FO Luke Barnes 422356 RNZAF



Luke, known as “Pop”, was born on 31 December 1922 in Mosborough, near Sheffield, Yorkshire, the son of John Taylor Barnes and Catherine Ann Barnes nee Snowden. In 1924 the family emigrated to New Zealand and settled in Christchurch.

Educated at Christchurch Boys' High School, Luke was employed by Messrs. J. S. Grounds & Co., Christchurch when, in March 1942, he enlisted in the RNZAF as an aircraft hand. After three months, Luke re-mustered as Pilot and, following basic flying training, in December 1942 was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Luke completed his pilot training in Canada in May 1943 with the award of his Wings, was granted a commission and, following further training at 1 OTU RCAF Bagotville, Quebec, was employed flying heavy transport planes and cargo across the Atlantic until June 1944 when he embarked for ops in the UK.

Completing advanced training at 57 OTU RAF Eshott, Northumberland, Luke was attached to 84 Group Support Unit, RAF Lasham, Hampshire until March 1945 when he was posted to 74 Sqn at B.85 Schijndel, Noord-Brabant, Netherlands. By April 1945 the sqn was based at B.105 Drope, Lower Saxony, Germany.

On 19 April 1945 74 Sqn was tasked with a series of armed reconnaissance flights around Bremen and Hamburg, NW Germany. At 18:15 Luke departed B.105 Drope in Spitfire XVI TB739 (4D-) as No. 4 in a flight of four.

After passing through light flak, other members of the section observed that Luke’s aircraft was streaming large amounts of smoke. Shortly after the engine seized and Luke attempted to crash land his Spitfire. Luke managed to land heavily in a field 2 miles SW of Hagen, Lower Saxony, Germany; however, the aircraft burst into flames and skidded along the ground for 500 yards before disappearing into a small wood.

Luke’s Sqn Cdr reported in a letter to his family that Luke’s last words on R/T were:

“Pop Barnes here….
Too low to bail out…
Goodbye England…
Goodbye World…”

Originally buried besides his aircraft, Luke was moved by American troops to Dorfhagen, Lower Saxony, Germany, before he was finally moved to Becklingen War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

Luke is commemorated on Wall Panel – Not Yet Erected

Photo Source: Aircrew Remembered