

Sgt. Robert Hasting Ancell
1399793 RAFVR

Robert Ancell was a 39-year-old who travelled thousands of miles to join the RAF only to be killed on his first operation.



Robert had grown up in the British community in Argentina, which had been established in the 19th Century. He lived in Lomas de Zamora in Buenos Aires where he was born, educated and worked before volunteering to fight despite being well over the age for air crew.

In fact, he was among the oldest crew members of 49 Squadron when he and his crew joined the unit at RAF Fiskerton in the late spring of 1943, serving as a rear gunner. Their first operation came on the night of 23/24 May when Bomber Command sent a massive force of 826 aircraft to Dortmund in one of the heaviest raids in what became as the Battle of the Ruhr.

He and his crew were flying in Lancaster ED813 EA-W which was shot down over Essen. Three of the crew, the pilot F/O I Thomas RCAF, flight engineer P/O J Grant and navigator F/O I Duthie, all escaped by parachute but the other four, including Robert, were killed.

Robert was the son of Robert and Hilda Ancell and was educated at St Andrews Scots School in Buenos Aires. He is today remembered on the roll of honour of the English Social Club, a stained-glass window in the chapel of Lavellol Cemetery and in the St John the Baptist Anglican Church in the Argentinian capital.

The others who died with him were the bomb-aimer P/O Tom Lewis RAFVR, wireless operator P/O Robert Christy RAFVR and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Gwilyn Evans RAFVR. All four were initially buried in Dusseldorf but now rest in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery.

His name can be found on panel 002.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command Losses 1943 by Bill Chorley/Volunteers from Argentina/British Settlers in Argentina/cementeriobritanico.org