

FS Beverley Gordon Lee 426753 RAAF

Beverley was born on 29 May 1913 in Mareeba, Queensland, Australia, the eldest son of Albert Gordon Lee and Maude Catherine Lee nee Bettenson. In March 1938 Beverley married Madge Sylvester Earl in Cairns, Queensland. They had two children. Educated at Brisbane Boys' Grammar School and Cairns State High School, Beverley was employed as a teacher when, in December 1941 he volunteered for aircrew duties in the RAAF.

Called up in July 1942, Beverley commenced pilot training in Australia; however, when his pilot training was suspended in February 1943, Beverley re-mustered as Navigator and in March 1943 was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Beverley completed his aircrew training in Canada in September 1943, with the award of his Navigator badge and embarked for the UK the following month.

Following advanced training at 6 (O) Advanced Flying Unit RAF Staverton, Gloucestershire, 12 OTU RAF Chipping Warden, Oxfordshire and 1678 HCU RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, in May 1944 Beverley was posted to 514 Sqn also at RAF Waterbeach.

On 30 June/1 July 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to bomb a road junction at Villers-Bocage, SW of Caen, Normandy, through which the tanks of two German Panzer divisions would have to pass in order to attack the advancing Allied forces in Normandy that night. A combined force of 266 aircraft, including twenty-nine 514 Sqn crews, was allocated to the op.

At 18:18 on 30 June Beverley, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster III PB178 (JI-P). This was a late departure for the crew due to a last-minute change in bomb load.

The formation was due to assemble over Luton, Bedfordshire but due to the delayed take-off Beverley's aircraft arrived late. The Rear Gunner spotted a group of Lancasters approaching from the rear and the pilot turned to formate on the group and visually identify them. The Bomb Aimer then reported another aircraft was closing in and the pilot dived to avoid a collision. Another aircraft was then spotted slightly below the first aircraft causing the Pilot to steepen his dive.

At 19:25 the cockpit area of Beverley's aircraft struck the underside of the tailfin of the second aircraft, instantly killing the Pilot and the Flight Engineer. Immediately afterwards the port inner prop cut off the starboard fin and the port outer prop removed the rear turret. The Bomb Aimer and Wireless Operator successfully baled out before the aircraft crashed at Pittsham Farm, near Midhurst, Sussex, killing the remainder of the crew.

Also Killed: PO Andrew Lorne George RCAF (AG); PO Jack Edward Kristjan Hannesson RCAF (Pilot); Sgt Kenneth Edward Arthur Fox (FE); Sgt Harry James Morgan (AG)

Beverley is buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey

Beverley is commemorated on Wall Panel 197

Beverley's younger brother, FS Desmond Maurice Lee RAAF was killed on 4 December 1944 whilst flying as a Wireless Operator on a 1652 HCU Halifax, and is also commemorated on Panel 197

Photo Source: findagrave

