

Ft. Sgt. Walter John Manley 512750 RAF

Walter Manley was a veteran mid-upper gunner killed during Pathfinder operations in the late summer of 1944.

He was flying in the crew of the deputy master bomber on a raid on the town of Darmstadt in August 1944 when it was believed his 97 Squadron Lancaster was shot down by a night fighter near the target.

His pilot, S/L Stuart Parkes, had won a DSO a week earlier when he and his crew took part in a daring low-level operation to lay float-flares and mines in a key canal close to the Baltic coastline.



Walter and his Pathfinder crew left Coningsby at 2103 hours on the night of 25 August, heading a 5 Group force of 190 Lancasters and six Mosquitoes, for the long trip to central Germany. They were reported to have been shot down at 0102 hours the following morning with only the flight engineer, Sgt. George Flint, surviving.

Walter had joined the RAF back in 1930, volunteering for aircrew during wartime and had already completed a tour of operations with 44 Squadron at Waddington. He was the 33-year-old son of Walter and Ethel Manley and lived in Berkhamsted with his wife, Maud. He is remembered on Berkhamsted War Memorial.



The others who died were the pilot S/L Stuart Parkes DSO, navigator F/O George Reynolds, bomb-aimer Ft. Sgt. Howard Chappell, wireless operator F/O Reg Atkins and rear gunner Ft. Sgt. Leonard Baldwin. All are buried in Durnbach War Cemetery.

His name can be found on panel 067.

Sources: Pathfinder Archive/97 Squadron Association/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook/Aircrew Remembered.