

PO Bernard Frederick West Matthews 62004 RAFVR

Bernard was born on 4 June 1916 in Chesterton, Cambridgeshire, the eldest son of George Henry Matthews and Sophia Ann Matthews nee Start.

Educated at the Perse School, Cambridge, Bernard was employed as a tobacconist when he joined the RAF and trained as an Observer. Bernard was commissioned in March 1941.

Following advanced training at 17 OCU RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire, in July 1941 Bernard was posted to 18 Sqn at RAF Oulton, Norfolk, shortly before the squadron re-located to RAF Horsham St Faith, Norfolk.

On 12 August 1941, 56 Blenheims, split into 2 forces and supported by a fighter escort, were tasked with simultaneous attacks on the Quadrath and Knapsack power stations at Cologne. Nine 18 Sqn aircraft participated - Bernard's target was Knapsack, the largest steam generator in Europe, supplying a vital industrial area. Three squadron aircraft failed to return.

At 09:20 Bernard, operating as the Observer, and the crew departed RAF Horsham St Faith in Blenheim IV V6437 (WV-C).

Flying at low level, Bernard's Blenheim hit some high tension cables with the rudder, flying on for a few minutes still under control. The bombs were jettisoned in a field and the crew turned for home; however, a short time later the Blenheim crashed in the mouth of the Scheldt, off Vlissingen, killing all on board. Only the WOp/AG was recovered for burial.

Also killed: PO Malcolm Thomas Kershaw Walkden (Pilot); Sgt Albert Charles Cutler (WOp/AG)

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

Bernard is commemorated on Wall Panel 206

Photo Source: Watton Info - The Matthews Crew

