

**Sgt. Robert Cecil  
Gilbert 1900007  
RAFVR**



Irish air gunner Bob Gilbert and three Australians were the four men who died when their Lancaster was shot down in March 1945.

They were the four casualties in a 49 Squadron aircraft shot down by a Ju88 fighter during a raid on an oil facility at Harburg, on the outskirts of Hamburg on the night of 7 March. After the attack his Lancaster, PB537 EA-X, burst into flames and the pilot ordered the crew to bale out, three doing so successfully before the bomber crashed near Sandbostel.

The crew, who were on their 13<sup>th</sup> operation, had taken off from Fulbeck at 1745 hours as part of a force of 234 Lancasters and seven Mosquitoes from 5 Group which badly damaged the plant and an adjoining rubber factory. Fourteen Lancasters were lost, including four from 189 Squadron which shared Fulbeck with 49.

Bob (*pictured second right in this crew photograph*) came from the town of Arklow, in County Wicklow in the Irish Republic, and was the 22-year-old son of George and Mary Gilbert.

The others who died were the pilot F/O Roussel Stark RAAF, bomb-aimer WO Ralph Bairnsfather RAAF and wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Angus Lovett RAAF. The survivors were the flight engineer Sgt. Fred Brennan RAAF, navigator WO John Yeoman RAAF and rear gunner Sgt. Joe Dixon.

His name can be found on panel 039.

Forces: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.