

Sgt Ronald Alexander Smith 415378 RNZAF

Ronald was born on 29 October 1921 in Lauriston, Canterbury, New Zealand, the son of David Watson Smith and Agnes Adelaide Smith nee Doyle.

Educated at Ashburton High School, Ronald was employed by the Atlantic Union Oil Company Ltd. when, in January 1941, he applied for service with the RNZAF. By the time of his call up in September 1941 Ronald was employed as a clerical cadet by the New Zealand Government in Wellington.

Following basic pilot training in New Zealand, in January 1942 Ronald was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. When his pilot training was terminated, in June 1942 Ronald re-mustered to Air Gunner and in August 1942 he was awarded his Air Gunner badge and embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire and 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, in March 1943 Ronald was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Newmarket, Cambridgeshire.



On 14/15 April 1943 July 1941 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack against Stuttgart, Baden-Wurtemberg, a significant industrial city including the Daimler and Porsche automotive factories, several military bases and the centre of rail transportation in SW Germany. A combined force of 462 aircraft, including eleven 75(NZ) crews, were allocated to the op.

At 21:32 on 14 April Ronald, operating as the Rear Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Newmarket in Stirling III BF513 (AA-E).

At 02:25 on 15 April Ronald's aircraft was intercepted by Lt Friedrich Graeff of the Stabl./NJG4 flying a Bf110 from Florennes Airfield, guided by ground radar cell 7B based in Villers-deux-Eglises, Namur, Belgium. The Stirling crashed in Nismes Wood near the village of Regniessart, SE Couvin, Belgium, killing all on board.

Also Killed: PO James Kennedy Grainger (Nav); PO Donald Gordon McCaskill RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt Ernest Desmond Cook (AG); Sgt Bertram Elwell (AB); Sgt Reginald Thomas Charles Green (WOp/AG); Sgt Angus McVicar (FE)

Ronald is buried in Florennes Communal Cemetery, Namur, Belgium

Ronald is commemorated on Wall Panel 244

Photo Source: IBCC