

Flt. Sgt. Joseph Edmund Leaman R/201700 RCAF



Joe Leaman (rear, far left) with his Canadian colleagues at Kirmington

Joe Leaman was the rear gunner in a No. 166 Squadron Lancaster lost in a daylight raid aimed at helping the advance of American ground forces in November 1944.

His Lancaster III, PB648 AS-B, was one of 25 provided by 166 for the attack on Düren during the afternoon of 16 November involving 485 aircraft from Nos. 1 and 5 Group. The raid utterly destroyed the town, which lay in the path of the US advance towards the Rhine. Only three aircraft were lost, all to flak, and Joe's was one of them, crashing close to the American lines in Belgium. There were no survivors.

Joe and his crew, which was made up of six Canadians and a Welsh flight engineer, had left RAF Kirmington at 1235 hours on what would have been their seventh operation since joining the squadron on 16 October 1944. Joe is buried in Hotton War Cemetery, in Belgium, while his crew mates can be found in the Rheinberg War Cemetery in Germany.

Joe was the 20-year-old son of Edward and Eva Leaman of Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Those killed with Joe were the pilot F/O Ted Coles RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. David Orme, navigator F/O Ken Farrow RCAF, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Ralph Carroll RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Ralph Schnauffer RCAF and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Neil Smith RCAF.

Joe's name can be found on IBCC panel 062.

Photographic source: 166 Squadron Association.