



t's the dead of night in the winter of January 1944, and the skies above Britain are swarming. Daring pilots of the elite Bomber Command air force – drawn from Canada, Australia and Great Britain – are bound for Berlin to stage a raid the Allies hope will bring Nazi Germany to its knees. Planes fly under darkness until they reach the German mainland, where the sky lights up like a highway.

At 12.19am on January 29, a Lancaster heavy bomber with the serial number JB412 roared down the runway at Wyton, near the medieval township of St Ives in Cambridgeshire, to take its place in the formation flight in the skies above blacked-out Britain. The crew of seven were all Britons except for one Australian, flight sergeant John Tree. With the rest of 83 Squadron, their mission was to head for a way-point over occupied southern Denmark and

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