

**Sgt. Bernard
Gibbons 1625259
RAFVR**



Flight engineer Bernard Gibbons was the only Englishman in an otherwise all Australian crew who were killed when their Lancaster crashed into a hill in Leicestershire a month before the war in Europe ended.

Bernard died when Lancaster ND949 LE-Z (*pictured above*) hit a hill near the village of Foxton, near Market Harborough, at 0310 hours on 9 April 1945 as they returned from a bombing raid on a synthetic oil refinery near Leipzig. They had been diverted due to bad weather and it was later believed either a faulty or wrongly-adjusted altimeter led to the crash.

ND949 had taken off from East Kirkby at 1800 hours the previous night for the attack which destroyed the Molbis refinery at Lutzkendorf, one of the last supplying fuel supplies to German forces.

Bernard and his crew were on their fourth operation with No. 630 Squadron after joining it in January. Although he was flying as an engineer, he was a qualified pilot and is remembered as a flight engineer/pilot in the squadron's history. He came from Letchworth, in Hertfordshire, and was the 21-year-old foster son of Raymond and Florence Gibbons. He was later buried in St Nicholas' churchyard in the Hertfordshire village of Norton.

The others who died were the pilot F/O Colin Richardson RAAF, navigator Flt. Sgt. Herbert Burton RAAF, bomb-aimer F/O Robert Martin RAAF, wireless operator F/O William Forrester RAAF, mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. Anthony Bowman RAAF and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Frederick Howlett RAAF.

His name can be found on panel 039.

Sources: 630 Squadron.