

PO Francis Albert Gabriel Fernand Joseph de Labouchere-Sparling 41990 RAF

Francis was born in 1920 in Koln, Germany, the son of Captain Francis Farwell de Labouchere-Sparling and Alice Eudoxie Emilie Marie Joseph de Labouchere-Sparling nee Pollet.

Francis joined the RAF on a Short Service Commission and was awarded his wings and granted a commission in November 1939.

Following advanced training, in March 1940 Francis was posted to 214 Sqn at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, from the 75 Sqn Pool Training Unit at RAF Harwell, Oxfordshire, but was quickly moved on the following month to the newly formed 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk.

On 21 May 1940 eight 75(NZ) Sqn aircraft were tasked to join a force of 124 aircraft destined to bomb the rail networks that were feeding the battle front. The squadron targets were Aachen and Dinant, Francis's crew was one of two tasked with an attack on Dinant.

At 21:20 Francis, operating as the 2nd Pilot, and the crew departed RAF Feltwell, Norfolk, in Wellington IC R3157 (AA-H). While attacking the road/rail bridge at Dinant from a height of between 2000 -3000ft, Francis's aircraft received a direct hit by an AA shell in the starboard engine. The aircraft crashed in flames near the township of Kain, 2-3 miles NNW of Tournai, Belgium. Francis and the aircraft Captain were killed in the crash, but the other crew-members baled out safely and became POWs. This was the first operational loss for 75(NZ) Sqn.



Also Killed: Flt Lt John Noel Collins RNZAF (Pilot)

Francis is buried in Kain Communal Cemetery, Hainaut, Belgium

Francis is commemorated on Wall Panel 154

Photo Source: www.inmemories.com/Cemeteries