

LOSS OF SGT PETER LEES 23/11/43

LETTER WRITTEN BY HIS CREW CAPTAIN - JOHN CHATTERTON  
TO PETER LEES PARENTS AFTER HIS LOSS.



To John Chatterton  
officer ~~WINGFIELD~~  
ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION,  
DUNHOLME LODGE,  
LINCOLN

1st Dec 1943

Dear Mr & Mrs Lees

This is a rather difficult task for me, because I know how useless and inadequate words are on such an occasion; but as captain of the crew the other boys wish me to tell you how keenly we ourselves have felt this blow and we send you our deepest sympathy.

We have known Peter since the beginning of June and really appreciated his presence in our crew. With his long experience in the ground staff he was always master of technical difficulties in the aircraft and several times helped different members of the crew at their own jobs. Apart from this immense practical knowledge he always knew

the ins and outs of service life and this helped us along considerably in our everyday life.

We all lived together for a long time (I was a sergeant until a few weeks ago) and you can't eat, sleep, and especially fly on desperate ventures, with chaps for that length of time without growing to know their ways and relying on them in times of danger and difficulty.

Peter was O1 in this respect and I shall always remember the calm, cool, way in which he gave me bombing directions on the second attack on Berlin (22<sup>nd</sup> Nov) although we were in the heart of the fiercest flak I've ever experienced.

To rest day we were on "standby crew" which meant that we had to be ready to supply any crewmembers to replace any one on the operation who went sick at the last minute. Unfortunately a pilot Po Buckel had to replace his bomb aimer at the last minute and Peter had to go on the operation with him.



ROYAL AIR FORCE STATION,  
DUNHOLME LOOSE,  
LINCOLN.

That was ~~was~~ Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov  
and their aircraft did not return. We  
waited hopefully next day for news but  
none came; and when the Adjutant of  
the squadron was detailing officers to  
pack up the kit of the missing man, I  
volunteered to do it so that Peter's  
stuff could have decent attention.

Normally all the personal kit is packed  
up and taken charge of, by the RAF  
authorities but I took most of Peter's  
private belongings and packed them in  
his case, which along with his bike  
I have kept for 9 days as were his  
instructions in a letter that he wrote  
before he went.

He also left this letter to be posted to  
you after 9 days.

I put the case and bicycle on railway  
yesterday so you should get it very soon.

Please do not give up hope - because out of every 10 aircraft that are missing 9 of the crews are either making their way back through occupied territory, or in prison camps safe until the end of the war. Personally, I have every hope and belief that in a month or two we shall be hearing that Peter has successfully escaped from France or Belgium; he always took with him plenty of useful articles to help him in such a case.

So don't give up hope dear people - our crew never will.

The navigator - Jack Leyland  
wireless operator - Jock Michie  
engineer - Ken Watts  
rear gunner - Wee Jock Davidson  
mid upper gunner - Bill Champion  
and myself.

all send our sympathy and best wishes.

John Chatterton