

FS Kenneth Alfred Burbidge 412200 RNZAF

Kenneth was born on 15 April 1921 in Byfleet, Surrey, the son of Alfred William Burbidge and Alice Jessie Burbidge nee Nunn. In 1922 the family emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Otago.

Educated at Newton West School, Seddon Memorial College and King Edward Technical College, Dunedin, in May 1940, Kenneth applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in April 1941, after basic flying training in New Zealand, in July 1941 Kenneth was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In November 1941 Kenneth was awarded his wings and embarked for the UK.

Following advanced flying training at 14 (P) AFU RAF Ossington, Nottinghamshire, in May 1942 Kenneth was posted to 271 Sqn RAF Doncaster, Yorkshire, where he was employed for nine months as a staff pilot.

In preparation for a posting on to ops, Kenneth completed advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott Buckinghamshire and 1651 HCU RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire for conversion to the Stirling. In June 1943 Kenneth was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire.

On 22/23 June 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Mulheim, a major centre of manufacturing in the Ruhr industrial region. A combined force of 557 aircraft were allocated to the task, including fifteen 75(NZ) Sqn crews. Four crews failed to return.

At 23:37 on the 22 June 1943 Kenneth and his crew departed RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire, in Stirling I EF399 (AA-O).

At 02:25 on 23 June a wireless transmission was sent from Kenneth's aircraft indicating they had been badly damaged by flak. Shortly afterwards the aircraft was engaged by Hptm Egmont Prinz zur Lippe Weissendfeld of Stab III./NJG1, flying a Bf110 from Twenthe Airfield. At 02:47 the aircraft crashed near Markelo, Overijssel, 12 miles SW of Hengelo, Holland, killing all on board. This was Kenneth's 5th op.

Post war analysis confirmed this was a very successful attack, with 64% of the town reported as destroyed.

Also killed: FS Donald Ernest Martin RNZAF (WOp/AG); FS Andrew James McEwin RNZAF (AB); FS Walter Frederick Wilcockson RNZAF (Nav); Sgt Gibson Cameron (AG); Sgt George Lockey (FE); Sgt Kenneth Fazackerley Shaw (AG)

Kenneth is buried in the Markelo General Cemetery, Overijssel, Netherlands

Kenneth is commemorated on Wall Panel 138

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com

