

Sgt. William Ashurst 1439160 RAFVR

William Ashurst was a Yorkshire-born Lancaster pilot who was killed along with five of his crew when their bomber was shot down in flames over Denmark.

He and his young crew had taken off from RAF Kelstern at 1725 hours on the evening of 15 February 1944, one of 15 Lancasters from the squadron to join the biggest-yet attack involving 819 bombers on Berlin. Two and a half hours later, his aircraft, Lancaster I R5702 CF-Y, was attacked by a night-fighter over Denmark and caught fire. The Lancaster is believed to have jettisoned its bombs but exploded at low level. Only the bomb-aimer, F/O H Proskurniak RCAF, survived, blown out of the aircraft in the explosion.



R5702 was a veteran Lancaster which had already seen service with 106, 50, 460 and 100 Squadrons (*pictured here during its time with 50 Squadron*) and crashed near the small Danish village of Fjelstrup. A small monument now marks the spot where the Lancaster crashed (*pictured*). Every year on the anniversary of the crash, local schoolchildren leave flowers to remember the crew of R5702. One note attached read: 'They gave their lives; we won out liberty.'



William came from the Thornhill area of Rotherham and was the 21-year-old son of William and Margaret Ashurst. He is buried along with five of his crew in Aabenraa Cemetery in Denmark.

The others who died were the flight engineer Sgt. Harold Reardon RAFVR, navigator WO Thomas Edwards RAFVR, wireless operator Sgt. Robert Campbell RAFVR, mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. Stanley Downes RAFVR and rear gunner Sgt. Cecil Lewis RAFVR.

His name can be found on panel 003.

Sources: Airwar Over Denmark/New Zealand Bomber Command Association via Facebook/625 Squadron records.