

AC1 Robert Christopher Charleton 628854 RAF

Robert, known to his crew as Paddy, was born in 1909 in Belfast, County Antrim, the eldest son of William John Charleton and Ellen Charleton nee McCann. He was married to Georgina and they had 2 children.

Robert joined the RAF in early 1939 and trained as a WOp/AG.

From 04:30 on 11 May 1940, twelve 21 Sqn Blenheims were placed on 1 hour standby. Following a desperate plea from the Belgians, who had lost six out of nine battles attacking bridges over the Albert Canal near Maastricht, 23 Blenheims from 110 Sqn and 21 Sqn, were ordered to attack the same enemy convoys.

At 15:00 Robert, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Watton, Norfolk in Blenheim IV P6886. The Sqn were to attack enemy armoured troops proceeding West from Maastricht, Belgium. At 16:30 the formation arrived over the target at a height of 15,000 ft. Maastricht was heavily defended by anti-aircraft guns and a curtain of flak hit many of the aircraft as they shallow dive-bombed the target.

A single bullet from the ground fire entered the fuselage of P6886 and pierced Robert's lung. The aircraft made a safe return to base with Robert's body. All aircraft returned home, but eight out of the 12 Blenheims were rendered unserviceable by bullet holes throughout the fuselage.

Robert is buried in Belfast (Milltown) Roman Catholic Cemetery

Robert is commemorated on Wall Panel 143