

Sgt Jack Kenneth Wilkins 416581 RNZAF

Jack was born on 21 November 1921 in Matata, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand, the son of Thomas Owen Wilkins and Mary Aileen Wilkins nee Walker.

Educated at Te Puke District High School, Jack was employed as a dairy farmer in Te Puke when, in February 1941, he volunteered for service in the RNZAF.

Called up in November 1941, following basic flying training in New Zealand, in March 1942 he was sent to Canada to complete his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In September 1942 Jack was awarded his Wings and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire and 1651 HCU RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, on 15 May 1943 Jack was posted to 214 Sqn at RAF Chedburgh, Suffolk.

On 23/24 May 1943, Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on Dortmund, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, a major centre for heavy industry including steelworks, armament factories and synthetic oil plants. The bombing of Dortmund was part of the "Battle of the Ruhr", a wider effort to disrupt the German war effort. A combined force of 826 aircraft, including twenty-three 214 Sqn crews, was allocated to the op, although only twenty-one departed. Three crews failed to return.

At 23:35 on 23 May Jack and his crew departed RAF Chedburgh in Stirling III R9356 (BU-L2).

At 02:02 on 24 May, Jack's aircraft was hit by flak and crashed at Wanlo, near Monchengladbach, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, killing Jack and the Bomb Aimer. The remaining five crew members were able to bale out and were taken as POW. This was Jack's 2nd op.

Also Killed: Sgt Lionel Gerald Freeman (AB)

Originally buried in Monchengladbach Town Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, in August 1946 Jack was moved to Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Jack is commemorated on Wall Panel 264