

P/O Douglas Andrew Thicke J/19621, Royal Canadian Air Force.



Douglas Thicke was born on Christmas Day in 1922. His father was Frank Herbert Thicke, an electrician by trade, and Margaret Sellar Thicke, who was English by birth having been raised in London before emigrating to Canada. The family lived at 1092 Broughton Street, Ladysmith in Vancouver, British Columbia. Sadly, Douglas's father died at an early age and his mother was always regarded as his sole next of kin.

After completing his basic education, he enlisted into the RCAF on 24 March 1942 at No.3 "H" Depot in Edmonton, commencing training for his Pilot's qualification. Having completed the course, he arrived in England where he was later posted to 1664 HCU at RAF Dishforth in North Yorkshire where he went through the process of forming up with his own complete crew for operational purposes. However beforehand he joined the "Evans" crew by way of further preparation and was duly posted to 434 Squadron.

434 (Bluenose) Squadron was, at the time, equipped with the Handley Page Halifax V bomber, and operated out of RAF Croft, in Yorkshire.

On 18 March 1944 Douglas was the pilot, and in the "Dickie" seat as part of the crew of eight, which took off at 1834 hours from RAF Croft, Yorkshire, in Halifax LL178, Code WL-R, (which bore the name "The old straw Hat"), to undertake a mine laying operation in the Heligoland area. This operation was a diversionary raid whilst Frankfurt was being bombed by 846 other aircraft. This aircraft was one of 98 which had taken off for this diversion.

All went well on the outward trip, with the mines being successfully dropped. Returning home, the crew were advised that bad weather had developed over Croft. For reasons unknown, LL178 descended through cloud over the North Yorkshire Moors, something they and all crews were briefed not to do. The crew may have thought that they were over the last hill and in poor visibility began their descent to land. The aircraft struck the ground and crashed near Kepwick Bank Top, 7 miles ESE of Northallerton, at 2300 hours killing all on board. The crash report stated that the aircraft crashed whilst flying at a steep angle. Douglas was 21 years old.

Douglas Thicke is buried in the Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire.

He is commemorated on IBCC Panel 252.

Photo source: [www.veterans.gc.ca](http://www.veterans.gc.ca).