

Sgt. Peter Alfred Toms
1317569 RAFVR

The attack on the city of Oberhausen, on the night of 14/15 June 1943, was among the smaller attacks mounted by Bomber Command during the Battle of the Ruhr that summer, but it was to cost 49 Squadron 3 Lancasters and the lives of 18 men.



One of those men was 20-year-old rear gunner Peter Toms who came from the Sandygate area of Kingsteignton, in south Devon, and was the son of Alfred and Dorothy Toms.

Peter was part of the crew of Lancaster ED434, which had left RAF Fiskerton at 2232 hours, one of 12 aircraft from the squadron joining another 185 Lancasters and 6 Oboe-equipped Mosquitoes that carried out an accurate night raid. However, ED434 was later shot down, crashing at Dodewaard in Holland, on the north bank of the Waal, at 0113 hours. Only the pilot and flight engineer survived to become POW's. It was the crew's third operation together.

The others who died were the navigator F/O Alan Whittaker, bomb-aimer Sgt. Victor Horsley, wireless operator Sgt. John Coulsey and mid-upper gunner Flt. Sgt. Walter Chatfield RCAF. All five are buried in Uden War Cemetery. The two survivors were the pilot Sgt. Reginald Frost and flight engineer Sgt. Nathan Hitchcock.

Peter's name can be found on panel 107.

Sources: 49n Squadron Association/Air Battle of the Ruhr by Alan Cooper.