

FO Nicholas James Stanford 80378 RAFVR

Nicholas was born on 2 January 1915 in Greytown, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, the son of Harold Shippey Stanford and Annie Gertrude Stanford nee Adkins.

Nicholas enlisted in Salisbury, Rhodesia in 1941 and trained as a Pilot. Commissioned in June 1942, he was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire in March 1943, flying on Lancasters.

On 4 May 1943 Bomber Command was tasked with "Operation Sprat", the largest non-thousand plane raid of the war to date, and the first major attack on Dortmund as part of the Ruhr Offensive. Of the 596 aircraft despatched on the raid, 101 Sqn contributed 18 crews. Two squadron aircraft failed to return, and 4 crash landed killing a further 7 crew members.

At 21:40 Nicholas and his crew departed RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire in Lancaster I W4888 (SR-P).



Whilst over the IJsselmeer on the Frisian Coast, Nicholas's aircraft was intercepted by Oblt Lothar Linke, flying a Bf110 from 12./NJG1 operating from Leeuwarden airfield. Oblt Linke claimed 4 aircraft on this raid. Damaged and on fire, Nicholas realised that they would not be able to return to the UK and a decision was made to make an emergency landing along the Frisian Coast.

Shortly after the Lancaster flew over the Workum railway station, the aircraft skimmed over a large farmhouse where the tail section broke away, throwing the Rear Gunner out of the aircraft into a meadow west of that farmhouse. At 01:40 the burning plane crashed around 150 metres from the two farmhouses on the south side of the Dyke, 1km S of Workum. The Navigator had managed to parachute out before the aircraft crashed, killing Nicholas and the 4 remaining crew. The Navigator, with serious burns, was taken as a POW.

The five crew from the main fuselage, including Nicholas, were recovered and buried in the local cemetery. On 7 May, the Rear Gunner's body was discovered in a meadow to the west of the farmhouse, and he was buried alongside his crew.

Also Killed: FO William Thomas Lewis DFM RCAF (Wop); FS George William Francis Reynolds (AG); Sgt John Milner Hadfield (AG); Sgt Anthony Jules Lawson Lyon (AB); Sgt Arthur Harold Clark (FE)

Nicholas is buried in Spoordyk General Cemetery, Workum, Friesland, Netherlands

Nicholas is commemorated on Wall Panel 101

Photo Source: www.teunispats.nl