

F/O Ralph Frank Litchfield J/25734 RCAF

Ralph was born on 11 January 1917 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, the son of Northamptonshire born parents William Litchfield and Magretta Litchfield (nee Cox).

Educated at Cecil Rhodes and Daniel MacIntyre Schools, Winnipeg, and the University of Manitoba, Ralph was employed as a carpenter, upholsterer and, at the time of volunteering for aircrew duties with the RCAF in June 1940, was a bottling machine operator for Central Dairies.

Called up in October 1940 Ralph commenced pilot training, but in April 1941 his training was suspended and he commenced service as a Ground Photographer. In December 1942 Ralph re-mustered as an Air Bomber and was badged and received his commission in April 1943.



In August 1943 Ralph arrived in the UK and, after advanced training at 19 OTU RAF Forres, Scotland, in January 1944 he was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire, as a Special Duty Operator.

On the night of 30 March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night, before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies this night. Twenty-six 101 Squadron Lancasters participated in the raid.

At 2150 hours on 30 March 1944 Ralph, operating as the Special Duty Operator, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna, in Lancaster I LL861 (SR), tasked with ABC duties for the raid.

Strong winds had blown Ralph's aircraft well off course when, at 0045 hours whilst outbound, the Lancaster was intercepted by Hptm Gustav Tham flying a Me110 of IV./NJG5 from Nord-Erfurt Airfield. Fully laden, the Lancaster exploded with great force scattering debris over a large area near the German town of Lauterbach, about 40km NE of Frankfurt and about 200 km short of Nuremberg. All eight crew were killed, and only two crew members could be identified. This was Ralph's 9th op.

Seven 101 Squadron aircraft were lost on the raid with 47 men killed.

Also Killed: P/O Donald James Irving RAAF (Pilot); WO Stanley George Richard King RAAF (Nav); F/Sgt. Norman Grenfell Huggett RAAF (WOp/AG); F/Sgt. Walter Joseph Adam RAAF (AG); F/Sgt. John Bede Newman RAAF (AG); F/Sgt. John Alfred Noske RAAF (AB); Sgt. Frank Phillips (FE).

Ralph has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey.

Ralph is commemorated on Wall Panel 63.

Photo Source: www.veterans.gc.ca