the 17th of September and promoted to the rank of Sergeant on the 26th of October. While serving overseas he was further promoted to Flight Sergeant on the 1st of September 1941. Meantime, on the 12th of November 1940, he had embarked for the Far East.

Flight Sergeant Appleby arrived at Singapore during December and was posted to No. 100 Squadron there as pilot of Vildebeeste Aircraft. After the fall of Singapore, he was evacuated by air to Java and continued to operate from Taskmalaya. He was the pilot of a Vildebeeste aircraft engaged during the 6th of March 1942 in an attack on the aerodrome at Kalajati. The aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed on a rubber plantation during the return journey, Flight Sergeant Appleby losing his life. He was buried at the scene of the crash.

Flight Sergeant Appleby was mentioned in Despatches in June 1940 for meritorious service.

5/2/2887 A.S. 2

No Logbook.

Mrs. C.M. Appleby (M)

Main North Road,

GERALDINE.

Fri 6/Sat 7 Mar 1942

FAR EAST Raid on airfield at Kalidjati, Java

36 Squadron, RAF (Tjililitan, Java)

Vildebeest III (serial?) - took off from Andir at about 2200 with two others and was hit by flak or the blast of its own bombs during a third bombing dive on the airfield, the observer being slightly wounded. About midnight, while struggling to clear mountains on the return journey, the engine failed. The observer and gunner were ordered to bale out, but the pilot died shortly afterwards when the Vildebeest crashed into a paddy field near the Estate Pasir Padang, about 20 miles from his base. His body was recovered and buried on the estate, but post-war the grave could not be found, and he is commemorated on the Singapore Memorial.

NZ40955 Flt Sgt **Bruce APPLEBY**, mid, RNZAF - Age 22.

MARTYN Errol W, 1998, *FOR YOUR TOMORROW*, Volume 1, Volplane Press Christchurch, Page 187

DEATHS. APPLEBY—In March 1942; In Java, Sergeant Pilot Bruce Appleby; R.N.Z.A.F. dearly loved younger son of Mr and Mrs Raymond s Appleby, Timaru: aged 23 years. Killed on active service.

Press, Volume LXXXI, Issue 24699, 17 October 1945, Page 1

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

WELLINGTON, October 11, 1946. His Majesty the King has approved the following awards to New Zealand airmen:

Evening Star, Issue 25921, 12 October 1946, Page 12

HONOURS FOR AIRMEN

Mentioned in Despatches. — Sergeant Bruce Appleby (deceased), Timaru.

APPLEBY, Flight Sergeant Bruce, *mid*.

NZ40955; **Born** Waimate, 21 Mar 1919; RNZAF 9 Apr 1940 to (kao) 6 Mar 1942; Pilot.

Citation Mention in Despatches (1 Oct 1946): *In recognition of gallant and distinguished services in Malaya and Nederland East Indies during operations against the Japanese terminating March 1942. Served with 36 and 100 Sqns RAF (Vildebeest). Due to heavy losses these two squadrons were amalgamated in Java. Kao Java 6 Mar 1942 with 36 Sqn RAF (Vildebeest). F/S Appleby's aircraft was hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire during a midnight attack on Kalidjati airfield. He ordered his crew to bale out and then crashed into a plantation at Pasir Padang. Later that day the two surviving crew members and the Dutch plantation manager located the crashed aircraft and recovered F/S Appleby's body which was then buried nearby. Due to the rapid deployment of Japanese troops no grave marking was possible, its location was not recorded and it could not be located post-war. Commemorated on the Singapore Memorial.*

HANSON C.M. Group Captain, OBE. RNZAF (Rtd) 2001 *By Such Deeds Honours and Awards In the Royal New Zealand Air Force 1923-1999* Volplane Press Page 60

Service Person Record & Images: Military Service Years

USEFUL WEB LINKS FOR REFERENCE:

1. [Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph](#)
 - A comprehensive database of New Zealand service personnel.
2. [New Zealand War Graves Project](#)
 - Contains images and information about New Zealand war graves and memorials around the world.
3. [New Zealand History - NZ Wars and Conflicts](#)
 - Provides detailed accounts and images of New Zealand's involvement in
 - various wars, including WW1 and WW2.
4. [Archives New Zealand - War History](#)
 - Access to war-related records and images held by Archives New Zealand.
5. [Te Papa Tongarewa - Collections Online](#)

Features war-related collections, including personal stories and photographs of New Zealand soldiers

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- Lois Shears
- South Canterbury Genealogy Society
- Auckland War Memorial Museum - Online Cenotaph
- New Zealand War Graves Project

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