

Sgt. Henry George Backway 1586864 RAFVR



It was the airmen's oldest foe, the weather, which was responsible for the deaths of six young men from RAF Elsham Wolds on a bitterly cold afternoon in January 1945.

By that stage of the war aircraft technology had increased significantly since the early days of the war but the weather could, and still did, bite back.

Henry Backway, known to everyone as 'Harry', was the bomb-aimer of Lancaster III, ND861 PM-H, of 103 Squadron which took off from Elsham at 1424 on the afternoon of 4 January on what should have been a routine training flight.

He and his regular crew, with the exception of the mid-upper gunner who missed the flight, were killed 16 minutes later when the Lancaster was caught in a severe blizzard and crashed into the River Humber, close to Hull. There were no survivors and no trace of the aircraft or crew, who had completed several bombing operations together, was ever found.

Harry was born in the Scilly Islands before his parents moved to Plymouth. He had just returned from leave before he was killed, attending a family Christmas gathering in the Scillies. He was 21 and the son of Henry and Violet Backway.

Killed with him were the pilot P/O Christopher Weight, flight engineer P/O George Widdicombe, navigator F/O Maurice Pickersgill, wireless operator Sgt. Clifford Hillier and rear gunner Sgt. Cyril Lloyd.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 004

Photographic source: Elsham Wolds Association