

Sgt. Robert Arthur Woolley 1805285
RAFVR



An ancient road between the villages of Belloy and Moyenne in the Oise region of France has now been renamed Chemin du Lancaster in honour of Robert Woolley and his young crew who died on what is understood to be their first operation with 626 Squadron.

Robert's aircraft, Lancaster LM102 UM-Z2, was shot down during an attack on marshalling yards in Rheims on the night of 22/23 June 1944 as the Allies attempted to consolidate the landings in Normandy.

His Lancaster had taken off from Wickenby in Lincolnshire at 2222 hours, one of 221

Lancasters and Halifaxes sent to attack rail targets in Rheims and Laon. The attacks were very successful at a cost of eight bombers.



LM102 crashed and exploded on farmland close to Belloy, killing all on board. Exactly sixty years later villagers renamed the road and erected this plaque honouring the crew, who were all buried in the churchyard 300 metres from this spot.

Robert headed an unusual all-sergeant crew. At the age of 20, he was the youngest member of the crew and came from the village of Hildenborough, near Tonbridge in Kent and was the son of Jack and Emily Woolley. He is remembered on Hildenborough's impressive war memorial.

The others who died were the flight engineer Sgt. Alfred Hawkins, navigator Sgt. Frank Goddard, bomb-aimer Sgt. Ernest Lewis, wireless operator Sgt. Herbert Browne, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Percival Lawrence and rear gunner Sgt. Eric Kirby.

His name can be found on panel 119.

Sources: 626 Squadron's Lost Lancasters/Aerosteles,