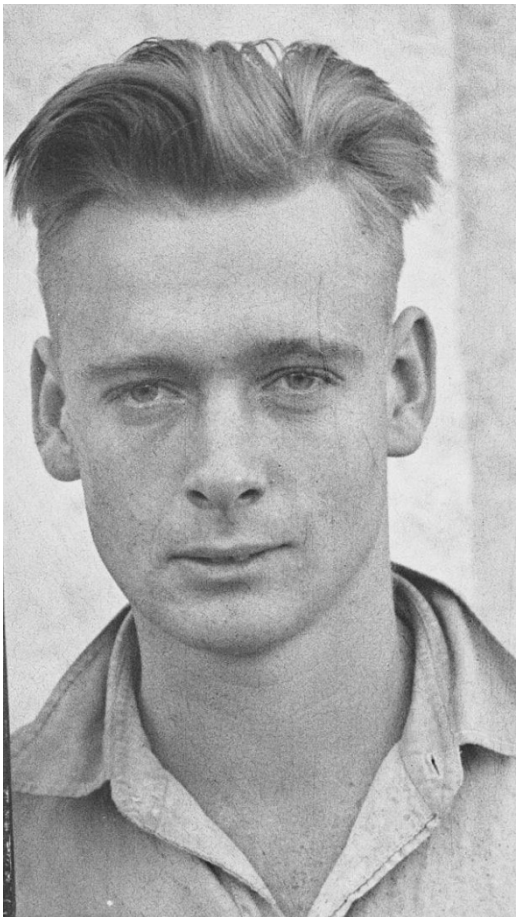
WO Stephen Eddy Richards 415550 RAAF



Stephen was born on 9 May 1922 in Perth, Western Australia, the eldest son of Stephen Eddy Thomas Richards and Mary Richards nee Forbes.

Educated at Midland Junction Central School and Perth Technical College, Stephen was employed as a clerk in the State Government Service in Herne Hill, Perth when, in May 1941 he volunteered for service in the RAAF.

Called up in November 1941, Stephen commenced pilot training; however, an aircraft accident in July resulted in a delay to his training. Following a period of convalescence, Stephen completed his pilot training in Australia in July 1943 with the award of his Wings and, in September 1943, he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 6 (P) AFU RAF Little Rissington, Gloucestershire, 26 OTU RAF Wing, Buckinghamshire and 13 OTU RAF Harwell, Oxfordshire, in December 1944 Stephen was posted to 98 Sqn at B58 Melsbroek near Brussels.

On 6 February 1945, six 98 Sqn crews were tasked with bombing Deventer Rail Bridge, Overijssel, Netherlands. The Deventer railway bridge was considered strategically important as part of the main railway connection between Amsterdam and Osnabruck, leading from there to either Berlin, Hamburg or Bremen. The Germans used the railway to transport war materials from east to west and food and other desirable items go from west to east.

At 08:50 Stephen and his crew departed Melsbroek in Mitchell II HD380 (VO-Y)

Reaching the target at a height of between 10,500 to 14,000 feet, the aircraft formation commenced the target run; however, after the order to release bombs was given by the leader, Stephen's aircraft was hit by flak. Flames were seen in the rear part of the fuselage and, almost immediately, Stephen's aircraft went into a vertical dive, minus its tail. The Mitchell disappeared into cloud and crashed at Langestraat, Deventer, Overijssel, Netherlands, killing all on board.

Also Killed: FS John Anthony Quick (Nav); Sgt Harry Clifford Locke (WOp); Sgt Jack Ward (AG)

Stephen has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey.

Stephen is commemorated on Wall Panel - Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: naa.gov.au