

Sgt Arthur Harold Clark 1203348 RAFVR

Arthur, known as "Sonnie" was born on 18 July 1920 in Bath, Somerset, the son of Arthur Clark and Ethel Jessie Clark nee Hawkins.

Educated at Bath Technical College, before joining the RAF in 1940 Arthur was employed with Pitmans Ltd as a Printer's machinist.

Serving as Ground Crew, in April 1942 Arthur was on board the Aircraft Carrier "USS Wasp" when it was delivering Spitfires to Malta.

Volunteering for aircrew, Arthur trained as a Flight Engineer, and In the Spring of 1943 he arrived on 101 Sqn at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire.

On 4 May 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with "Operation Sprat", the largest non-thousand plane raid of the war to date, and the first major attack on Dortmund as part of the Ruhr Offensive. Of the 596 aircraft despatched on the raid, 101 Sqn contributed 18 crews. Two squadron aircraft failed to return, and 4 crash landed killing a further 7 crew members.

At 21:40 Arthur, operating as the Flight Engineer, and the crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire in Lancaster I W4888 (SR-P).

Whilst over the IJsselmeer on the Frisian Coast, Arthur's aircraft was intercepted by Oblt Lothar Linke, flying a Bf110 from 12./NJG1 operating from Leeuwarden airfield. Oblt Linke claimed 4 aircraft on this raid. Damaged and on fire, the pilot realised that they would not be able to return to the UK and a decision was made to make an emergency landing along the Frisian Coast.

Shortly after the Lancaster flew over the Workum railway station, the aircraft skimmed over a large farmhouse where the tail section broke away, throwing the Rear Gunner out of the aircraft into a meadow west of that farmhouse. At 01:40 the burning plane crashed around 150 metres from the two farmhouses on the south side of the Dyke, 1km S of Workum. The Navigator had managed to parachute out before the aircraft crashed, killing Arthur and the 4 remaining crew. The Navigator, with serious burns, was taken as a POW.

The five crew from the main fuselage were recovered and buried in the local cemetery. On 7 May, the Rear Gunner's body was discovered in a meadow to the west of the farmhouse, and he was buried alongside his crew.

Also Killed: FO William Thomas Lewis DFM RCAF (WOp); FO Nicholas James Stanford (Pilot); FS George William Francis Reynolds RCAF (AG); Sgt John Milner Hadfield (AG); Sgt Anthony Jules Lawson Lyon (AB)

Arthur is buried in Spoordyk General Cemetery, Workum, Friesland, Netherlands

Arthur is commemorated on Wall Panel 20

Photo Source: www.teunispats.nl

