

FS Arthur Stokes DFM 551369 RAF

Arthur, known as "Stokey" was born on 18 November 1920 in Liverpool, Lancashire, the son of Jennie Louisa Stokes.

Arthur enlisted in January 1937 and served with 51 Sqn until he was posted to 102 Sqn at RAF Drifffield, Yorkshire in September 1939. Employed as a WOp/AG, for his service on 102 Sqn, in September 1941 Arthur was awarded the DFM. His citation read:

"This N.C.O. has completed 40 operational flights as First Wireless Operator. He joined the squadron on 13th September 1939, and was posted on the 14th. November 1940. He has consistently displayed exceptional keenness and technical ability of the highest order. His enthusiasm and capacity for operational work has been an inspiration and example to all other Wireless Operators. He is an invaluable asset to the squadron"

On completion of his tour, Arthur was given the opportunity to move to instructor duties, but he declined this offer in order to remain operational and was posted to 138 Sqn at RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire.

On the night of 16/17 February 1943, Arthur participated in "Operation Gunnerside", the dropping of 6 Norwegian Commandos and containers to the north of the Heavy Water facility at Rjukan, 120 miles NE of Stavanger.

On the night of 26 February 1943, the Norwegian Commandos successfully destroyed the Norsk Hydro Plant. With their supply of heavy water cut off, the German scientists who had been working on this project had to give up and Hitler was not going to get the atomic bomb.

On 14 March 1943, Arthur and the crew were tasked with "Operation Bronse", the insertion of a 3 man Czechoslovakian SOE Bronse team to Bohemia. The team was tasked to organize the resistance, carry out intelligence surveillance activities, and transmit information back to London. The group radio was codenamed "Blanka" .

Arthur, operating as the WOp/AG, and the crew, together with the 3 man Czech team departed RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire, in Halifax II BB281 (NF-O) destined for a drop zone near Brno, SE of Prague. Deteriorating weather conditions in the drop area prevented the planned operation continuing and the decision was made to return to base. Whilst flying to the south of Munich, the aircraft was hit by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed in the Perlacher Forest. Only one crew member and one Agent survived the crash, but they died later of their injuries.

Arthur had flown 1,245 hours, of which 578 hours were flown on ops over enemy territory

Also Killed: Sqn Ldr Christopher Francis Gibson DFC (Pilot); WO1 Douglas Clark Lisson RCAF (Pilot); WO2 Maurice Tallier Peter Myers RCAF (WOp/AG); FS John Stanley Rigden (Nav); Sgt Malcolm John Hudson (FE) died 11 April; Sgt Harold John Sharood (AG); Sgt Leo Peter Ward (AG); Lt Bohumir Martinek (Agent); František Vrbka (Agent) died 23 March; Antonin Kubec (Agent)

Originally buried in Munich West Cemetery, in November 1947 Arthur was moved to Durnbach War Cemetery, Bayern, Germany

Arthur is commemorated on Wall Panel 248

Photo Source: Friends of St Clement Danes

