

**F/O Charles Ashcroft
151325 RAFVR**

Charles Ashcroft was the bomb-aimer in a 576 Squadron Lancaster shot down during a mining operation over Denmark in May 1944.

He was part of an experienced crew under the command of F/L Ernie Presland DFC, who was on the 17th operation of his second tour.



Their task on the night of 15/16 May was to drop mines in the Great Belt off the eastern coast of Denmark. They were flying on board Lancaster I ME576 UL-X2 which was intercepted by a night fighter in the target area and, in the ensuing battle, part of the tail broke away and the bomber came down in the hamlet of Gamtofte, east of the small coastal town of Assens.

The bomber crashed into the gardens of some farmworkers' houses, starting a fire. One of the mines then exploded, wrecking other nearby houses and damaging the local church. The Lancaster had been carrying a crew of eight and all died and were later buried in Assens New Cemetery. A second Lancaster from 576's sister squadron at Elsham, 103, was lost on the same operation.

Charles, whom was 27, left a wife, Stella, who lived in Rusholme, Manchester. He was the son of Mancunians John and Alice Ashcroft.

The others killed with him were pilot F/L Ernest Presland DFC RAFVR, second pilot P/O Albert Slade RAFVR, flight engineer Sgt. Alan Knapp RAFVR, navigator F/O Mark Abramson RCAF, wireless operator Sgt. Benjamin Hudson RAFVR, mid-upper gunner Flt.Sgt. Robert Leatham RAFVR and rear gunner Sgt. Arthur Wright DFM RAFVR.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 003.

Illustration source: Elsham Wolds Association.

