

FO Leslie Simpson 155534 RAFVR

Leslie was born on 3 December 1910 in East Boldon, Durham, the son of John William Simpson and Anne Whittles Simpson nee Mould. In 1934 he married Marguerite Senior in Houghton-le-Spring, Durham.

Before joining the RAF and training as an Air Gunner, Leslie was employed as a Drapery Salesman

Commissioned in September 1943, in February 1944 Leslie was on the strength of 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.

On the night of the 30th March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies this night. Twenty-six 101 Sqn Lancasters participated in the raid.

At 22:05 on 30 March 1944 Leslie, operating as the Air Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire in Lancaster I LL832 (SR-K2), tasked with ABC duties for the raid.

At 00:15 whilst outbound, the aircraft was hit by flak and crashed near the village of Rubenach, 5km WNW of Koblenz, killing all on board.

Seven 101 Sqn aircraft were lost, 47 men killed.

The raid was a major disaster for Bomber Command with the loss of 105 aircraft - Bomber Command's heaviest loss of the war. There were 721 casualties: - 542 men died, 6 injured, 161 POWs, with just 12 airmen evading capture. The damage to Nuremberg itself was slight - 256 buildings destroyed and 75 enemy dead.

Also Killed: PO Gordon Lewis Preece (Nav/Special Duties Operator); FS Gerald Tivey (Pilot); FS Leonard Lockwood (Nav); FS Henry Royston Butterworth (BA); Sgt Basil Henry Schofield (WOp); Sgt Albert Walter Verdun Farley (FE); Sgt Alexander David Dickson (AG)

Originally buried in Rubenach Cemetery, Koblenz, Germany, in June 1947 Leslie and the crew were moved to Rheinberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany.

Leslie is commemorated on Wall Panel 97