

Flt. Sgt. Charles Lorne Bray DFM R/78203 RCAF

Charles Bray was a young Canadian Wellington pilot who was decorated for bravery only to lose his life when his aircraft disappeared three months later.

In January 1942 his 103 Squadron Wellington was hit by flak and set on fire during a raid on Wilhelmshaven. Four of the crew bailed out but Charles and his co-pilot remained at the controls, the flames went out and they nursed the badly damaged bomber back across the North Sea, before landing at RAF Grimsby. Both were awarded immediate Distinguished Flying Medals for 'outstanding fortitude'.

He was killed on the night of 25/26 April when his Wellington 1C DV579 (PM-Z) failed to return from a raid on Rostock. It had taken off from Elsham Wolds at 2145 hours, one of six Wellingtons provided by 103 for an attack involving 128 Bomber Command aircraft. No trace of aircraft or crew was ever found and they were recorded as 'lost without trace'.

Charles was the 23-year-old son of Wilbur and Sybil Bray who lived in the small community of Lyn in Ontario, close to the US border. He was educated at Oakville Trafalgar High School, near Toronto and is remembered on the school's roll of honour.

The others who died were the co-pilot Sgt. Frank Eivers, observer Sgt. Sidney Harle, wireless operator Sgt. Arthur Blencowe, wireless operator/air gunner Sgt. Harry Bullen and rear gunner Sgt. Dennis Musgrove. All are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

His name can be found on panel 012.

Sources: Bill Chorley/northlincsweb/Oakville Museum.

