

PO Philip Henry Lowther 104490 RAFVR

Philip was born on 4 April 1922 in Tonbridge, Kent, the son of John Henry Lowther and Mary Louisa Lowther nee Harrison. Educated at Taunton School, Devon, he was granted a Short Service Commission as a pilot in August 1941.

Just five months before the fatal crash, whilst serving with 139 Sqn Coastal Command, Philip skilfully crash landed a crippled Hudson aircraft at Arminghall, Norfolk only two miles NW of Stoke Holy Cross. Badly burnt on his arms and face he had only just returned to operations after many months in RAF Hospital Ely.

On the afternoon of 18 July 1942, Philip and the crew departed RAF Wattisham in Blenheim IV Z7304 (WV) of 18 Sqn on an air test.

At 15:45, in low cloud and poor visibility, the aircraft collided with one of the 365 foot high Chain Home radar transmitter masts at Stoke Holy Cross near Norwich. The aircraft fell into a nearby field and all aboard were killed.

The 'Curtain Array', slung between two of the masts and used to transmit the massive power of the radar, was brought to the ground by the impact. The station was only off the air for a few minutes while the Mechanics reconnected the transmitter to a 'Stacked Array', superceded by the Curtain but retained as a standby. The steel mast, third in a line of four, was badly damaged and was dismantled some time well after the accident. A new mast was constructed on new foundations considerably displaced from the original and the mid-level gantry platform, not required for the Curtain Array, was omitted from the rebuilt tower.

Also killed were : Sgt Kenneth Custance Ellis (Observer); Sgt George Bernard Crawford (WOp/AG); Mr Kenneth Thomas Tagg (Civilian Assistant Meteorologist)

Philip is buried in Bideford Cemetery, Devon

Philip is commemorated on Wall Panel 201