

FS John Oscar Noel Smith DFM 550971 RAF

John, known as Oscar, was born in 1919 in Birmingham, Warwickshire, the son of John Smith and Maud Mary Anna Smith nee Scott. In 1938 he married Eveline B Sidsaph in Lincoln.

Educated at Wolverhampton Grammar School, Oscar joined the RAF aged 16 as a Boy Entrant. After training as a WOp, in September 1937 he was posted to 110 Sqn at RAF Waddington. When the squadron converted to Blenheims, Oscar upgraded to WOp/AG and in May 1939 the squadron moved to RAF Wattisham. On 4 September 1939 Oscar was to participate in the first bombing raid of the war. By August 1940, the squadron had participated in the battles of France and Norway and for his work during the period he was awarded his DFM. His citation reads:

"Sgt Smith was engaged in the first active operation carried out by his squadron at Wilhelmshaven on 4th September 1939. He has completed 43 operational flights involving 117 hours flying. Sgt Smith has shown steadfast courage and a great determination to engage and defeat the enemy. His ability as a wireless operator, and his exemplary behaviour during the large number of sorties he has taken part in, have been exceptional".

Ten months of instructor duties followed before Oscar was posted to 101 Sqn at RAF West Raynham and 3 months later to 18 Sqn at RAF Oulton.

On 16 July 1941, 36 Blenheims were allocated to carry out a daring mast high attack on ships in the docks at Rotterdam.



At 15:17 Oscar, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew departed RAF Horsham St Faith in Blenheim IV V6267 (WV-M), leading the second wave of the attack. This photo of the aircraft was taken on the run in to attack. (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205211308>). Post war reports state eye-witnesses had reported seeing Oscar's aircraft over Rotterdam with the port engine on fire, trying to land in a park. When it was realised that the park was full of children and many adults, the aircraft was pulled up over the rooftops but the aircraft's wingtip hit the Courthouse and it plunged into the bank of the Noordsingel Canal, killing all on board.

Bomber Command considered the raid an outstanding success, not only because of the tonnage of shipping claimed as destroyed or damaged, but also because 'only' four Blenheims were lost out of the 36 aircraft that attacked the docks. This, however, was at the cost of 9 lives.

Also Killed: Wg Cdr Thomas Noel Partridge DFC (Pilot); Sgt George Arthur Dvorjetz (Observer)

Oscar is buried in Rotterdam (Crooswijk) General Cemetery, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands

Oscar is commemorated on Wall Panel 244

Photo Source: www.rafwatton.info

