

# Frederick Edwin WOOLVEN

**Born:** 1921

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

Remembered as shy he was the first boy from Wepham to win a scholarship to the High School

**School years:** 1932-1937

Oxford School Certificate July 1937

Exemption from London Matriculation – December 1937

Prize List – VM. March 1938

'Roll of Service' - The Martlet - December 1943

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

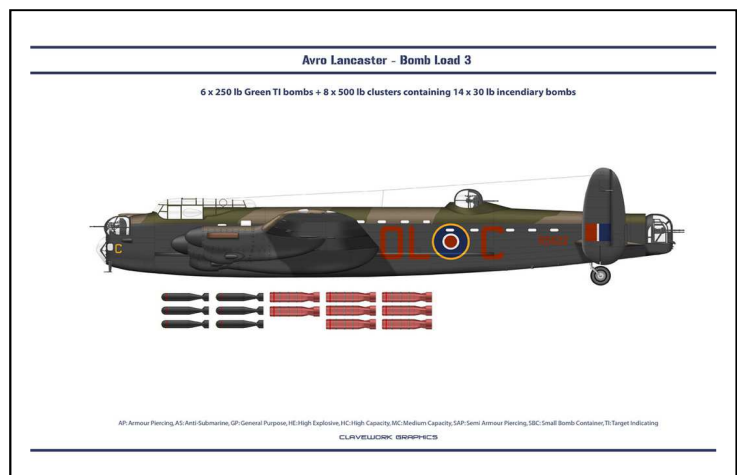
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## Armed Forces Record

### Squadron 156 Badge



*We light the way*



*Mk 111 Lancaster Bomber – Pathfinder's Bomb Load No. 3*

**Service Rank:** Sergeant Navigator

**Service Number** 156 Squadron

**Operational Base:** RAF Warboys – Cambridgeshire

**Bomber Command:** 8 Group Pathfinder Force

**Date of death:** 3 January 1944

The 'Pathfinders' were the target marking squadrons in the RAF 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 *Old Boy* Frederick Woolven flying Lancaster Bomber Mark III Serial GT640. 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 over Germany.

Sgt Frederick Woolven's 156 Squadron were 'Pathfinders'. He was the navigator on board GT640 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 GT640 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 April, 2016 at the 1939-1945 War Cemetery (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) on Heerstrasse outside Berlin two separate services of Remembrance and Rededication 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 January 1944 when it crashed into a lake during a raid on Berlin.

Three aircrews from each aircraft were interred on that day. Sadly this did not include Sergeant Frederick Edwin Woolven. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has confirmed that he has 'no known' grave.

Headmaster Dr E.W. Bishop wrote to his grief-stricken parents,

*"Your son was one of the solid, steady-going fellows whom this country can ill spare and who have made such fine airmen. May the boys who come here in the future, saved by the valour of lads like your son, do their utmost to be worthy of the great sacrifices that have been made on their behalf"*

*Andrew Berriman – 'Chi High' at War 1939-1945*

**Commemorated**

**Chichester High School for Boys**

**Chichester War Memorial**

**Runnymede**