

Flt. Lt. Eric Sidney Allen 179320 RAFVR

Eric Allen was the pilot of one of the very few Lancasters lost by Bomber Command during the controversial attack on Dresden in February 1945.

He and his crew died just 12 minutes into the raid, their Lancaster colliding with another over Lincolnshire, resulting in all 14 men on both aircraft being killed, the first deaths of more than 19,000 as a result of this raid.

Eric and his crew had left North Killingholme at 2139 hours on the night of 13 February 1945, just one of 799 Lancasters sent to Dresden as part of the RAF's Operation Thunderclap. Twelve minutes later their 550 Squadron aircraft, NF932 BQ-B2, was still gaining height when it was involved in a collision with another Lancaster from 300 Squadron at Faldingworth, over the Lincolnshire market town of Wragby. These were two of only six aircraft lost on the night.



Both bombers crashed and exploded soon afterwards, the 550 Squadron aircraft – which bore the name *'Macnamara's'* on the fuselage – coming down in a field at Stott's Farm, Apley, between Wragby and Bardney. Only two bodies were later identified and the other five crew members, including Eric, are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Eric was part of an experienced 550 Squadron crew. They had arrived at North Killingholme the previous September and were well into their tour of operations. He was 22 and the son of Sidney and Alice Allen of East Ham in London.

The others who died were the flight engineer Flt. Sgt. Ted Smith – at 42, one of the oldest Bomber Command casualties of the war, navigator Flt. Sgt. Alex Dennison, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. George Maginley, wireless operator P/O John Byrne (who was flying as a replacement for the crew's regular wireless operator), mid-upper gunner Sgt. Reginald Crump and rear gunner F/O James Murray-Shirreff.

His name can be found on panel 002.

Sources: 550 Squadron Association/Five Fifty: The story of a Lancaster squadron.

