

Sergeant Charles Christopher Brennan 942037 RAFVR



Charles Brennan was a Lancaster flight engineer who was killed 17 May 1943 on the most famous Bomber Command action of World War Two – Operation Chastise, the Dambuster Raid.

Charles was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in February 1916. He moved to England in 1928 and joined the RAF at the outset of the war; after training he worked as ground crew. He then took the opportunity for skilled ground crew to qualify as flight engineers on heavy bombers.

He joined No. 106 Squadron at RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire in June, and flew for the first time on 14 August. The following day was his first operation, with a trip to Dusseldorf. He carried on with this crew until the tour ended, in October 1942, having flown on 16 operations. Instead of being assigned to another crew, he was then posted to No. 1660 Conversion Unit as a trainer.

Charles was picked for the new 617 Squadron at RAF Scampton for the Dams raid, under pilot Flt. Lt. John Hopgood, flying in Lancaster ED925 AJ-M. Shortly before reaching the target, the aircraft was hit by flak, killing the front gunner and injuring Hopgood. Charles would have needed all his skill to help the pilot keep the aircraft aloft, as one of the engines was damaged and running on reduced revs. It was recalled that he was a 'calm chap', so also having to tend to Hopgood's head wound may not have completely fazed him.

When they were hit again, as they attacked the Möhne Dam, the pair must have realised they would never get off the flight deck themselves. All they could do was to give the rest of the crew a chance to escape: bomb aimer P/O John Fraser, rear gunner P/O Anthony Burcher and wireless operator Sgt. John Minchin were able to bale out. Sgt. Minchin, already wounded, did not survive the drop.

Charles' crew lost with him were:

Flt. Lt. John Hopgood DFC & bar – pilot
F/O Kenneth Earnshaw – navigator
Sgt. John Minchin – wireless operator
F/O George Gregory DFM – front gunner

They are buried together in Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany (Coll. grave 17. E. 2-6).

Charles' name can be found on IBCC Panel 12

Information courtesy of Charles Foster.