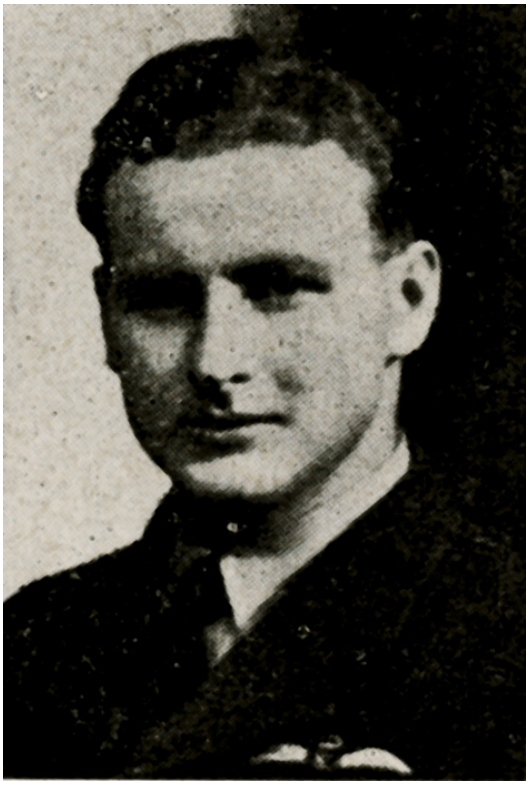
FS David Bennett 413531 RNZAF



David was born on 13 October 1920 in Christchurch, New Zealand, the son of David Bennett and Mary Gertrude Bennett nee Carmichael. In 1941 he married Josepha Ella Gollop in New Zealand.

Educated at Spreydon School and Christchurch Technical College, in June 1941 David enlisted in the RNZAF. Completing his training in New Zealand in October 1941 with the award of his Wings, in December David embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at No. 5 Advanced Flying Unit RAF Ternhill, Shropshire and 55 OTU, RAF Annan, Dumfries, Scotland, in September 1942 David was posted to 486 (NZ) Sqn at RAF Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire.

David remained with 486 (NZ) Sqn flying the Hurricane as the squadron moved to RAF Wittering, Cambridgeshire, RAF North Weald, Essex, RAF West Malling, Kent and finally in October 1942 to RAF Tangmere, Sussex where he converted to the Typhoon.

On 29 May 1943 on return from a Ramrod sortie, David was forced to make a landing on the marshes close to St. Helens Railway Station, near Bembridge, Isle of Wight, after developing mechanical problems. Following the crash landing, David was able to extricate himself from the cockpit and carrying his parachute made his way the short distance to the Railway Station where it is reported the Station Master made him a cup of tea before ringing his base to report the situation. The Typhoon was found to be damaged beyond repair and was recovered and returned to the Hawker factory for spares.

On 16 September 1943, thirteen 486 (NZ) Sqn aircraft were allocated to a “Roadstead operation”, the British overall designation of offensive air sweeps by day, using low-level and dive-bombing attacks, against German shipping making the passage along the coasts of German-occupied northern Europe. David’s area of operation was from Dieppe - le Havre. Three squadron aircraft failed to return.

At 06:35 on 16 September 1943 David departed RAF Tangmere in Typhoon Ib EJ976 (SA-V).

Whilst in the target area, enemy aircraft were encountered and during the attack his aircraft was seen to crash into the sea. This was David’s 88th op.

David is buried in Pont-Audemer Communal Cemetery, Eure, France

David is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: aucklandmuseum.com