

PO Ronald Daniel Gordon Collender 416419 RNZAF

Ronald was born on 9 September 1923 in Christchurch, Canterbury, New Zealand, the only son of Gordon Collender and Hazel Olivia Collender nee Savage.

Educated at Waltham School, the School of Art, Christchurch and Christchurch Technical College, Ronald was employed as a motor body builder by Auto Body Builders, Christchurch when, in January 1941, he applied for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in November 1941, following basic aircrew training in New Zealand, in January 1942 Ronald embarked for Canada to continue his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In August 1942 Ronald was awarded his WOp/AG badge and completed Ventura training at 34 OTU RAF Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. In March 1943 Ronald embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire, 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk and Lancaster conversion at 31 Base RAF Feltwell, Norfolk, in April 1944 Ronald was posted to 514 Sqn at RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire.

On 11/12 September 1944 Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Frankfurt, the final major raid of the war on this target. A combined force of 387 aircraft, including fourteen 514 Sqn crews, was allocated to the task.

At 18:44 on 12 September Ronald, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Mildenhall in Lancaster II LL731 (JI-U).

At 23:30 on 12 September, Ronald's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Fred Hromadnik of the 9./NJG4. A second claim was made by Flak of 1.-3./schw. Flak Abt. 430 (Eisb.) The aircraft crashed at Kordel, 5 miles NW of Trier, Rheinland-Palatinate, Germany, killing five of the seven-man crew. The Bomb Aimer and Flight Engineer survived and were taken as POW. This was Ronald's 28th op.

Ronald was posthumously commissioned, backdated to 12 September 1944.

Also Killed: FO William Douglas Brickwood (Pilot); PO James Samuel Lupton RAAF (AG); FS Keith Varndell Stafford RNZAF (Nav); Sgt William Percy Blake (AG)

Originally buried in Kordel Cemetery, Rheinland-Palatinate, Germany, in May 1948 Ronald was moved to the Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Ronald is commemorated on Wall Panel 146

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com