

War Memorial – The Green, Castle Bromwich

World War II 1939-1945

Pilot Officer Navigator Ralph William Thompson (1921-1943) 130160 Royal Air Force (Voluntary Reserve) RCAF 424th Squadron died aged 22



Ralph was born in 1921 and married his wife Joan in October 1942 while on war service.

Ralph Thompson received a commission on 12th October 1942 to the rank of P/O on probation (emergency). He was stationed at RAF Topcliffe, North Yorkshire with No 424 'Tiger' Squadron. This was a Royal Canadian Air Force squadron that formed that month. It flew its first operation on 15th January 1943 and spent the next three months operating with Bomber Command using the Vickers Wellington III aircraft and by the end of April 1943 had bombed a number of cities in Germany.

On the evening of the 14th February 1943 the crew of Wellington BK398 were undertaking an operational flight to bomb Cologne and they left base of Topcliffe early evening. The aircraft was slightly damaged by flak which made a hole in the windscreen, a splinter of glass lodged itself in the pilot's, Squadron Leader Johnnie Comar RAF of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, eye but he was able to make the return flight and land at base of Topcliffe just before midnight. The navigator on the flight was Pilot Officer Ralph William Thompson.

Two months later, on 11th April 1943 Ralph and his crew colleagues, Pilot Sergeant Robert M Buie RCAF aged 21 on his 13th operation, Flight Sergeant Walter Kimmerley RCAF and Pilot Officer LK Taylor RCAF were killed on a bombing mission to Frankfurt. When on the outwards leg of the flight the Wellington HE159 developed serious engine problems. It turned back to base but crashed over Rolvenden, Kent. Only Flight Sergeant Art Lees, rear gunner, parachuted to safety.

At the time of his death his widow Joan was living at 75 Chester Road, Castle Bromwich. There is a memorial to the crew at Lambsland Farm, Rolvenden, Kent. Ralph is buried at St Mary and St Margaret's Churchyard, Castle Bromwich and also commemorated at the war memorial at The Green, Castle Bromwich.



Lambsland Farm Memorial