

Sgt Arthur Ernest Craig 358376 RAF

Arthur was born on 1 June 1906 in Hornsey, London, the son of Alexander Craig and Rose Craig nee Harvey. In October 1927 he married Kate Ellen Groombridge in Croydon, Surrey, and they had three daughters.

Educated locally, before joining the RAF Arthur was employed as a clerk with the North British Rubber Company and T Webster and Co, manufacturers of printing inks.

Arthur joined the RAF in 1924 and, in 1927 after basic training, he commenced specialist training as an Aerial Photographer. Arthur served in this role with 13 Sqn, 35 Sqn and 2 Sqn. In 1936 Arthur completed Observer training and he returned to 13 Sqn where he served for 3 years before a final posting to 18 Sqn in 1939, just before the declaration of war.

At the outbreak of war, 18 Sqn was sent to France as part of 70 Wing of the BEF in the reconnaissance/bombing role. Initially based at Beauvraignes, they moved to Meharicourt in October 1939 and were heavily involved in the Battle of France which commenced on 10 May 1940. Following heavy losses, the Sqn was withdrawn to RAF Watton, Norfolk on 20 May 1940. The ORB for 21 May states the Sqn had only 8 operational pilots.

At 12:00 on 21 May 1940, Arthur, operating as the Observer, and the crew departed RAF Watton in Blenheim IV L9325 (WV-V) on a reconnaissance mission over Douai-Arras-Amiens-Abbeville, France. The aircraft failed to return and the crew were reported as missing believed killed and their names were recorded on the Runnymede Memorial.

Extensive post war research finally discovered the fate of the crew. The aircraft crashed at La Priez Farm, between Combles and Rancourt, Somme and was believed to have been shot down by anti-aircraft fire near Arras. The location was confirmed by the emergence of photographs of a crashed Blenheim in that place taken by German troops which clearly show the identifying number L9325. The crew had been buried at the nearby Military Cemetery in Rancourt and, until 2015, their graves had been marked as "Unknown Airmen of WW2".

In June 2015, sufficient satisfactory evidence was provided to the CWGC and the three anonymous graves in Rancourt Military Cemetery were confirmed as the crew of Blenheim L9325 and named headstones were finally installed.

Also killed: PO Cyril Light (Pilot); Sgt George Hawkins DFM (WOp/AG)

Arthur is buried at Rancourt Military Cemetery, Somme, France

Arthur is commemorated on Wall Panel 150