

FS Thomas Douglas Ellis 415076 RAAF

Thomas was born on 18 July 1918 in Meekatharra, Western Australia, Australia, the son of Thomas Henry Ellis and Mabel Ellen Ellis nee Wall.

Educated at Meekatharra State School and Scotch College, Swanbourne, Thomas was employed as a locomotive engine driver when, in July 1940, he volunteered for aircrew duties with the RAAF. Called up in June 1941, Thomas completed his aircrew training in Australia in April 1942 with the award of his Observer badge, and transferred to the UK in August 1942.

Following advanced training at 11 OTU RAF Westcott, Buckinghamshire and 1657 HCU RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, in August 1943 Thomas was posted to 218 Sqn at RAF Downham Market, Norfolk.

On 22/23 September 1943, Bomber Command was tasked with an op against Hanover, the first major raid to the city for 2 years and the first of a series of four raids on this target. Hanover was an important railway junction at the intersection of two major east-west and north-south routes and was the fifth most active industrial centre in the Third Reich. A combined force of 711 aircraft were allocated to the task, including fifteen 218 Sqn crews. Three squadron crews failed to return.

At 18:50 on the 22 September Thomas, operating as the Navigator, and the crew departed RAF Downham Market in Stirling III EJ105 (HA-N).

In the target area, Thomas's aircraft was damaged by flak which killed the Rear Gunner, and part of his turret fell from the aircraft taking him with it. The Rear Gunner was found near Benstorf, south of Hanover, with parts of the gun turret nearby. The Mid Upper Gunner and Flight Engineer baled out and were taken as POW.

The remaining four crew nursed the aircraft homewards. On reaching the East Anglian coast of England, and with one engine on fire, the Stirling crashed in the early hours of 23 September at Hall Farm, Barrow, 5 miles WSW of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, killing the four remaining crew members.

Also killed: FO Wilfrid Selwyn Pryce-Williams (AB); PO Rodney Ernest Duffy RAAF (Pilot); FS Roy Lawrence Gehrig RAAF (AG); FS Arthur Henry John Morgan RNZAF (WOp/AG)

Thomas is buried in Cambridge City Cemetery, Cambridgeshire

Thomas is commemorated on Wall Panel 160

Photo Source: naa.gov.au

