



**Pilot Officer**  
**Thomas Harold Proudlock**  
Royal Canadian Air Force WW 2

By Norma Lavallée  
February 2023

# Pilot Officer Thomas Harold Proudlock



Figure 1. Thomas Harold Proudlock

Thomas "Harold" Proudlock is a true Canadian war hero. He was born May 1st, 1918 in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan to Duncan McDougall Proudlock and his wife Stella Warin. Harold as he was known, had three siblings: Muriel, Duncan Jr. and Marion. After



Harold left high school, he worked as a mechanic but also spent a few months working as a bartender since the pay was better. Harold listed his hobbies as hockey, baseball, woodwork and mechanics. He was known to be a very good woodcarver.

Harold enlisted in the Saskatoon Light Infantry (militia) in Regina on October 1, 1941, but he was medically discharged after two weeks due to torn muscles.



Figure 2. Thomas Harold Proudlock

Harold enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on November 7, 1941. Harold's high school principal provided a reference letter for his application to the RCAF. Harold underwent vigorous training that included being able to tolerate the harsh conditions of flying at high altitudes. Lancaster Bombers were built to maximize the space for the bombs and not for the comfort or safety of the crew. The crew compartment could get bitterly cold and was very cramped inside.<sup>1</sup> Some of the Canadian locations that Harold received training were: Saskatoon, Brandon, Manitoba, St. Thomas, Ontario, Jarvis, Ontario and Toronto (Malton), Ontario. Harold took much of his training at RCAF Station Jarvis, where the No. 1 Bombing

and Gunnery School (BCATP)<sup>2</sup> was located. Harold successfully completed his bomb aiming and machine gun certification on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942 in Malton and Jarvis, Ontario. It was no easy feat to graduate from the program. Out of the 6,500 people who took the program at RCAF Jarvis, 39 died during training exercises. Some of the airplanes that Harold trained in were: Ansons, Battles, Bolingbrokes, Wellingtons and finally Lancasters. In Canada and in England, some of Harold's training was done in a Link Trainer. A Link Trainer was an early version of a flight simulator.

While in Ontario, Harold met a young woman named Muriel who he obviously adored. He wrote glowingly about Muriel in his letters back home and wrote that no English girl could measure up to her.

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<sup>1</sup> I recently toured a Lancaster Bomber at the Air Command Museum in Nanton, Alberta. The crew cabin ceiling is so low that very few men if any could stand upright in it. There were cables and structural components on the floors making a quick egress extremely difficult.

<sup>2</sup> British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. (BCATP) Training program during WW2 for aircrews from United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.



Figure 3. Fairey Battle. Photo in Public Domain

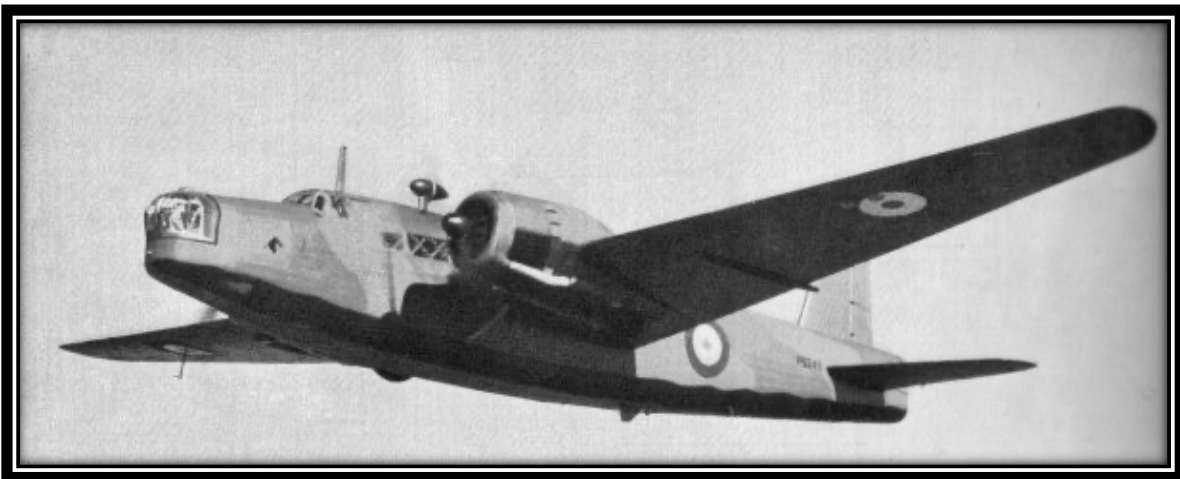


Figure 4. Wellington. Photo in Public Domain



Figure 5. Bolingbroke. Photo in Public Domain

Harold left Halifax, Nova Scotia on October 28th, 1942 and arrived in England on November 4<sup>th</sup>. Once in England, Harold joined the 23rd Operational Training Unit (23rd O.T.U.) and commenced his in-flight training on December 1, 1942. On that day, Harold was practicing his Air-Gunning in a Wellington Bomber. He flew 2 times that day, each flight was about 1 ½ hours long. The first flight seemed to go well but it was noted in Harold's log book that on his second flight the plane crashed on landing. He did not fly with that pilot again. There was no mention of damage or injuries.

While Harold was in Canada and in 23<sup>rd</sup> O.T.U., he spent some of his time learning to pilot airplanes.

Harold became a member of No. 426 Bomber Squadron known as the Thunderbird Squadron. This squadron was based out of Linton-on-Ouse, North Yorkshire, England. Harold Proudlock was a bomb aimer in Pilot Officer A.L. Olsson's crew. In time, P/O Olsson's crew would become one of the No. 426 squadron's most experienced crews.

## The Lancaster Bomber

The Lancaster Bomber was a 4-engine heavy bomber used by the British and Commonwealth Air Forces beginning in 1941. There were several models of Lancasters made during the war. Harold's crew flew in a Lancaster Mark II for most and perhaps all of their missions. The maximum range and speed of the bombers depended on the weight of the bomb load, altitude during the flight and weather conditions. The maximum speed at sea-level was 245 mph (394 kph) and maximum range with a bomb load of 7000 lb. (3175 kg) was 2530 miles (4070 km).

### Dimensions of Lancaster Bombers<sup>3</sup>

Wingspan: 102 ft.	31 meters
Length: 69 ft.	21 meters
Height: 20 ft. 6 in.	6.25 meters

### War Statistics

6,000 Lancaster Bombers were built for duty in WW2  
3,400 Lancaster Bombers were lost  
125,000 crewmembers in total flew in Lancaster Bombers  
About 55,000 were killed  
10,000 became prisoners of war

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Bomber Command Museum of Canada. Nanton, Alberta  
<http://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/>

## Crew of a Lancaster Bomber

The aircrew typically consisted of the following crewmembers: pilot, navigator, wireless operator, flight engineer, bomb aimer, upper gunner, and rear gunner.

### Thomas Harold Proudlock - Bomb Aimer

Harold's position as bomb-aimer was in the front glass cupola. He had many responsibilities. Not only was Harold responsible for releasing the bombs on target, but he also manned the front nose machine gun. Bomb-aimers also aided the navigator to determine the airplane's location and took pictures of the damage to the target site with the wing camera. Harold was also a trained pilot hence the rank of Pilot Officer. If the pilot was incapacitated or tired Harold could fly the aircraft, presuming he was able to get to the pilot seat from his cupola which was not an easy maneuver especially in an emergency situation!

I found the following description in a Wikipedia article.

“Starting at the nose, the bomb aimer had two positions to man. His primary location was lying prone on the floor of the nose of the aircraft, with access to the bombsight controls facing forward, with the bombsight computer on his left and bomb release selectors on the right. He also used his view out of the large transparent Perspex nose cupola to assist the navigator with map reading. To man the Frazer Nash FN5 nose turret, he stood up placing himself in position behind the triggers of the twin .303 in (7.7 mm) guns. Ammunition for the turret was 1,000 rounds per gun (rpg). The bomb aimer's position contained the nose emergency hatch in the floor; at 22 inches by 26.5 inches, it was difficult to exit through while wearing a parachute.”<sup>4</sup>

During take-off, the bomb aimers were supposed to be situated in the main body of the airplane. Quite often the bomb aimers would have already taken their position in the nose of the aircraft before take-off due to the awkward and limited entry space to the nose of the plane. The bomb aiming computer was a mechanical device and not an electronic device like we use today.

While on route to the target and when given the order, the bomb aimer would drop paper bags of aluminum foil out of his window. The bags called “Window”, would break open in the air and the foil would blind the German radar. These paper bags took up substantial room in the bomb aimers tight quarters in the nose of the plane.

