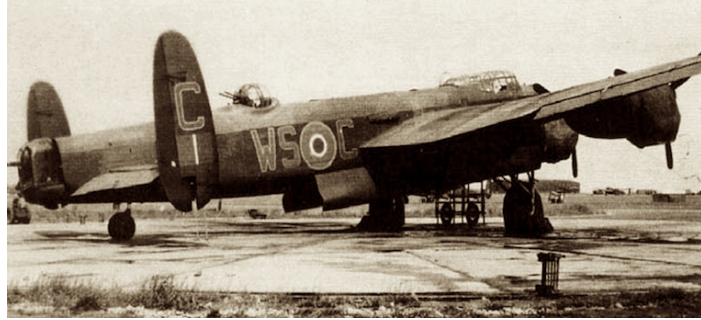


**Sgt. Ronald James
Atkin 1451056 RAFVR**

Lincolnshire farmer-turned wireless operator Ronald Atkin was on board of one of 42 Lancasters lost during two raids early in July 1944 at a large V1 storage depot in caves and tunnels near Paris.



He was part of the crew of Lancaster LL785 WS-F, of 9 Squadron, which was one of 13 aircraft lost in the first attack in the early hours of 5 July 1944 on the depot at St Leu d'Esserant, the well-known cave and tunnels formerly used for growing mushrooms. The storage was being used to deliver flying bombs on sites across the Pas de Calais area at what was the height of the 'battle of the buzz bombs' over London.

His aircraft (which sported the name 'Fanlight Fanny') took off from Bardney at 2318 hours on the night of 4 July, part of a force of 231 bombers. His aircraft had just dropped its load of 1,000lb bombs when it was attacked by a night fighter, crashing in a field near the hamlet of Le Tillet, killing the crew plus a second pilot. The squadron was to lose three more aircraft on the same target three nights later.

Ronald was the 22-year-old son of Edwin and Annie Atkin of Skegness. Born in Friskney, near Boston, he and his brother farmed at Hanby Hall, near Alford, before both joined the forces in 1941. His brother went to the Army and later served in Italy, whilst Ronald joined the Royal Air Force. He is now buried in Marissel French National Cemetery, near Beauvais

The others who died were the pilot P/O Dennis Ryan, second pilot Flt. Lt. James Patrick RNZAF, flight engineer Sgt. Harold Eveleigh, navigator Flt. Sgt. Ian Buchanan, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Victor Grayson, mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. Stanley Marshall and rear gunner Sgt. James Theaker.

His name can be found on panel 004.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley/Lincolnshire Standard In the Past.