

Sergeant Robert Edward Charles Bottle 1604911 RAFVR



The plaque in St Laurence's Church, Corringham

Robert Bottle died on the night of 16 December 1943, which Bomber Command called its 'Black Thursday' – but he was not aboard one of the 54 aircraft lost on operations on that grim date.

Another loss that night was of a Halifax II from No. 1662 Heavy Conversion Unit based at RAF Blyton, between Gainsborough and Scunthorpe. The aircraft, DT669, was taking part in a major navigational exercise for its trainee crew. Given their composition, they were likely to be posted to serve with No. 460 (Australian) Squadron at RAF Binbrook on the completion of their course.

Robert was one of the six-man crew who had completed the exercise, and were back in the Blyton circuit preparing to land, when their Halifax crashed into farmland in the village of Corringham, three miles south of Blyton. Sadly all those on board were killed in the crash.

The only Englishman in the otherwise all-Australian crew, flight engineer Robert Bottle was 20 years old, married to Frances and lived in Copnor, Portsmouth. He was the son of Edward and Elizabeth Bottle of Waterlooville, Hampshire and is buried in Waterlooville Cemetery (grave 622). The remainder of the crew are buried in Cambridge Military Cemetery; all the crew are also commemorated on a plaque in St Laurence's Church in Corringham.

Those who died with him were the pilot Sgt. Garnault Vautier RAAF, navigator Sgt. John Findley RAAF, bomb-aimer Sgt. Edward Hoskins RAAF, wireless operator Sgt. Noel Toy and the rear gunner Sgt. Eric Strawbridge.

Robert's name can be found on IBCC panel 011

Photographic source: Patrick Otter