

W/C Edward James Carter DFC 70770 RAFVR

Edward 'Jimmy' Carter was the 29-year-old commanding officer of the Pathfinders No. 97 (Straits Settlement) Squadron who was killed along with the other seven members of his highly-decorated Lancaster crew just 86 minutes before the D-Day landings began.

The aircraft he was piloting was shot down at 0504 hours by a Fw190 near Carentan, 18 miles from their target, a German gun battery at St Pierre du Mont. This was close to Omaha beach where American soldiers were to land at 0630 hours.

Jimmy Carter's Lancaster, ND739 OF-Z, and his crew were listed as 'lost without trace'. In 2012, the wreckage and personal items from the crew were found and recovered by a team of British aviation archaeologists. Sadly the bodies of the crew were never discovered, and all are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (panel 200).



97 Squadron was a key part of the plan to nullify German defences as the landing craft arrived on the Normandy beaches. W/C Carter chose to lead 97's element, applauding in the briefing at RAF Coningsby and telling aircrew: 'Thank God I'm still on ops and not at an OTU!' His aircraft took off at 0256 hours on 6 June, flying over the assembling invasion fleet. At 0504 hours the controller picked up a signal from his aircraft which suddenly stopped, and it is believed ND739 was attacked by one of a number of Fw190s which had been scrambled.

Jimmy Carter had joined the RAF at the outbreak of war, trained to fly Wellingtons and joined No. 214 (Federated Malay States) Squadron in 3 Group. He was awarded his Distinguished Flying Cross on Christmas Eve, 1940. He had a distinguished career, ending as CO of 97 Squadron when it moved back from 8 Group to 5 Group at Coningsby in April 1944. The move cemented 5 Group's role as the premier arm of Bomber Command.

The others who died were flight engineer P/O Guy Dunning DFM, navigator Flt. Lt. Ronald Conley DFC RAAF, bomb-aimer Flt. Lt. Herbert Rieger RCAF, second bomb-aimer F/O Henry Jeffery DFM, wireless operator and squadron Signals Leader Flt. Lt. Albert Chambers DFC and Bar, mid-upper gunner P/O Frank Watson DFM and rear gunner and squadron Gunnery Leader Sqn. Ldr. Martin Bryan-Smith DFC and Bar MiD.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 018.

Sources: RAF Pathfinders Archive/97 Squadron Association/Bomber Command Losses 1944 by Bill Chorley.