

P/O Harry Frederick Fansher J/16216 RCAF

Harry Fansher was an experienced 26-year-old Canadian Lancaster pilot who was among 21 aircrew from 12 Squadron killed during a raid on Berlin in January 1943.

Ten Lancasters had taken off from the squadron's base at RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire in the late afternoon of 17 January and only six of them returned. Twenty-one aircrew from three Lancasters were killed while the seven on board the fourth bomber shot down all survived. Most of the crews involved had flown in another long-distance raid on the German capital the night before.

Harry was the pilot of Lancaster ED388 PH-Y, which had taken off from Wickenby at 1649 hours as part of a force of 170 Lancasters and 17 Halifaxes heading for Berlin for the second time in less than 24 hours.

There are conflicting accounts of what happened to ED388. One suggests that the aircraft was later shot down, crashing near the small village of Klein Kummerfeld, near Neumunster in northern Germany. However, in 12 Squadron's records the Lancaster is recorded as having been shot down into the sea off the German island of Sylt, with only two bodies later recovered and now buried in Kiel War Cemetery.

Harry was born in the town of Govan, in Saskatchewan, and was the son of Mr William and Mrs Mary Fansher (née Osborne). He was educated at Govan High School and later enlisted, gaining his wings in Saskatchewan in November 1941 before eventually being posted to the UK. He went to No. 26 Operational Training Unit at RAF Wing in Buckinghamshire and was then posted to 12 Squadron, in August 1942, to begin flying Wellingtons.

The others who died with him were the flight engineer Sgt. Roy Poole, navigator P/O Kenneth Butler, bomb-aimer Sgt. Edward Cadden, wireless operator P/O John Fallis RCAF, mid-upper gunner Sgt. William Smith and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Frederick Marsh. Harry's body was one of those not recovered and he is now remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Harry's name can be found on IBCC panel 034.

Sources: Wickenby Museum/Canadian veterans/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.

