

Flt Sgt William Joseph Roche RAAF 426161

William Roche was a twenty-nine-year-old Australian rear gunner who was killed during a raid on Berlin early in 1944.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster JB532 LE-X of 630 Squadron and was among eight men killed when it was shot down by flak during the raid on the night of 1st/2nd January 1944.

JB532 was part of a force of 471 bombers attacking the German capital as part of the ongoing Battle of Berlin being staged by Bomber Command. His was one of fifteen Lancasters from 630 which took off shortly before midnight from East Kirkby and was reported to have been hit by flak before crashing at Grossbeuthen, near Trebbin (south-east of Berlin). An engine was torn from one of the Lancaster's wings before the aircraft plunged into the ground.

William came from the town of Whorouly in Victoria and was the son of Patrick and Mary Roche.

The others who died were the pilot Flt Lt Douglas Macdonald DFC RCAF, second pilot S/L Kenneth Vare AFC, flight engineer Sgt Robert Smale MiD, navigator FO Niels Westergaard DFC, bomb-aimer Flt Sgt John Turnbull, wireless operator Sgt William Tyrie DFM and rear gunner Flt Sgt William Roche RAAF. All were initially buried in Grossbeuthen cemetery before being reinterred in Berlin War Cemetery.

William's name can be found on panel 091.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/Aircrew Reunited/Australian Virtual War Memorial.

