

FS George Herbert Gittins DFM 1210420 RAFVR

George was born on 20 September 1922 in Leominster, Herefordshire, the son of Henry Gittins and Annie Gittins nee Went. Educated at Hanley Castle Grammar School, Worcestershire, before enlisting in the RAF in 1940 George worked on the family farm.

After qualifying as an Air Gunner, George was posted to 150 Sqn, then stationed at RAF Snaith, Yorkshire. With the exception of a short posting as a Gunnery Instructor on 50 OTU at RAF Hixton, Staffordshire, George would serve with 150 Sqn until December 1942 when he was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire, moving with the squadron to RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire in June 1943.

Following his tour with 150 Sqn, George was awarded the DFM. An extract from his citation reads:

".....He has been an outstanding Air Gunner throughout his tour and his courage, determination and cheerful confidence through many difficult sorties has gone a long way to sustaining the high morale of his crew..... By his courage, presence of mind and cool determination with which he always handles his guns, Sgt Gittins has undoubtedly extricated his crew from several perilous situations and has contributed largely to the continued success of his crew."

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 George, 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, George'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); Sgt Charles Harold Downs (AG); Sgt Kenneth Jones (FE); Sgt Anthony Ezra Rosen (WO/AG)

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

George is commemorated on Wall Panel 40

Photo Source: aviation-safety.net

