

## **P/O Charles Agnew 428826 RNZAF**

Fatigue may have been one of the contributory factors which led to the death of Scottish-born Lancaster navigator Charles Agnew and his 630 Squadron crew.

They were returning from a raid on U-boat pens at Trondheim in Norway when their aircraft ran into the ground on a remote spot in Sunk Island on the Humber estuary east of Hull, some 40 miles from 630's base at East Kirkby, on the night of 22/23 November 1944.



It is believed that six of those on board, including Charles, were killed in the crash. The wreckage was only found three days later by a local farmer who found the 20-year-old flight engineer still alive, though very badly injured and he was later to die in hospital on 1 December.

An inquiry later found the aircraft had been flying low on the return leg and was very low on fuel. It was also pointed out that less than 24 hours earlier Charles' crew took part in a highly-successful bombing raid at Gravenhorst on the Mittelland Canal in Germany, adding that fatigue could now have led to the Sunk Island crash.

The Trondheim raid was Charles and his crew's 20<sup>th</sup> operation together and the crash was the first operational loss for 630 for almost 10 weeks. He came from the city of Lower Hutt, near Wellington where he lived with his wife, Cecilia, and was the 25-year-old son of Robert and Margaret Agnew. Charles was born in the village of Lochore in Scotland before his family emigrated to Perth in Australia before he then moved to New Zealand in 1937 to work in the paint industry before enlisting in the RNZAF. He was later buried in Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate.

The others who died were the pilot F/O George Flood RNZAF, flight engineer Sgt. Leslie Woodward, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. Kenneth James Aspell, wireless operator Flt. Sgt. William Ingram RNZAF, mid-upper gunner Sgt. Frederick Hughes and rear gunner Sgt. Maurice Henley.

His name can be found on panel 001.

Sources: 630 Squadron Association.