

FO Keith Southward 411048 RNZAF

Keith was born on 22 June 1916 in Runanga, Greymouth, South Island, New Zealand, the son of William Henry Southward and Janet Sneddon Southward nee Lumsden.

Educated at Greymouth Technical College, Keith was employed as a store manager in the family carpentry business when, in June 1940, he volunteered for service in the RNZAF.

Called up in February 1941, Keith was employed on ground duties until September when he commenced his flying training. In January 1942 Keith was awarded his Wings, and embarked for the UK the following month.



Following advanced flying training at 6 Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Little Rissington, Gloucestershire and No.2 Flying Instructor's School, RAF Montrose, Angus, Scotland, in July 1942 Keith was posted to 11 Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Shawbury, Shropshire as an instructor on Oxford aircraft. In March 1943 Keith was posted to 1531 Beam Approach Training School at RAF Cranage, Cheshire where he served as an instructor for a year.

In March 1944 Keith was posted for advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Oakley, Buckinghamshire for multi engine/multi crew training on the Wellington, 1653 HCU RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk for Stirling conversion and, following Lancaster conversion at RAF Feltwell, Norfolk, in August 1944 Keith was posted to 75(NZ) Sqn at RAF Mepal, Cambridgeshire.

On 6/7 October 1944 Bomber Command was tasked with a raid on Dortmund, the largest city in the Ruhr Valley and home to more than two dozen industrial works and ten power stations. It was also a communications and transportation hub. A combined force of 523 aircraft, including twenty nine 75 (NZ) crews, were allocated to the op.

At 16:46 on 6 October Keith and his crew departed RAF Mepal in Lancaster I LM104 (AA-Z).

Whilst flying at 22,000 feet and to the SW of Mönchengladbach, Germany, and 50 miles from the target, Keith's aircraft was hit by heavy flak. Keith was able to keep the Lancaster under control to enable the crew to bale out; however, at 20:49 the aircraft crashed at Hoxhöfe, near Willich, with Keith still on board. The remaining six crew survived to be taken as POW.

Originally buried in Willich Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, in May 1947 Keith was moved to Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen

Keith is commemorated on Wall Panel 245

Photo Source: IBCC