

## **Sgt. Philip William Alderton 545761 RAF**



**The crew of JB658 pictured in the autumn of 1943 at Elsham**

Philip Alderton was the 24-year-old flight engineer of a 103 Squadron Lancaster shot down by flak as it approached Berlin on the night of 16 December 1943.

His aircraft, Lancaster III JB658 (the squadron code is not listed in 103's records), was one of five Lancasters lost in the Berlin area, four of them in mid-air collisions. His aircraft was hit by flak and crashed on open land at Doberitz, a military training ground which had been used for the Modern Pentathlon at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. All seven crew members were buried in the area but later the graves of only three could be located and their bodies reinterred in the Berlin War Cemetery.

The raid itself went down in RAF history as 'Black Thursday' with 25 Lancasters lost in action and another 20 in crashes when they returned to fog-shrouded airfields.

He and his crew had left RAF Elsham Wolds at 1630 hours in an aircraft which was only just over a month old. It was their 22<sup>nd</sup> operation after joining the squadron in July. Their operations included Hamburg, Nuremberg, Leipzig, Milan and Stuttgart and this would have been their seventh trip to Berlin.

Philip came from Dagenham in Essex where he lived with his wife Iris. He was the son of William and Winifred Alderton and is remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Those killed with him were the pilot WO Hugh Campbell RAAF, navigator Flt. Sgt. Matthew Hartley, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Denis McGrath, wireless operator Sgt. Tom Moore, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Charles O'Neill and the rear gunner Sgt. Billy Chambers.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 001.

Photographic source: Shaun Turner