

**F/O William James Bailey 189698
RAFVR**

William Bailey was the 20-year-old pilot of a No. 153 Squadron Lancaster lost in an attack on the city of Chemnitz, deep in eastern Germany, in the early spring of 1945.

The attack was part of Operation Thunderclap, which had also included the attack on the nearby city of Dresden three weeks earlier. It took place on the night of 5/6 March 1945 and involved 760 Lancasters and Halifaxes, of which 22 would be lost including William Bailey's PB872 P4-X.

It had left RAF Scampton at 1640 hours and some five hours later was seen on fire over the Ore Mountain areas, near the target city. It appeared the crew was attempting an emergency landing but a wing broke away and the Lancaster crashed in a forested area at Roszbach (now Hranice in the Czech Republic). The Lancaster may have been hit by flak, but it is also believed to have been claimed by Luftwaffe night-fighter pilot Major Walter Burchersem, who was flying a Me110 that night.

There were no survivors and the crew, who were on their sixth operation with 153 Squadron, were buried locally. In 1947 their bodies were reinterred in Prague War Cemetery and in 1991 a small monument in memory of the crew was erected at the crash site.

William was born in Fordingbridge, Hampshire and grew up in the nearby village of Sandleheath. He was the son of William and Lydia Bailey.

Those killed with him were the flight engineer Sgt. Jim Howard, navigator F/O Reg Adlam RNZAF, bomb-aimer F/O Ted Morris, wireless operator Sgt. Jack Dixon, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Bill Meechan and rear gunner Sgt. Walter Simpson.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 004.

Photographic source: Aircrew Remembered.

