

## **F/O Clifford Coombes 160156 RAFVR**



Clifford Coombes was an experienced 83 Squadron air gunner who was one of two Welsh brothers to be killed while flying with Bomber Command.

He was flying as the mid-upper gunner in a hand-picked Pathfinder operation which was to breach the Mittelland section of the Dortmund-Ems canal on the night of 21/22 February 1945. Clifford was in a crew assembled by the commanding officer of RAF Coningsby, Group Captain Anthony Evans-Evans DFC, made up of personnel from at least three 5 Group squadrons.

After taking off from Coningsby at 1707 hours, his Lancaster, NE165 OL-Y of 83 Squadron, was shot down by a night fighter in an attack close to the Dutch border, crashing in Gertruda Farm in the village of De Rips, near Helmond. Only the rear gunner in the eight-man crew survived and all seven men who died are buried in Mierlo War Cemetery.

Clifford lived in Eastleigh, Hampshire with his wife, Hilda, and was the 22-year-old son of Henry and Alice Coombes.

The others who died on NE165 were G/C Evans-Evans, flight engineer F/O Sid Marsh, navigator S/L William Wishart DFC & Bar, bomb-aimer F/L William Fitch DFC, GM, second navigator F/O Desmond Ball DFM, and wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Richard Takle. The survivor was rear gunner P/O E Hansen RAAF.

His name can be found on panel 022.

Sources: RAF Commands/Bomber Command Losses 1945 by Bill Chorley/Facebook.