

A Tribute to 551369 Flight Sergeant Arthur 'Stokey' Stokes, DFM.

Arthur was born to Jennie Louisa Stokes on Thursday 18th November 1920, at 182 Grove Street, Liverpool. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force on Tuesday 19th January 1937, aged 16 years and 3 months.

He was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) by His Majesty King George VI on Friday 26th September 1941.

His medal came with the words:

'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'.

The award of the DFM was published in The London Gazette dated 17th January 1941.

Starting with 51 Squadron Arthur then served with 'B' Flight, 102 Squadron at RAF Driffield (East Yorkshire) and then RAF Leeming (North Yorkshire) from 11th September 1939 until 5th November 1940. His first operational sortie was on 26th February 1940 to bomb Cologne, with Pilot McArthur in command of the aircraft.

During his service with 102 Squadron, Arthur flew with the then Pilot Officer (Leonard) Cheshire, who described him as "the best wireless operator in the squadron" in his biography 'No Passing Glory', (pages 104 & 105).

Also whilst with 102 Squadron Arthur survived the bombing of RAF Driffield on the 15th August 1940. Arthur is quoted in a book from the time stating 'At about 1:30pm, my room mate in the Sergeant's Mess looked out of the window and said, 'What are all these Blenheims flying about for?' (He was later given extra instruction on aircraft recognition!). Then the bombs started exploding. I left my bed in a hurry - I'd been on the Milan raid and was having a 'lie in'. Our room was on the first floor hut but without hesitation I leapt through the window landing on the grass below. I then 'streaked' across the grass and flung myself into the shelter.' Inside the shelter he discovered he literally 'streaked' across the grass - he was only wearing his shirt!.

On completion of his time with 102 Squadron he was then presented with an opportunity to become an instructor however Arthur declined this offer as he wanted to remain operational. He then had the honour of joining 138 (Special Duties) Squadron, RAF Tempsford, Bedfordshire.

One of his operations was the famous Operation Gunnerside, the dropping of saboteurs to destroy the Norsk Hydro heavy water plant (crucial for the German atomic bomb project) at Vemork in German-occupied Norway.

Arthur was killed in Action on Sunday 14th March 1943 when, on Operation Bronze to Czechoslovakia to drop two Czech spies into an enemy occupied country, Halifax BB281, NF-O crashed in Munich, Germany.

Arthur (second from left) and his fellow crew members with their Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bomber, pictured before his service at RAF Tempsford.



Arthur lies at rest with his crew in Durnbach War Cemetery, Bad Tolz, Germany.



During his RAF career, until his death aged just 22 years and 5 months, Arthur flew a total of 1,245 hours, with 578 hours on operations over enemy occupied territories.

**FLIGHT SERGEANT ARTHUR STOKES DFM
WE REMEMBER HIM**