

FS Lancelot Kell 417215 RNZAF

Lancelot was born on 4 July 1914 in Birtley, Durham, England, the son of George Thomas Kell and Barbara Kell nee Soppit. In 1942 he married Grace Florence Coverley in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. They had one daughter.

Educated at Ravensworth Terrace School, Durham, Lancelot was employed as a joiner in Durham until he emigrated to New Zealand in August 1939. Working as a carpenter in Wanganui, in November 1940 Lancelot volunteered for aircrew service in the RNZAF.

Called up in December 1941, following basic training in New Zealand, in March 1942 Lancelot was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Lancelot completed his aircrew training in Canada in January 1943 with the award of his WOp/AG badge and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 9(O) Advanced Flying Unit RAF Penrhos, Gwynedd, Wales, 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire and 1651 HCU, RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, in December 1943 Lancelot was posted to 514 Sqn, also at RAF Waterbeach.

On 14/15 January 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to Brunswick, the first major raid on this town of the war. A combined force of 498 aircraft was allocated to the op, including 23 squadron aircraft.

At 17:22 on 14 January Lancelot, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL679 (J1-J2).

The German controller tracked the bomber stream from just off the English coastline and many German fighters entered the stream over Bremen, continuing to claim aircraft until the stream left the Dutch coast on the return leg.

Lancelot's aircraft crashed in the woods, one mile East of Lauenberg, near Dassel, Lower Saxony, Germany, having broken up in mid-air. Other 514 Sqn aircraft had bombed the target at around 19:15, and the location of the loss suggests that Lancelot's aircraft was attacked between 19:30 and 19:35. Hptm Erhard Peters of 9./NJG3, flying a Bf110 from Stade Airfield, claimed a Lancaster shot down at an unstated location at 19:33 and this claim is the most likely match for the loss of Lancelot's aircraft. This was the crew's first op on the squadron.

Also Killed: FS Arthur Edward Dimock RCAF (AB); FS James Stanley Gallagher RNZAF (Nav); FS Paul Eugene Mason RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt John William Hennis (AG); Sgt Ronald Frederick Laishley (FE); Sgt Ernest James Oakley RCAF(AG)

Originally buried in Lauenberg Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in June 1947 Lancelot was moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

Lancelot is commemorated on Wall Panel 192