

Sergeant Peter Raymond Beilby 1318936 RAFVR

Peter Beilby was a 21-year-old navigator who was killed along with his Lancaster crew when their bomber was one of 96 lost by Bomber Command during the infamous 1944 Nuremburg raid, with 13 more lost in crashes when returning.

The raid, which saw the heaviest losses of Bomber Command on a single night, came on the night of 30/31 March, 1944. A series of pre-operation forecasts went disastrously wrong, leaving the bomber stream exposed in bright moonlight, particularly on the long outbound leg.

Peter was part of the crew of Lancaster III W5009 CF-Z, one of thirteen bombers from No. 625 Squadron for the raid. They took off from RAF Kelstern at 2144 hours as part of a force of 779 Bomber Command aircraft. It was an experienced crew, who had been with 625 at Kelstern since October 1943. Nuremburg was their 21st operation, 13 of them flown in W5009.

His Lancaster was the fifth bomber to be shot down after being intercepted by a night fighter as it crossed the Belgian border, crashing near the small village of Udenbreth. There were no survivors.

Peter left a young wife, Joyce, and their baby daughter, Georgina. He and his crew were initially buried locally but were later reinterred in Rheinberg War Cemetery (Coll. grave 17. D. 12-18).

The others who died in his crew were mid-upper gunner Sgt. Lloyd Anderson RCAF, one of three young Canadian brothers who died while flying with the Royal Canadian Air Force. The others were pilot and B Flight commander Sqn. Ldr. Thomas Nicholls, flight engineer Sgt. Norman Wallis, bomb-aimer WO2 Ernest Johnston RCAF, wireless operator P/O Frank Smith and rear gunner P/O Reginald Pitman.

His name can be found on IBC panel 008.

Sources: John Albrecht - Aircrew Remembered/625 Squadron records/625 Squadron Association/The Nuremburg Raid by Martin Middlebrook.

