

F/O Kenneth Earnshaw J/10891 RCAF



Kenneth Earnshaw was born in Bridlington, Yorkshire, on 23 June 1918. His family emigrated to Canada a year later and took up farming in rural Alberta. He qualified as a teacher after leaving school, but left within a year to enlist in the RCAF.

After training in Canada, at the end of which he was commissioned, he travelled over to England, and was posted to 50 Squadron in November 1942.

He was part of a Lancaster crew which flew with pilot Norman Schofield, another Canadian. John Fraser, the bomb aimer was also Canadian and became a close friend. Together they flew on 30 operations in under six months.

By mid-April 1943, they were scheduled to go to a training unit for the normal inter-tour rest period. However both Earnshaw and Fraser were recommended when a call came from the new 617 Squadron being set up at Scampton. Pilot F/L John Hopgood RAFVR needed an experienced navigator and bomb aimer after the first pair selected had not come up to scratch, so they arrived at Scampton on 29 April 1943 sometime after training for the Dams Raid had begun.

As navigator, Ken Earnshaw sat immediately behind John Hopgood and Sgt. Charles Brennan RAFVR in the cockpit and would have seen that Hopgood had been hit by flak before they even reached the Möhne Dam. Almost as far from the escape hatch as them, he had no chance when Hopgood ordered the crew to bale out, and he died along with them when Lancaster ED925 AJ-M crashed in a field near Ostönnen, 6km from the dam.

F/L Hopgood DFC, Sgt. Brennan, F/O Earnshaw, Sgt. Minchin and F/O Gregory DFM are buried together in Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany.

Information courtesy of Charles Foster

Kenneth's name can be found on Panel 31