

## **FS James Henry Fitch R/157039 RCAF**

James was born on 20 August 1920 in Ogema, Saskatchewan, Canada, the son of Claude De Witt Fitch and Lydia Mae Fitch nee McGarvey.

Educated at Caswell and Omega Schools, and Bedford Collegiate, Saskatoon, James was employed as a stereotype setter by Star-Phoenix Ltd in Saskatoon when, in June 1941, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Artillery where he served until he transferred to the RCAF in February 1942.

In August 1942 James completed his aircrew training in Canada with the award of his Air Gunner badge, and in October 1942 he embarked for the UK.

Following advanced training at 1656 HCU RAF Lindholme, Yorkshire, and 1662 HCU RAF Blyton, Lincolnshire, in March 1943 James was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire.



On the night of 16/17 April 1943, a combined force of 598 Bomber Command crews were tasked with an operation against the Skoda Armament works, Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, with the main force of 327 crews targeting the works and 271 crews on a diversionary raid to Mannheim. Fifteen 101 Sqn aircraft were allocated to the attack on the Pilsen factory.

At 21:21 on 16 April James, operating as the Mid Upper Gunner, and the crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor in Lancaster I ED379 (SR-F).

At 01:26 on 17 April James's aircraft was coned by searchlights of the lei. Scheinw. 11/XII and engaged by both heavy and light Flak units. At 01:28 the aircraft crashed in the district of Dutzendteich, Nürnberg. The WO/AG was the only crew member to bale out and was taken as POW. This was James's 4th op.

The raid was not a success. A large asylum building 7 miles from the target was mistaken for the factory, and only 6 crews brought back bombing photographs which were within 3 miles of the real target. The Skoda works were untouched.

Also killed: FO Thomas Henry Maxwell RAAF (AB); FS Colin Kerr Menzies RAAF (Pilot); Sgt Henry Evans (Nav); Sgt Jack Monks (AG); Sgt Harold Albert Upton (FE)

Originally buried in the South Nurnberg Cemetery, Nuremberg, Germany, in September 1947 James was moved to the Durnbach War Cemetery, Bayern, Germany.

James is commemorated on Wall Panel 164

Photo Source: [veterans.gc.ca/en](http://veterans.gc.ca/en)