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<sup>4</sup> Wikipedia



Figure 6. Lancaster Bomber- Wikipedia Photo

## Some of the Bombs Carried on Lancaster Bombers

- 8000 lb. impact-fused high explosive
- 4000 lb. impact-fused high explosive known as the “Cookie”
- 1000 lb. impact-fused high explosive

Also, the following Small Bomb Containers (SBC) with incendiary bombs or bomblets were carried:

- 3 x 150 x 4 (3 small bomb containers (SBC) with 150 4-pound bomblets)
- 4 x 150 x 4 (4 SBC with 150 4-pound incendiary bomblets)
- 3 x 30 x 8 (3 SBC with 30 8-pound incendiary bomblets)
- 4 x 30 x 8 (4 SBC with 30 8-pound incendiary bomblets)

The Small Bomb Containers were designed to break up after being dropped from the plane dispersing the incendiary bombs. These types of bombs had to be handled very carefully by the ground crew because they were fragile. They were not very accurate in hitting the target.



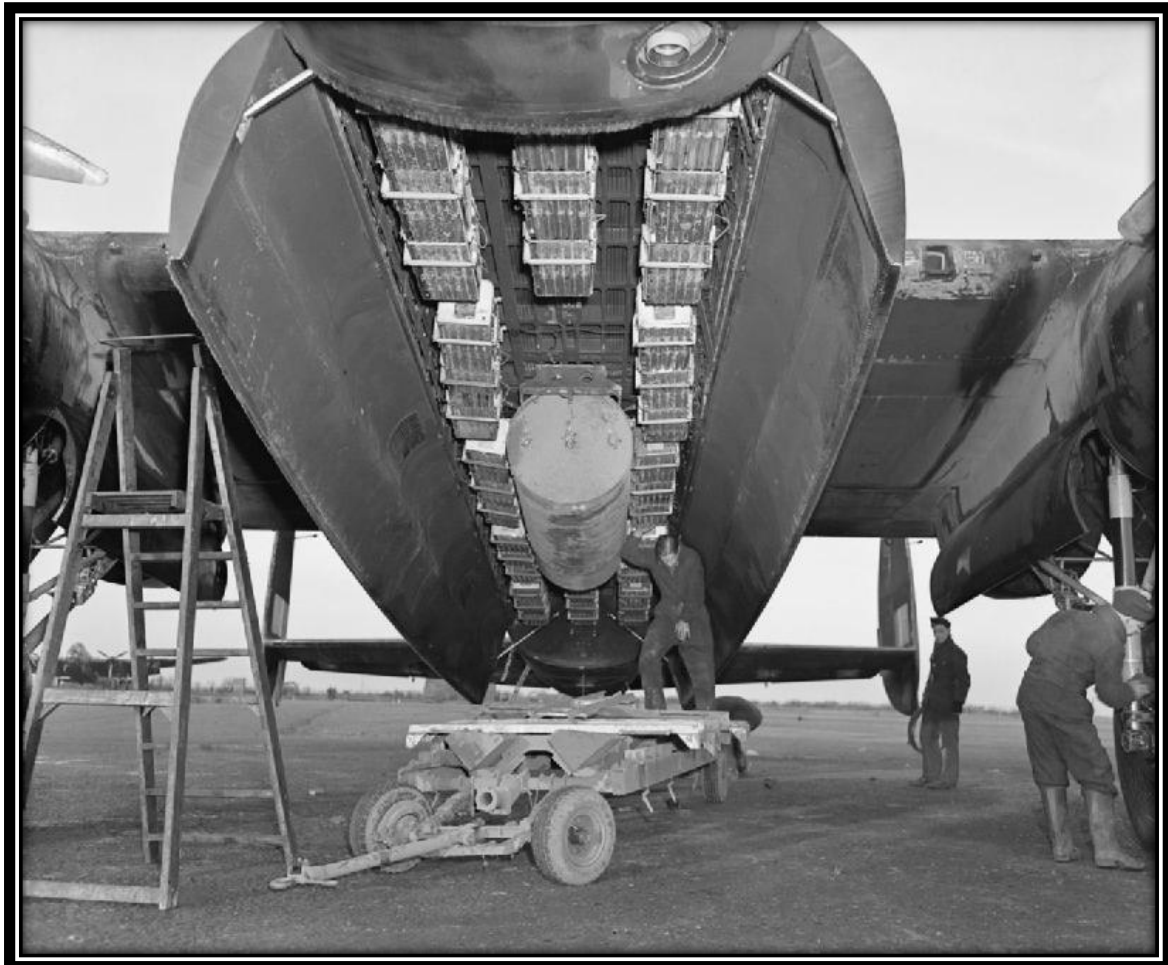


Figure 7. Lancaster Bomb Load: Large bomb is the 4000 lb. "cookie" and small bombs are SBC. Photo in Public Domain

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE		119063	
	Name <u>PROUDLOCK, Thomas Harold</u>	R. 1 3 9 6 7 3	
	Rank <u>AC2</u>	R. C. A. F.	
	Age <u>23</u>	Height <u>5' 11"</u>	Weight <u>149</u>
	Hair <u>Med. Brown</u>	Eyes <u>Blue</u>	Hair on face <u>Fair</u>
	Marks, scars, etc. <u>Scar through left eyebrow.</u>		
	<i>Thomas Proudlock</i> (Signature of holder)		
	<i>C. Bishop</i> (Signature of issuer)		
	Place <u>Saskatoon Recruiting Centre</u>	Date <u>November 7th, 1941.</u>	
		Card serial number <u>81740</u>	

Right Index Fingerprint

Figure 8. RCAF Identification Card



## The Pathfinders

Early in the war, bombing missions were flown in the daytime. While this gave good visibility on the target area, it also gave the enemy a perfect view of the bombers. At the time, fighter escort planes could not carry enough fuel to protect the bombers all the way to the target and back. The number of bombers lost and casualty rates were extremely high. It was decided that bombing raids should be carried out at night but the accuracy and effectiveness of the bombing was very poor. Pathfinder Aircraft were equipped with radar, radio beams and other navigational aids that were not widely available at the time. The Pathfinders were select crewmen that were highly skilled in navigation and navigational equipment. The Pathfinders would locate the target and mark it by dropping flares and/or incendiaries to pinpoint the target for the Lancaster Bombers. The airplanes often used by The Pathfinders were Mosquito Bombers. It was much more difficult to shoot down a Mosquito Bomber than a Lancaster due to the Mosquitos speed and manoeuvrability. Mosquitos were a 2-engine aircraft that was flown by 2 pilots and was a very fast plane for its time. Mosquitos also served duty as a night fighter, reconnaissance, precision bomber and anti-submarine bomber.



Figure 9. Mosquito Bomber Photo in Public Domain

# T. H. Proudlock Locations in England

WW 2 Locations of T. H. Proudlock

- 1 Linton-on-Ouse, North Yorkshire
- 2 York
- 3 Horham, East Suffolk
- 4 Snetterton Heath, Norfolk
- 5 Downham Market, Norfolk

