WO2 William Obediah Powell R/71536 RCAF



William was born on 14 December 1920 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the son of William George Powell and Marion Gertrude Powell nee McGee.

Educated at Plains Road Public School and East York Collegiate Institute, William was employed as a messenger by the Royal Bank of Toronto when, in April 1940, he volunteered for service with the RCAF.

Called up in August 1940, William was employed on ground duties in Canada until July 1942 when he commenced WOp/AG training.

William completed his training in Canada in December 1941 with the award of his WOp/AG badge, and in January 1942 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at No. 1 Signal School, RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, 2 (O) AFU RAF Millom, Cumbria, 23 OTU RAF Pershore, Worcestershire and conversion to the Stirling at 214 Conversion Flight, RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, in September 1942 William was posted to 214 Sqn at RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk.

On 3/4 February 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on Hamburg, a key industrial hub housing significant military production facilities, including oil refineries and factories that supported the German war effort. The port housed shipyards, U-boat pens, and was also crucial for the transportation of goods and military supplies. A combined force of 263 aircraft, including eleven 214 Sqn crews, were allocated to the op. Two squadron crews failed to return.

At 18: 37 on 3 February 1942 William, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Chedburgh in Stirling I R9197 (BU-V).

At 20:04 on 3 February whilst flying East of Utrecht, William's aircraft was intercepted by Hptm Reinhold Knacke in a Me110 of 1./NJG flying from Gilze-Rijen Airfield. The Stirling crashed between Valleikanaal and the railway near Leusden, Utrecht, Netherlands, killing all on board.

During the combat with William's Stirling, the Me110 was shot down and crashed in a meadow near the Modderbeek at the Helweg Achterveld, killing Hptm Knacke.

Also Killed: FO John Irven Mackenzie RCAF (Nav); PO Derek Gordon de Garis (Pilot); PO Denis Hedley Smith (Pilot); PO Daniel O'Neill RCAF (AG); WO2 William McKenzie Murdoch RCAF (AB); FS Arley Henry Thiessen RCAF (AG); Sgt Ronald Frank Evans (FE)

William is buried in the Amersfoort (Oud Leusden) General Cemetery, Utrecht, Netherlands

William is commemorated on Wall Panel 228

Photo Source: IBCC