

Warrant Officer Ronald Howard Boyd 416041 RAAF



Ron Boyd (front right) with his crew at RAF Elsham Wolds

Ron Boyd was killed on a disastrous night in early May 1944 when Bomber Command lost 42 Lancasters in an attack on a German military depot at Mailly-le-Camp in France. The attack, though accurate, was marred by confusion over the target and communication problems, all of which helped German night fighters score heavily.

No. 1 Group aircraft suffered particularly badly and No. 103 Squadron at RAF Elsham Wolds lost three of the 12 aircraft it provided for the raid, which took place on the night of 3 May. There was not a single survivor from any of the three lost.

One of the aircraft, Lancaster ND905 PM-B, was piloted by Sqn. Ldr. Harold 'Jock' Swanston, the 32-year-old A Flight commander. His bomb aimer was Australian Ron Boyd. It was caught as bombers were instructed to circle to await instructions, and crashed near the French village of Villers-le-Chateau, five miles from Chalons-sur-Marne. Unbeknown to the controller, where they were ordered to circle was close to a Luftwaffe night fighter beacon.

Ron was 32 and lived with his wife Esma in Hackney, South Australia. He was the son of Edward and Ada Boyd.

Those killed with him were the pilot, flight engineer Sgt. Dennis Hadden, navigator F/O Eric Dane, wireless operator WO John Smith, mid-upper gunner Sgt. George Casey RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Jack Rankin RCAF. All are buried in Villers-le-Chateau churchyard (Mil. Plot Row 1 Coll. grave 1).

Ron's name can be found on IBCC panel 011.

Photographic source: David Fell.