

PO Charles Peter Hope Maclaren 86640 RAFVR

Charles was born in 1920 in Peebles, Scottish Borders, the son of John Walter Maclaren and Elizabeth Lennie Maclaren nee Hope.

Educated at Peebles Burgh and County High School, Charles was apprenticed to an Edinburgh engineering firm and attended evening classes at Heriot-Watt College, Edinburgh as a science student. Whilst studying he enlisted in the RAFVR. At the outbreak of war he was called up and trained as a Sgt Pilot. He was commissioned in October 1940 and posted to 107 Sqn.

Between 3 March and 10 May 1941, 107 Sqn was on loan to Coastal Command and stationed at RAF Leuchars, Fife. Duties whilst in Coastal Command included shipping strikes, convoy duties, coastal patrols, submarine searches and attacks on enemy airfields and harbours.

At 18:00 on 24 April 1941, Charles departed RAF Leuchars with his crew in Blenheim IV Z5795 (OM-M), tasked with a Stand (reconnaissance) along the Norwegian coast. The aircraft was shot down by enemy fighters, crashing at Flekkero, Kristiansand. Charles's body was washed ashore later near Kristiansand. The other 2 crew members were lost without trace.

The War Poet, Flt Lt Anthony Richardson RAFVR, dedicated a poem to the crew in his 2nd book of poetry "These-Our Children" published in 1943.

"AFTERMATH (For Mac and his crew)".

*For whom lie dead in Kristiansand
And buried by a foreign hand
Can be no scent of Scottish seas,
Nor tang of fir upon the breeze,
No sight of Dundee's chimney stacks.
Indeed, their earth-dimmed hearing lacks
Sound of the pipes upon the hills,
Sound of the rivers and the rills,
Nor all the whisperings of the Usk
Can follow them into the dusk;
And their cold fingers cannot touch
The Fifeshire girls they loved as much
As any friend, who made his way
Across the sky that fatal day.
And yet there only lies between
Their hearts and mine the grey and green
Dark Northern sea. How should we fail
To clasp our hands across a veil
That scarce divides their lives and mine,
And is so slight and frail and fine
That still I hear them call to me
Across two hundred miles of sea?*

Also Killed: Sgt Anthony James Hannah RNZAF (Observer); Sgt Douglas Stevenson Hutcheon King (WOp/AG)

Charles is buried in Kristiansand Civil Cemetery, Norway. His missing crew members are commemorated on his gravestone.

Charles is commemorated on Wall Panel 203