

Sgt Frank Ernest Kearns 411765 RNZAF

Frank was born on 10 August 1922 in Wellington, New Zealand, the eldest son of Albert Ernest Kearns and Constance Elsie Kearns nee Thompson, and husband to Marie.

Educated at Wellington Technical College, Frank was employed as a salesman when, in February 1940, he applied for aircrew duties in the RNZAF.

Called up in March 1941, after initial training in New Zealand, in April 1941 Frank was sent to Canada to complete his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In October 1941 Frank was awarded his Air Gunner's badge and was posted to the UK in December.

Posted to 11 OTU at RAF Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, in July 1942, Frank completed his conversion training and was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Bourn, Cambridgeshire, before the squadron moved to Stradishall, Suffolk in August.

On 28/29 August 1942 Bomber Command were tasked with an op against Nuremberg, Germany, a strong economic and infrastructure hub, with symbolic importance as the "City of the Nuremberg Rally". A combined force of 159 aircraft, including seven 101 crews, were allocated to the op.

On the night of 28 August, Frank and the crew departed RAF Stradishall in Wellington III X3754 (SR).

At 23:51, whilst on the outbound leg, Frank's aircraft was intercepted by Hptm Walter Ehle & Ofw Ludwig Leidenbach of Stab II./NJG 1, flying a Bf 110 from St Trond (Sint-Truiden) airfield. The aircraft crashed at Cheratte, Visé, Liège - only the Observer survived and became a POW.

Also Killed: FS James Douglas Follett RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt John Ramsey (AG); Sgt Murray Swann RNZAF (WOp/AG)

Originally buried in the Brustem Airfield Cemetery, St Trond, Belgium, in February 1947 Frank was re-located to Heverlee War Cemetery, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium

Frank is commemorated on Wall Panel 192