

FO Henry Lovell Emden 36138 RAF

Henry Lovell Emden was born in 1914 in Finchley, Middlesex, the son of William Samuel Alfred Emden and Mary Emden nee Kimber. In 1938 he married Jocelyn Mary Bishop in Hendon, London. Their son was born after his death.

After graduating from the London School of Economics in 1938 with a BSC (Economics), Henry joined the RAF and was commissioned in 1938.

When war was declared on the 3 September 1939, Henry was a pilot with 110 Sqn based at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk. The Sqn was tasked with flying the first bombing operation of the war the following day.

A reconnaissance flight on the day war was declared had observed the German "pocket" battleship Admiral Scheer, cruiser Emden, and other warships anchored at the German naval base at the entrance to Wilhelmshaven on Germany's north coast. Orders were issued by 2 Group Bomber Command that fifteen Blenheims were to attack the warships, five from each of 107, 110, and 139 Sqn.

The morning of 4 September 1939 was cloudy over southern England with heavily overcast skies and a strong NW wind. Together with four crews from 107 Sqn, at 15:45 Henry departed RAF Wattisham, Suffolk in Blenheim IV N6199 (VE). Poor weather conditions over the Channel forced the aircraft to fly at very low level and the five aircraft from 139 Sqn jettisoned their bombs and turned back after failing to locate the warships; however, 110 Sqn aircraft found the targets.

The first wave of aircraft took the Germans by surprise, but as Henry attacked in the second wave, return German fire was both more intense and accurate. Henry's aircraft was hit and the Blenheim crashed into the bow of the battleship "Emden". Nine German seamen were killed and 20 wounded. By this odd quirk of fate, the first pilot killed in Bomber Command in WW2 was named Emden, lost in an attack against the Emden and due to crashing into the Emden. Henry's body was recovered from the water the following day.

Also killed : Sgt Stanley George McKenna Otty (Observer); Sgt Raymond Charles Grossey (Navigator); AC1 Ralph Evans (WOp/AG)

Henry is buried in the Sage War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, Germany. His remains were transferred in July 1947 from his original burial place in Wilhelmshaven German Military Cemetery, Bremen.

Henry is commemorated on Wall Panel 160

Photo source: IBCC

