

Flt. Sgt. Alexander Elias Kan 409716 RAAF



A 460 Squadron Lancaster pictured at RAF Binbrook

Twenty-four-year-old Alex Kan was a London-born rear gunner serving in the Royal Australian Air Force. He had been born in Whitechapel, in the east end of London, but moved to Australia with his parents, Hartog and Rachel, and lived at Elwood in Victoria. Before joining the RAAF he was employed as a tobacco worker.

He was trained as an air gunner and was posted to England where, after completing his training, he joined 460 (Australian) Squadron at RAF Binbrook, flying Lancasters.

By late 1943 he was nearing the end of his tour, having already completed 27 operations. His 28th was another trip to Berlin on the night of 2/3 December when this experienced crew, headed by P/O James English, was joined by Australian war correspondent Norman Stockton, who was working for the Sydney Sun.

As their Lancaster, W4881 AR-K, was approaching Berlin it was attacked by a night fighter, which killed the mid-upper gunner and badly wounded Alex, trapping him in his turret. Part of the tail section was shot away and, with a wing on fire, the Lancaster went into a dive. A series of explosions blew three of the crew clear (flight engineer Sgt. William Miller, navigator P/O Neville Anderson DFC RAAF and bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Arthur Catty) but the remainder died when the aircraft crashed at Groningen, near Brandenburg.

Alex is buried in the Berlin War Cemetery alongside his pilot P/O James English DFC RAAF, the wireless operator Sgt. Arthur Cole, the mid-upper gunner WO2 Ivan Rodin RCAF and Norman Stockton.

Alex's name can be found on IBCC panel 057.

Picture source: Peter Green Collection