

P/O Thomas Owen Bolton 190987 RAFVR

Tom Bolton was the navigator in an experienced and very popular crew lost in a devastating Bomber Command raid on one of Germany's last remaining synthetic oil plants.

He and his 49 Squadron crew were on their 26th operation when their Lancaster ME353 (EA-Q) was shot down during the attack on the Pölitz refinery close to the Polish-German border on the night of 8/9 February 1945. Only the mid-upper gunner, Flt. Sgt. Ernie Ellis, survived to become a PoW for a few months.

His aircraft had taken off from Fulbeck at 1649 hours, part of a force of 475 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes which destroyed the refinery. Twelve Lancasters were lost.

49 Squadron's historian recalls the crew as 'very popular characters' on the Lincolnshire airfield and said everyone at Fulbeck regarded it as 'a very sad loss, which everyone deeply felt'.

Tom came from Carlisle and was the 21-year-old son of John and Emma Bolton. He is buried along with five of his crew in Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery in Poland.

The others who died were the pilot Flt. Lt. 'Jock' Galloway, 2nd pilot/rear gunner F/O William Dron, flight engineer Sgt. Hubert Hardy, bomb-aimer F/O George Kidd and wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Leslie Randall.

His name can be found on panel 010.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command Losses 1945 by Bill Chorley/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.

