

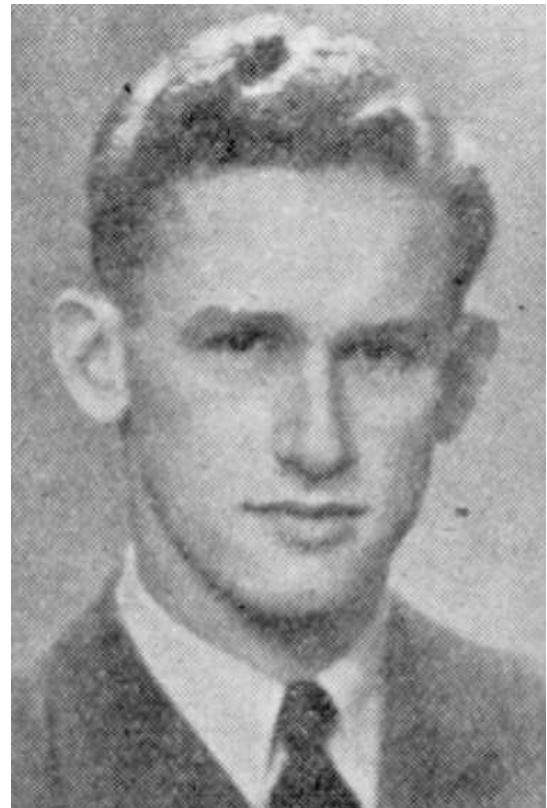
FO Ralph Francis Jenkin 416119 RNZAF

Ralph was born on 2 October 1920 in New Plymouth, Taranaki, New Zealand, the son of Carl Reginald Jenkin and Ivy Clarence Jenkin nee McMahon.

Educated at Takapuna Grammar School and Auckland University College where he gained his Teachers' Certificate, Ralph was employed as a teacher by the Auckland Education Board when, in July 1940, he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in November 1941, following basic pilot training in New Zealand, in March 1942 Ralph was sent to Canada to continue his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. When his pilot training was terminated in June, Ralph re-mustered as Observer.

In March 1942 Ralph was awarded his Observer badge, granted a commission and immediately embarked for the UK. Following advanced training at 9 (O) AFU RAF Penrhos, Gwynedd, Wales, 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire where he qualified on the Wellington, and 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk for conversion to the Stirling, in November 1943 Ralph was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire.



On 16/17 December 1943 four 75(NZ) Sqn crews were allocated to a mining "Gardening" op off the Frisian Islands - Nectarines Area.

At 17:00 on 16 December Ralph, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Mepal in Stirling III EF163 (JN-L).

On the return, whilst attempting to land in deteriorating weather, Ralph's aircraft crashed at Bedinghams Farm, two fields NW of the farm buildings, SW of the airfield in Sutton, Cambridgeshire. The pilot had lost visual references at low level, and it is believed that the aircraft's centre of gravity had also been adversely affected by a mine that had failed to release. Only the Mid Upper Gunner survived. This was Ralph's 2nd op.

This was one of 41 other crashes that occurred on this night by aircraft returning to England in extremely poor weather conditions. This scale of losses by aircraft in these circumstances was the heaviest ever experienced by Bomber Command in a single night.

Also killed: PO Colin John Kinross RNZAF (Pilot); FS Ronald Harry Emmerson RAAF (AB); Sgt Raymond Askew (FE); Sgt Willis Arthur Savage (WOp/AG); Sgt John Albert Warner (AG)

Ralph is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Ralph is commemorated on Wall Panel 189

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com