

Flying Officer Alan Bulmer 74665 RAFVR

Alan Bulmer was an outstanding young man with a glittering future ahead of him when he took off from RAF Scampton on the night of 10 November 1940. He was piloting Hampden X2985 EA-W and they were heading for Danzig on the Baltic coast, almost 1,000 miles away, one of the longest raids yet staged by Bomber Command.

His aircraft was one of six from No. 49 Squadron fitted with special long-range tanks –Hampdens being usually noted for their short range. One aircraft was tasked to drop leaflets, the five others incendiaries. The aim was to start fires to provide targets for the next bombers due to arrive 15 minutes later; possibly the first trial of ‘pathfinding’ by the RAF.



In the early hours of the following morning, a message was picked up that X2985 was around 30 miles off the Norfolk coast, but after that nothing was heard. The Hampden presumably crashed in the North Sea, out of fuel, a fate shared by another Hampden of No. 83 Squadron (also based at Scampton). There were no survivors and the bodies were not found; Alan Bulmer and his three young aircrew are now remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (panel 5).

Alan was 21 and came from Penarth in Glamorgan, the son of William and Dorothy Bulmer. He was educated at Malvern College where he became an outstanding student both academically and athletically. He represented the college at rugby, soccer, cricket, boxing and rackets, and was a school prefect. The school remembered him as ‘an engaging personality with a cheery outlook, intellectually and athletically a great asset to the school.’ The note added poignantly: ‘If he would have been spared, he would certainly have made his mark.’

He was awarded a place at Brasenose College in Oxford where he went on to represent the college at rugby, taking part in a tour of South Wales, before he left to join the RAF. Brasenose college remember him ‘with great affection’.

The others who were lost in X2985 were second pilot P/O Donald Wakeford and wireless operator/air gunners Sgt. David Walter and Sgt. George Herdman.

Alan’s name can be found on panel 015.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Malvern College/Brasenose College/Bomber Command Losses 1939-40 by Bill Chorley.