

F/O Harold Earl Wilson J/86677 RCAF

Harold Wilson was a Canadian pilot who was killed along with his crew when their aircraft crashed in France, possibly following a mid-air collision with a second Lancaster.

He was the pilot of Lancaster ND527 LE-O of No. 630 Squadron, one of four bombers lost on a 5 Group raid on the key rail junction at the town of Givors, on the Rhône, a raid intended to hamper German reinforcements reaching Normandy from southern France.



ND527 had taken off from East Kirkby at 2117 hours on the night of 26 July 1944 and was homebound when it crashed near the small village of Saint-Ignat, north-east of Clermont-Ferrand. Almost simultaneously a No. 83 Squadron Lancaster also crashed, one exploding in the air and the other attempting to crash-land only to hit a row of trees. All 14 men on board the two Lancasters were killed.



Harold Wilson headed an experienced crew that included another three Canadians for which the Givors raid was their 18th operation after joining the squadron in the late spring with their first raid coming on 1 June.

He was born in the small community of Birtle, on the prairies of Manitoba, and had enlisted in Winnipeg in May 1942. He was the 22-year-old son of Albert and Susan Wilson.

Harold and his crew are buried in Des Carmes-Dechaux Communal Cemetery in Clermont-Ferrand and are remembered on a striking memorial (*pictured*) in the churchyard at Saint-Ignat.

The others who died on board ND527 were the flight engineer Sgt. Frederick Arnold, navigator F/O Ambrose Bain RCAF, bomb-aimer F/O Alexander Lindsay RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Percy Gilliatt, mid-upper gunner P/O John Gutcher RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. David Fontaine.

His name can be found on panel 117.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/aerosteles.