

Sgt. John Breivis
R/132533 RCAF



John Breivis was a 19-year-old American mid-upper gunner who was killed when his Lancaster is believed to have been involved in a mid-air collision during the bomb run over the city of Nuremburg in the early hours of 29 August 1942.

His aircraft, Lancaster R5897 EA-B, was one of two lost by 49 Squadron that night, their first losses since their disastrous short spell flying Manchesters back in June. R5897 was only a month-old and the sobering thought is that the squadron was to lose another 100 Lancasters before the war ended.

John's aircraft was one of 10 Lancasters that took off from RAF Scampton at 2104 hours to join a force of 159 bombers to attack Nuremburg. Twenty-three were lost, fourteen of them Wellingtons. It was a Wellington from 57 Squadron that is believed to have been involved in a collision with R5897 as both were on their bomb runs over the city. The wreckage of both aircraft fell in the village of Kalchreuth, eight miles north of Nuremburg. The twelve bodies, seven of them from the 49 Squadron Lancaster, were buried in the village, being reinterred in the Durnbach War Cemetery after the war.

The son of John and Annie Breivis, of Massachusetts, he had decided to travel to Canada to join the RCAF before being trained as an air gunner. He was killed just six days before his 20th birthday. John was part of a crew that also included two Australians and a Canadian.

The others who died on board R5897 were the pilot Flt. Sgt. Edward Burton, second pilot (flying as the flight engineer) Sgt. Kent Newbery RAAF, navigator Sgt. Gilbert Swan RAAF, wireless operator Sgt. Ernest Ibbotson, air gunner Sgt. James Osbaldeston and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Leslie Capton RCAF.

John's name can be found on panel 012.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Aviation Safety Network/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.