

Sgt. Douglas Butterworth 1061600 RAFVR

Douglas Butterworth was a young Wellington pilot who was killed along with three of his crew when their bomber crashed attempting to make an emergency landing near Redditch.



Douglas was the pilot of Wellington W5356 from No. 12 Squadron. The aircraft had taken off from RAF Binbrook at 0438 hours on 9 January 1942 to participate in an early-morning raid by 31 aircraft on shipping in the French port of Cherbourg.

On the return journey, the port engine began to overheat and lost power. Looking to make an emergency landing, the Wellington attempted to land at Middleton Farm at Wythall, near

Redditch, mistaking the sheds on a balloon barrage site for hangars. By this time, the aircraft was too low and slow to find an alternative landing site. The aircraft clipped a tree, cartwheeled into the ground and burst into flames. Two members of the crew managed to get clear and attempted to rescue any other possible survivors, helped by workers in the area.



Douglas was killed in the crash along with wireless operator/air gunners Sgt. Charles Morrey and Sgt. Brian Franklin while the observer, P/O Wilfred Burnham, died two days later in hospital from his injuries. Both survivors, second pilot P/O Alan Breck RCAF and wireless operator/air gunner Sgt. Bernard Cable RCAF, were injured but survived.

Douglas and his crew had come together at 23 Operational Training Unit at Pershore and had joined No. 12 Squadron in October 1941. He was the 20-year-old son of Alfred and Violet Butterworth and came from Rochdale in Lancashire. He is buried in the town's cemetery. A plaque commemorating the crew of W5356 was unveiled at the site of the crash in 2019 (pictured).

Douglas' name can be found on panel 016.

Sources: Aviation Safety Network/Aircrew Remembered/Solihull Observer/IBBC.