

PO Norman Maylin Cooper 170735 RAFVR

Norman was born on 18 March 1923 in Edmonton, Middlesex, the youngest son of Frederick James Cooper and Florence Elizabeth Cooper nee Maylin.

Educated at Letchworth Grammar School, Hertfordshire, before joining the RAF and training as a Pilot, Norman was employed in the aircraft manufacturing industry . Commissioned in November 1943, on 2 December 1943 Norman joined 101 Sqn at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire from 1656 HCU.

On 16 December 1943 Bomber Command crews were tasked with a raid on Berlin. Of the 498 aircraft despatched that night, 101 Sqn contributed 21 crews. Around 16:30 Norman and his crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster I LM389 (SR-Y). This would be this newly mustered crew's first, and last op.

The crew successfully bombed the target area; however, as the Bomber Command aircraft returned from Berlin, the weather had deteriorated significantly, with fog blanketing most of the airfields in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. Norman and his crew were ordered to divert to Yorkshire, probably aiming for RAF Holme on Spalding Moor.

At 00:27 on 17 December 1943, whilst trying to identify somewhere to land, the aircraft was descended into the ground in a small wooded area to the north of the village of Eastrington, between Selby and Goole, East Yorkshire. Only the 2 gunners at the rear of the aircraft survived.

Black Thursday, as the day was soon called, saw the loss of twenty-five Lancasters during the Berlin operation, but a further thirty-one lost due to the fog over England -crashed or abandoned when their crews baled out, or in the case of two unfortunate crews collided over Lincolnshire.

Of the 328 aircrew who lost their lives that night, more were the victims of the weather than enemy action.

Also Killed: WO Herbert Percy Davis (AG); Sgt Robert Corrie Custance (Nav); Sgt John Gregory Hayden (WOp); Sgt Robert Kenneth Rye (FE); Sgt Reginald William Melville Spelman (AB)

Norman was cremated at Cambridge Crematorium, Cambridgeshire and is Commemorated on the Crematorium Memorial.

Norman is commemorated on Wall Panel 23