Arthur Pyrah





Rank: - Flying Officer (formerly Wireless Operator/Air Gunner)

Number: - 130235

Regiment: - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve 7 Squadron Code letters MG

Died: - 30 July 1943

Cemetery: - Runnymede Memorial, Surrey, Panel 129

Batley News, 7 Aug 1943 (photo)

Arthur was born in Batley on 13 July 1913 the son of Harry and Annice Pyrah nee Farrar who had married at St. Paul's Church, Hanging Heaton on 8 June 1907. Winfred was born in 1917, Eric 1924.

Arthur attended Mill Lane Council School and was later a fettler at Messrs. Taylor Yielding and Co.'s Prospect Mills, Birstall. In early 1939 he married Rose Argyle and they had a son. In 1939 the family was living at 39, Mill Lane, Batley although by 1942 his parents had moved to 35, Bradford Road, Carlinghow and he and his wife and child was living at Bromley Street, Hanging Heaton.

Arthur joined up in November 1941 and by November 1942 it was reported that he had been promoted from Sergeant (wireless operator-air gunner) to that of Pilot Officer. His wife and small son lived at “Southlea”, Tingley when he was reported missing on the night of the big raid over Hamburg.

Arthur with the crew, Sgt RM Bowyer, Sgt E A Charles, F/O A L Forbes, P/O D L A Pool, F/O D E Pushor , Sgt F H Webb set off in a Short Stirling 11 Serial No. E F 364 Markings MG-X from Oakington, nr. Cambridge on 29 July 1943 on a night raid to bomb Hamburg.

This followed an operation to bomb Hamburg the previous night using 787 aircraft of which 17 were lost (2.2%). For the second consecutive raid, Brig Gen. Anderson, the commander of the American 8th Air Force flew as an observer on this operation. PFF used H2S to mark the target but were approximately 3 Km east of the centre of the city but at least concentrated, leading to concentrated bombing with little creep-back. This raid caused a firestorm resulting from very high summer temperatures and low humidity following a particularly dry spell. Most of the fire crews were in the west of the city following the raid of three nights earlier and few could make the journey to the new fires due to rubble blocking roads. The fires quickly joined into one mass of fire, drawing so much oxygen into the area that it caused storm-force winds. The fire raged for over three hours after the raid and only subsided when all combustible material was consumed. There were approximately 40,000 civilian deaths mostly from asphyxiation resulting from lack of oxygen. The raid led to an exodus of over 1.2 million people fearing another raid.

Arthur died the following night when twenty eight of the 777 attacking aircraft were lost.

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

Arthur is remembered with Honour at Hanging Heaton War Memorial (St Paul’s); Royal Air Forces Association Club, Batley and Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group