Sqn Ldr Philip Rex Barr DFC 39482 RAF



Philip was born on 25 November 1918 in Newent, Gloucestershire the son of Philip Harry Barcinski and Adelaide Mary Barcinski nee Hanby. Philip's father anglicised their Polish surname to Barr. In December 1941 he married Maria Chłusewicz in Glasgow. Philip and Maria, a Polish Red Cross worker, had met onboard the Polish ship MS Sobieski after the fall of France when the ship was used as a troopship in the Allied evacuation of western France in 1940.

A pilot with 107 Sqn, Philip had gone into action on the second day of the war when the squadron attacked the German port of Wilhelmshaven. The squadron was then involved in fighting in Norway, before taking part in the desperate attacks on German columns during the Battle of France.

On 19 May 1940 Philip, operating in Fairey Battle I N2178 (PH-I) with 12 Sqn from Echemines, was attacked by Me109s from 4./JG52 near St Fergeux. Philip made the decision to try and return to base but crashed near Cauroy, 20km SE of Rethel. Philip and the WOp/AG survived the crash and were admitted to hospital. As the Allies retreated, Philip, together with four other British airmen, were helped to safety on the MS Sobieski.

On 7 November 1942, 9 Bostons from 107 Sqn were tasked with a low level attack on the Coutrai Marshalling yards, Zeebrugge coke ovens and the power station at Zwevegem. Philip and his crew departed RAF Great Massingham at 14:00 in Boston III Z2157 (OM) aiming for Coutrai. At 15:00, Philip's aircraft was seen with the port engine on fire and was believed to have collided with high-tension overhead electrical cables. The aircraft crashed into the ground at high speed on Lietard Farm 6km NE of Menin, Belgium.

Philip and his navigator was posthumously awarded a DFC, Gazetted December 1942. The citation reads:

"Sqn Ldr Barr and PO Barfod have flown together, as captain and navigator/bomb aimer respectively, in attacks on important enemy industrial targets and shipping. One night in June 1942, they participated in an attack on an airfield in the low countries as part of the operation undertaken by 1,000 bombers that night. Although the target was heavily defended, a most successful attack was executed. In September 1942 they took part, with great success, in an attack on a whale oil ship in Cherbourg harbour. Throughout Sqn Ldr Barr has displayed exceptional skill and leadership, while PO Barfod's expert navigation and accurate bombing have contributed materially to success achieved".

Also killed : FO Walter Barford DFC (Navigator); PO Thomas Trotter (AG); WO2 Neil Seymour Hunter Phillips RCAF (WOp/AG)

Philip is buried in Wevelgem Communal Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

Philip is commemorated on Wall Panel 127

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