

Sergeant Jack Arthur William Bodsworth 1853136 RAFVR



Jack Bodsworth was a 27-year-old rear gunner killed when his Lancaster was attacked by a night fighter during Bomber Command's costly attack on a Germany military depot at Mailly-le-Camp in May 1944.

He died along with the mid-upper gunner, Sgt. John Cockburn, when their No. 166 Squadron Lancaster (LL743 AS-U) was raked by cannon fire after completing its bomb run in the early hours of 4 May. The aircraft had already been badly damaged by flak while spending 45 minutes orbiting the target area waiting for instructions to bomb, which had been delayed by severe communication problems caused by radio interference.

LL743 had bombed on three engines and had just turned for home when it was attacked. A serious fire started in the rear of the aircraft after cannon strikes which probably killed both gunners. A fire then started in the forward area of the stricken Lancaster and the other five crew members managed to bale out.

The wireless operator Sgt. W T Violet climbed out through the escape hatch near the astrodome, a scene captured in this dramatic painting by Gary Eason of LL743. He later evaded capture and joined French Resistance, training fighters in the use of radio equipment and eventually being awarded the *Légion d'honneur*.

The Lancaster, which had left RAF Kirmington at 2200 hours, was one of 24 from the squadron which took part in the raid and one of three from 166 Squadron which were lost.

Jack came from Bromley in Kent and was the son of Arthur and Alice Bodsworth. He is buried along with a 101 Squadron crew lost on the same raid in the churchyard at Voué (*Grave 1, pictured*), close to where his Lancaster crashed. He and his crew had been with 166 Squadron since early March 1944.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 010.

Sources: 166 Squadron Association/On Wings of War by Jim Wright/Aviation Safety Network/France-crashes 39-45

