

Sgt. Kenneth Bowes 1098656 RAFVR

Kenneth Bowes was a 23-year-old navigator from Darlington who was killed just six days after he was married in the town.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster ED357 PH-S that was one of five Lancasters and their crews lost during a raid on Dusseldorf on the night of 11/12 June 1943. Only five men on board No. 12 Squadron's lost aircraft survived

to become prisoners-of-war, two of whom came from Kenneth's crew. It was a night when No. 12 Squadron lost 32 aircrew.



Kenneth's Lancaster had taken off from RAF Wickenby at 2240 hours, one of 12 bombers from the squadron taking part in the attack on the Ruhr industrial city. The attack, involving 782 Bomber Command aircraft, caused extensive damage, wrecking much of the city but 38 bombers were lost, including the 5 from No. 12 Squadron. ED357 was homebound when the starboard inner engine burst into flames and the Lancaster lost height; it was then attacked by a Bf110 night-fighter flown by Oblt. Helmut Bergman. Several of the crew managed to bale out before the bomber crashed into Holland's inland sea, the IJsselmeer. Only the two Canadian air gunners survived to become prisoners-of-war.



Kenneth was born in Billingham, County Durham and later moved to nearby Darlington with his parents, John and Gertrude Bowes. He was educated at the Alderman Leach School in Darlington and was planning to join the civil service before enlisting.

Kenneth was a keen sportsman, and it was while playing tennis that he met his future wife, Joyce. He had returned to Darlington for a brief spell of leave to get married at Darlington Register Office before going back to RAF Wickenby, dying just six days later. It is understood that he had managed to get clear of the Lancaster, but it was thought that his parachute may have been damaged by fire, and that he fell to his death. His body was never found. The remaining four of his crew members are buried in The New Eastern Cemetery at Amsterdam.

After the war, the wreckage of ED357 was discovered during drainage work and a propeller from the Lancaster is now mounted outside the town hall in the town of Dronten (*pictured*) as part of a monument to the crew of the Lancaster. In addition, seven roads in a new development in the town have been named in memory of those who flew in ED357.

The others who died were the pilot Flt. Sgt. Daniel Thomson RAAF, flight engineer Sgt. James Osborne, bomb-aimer Sgt. William Ward and wireless operator Sgt. Douglas Campbell. The survivors were the mid-upper gunner Sgt. Bill Pingle RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Clarence Sparling RCAF.

Kenneth's name can be found on panel 011.

Sources: The Northern Echo/Aircrew Remembered/Aviation Safety Network/WW2Talk/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.