

RAF No. 103 Squadron

8 april 2019 ·

Thanks to the International Bomber Command Centre Facebook page for this interesting post. Great respect for these heroes. 'Lest we forget'.



International Bomber Command Centre

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Sgt James Edward Callaghan 1459176

Twenty-year-old Jim Callaghan was the flight engineer of a Lancaster which was lost in an experimental raid which went tragically wrong.

He was part of the crew of Sqdn Ldr Charles O'Donoghue, A Flight CO of 103 Squadron at RAF Elsham Wolds who, in the spring of 1943, came up with the idea of single aircraft carrying out early morning nuisance raids on relatively small German targets. The first, again the small coastal town of Leer on 19 March, proved successful but when it was tried a second time on 1 April their Lancaster was caught by German fighters and shot down over Holland, killing all on board.

They left Elsham on board Lancaster ED626 PM-G at 4.30am heading for the town of Emmerich on the Rhine. Again, it was a low-level raid but this time the Germans were prepared. They managed to bomb Emmerich at first light but by this time two units of Fw190s had been scrambled and there followed an unequal chase across Holland before ED626 was finally shot down by Ofw Timm, crashing near Harderwijk in central Holland at 7.22am. There were no survivors. Today the crash site is marked by a simple wooden cross which is tended by local schoolchildren in remembrance of those who died.

Killed with Charles O'Donoghue and his flight engineer were navigator Sgt Tony Fry, bomb-aimer FO Eric Ashcroft, wireless operator Sgt John Winn, mid-upper gunner FO Ian Burns DFM and rear gunner Sgt Sefton Stafford. Six of the crew rest in Harderwijk General Cemetery while the rear gunner is buried in Amersfoot (Oud Leuden) Cemetery.

Jim was a Londoner and was the son of James and Mary Callaghan of Holborn. His name can be found on panel 016