

GLEN RANSOM

The son of Mr. and Mrs. William S. Ransom, Glen Irwin Ransom was born in Nanton and attended school there prior to joining the RCAF during August 1941. He was introduced to the air force at 3 Manning Depot in Edmonton and then posted to 4 Initial Training School in Edmonton following which he was selected for pilot training.

Glen trained on Tiger Moths at 18 Elementary Flying Training School at Boundary Bay, BC and then earned his wings flying Cessna Cranes at 15 Service Flying Training School at Claresholm, Alberta, just forty kilometres south of his home town. During a training flight while based at Claresholm, Glen saw one of his former school friends bringing in the milk cows. He decided to help. With the motors cut, he glided silently at low level towards the cows. Then Glen opened up his motors with a roar. Away went the cows and the saddle-horse started to buck and nearly lost its rider.

During August 1942, Glen travelled overseas. He attended 3 Advanced Flying Unit flying Oxfords and then 29 Operational Training Unit where he became part of a crew and trained on an actual warplane, the Wellington, and was assessed as 'above average' as a bomber pilot. Then, at 1660 Heavy Conversion Unit, Glen and his crew learned to do their work on Lancasters.

On 10 July 1943, Glen was posted to 44 Squadron RAF based at Dunholme Lodge in Lincolnshire. His first operation was just two days later, a lengthy 10:10 hour operation to Turin, Italy. Glen flew a total of eighteen Operations with 44 Squadron including the attack against Peenemünde, the site of the enemy's V-2 Rocket development program.



GRADUATION No. 2 SQUADRON CLARESHOLM, ALTA.
GLEN RANSOM 1st Row 7th FROM RIGHT



A painting of Lancaster ED974 by John Rutherford



F/S Alfred Millard DFM

During an operation to Bochum on 29 September, Glen's Lancaster was twice attacked by enemy night-fighters. Both were shot down by Glen's air gunners, F/S Alfred Millard and F/S D.L.T. Welensky. Rear gunner Millard was awarded an 'immediate' Distinguished Flying Medal.

On 30 November, Glen was transferred to 83 Squadron based at Wyton, as part of the elite Pathfinder Force. He completed seven operations with 83 Squadron, including four to Berlin, the most dangerous of Bomber Command's targets at the time.

At 4:03 in the afternoon of 20 January 1944, P/O Ransom and his crew took off on their eighth operation with 83 Squadron, their fifth to Berlin. They were flying Lancaster ED974. The markings on the fuselage were 'OL-Y'. His crew included Sgt. Garnet S.A. MacKinnon (flight engineer), F/S Cyril Fred Plumb (navigator), F.S. Arthur William Coote (wireless operator), Frederick Thomas West (bomb aimer), Sgt. Paul Vernon De Villiers (mid-upper gunner), and F/S Alfred Edwin Millard DFM (rear gunner).

In the target area, conditions were exceptionally favourable for the night-fighters, since a layer of cloud at 12,000 feet, illuminated by searchlights, provided a background against which the bombers could be silhouetted. About 25 miles from Berlin, near the town of Dreetz and while at about 20,000 feet, Glen's Lancaster was attacked by an Me110, twin-engined fighter flown by Hptm. Werner Hoffmann. Shortly after the attack, Hoffmann and his crew abandoned their night-fighter, so it seems likely that they were struck by fire from one of Glen's air-gunners.

Glen ordered his crew to abandon the Lancaster but only Sgt. MacKinnon, the flight engineer who sat next to Glen in the cockpit, managed to escape from the aircraft. According to his brother, Glen shouted, "Jump 'Mac', I'm right behind you." As 'Mac' jumped he saw the aircraft lurch –likely as Glen let go of the controls and was trapped inside as it spun out of control.

During a post-war investigation by the RAF, the Burgermeister of Dreetz and several of the local inhabitants reported that, "the aircraft exploded in the air and crashed outside Dreetz. The bodies of the six members of the crew who were still aboard were found scattered round the countryside. Nobody was sure what happened to the seventh. However, several people were sure that on the same night of the crash, an airman who had parachuted, was seen to pass through the village (Dreetz) and knocked on the door of a house. This airman may have been Sgt. MacKinnon." Sgt. Mackinnon was captured by the enemy and spent the remainder of the war as a Prisoner of War in Stalag Luft III.

P/O Ransom and the other crew members are buried in the Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery.

'OL-Y' was one of 35 bombers (4.6%) that failed to return from the operation. Three of the fourteen 83 Squadron Lancasters were lost.



ED974 crash site near Dreetz





Glen's son, Hal Osborne, has researched his father's RCAF service. As part of this, he contacted Gerald Walmsley who visited the crash site and recovered a piece of ED974. He sent it to Hal and it is now on display at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada.