FS Bruce Llewellyn Williams 428538 RAAF



Bruce was born on 4 July 1923 in Coburg, Victoria, Australia, the son of Llewellyn Eli Williams and Olivia Rosalind Williams nee Vogt.

Educated at Wesley College, Melbourne, Bruce was employed as a furniture salesman when, in 1941 on turning 18, he joined the Citizen's Military Force as an anti-aircraft gunner with the 112th Anti-Aircraft Regiment, before requesting a transfer to the RAAF in March 1942. Transferred in November, following basic pilot training in Australia, in April 1943 Bruce was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

In September 1943 Bruce completed his flying training in Canada with the award of his Wings, and posted to 34 OTU RAF Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick where he qualified on the Ventura. In January 1944 Bruce embarked for the UK. Following advanced training at 13 OTU RAF Bicester, Oxfordshire, and conversion to the Mitchell, in July 1944 Bruce was posted to 98 Sqn at RAF Dunsfold, Surrey.

On 25 September 1944 twelve 98 Sqn aircraft, escorted by six Spitfires were detailed to bomb a bridge in Schaarsbergen, north of Arnhem, known as "The Bridge Too Far" which had been occupied by German forces with Flak equipment. This op was in support of the withdrawal of the British paratroop brigade from "Operation Market Garden". Two 98 Sqn crews failed to return.

At 15:15 on 25 September Bruce and his crew departed RAF Dunsfold, Surrey, in Mitchell II FW194 (VO-N).

Close to their destination, the Mitchell formation was attacked by a flight of twenty FW190s of the IV./JG 54. An air battle ensued with the Spitfires; however, the overwhelming odds led to a loss of the majority of the fighter protection. At 17:00 Bruce's aircraft was intercepted from below by Major Wolfgang Späte, killing the Navigator in the attack.

The rear hatch was jammed by the attack, and the Rear Gunner was unable to escape. Upon trying to escape, the Wireless Operator found his hatch jammed partway open, and he could not get through with his chute on. He pushed his parachute out through the opening and, whilst gripping the harness, put his head and shoulders through the opening and pulled the cord. He sustained some injuries being pulled through the hatch, but escaped and drifted to the ground where German troops took him prisoner.

The plane continued on towards Arnhem where Bruce baled out, only to be killed by German machine gunners as he drifted over the bridge onto Graslaan Street.

The Mitchell crashed into a dyke near the bridge in Arnhem with the Navigator and the Rear Gunner still inside. This was the last day of the battle of Arnhem.

Also Killed: Flt Lt Charles Bindon Carter DFC DFM (AG); FO Thomas John Lennie RAAF (Nav)

Originally buried in a temporary grave close to the crash site, in July 1946 Bruce was moved to Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands

Bruce is commemorated on Wall Panel - Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: vwma.org.au