

Sgt. John Grenfell Wise 1835959 RAFVR

Nineteen-year-old John Wise, once a boy chorister in the 'Church of Parliament', was a rear gunner who died when his Lancaster crashed between Munich and Stuttgart after being attacked by a night fighter.

His 49 Squadron aircraft was intercepted by the fighter on the crew's first operation together, against the southern German city of Stuttgart in the early hours of 16 March 1944.

They had taken off from RAF Fiskerton at 1905 hours the previous evening, one of 863 Lancasters and Halifaxes. Part of the force flew right to the Swiss border before turning north and it was during this stage of the raid that John's Lancaster, ND474 (EA-T), was picked up by a fighter flown by Oblt. Gunter Koberich at 22,000 feet.



The Lancaster crashed near the small town of Bolstern, near Bad Solgau, and there was speculation that the crew were trying to make it to the Swiss border, just 18 minutes' flying time away, in their damaged aircraft before they crashed. All seven men on board were buried locally and now rest in Durnbach War Cemetery. A memorial for the crew now stands at the crash site.

Bill was a former boy chorister at St Margaret's Church in Westminster, known as the 'church of Parliament'. He was the son of Thomas and Margaret Wise, who then lived in the Treloyhan area of St Ives in Cornwall.

The others who died were the pilot P/O Thomas 'Billy' Waugh, flight engineer Sgt. Ron Hoole, navigator Flt. Sgt. Terence McEneaney, bomb-aimer F/O John Knowles, wireless operator Sgt. Bill Hardy and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Douglas Birbeck.

His name can be found on panel 118.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/'Remembering the crew of ND474'/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.