

Sgt. John Bowman Reay
1025301 RAFVR



John Reay was a young navigator from Doncaster who was killed when his Lancaster crashed in Lincolnshire as it returned from a bombing raid on the night of 13 February 1943.

He was part of the crew of Lancaster W4836 PH-P, of No. 12 Squadron, which had taken part in what was the biggest raid of the war on the French port of Lorient. Bomber Command sent 466 aircraft to Lorient and its extensive U-boat facilities, and just seven were lost.

W4836 had taken off from RAF Wickenby at 1741 hours and had almost made it back home. The bomber was in the airfield's circuit when it crashed at Newhall Farm, less than three miles from the runway, killing all of the young crew members, including an 18-year-old mid-upper gunner.

John was the 23-year-old son of Mr and Mrs Thomas Reay of Doncaster and was later buried in the town's Bentley-with-Arksey New Cemetery.

The others who died with him were the pilot P/O James Martin, flight engineer Sgt. Leonard Jones, bomb-aimer Sgt. Robert Coombs, wireless operator Sgt. James Callanan, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Dennis Gibbs and rear gunner Sgt. Edward Hemmings.

John's name can be found on IBCC panel 088.

Sources: IBCC/Bomber Command Losses 1943 by Bill Chorley/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.