

## **AC1 Ralph Evans 537187 RAF**

Ralph was born in 1918 in Gateshead, Durham, the son of Robert Edward Evans and Susannah Evans nee Mansfield.

Before joining the RAF in 1937, Ralph worked as a Clerk in the Mercantile Marine Offices on Newcastle Quayside, Northumberland.

When war was declared on the 3 September 1939, Ralph was a WOp/AG 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 Ralph and the crew 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 Ralph and the crew attacked in the second wave, return German fire was both more intense and accurate. Ralph's aircraft was hit and crashed into the bow of the battleship "Emden", killing nine German seamen and wounding twenty. All on board the aircraft were killed.

Also killed : FO Henry Lovell Emden (Pilot); Sgt Stanley George McKenna Otty (Observer); Sgt Raymond Charles Grossey (Navigator)

Ralph 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.

Ralph is commemorated on Wall Panel 174

Photo Source: IBCC

