

PO James Lester Fletcher J/15691 RCAF

James was born on 26 October 1918 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, the son of Levi Fletcher and Mary May Fletcher nee Skelly. Raised in Plantagenet, Ontario, James was educated at the local High School and worked for his father on the family farm until he was called up at the beginning of 1941 after enlisting in June 1940.

Training was completed in Calgary and Fingal where James was awarded his Air Gunner badge in March 1941. In April 1941 James was posted overseas and, following advanced training and some short detachments to 82 Sqn & 90 Sqn, he was posted to 226 Sqn at RAF Swanton Morley, Norfolk in January 1943.

On 6 December 1942, 226 Sqn were tasked as part of Operation Oyster, a daylight raid on the Philips radio and valve factory in Eindhoven. The 8th Air Force operated a diversionary raid to Lille using Spitfires as escort. A low level raid in clear conditions led to very accurate bombing and the factory was extensively damaged. The raid was deliberately planned for a Sunday when few employees would have been on site. Full production took 6 months to achieve due to the level of damage. This successful raid was the biggest daylight raid of the war so far comprising 36 Bostons, 12 Mosquitos and 48 Venturas. At 11:35 James, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Swanton Morley in Boston IIIIV V5854 (MQ-S). At 12:54 they crashed into the sea, killing all on board. Two claims were made, they were either hit by Marine Flak or shot down by Uffz. Robert Stellfeld of the 5./JG 1, flying an Fw 190 A-4.

Also killed : Flt Lt James George Annesley Maguire DFC MiD (Nav); Norman James Alexander Paton DFM (Pilot)

James has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

James is commemorated on Wall Panel 164