

Sgt. Maurice George Smith 1817166 RAFVR



The Swiss graves of the crew members of LL750

Maurice Smith was the 19-year-old special operator of an ABC-equipped Lancaster of 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna. He had joined the squadron early in 1944 and by late April had completed seven operations as part of the crew of WO Bert Noble. The crew's eighth was to Friedrichshafen, close to the German-Swiss border, a centre for tank production for the German army. The raid by 322 Lancasters was deemed to be an 'outstanding success' although 18 of the 322 Lancasters taking part were shot down, the majority after they had bombed. Two of those were from 101.

WO Noble, who had already been mentioned in dispatches twice, headed a crew of eight – ABC Lancasters carried a 'special operator' to jam Luftwaffe fighter frequencies. On 27 April 1944 they took off from Ludford at 2140 hours, in Lancaster LL750 SR-P, for the long trip south. At 0219 hours on 28 April 1944, after successfully bombing, the aircraft was intercepted at around 20,000 feet by a fighter flown by Hptm Gerhard Friedrich and it exploded.

Two of the crew members were blown clear but the other six died when the Lancaster crashed in thick snow at Alp Grappelen, across the Swiss border. All six are buried in St Martin's Churchyard in Vevey, close to Lake Geneva. The two survivors, flight engineer Sgt. R K Bridges and bomb-aimer F/O H S Prowse RCAF, were briefly interned by the Swiss.

Maurice had worked as a librarian in Birmingham City Library before joining the RAFVR and qualifying as a special duties operator.

Killed with him were the pilot WO B B Noble, navigator F/O J R Burton, wireless operator Sgt. W G Anderson, mid-upper gunner P/O O J Albrecht RCAF and rear gunner Sgt. F H Bathmaker.

His name can be found on IBCC panel 099

Photographic source: Aircrew Remembered