

Flt. Sgt. Arthur John Stainton R/158503 RCAF

It was a cruel fate which befell a Halifax of 427 (Lion) RCAF Squadron from Leeming and a Lancaster from 622 Squadron at Mildenhall as they both returned from Bomber Command's worst raid of the war.

Both were heading back to England from the mauling the bombers had taken during the raid on Nuremburg on the night of 30/31 March, 1944 when they collided, crashing close to the border of Luxemburg and Belgium. Only one of the 15 men on board survived as they became the 89th and 90th Bomber Command losses on the night.



It was a cruel fate, too, that 27-year-old Arthur Stainton was to fly as the second pilot for his first taste of operational flying before he began flying with his own crew

Arthur joined the crew of 427 Halifax III LV932 ZL-W flown by the squadron's 29-year-old B Flight commander 'Turkey' Laird. His aircraft crashed at Rachecourt on the Luxemburg border, close to the attractive Belgian Ardennes town of Arlon. Only the rear gunner survived and evaded capture.

They had taken off from Leeming at 2200 hours one of 795 bombers heading to the southern Germany city. Ninety-five were lost, including three from 427 Squadron. 'Turkey' Laird was one both the squadron's flight commanders to be killed.

Arthur came from the city of Peterborough in Ontario and was one of five children of Arthur and Alma Stainton. He had enlisted in the RCAF in May 1942.

The others who died were the pilot S/L George Laird DFC RCAF, flight engineer P/O John Morrison DFC, navigator F/O William Soeder RCAF, bomb-aimer P/O Joseph Corbally RCAF, wireless operator Ft. Sgt. Bill Clapham and mid-upper gunner P/O Lloyd Smith RCAF. The surviving rear gunner was P/O Jim Moffat RCAF. Six of those, including Arthur Stainton, are buried in Hotton War Cemetery while the flight engineer, who died on 20 April of his injuries while baling out, is buried in Arlon Communal Cemetery.

His name can be found on panel 246.

Sources: 427 Squadron Association/Canadian Veterans/Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley/The Nuremburg Raid by Martin Middlebrook.

