

WO John David Steele R/94702 RCAF

John was born on 7 November 1919 in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, Canada, the son of Samuel Steele and Caroline Mabel Steele nee Horne.

Educated at Haig School and Weyburn Collegiate, John was employed as a miller by Arcola Flour Mills when, in August 1940, he volunteered for service in the RCAF.

Called up in March 1941, John completed his pilot training in Canada in December 1941 with the award of his wings, and in January 1942 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 14 OTU RAF Cottesmore, Rutland, in September 1942 John was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor. When the squadron was equipped with the Lancaster, John completed his conversion training at 1656 HCU RAF Lindholme, Yorkshire, before returning to the squadron.

On the night of the 9/10 April 1943, Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Duisberg, a major logistical centre in the Ruhr Area and location of chemical, steel and iron industries. A combined force of 109 aircraft, including eight 101 Sqn crews, were allocated to the task. Two crews failed to return.

On the evening of 9 April John and his crew departed RAF Holme on Spalding Moor, Yorkshire, in Lancaster III ED618 (SR-X).

As John's aircraft crossed the Dutch coast near Harlem, they were intercepted by Lt Oskar Köstler flying a Bf110 from Bergen Airfield who had picked up a signal on his onboard radar and spotted a lone Lancaster on the side of the main bomber stream's course.

Whilst flying west of Elburg, at 22:40 the Lancaster was hit in the bomb bay by the cannons and instantly exploded. Debris from the huge blast damaged the Bf110 and killed the pilot. The radio operator managed to bale out and survived. The Lancaster wreckage came down near Doornspijk, killing all on board.

Also Killed: FO Norman James Ritchie RAAF (WOp/AG); FS Michael John Bennett (Nav); FS Stanley Grundy DFM (AG); Sgt D'Arcy Gould (AB); Sgt John Hence (FE); Sgt William David George O'Brien (AG)

John is buried in Doornspijk General Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands

John is commemorated on Wall Panel 101

Photo Source: IBCC

