

Flt. Sgt. Hector Ferdinand Altus
416819 RAAF

Hector Altus was a farmer in South Australia when he decided to join the Royal Australian Air Force in October 1941.

He trained as an air gunner and was eventually posted to England where he joined a Lancaster squadron in Lincolnshire only to be killed flying as a mid-upper gunner along with his crew during a raid on Berlin on their 17th operation.



His two-month-old 9 Squadron aircraft, DV284 WS-G, was hit by flak after leaving the target area and crashed at Weissenfels, south-west of Leipzig, on the return leg of the raid of 440 Lancasters on the night of 18 November 1943. Their aircraft had taken off from Bardney at 1725 hours and is believed to have crashed almost four and a half hours later.

There were no survivors and he and his crew, plus a second pilot who had joined for operational experience, were buried locally before being reinterred after the war in the Berlin War Cemetery. Hector's crew had joined 9 Squadron in the late summer and had been involved in many of the major operations over Germany in the intervening period.

Hector farmed in Wilkawatt, Southern Mallee, an area between South Australia and New South Wales, and had enlisted on 11 October 1941 in the small town of Lameroo. He was the 33-year-old son of Maria Altus and was the ninth of 35 Australians killed on operations while serving in 9 Squadron.

The others who died were the pilot P/O Gordon Graham RCAF, second pilot P/O John McComb, flight engineer Sgt. Walter Statham, navigator F/O Duncan MacDonald, bomb-aimer Sgt. Ronald Innes, wireless operator Sgt. Arthur Williamson and rear gunner Sgt. Kenneth Mellor.

His name can be found on panel 002.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/Australian Virtual War Memorial/9 Squadron ORBs/The Berlin Raids by Martin Middlebrook.