

Sgt Alfred Kenneth Bonser 976336 RAFVR

Alfred was born on 8 November 1919 in Aigburth, Liverpool, the son of Alfred George Bonser and Emily Susan Bonser nee Griffiths.

Educated at Holt Secondary School, Alfred was employed as a wages clerk in the local aircraft factory when he volunteered for aircrew duties with the RAF.

Qualified as a WOp/AG, at the beginning of August 1942 Alfred completed his advanced training at 27 OTU RAF Lichfield, Staffordshire, and was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF Stradishall, Suffolk.

On 27/28 August 1942, 306 Bomber Command crews were tasked with an operation against the industrial city of Kassel, home of the Henschel aircraft company. Thirteen 101 Sqn Wellingtons were allocated to the task, two failed to return.

At 20:45 Alfred, operating as the Wireless Operator, and the crew departed RAF Stradishall in Wellington III X3649 (SR).

Whilst outbound and flying over Holland, one of the engines burst into flames, probably as a result of anti-aircraft fire. The pilot cut the motor and applied the fire extinguishing apparatus, successfully subduing the blaze and ultimately putting it out completely by diving. The use of the extinguisher made the restart of the motor impossible, so the op was abandoned and course was set for home on the one serviceable engine. To lighten the load, the bombs, and every possible removable item, were jettisoned, but height was gradually lost and the pilot ordered the crew to prepare for ditching.

At 22:40. about 20 miles from the English coast, the pilot made a successful ditching; however, the rubber dinghy appeared to have been damaged, probably by the fire, as neither the manual or the automatic releases had any effect, leaving just the individual "Mae West" for survival. After 70 minutes, a trawler picked up 3 survivors, Alfred and the pilot were lost, presumed drowned.

Also killed: FS George Thirlwell Brown RNZAF (Pilot)

Alfred has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

Alfred is commemorated on Wall Panel 133