

Sgt. William Frank Biggs 569401 RAF

William Biggs was a young flight engineer from Berkshire who was one of 32 aircrew from No. 12 Squadron killed in a disastrous night for the Lincolnshire-based unit in the summer of June 1943.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster DV157 PH-Z that was one of five Lancasters and their crews lost during a raid on Dusseldorf on the night of 11/12 June 1943. Only five men on board the lost aircraft from No.12 Squadron survived to become prisoners-of-war.



William's Lancaster had taken off from RAF Wickenby at 2322 hours, being one of 12 bombers from the squadron taking part in the attack on the Ruhr industrial city. The attack involved 782 Bomber Command aircraft and caused extensive damage, wrecking much of the city. However, 38 bombers were lost, including the 5 from No. 12 Squadron.

DV157 was damaged over the target area by flak and lost height as it headed back across Holland. By the time the Lancaster reached the coast it had dropped to 1,500 feet, when it was spotted and attacked by Kriegsmarine light flak batteries. The Lancaster crashed near the port of IJmuiden with only the wireless operator, Newfoundlander Sgt. Donald Templeman, managing to survive.

William was part of a crew which included several very experienced airmen who had arrived at Wickenby only a few days earlier from 1662 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Blyton. He was the 23-year-old son of Walter and Helen Biggs of Reading. His body was one of three later recovered from the sea and is now buried in Bergen General Cemetery in Holland.

The others who died with him were the pilot Flt. Lt. Alfred Doel RNZAF, navigator WO Robert Durham DFM, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Owen Whyman RNZAF, mid-upper gunner F/O Owen Jones RNZAF and rear gunner Sgt. Thomas Pagett.

William's name can be found on panel 009.

Sources: Aircrew Remembered/Aviation Safety Network/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.
Photo source: Aircrew Remembered.