

Flt. Sgt. James Porter 1824774
RAFVR

One of the final jobs aircrew members were asked to do before being demobbed in the summer of 1945 was dumping unused ordnance in the sea.



It was just such a task that led to the death of Scottish rear gunner Flt. Sgt. James Porter and the five members of his crew when their Lancaster vanished over the North Sea.

Several of the crew on board Lancaster PB344 LE-R had flown 27 operations with 630 Squadron at East Kirkby in Lincolnshire, raids from Walcheren in October 1944 to Bomber Command's final attack on Hitler's lair at Berchtesgaden in Bavaria on 25 April 1944.

So when James and his crew set off from their Lincolnshire base on the morning 15 June, along with three other Lancasters, to drop unwanted incendiary bombs far out over the North Sea it seemed a routine task as the squadron headed for disbandment in a few weeks.

At 1147 hours a message was picked up from the veteran 630 Squadron Lancaster that the incendiaries had been dropped and they were turning for home. It was the last anyone heard from PB344. A massive air-sea rescue operation was launched but all that was found was an empty life raft and wreckage that could have come from the tail of a Lancaster.

James came from the Aberdeen suburb of Stoneywood and was the 20-year-old son of Albert and Elsie Porter.

The others who died were the pilot F/O George Cowan, flight engineer Flt. Sgt. David Currie, navigator Flt. Sgt. Wilfred Smith, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Jonah Rhodes and wireless operator Flt. Sgt. Frederick Reynolds. They were the last of some 470 personnel lost from 630 Squadron and are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

James' name can be found on IBCC panel 086.

Source: 630 Squadron Association.