

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE



EDWARD CHRISTOPHER CHARLES (1920-1944)
(Photo April 1943)

Christie Charles was born in 1920 in Post Office Street (Now Mary Street), Warrenpoint, County Down. His parents, Mary and Edward, were both from Dublin and met while they were working in Warrenpoint. He was an only child. He attended St Peter's School in the town. When the Second World War started Christie joined the Royal Airforce Voluntary Reserve and became Sergeant, Service No 2221730. While in the RAF he met and married Joan Murphy, from Birmingham. Christie was in the 49th Squadron that flew Lancasters on bombing raids out of Finkelston, Lincolnshire until October 1944 when it moved to Fulbeck. During the bombing campaign the bomber crews were all volunteers and obliged to complete a mission tour of 30 operations. The average life expectancy of a crew was five operations.

Loss of life happened on non-operational flights too and it was on one of these that Christie died, together with the other six members of the crew of his aircraft. On Saturday 11 December 1944 at 1955 hours two crews took off from Fulbeck on a high level cross-country bombing exercise. Flying Officer John Branch RAAF piloted one while the other, Lancaster PB799 (EA-G), with Christie among the crew, was piloted by Flight Lieutenant G.W. (Jerry) Green. F/O Branch reported that the exercise was via Epperstone, Great Ormes Head (North Wales), Cirencester and back to Fulbeck. He reported that *"during the flight our crew was confronted with a band of Cu-nimbus clouds which I attempted to climb over. At 29,000 feet and icing up badly, we gave up and flew a reciprocal course. We eventually completed the exercise and landed safely back at Fulbeck. It is my belief that F/L Green must have flown into that fatal wall of cloud."*

The aircraft and crew were never found and it is believed that their aircraft must have come down in the Irish Sea.

Christie's name is inscribed on Panel 226 of the Runnymede Memorial which commemorates the names of over 20,000 airmen and airwomen who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe and who have no known graves. The Memorial was designed by Sir Edward Maufe with sculpture by Vernon Hill and ceilings by John Hutton.

Patrick Devlin with acknowledgement to the Old Warrenpoint Forum -
<http://www.oldwarrenpointforum.com/> and <http://www.bomberhistory.co.uk>