

**Ronald Tom HALLETT**

**Born:** 1925 at Lymington, New Forest, Hampshire  
**Parents:** Son of Harry John Richard and Marguerite Besse Hallett of Chichester  
**School Years:** 1936-1940 Chichester High School for Boys  
**'The Martlet' 'Roll of Service' – A.C. 2 RAF – December 1942**

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**Armed Forces Record Service**

**Rank:** Sergeant  
**Service Number:** 1602270  
**Service Record:** 166 Squadron  
**Service Base:** RAF Kirmington  
**Date of Death:** 23-24 September 1944



**Sgt R.T.Hallett (W.Op./Air Gnr)**

**Lancaster Mk III PB 242 AS-E**

**The 'Martlet' 'School Notes' December 1944**

**"It is with deep regret that we record the loss of Sgt. R.T.Hallett (1936-40) was killed in a raid over Dortmund in Germany on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and was buried at Chichester. His prompt action as rear gunner saved his plane and the lives of his comrades".**

**From p.435 of W.R.Chorley's 'Bomber Commander Losses of the Second World War 1941**

**No. 166 Squadron – Lancaster III –PB242 AS-E - Op. Neuss Germany**

**T/o 1840 Kirmington. Intercepted by a Junkers 88 night fighter whose fire killed rear gunner Sgt Hallett and inflicted very severe damage on the Lancaster. With two other crew injured from the attack, the pilot brought it back to crash-land at 23.30 at Manston Airfield Kent. Sgt. Hallett lies in Chichester Cemetery, whilst it is reported that pilot S/L Rippingale and navigator Sgt. Cridge were decorated with the DSO and CGM respectively.**

**Other Crew Members - Lancaster Mk I PD242 AS-E**

S/Ldr. Thomas Woodruff Ripplingale DSO *RAF 39159* - Pilot

Sgt. R. C. Taylor *RAF 1559642* - Flight Engineer

Flg. Off. Harold Lawson Howling *RAF 164614* - Air Bomber

Sgt. Francis William Cridge CGM *RAF 1802499* - Navigator

Plt. Off. Clifford Ivor Edwards *RAF 170904* - Wireless Op.

Sgt. D. Lewington *RAF 1609984* - Mid Upper Gunner

**Below is Hallett's operational 'Log' which shows him having completed four missions all within a thirteen-day period before his death.**

| <b>Missions »</b>      | Posted in 25 August 1944 | Notes:   |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 12 Sep 1944 PD242 AS-E | Frankfurt                |  |
| 17 Sep 1944 "          | Biggekerke (Gun Site)    |  |
| 20 Sep 1944 "          | Sangatte                 |  |
| 23 Sep 1944            | Neuss                    | Sgt Hallet killed<br>Sgt Cridge & Sgt<br>Edwards injured |

**Sergeant Francis William Cridge – 166 Squadron Royal Air Force**

**Frankie Cridge was a navigator with 166 Squadron Bomber Commander. He served alongside Cliff Edwards and Roy Taylor. Roy was the Wireless Operator.**

**Post from Sergeant Cridge's son.....**

*My dad's Lancaster was shot up in a raid on Germany. They flew back and when they landed the officer in charge said, "Only God could have guided this plane back", as it was shot to pieces and never should have got back.....*

*J. Cridge*

#### Chichester Observer – Saturday 07 October 1944

The rôle of honour of the Chichester High School for Boys was added to on September 23<sup>rd</sup> by the death in action of Sgt. Air Gunner Ronald Tom Hallett, only son of Petty Officer H.Hallett, R.N. and Mrs Hallett, of 57 Parklands Road, Chichester, who was killed when on operational duty over enemy territory.

Nineteen years of age, he was a former member of the 461 (Chichester District) Squadron of the A.T.C. which he joined in March 1941 passing onto the R.A.F. in January 1942. His career in the force was creditable. He attained the rank of sergeant in April of this year and showed every promise of further advancement.

His remains were brought to Chichester for interment, the funeral taking place on Thursday afternoon, following the impressive service in the Congregational Church, where the officiating minister (the Rev F. James Kay) paid high tribute to his laudable desire to fight against tyranny and his readiness to make the great sacrifice he had done for the cause of right. Squadron Leader Rippingale (commander of the deceased's flight) travelled from a very distant station to attend the funeral, and Sgt. Air Gunner D.Lewington (companion gunner in the same bomber aircrew) was also present, with his father Mr W. Lewington (Portsmouth). Flight-Lieut. Stephenson with two N.C.Os represented 461 Squadron, A.T.C., and R.A.F. party, under a Sergeant, acted as bearers, the coffin being draped with the R.A.F colours, and surmounted with flowers. The Headmaster of the Boys High School (Dr.E.R.Bishop) attended and also present were some school colleagues of the deceased. A long list of mourners, tributes .....

#### Rear Gunners – 'Tail End Charlies'

The term 'Tail-End Charlie' is nowadays used flippantly as a designation to anyone who finds themselves at the back protecting others. Above, we see Hallett enjoying a fag, nonchalantly posing for a squadron photo shoot. In reality, a rear-gunner's call of duty was to operationally fulfil one of the most dangerous tasks that could be asked of anyone across all armed services during the Second World War. His duties generally lasted just a few missions.