



Ivan Wesley Kelly

Enlistment: Service Number J/92436

Deceased: March 31, 1945 Hamburg, Germany. Age 20

Military Service

Force: RCAF

<http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2199251>

The following information has been provided by Bev Corsini in honour of Ivan Wesley Kelly.

Ivan Wesley Kelly (Service Number J/92436) died March 31, 1945. He was a Pathfinder Gunner (RCAF) who had flown 42 missions and was 20 years old when his entire crew was shot down during operations over Hamburg, Germany. He is buried in Germany. Following is the story of how he lost his life.

German Me 262 jets ambush Allied bombers



The Me 262 first became operational in late 1944.

The development programme for the world's first operational jet fighter had begun in 1939, although its development had been slowed because the Nazis believed they would have won the war long before it became available. The Me 262 first flew in 1942 but did not appear operationally until 1944. The Nazis pushed ahead with a mass production programme but by now they lacked the experienced pilots needed to fly them, and increasingly found themselves limited by fuel shortages.



Although the Me 262 was able to outrun any Allied fighter it did not make a dramatic breakthrough in the balance of airpower that Hitler had hoped. In many ways it was too fast to take on the Allied bombers, especially given the short time it had in the air, which meant it was limited in the number of attacks it could make in a sortie. The preferred tactic was to ambush the mass of bombers with rockets fired by simultaneously by a group of Me 262s, followed by individual attacks.

Luftwaffe pilot Hermann Buchner, already an Ace decorated with the Knights Cross, describes an attack:

On 31 March there was something new for us — an early scramble. We were still at breakfast in the dining room and the weather was not very good with a cloud base 150-200 metres above the ground. We flew with seven 262s led by Oberleutnant Schall, one Schwarm and one Kette. Our mission was against US units in the Hannover region, with take off at 0900hrs. We climbed in tight formation into the clouds, heading westwards.

The clouds just weren't coming to an end and Schall asked the ground station guiding us whether we should make 'Luzi-Anton 5'. A brusque answer came back over the radio: 'First of all make Pauke-Pauke' At 7,500 metres above ground, we had just come out of the clouds when Schall got the order: 'Assume course 180, Dicke Autos, course 180!'

At the same moment someone from our unit cried, 'To the right of us, nothing but bombers, to the right of us!' Schall, as well as the rest of us, saw the bombers, flying north in a formation that was new to us. They flew staggered, about 1,000 metres deep and 2,000 metres wide. They were not US bombers, however, but Tommys in night-flight formation, doing a daytime attack on Hamburg.

Schall ordered us to take up attack formation, already having long forgotten the order 'assume 180'. We were lucky to reach the band without fighter protection and Schall, a fighter with real heart, was not going to pass up a chance like this. As we got closer we could clearly see what kind of bombers they were — RAF Lancasters — on their way to attack Hamburg, but still 50km away over the Luneberg Heath.

On our first attack seven Lancasters were shot down with the R4M rockets. Now the large unit dissolved somewhat and the Rotten flew a renewed attack on the bombers. I made a right turn and lined up for another attack, using the nose cannon.





The R4M Rocket was an unguided missile that was fired in salvos from about 600 metres. One hit was sufficient to bring down a bomber.

My Lancaster lay directly in my sights and I only had to get a bit closer. I opened fire, the hits were good, but the pilot of the Lancaster must have been an old hand. He turned his Lancaster steeply over on its right wing, making a tight turn around the main axis. With my speed I was unable to follow this tight manoeuvre and was also unable to see if my shots had had any effect, or to see how he flew on.

I shot through the pile and had to think about returning home. The other pilots were also having the same problem. We had a shortage of fuel and had to get back to our own garden. At the same time, all called to the ground control 'Autobahn', for the course number for the direction back to our home airfield.

Only one of us could be handled by 'Tornado' ground control, but all of us wanted to be given a course. We were still all in the tangle of RAF bombers, but none of us had visual contact with each other. We all had to go back down through the cloud layer. I thought to myself, 'Go back down alone!'



At 7,000 metres I dived into the cloud layer, laying on a course of 090, 700kmph and the engines running at 6,000rpm. Over the radio I could still hear my colleagues calling ‘Autobahn’ to ‘Tornado’ — they were all still in the air. My altimeter showed that I was quickly losing height, and at 1,000 metres it was already dark — I had to get out of the clouds soon. My altitude was diminishing, the gauge showing 500, 400, 300 metres — the ground must surely soon appear. Yes, there it was. Doing 700kmph I shot out of the clouds and found myself over fields and clumps of trees. Unfortunately I didn’t know quite where I was. On my left side I could make out the sea — was it the Baltic, or where was I?

Anyhow, I flew eastwards with a normal turbine rpm and at 800kmph. In the distance I could see the silhouette of a town. I quickly thought about it, then I was sure that the town had to be Lubeck. I had recently seen a film called Die Budenbrocks in which the silhouette of the town had been shown. Flying over the harbour, I came under fire from light flak, but I was too fast — they had no chance of hitting me.

Now I knew how I could get back. My other comrades were also on their journey back to Parchim, and now the traffic with ‘Tornado’ was quieter, so I could also call up and ask for instructions, giving him my location. I was the last 262 to call in after the mission at 7,000 metres. Now he had his flock together.

By the time I reached Ludwigslust I had already been given permission to land, as well as the comforting news that there were ‘no Indians on the airfield’. After 65 minutes flying I landed without difficulty in Parchim, the last of the seven.

My list of aircraft shot down was extended: one Lancaster confirmed and one definitely damaged. Altogether we had certainly shot down ten Lancasters and five others had been damaged.“ The seven 262s on the mission had landed without problems after 60-70 minutes flying time in bad weather conditions. The reported aerial victories were confirmed by Jagd Division, and the bombers had offloaded their cargoes over the heath, far from their target. Around sixty flying personnel were taken prisoner on the heath.

See [Hermann Buchner: Stormbird: One of the Luftwaffe’s Highest Scoring Me 262 Aces](#)

RAF records show that of the 469 aircraft involved in the attack on Hamburg, eight Lancasters and three Halifaxes were lost. The bombing raid was aimed at the Blohm and Voss U-Boat construction factories but cloud covered the target area and the bombing was scattered. For more details see the extended comment below, thanks to Pierre Lagacé.



