

**PO John Leslie  
Richards RAFVR  
170946**



John Richards was flying as a second pilot who was killed when his aircraft was shot down by a night fighter as his Lancaster was heading for Berlin.

He had joined the crew of Lancaster JB665 LE-B of 630 Squadron whose aircraft was one of twenty bombers shot down as they approached the German capital on the night of 15th February 1944. A further twenty-three Bomber Command aircraft were lost later from a force of 891 on what was a record-breaking night for the RAF as the Battle of Berlin was resumed after a two-week break.

JB665 had lifted off from East Kirkby at 17:16, the second to take off from twenty-one Lancasters, the biggest number yet for 630 Squadron since its formation in November. The outward route took the bomber stream across Denmark and the Baltic before going south-east for Berlin. It was in this stage JB665 was caught by Oblt Joseph Kraft's Bf110 and shot down in flames, crashing near Güstrow, south of Rostock. There were no survivors.

John came from Oakham in Rutland where he lived with his wife, Mary, and was the son of John and Beatrice Mitchell. He was buried along with six of his crew in the churchyard in Güstrow and later reinterred in Berlin War Cemetery. The body of his Australian rear gunner was never found.

The others who died were the pilot Flt Lt William English, flight engineer Sgt Norman Mitchell, navigator FO John Evans, bomb-aimer PO Llewellyn Fussell, wireless operator Flt Sgt Leslie Lane, mid-upper gunner PO Derek Carlile and rear gunner PO William Hewitt RAAF.

John's name can be found on panel 089.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/The Berlin Raids by Martin Middlebrook.