

Sgt. Henry Jack 1550129
RAFVR

Navigator Henry Jack was one of two Scottish brothers killed while flying with Bomber Command.



He died following a heavy ditching of his Lancaster following a raid on Berlin in September 1943, while his brother Robert would later be killed in a 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit Halifax in a crash near Bristol, the following April. Both are buried together in the village cemetery at Tealing, near Dundee, where their parents, John and Mary Jack, lived.

Henry and his crew were on their 12th operation with 49 Squadron at RAF Fiskerton when they joined a force of 316 Lancasters and 4 Mosquitos to attack the German city on the night of 3/4 September 1943.

During the bomb-run his aircraft, JB126, is believed to have been hit by a flare before it was damaged by the city's formidable flak defences, damaging both wings and causing the aircraft's fuel tanks to leak.

The route back from the raid was across north Germany, over the Baltic and along the Swedish coast, before turning west across the northern tip of Denmark. By the time the aircraft was over the North Sea it became clear that JB126 didn't have enough fuel to make it back and a distress call was sent. With misty conditions across the sea, the pilot had to abort the first ditching attempt before the Lancaster made a heavy impact on the sea about 15 miles off Blyth on the Northumberland coast.

The pilot may have been incapacitated in the landing as he was unable to get clear before the Lancaster broke up and sank. The other six crew members did get into the water and five made it into a survival dinghy, while the flight engineer was unable to reach them and drowned. Later, a searching aircraft spotted the dinghy but by the time the Air Sea Rescue launch arrived three crewmen had died of exposure.

The others who died were the pilot F/O Harold Coates, flight engineer Sgt. John Sacre, wireless operator Sgt. Clarence Kendrew and rear gunner Sgt. George Pawson. The survivors were the bomb-aimer Sgt. Leslie Underwood and mid-upper gunner Sgt. Raymond Nelson RAAF.

Henry's name can be found on IBCC panel 053.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/The Berlin Raids by Martin Middlebrook.