

Sgt. Norman Percival Rayner 1385954 RAFVR

Norman Rayner was the rear gunner of a Wellington shot down by a night fighter over Holland.

He died along with all his crew in the early hours of 28 May 1943 when his 166 Squadron Wellington was homebound from a raid on Essen.



His aircraft, Wellington HE752 AS-W, was intercepted over Holland by a fighter flown by Oblt. Hans-Heinz Augenstein. It crashed close to the hamlet of Oele on the outskirts of the city of Hengelo, a few miles from the German border.

Norman and his crew were flying in one of six No. 166 Squadron Wellingtons that took part in the attack by 518 Bomber Command aircraft, in which considerable damage was done to the Krupps factories in this much-bombed city. On the same night, other 166 Squadron Wellingtons were engaged in mining operations. They had left Kirmington at 2302 hours on 27 May and their aircraft was the only one not to return.

He and his crew had joined 166 at Kirmington three weeks before the Essen raid. Norman came from the village of Liftondown, on the Devon-Cornwall border, and was the son of Percival and Florence Rayner.

The others who died were the pilot Flt. Lt. Donald Tonkinson, bomb-aimer F/O Thomas Brown, wireless operator/air gunner P/O Arthur Johnson and rear gunner Sgt. Norman Rayner.

Norman is buried in the Hengelo (Overijssel) General Cemetery in the Netherlands, Plot D Row 1 Grave 62.

His name can be found on panel 088.

Sources: 166 Squadron Association/On Wings of War by Jim Wright/Air Battle of the Ruhr by Alan Cooper.