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On the evening of 5 December 1943 most of Bomber Command's squadrons were stood down because of adverse conditions, but this allowed additional time for training for bomber crews.

At RAF Ludford Magna Lancaster III DV270 SR-E, and its 101 Squadron crew, left the airfield shortly before 1700 hours for a night navigation exercise. Three and a half hours later the aircraft returned but, as it emerged from low cloud over the Lincolnshire Wolds, it struck high trees close to Binbrook Hall and then crashed into the grounds of nearby Scallows Hall, near Wold Newton, bursting into flames as it did so. The aircraft missed the hall itself by just 30 feet and local residents reacted quickly in an attempt to save the crew.

Among them were farm worker Sidney Smith and, later, the squire of Scallows Hall William Wright who had just returned from Evensong. The Wold Newton fire service turned out but it was too late to save the men on board the aircraft. Later, a stone cross was erected at the site of the crash in Scallows Wood and is pictured here in 1984 with Sidney Smith, then 90 years old.

The Lancaster's bomb-aimer was John Anderson, who was an acclaimed pre-war athlete and had represented Great Britain at international level, notably at a meeting with France at the White City in July 1935. He was 30 years old and came from the Middlesbrough suburb of Aklam. He was the son of Arthur and Florence Anderson and is buried in Louth Cemetery in Lincolnshire.

Killed with him were the pilot F/O Francis Oliver, flight engineer Sgt. Albert Wells, navigator F/O William Reid, wireless operator Sgt. Raymond Spierling, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Stanley Burton and rear gunner Sgt. Robert Bradbury.

Francis Oliver's name can be found on IBCC panel 002.

Photograph: David Tilley, Grimsby Evening Telegraph

