

“Lest we forget”

This month **74 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 TI enroute and green TI at the aiming point. This was mostly accurate but some of the backing-up marking fell short, being corrected by red TI 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 Staffelkapitän 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 *00.58 Hrs.* close to **De Wijk** in the **Netherlands** after a violent fire in the bomb bay and the loss of the starboard engine of the Wellington caused by the attack of the German night fighter. 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 of the Wellington **HE530 HD-** is buried on the cemetery in **De Wijk** in the **Netherlands**.

Rest in Peace.

Note:

This tribute is for very unfortunately and very brave man who lost his life far from home and is buried in a lonely war grave in the Netherlands.....