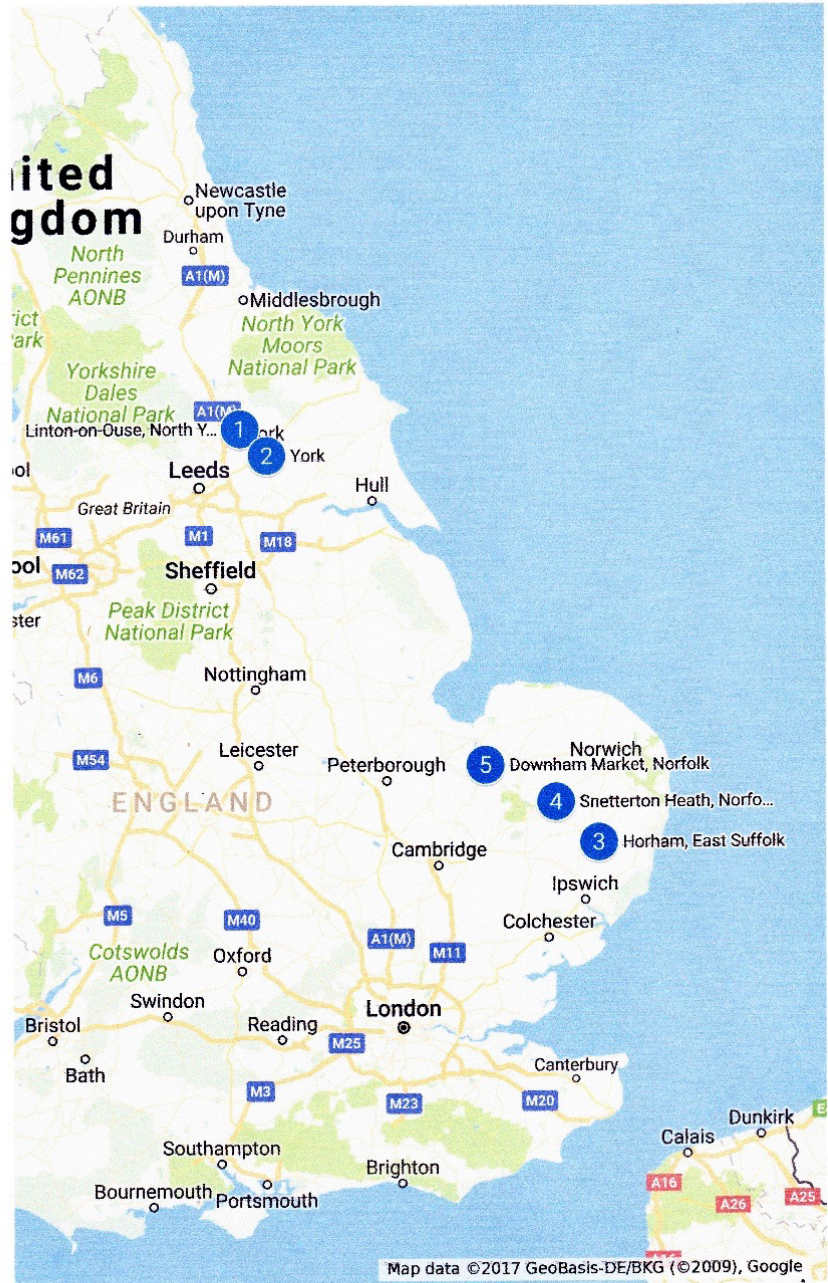


Figure 10. Places in England Associated with Harold Proudlock





Figure 11. Harold Proudlock



Figure 12. Harold Proudlock

## Log Book of Thomas Harold Proudlock

For virtually his entire time of service in the RCAF, Harold kept a Log Book. When he was in training, he recorded the: date, plane type, pilot's name, his duty or what he was practicing, and time spent in the air. When he was on active bombing operations he recorded the: date, time of take-off (hour), type of aircraft with identification number, pilot, duty, bomb load, remarks on the operation and flying time. His log entries are listed in **red font** in the following account.

## Diary Entries of Harold Proudlock

During some of his time in England, Harold kept a diary. Although the entries in his diary are brief in nature, they do reveal some of the major bombing missions he had participated in. Also included in his entries, are some of his other operational and recreational activities. There are entries that refer to his brother Duncan MacDougall (Mac) Proudlock Jr<sup>5</sup>, who was also in RCAF and posted in England. I will record Harold's actual diary entries in *blue script* while I will add historical background in black font. I have added some punctuation in the entries for clarity purposes.

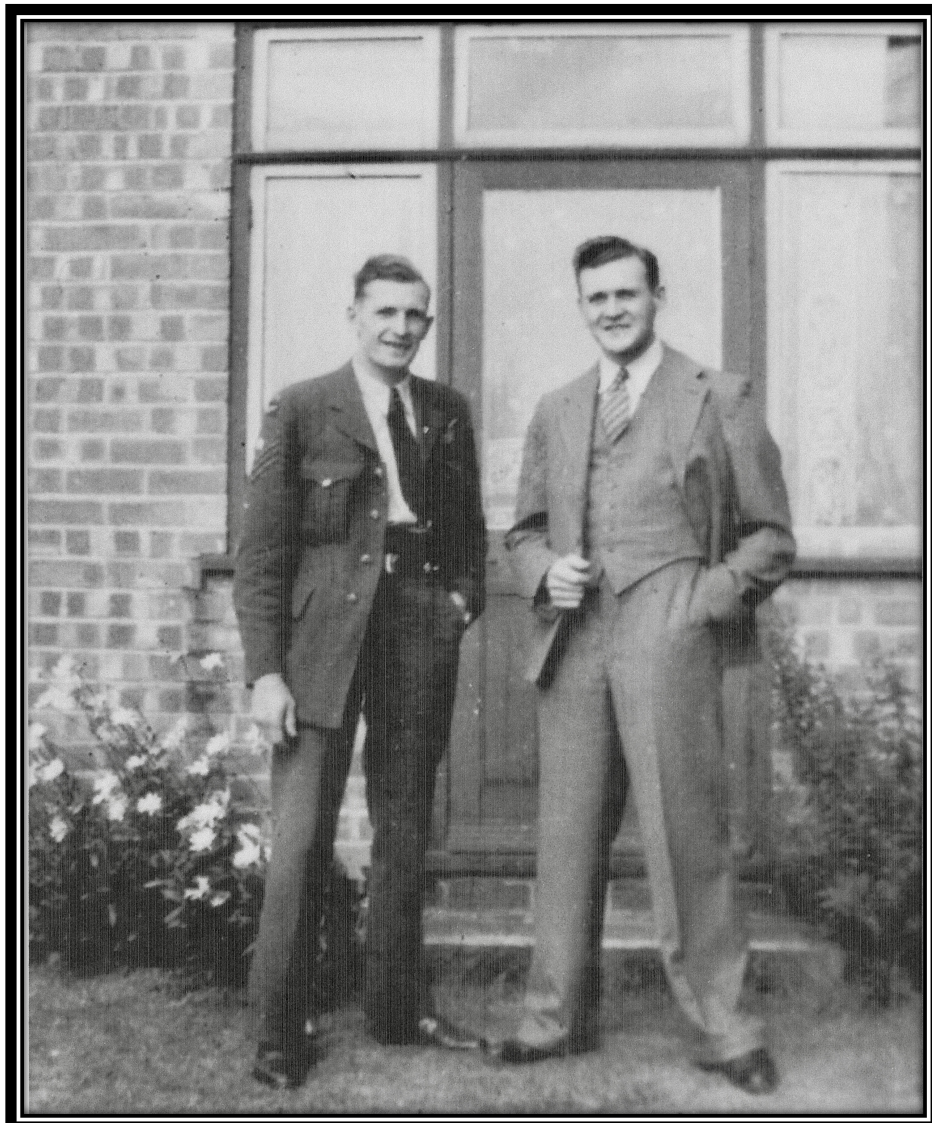


Figure 13. (left to right) Harold Proudlock and His Brother Sgt. Duncan MacDougall (Mac) Proudlock.

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<sup>5</sup> Sgt. Duncan MacDougall (Mac) Proudlock. RCAF 423 Squadron Wireless Operator and Air Gunner on Sunderland Flying Boats. Anti-submarine and convoy escort duty.

## Missions and Activities of Harold Proudlock

September 23, 1943. Mannheim, Germany

Hour 19:15. Lancaster DS-711. Pilot F/Sgt. Olsson. Ops. (Operation) Mannheim. Bomb Load: 1 x 8000. 5 SBC. Hit Sugar Factory. Flying Time 6 hr. and 25 minutes.

The objective was to destroy the northern part of the city of Mannheim. Mannheim was an industrial city. Not only the industries were bombed but residential areas as well. This was in retaliation for the bombing of civilian areas in England. It was a moonless night. While inbound to the target and over Namur, Belgium, a Ju 88 German fighter attacked Harold's Lancaster. The rear gunner Sgt. Pulham saw the fighter astern and below at about 400 yards away. Pulham opened fire and the Lancaster took evasive action. The fighter did not continue the pursuit.

October 7, 1943. Stuttgart, Germany

Lancaster DS 711B. Pilot W/O Olsson. Ops. Stuttgart. Jettisoned English Channel, Bomb Load 1 x 8000, 5? SBC. Rear Gunner Frost Bitten. Flying Time 3hr. 30 min.

The city of Stuttgart is situated at the center of the railway system in southwestern Germany. It was home to industries such as Daimler and Porsche. The rear gunner fell unconscious due to an oxygen leak. He had to be rescued by other members of the crew. The plane returned to Linton-on-Ouse.

October 8, 1943. Hanover, Germany

Lancaster DS 711B. Pilot W/O Olsson. Ops. Hanover. Rear Gunner got Ju 88. I got 109 possible hits. Baby factory? Flying time 4 hr. 40 min.

The mission was to bomb Hanover, Germany. Hanover was an important railway hub. It was an industrial city producing military vehicles, aircraft and rubber parts for equipment. Hanover had a military training facility and was the headquarters of the German 19<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. On the way to Hanover, Harold Proudlock spotted a lone enemy fighter approaching at high speed. There was no time for evasive action. Harold opened fire from his machine gun but could not get a good shot due to the speed of the fighter going by. The Luftwaffe fighter did not fire and disappeared in the distance. On the return to base from Hanover, Harold's plane was once again attacked by an enemy fighter. The fighter was first sighted by the mid-upper gunner (Sergeant R.V. Jones) and later by the rear gunner (Sergeant K.M. Pulham). The fighter pulled within 300 yards of the tail of the Lancaster without opening fire. Pulham called for evasive action and started firing his tail-gun and hit the fighter causing it to explode. Harold's plane landed at RAF Snetterton Heath, Norfolk instead of their home base. They returned to Linton-on-Ouse the next day. Sgt. Pulham's heroics were featured in a newspaper article. Harold is mistakenly referred to as Terry.



## Bags First Nazi Junkers When 19

LONDON, Nov. 5.—The R.C.A.F. reported Thursday night in an overseas press release that 19-year-old Flt. Sgt. Ken Pulham of Vancouver had the satisfaction of blowing a Nazi Junkers 88 fighter to bits on his second operational flight.

One of a crew of Canadians and Britons in the bomber "B for Beer" of the "Thunderbird" squadron of the R.C.A.F. Bomber Group in England, Sergeant Pulham opened fire and ordered evasive action as the enemy plane closed in. At 300 yards the JU-88 exploded with a bright flash, and the battle was over.

A member of the crew was Flt. Sgt. "Terry" Proudlock of Kindersley, Sask.

