

Sgt. Robert Alexander Chorley 932412 RAFVR



A 9 Squadron Lancaster at Bardney

Bob Chorley was the mid-upper gunner in a very experienced Lancaster crew killed on their 22nd operation when, it was believed, their aircraft was shot down in the English Channel.

His aircraft, Lancaster ED551 WS-M of 9 Squadron, was officially 'lost without trace' following a raid on the twin German towns of Monchengladbach and Rheydt in the early hours of 31 August 1943, the first major attack on these towns, which involved 660 bombers and caused major damage. However, it was later revealed that a 'four-engined bomber' was reported shot down by flak and crashed into the sea about 12 miles off the port of Ostend. No bodies or wreckage were recovered and the eight men who were on board the missing aircraft, including Bob Chorley, are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

He and his crew had taken off from Bardney shortly after midnight and were looking forward to the end of their tour, which had involved numerous attacks on targets in the Ruhr, four on the city of Cologne and the key raid on the V-rocket research facility at Peenemunde. For their final operation they were carrying a second navigator.

Bob was one of two gunners in the crew from south-east London. His home was in Catford where he lived with his wife Joan, and he was the 27-year-old son of Robert and Elvira Chorley.

The others who died were the pilot WO Gilbert Hall, flight engineer Sgt. Leon Field, navigator Sgt. William Evans, second navigator P/O Clarence Anderson RCAF, bomb-aimer Sgt. Ted Colbert, wireless operator Sgt. Oliver Overington and rear gunner Sgt. Henry Williams.

His name can be found on panel 019.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/9 Squadron ORB/Peter Green Collection.