

Sgt. Claude William Frank Sizer 1600791 RAFVR

Lancaster wireless operator Claude Sizer was part of what was known as 49 Squadron's 'Bad Penny' crew.

They survived numerous narrow scrapes during the winter and spring of 1943/44 but finally the luck that had followed them ran out on the night of 26/27 April, after they had taken off from RAF Fiskerton on their 25th operation.

The target was the city of Schweinfurt and 49 Squadron provided 15 of the 215 Lancasters taking part. The raid was a failure and cost 1 and 5 Groups a total of 21 aircraft lost, including three from 49 Squadron.

Claude's aircraft was shot down over eastern France, crashing close to the village of Ugny-sur-Meuse, west of Nancy, and was one of three shot down in just 11 minutes by Luftwaffe ace Hpt. Helmut Bergmann, each time using his night-fighter's upward-firing guns. Two of his victims were from Fiskerton and one from the nearby airfield at Metherringham.

Claude and his crew had taken off from Fiskerton at 2139 hours. They were a popular crew with the squadron and are remembered for their enjoyment of flying their Lancaster at low level as often as possible during training flights. There were no survivors and all seven men are now buried in Ugny-sur-Meuse churchyard.

Claude, who was the youngest member of the crew at the age of 20, lived in the Stamshaw area of Portsmouth with his parents, Claude and Kate, and sister Violet. He had been a clerk before joining the RAF.

The others who died were the pilot P/O John Dickinson, flight engineer Sgt. Richard Hainsworth, navigator Flt. Sgt. Frederick Wale, bomb-aimer WO2 Norman Mackenzie RCAF, mid-upper gunner Sgt. John Ellenor and rear gunner Sgt. Robert Hudson DFM.

Claude's name can be found on IBCC Panel 097.

Sources: 49 Squadron Association/Bomber Command War Diaries by Martin Middlebrook.

