

Sgt. Alfred James Herbert Clayton
1811224 RAFVR

Alfred was born in 1924 in Edmonton, Middlesex, the son of Alfred Frederick Clayton and Beatrice Cicely Clayton (née Brown).

Educated locally, Alfred joined the RAF in March 1943 and was trained as a Wireless Operator at RAF Yatesbury before completing his aircraft conversion training. On 10 March 1944 Alfred was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire, as a Special Duties Operator using the ABC System.

On the night of 30/31 March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies that night. Twenty-six 101 Squadron Lancasters participated in the raid.

At 2150 hours on 30 March 1944 Alfred, operating as Special Duties Operator, and the crew departed RAF Ludford Magna in Lancaster III LM463 (SR-K2), tasked with ABC duties for the raid. At 0036 hours, whilst outbound, the aircraft was engaged East of Siegen at 18,000ft by a night fighter flown by Uffz. Bruno Rupp of 4./NJG3. The aircraft crashed near Dillenburg, Hessen, killing 6 of the 8 crew; the pilot (P/O Albert Lander RNZAF) and wireless operator (Sgt. W G Clapp) survived and were captured. This was the crew's 2nd op. Seven 101 Squadron aircraft were lost on this raid, with 47 men killed.

The raid was a major disaster for Bomber Command with the loss of 105 aircraft, Bomber Command's heaviest loss of the war. There were 721 casualties: 542 men died, 6 injured, 161 POWs, with just 12 airmen evading capture. The damage to Nuremberg itself was slight - 256 buildings destroyed and 75 enemy dead.

Also killed were the navigator F/O Mervyn Hutchinson RNZAF, air bomber F/Sgt. Raymond Cato RNZAF, air gunner F/Sgt. Cyril Parkinson RNZAF, air gunner Sgt. Erod Johnson and flight engineer Sgt. Alexander Johnston.

Originally buried in Dillenburg Cemetery, Hessen, Alfred and the crew were moved to Hanover War Cemetery, Niedersachsen, in April 1947.

Alfred is commemorated on Wall Panel 20.

Photo Source: IBCC

