



The dramatic memories and death-defying experiences of a World War Two Lancaster Flight Engineer were vividly described to members of Kyrle Probus Club on Thursday 6 December.

Guest speaker Nigel Thompson told members how the Lieutenant Flight Engineer, known to his friends as Ray, survived against all the odds while serving with Bomber Command. "Ray flew the full tour of 30 sorties and said he had a 'good war'," said Nigel. "But 75 per cent of those attempting sorties didn't survive. The attrition rate was horrendous. Ray is one of the last of the Bomber Command war survivors." Did Ray and the 7-man crew ever experience fear? "We all did", replied Ray.

Only the German U-boats suffered a higher casualty rate than Bomber Command, though recognition of their heroism has only recently been forthcoming with memorials at Beachy Head and Green Park in London.

Ray volunteered in 1942 at the age of just 17; it was the only way to get into the RAF. Now 93 and living near Tewkesbury, he is still mentally strong.

The meeting heard that a Flight Engineer controlled most of the functions of the very heavy and unheated Lancaster, although the four-engine aircraft was very manoeuvrable.

The impact of the raids was such that Bomber Command turned possible defeat into eventual victory. This was despite the German's defensive abilities becoming increasingly effective and dangerous until the war ended in 1945. Ray was demobilised in 1947 with a 'very good' conduct report.

Future club events include the Christmas Message given on December 20th by member Chris Hucker, at the Royal Hotel, on his experiences as a pastor in the US mid-west for 16 years, and a guided tour of the Hillside Brewery on 23 January.



Cyril Powell, who joined Kyrle Probus Club in 1997, was unanimously granted Life Membership.