

**Sgt. John Brett 798503**  
**RAFVR**



Newfoundlander John Brett was a wireless operator/air gunner whose Wellington was one of four aircraft lost by No. 12 Squadron on the first 'thousand-bomber' raid on the city of Cologne on the night of 30/31 May 1942.

Some 1,047 aircraft took part in the raid, many from training units. It was seen as a display of strength by Bomber Command and a morale boosting attack for the British after over two and a half years of war.

RAF Binbrook-based 12 Squadron provided an astonishing 28 Wellingtons, the most from any unit taking place. However, six Wellingtons were forced to return to Binbrook after suffering mechanical problems. 12 Squadron's losses were also the highest.

John's aircraft, Z8598 PH-B, had only been returned to operational flying that day after undergoing repairs for battle damage. He and his crew took off from RAF Binbrook at 2255 hours, but soon afterwards the Wellington developed serious engine problems. They attempted to crash-land near Lexham Hall, north of Swaffham in Norfolk, only for the Wellington to burst into flames and explode. There were no survivors.

He was one of several Newfoundlanders serving in the RAF and one of a few lost flying with 12 Squadron. John was the 22-year-old son of Charles and Matilda Brett, and came from Joe Batts' Arm on Fogo Island, Newfoundland. He was later buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey (grave ref. 21. B. 17).

The others killed with him were the pilot Sgt. George Everatt, observer Sgt. Alfred Draper, wireless operator/air gunner Flt. Sgt. Donald Moodie RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Harold Hooley.

John's name can be found on IBCC panel 012.

Sources: Canadian veterans/The Thousand Raid by Ralph Barker/Aircrew Remembered/Bomber Command Losses 1942 by Bill Chorley.