

Sergeant Eric Bland 1051834 RAFVR



Eric Bland was the son of John and Annie Evelyn Bland, from Halifax, Yorkshire. He had one brother and two sisters, and was employed as a waterworks draughtsman prior to enlisting.

He was an air gunner serving with No. 455 (Australian) Squadron, based at RAF Swinderby, Lincolnshire. The Squadron had the distinction of being “the first Australian squadron to bomb Germany”.

Handley Page Hampden I AE308 UB-L took off from Swinderby airfield at 1205 hours, on 6 February 1942, on a mine-laying operation off the Frisian Islands. It was one of 33 Hampdens and 13 Avro Manchesters. Four of eight Swinderby aircraft turned back due to insufficient cloud cover, the remainder pressed on and completed the operation. AE308 was shot down at 1510 hours, 70 miles west of Terschelling, by Luftwaffe night fighter ace Hauptmann Helmut Lent, his 30th victory.

Eric’s body was never recovered, and he is commemorated at the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey (Panel 78). He was just 19 years old.

His crewmates lost with him were:

Sgt. Robert Anthony Billington RAFVR
Sgt. Bernard Edward Brown RAFVR
Sgt. David Michael Pickersgill RAFVR

Eric is commemorated on IBCC Panel 10

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