

PO Garth Stewart Hughes 413614 DFC RAAF

Garth was born on 3 October 1918 in Turramurra, New South Wales, Australia, the son of Charles Stuart Parnell Hughes and Florence Alice Hughes nee Podmore. Garth was employed as an assistant electrician with the Public Works Department, Sydney, New South Wales when, in May 1941 he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RAAF. Called up in September 1941, Garth completed his aircrew training in Australia in July 1942, with the award of his Wings and embarked for the UK in November. Following advanced training at 15 (P) Advanced Flying Unit RAF Ramsbury, Wiltshire, 11 OTU RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, and 1678 HCU RAF Foulsham, Norfolk, in September 1943 Garth was posted to 514 Sqn also at Foulsham.



Commissioned in October 1943, the same month Garth was awarded the DFC. His citation read:

"One night in October 1943, this officer piloted an aircraft detailed to attack Berlin. Just as the bombing run was completed, his aircraft was attacked by a fighter. PO Hughes succeeded in evading the attacker, but his aircraft had been repeatedly hit by bullets from the enemy aircraft. The Rear Gunner was killed, the mid upper turret was rendered unserviceable, while the fuselage became filled with smoke which prevented PO Hughes from seeing his instruments. The smoke cleared, however, when several small fires in the fuselage were extinguished. Almost immediately, another fighter took up the attack, but PO Hughes was able to evade it, and a course was set for base. Soon afterwards, one of the damaged engines became useless. Although the aircraft became difficult to control, PO Hughes succeeded in reaching base. This officer, who has attacked Berlin on five previous occasions, displayed a high degree of skill, courage and determination."

In November the squadron moved to RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire.

On the night of the 30 March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies this night. Twenty-one 514 sqn crews were allocated to the op. At 22:25 on 30 March Garth and his crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL738 (JI-D).

At 00:20 on 31 March whilst outbound, Garth's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Hans Raum flying a Ju 88 of the 9./NJG3. The aircraft crashed in the southern outskirts of Sinzig, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, 31 miles SE of Cologne, killing six of the seven-man crew. The Bomb Aimer survived and was taken as POW. This was Garth's 19th op. The raid was a major disaster for Bomber Command with the loss of 105 aircraft- Bomber Command's heaviest loss of the war. There were 721 casualties: - 542 men died, 6 injured, 161 POWs, with just 12 airmen evading capture. The damage to Nuremberg itself was slight- 256 buildings destroyed and 75 enemy dead.

Also Killed: PO Llewellyn Selwyn Smith RNZAF (Nav); WO Osmond John Goddard RAAF (WOp/AG); FS Leslie James Henry Whitbread (AG); Sgt George Henry Thornton (AG); Sgt Harry West (FE)

Originally buried in Sinzig Cemetery, Ahrweiler, Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany, in May 1947 Garth was moved to the Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Garth is commemorated on Wall Panel 186

Photo Source: IBCC