

Sgt Leonard William Stephenson 401680 RAAF

Leonard was born on 22 April 1917 in Mildura, Victoria, Australia, the son of Thomas Armstrong Stephenson and Eva Muriel Edith Stephenson nee Gear. In 1941 he married Alice Jean Richards in Lindfield, Sydney, New South Wales.

Educated at Melbourne and Mildura High School, Leonard was employed as a winemaker by Mildura Winery when, in June 1940, he volunteered for service in the RAAF.

Called up in March 1941, following basic training in Australia, in June 1941 Leonard was sent to Canada to train under the Empire Air Training Scheme where, in January 1942 he was awarded his Air Gunner badge, and he immediately embarked for the UK.



Completing training at No 1 Signals School, RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, in June 1942 Leonard was awarded his WOp/AG badge, followed by advanced training at 12 OTU RAF Benson, Oxfordshire where he converted to multi crew/multi engine ops on the Wellington. In August 1942 Leonard was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk.

On 16/17 September 1942 Bomber Command was tasked with an attack on the industrial and transport complex in Essen, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, home to the Krupps Steel Works. A combined force of 369 aircraft, including twelve 101 Sqn crews, were allocated to the op.

At 20:30 on 16 September Leonard and the crew departed RAF Stradishall in Wellington III BJ897 (SR-).

On approach to the target area, Leonard's aircraft was hit by flak and crashed, killing all on board.

Also Killed: PO Clifford Harry Grant (Pilot); PO Ronald Horace Hill (WOp/AG); FS Robert Kitchen Griffith RCAF (AG); Sgt Alan Watson Firth (Obs)

Originally buried in Dusseldorf North Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, in November 1946 Leonard was moved to the Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Leonard is commemorated on Wall Panel 247

Photo Source: naa.gov.au