

AC1 Peter Bothamley Harris 537545 RAF

Peter was born on 7 March 1919 in Bury, Lancashire, the son of Gertrude Mary Gladys Trueman, nee Harris.

Peter joined the RAF in 1936 and was trained as a WOp/AG. At the outbreak of war, Peter was posted with 18 Sqn to France as part of the Air Component of the BEF.

At 07:55 on 3 January 1940 Peter, operating as the WOp/AG, departed Méharicourt, Picardie, France in Blenheim I L1410 (WV-B) for a photo reconnaissance mission over the Siegfried line. Shortly after becoming airborne they were attacked by a Belgian Hurricane, but fortunately escaped damage and were able to carry on.

A short time later, the aircraft was intercepted at a height of 7000m over Emmerich, North Rhine-Westphalia, by three Bf 109s. The pilot immediately dived to 2000m and, having been shot by the 109s, aimed for neutral Belgium whilst Peter kept firing at the attackers until he was out of ammunition. After passing the German-Belgian border the pilot ordered his crew to bale out. Only Peter was able to get out, but the aircraft was too low for the parachute to deploy fully and he was killed on impact.



At 09:15, whilst the pilot was attempting a forced landing, the aircraft collided with a power line before crashing in a meadow near the hamlet of Hagbenden in Eynatten near Raeren-lez-Eupen, Liege. Both remaining crew survived the crash and were taken POW. The victory was later claimed by Fw Goltzsche of I./JG77.

Peter's body was taken to the Liège Military Hospital, and three days later he was laid to rest in Robertmont Cemetery. He was the first RAF airman to die on Belgian soil during WW2.

Peter is buried in the Liege (Robermont) Cemetery, Liege, Belgium

Peter is commemorated on Wall Panel 177

Photo Source: findagrave