

**F/O Desmond Arthur John
William Ball DFM 171305
RAFVR**



Desmond Ball was an experienced second navigator who was killed when his Lancaster was shot down over Holland.

He was flying in a hand-picked Pathfinder operation which was to breach the Mittelland section of the Dortmund-Ems canal on the night of 21/22 February 1945. Desmond was in a crew assembled by the commanding officer of RAF Coningsby, Group Captain Anthony Evans-Evans DFC, made up of personnel from at least three 5 Group squadrons.

After taking off from Coningsby at 17.07 hours his Lancaster, NE165 OL-Y of 83 Squadron, was shot down by a night fighter in an attack close to the Dutch border crashing in Gertruda Farm in the village of De Rips, near Helmond. Only the rear gunner in the eight-man crew survived and all seven men who died are buried in Mierlo War Cemetery.

His DFM followed the completion of his tour with 207 Squadron at Langar before he later moved to Coningsby to join 83 Squadron. He lived in Edmonton in north London with his wife Louisa and was the 24-year-old son of John and Alice Ball.

The others who died on NE165 were G/C Evans-Evans, flight engineer F/O Sid Marsh, navigator S/L William Wishart DFC & Bar, bomb-aimer F/L William Fitch DFM GM, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Richard Takle and mid-upper gunner F/O Clifford Coombes. The survivor was rear gunner P/O E Hansen RAAF.

His name can be found on panel 005.

Sources: RAF Commands/Bomber Command Losses 1945 by Bill Chorley/Facebook.