

F/O Cyril Morgan Cottingham J/21625 RCAF

When Cyril, his parents and brother and sister emigrated from Aberystwyth to Vancouver Island, in Canada, he couldn't speak a word of English. He was just nine years old at the time and had been brought up in an all-Welsh speaking family in the village of Goginan, seven miles from Aberystwyth.

The next time he saw Wales was from the cockpit of a RAF aircraft, as he was about to complete his training as a bomber pilot, and he wrote home to say: 'It looks beautiful.'

Cyril was never able to go back to Wales, or to Vancouver. He and his crew, plus a young American second pilot flying to gain experience, were all to die during a raid on Berlin in November 1943 when their Lancaster vanished.

He was one of three Canadians in the regular crew of their No. 49 Squadron aircraft and had already completed 19 operations when they took off from RAF Fiskerton in the late afternoon of 22 November 1943, part of a force of over 760 bombers sent to the German capital. Twenty Lancasters failed to return, including Cyril's JB368 EA-G. The bodies of the crew were never located after the war. They may have crashed into the sea, or on battlefields yet to be fought over, and all are now remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Cyril was 25 when he died and has never been forgotten on Vancouver Island. In 2004 when a new terminal was opened at Comex Valley Airport on Vancouver Island, by the Governor General of British Columbia, it was named the Flying Officer Cyril Cottingham Terminal.

He was the son of William and Mary Cottingham who originally settled in Lazo, with Cyril, his brother Glyn and sister Doreen, in British Columbia before finally moving to Comox.

The others who died were the second pilot Flt. Lt. George Bailey RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. Alexander Mathieson, navigator F/O Russell Richard RCAF, bomb-aimer F/O Maurice Wright, wireless operator Sgt. Geoffrey Tabenor, mid-upper gunner Sgt. George Falck and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Colin Byers RCAF.

His name can be found on panel 023.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Canadian Veterans/Comex Valley Airport (YQQ).

