

F/O Verner Charles Bye 134381 RAFVR

Verner Bye was a 28-year-old experienced navigator from north London who was killed along with his crew on his 21st operation with No. 12 Squadron.



His aircraft, Lancaster DV158 PH-A2, was one of 56 bombers lost on the night of 23/24 August 1943 on an attack on Berlin, a raid which was the opening overture of Bomber Command's assault on the German capital during the Autumn and Winter of 1943/44.

DV158 had taken off from RAF Wickenby at 2030 hours to join what was the biggest raid so far on Berlin, involving 727 aircraft. It was a 'maximum effort' night for No. 12 Squadron and when DV158's regular flight engineer was sick, a tour-expired engineer awaiting a posting to Canada for retraining as a pilot, volunteered to take his place.

The route took the bombers across Germany to Berlin and back across Denmark and the North Sea, and that was probably where Verner's Lancaster was caught by a night-fighter and shot down into the sea. There were no survivors. The raid itself cost Bomber Command 56 aircraft, the biggest toll so far in the war and one to be exceeded numerous times later.

Verner and his crew had joined No. 12 Squadron from 1662 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Blyton on 7 May 1943. He came from Enfield where he lived with his wife, Margaret. He was the son of Herbert Charles and Florence Eleanor Bye.

The others who died with him were the pilot F/O Norman Ashburner, flight engineer Sgt. Richard Barrass, bomb-aimer F/O Harold Laverick, wireless operator Sgt. Thomas Gleeson, mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. George Fraser RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Walter Peace. All are now remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Verner's name can be found on panel 016.

Sources: Wickenby Museum/The Berlin Raids by Martin Middlebrook/Bomber Command Losses 1943 by Bill Chorley.