

## Sqn. Ldr. John Baker DSO DFC 120393 RAFVR



John was born on 11 August 1915, the son of John and Mary Baker, of Wednesbury, Staffordshire; he was the husband of Edith Prudence Baker, also of Wednesbury. He was one of nine children and was educated at the Royal Orphanage School in Wolverhampton. On leaving school he initially enlisted in the Royal Artillery on 27 August 1932, making the rank of Bombardier before transferring to the Reserves. He was recalled to the Army when war broke out and went on to be rescued from the Dunkirk beaches before volunteering for the RAF. He quickly rose through the ranks, gaining his commission and making squadron leader in April 1944.

He was a Navigator in No. 7 Squadron and had previously been awarded the DSO and DFC. He had completed 62 missions including Peenemunde and was also a member of the Caterpillar Club. As he was new to 7 Squadron, and only on his 3<sup>rd</sup> Master Bomber sortie, he was flying as 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot to Wg. Cdr. Barron and was the 8<sup>th</sup> crew member on ND845.

Lancaster ND845 MG-C took off from Oakington at 2222 hours on 19 May 1944 on a night mission to attack the railway yards at Le Mans, France, as one of 112 Lancasters plus 4 Mosquitoes. SOE intelligence had reported the positioning of many V1 flying bombs on the railway rolling stock en route to sites around France. After an initially uneventful flight, and as Master Bomber, John was heard giving directions to the oncoming bomber stream when all communication suddenly ceased. Initially thought to be hit by flak, it now appears the aircraft may have tragically collided with Lancaster JB653 MG-R, the deputy Master Bomber, as at the same instant they also stopped communicating.

John is buried at Le Mans West Cemetery, Sarthe, France. Plot 38. 1939-1945 Row C. Grave 13. The inscription reads "John, dear husband of Prue, Daddy of Teddy. He gave his life to help keep England free. R.I.P." He was 28 years old.

Sqn. Ldr. John Baker DSO DFC - 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot (killed)  
Flt. Sgt. Derek William Wood - Flight Engineer (killed)  
Sqn. Ldr. Philip Robert Coldwell DSO DFM - Navigator (killed)  
P/O Albert Price - Bomb Aimer (killed)  
F/O Jack William Walters DFC RNZAF – Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (killed)  
F/O Robert Lorne Weatherall DFM RCAF – Air Gunner (killed)  
WO Joseph Lamonby – Air Gunner (killed)  
Wg. Cdr. James Fraser Barron DSO & Bar DFC DFM RNZAF - Pilot (killed)

He is commemorated on Panel 5

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