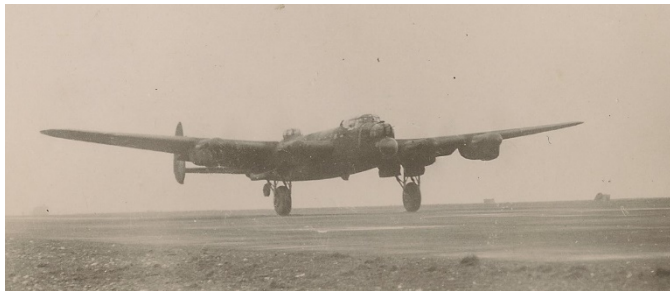


**Flt. Sgt. Francis Thomas
Nolan 1397479 RAFVR**



Francis Nolan was a 35-year-old navigator who was killed along with five of his crew when their Lancaster was shot down during a raid on a key railway hub in northern France.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster III ND636 CF-O of 625 Squadron and was part of a force of 132 1 Group Lancasters tasked to bomb the key railway junction, rail yards and locomotive depot at Aulnoye in France's Somme region.

The raid was one of four staged by Bomber Command on the night of 10/11 April 1944 as it began its 'railway plan' to disrupt communications prior to D-Day. The attack at Aulnoye was very successful but at the cost of seven Lancasters lost.

Francis' Lancaster had taken off from RAF Kelstern at 2324 hours and was reported to have crashed between Pont-de-Metz and Guignemicourt on the outskirts of the city of Amiens. Only the bomb-aimer, Sgt. E Findley, survived to become a prisoner-of-war.

His home was in the village of Loose, near Maidstone where he lived with his wife, Catherine, and was the son of Edward and Brigid Nolan. He is buried along with the five of his crew in St Pierre Cemetery in Amiens.

The others who died were the pilot P/O William Green RNZAF, flight engineer Sgt. Alfred Ayres, wireless operator Sgt. Ronald Brimelow, 19-year-old American mid-upper gunner Sgt. Harry Bottomley RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. James Ramsay.

His name can be found on panel 070.

Sources: 625 Squadron records/625 Squadron Association.