Figure 14. Unknown Newspaper

October 18, 1943. Hanover, Germany

Lancaster DS711B. Pilot W/O Olsson. Ops. Hanover. Bombed above clouds. Flares bright as Day. Load 1 x 4000, 8 SBG Flying time 5 hr. 45 min.

October 20, 1943. Leipzig, Germany

Lancaster DS711B. Pilot W/O Olsson. Ops. Leipzig. Flew through 10/10 cloud at 23000 ft. Icing. Proper shaky-do. 1 x 4000, 6 SBC. Flying time. 7 hr. 45 min.

At the start of WW2, Leipzig was the sixth largest city in the German Reich. Leipzig was a major industrial and railway hub where the Messerschmitt BF 109 fighters were being manufactured. 10/10 clouds mean it was totally overcast.



November 3, 1943. Dusseldorf, Germany

Hour 17:14. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot W/O Olsson, Bomb Aiming. Ops. Dusseldorf – 1 x 4000, 5x 250. Rear Turret U.S. (unserviceable) Turn Back. Flying Time 3 hours.

The target was a tubular steel factory. The rear gunner's turret was jammed. The "cookie" was dropped in the English Channel before landing. When Harold's bomber neared Southwold, England, it was mistaken for an enemy aircraft despite flashing the correct recognition signals. They were shot at by friendly fire making it a very rough ride home.

November ?, 1943. Berlin, Germany

Hour 17:20. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot W/O Olsson, Bomb Aiming. Ops. Berlin. Load 1 x 4000, 4 x 250. Hang up on No. 13. (no idea what that means) Good Show. Flying Time. 7 hr. 30 min.

December 1943. Training exercises all month.

Note: January 1, 1944 and Onward. Harold's logs contain much less detail.

January 5, 1944. Stettin, Germany

Hour ?:30. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson, Flying Time 8 hr. 20 min.

Stettin was Germany's largest Baltic port. The weather was clear and the bombing was successful. Stettin which is now spelled as Szczecin and vicinity, was given to Poland after the war.

January 14, 1944. Brunswick, Germany

Hour 16:50. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson, Ops. Brunswick. Shot up by flak. 16 Holes. Flying Time 5 hr. 45 min.

Brunswick was an important centre for the manufacturing of armaments and airplanes. It was also a highly populated area.

January 20, 1944. Berlin, Germany

Hour 16:35. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson, Ops. Berlin. Oxygen u/s (unserviceable) Flying Time 4 hr 10 min.

Returned early due to oxygen problem.

January 21, 1944. Magdeburg, Germany

Hour 19:55. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Ops. Magdeburg. Landed Downham Market. Flying Time 7 hrs.

Magdeburg was an industrial city. Harold's bomber was diverted to the airbase at Downham Market, Norfolk. They flew back the next day to Linton-on-Ouse in the afternoon.

January 27, 1944. Berlin, Germany

Hour 18:00. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. High (illegible) Second Dickey. Flying Time 8 hr. 25 min.

Seven flight crews based out of Linton-on-Ouse were lost in this raid. Poor visibility. Harold implies he flew "second dickey". This means he flew as co-pilot during this mission.

January 28, 1944. Berlin, Germany

Hour 00:20. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Ops. Berlin. Flying Time 7 hr. 20 min.

Successful mission. 667 aircraft were sent on this mission. 46 planes were lost. All planes from No. 426 squadron returned from the mission.

January 30, 1944. Berlin, Germany

Hour 17:15. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Ops. Berlin. Flying Time 6 hr.50 min.

It was hoped that the repeated bombing of Berlin would break the spirit of the German people and they would lose the will to continue fighting the war. They did not. The bombings did make more than a quarter of the city uninhabitable.

February 19, 1944. Leipzig, Germany

Hour 23:50. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops Leipzig

DRunoverToget (Not at all sure what this means) Flying Time. 7 hr. 15 min.

*Briefed for Leipzig for the second time. The target was hot. But didn't have any trouble. Bomb Load: 1 x 4000, 3 x 150 x4, 3 x 30 x 8. We were in S Lights (search lights) for 5 minutes but was able to get away. My camera wouldn't work. We lost 79 aircraft. Bad show.*

There were 823 aircraft flying this mission and of that there were 561 Lancaster Bombers. You will notice that Harold referred to the night as a bad show. Many things went wrong that night resulting in the loss of many crews and aircraft. Some factors that lead to the high losses were: the Luftwaffe main fighter force was not fooled by the diversionary tactics, winds dispersed the bombers as they flew to Leipzig, the skies were clear all the way to the target area allowing German fighters to continually attack, and the actual target area was overcast. Some of the planes were shot down by enemy fighters and anti-aircraft flak. Four bombers collided over the target area while trying to avoid being attacked. The bombing mission was not entirely successful in destroying the targets.

February 20, 1944. Stuttgart, Germany

Hour 23:55. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Stuttgart. Flying Time 7 hr. 25 min.

*Went to Stuttgart. Bomb load: 1 x 4000, 3 x 150 x4, 3 x 30 x 8. Lost 8 aircraft. Good show. Nothing much to the trip. Had second Pilot. I flew for 30 minutes. Very tired and cold.*

A total of 598 Allied aircraft were involved in this mission. It was a bitterly cold night. The temperature at the back of one Lancaster was reported to be -60° F and this was cold enough to freeze some oxygen lines.

February 21, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Arrived home from Stuttgart at 8:00 in morning. So had breakfast and went to bed. Went to the pub for an hour then went to bed at 9 o'clock. Poor day.*

Stand down day for both the ground crews and the flight crews.

February 22, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Instructed 2 new crews on the M.XIV BS (bombsight). Were briefed to raid Frankfurt. But then weather closed in so was scrubbed the last minute - had 4 engines running. Bomb load: 1 x 4000, 3 x 150 x4, 3 x 30 x 8. Finished the day going to the show "Holy Matrimony".*

Mark XIV bombsight was invented by the RAF during WW2. It was also known as the Blackett sight and it replaced technology that had been used in WW1. It was basically a mechanical computer. It contained a stabilizing platform that kept the sight pointed at the target during maneuvers and it was much more accurate than the previous bomb aiming equipment.

The weather turned cloudy, rainy and icy that evening.

"Holy Matrimony" was a very successful comedy movie made in 1943.

February 23, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Stand Down. Assessed bombs which were dropped on Range. Supposed to fly in afternoon, but there were 4 ground crew were flying so I didn't go. Put on new uniform for first time to laundry to York. But didn't stay. Wednesday? ? Holiday Wrote letters home.*

February 24, 1944. Schweinfurt, Germany

Hour 18:20. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Schweinfurt. Flying Time 8? hr. 10 min.

*Target tonight, Schweinfurt. Very good show. Clear over target. U.S.A.F bombed in daylight. We went at night 700 aircraft. Bomb Load: 1 x 4000, 3 x 150 x4, 4 x 30 x 8. Losses are we lost*

*on one station. Read 5 letters. Also, a call from Mac on leave on the 24<sup>th</sup>. My leave may come at end of month. We screened our WAG (Wireless Operator, Air Gunner). John Powell which? 30 trips. Boy was he ever happy to finish up.*

Schweinfurt was where Germany's main ball-bearing factories were located. Ball-bearings were critical to the German war effort as they were found in everything from jeeps to airplanes. The Pathfinder's were able to mark their targets. The crews could see the fires started by their bombs as the target area was clear. All of the squadron returned safely to England. Individual crew members were required to fly 30 missions. Aborted missions did not count towards the total. After 30 missions the individual would be reassigned to non-combat roles such as instructor. John Powell had survived his 30 missions.

Figure 15 is a photocopy of the map that Harold had in his personal effects. Presumably he used this map the night of the bombing of Schweinfurt. The actual map is about the size of 2 to 3 pages of letter size computer paper put together. The paper is now quite fragile. I was able to photocopy it with a miniature scanner and software that stitches the pieces together.

#### February 25, 1944. Augsburg, Germany

**Hour 21:20. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Augsburg. Flying Time 7 hr. 30 min.**

*We went to Augsburg tonight. Very good show but before takeoff the 4000 (lb. bomb) fell through the Bomb Doors onto ground, you should have seen the ground crew run. We loaded? it again. But it fell off once the target so we have put new Bomb Doors on now. Bomb Load: 1 x 4000, 3 x 150 x 4, 4 x 30 x 8. Unreadable sentence. Aiming point. Lost 24 aircraft.*

Messerschmitt had a factory in the south end of Augsburg. The attack caused much damage. It was a very cold night and the water hoses to fight the fires froze allowing the fires to spread.

#### February 26, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse and York

*Mac and I decided to go to York. Had Dinner then went to a show "The Black Raven" It wasn't bad, came home early and went to bed. All in.*

"The Black Raven" was made in the USA in 1943 and was a murder-mystery type movie.



