

FS Ian Hector Ross Smith 421614 RNZAF

Ian was born on 3 March 1909 in Napier, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, the son of Hector John Smith and Gertrude Mary Smith nee Nelson.

Educated at Wanganui Collegiate College and Canterbury College, Ian was working on his father's sheep farm when, in March 1941, he applied for aircrew duties with the RNZAF.

Called up in April 1942, Ian completed his basic training in New Zealand before he was sent to Canada for training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In December 1942 Ian was awarded his Air Bomber badge and embarked for the UK immediately.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Wescott, Buckinghamshire, and 1665 HCU RAF Woolfox Lodge, Rutland, in August 1943 Ian was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire.

On 31 August 1943, Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Berlin. A combined force of 622 aircraft, including eighteen 75(NZ) Sqn crews were allocated to the Op. Four aircraft failed to return

At 20:31 on 31 August Ian, operating as the Bomb Aimer, and the crew departed RAF Mepal in Stirling III EE878 (AA-P). Moderate to heavy flak co-operating with searchlights, together with enemy fighters in great prominence, were reported in the target area by returning crews.

Whilst over the target area, Ian's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire, putting the port inner engine out of action and damaging the port tailplane. The aircraft lost considerable height and were then attacked by a night fighter. The pilot was able to evade the fighter and nursed the aircraft homeward for nearly 500km, before ordering the crew to abandon the aircraft as they were nearly out of fuel. Some of the crew succeeded in clearing the aircraft before it crashed at Ahrbruck, 7 miles SW of Ahrweiler.

Due to the low level of the Stirling, although Ian successfully evacuated the aircraft, his parachute failed to fully deploy and he was killed on impact. This was Ian's 4th Op.

Also killed: FO Clifford Arnold Watson RNZAF (Nav); PO Douglas Charles Henley MiD RNZAF (Pilot)

Originally buried in Mayschoss Churchyard, Rheinland-Pfalz, in June 1947 Ian was moved to the Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Ian is commemorated on Wall Panel 243

Photo Source: IBCC

