

Squadron Leader Kenneth George Bickers DFC 122345 RAFVR

Ken Bickers is believed to have been the youngest flight commander killed in Bomber Command operations in 1944.

He was just 21 and flying on the fourth operation of his second tour when he died piloting a No. 103 Squadron Lancaster, shot down during the final major RAF raid on Berlin.

Ken came from Portsmouth and was one of five children raised in the Bitterne Park area of the city by James and Emily Bickers. After leaving Bitterne Park Boys' School he joined the Royal Artillery at the age of 17 and manned searchlights during the Portsmouth blitz. He later opted to join the RAF, was accepted for pilot training in the United States.



He arrived back in England in time to join 103 Squadron in February 1943, completing a tour of operations in just three months. He was awarded an immediate Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions during a raid on Duisburg. After a spell out with a training unit, he rejoined 103 Squadron at RAF Elsham Wolds with the rank of squadron leader.

Ken was on his fourth operation, his 34th in total, on the night of 24 March 1944. He was flying ME665 PM-C, a brand-new Lancaster Mark I, as part of a force of 811 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Mosquitoes in the final raid in what had become known as the Battle of Berlin. His aircraft was shot down shortly after completing its bomb run, crashing and exploding at Luckenwalde, near Berlin. Only three bodies were ever found; the others, including Ken Bickers, are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (panel 200). A memorial to the crew now stands on the site of the crash in Luckenwalde.



During his period away from operations Ken had become engaged to a girl from Leicester and they were planning to marry on 5 April, just 12 days after he was killed.

Those who died with him were the flight engineer Flt. Sgt. Joe Wadsworth, navigator F/O Cyril Plummer DFC, bomb-aimer F/O Peter Bell, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Len Comer, mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. Dennis Cannon and rear gunner F/O Norman Tombs.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 009. Photographic source: 103 Squadron Association and Bickers family.