

Sgt. Francis Henry Allen 1332207
RAFVR

Francis was a young rear gunner in a Lancaster which crashed in the sea off Plymouth after hitting a cable from a barrage balloon attached to a ship moored off the breakwater.



His aircraft, Lancaster III ED450 EA-G of 49 Squadron, was returning from a raid on Lorient on the night of 13/14 February 1943. According to reports, the Lancaster had been damaged during the raid and had headed back across the Channel planning to land at the fighter airfield at RAF Harrowbeer, nine miles from Plymouth.

However, the low-flying Lancaster hit the thick steel cable and broke up and crashed in the sea, just off the breakwater at the entrance to Plymouth harbour. No trace of the seven men on board was ever found. Wreckage from the crash (pictured here) was later discovered by divers and some pieces were recovered in 1975.



The aircraft had taken off from RAF Fiskerton at 1859 hours to join a force of 466 bombers which took part in the heaviest attack on the French port during the war. ED450 was one of seven that failed to return.

Francis was 21 and came from Norwich. He was the son of Percy and Edith Allen. The others who died were the pilot Flt. Sgt. Gifford Miller, flight engineer Sgt. Stanley Young, navigator F/O Ron Allin, bomb-aimer Sgt. Bill Noble, wireless operator Sgt. Ken Hands and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Bill Halsall. All are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

His name can be found on panel 002.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/The Ships Project/Plymouth Herald.