Sgt Albert Stanley Prince 580195 RAF



Albert Stanley Prince was born in Montreal, Quebec on 22 November 1911, the son of Eliza and Harold Braithwaite Prince who had seen service with the Royal Highlanders of Canada. Following the Great War, the family moved to Neston, Cheshire. He married Winifred Mary Norris on 21 November 1936 and the couple had one son, William.

Albert attended Caldey Grange Grammar School on the Wirral. A tall, athletic young man, he played tennis and captained the Nestor Nomads football team. After completing his schooling, he spent seven years working for Neston Council before joining the RAF in 1935. After initial training at Bristol, he attended the Martin School of Navigation at Shoreham by Sea.

When war was declared on the 3 September 1939, Albert was a pilot with B Flt, 107 Sqn based at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk. The Sqn was tasked with flying the first bombing operation of the war the following day.

A reconnaissance flight on the day war was declared had observed the German "pocket" battleship Admiral Scheer, cruiser Emden, and other warships anchored at the German naval base at the entrance to Wilhelmshaven on Germany's north coast. Orders were issued by 2 Group Bomber Command that fifteen Blenheims were to attack the warships, five from each of 107, 110, and 139 Sqns.

The morning of 4 September 1939 was cloudy over southern England with heavily overcast skies and a strong NW wind. Together with four crews from 107 Sqn, Albert took off from RAF Wattisham at 1600 hours in Blenheim IV N6240 (OM-K). Poor weather conditions over the Channel forced the aircraft to fly at very low level and the five aircraft from 139 Sqn jettisoned their bombs and turned back after failing to locate the warships; however, 110 squadron aircraft found the targets.

The Blenheims hit the Admiral Scheer with at least four bombs although, none exploded probably because of the extremely low altitude of the attack and the battleship's thick armour plating. When the 110 Sqn Blenheims headed home the 107 Sqn aircraft prepared to attack. Having lost the element of surprise, the flak was now heavy and well directed. Three of the four bombers which attacked were shot down during their low level bombing runs -the aircraft flown by Albert was one.

Albert was able to ditch his aircraft in the harbour and all three crewmembers were successful in getting out of the aircraft and were picked up by a pilot boat. However, Albert had been mortally injured and died later in hospital. His crew become the first allied prisoners of war and remained in confinement until 1945.

Albert was the first Canadian serving with Bomber Command to be killed during the war, and also the first Canadian to die in combat in any of the services.

Albert is buried in the Becklingen War Cemetery, Soltau, Germany. His remains were transferred in November 1946 from his original burial place in Geestemunde Cemetery, Bremen.

Albert is commemorated on Wall Panel 228

Photo source: https://www.bombercommandmuseum.ca/