

F/O Borden Bramshott Ashley J/25521 RCAF



The crew of ME581 at North Killingholme and, right, Borden Ashley

On moorland outside the eastern Belgian town of Spa is a monument to three Canadian and four RAF crew members of a Lancaster which crashed on the exact spot in the spring of 1944.

The aircraft was Lancaster ME581 BQ-D of 550 Squadron, one of 29 British aircraft lost on the night of April 22/23. It was shot down by a night fighter homebound after an attack on Dusseldorf by 596 bombers.

The bomb-aimer was Canadian Borden Ashley, who had been with 550 at North Killingholme for almost exactly a month before he and his crew were killed.

They had left north Lincolnshire at 2243 hours, joining the bomber stream over the Skegness area before heading across the North Sea towards their target. The raid itself caused great destruction but at a heavy cost for Bomber Command.

ME581 crashed on open ground five kilometres south-east of Spa and in 1946 local people began the task of erecting a memorial to the men who died, all of whom now rest in Heverlee War Cemetery.

Borden was the 27-year-old son of George and the late Margaret Ashley of Toronto. His father, who was a painter and decorator, was born in Birmingham, later emigrating to Canada where he met and married Canadian-born Margaret. Borden was one of two sons of the couple and worked as a customs clerk before joining the RCAF.

The others who died were the pilot F/O Philip Milburn RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. Joseph Palfrey RAFVR, navigator P/O Norman Burdett RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Stanley Courtenay RAFVR, mid-upper gunner F/O Sydney Clarke RAF, and rear gunner F/O Daniel Magan RAFVR.

His name can be found on panel 003.

Sources: 550 Squadron Association/Musees de la Ville de Spa/ Wilfred Burie.

