Leading Aircraftsman George Wellesley Barrie 547360 RAF

George Barrie was born on 26 May 1918 in Rangoon, India, the son of William George Barrie and Muriel Enid Barrie nee Sandys.

In April 1940 George was an armourer on No. 98 Squadron when they moved from England to Chateau Bougon, near Nantes, France as a supporting unit to the RAF Advanced Air Striking Force (AASF) fighting squadrons, supplying replacement crew and aircraft as needed.

With the fall of France, the AASF began the withdrawal to England. Just two weeks after Dunkirk, Operation Aerial was launched - the evacuation of the servicemen and civilians who had been left behind and involved over 130 British and allied vessels. There were an estimated 40,000-60,000 men, women, and children waiting to be rescued at St. Nazaire, Brittany.

On 15 June 1940, the Commanding Officer of 98 Squadron left Chateau Bougon Aerodrome, Nantes in the last aircraft belonging to the squadron. The Adjutant was left in charge of the remaining personnel, numbering 13 officers and 230 other ranks. The party was given orders to proceed to St. Nazaire on 16 June to embark for England.

RMS Lancastria arrived in the mouth of the Loire estuary late on 16 June. Her normal complement in troopship configuration was 2,180 including 330 crew; however, the Captain was told to take as many as he possibly could.

Troops were ferried out to the Lancastria and the other larger ships by destroyers, tugs, fishing boats and other small craft, a round trip of three or four hours. By mid-afternoon of 17 June she had embarked an unknown number (estimates range from 4,000 up to 9,000).

At 1550 hours the Lancastria was within minutes of hauling up anchor when a lone Junkers JU88 bomber from Kampfgeschwader 30 began its bombing run. Lancastria was hit by three bombs and sank within 20 minutes. Estimates of the death toll vary from 3,000 - 6,500, the largest loss of life in British maritime history.

George was one of at least ninety-six 98 Sqn personnel lost in the sinking of the Lancastria. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey (Panel 22)

George is commemorated on IBCC Wall Panel 6