

**Sgt. Jack Raymond  
Rankin R/208112 RCAF**

On a disastrous night in early May 1944 Bomber Command lost 42 Lancasters in an attack on a German military depot at Mailly-le-Camp in France. The attack, though accurate, was marred by confusion over the target and communication problems, all of which helped German night fighters score heavily.

Aircraft from No. 1 Group suffered particularly badly and 103 Squadron at Elsham lost three of the 12 aircraft it provided for the raid, which took place on the night of 3/4 May. There was not a single survivor from any of them.



One of the aircraft, Lancaster ND905 PM-B, was piloted by Sqn. Ldr. Harold 'Jock' Swanston, the 32-year-old A Flight commander. His rear gunner was 19-year-old Canadian Jack Rankin. The aircraft was caught as bombers were instructed to circle to await instructions and crashed near the French village of Villers-le-Chateau, five miles from Chalons-sur-Marne. Unbeknown to the controller, the area they were ordered to circle was close to a Luftwaffe night fighter beacon.

Jack came from a family of seven brothers and sisters, the children of George and Annie Rankin. The family home was in Westdale, Hamilton, Ontario, and Jack was a star athlete at school before joining Westinghouse as an assembler. He joined the RCAF as soon as he was old enough before training as an air gunner.

Those killed with him were the pilot Sqn. Ldr. 'Jock' Swanston, flight engineer Sgt. Dennis Hadden, navigator F/O Eric Dane, bomb-aimer WO Ron Boyd RAAF, wireless operator WO John Smith and mid-upper gunner Sgt. George Casey RCAF. All are buried in Villers-le-Chateau churchyard.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 088.

Photographic source: Elsham Wolds Association.