Alan Forster Muris





Rank: - Sergeant (Observer)

Number: - 1001438

Regiment: - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, 407 (Demon) Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force

Died: - 12 February 1942 aged 20

Cemetery: - Runneymede Memorial, Surrey, panel 90

Batley News, 15 Nov 1942 (Photo), 21 Nov 1942 (photo)

Alan was born in June 1921 at Blaydon-on-Tyne the son of James and Mary Eveline Muris (nee Forster, m. 1919, registered Gateshead) .His mother died shortly after he was born and his father came to live at Fieldhead Lane, Birstall when Alan was two years old. He attended Birstall Council School and won a scholarship to Batley Grammar School where secured his School Certificate and

his Higher School Certificate. On leaving school he took up a position with the Bradford Employment Exchange.

Alan joined up in July 1941 and was sent to South Africa to take a course in navigation, bombing and gunnery and told a Batley News reporter that he had thoroughly enjoyed his stay. He took many snaps from the air; one unusual one was of ostriches at a farm in Oudtshoorn. Cape Town, he said was very friendly and they received a terrific welcome. There was no rationing and the bread was of a special standard. The coast off Cape Town was beautiful with a marine drive and lovely bathing beaches. Port Elizabeth, on the Indian Ocean was the centre of the South African woollen trade so should be of interest to people in Batley.

Alan was flying Hudsons from North Coates, near Grimsby until he took part in the attack on the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, German battle cruisers. (Thanks to Bill Berry)

On 12 February – a cold day, overcast, 10/10ths cloud – news arrived at Bomber Command Headquarters soon after 11am that the battle cruisers Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, accompanied by a strong escort of destroyers, R- and E-boats, fighter and bomber aircraft, had sailed from Brest and were moving up the Channel, right under the noses of the British in bad weather and low cloud. The German naval force was obviously making for their home ports. The German warships were not discovered until late that morning when a Spitfire flown by Squadron Leader 'Bobby' Oxspring spotted them off Le Touquet. All available Royal Navy and RAF units were ordered to attack the ships before darkness closed in. Most of Bomber Command was 'stood down' for the day and only 5 Group was at four hours' notice. In the largest Bomber Command daylight operation of the war to date 242 bombers and aircraft of Coastal and Fighter Commands and of the Fleet Air Arm made frantic efforts to sink the ships. The attacks were kept up from a little before 3 o'clock in the afternoon to a quarter-past six in the evening, by which time it was almost dark. Icing at times very severe, and rain and hail were met with by most of the crews. All the attacks were in vain. Most of the aircraft were unable to find the German ships and of those aircraft which did bomb, no hits were registered. None of the attacks by other forces caused any serious damage to the German ships, though the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau were both slowed down after striking three mines previously laid by 5 Group Hampdens or

Manchesters in the Frisian Islands. Operation Donnerkeil-Cerberus had been a complete success.

Alan was reported missing after the attack but it was not until November 1942 that he was officially reported presumed dead. His father, James had died on 7 July 1942 at 22, Fieldhead Lane, Birstall, his mother Margaret Ann Muris was living with him.

Alan was awarded the Air Crew Europe Star; 1939-45 Star; 1939-1945 War Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at The Royal Air Forces Association Club, Batley; Batley Grammar School; Batley and Birstall War Memorials.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group