

Sgt. Thomas Ithel James
615300 RAF



Thomas James was a Welsh mid-upper gunner who died along with the rest of his crew when their Lancaster crashed in the North Sea following a raid on Cologne on the night of 26 February 1943.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster W4792 PH-Y, of No. 12 Squadron, which had taken off from RAF Wickenby at 1902 hours as part of a force of 427 bombers heading for the much-bombed city on the Rhine. Ten of those aircraft were lost, including W4792.

12 Squadron records show that 10 Lancasters from the squadron were involved in the raid and that the only one not to return was W4792, recording that the Lancaster had crashed in the sea 20 kilometres from the Frisian island of Schiermonnikoog. There were no survivors and no bodies were ever recovered.

Thomas was one of two Welsh gunners in the crew. He came from the seaside town of New Quay, in Cardiganshire, and was the 22-year-old son of G Clifford and Ellen James.

The others who died with him were the pilot WOII William Kenny RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. Jack Bunce, navigator Flt. Sgt. John Correll RCAF, bomb-aimer Sgt. Donald Travis, wireless operator Sgt. Cyril Petherbridge and rear gunner Sgt. Ronald Vaisey. All are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

Thomas' name can be found on IBCC wall panel 054.

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