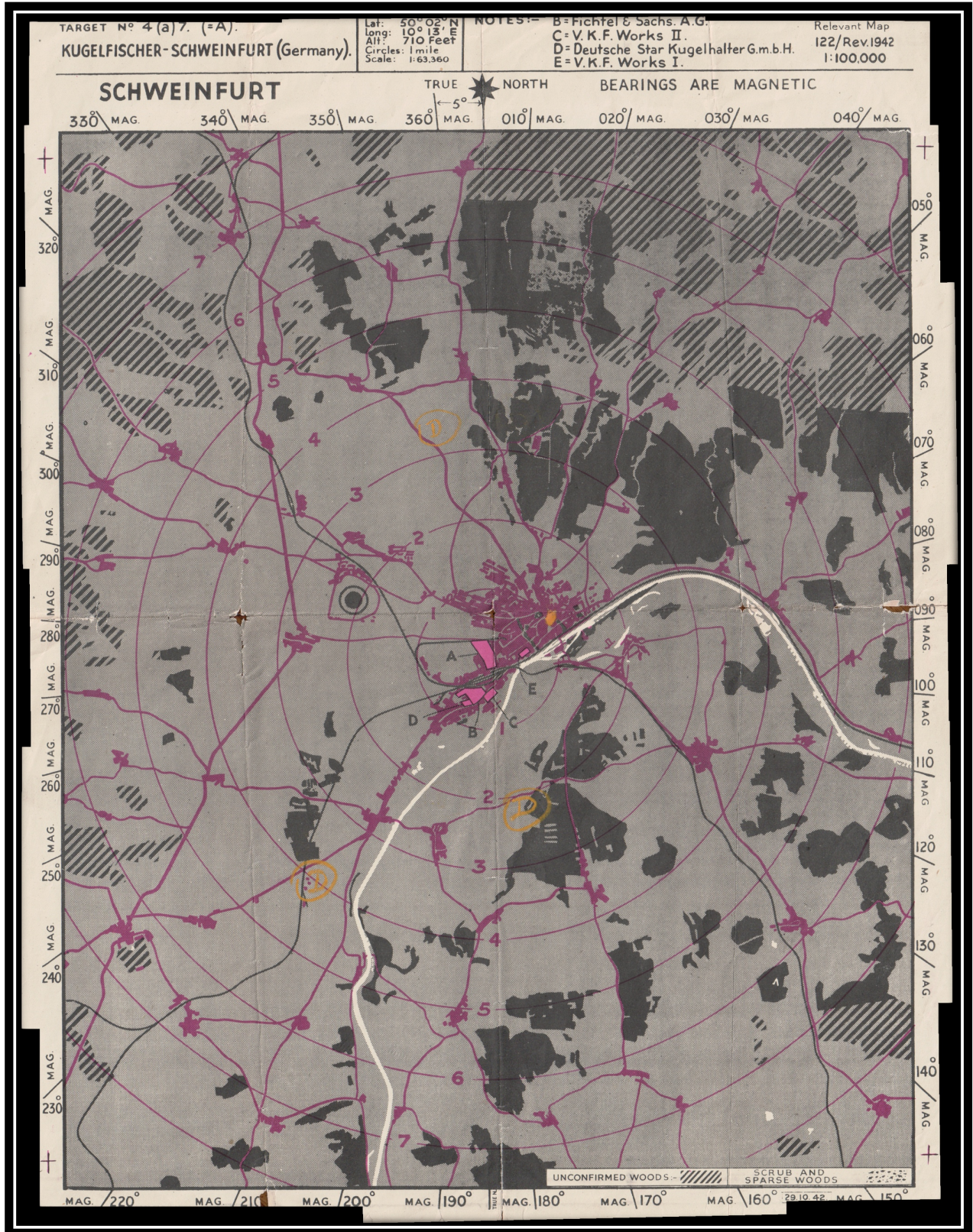


Figure 15. Harold Proudlock's Map of Schweinfurt, Germany.



February 27, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Missed breakfast but I didn't mind. Was told that I was going on a Bombing Leaders Course. Mac and I went to the show in Camp. "Above Suspicion" Went to bed. Poor Day.*

"Above Suspicion" was a 1943 American spy movie which starred Joan Crawford and Fred McMurray. It received mixed reviews.

Feb 28, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Stand down, so went to my room and studied for my exam. Went to the mess for a few hours then went to the Pub with Terry.*

February 29, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse and York

*Went to York to get Laundry. But it wasn't ready, so stayed in and studied. Jack printed some pictures. Now it is time for bed.*

March 1, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Ready to go to Stuttgart but at take-off time, it started to rain and snow, so our station couldn't go. ½ in. ice all-over aircraft. Bomber Command lost 4 aircraft out 600.*

March 2, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

**Night time training exercise. Hour 20:30. Lancaster DS711B. Pilot P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Night Cross Country. Flying Time 3 hr. 2 min.**

*It has been a dull day but we had a 4-hr. cross country which I flew half the time, navigated the rest. Went to bed at 4 o'clock in morning.*

March 3, 1944. Linton-on-Ouse

*Called at 6:00 in morning to go to H.Q. (Headquarters) Found out over there that I have to take 2 different courses. Boy if I make it I'll sure have to work.*

March 10, 1944. Stuttgart, Germany

**Hour 19:30. Lanc II. DS-711B. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Stuttgart. Flying Time 7 hr. 30 min.**

March 18, 1944. Frankfurt, Germany

**Hour 19:15. Lanc II. DS-711B. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Frankfurt. Flying Time 5 hr. 25 min.**

The crew was successful in dropping their bomb load. On their return to Linton-on-Ouse, the base became socked in with low cloud so Harold's plane was diverted to



another airfield in Horham, East Suffolk. The plane landed safely there. Unfortunately, another taxiing plane hit Harold's Lancaster damaging a wing and the tail. There were no injuries. This incident was to have great significance in the final mission that Harold and his fellow crewmembers would undertake.

March 19, 1944. Horham, Suffolk to Linton-on-Ouse

Hour 11:30 Lancaster-772 E. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Flying Time 1hr.

They had to fly in a substitute bomber as their Lancaster DS-711B could not be fixed quickly.

March 22, 1944. Frankfurt, Germany

Hour 18:50. Lancaster LL-634 F. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops Frankfurt. Flying Time 5 hr. 50 min.

Harold and his crew flew in a substitute bomber. There were 816 aircraft involved in this mission. There were many German fighters to contend with. The mission was successful in hitting its target.

March 24, 1944. Berlin, Germany

Hour 19:00. Lancaster DS-789 A. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops Berlin.  
Flight Time 6 hr. 45 min.

Harold and his crew flew in a substitute bomber. The 100 miles per hour winds were much stronger than anticipated and stronger than most crews had ever dealt with before. The bombers were more dispersed than usual because of that wind. Over Berlin there was flak and searchlights but not many German fighters. The winds made it very hard for The Pathfinders to mark the target and the clouds made it hard to see the markers and targets. Losses were heavy in this operation.

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I have included the following picture that was obtained from the BBC Archives of "WW2 People's War". The Archive contains articles written by the public. The article was focused on Sergeant Thomas Earle the flight engineer. Included was the following group photograph but only Sergeant Earle was identified in the picture, therefore I can not be completely sure of the identity of each crewmate.

Possible Photograph of T. H. Proudlock with Crewmates



WW2 People's War. BBC. Photo Contributed By Hitchin Museum.

Crew of Lancaster DS789/OW.  
Front. Sergeant Thomas Earle. Top left Jack Koivu?  
Top right. T. Harold Proudlock?



WW2 People's War. BBC.  
Photo Contributed By Hitchin Museum

Sgt. Thomas Earle  
Flight Engineer



WW2 Service Files: Canadian Armed Forces  
War Dead. Library and Archives Canada.

Pilot Officer Jack Koivu  
Navigator

Figure 16. Possible Crew Photographs.



# T. H. Proudlock - Bombing Missions WW2



Figure 16 Bombing Mission Targets

## The Final Mission of Thomas Harold Proudlock

March 26, 1944. Essen, Germany

**Hour 20:00. DS-789 A. P/O Olsson. Bomb Aimer. Ops. Essen.**

The crewmembers on that night are listed on the chart below.

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Completed Operational Missions Before Final Mission</b>	<b>Royal Canadian Air Force or Royal Air Force</b>
P/O (Pilot Officer)	A.L. Olsson	Pilot	24	RCAF
P/O (Pilot Officer)	J.O. Koivu	Navigator	24	RCAF
P/O (Pilot Officer)	T.H. Proudlock	Bomb Aimer	21	RCAF
W/O (Warrant Officer)	C.G. Phinney	Wireless Operator and Air Gunner	21	RCAF
Sergeant	T. Earle	Flight Engineer	14	RAF
Sergeant	R.V. Jones	Mid Upper Gunner	22	RAF
Flight Sergeant	F.E. Fox	Rear Gunner	28	RAF

On March 26/27, 1944, a bombing raid was planned on Essen, Germany. Essen was a highly industrialized city and railway hub. In "Thunderbirds at War" by Laurence Motiuk it is stated that Harold's crew had just returned from leave to find out that their usual Lancaster (LL634/OW "F") had been badly damaged in their previous mission and was not yet available. The crew was assigned another Lancaster (DS789/OW "A") and some of the crew considered this to be a bad omen. Proudlock, Earle, Jones and Fox spoke to a member of the ground crew, and said they would not return from that night's mission. Even one crewmember's fiancé said that she felt that they would not come back. The other crewmembers were not told of any of the premonitions.

