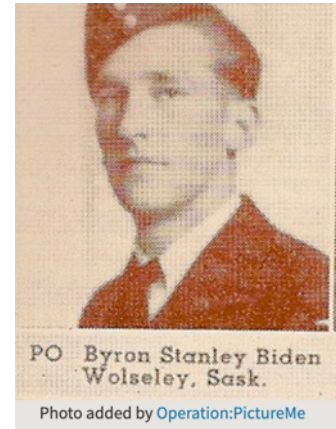


Pilot Officer Byron Stanley Biden J/15780 RCAF

Byron Biden was born on 4 October 1914, the son of Thomas Herbert Biden and Alma Biden of Saskatchewan, Canada. On 18 January 1941 he married Denalda Madline Dundas at St John's Church, Sintaluta, Saskatchewan. He died in the summer of 1942 in a Wellington bomber in mission to Germany, age 27.

Prior to WWII Byron worked as a salesman for British American Oil Co. Regina. His hobby was shooting and he also played hockey, tennis, soft ball, and swimming. He enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on 17 July 1940 at Regina, Saskatchewan and following training embarked from Canada to the UK on 18 June 1941 where he joined No. 142 Squadron on 13 May 1942 (via 3PRC and 27OTU).



On 27 August 1942 the crew of Wellington Z1424 QT-F took off from RAF Grimsby with Byron its bomb aimer - their target was Kassel. At the briefing the crews were told to expect the target to be heavily defended because of its industrial importance. The weather conditions – good visibility and light wind – would make it possible for them to bomb the targets successfully. Kassel was a medium sized city with only 250,000 inhabitants. However, the city was a high-profile target for RAF Bomber Command. As well as being the capital of the provinces of Hessen-Nassau and Keur-Hessen, the city contained some important industrial targets.

The Kassel newspaper stated: 'Hits were obtained on military installations, industrial sites, living areas, hospitals. Kassel was a prime target, producing large amounts of armament, amongst them Fieseler airplanes, Junkers planes and parts, Henschel plane engines, the Tiger I tank, and train engines. In June 1942 Fieseler had received the instruction to develop what would become the V1 flying bomb (known as the buzz bomb or doodlebug). The attack was effective because of low cloud and good moonlight, enabling pathfinders to mark well. But I guess that also accounts for the very heavy losses. This was the first time German night fighters intervened in an attack on Kassel. Planes lost were 21x Wellington, 5x Stirling, 3x Lancaster, 1 each Halifax and Hampden'.

142 Squadron lost 5 aircraft on this raid, including Byron's Z1424 which failed to return to Grimsby.

Subsequently on 9 November 1942, the International Red Cross advised that German information had been received which stated that the crew of Z1424 had been buried on 29 August 1942 in the North Cemetery, Dusseldorf, Germany. Presumably Z1424 had crashed in this area. Byron and the crew were later re-interred in the Reichswald Forest British Cemetery (one of the permanent Military Cemeteries that were turned over to the Imperial War Graves Commission) on 2 January 1947. The local grave reference is 11. C. 6

PO Byron Biden is commemorated on panel 9.

SOURCES

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PICTURE

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