

F/O William Dron 55242 RAFVR

William 'Billy' Dron was part of an experienced and very popular crew lost in a devastating Bomber Command raid on one of Germany's last remaining synthetic oil plants.

He and his 49 Squadron crew were on their 26th operation when their Lancaster ME353 (EA-Q) was shot down during the attack on the Pölitz refinery close to the Polish-German border on the night of 8/9 February 1945. Only the mid-upper gunner, Flt. Sgt. Ernie Ellis, survived to become a PoW for a few months.

Billy, who was 24, was a pilot and is also listed as the rear gunner in the Lancaster which took off from Fulbeck at 1649 hours, part of a force of 475 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes which destroyed the refinery. Twelve Lancasters were lost.

49 Squadron's historian recalls the crew as 'very popular characters' on the Lincolnshire airfield and said everyone at Fulbeck regarded it as 'a very sad loss, which everyone deeply felt'.

Billy is buried along with five of his crew in Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery in Poland. The others who died were the pilot Flt. Lt. 'Jock' Galloway, flight engineer Sgt. Hubert Hardy, navigator P/O Tom Bolton, bomb-aimer F/O George Kidd and wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Les Randall.

His name can be found on panel 030.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command Losses 1945 by Bill Chorley/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.

