

Sergeant Archibald Halliday Brownlie 1554013 RAFVR

Archie Brownlie was a 20-year-old flight engineer killed in 1943 on his first operation after a desperate battle by his crew to keep their Lancaster flying.

He was part of the crew on No. 49 Squadron Lancaster ED426 EA-P, which had taken off from RAF Dunholme Lodge in an attack on Stuttgart involving 343 Lancasters. These included for the first time some aircraft fitted with 'ABC' equipment to jam enemy fighter radio communications, which contributed to only four bombers being lost.



One of those lost that night, 7/8 October 1943, was ED426 which had been attacked first by a night fighter and then hit by flak on their return journey. Two engines were knocked out; the crippled bomber began to lose height as it crossed the French border and the crew jettisoned everything possible to keep ED426 flying. Finally, the pilot P/O Dan Wares attempted a crash-landing, only for the engines to be ripped off as the Lancaster came down at the end of Commercy Forest, south of Metz in eastern France.

Three of the crew were killed in the crash: Archie, the Irish navigator Sgt. Timothy O'Leary and the Canadian bomb-aimer F/O Elmer Hepburn. Of the survivors, both the pilot and wireless operator Sgt. Ray Barlow evaded capture and made it back to England via Switzerland. The gunners, Sgt. G Attwood and Flt. Sgt. W Fitzgerald RAAF, both became prisoners of war.

Archie rests in Choloy War Cemetery, Coll. grave 2A. B. 17-18. In October 2021 a memorial stone to the three lost airmen was unveiled in the Commercy Forest near to the crash site.

Archie's name can be found on IBCC panel 014.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.