Looking at Harold's logbook, it would appear that the crew was on leave from March 11<sup>th</sup> to March 17<sup>th</sup> and flew on the 18<sup>th</sup> when their bomber was damaged. This suggests

that they were on their third mission without their trusted DS-711 B. I don't know which account is correct, but I do believe the reports of premonitions that the crew had before their last mission. Bomber crews were generally known to be very superstitious and would not be comfortable with any changes in their airplane or their routine. I am sure that I would have felt the same way in those circumstances.

The March 26th operation was a large-scale mission with over 100 bombers taking part. The Lancaster Bomber carrying Harold took off at 19:58 hr. (7:58 PM) from Linton-On-Ouse. In order to avoid flak, the bombers flew in a "dog-leg pattern" to arrive at target. Nine bombers from No. 426 squadron arrived to the target area over Essen. The area was covered by cloud but the target area had been well marked with flares dropped from Mosquito Pathfinder aircraft. Bombs were released from 20,000 to 23,000 feet. There were very few enemy fighters out that night. Sadly, it is thought that Thomas Harold Proudlock's plane was hit by flak over the target area and shot down. The Germans reported that a Lancaster Bomber was shot down at 22:00 (10 PM), 10 km west of Gelsenkirchen, Germany. Another bomber crew reported that Olsson's crew was seen bailing out of their plane but 2 weeks later the Red Cross reported that all the crewmembers had died in the crash. The debris field was widely dispersed near Bottrop, Germany. The Germans did a preliminary identification of the bodies and then buried them in the Bottrop Cemetery. (Another report mentioned them being buried in Gladbeck, Germany which is very near to Bottrop.)

Harold's father Dr. Duncan Proudlock, would have first been notified by telegram that his son was missing in action. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1944, the squadron leader sent a letter to Harold's father repeating that Harold and his crewmates were missing in action. The squadron leader does leave some room for hope but mostly dashes that with this paragraph written in past tense.

*"The loss of your son was sustained with great regret by the members of this Squadron. He was a fine chap and an excellent Air Bomber, and we had complete confidence in his technical ability, and respect for his manly character. I can say personally that he set a splendid example to all ranks and his loss is felt very keenly. Previous to his being reported missing, your son had successfully completed twenty-one sorties over enemy territory."* See Figures 20a and 20b for full letter.

After the war, Allied Forces exhumed the Olsson crew's remains and their identities were confirmed. They were reburied in the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Reichswald Forest, Kleve, Germany. Harold's name is also inscribed on the tombstone of his grandmother Nancy Nesbet-Stevenson Proudlock in the cemetery in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan. He is also listed on the memorial at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada, in Nanton, Alberta. The province of Saskatchewan named a lake "Proudlock Lake" in his honour and as a remembrance (Figure 29).

Harold's brother Mac suffered greatly from his brother's loss and according to family, he



never fully accepted that his brother had been killed in the way stated in the reports. Mac survived the war and died in 2008.

Thomas Harold Proudlock and the men he served with, were truly courageous and principled men who served their country and Commonwealth with distinction.

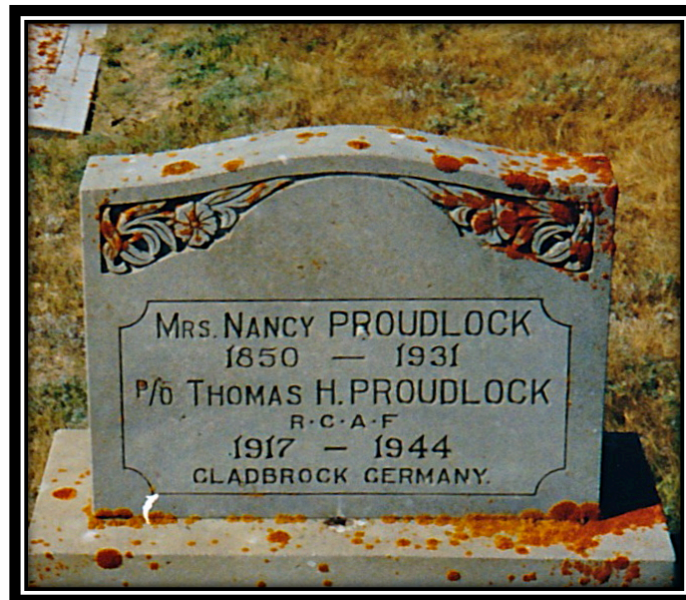


Figure 18. Memorial Tribute on his Grandmother's Cemetery Stone, Kerrobert, Saskatchewan

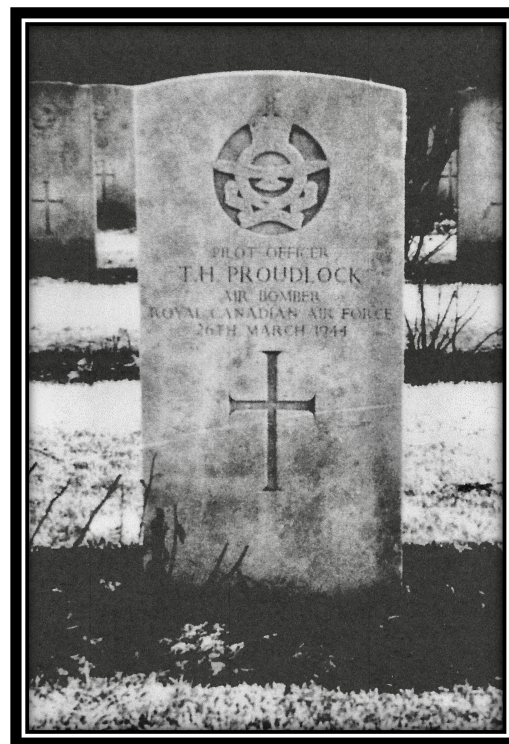


Figure 19. T.H. Proudlock Cemetery Stone, Reichswald Forest, Kleve, Germany





COPY FOR H.Q. OTTAWA

J 19063 P.O. Proudlock J.H.  
.....  
(NUMBER) (RANK) (NAME)

PA

426 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron.

March 30, 1944.

J 19063

Dear Dr. Proudlock:

You will have been notified by telegram that your son, Pilot Officer Thomas Harold Proudlock, is missing as the result of air operations, before this letter reaches you.

At 7.58 p.m. on the night of the 26th March 1944, your son and his crew took off from this aerodrome to carry out an attack on enemy installations at Essen, Germany. Unfortunately nothing further has been heard from any member of the crew since time of take-off. This is not unusual however, as wireless silence is always maintained on such sorties.

There is always the possibility however that your son is a prisoner of war, in which case you will be informed by the Air Ministry, who will have been notified by the International Red Cross Society, or hear from your son direct. In the meantime your son's personal effects have been gathered together and forwarded to the Royal Air Force Central Depository where they will be held until better news is forthcoming, or in any event for a period of at least six months, before being forwarded to you through the Administrator of Estates, Ottawa.

The loss of your son was sustained with great regret by the members of this Squadron. He was a fine chap and an excellent Air Bomber, and we had complete confidence in his technical ability, and respect for his manly character. I can say personally that he set a splendid example to all ranks and his loss is being felt very keenly. Previous to his being reported missing, your son had successfully completed twenty-one sorties over enemy territory.

over.....

APR 1944

Figure 20a Squadron Leader's Letter to Family pg.1.



On behalf of the entire Squadron I would like to take this opportunity to tender to you our sincere sympathy in your great anxiety. We join with you in the heartfelt hope that better news will be forthcoming soon.

If there is anything you wish to know and which I may have overlooked, Dr. Proudlock, please do not hesitate to write to me. I am only too anxious to give you any information which may help you in any way.

Yours very sincerely,

*Aswant s/l*

Squadron Leader, Commanding,  
No. 426 (R.C.A.F.) Squadron,  
R.C.A.F. Overseas.

Dr. D.M. Proudlock,  
Kindersley, Saskatchewan,  
C A N A D A.

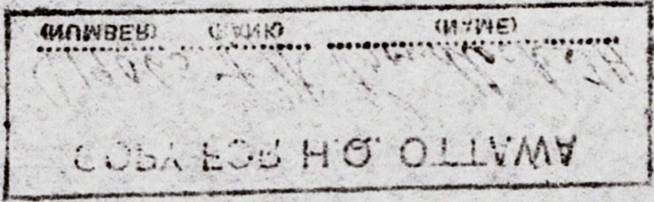


Figure 20b. Squadron Leader's Letter to Family. pg. 2.



