FS Peter Henry Kilsby 1215916 RAFVR



Peter was born on 13 May 1921 in Daventry, Northamptonshire, the eldest son of William Joseph Kilsby and Hannah Kilsby nee O'Neil.

Educated at Daventry Abbey School, Peter was employed as a Mechanical Fitter before he enlisted in the RAFVR in 1941. The majority of Peter's training was completed in South Africa before he returned to England in April 1943.

Peter and his crew came together at 1657 H.C.U. before posting to 218 Sqn at RAF Downham Market, Norfolk, in September 1943.

During the moon period of March 1944, "A" Flight, 218 Sqn was attached to RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire to augment the two existing base SOE squadrons. On the night of the 4/5 March, Bomber Command committed 76 aircraft to SOE sorties, dropping equipment to the Resistance fighters in Europe. These operations were vital for the success of the forthcoming invasion.

At 21:14 on 4 March 1944 Peter, operating as the Air Bomber, and the crew departed RAF Tempsford in Short Stirling III EE944 (HA-H). According to one of the surviving crew, the aircraft was hit by flak as they crossed the French Coast on the outbound leg, damaging the port outer engine. The crew continued until, on reaching Paris, it was clear that they were losing too much fuel and would be unable to complete the mission.

The crew reached RAF Tempsford in the early hours of the 5 March but were instructed by the Control Tower to go round, probably because they were approaching too high. The Pilot opened the throttles but, at 150 feet, the engine failed. Unable to prevent the port wing from dropping, at 02:17 the Stirling side-slipped into the ground, killing 5 of the 7 man crew.

Also killed : FO Bernard Denness (Navigator); PO Elwyn Hinton Edwards (Pilot); Sgt Ernest Vamplough (FE); Sgt Douglas Graham Davies (WOp/AG)

Peter is buried in Holy Cross Churchyard, Daventry , Northamptonshire.

Peter is commemorated on Wall Panel 194

Photo Source:stirlingproject.org.uk