

## Frederick Edwin WOOLVEN

**Born:** 1921

**Parents:** Son of Frederick Edwin & Ellen Mary Woolven, husband of Joan Marie Woolven of Littlehampton, Sussex

**School admission year:** 1930s. Remembered as shy, he was the first boy from Wepham, near Arundel to win a scholarship to the High School.

**Civilian Occupation –** He was offered a University Scholarship but family circumstances meant he became a railway clerk at Arundel Station.

---

### Armed Forces Record

#### Squadron 156 Badge



**Service Rank:** Sergeant Navigator

**Service Number:** 1324142

**Service Record:** 156 Squadron

**Operational Base:** RAF Warboys – Cambridgeshire

**Bomber Command:** Number 8 Group Pathfinder Force

**Date of death:** 3 January 1944

The 'Pathfinders' were the target-marking squadrons in the Royal Air Force Bomber Command. They located targets, dropping flares which following main bomber formations (occasionally numbering up to a thousand aircraft) could aim at thus increasing the accuracy of their bombing. Number 8 Group Pathfinder Force eventually grew in 1942 from eight to nineteen squadrons. For maximum impact, they were used mainly on cities.

An edition of 'The Walsall Observer and South Staffs Chronicle' printed an interview with Sgt. Norman Henry Colebatch, a Wireless Operator and co-crew

member with Frederick Woolven flying Lancaster Bomber Mark III Serial JB640. When Colebatch was home on leave he told the local press that "In a previous raid on Berlin their aircraft had been shot up so badly it had been taken out of commission". "This was not the first time they had visited the German capital," he said. He observed that "It would only take a few more heavy raids to finish the city off!" His crew had completed twenty-two missions, nearly all to Germany

Sgt. Frederick Woolven's 156 Squadron were 'Pathfinders'. He was the navigator on board JB640 which took off from RAF Warboys on 2nd January 1944 destined for Berlin but was never heard of again, the crew being listed as 'missing'.

For some time there has been a campaign in Eastern Europe to recover the 'missing' crew members from both sides; the scale in terms of geography is vast. The aircrew of Lancaster JB640 and of a Halifax LK709 have been found as part of this process. Evidently, they had been interred by the Germans during the War only for the 'unknown airmen' records to be lost.

A project to match their remains with the 'missing' led to the authorities in Britain, and the now-reunified Germany, organising a special burial ceremony in Berlin to give the Lancaster crew the 'send-off' they had been denied for 72 years.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at the 1939-1945 War Cemetery (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) at Heerstrasse outside Berlin, two separate services of Remembrance and Re-dedication were performed by the Revd. Adrian Dyer, RAF Chaplain. It is recorded that the burial services were very moving especially as relatives were present.

Note: The second service was for the remaining crew members of the Halifax Bomber LK 709 lost on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1944 when it crashed into a lake during a raid on Berlin.

Three aircrew from each aircraft were interred on that day.

Sadly this internment did not include Sergeant Frederick Edwin Woolven. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has confirmed that he has 'No known grave'.

Commemorated

Chichester War Memorial

Runnymede