

Sgt James Henry Overholt RCAF R/197141

James Overholt was a twenty-year-old mid-upper gunner who was killed along with his rear gunner in a battle with two night-fighters during a raid on Stuttgart of the night of 15th/16th March 1944.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster ND530 LE-P of 630 Squadron which had taken off from East Kirkby at 19:12 on what was their fifth operation together.

There was one of fourteen Lancasters from 630 Squadron which joined a force of 863 bombers which was involved in some fierce battles with the night-fighter force, battles which cost Bomber Command thirty-seven aircraft.

ND530's battle came over France as the bomber stream returned, two Luftwaffe aircraft opening fire on the Lancaster, raking both turrets and causing serious damage to the bomber. The pilot, PO Len Bailey, dived the aircraft but finally gave the order to bail out. Both gunners were believed to have been killed in the cannon fire which poured in from the fighters before the other members of the crew abandoned the Lancaster, which crashed near the village of Saint-Gilles, fifteen miles west of Reims.

James was the only son of George and Irene Overholt of Eastwood in Ontario. He had worked for the Massey-Harris Company before enlisting, his notes listing him as a 'munitions worker'. He is remembered in a memorial in Princeton Cemetery, Princeton in Ontario.

The other casualty was the rear gunner Sgt Thomas Fox and both were buried in Saint-Gilles Churchyard. The pilot and flight engineer, Sgt Kenneth Walker, both evaded capture while the navigator FO Malcolm Geisler, bomb-aimer Sgt Malcolm Gregg and wireless operator Sgt George Plowman all become prisoners.

James' name can be found on panel 081.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/Canadian veterans.

