FS Keith McRae Smith 413145 RAAF



Keith was born on 21 July 1922 at the Flodden Field Sheep Station, near Coonamble, NSW, Australia, the thirteenth of fourteen children of Colin George Smith and Mary Isabella Smith nee Hall.

Educated at Urungie Provincial School, Gilgooma, Coonamble, Keith was employed as a labourer and sheep station worker when, in October 1940, he volunteered for service with the RAAF. This was the second time, as Keith admitted to applying when he was underage.

Called up in August 1941, Keith completed his basic flying training in Australia and, in April 1942, he was sent to Canada to complete this training under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In September 1942 Keith completed his pilot training with the award of his wings and, following advanced training at 34 OTU RCAF Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick, where he trained on the Ventura, in March 1943 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 13 OTU RAF Bicester, Oxfordshire, in August 1943 Keith was posted to 226 Sqn at RAF Foulsham, Norfolk, followed by a move to RAF Swanton Morley, Norfolk.

On 8 November 1943, No. 2 Group of the 2nd Tactical Air Force were tasked with an attack, consisting of 3 waves, on the Fortress Of Mimoyecques, Landrethun-le-Nord, France, the underground military complex under construction for the purpose of housing a battery of V-3 rockets permanently aimed at London. Fifteen 226 Sqn aircraft were allocated to the third wave of the op.

At 08:15 on 8 November 1943 Keith and his crew departed RAF Swanton Morley in Mitchell II FV927 (MQ-R). Flying in a box formation of six aircraft at 1000 ft, Keith was number three, positioned to the rear of the lead aircraft. Intense and accurate flak was encountered from the coast to the target and, as Keith's aircraft approached the target, the Mitchell received a direct hit from an anti-aircraft shell on the port engine and wing. The aircraft burst into flames and crashed. Despite returning crews reporting the sight of 2 or 3 parachutes, all on board were killed.

Also Killed: WOII John Harrison Cowieson RCAF (WOp/AG); WOII Carl Martin Berg RCAF (Nav); WOII Joseph Amedee Grenier RCAF (AG)

Originally buried in the Marquise Communal Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France, in August 1945 Keith was moved to the Calais Canadian War Cemetery, Leubringhen, Pas de Calais, France

Keith is commemorated on Wall Panel NYE

Photo Source: vwma.org.au