

Flt. Sgt. William Frank Austin DFM 591214 RAF



F/S WF Austin DFM RAFVR and crew - 103 Squadron - KIA 2nd March 1943.

William 'Bunny' Austin was an outstanding pilot who had joined 103 Squadron in its Halifax days at RAF Elsham Wolds. He went on to complete 29 operations – 25 of them in Lancasters - before he and his crew were lost without trace during an attack on Berlin on the night of 2 March 1943.

He was 23 years old and came from the Liverpool area where it is believed a number of his family members had been killed in air raids. He was the son of John and Henrietta Austin.

He was awarded an immediate Distinguished Flying Medal following an attack on Frankfurt in December 1942 when his Lancaster was subjected to six attacks by night fighters. He and his crew managed to evade those – shooting down one of the fighters – and continued to bomb the target. His citation spoke of him as an 'outstanding captain' who had shown the 'utmost determination and courage in the face of the enemy'.

By the night of 2 March 1943 the crew had completed 29 sorties. Their aircraft, W4361 PM-N, left Elsham at 1853 hours but nothing further was heard. It was one of 17 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Stirlings lost in an attack involving 302 Bomber Command aircraft.

Killed with him were his crew comprising flight engineer Sgt. K H Chapman, navigator P/O A F Reif RCAF, bomb-aimer Flt. Sgt. P G Roberts RNZAF, wireless operator Sgt. D N D Waite, mid-upper gunner Sgt. D E J Boland and rear gunner Sgt. E J Cook.

All have no known grave and are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey.

Bunny Austin's name can be found on panel 004

Photographic source: Elsham Wolds Association