# Essen, Germany and Surrounding Area

- Germany
- 1 Essen
  - 2 Gelsenkirchen
  - 3 Bottrop
  - 4 Gladbeck

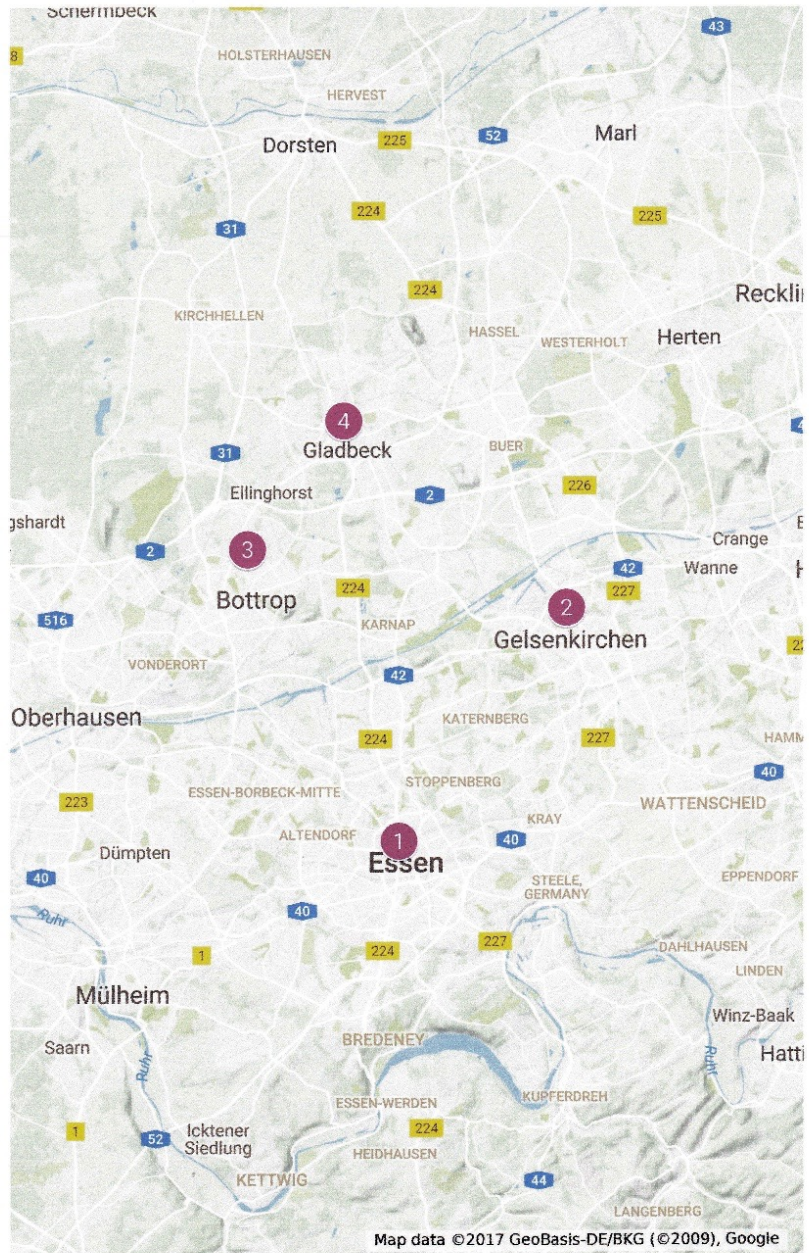


Figure 21. Essen, Germany and Vicinity



# Commonwealth War Cemetery, Reichswald Forest, Kleve, Germany

Burial Site



Commonwealth War Cemetery  
at Reichswald Forest



Figure 22. Burial Site of Thomas Harold Proudlock and His Crewmates



Figure 23. Harold's Picture and Decorations- Mounted by Donald Proudlock

Pilot Officer Thomas Harold Proudlock was awarded the following medals.

- 1939-45 Star
- Air Crew Europe Star
- Defence Medal
- Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (CVSM)
- Clasp to the CVSM
- New Bomber Command Clasp
- War Medal 1939



In Memory of  
Pilot Officer Air Bomber  
**Thomas Harold Proudlock**

J/19063, 426 Sqdn., Royal Canadian Air Force who died on 26 March 1944

Remembered with Honour  
Reichswald Forest War Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

Figure 24.





Figure 25. Lancaster Bomber at Bomber Command Museum of Canada, Nanton, Alberta



Figure 26. Lancaster Bomber at Bomber Command Museum of Canada, Nanton, Alberta



Figure 27. Lancaster Bomber at Bomber Command Museum, Nanton Alberta



Figure 28. Bomb Bay with Door Open. Photo taken by Ernie Everitt

## Why I Am Proud to Wear a Poppy

By Leah Proudlock

I wear a poppy to remember  
To remember the men who fought for us.  
The men that had the courage to fight,  
The men who went through starvation,  
They went through torture.  
I have the memories, and am proud of them.  
I wear a poppy to remember.  
To remember the men who were scared,  
Who went through the experience of war.  
They fought yesterday, for peace today.  
I wear a poppy to remember,  
To remember the soldiers who left their loved ones.  
To remember the men that died,  
And didn't return home.  
I wear a poppy to remember,  
To remember who fought,  
For Freedom and Peace.

Written in honour and loving memory of  
T.H. Proudlock (RCAF) (Great Uncle)  
and  
Nick Harris (RCASC/Provost Corp) (Grandfather)

Leah Proudlock  
Age 11  
Grade 6  
Royal Canadian Legion #86  
Junior Poem (1982) First Place





Government of  
Saskatchewan

## In Commemoration

“At the going down of the sun and in the morning we  
will remember them.”

Binyon

Saskatchewan

In memory of a valiant one from  
Saskatchewan who gave his life  
in preservation of ideals of free men.

