

Sergeant Russell Boyde 1479287 RAFVR



Russell Boyde (front, right) with his crew

Russell Boyde was the bomb-aimer of a No. 166 Squadron Lancaster lost on what turned out to be Bomber Command's final attack of the Battle of Berlin.

He was flying in Lancaster I ME635 AS-C, which was hit by flak at 25,000 feet shortly after dropping its bombs on the German capital on the night of 24/25 March 1944. Both port engines were set on fire, before the aircraft was attacked by a night fighter at which point the crew was ordered to bale out. The aircraft then spiralled down before crashing on the edge of a forest near the village of Reuden, east of Berlin.

The only survivor was the mid-upper gunner Sgt. William Burnell. He later recounted that he was wounded in the night fighter attack and lost consciousness, but believed all six other crew members got out of the aircraft. He miraculously came to in the wreckage of the Lancaster and later surrendered to the Germans. What happened to the rest of the crew is unclear, but German authorities reported that six bodies were discovered and buried locally before being reburied after the war in Berlin War Cemetery (Coll. grave 5. B. 17-22).

ME635 had left RAF Kirmington at 1835 hours and was one of three Lancasters lost by 166 on the raid. Bomber Command lost a total of 72 aircraft from the 811 sent, the bomber stream being badly scattered by unexpectedly strong winds.

Russell was the 20-year-old son of Maj. Edward and Mrs Lillian Boyde.

The others killed with him were the pilot Flt. Sgt. Ernest Brown RAAF, flight engineer Sgt. John Scruton, navigator Flt. Sgt. Bill Mitchinson, wireless operator Sgt. Joe Flavell and rear gunner Sgt. Bill Mason.

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

Photographic source: 166 Squadron Association and Aircrew Remembered.