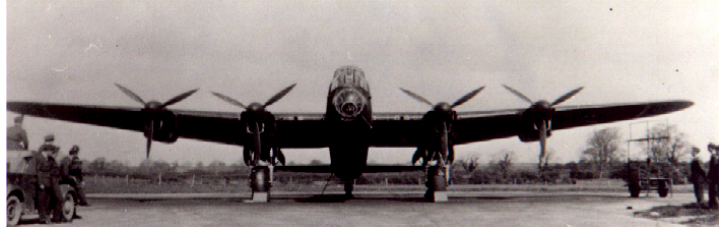


**Sgt. William John
Smith 943798 RAFVR**



William Smith was a mid-upper gunner who was among 21 aircrew from 12 Squadron killed during a raid on Berlin in January 1943.

Ten Lancasters had taken off from the squadron's base at RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire in the late afternoon of 17 January and only six of them returned. Twenty-one aircrew from three Lancasters were killed while the seven on board the fourth bomber shot down all survived. Most of the crews involved had flown in another long-distance raid on the German capital the night before.

William was part of the crew of Lancaster ED388 PH-Y and had only joined the squadron two weeks earlier after completing his training at No. 12 Operational Training Unit at Chipping Warden.

His aircraft had taken off from Wickenby at 1649 hours as part of a force of 170 Lancasters and 17 Halifaxes heading for Berlin for the second time in less than 24 hours. There are conflicting accounts of what happened to ED388. One suggests that the aircraft was later shot down, crashing near the small village of Klein Kummerfeld, near Neumunster in northern Germany. However, in 12 Squadron's records the Lancaster is recorded as having been shot down into the sea off the German island of Sylt and William's body was one of only two bodies later recovered and now buried in Kiel War Cemetery.

The others who died with him were the pilot P/O Harry Fansher RCAF, flight engineer Sgt. Roy Poole, navigator P/O Kenneth Butler, bomb-aimer Sgt. Edward Cadden, wireless operator P/O John Fallis RCAF and rear gunner Flt. Sgt. Frederick Marsh.

William's name can be found on IBCC panel 099.

Sources: Wickenby Museum/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt.