

Flight Sergeant Kenneth Bolton 989205 RAFVR

Ken Bolton was a wireless operator who was killed along with his crew when their Lancaster was shot down in the sea during the first attack of Bomber Command's Battle of the Ruhr in 1943.



His No. 49 Squadron Lancaster (ED431 EA-M) was one of 442 bombers sent to attack Essen on the night of 5/6 March 1943, 56 of them turning back because of technical problems.

The battle was to go on until the end of July, badly damaging cities and towns in the Ruhr and costing Bomber Command 872 aircraft and over 6,000 aircrew.

Ken and his crew were on their 18th operation with 49 Squadron and had taken off from RAF Fiskerton at 1913 hours, one of eight Lancasters sent by the squadron. His aircraft was intercepted and shot down into the sea 12 miles from the island of Texel, off the Dutch coast. The Lancaster was claimed by two night-fighters operating in the area; there were no survivors. All seven lost on ED431 are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (panel 135).

The others who died were the pilot Sgt. James Thomas DFM, flight engineer Sgt. David Fairlie, navigator Flt. Sgt. John Prior DFM, bomb-aimer WO2 Alexander Horne DFM RCAF, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Douglas Bratt and rear gunner Sgt. Frank Vines.

Ken's name can be found on IBCC panel 010.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook/Air Battle of the Ruhr by Alan Cooper.