



W/C Kenneth Brooke Farley Smith DSO, MiD, 36042 RAF

Wing Commander Kenneth Smith was a highly-decorated bomber pilot who had taken command of 9 Squadron at Waddington in March 1943, just as preparations were being made for the squadron to move to the new airfield at Bardney, 10 miles away.

Ken Smith had joined the RAF in 1934, was shortly commissioned and rose through the ranks in the 1930s when the RAF was moving beyond the days of biplane and in the early days of the war joined 58 Squadron as a squadron leader, flying Whitleys at Linton-on-Ouse in North Yorkshire. He flew numerous operations on bombing and mining operations, was twice Mentioned in Dispatches, and was then awarded the Distinguished Service Order, his citation noting his 'numerous bombing operations' and his 'exceptional powers of leadership, courage and determination'.

When he assumed command at Waddington, he had not flown operationally in a four-engined bomber and quickly made three trips in a Lancaster on raids as a passenger.

In early April the squadron suffered a terrible spell, losing eight Lancasters and their crews in six days. When the squadron was listed to take part in an attack on Frankfurt, the last operation from Waddington, he went into the briefing announcing: 'I'm going with you tonight to find out what's going wrong.'

He took over Flt. Lt. Cowan's experienced crew and took off shortly before midnight on 10 April as part of a force of 502 heavy bombers heading for Frankfurt. His aircraft, Lancaster ED501 WS-R (*pictured above*), was one of 21 lost that night, crashing near Mainz. There were no survivors. His aircraft was the last 9 Squadron Lancaster lost on bomber operations from Waddington.

Ken Smith was 30 and was born in Lyndhurst in Hampshire, the son of company director Thomas Smith and his wife Jessie. The family later moved to Heathfield House in Brockenhurst in the New Forest and Ken was educated at Charterhouse public school and Corpus Christi College, Oxford where he gained BA in law and was reading for the bar before joining the RAF. He and his wife, Esme, were married in February 1939 and lived in Brockenhurst. He is now buried along with most of his crew in Rheinberg War Cemetery. The others who died were the second pilot Sgt. Allan Stone, flight engineer Sgt. William Thomson, navigator F/O Arnold Turner, bomb-aimer F/O Bernard Smith, wireless operator Sgt. Gordon Taylor RNZAF, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Louis Fiddes and rear gunner P/O Roy Pleasance.

His name can be found on 099.



Sources: *Bombers First and Last* and *Luck of a Lancaster* by Gordon Thorburn/Charterhouse School/Corpus Christi College, Oxford.