### Proudlock Lake

is named after

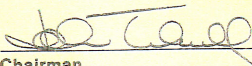
**Thomas Harold Proudlock**

**Latitude:** 60°00'00"

**Longitude:** 108°24'00"

**Adopted** May 6, 1954

**Certified by the Saskatchewan Geographic names board**

  
Chairman

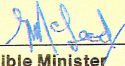
  
Responsible Minister



Figure 29. Saskatchewan Commemoration Certificate



Figure 30. Proudlock Lake in Large Scale View



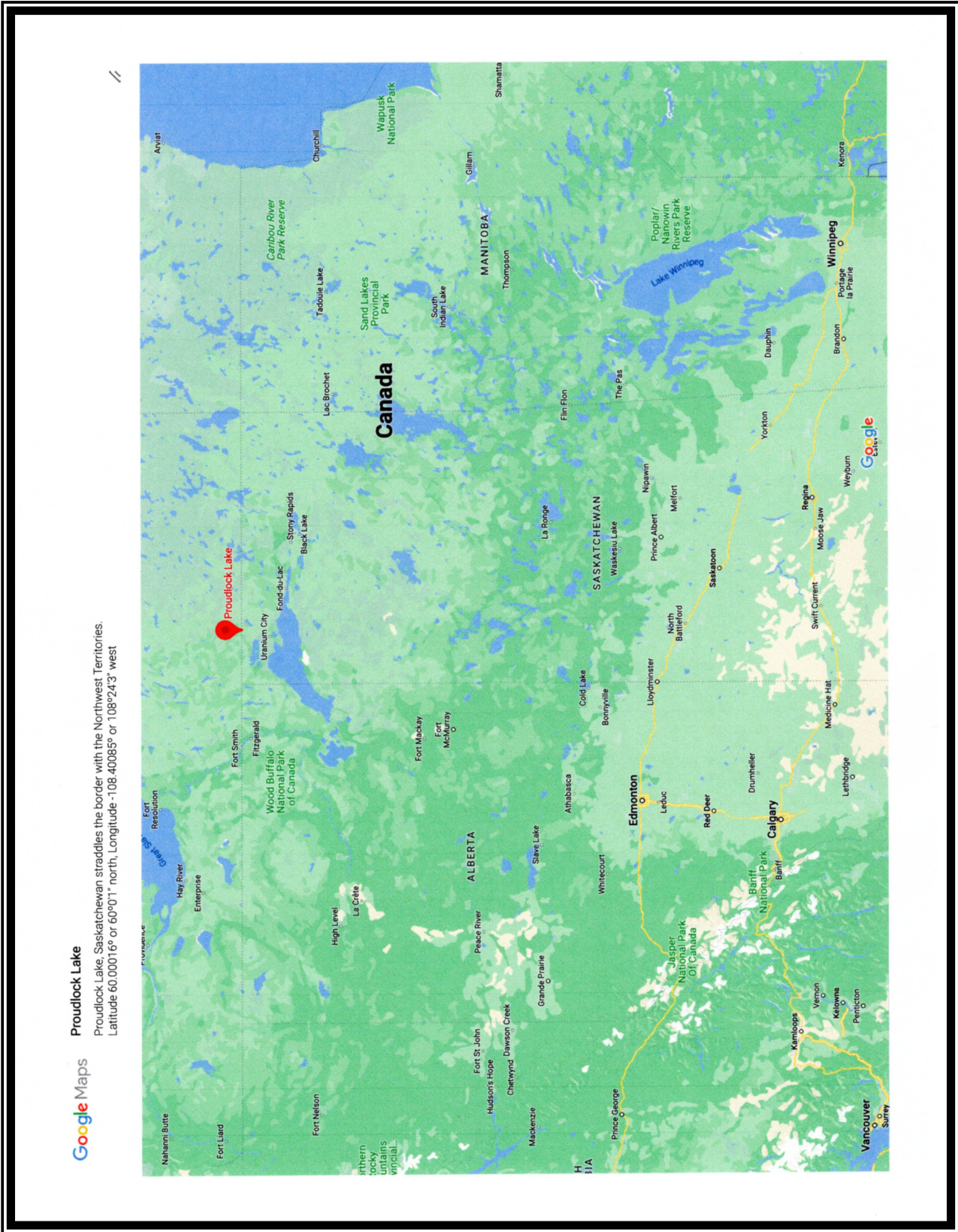


Figure 31. Proudlock Lake in Western Canada



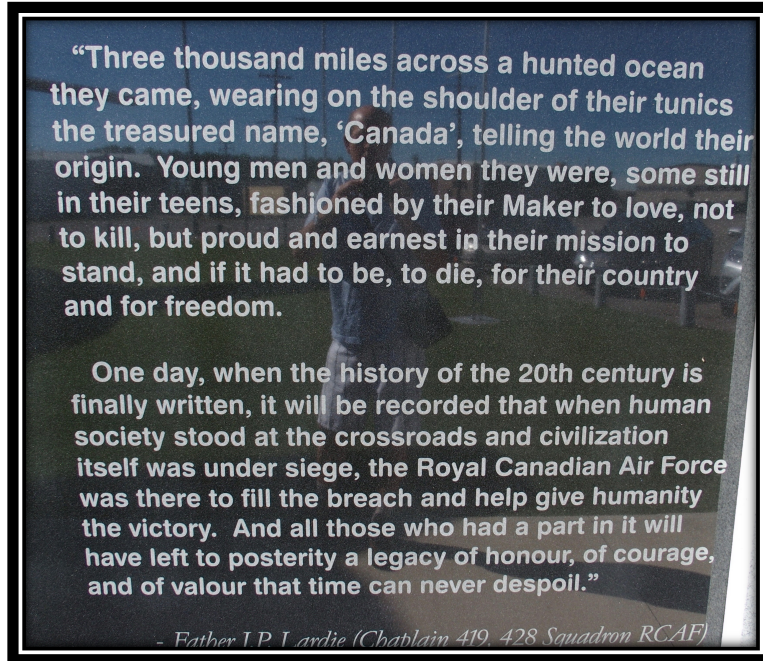


Figure 32. Memorial Wall. Bomber Command Museum of Canada. Nanton, Alberta

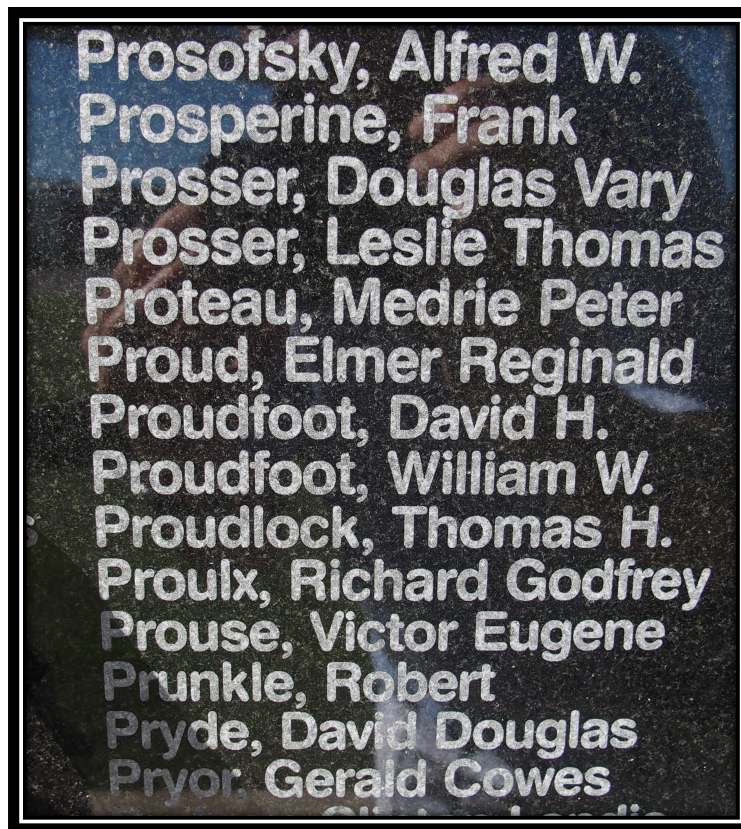


Figure 33. Memorial Wall. Bomber Command Museum of Canada. Nanton, Alberta



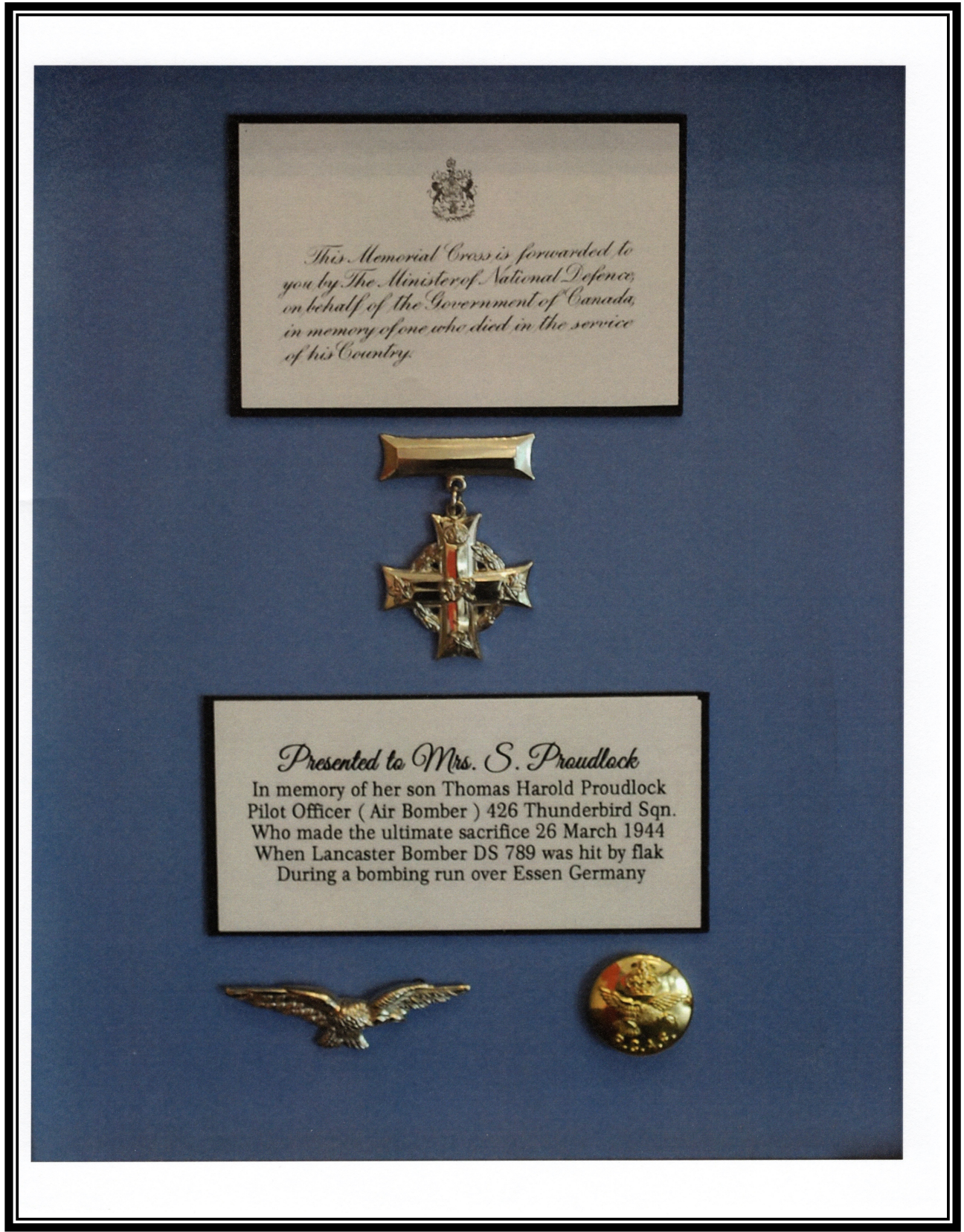


Figure 34. Silver Cross Given to T.H. Proudlock's Mother. Courtesy of Donald Proudlock

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Google Maps

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WW2 People's War. An archive of World War Two memories - written by the public, gathered by the BBC - [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

Wikipedia

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Harold's nephew Donald Proudlock for providing Fig. 1, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 29, 32, 33 and 34. Don provided historical reference materials and copies of two letters that Harold wrote home during the war. The two most important pieces of memorabilia he provided were Harold's actual log book and copy of his diary entries. He also provided his daughter's tribute, "Why I am Proud to Wear a Poppy". Thank you!

## About the Author

Thomas "Harold" Proudlock was my grandmother Elizabeth "Hazel" Manwell's first cousin. I am an avid genealogist and family historian. I hope that my recounting of Harold Proudlock's service in RCAF will help to keep his memory alive for future generations.

Norma Lavallée