

**F/O Joseph McKee
151850 RAFVR**



Bomb-aimer Joe 'Paddy' McKee and his crew were killed within a week of joining 9 Squadron at Bardney in May

1944. Having already completed one operation, his aircraft was over Germany for his second mission when it was shot down by a night fighter. His death also came three days after his wife gave birth to a child.

Joe had arrived at Bardney on 15 May 1944 and within a few days he and his crew took part in their first operation together, a bombing raid on Dortmund, arriving back in Lincolnshire in the early hours of 22 May.

After a debrief, meal and a short sleep he and his crew were roused for a briefing for another raid, that night against the city of Brunswick. It was a 5 Group attack involving 225 Lancasters that turned out to be an utter failure. Unexpected cloud cover and German radio interference for the Master Bomber led to virtually all bombs to fall in open country and no casualties recorded in Brunswick itself. 5 Group lost 13 Lancasters and the lives of 81 aircrew, including Paddy McKee and five of his crew.

They had taken off from Bardney at 2242 hours on board Lancaster LM519 WS-N and Luftwaffe records suggest it was intercepted and shot down at 0047 hours, the aircraft crashing near the village of Gersten, near Lingen. The only survivor was the navigator, Sgt. William Stephenson, who was captured.

Joe and the others who died were buried locally and were reinterred in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. The others who died were the pilot P/O Leslie Baker, flight engineer P/O Eric Brittain, wireless operator Sgt. Richard England, mid-upper gunner Sgt. George Gow RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Norman Pike.

His name can be found on panel 071.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook/Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley/Peter Green collection.