

“Lest we forget”



Today **77 years ago**, in the night of *4th-5th of May 1943* the battle intensifies of the 5-month long Bomber Command campaign the **“Battle of the Ruhr”**, the campaign of strategic bombing against the Ruhr area.

The **466 RAAF Squadron Wellington HE530 HD-** took off from *Leconfield* airfield, for their fatal mission. After a 3-day break in major operations, Bomber Command dispatched 596 aircraft for the first major attack on **Dortmund.**

The force comprised: 205 Lancasters, 141 Halifaxes, 110 Wellingtons, 80 Stirlings and 60 Mosquitos. 31 aircraft were lost, 5.2 % of the force, a further 7 aircraft crashed in bad weather at the bomber bases.

The initial Pathfinder marking dropping yellow Target Indicators enroute and green Target Indicators at the aiming point. This was mostly accurate but some of the backing-up marking fell short, being corrected by red Target Indicators dropped by Lancaster and Halifax bombers. A decoy fire site also attracted many bombs, but half of the force did bomb within 3 miles of the aiming point and severe damage was caused in central and northern parts of **Dortmund**. Damage was extensive, with 28 factories burned out and 45 acres of the industrial area levelled. Dortmund Union and Hoesch Steelworks were very severely damaged. The Germans called this *'Der Grossangriff'*.

The **Wellington HE530 HD-** was one of Wellingtons who were dispatched for the attack on **Dortmund**. On its route to their target **Dortmund** the Australian pilot **Sergeant Leonard F. 'Jessie' James** and his crew, flying the **Wellington HE530 HD-** were attacked at 18,000 feet near the **German** border by the German night fighter pilot Staffelfkapitän *Lothar Linke* flying a Bf110 G-4 night fighter of the 12./NJG 1, the **Wellington HE530 HD-** was one of the four RAF bombers *Lohar Linke* shot down that night.

The **Wellington HE530 HD-** crashed at *01.10 Hrs.* between **Meppel** and **De Wijk** on the land of *Mr. J. Eelkman Rooda* in **The Netherlands** after a violent fire in the bomb bay, the rear of the aircraft, the loss of the starboard engine and the controls were jammed of the Wellington caused by the attack of the German night fighter. the Australian pilot **Sergeant Leonard F. 'Jessie' James** did give a bale order at 10,000 ft.

Four of the five crewmembers could bail out in time and were taken Prisoner of War (POW) by the German army soon after. Unfortunately, the rear gunner **Sergeant Francis Graham Latham** was unable to bail out in time and didn't survived the attack.



Let's keep the remembrance alive of what **RAAF** pilot **Leonard F. James**, **RAAF** navigator **Ronald Ernest Dolby**, **RAAF** bomb aimer **Roger L. Lutton**, **RAF** Wireless Operator Air Gunner **John Baxter** and **RAAF** rear gunner **Francis Graham Latham** (*2nd from left on the picture*) did for our freedom.

Francis Graham Latham is buried in the Commonwealth War Graves section on the cemetery in **De Wijk** in **The Netherlands**.

Rest in Peace.