

## **Sgt. Gilbert George Provis 1836365 RAFVR**



**A 9 Squadron Lancaster pictured at Bardney**

Gilbert Provis was a Welsh mid-upper gunner killed during a running battle with four Luftwaffe night-fighters during a raid on Kassel in October 1943.

He was on board Lancaster EE188 WS-B of 9 Squadron, which had just completed its bomb run at 2109 hours on the night of 22 October when, two minutes later the rear gunner, Sgt. Birkinshaw, spotted an approaching Dornier 217 some 300 yards away. He immediately called for the pilot, P/O Albert Manning, to 'corkscrew right'. At the same time both gunners opened fire.

Seconds later the navigator, former librarian P/O Jim Hearn, spotted a second night fighter, a Ju 88, from his position in the astrodome. The Junkers then opened fire with cannon fire hitting all along the port side of the rear fuselage, killing Gilbert Provis and wounding the rear gunner before the night fighter broke away. With the Lancaster still corkscrewing, Jim Hearn then saw two further Ju88s approaching on either beam before they opened fire. The report of the account says simply they 'missed' before the damaged Lancaster managed to shake off the fighters.

By this time EE188 was in a sorry state. All the hydraulics had failed – the pilot later found a cannon shell had severed the pipes below his seat – and the fuselage and tailplane badly damaged. But the engines were unaffected and, at about 2356 hours, the battered Lancaster made it back to Bardney where George Provis' body was recovered.

He was later buried in his native Rhondda Valley at Treorchy Cemetery. He was the 27-year-old son of Henry and Emma Provis and came from the mining village of Ystrad.

EE188 was repaired but was lost in a raid on Berlin on the night of 16 December 1943. Albert Manning, with two new gunners, was later killed along with the Bardney station CO during an attack on Frankfurt in February 1944.

Gilbert's name can be found on panel 087.

Sources: Bombers First and Last by Gordon Thorburn/9 Squadron ORB/Peter Green Collection.