

F/O William Samuel Richards J/28875 RCAF

William Richards was a Canadian navigator who died after his Lancaster was hit by a 'friendly' bomb during a daylight operation.

He was part of a 166 Squadron crew which had arrived at Kirmington early in June 1944 and was heavily engaged in that summer's hectic bombing operations.

On 3 August 1944 they were tasked with taking part in an attack on a V1 storage site at Trossy St Maximin, north of Paris. It was their 20th operation.

Their aircraft, Lancaster ME839 AS-N, had left Kirmington at 1130 hours and was approaching the

target when the flight engineer, Sgt. Sydney

Witham, spotted another Lancaster directly above them. As he shouted a warning a bomb hit AS-N, breaking off most of one wing. The pilot, F/O Hurbert Wagner, and Sgt Witham managed to bale out but the other five members of the crew died when the Lancaster crashed. Sgt. Witham managed to evade capture but the pilot spent the rest of the war as a PoW.



William is buried with three other crew members in Creil Communal Cemetery. He was 32 and was born in Birmingham. His father was killed in 1915 while serving in France with the British Army and William's mother, Nellie, later emigrated to Canada with William and his brother Arthur and settled in Toronto. After finishing his education at Oakwood Collegiate Institute, William had a number of jobs before working as a bookkeeper and accountant for L R Greene and H K Robinson. He was married and lived in

Toronto with his wife Madge.

The others who died were the bomb-aimer Sgt. John Davies, wireless operator Sgt. Henry Buckler, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Francis Graham and rear gunner Sgt. Lewis Arthur.

His name can be found on panel 090.

Sources: 166 Squadron Association/On Wings of War by Jim Wright/Pierre Vandervelden/emedals.com

