

P/O Edward Frank Champness 421858 RAAF

Edward 'Teddy' Champness was a 20-year-old Australian pilot who died along with three of his crew when their Lancaster was shot down over Germany during a raid on Brunswick on the night of 22/23 May 1944.

He died when his aircraft, Lancaster JB546 LE-A of 630 Squadron, was shot down by a night-fighter flown by Oblt. Heinz Ferger. The bomber crashed near the village of Quakenbrück, east of the German/Dutch border. Three of his crew managed to escape by parachute to become prisoners. His aircraft had taken off from East Kirkby at 2240 hours and was reported to have been shot down at around 0030 hours. JB546 was one of nine Lancasters lost on the raid, two of them from 630 Squadron.



Teddy and most of his crew were on their ninth operation with 630 at East Kirkby in a little more than a month since they joined the squadron, a reflection of the intensity of Bomber Command operations in the weeks leading up to the Normandy invasion.

He was born in the Sydney suburb of St. Mary's in August 1923, the son of Edgar and Vera Champness. Teddy was educated at St. Mary's Primary School between 1928 and 1934 and St. Mary's High from 1934 to 1937.

After leaving school at the age of 16 he joined St. Mary's Municipal Council as a clerk while continuing studying for a course on local government and accountancy. He joined the RAAF Reserve when he was 17 and enlisted shortly after his 18th birthday, gaining his pilot's wings in Australia in 1943 before embarking for England.

The others who died were the flight engineer Sgt. John Johnstone, bomb-aimer P/O Gerald Naugler RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Alan Pickering. All are buried in the Rheinberg War Cemetery. The survivors were the navigator Flt. Sgt. Vernon Zucker RAAF, wireless operator Sgt. Edmond Adair and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Leonard Jones.

Edward's name can be found on panel 019.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association/St Mary's and District Historical Society/Australian Virtual War Memorial.