Sgt Leslie Robert Ward 564477 RAF



Leslie Robert Ward was born in 1912 in Edmonton, Middlesex, the son of Percy Walter Ward and Eleanor May Ward nee Beard. He was married to May Ward nee Sneddon in Hendon, Middlesex in 1934 and his wife was pregnant when he was killed. His son was born the following year.

When war was declared on the 3 September 1939, Leslie was an Observer on 107 Sqn based at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk. The Sqn was tasked with flying the first bombing operation of the war the following day.

A reconnaissance flight on the day war was declared had observed the German "pocket" battleship Admiral Scheer, cruiser Emden, and other warships anchored at the German naval base at the entrance to Wilhelmshaven on Germany's north coast. Orders were issued by 2 Group Bomber Command that fifteen Blenheims were to attack the warships, five from each of 107, 110, and 139 Sqns.

The morning of 4 September 1939 was cloudy over southern England with heavily overcast skies and a strong NW wind. Together with four crews from 107 Sqn, Leslie and the crew took off from RAF Wattisham at 1600 hours in Blenheim IV N6188. Poor weather conditions over the Channel forced the aircraft to fly at very low level and the five aircraft from 139 Sqn jettisoned their bombs and turned back after failing to locate the warships; however, 110 squadron aircraft found the targets.

The Blenheims hit the Admiral Scheer with at least four bombs, although none exploded, probably because of the extremely low altitude of the attack and the battleship's thick armour plating. When the 110 Sqn Blenheims headed home, the 107 Sqn aircraft prepared to attack. Having lost the element of surprise, the flak was now heavy and well directed. Leslie's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire from the Admiral Hipper and crashed into the Harbour, killing all on board. Three of the four Squadron aircraft were shot down during their low level bombing runs.

Also killed were : PO William Joseph Murphy (Pilot), AC2 Edward Pateman (WOp/AG)

Leslie was buried at the time on Heligoland Island, Germany but his grave is now lost. He is commemorated on the Hamburg Cemetery Special Memorial, Hamburg, Germany.

Leslie is commemorated on Wall Panel 260

Photo source: Daily Mirror