

Flt. Lt. Arthur Wynne Thomas
108063 RAFVR

Arthur Wynne Thomas was a very experienced bomber pilot. By the autumn of 1944 he had already completed a tour of operations flying Halifaxes with 77 Squadron at Elvington, near York. Then he had a successful spell as an instructor with 140 Operational Training Unit at Market Harborough.

In the summer of 1944 he was selected for a return to operational duties and later 'picked up' a new, inexperienced crew before taking them through the remainder of their training.

On 3 October 1944 they arrived at RAF North Killingholme to join 550 Squadron and finally found themselves on the operations board on 19 October for a planned attack on the city of Stuttgart.

They were allocated a new Lancaster, NG192 BQ-L, which had arrived at 550 even later than Arthur's crew did. The attack was spread over two waves and BQ-L was in the second, taking off from North Killingholme at 1702 hours. But, within a few hours, the Lancaster was shot down outbound by a night fighter, one of six aircraft lost on the raid, and all on board were killed.

Arthur and the other members of his crew are now buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in Bavaria. He was 31 and was the son of Oswald and Gertrude Thomas of Gerrard's Cross in Buckingham and lived with his wife, Gwendoline, in Wargrave, Berkshire.

The others who died were the flight engineer Sgt. Manning Harris, navigator Sgt. Maxwell Austin, bomb-aimer Sgt. John Knott, wireless operator Sgt. James Garland, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Ralph Garrad and rear gunner Sgt. Alex Lukeman.

**The above photograph shows a Lancaster of 550 Squadron at North Killingholme loaded with a 4,000lb 'cookie' and incendiaries, the kind of load carried for the Stuttgart raid.*

Arthur's name can be found on panel 120.

Sources: 550 Squadron Association/'Five-Fifty' by Patrick Otter

