

Sgt. Alan Havelock Spence 1535230 RAFVR



Alan (far right) with some of his crew

Alan was the son of Albert H. Spence and Mary Spence; husband of Florence Irene Spence, of Gosforth, Newcastle-on-Tyne. He was an accomplished rugby player and played for Sunderland RFC in the 1930s. Alan was thought of as the best Sunderland player of his time and was a regular county player. During the 1935/36 season he was one of the forwards in the Northumberland/Durham side that played against the All-Blacks. Alan trained as a Navigator and was on 100 Squadron in 1943.

100 Squadron had only recently reformed, as part of Bomber Command, having previously been overseas. Following work-up the squadron undertook its first operational mission on the night of 4/5 March 1943. Alan was part of this operation and the Navigator of the crew that left RAF Waltham (Grimsby) at 1832 hours local time in Lancaster III, ED 549 HW-S. Along with 7 other 100 Squadron aircraft their mission was to conduct mine laying operations, known as 'Gardening', around the French port of St Nazaire.

Following a successful mission, ED 549 came back to RAF Waltham (Grimsby), but had to divert due to poor weather. The pilot, Flt. Sgt. Avey, attempted 2 landings at other airfields before making an approach to RAF Langar. Sadly the aircraft crashed 1/4 mile away from RAF Langar. All but one of the crew, including Alan, were killed. Subsequent examination of the aircraft revealed a mechanical problem with the port inner engine.

Alan was aged 32 when he was killed. The full crew comprised:

Flt. Sgt. G R Avey RCAF Pilot - killed
Sgt. B T Hallett Flight Engineer - killed
Sgt. A H Spence Navigator - killed
Sgt. G D Cumberbatch Air Bomber - killed
Sgt. J Robinson Wireless Operator - killed
Sgt. D S Davies Air Gunner - injured
Flt. Sgt. R S Landry RCAF Air Gunner - killed

Alan is buried in the North Sunderland Cemetery, Grave U.6.

Alan is commemorated on Panel 100

Photo source: www.woodstocksentinelreview.com