

Sgt William Frederick Donald Bolt 1587851 RAFVR

William was born on 1 February 1922 in Totnes, Devon, the son of William James Bolt and Elsie May Bolt nee Eames.

Employed as a gas fitter, William volunteered for aircrew duties with the RAF and trained as an Air Gunner. Crewing up at 1656 HCU, RAF Lindholme, Yorkshire, in October 1943 William was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.

On the night of 19/20 February 1944, a major offensive to Leipzig was planned by Bomber Command with 823 aircraft allocated to the op. Twenty-one 101 Sqn Lancasters participated in the raid. Leipzig, the 5th biggest German City with 12 aircraft factories, 8 machine and weapons factories and other war-related industries, including the production of textiles and synthetic oil. Leipzig was also one of the most important railway hubs of Central Germany.

At 23:38 William, operating as the Mid Upper Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster III DV267 (SR-K), tasked with ABC duties.



Whilst outbound, near Oldenburg, William's aircraft was intercepted from beneath by Ofw Rudolf Frank of the 3./NJG 3 from Vechta airfield, Germany, flying a Bf 110 fitted with upward firing guns.

With the fuel tank in the port wing on fire, the fire extinguishers were used and the propeller was stopped and 'feathered'. The crew jettisoned their bombs and headed home. Although the port wing engine had stopped burning, the fire had taken hold in the wing tanks between the port side engines. When the aircraft began to disintegrate, at 04:43 the captain ordered the crew to bale out. The rear escape door was jammed, and after using the axe to open the rear door, William parachuted out. William did not survive the jump - either his parachute failed to open, or he may have hit the falling aircraft. This was his 23rd op. Five crew members survived and became POWs.

The raid proved to be the heaviest loss from Bomber Command, with 78 aircraft failing to return.

Also Killed: PO John Laurens DFM (Pilot); PO Cassian Henry Waight (WOp/AG)

William is buried in the Leek (Tolbert) Protestant Cemetery, Groningen, Netherlands

William is commemorated on Wall Panel 10

Photo Source: www.robertchristie.co.uk