

Sgt. Neil Lauretz Smith R/267154 RCAF



Neil Smith (front, right) with his Canadian colleagues at Kirmington

Neil Smith was the mid-upper gunner in a No. 166 Squadron Lancaster lost in a daylight raid aimed at helping the advance of American ground forces in November 1944.

His Lancaster III, PB648 AS-B, was one of 25 provided by 166 for the attack on Düren during the afternoon of 16 November involving 485 aircraft from Nos. 1 and 5 Group. The raid utterly utterly destroyed the town, which lay in the path of the US advance towards the Rhine. Only three aircraft were lost, all to flak, and Neil's was one of them, crashing close to the American lines in Belgium. There were no survivors.

Neil and his crew, which was made up of six Canadians and a Welsh flight engineer, had left RAF Kirmington at 1235 hours on what would have been their seventh operation since joining the squadron on 16 October 1944. He is buried along with five of his fellow crew members in Rheinberg War Cemetery.

Those killed with Neil were the pilot F/O Ted Coles RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. David Orme, navigator F/O Ken Farrow RCAF, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Ralph Carroll RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Ralph Schnaufer RCAF and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Joe Leaman RCAF.

Neil's name can be found on IBCC panel 099.

Photographic source: 166 Squadron Association.