

**Sgt. Gilbert
Aitken Swan
407354 RAAF**



Gilbert Swan was an Australian navigator who was killed when his Lancaster is believed to have been involved in a mid-air collision during the bomb run over the city of Nuremburg in the early hours of 29 August 1942.

His aircraft, Lancaster R5897 EA-B, was one of two lost by 49 Squadron that night, their first losses since their disastrous short spell flying Manchesters back in June. R5897 was only a month-old and the sobering thought is that the squadron was to lose another 100 Lancasters before the war ended.

Gilbert's aircraft was one of 10 Lancasters that took off from RAF Scampton at 2104 hours to join a force of 159 bombers to attack Nuremburg. Twenty-three were lost, fourteen of them Wellingtons. It was a Wellington from 57 Squadron that is believed to have been involved in the collision with R5897 as both were on their bomb runs over the city. The wreckage of both aircraft fell in the village of Kalchreuth, eight miles north of Nuremburg. The twelve bodies, seven of them from the 49 Squadron Lancaster, were buried in the village, being reinterred in the Durnbach War Cemetery after the war.

Gilbert was one of two Australians in a crew that also included a Canadian and an American serving in the RCAF. He was the 25-year-old son of Henry and Jessie Swan and came from the Adelaide suburb of Brighton.

The others who died on board R5897 were the pilot Flt. Sgt. Edward Burton, second pilot Sgt. Kent Newbery RAAF, wireless operator Sgt. Ernest Ibbotson, air gunner Sgt. James Osbaldeston, mid-upper gunner Sgt. John Breivis RCAF and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Leslie Capton RCAF.

His name can be found on panel 103.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Aviation Safety Network/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.