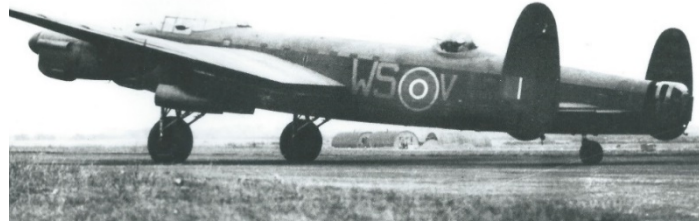


P/O Leslie Jack Baker
174632 RAFVR



Pilot Leslie Baker and his crew were killed within a week of joining No. 9 Squadron at Bardney in May 1944. In that time he had completed two operations and his aircraft was over Germany for a third when it was shot down by a night fighter.

Leslie had arrived at Bardney on 15 May 1944 and four days later he was flying as a 'second dickie' in an experienced crew. The following night he and his own crew took part in their first operation together, a bombing raid on Dortmund, arriving back in Lincolnshire in the early hours of 22 May.

After a debrief, meal and a short sleep he and his crew were roused for a briefing for another raid, that night against the city of Brunswick. It was a 5 Group attack involving 225 Lancasters that turned out to be an utter failure. Unexpected cloud cover and German radio interference for the Master Bomber led to virtually all bombs to fall in open country and no casualties recorded in Brunswick itself. 5 Group lost 13 Lancasters and the lives of 81 aircrew, including Leslie Baker and five of his crew.

They had taken off from Bardney at 2242 hours on board Lancaster LM519 WS-N and Luftwaffe records suggest it was intercepted and shot down at 0047 hours, the aircraft crashing near the village of Gersten, near Lingen. The only survivor was the navigator, Sgt. William Stephenson, who was captured.

Leslie came from the London suburb of Raynes Park and he was the 22-year-old son of Bertie and Priscilla Baker. He and the others who died were buried locally and were reinterred in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery.

The others who died were the flight engineer P/O Eric Brittain, bomb-aimer F/O Joe McKee, wireless operator Sgt. Richard England, mid-upper gunner Sgt. George Gow RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Norman Pike.

His name can be found on panel 005.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook/Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley/Peter Green collection.