

Flt. Sgt. Frank Sumner 327457 RAFVR

Frank was amongst those airmen known as "The Few" who fought in the Battle of Britain in WWII. Frank was killed in action on 30 November 1941 age 39. Frank Sumner was born in South London on 12 October 1902 and in February 1919, at the age of 16, he joined the Royal Air Force as a boy recruit earning just 9d. (3.5p) a day. Frank went to the RAF Armament and Gunnery School at RAF Eastchurch, on the Isle of Sheppey, in 1922 for ground and air instruction on the Lewis Gun. After successfully completing the air gunner training he was awarded a brass 'Winged Bullet', worn upon the right sleeve of his RAF tunic.

Frank joined his first unit, No. 64 Squadron, on 6 September 1939 as a Leading Aircraftman and went on his first flight as an operational air gunner on 6 December 1939. Frank was then posted to No. 23 Squadron at RAF Wittering on 20 May 1940 to continue air gunner duties, but with a change to night-fighting. He flew operational missions with a variety of pilots during his time on the squadron. Frank was then posted to No. 23 Squadron at RAF Wittering on 20 May 1940 and No. 142 Squadron at RAF Binbrook in December 1940

142 Squadron moved to RAF Grimsby in November 1941 and Frank joined a new crew consisting entirely of non-commissioned officers. The crew: Sgt. Alexander Gilmour (Captain), Sgt. John Lucking (2nd Pilot), Sgt. William Lewis (Observer), Sgt. John Saunders (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner), Sgt. Jesse Butterworth (Front Gunner) and Flt. Sgt. Frank Sumner (Tail Gunner), flew together on their first raid on November 1941.



30

Two of the squadron's aircraft failed to return from this mission, one of which was Frank's – Z1292 (QT-). The Squadron Order of Battle simply states, "This aircraft failed to return. No W/T communication at all". Later news came, via the German authorities, that the crew of a Wellington that had been shot down by German Naval Artillery (coastal flak) near Kiel had been recovered and buried at the local Garrison Cemetery. After the war in Europe had finished Frank's body was exhumed, identified and laid to rest in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Kiel.

Further information provided by Frank's family can be found here - <http://bbm.org.uk/?s=sumner> and here - http://www.battleofbritain1940.net/bobhsoc/airmen_stories/sumner%20f/as-sumner.html. Information on the crash - <http://spurensuchesh.de/rastorfer-passau/>

Frank Sumner is commemorated on Panel 103.

Sources:

<https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2356859/SUMNER,%20FRANK>
http://www.battleofbritain1940.net/bobhsoc/airmen_stories/sumner%20f/as-sumner.html
<http://www.bbm.org.uk/airmen/as-sumner.htm> , https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Sumner

Picture: 142 Squadron Facebook page