

Sgt. Alex Ernest Lukeman
2221055 RAFVR

It took a long time to build a Lancaster bomber and even longer to train its crew. Yet the operational career of Lancaster NG192 BQ-L, of 550 Squadron, and six of its seven-man crew was to span only a few hours.

Alex Lukeman was the rear gunner in the crew of NG192. He and five of his colleagues had joined up with experienced bomber pilot Flt. Lt. Arthur Wynne Thomas at a heavy conversion unit before moving to North Killingholme to join 550 early in October 1944.

Wynne Thomas already had a tour on Halifaxes, and a spell as an instructor, behind him. They finally found themselves on the battle order on 19 October for a planned attack on the city of Stuttgart.

They were allocated a new Lancaster, NG192 BQ-L, which had arrived at 550 even later than Alex's crew did. The attack was spread over two waves and BQ-L was in the second, taking off from North Killingholme at 1702 hours. But, within a few hours, the Lancaster was shot down outbound by a night fighter, one of six aircraft lost on the raid, and all on board were killed.

At the age of 38 Alex was among the oldest members of air crew to serve with 550. He came from Smethwick in Birmingham and was the son of Samuel and Mary Lukeman. He and the other members of his crew are now buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in Bavaria.

The others who died were the pilot Flt. Lt. Arthur Wynne Thomas, flight engineer Sgt. Manning Harris, navigator Sgt. Maxwell Austin, bomb-aimer Sgt. John Knott, wireless operator Sgt James Garland and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Ralph Garrad.

**The above photograph shows a Lancaster of 550 Squadron at North Killingholme loaded with a 4,000lb 'cookie' and incendiaries, the kind of load carried for the Stuttgart raid.*

His name can be found on panel 065.

Sources: 550 Squadron Association/'Five-Fifty' by Patrick Otter

