Flt Lt Ronald James Mortimer 255684 DFC RAAF

Ronald was born on 21 November 1918 in Sale, Victoria, Australia, the son of Percy Samuel Mortimer and Priscilla Beatrice Mortimer nee Booth.

Ronald was employed on the family farm and as a salesman by Motor Spares Ltd, Sale when, in December 1939, he volunteered for service in the RAAF.

Called up in January 1940, Ronald was employed on ground duties as a storekeeper until August 1941 when he re-mustered as pilot. Following basic aircrew training in Australia, in November 1941 Ronald was sent to Rhodesia to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In June 1942 Ronald was awarded his Wings and, following additional training at 23 SFTS Heany, Bulawayo, in September 1942 he was awarded a commission and embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 15 (P) Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Hullavington, Wiltshire, 14 OTU RAF Cottesmore, Rutland and 1654 HCU RAF Wigsley, Nottinghamshire, in August 1943 Ronald was posted to 61 Sqn at RAF Syerston, Nottinghamshire. In November 1943 Ronald was posted to 463 Sqn at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire.

On 23 February 1944 Ronald was awarded the DFC. His citation read:

"On three occasions Flt Lt Mortimer's aircraft has sustained severe damage from anti-aircraft fire or enemy fighters, but each time he persisted in his mission and bombed the target. During one of his flights, both turrets became unserviceable before the enemy coast was reached, but again he pressed on and completed his mission. As captain of aircraft and deputy flight commander, Flt Lt Mortimer has shown outstanding qualities of leadership, courage and determination"

On 24/25 February 1944 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on Schweinfurt, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, home of Germany's main ball bearing manufacturing factories. This was Bomber Command's first raid on this target, although the USAAF had attacked the previous day. A combined force of 734 aircraft, including seventeen 463 Sqn crews, was allocated to the op.

At 20:22 on the 24 February Ronald and his crew departed RAF Waddington in Lancaster I LL740 (JO-M).

Post war it was established that, whilst outbound and passing Stuttgart, Ronald's aircraft was hit by cannon fire from an unseen night fighter. The starboard inner and wing burst into flames and Ronald reported severe structural damage to his cockpit and forward fuselage. With the fire spreading and threatening to engulf the entire wing area, the bale out order was given. Ronald remained in control whilst the crew baled out, but the aircraft was losing height and going round in slow circles. The aircraft crashed about 22 miles west of Stuttgart, killing Ronald and the Bomb Aimer. The remaining five crew members were able to safely abandon the Lancaster and were taken as POW.

Also killed: PO Ian Cedric Young RAAF (AB)

Originally buried in the Murr Civil Cemetery, in August 1948 Ronald was moved to the Durnbach War Cemetery, Bayern, Germany

Ronald is commemorated on Wall Panel 76