

Sgt Charles Harold Downs 1101786 RAFVR

Charles was born on 5 September 1918 in Salford, Lancashire, the only son of George Downs and Alice Downs nee Greenwood.

Before joining the RAF and training as an Air Gunner, Charles was employed by the Post Office as a Messenger, Sorting Clerk and Telegraphist.

By September 1943 Charles was on the strength of 101 Sqn based at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.

On the morning of 18 November 1943 "Bomber Harris" decided the offensive against Berlin would resume. The weather was forecast favourable. That night, an all Lancaster force of 440 aircraft were tasked with the raid on Berlin, with 101 Sqn contributing 23 crews.

At 17:21 Charles, operating as one of the Air Gunners, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire in Lancaster III LM370 (SR-K2), routeing out over the Lincolnshire coast to rendezvous with the rest of the force and commencing a route to Berlin South of the Ruhr across Belgium.

The visibility over the target area was poor, and winds were not as forecast making the task extremely difficult. The 101 Sqn Lancasters arrived just before 21:00 and completed blind drops. Despite this, German reports stated that bombs fell in most parts of the city with reasonable impact on the industrial areas.

At 23:11 whilst on the homeward flight, Charles's aircraft was intercepted over the Dutch province of Drenthe on the Dutch/German border by Fw Rudolf Frank of the 2./NJG3, flying a Ju88 from Wittmund Airfield. The Lancaster crashed on an area of peatland on the outskirts of Oud-Schoonebeek killing all on board.

Also Killed: FO Charles Patrick McManus (Pilot); FO Barry Kingsley Petyt (AB); FO Guy Dermot Spyers (Nav); WO2 George Philip Herman RCAF (Special Operator/AG); FS George Herbert Gittins DFM (AG); Sgt Kenneth Jones (FE); Sgt Anthony Ezra Rosen (WOp/AG)

Charles is buried in Schoonebeek (Oud Schoonebeek) General Cemetery, Drenthe, Netherlands.

Charles is commemorated on Wall Panel 30

Photo Source: aviation-safety.net

