

P/O Arthur Sidney Needham 117845 RAFVR

Arthur 'Sandy' Needham was a 31-year-old Wellington observer who died when his bomber crashed in the North Sea after developing engine problems during a raid on Bremen in the early hours of 5 September 1942.

He was part of the crew of Wellington Z8595, of No. 12 Squadron, which had taken off from RAF Binbrook at 0025 hours as part of a 251-aircraft force heading for the port of Bremen.

As Z8595 approached the Dutch coast it developed serious problems and the crew decided to turn back, dumping their bombs in the sea. The aircraft still struggled to maintain height and, finally, at 0230 hours the Wellington crashed about 20 miles off Cromer.



Only the pilot, Sgt. Tom Smith, managed to get clear and despite being injured climbed into the bomber's dinghy. He was found three hours later by the Harwich-based destroyer *HMS Hambledon* and later taken to hospital in Felixstowe.



Sandy was born in Wandsworth in London in 1910, the son of Arthur and Beatrice Needham. He was educated at the Archbishop Templar School in Lambeth and trained in commerce, joining the Commonwealth Bank of Australia at Old Jewry in the City of London, dealing in French affairs.

He was a keen athlete who ran with South London Harriers and helped run the 2nd Streatham Boys Scout Group. Sandy and his wife, Florence (always known as 'Vi'), met and were married in Streatham Hill in London in 1935 (pictured) and two years later their daughter, Maggie, was born. Vi later emigrated to Australia but never got over Sandy's death and died in Tasmania in 1984. His daughter, Maggie, was later to write: 'Sandy was much loved by all who knew him'.

The others who died with him were the bomb-aimer Sgt. Frank Smith, wireless operator/air gunner Flt. Sgt. Russel Mills RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. Stanley Bland. Their bodies were never recovered and all are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial (panel 70).

Sandy's name can be found on panel 078.

Sources: Banstead War Memorial/Aviation Safety Network/Bomber Command Losses 1942 by Bill Chorley.