

PO Wilson Birwell Yates DFC RAFVR 16107

Former Lancashire police officer Wilson Yates was a Lancaster pilot who died along with three of his crew when their bomber was shot down over Leipzig on 20th February 1944.

His aircraft, LD532 LE-N of 630 Squadron, was one of 833 bombers targeting aircraft factories in the eastern German city when his Lancaster was attacked by three single-engine fighters at between 04:16 and 04:20. The Lancaster crashed near the target. Three men bailed out but Wilson Yates and three others died in the crash.



On their previous operation, a raid on Berlin a few days earlier, the crew had successfully beaten off a Ju88 fighter over the German capital.

LD532 had taken off from East Kirkby a few minutes after midnight and was one of seventy-eight which failed to return, including a second Lancaster from 630 Squadron.

Wilson Yates had served as a police officer in Preston before he enlisted. He was the thirty-one-year-old son of George and Sarah Yates and lived with his wife, Lily, in Anchorsholme, near Cleveleys on the Lancashire coast. The news of his posthumous Distinguished Flying Cross came on 21st December 1945 and was backdated to 18th February 1944.

The others who died were the navigator Sgt Alan Spence, mid-upper gunner and 630 Squadron gunnery leader Flt Lt Ernest Stead MiD and rear gunner Flt Sgt Dennis Dawson. The survivors were the flight engineer Sgt William Isaacs, bomb-aimer Sgt Reginald Findlow RCAF and wireless operator Sgt Donald Scott. Those who died were buried locally and later reinterred in Berlin War Cemetery.

Wilson's name can be found on panel 120.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association.