LAC William Edward Palmer 551629 RAF



William was born in 1919 in Rosberg, Westport, Co Mayo, the son of William Henry Palmer and Annie Campbell Palmer nee Brabazon.

In an effort to slow the German advance through Belgium, on the 12 May 1940, British and French bombers were sent to attack the German army formations between Maastricht and Gembloux and to bomb the bridges over the Meuse. The goal was to cause enough damage so that the debris and rubble would block the roads, thus effectively impeding the Wehrmacht.

On the morning of 12 May 1940, 12 Blenheims from 107 Sqn, as part of a combined force of 42 Blenheims, took off from RAF Wattisham, Suffolk. This would prove to be a very costly raid, with 11 aircraft being lost, 4 from the Squadron. William, operating as WOp/AG, and his crew departed RAF Wattisham at 08:10 in Blenheim IV P4905 (OM-P).

The Squadron aircraft reached their objective and carried out accurate bombing with excellent results, but they were subject to heavy anti-aircraft fire for a distance of 15 miles from the target, which increased to an intense barrage over the objective. Eleven out of the 12 aircraft were hit by the fire. After the bombing of the bridges had been completed the formation was forced to open out owing to the increasingly intensive and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Before the formation could close, it was set upon by enemy fighters.

William's aircraft was shot down by Bf109s of 2./JG 27 shortly after attacking the target. The pilot and the navigator were able to bail out before the aircraft crashed in Bettincourt, northwest of Waremme, on the border between the provinces of Liège and Limburg. The lifeless body of William was found in the wreckage of the plane, probably killed by the bullets from the German fighter plane before it crashed. Despite attempts by Belgian civilians to aid their escape, the Pilot & Observer were captured by the German Forces and served the whole war in captivity.

William is buried in the Bettincourt Communal Cemetery, Waremme, Belgium

William is commemorated on Wall Panel 82

Photo Source: mayo.me