

Sgt. Douglas Stuart Bratt 1546821 RAFVR

Douglas Bratt was a 20-year-old mid-upper gunner who was killed along with his crew when their Lancaster was shot down 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 these turned back because of technical problems.

The battle was to go on until the end of July, badly damaging cities and towns in the Ruhr. It came at a very heavy cost to Bomber Command - 872 aircraft and over 6,000 aircrew lost.

Douglas and his crew were on their 18th operation with 49 Squadron. They had taken off from RAF Fiskerton in Lincolnshire at 1913 hours, one of eight Lancasters sent by the squadron. Their aircraft was intercepted and shot down into the sea 20km from the island of Texel, off the Dutch coast. The Lancaster was claimed by two night-fighters operating in the area, sadly there were no survivors aboard the bomber. All seven lost in ED431 are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (Panel 143).

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, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Ken Bolton and rear gunner Sgt. Frank Vines.

Douglas' name can be found on IBCC panel 012.

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

