

FO Henry (Harry) Philemon Collings 115183 RA

Henry, known as Harry, was born in 1920 in Tongwynlais, Glamorganshire, Wales, the son of Robert James Collings and Clara Annie Collings nee Saunders.

Educated at Tongwynlais Intermediate and Pontypridd Grammar School, in April 1938 he was awarded a Civil Service Commission and commenced work in London in the War Office.

Harry joined the RAF in 1940 and trained as a Pilot in the USA. He was commissioned in December 1941.

On 31 October 1942, seventeen Bostons from 88 and 107 Sqns were tasked with attacking the power stations in the vicinity of Lille (Rijsel) and Bethune, France. Harry and the crew from 107 Sqn were flying an 88 Sqn airframe. Four Bostons aimed for Mazingarbe, four to Gosnay, six to Pont-a-Vendin and three to Comines. Harry and the crew were headed for Pont-a-Vendin.

At 11:27 Harry and the crew departed RAF Great Massingham, Norfolk, in Boson III Z2179 (RH). Whilst over Jonkershove, Belgium his aircraft was attacked by two FW190s of 8/JG26s from Wevelgem-Kortijk, Belgium. The lead aircraft was piloted by Lt Paul Galland, the younger brother of the air ace Adolph Galland. Although the two air gunners returned fire, the shells from Galland's guns had set the aircraft on fire. An eye witness on the ground reported that, before the final fatal landing, Harry had made an attempt to land the aircraft but was forced to pull up due to a row of trees blocking the approach. After this failed attempt, the aircraft was flown towards Noordschote. The eyewitness saw the burning aircraft crash land near Jonkershove, Belgium, sliding along the field until it flipped over and exploded. All on board were killed.

This was Lt Galland's seventeenth victory and his last. Five hours later he was killed when he was shot down into the sea by a Spitfire whilst returning from an escort mission for the bombers to Canterbury.

Also killed : Sgt Stanley Walter Nash (WOp/AG); Sgt Francis Rex Pickering (WOp/AG); Sgt Ronald Tebbutt (Navigator)

Originally buried in Woumen Churchyard, Diksmuide, Belgium, in August 1967 Harry and his crew were transferred to Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Oost-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Harry is commemorated on Wall Panel 146

Photo Source: Aircrew Remembered

