FO Kenneth Watts 420315 RAAF



Kenneth, known as Ken, was born on 18 May 1921 in Hornsby, New South Wales, Australia, the son of Frank Charles Watts and Ellen May Watts nee Matthews. In December 1943 he married WAAF Norma Ridley Abbott in West Bridgford, Nottinghamshire.

Educated at Dulwich Hill Public School and Belmore Central Technical College, Kenneth was employed as a lorry driver when, in June 1941, he volunteered for aircrew service with the RAAF.

Called up in October 1941, following basic flying training in Australia, in May 1942 Kenneth was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. In October 1942 Kenneth was awarded his Wings and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 17(P) AFU RAF Watton, Norfolk and 59 OTU RAF Annan, Dumfrieshire, in June 1943 Kenneth was posted to 1686 Flt (Bomber Defence Training) at RAF Hixon, Staffordshire. The flight was formed to train Bomber crews how to defend their aircraft using defensive tactics by simulating enemy fighter attacks. In March 1944 Kenneth was commissioned and posted to ops on 56 Sqn at RAF Newchurch, Kent

The squadron was employed on air defence duties in the South of England, particularly against the threat from V1 rockets, until 28 September 1944 when they moved to Base 60 (Grimbergen) Belgium, as part of 122 Wing, 2nd Tactical Air Force. As the front progressed, by November the squadron was operating from Base 80 (Volkel), Netherlands.

On 29 December 1944, 56 Sqn was tasked with an armed reconnaissance of the Bremen-Minden-Osnabruck area.

At 14:50, eight 56 Sqn pilots departed Base 80 (Volkel) in 2 sections of four- Kenneth was flying in Tempest V EJ522 (DP-F).

Whilst in the Dummer Lake area, NE of Osnabruck, "Red Section" had just attacked a train with "Yellow Section" covering from above when the formation was bounced by over 50 enemy fighters. Following an intense air battle, the squadron returned for base. Two aircraft failed to return, and the exact circumstances and location of Kenneth's loss is unknown.

Kenneth is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

Kenneth is commemorated on Wall Panel - Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: vwma.org.au