

Sgt Ben Michael Pick 1194506 RAFVR

Ben was born on 18 December 1921 in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, the son of Ben Pick and Lizzie Robinson Pick nee Atkins.

In October 1939, Ben joined the Merchant Marine Service, initially as a Saloon Boy on the "Dunvegan Castle", before signing on the 5000 tonne MV "King John" from Liverpool as a Galley Boy. On 13 July 1940, the "King John" was sunk by the German Armoured Merchant Ship "Widder", disguised under Swedish colours and flag. The survivors, in two lifeboats, were approached by gunships from the "Winder", but only the Captain, Chief Officer and 7 wounded men were taken, leaving the survivors, including Ben, in the lifeboats. After 4 days they landed in the West Indies.

On return to the UK, Ben joined the RAF and trained as a pilot, arriving on 138 Sqn at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in September 1942.

At 22:45 on 22 December 1942, Ben, operating as the 2nd Pilot, and the crew departed RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire in 138 Sqn Halifax II W7775 (NF-R) bound for Holland. Their mission, "Operation Marrow 12", was a container drop of weapons for the Dutch Resistance on a moor near a forest in the IJhorsterveld.

Whilst passing the Dutch coast, Ben's aircraft was hit by Flak, but the aircraft was still serviceable and the captain made the decision to continue with the operation.

The drop-zone area at IJhorst was found without any problems and the agreed light signal was sighted. On the second pass, at low speed and low altitude, the containers were dropped. Immediately after the containers left the aircraft, the Halifax was heavily shelled by an unknown German Flak unit who were on exercise in the area.

At 01:03 the aircraft crashed near De Wijk, 6 km ESE of Meppel, Holland. Six of the eight man crew were killed in the crash, the surviving two were taken POW and finally returned to the UK in September 1944 as part of an exchange of POWs.

Also Killed: FO Gervase Francis Benton Newport Tinley DFC (Pilot); WO Charles Anthony Howard DFC (Nav/AB); FS Henry Charles Taylor (WOp/AG); Sgt Brenard Stearman Nixon (FE); Sgt Cyril Clifford Hayes (AG)

Ben is buried in Staphorst (IJhorst) General Cemetery, Overijssel, Netherlands.

Ben is commemorated on Wall Panel 226

Photo Source: www.teunispats.nl

