

**WO Ralph  
McPherson  
Bairnsfather  
417440 RAAF**



Bomb-aimer Ralph Bairnsfather was one of three Australians and an Irishman who died when their

Lancaster was shot down in March 1945.

They were the four casualties in a 49 Squadron aircraft shot down by a Ju88 fighter during a raid on an oil facility at Harburg, on the outskirts of Hamburg, on the night of 7 March. After the attack his Lancaster, PB537 EA-X, burst into flames and the pilot ordered the crew to bale out, three doing so successfully before the bomber crashed near Sandbostel.

The crew, who were on their 13<sup>th</sup> operation, had taken off from Fulbeck at 1745 hours as part of a force of 234 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes from 5 Group which badly damaged the plant and an adjoining rubber factory. Fourteen Lancasters were lost, including four from 189 Squadron which shared Fulbeck with 49.

Ralph (*pictured fourth from the left on this crew photograph*) came from the inner suburb of Wayville, in Adelaide, and was the 23-year-old son of John and Florence Bairnsfather. He was born in Penong, South Australia, before his family moved to Adelaide and had joined the RAAF in May 1942.

The others who died were the pilot F/O Roussel Stark RAAF, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Angus Lovett RAAF and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Robert Gilbert. The survivors were the flight engineer Sgt. Fred Brennan RAAF, navigator WO John Yeoman RAAF and rear gunner Sgt. Joe Dixon.

His name can be found on panel 004.

Forces: 49 Squadron Association/[aviationmuseumwa.org](http://aviationmuseumwa.org)/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.