

Sgt Ernest James Oakley R/190931 RCAF

Ernest was born on 17 September 1915 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, the son of James William Oakley and Annie Maria Oakley nee Fisher.

Educated at the Duke of Connaught High School and Earl Gray Technical School, Ernest was employed as a general factory worker by George Allan & Co. in Toronto when, in September 1942 he enlisted in the RCAF.

Ernest completed his aircrew training in Canada in August 1943 with the award of his Air Gunner badge and immediately embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 82 OTU RAF Ossington, Nottinghamshire, 1651 HCU and Lancaster conversion training on 1678 HCU, both at RAF Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, on 5 January 1944 Ernest was posted to 514 Sqn, also at RAF Waterbeach.



On 14/15 January 1944, Bomber Command was tasked with an operation to Brunswick, the first major raid on this town of the war. A combined force of 498 aircraft was allocated to the op, including 23 514 Sqn crews.

At 17:22 on 14 January Ernest, operating as the Mid Upper Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Waterbeach in Lancaster II LL679 (J1-J2).

The German controller tracked the bomber stream from just off the English coastline, and many German fighters entered the stream over Bremen, continuing to claim aircraft until the stream left the Dutch coast on the return leg.

Ernest's aircraft crashed in the woods, one mile East of Lauenberg, near Dassel, Lower Saxony, Germany, having broken up in mid-air. Other 514 Sqn aircraft had bombed the target at around 19:15, and the location of the loss suggests that Ernest's aircraft was attacked between 19:30 and 19:35. Hptm Erhard Peters of 9./NJG3, flying a Bf110 from Stade Airfield, claimed a Lancaster shot down at an unstated location at 19:33 and this claim is the most likely match for the loss of Ernest's aircraft. This was the crew's first op on the squadron.

Also Killed: FS Arthur Edward Dimock RCAF (AB); FS James Stanley Gallagher RNZAF (Nav); FS Lancelot Kell RNZAF (WOp/AG); FS Paul Eugene Mason RNZAF (Pilot); Sgt John William Hennis (AG); Sgt Ronald Frederick Laishley (FE)

Originally buried in Lauenberg Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in June 1947 Ernest was moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany.

Ernest is commemorated on Wall Panel 220

Photo Source: recherche-collection