

The Last Flight of Sergeant (Air Bomber) Aaron Ottolangui



Aaron Ottolangui was born in Bethnal Green in January 1921, grandson of Aaron Ottolangui & Mary nee Sharp (Schaap), son of their 8th child Mordechai born 1895 and his first wife Sarah who was born in 1897 to Abraham Garcia and Rebecca nee Witmond. Mordechai known as Monty and Sarah married on 14th August 1912 in Bethnal Green. Sarah's sister Julia married George Ottolangui, Monty's younger brother.

Aaron's sister Annie was born in 1925 and his mother, Sarah died in 1931.

Aaron, service number 1391065, joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). The RAFVR was formed in July 1936 to provide individuals to supplement the Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAAF) which had been formed in 1925 by the local Territorial Associations. The AAF was organised on a Squadron basis, with local recruitment similar to the Territorial Army Regiments. The object was to provide a reserve of aircrew for use in the event of war. By September 1939, the RAFVR comprised 6,646 Pilots, 1,625 Observers and 1,946 Wireless Operators.

When war broke out in 1939 the Air Ministry employed the RAFVR as the principal means for aircrew entry to serve with the RAF. A civilian volunteer on being accepted for aircrew training took an oath of allegiance ('attestation') and was then inducted into the RAFVR. Normally he returned to his civilian job for several months until he was called up for aircrew training. During this waiting period he could wear a silver RAFVR lapel badge to indicate his status.

By the end of 1941 more than half of RAF Bomber Command aircrew were members of the RAFVR. Eventually of the "RAF" aircrew in the Command probably more than 95% were serving members of the RAFVR.

In October 194, Aaron married Betty Moscovitz



Around 1942 Aaron was posted as a Bomb Aimer to 101 Squadron Bomber Group 3, at RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, near Pocklington, about halfway between Scunthorpe and Scarborough. 101 Squadron was the flying AVRO Lancaster Mk.1, Heavy Bomber



The role of bomb-aimer was introduced in 1942 as the new heavy bombers required seven-man crews. The bomb-aimer took control of the aircraft when it was on its bombing run. He would lie flat in the nose of the aircraft, directing the pilot until the bombs were released and the bombing photograph was taken. The photograph was the proof that the operation had been completed, which meant the crew could count it towards their total number of operations carried out.



This is the official photograph of a bomb aimer at his post in the nose of a Lancaster Mk. 1 heavy bomber

The RAF service records are still classified, so we do not know how many missions Aaron flew, but on 14th April 1943 Aaron took off in his Lancaster registration number W4951, Call Sign **SR-O** or **SR-P** together with 6 other crew members:

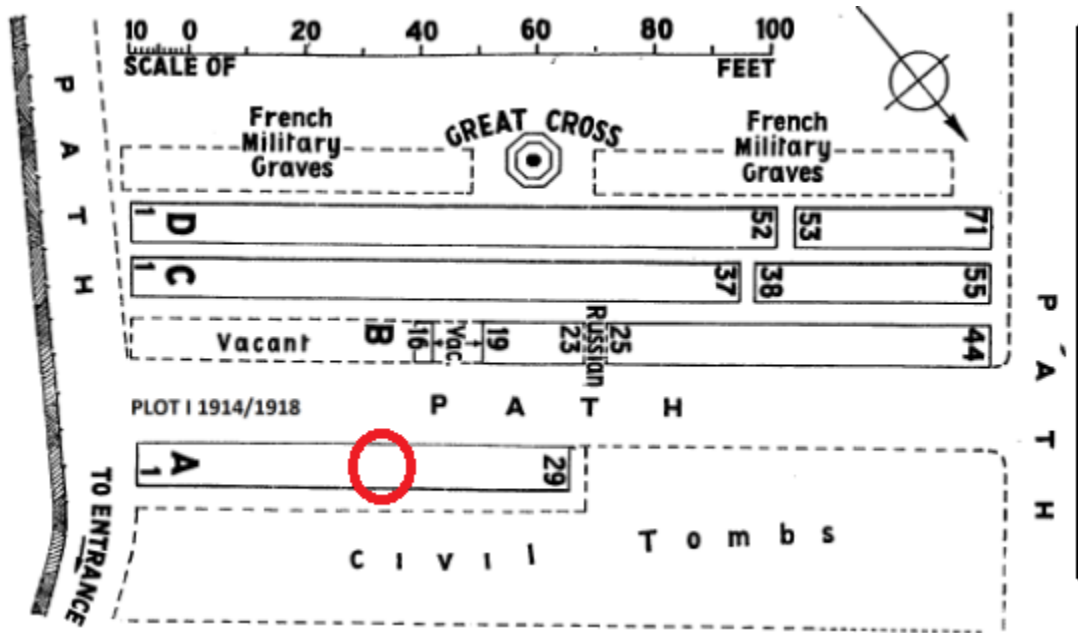
Pilot	1043580 Sergeant Robert Gordon Hamilton
Navigator	127970 Flying-Officer Henry Eifon Clement
Flight Engineer	1149392 Sergeant Frank Wood
Wireless Operator	1129644 Sergeant Joseph Leadbetter Cartmell
Air Gunner	1601428 Sergeant George William Henry Northover
Air Gunner	1307887 Sergeant Peter Donovan Steed

Their mission was a night bombing raid over Stuttgart which they completed and were flying back to base when they were attacked at around 02.18 a.m., and shot down by Luftwaffe heavy night fighter pilot Oberleutnant Rudolf Altendorf of the 2./NJG 4, flying the Messerschmitt Bf 110 3C+EK from Florennes airfield in Belgium.



The crippled Lancaster lost control and crashed into the forest between Trelon and Eppe Sauvage near Maubeuge, Hauts-de-France, Northern France. There were no survivors.

Aaron and his comrades are buried in the Mauberge Centre cemetery in Block A



The site of Aaron's grave is circled in red.

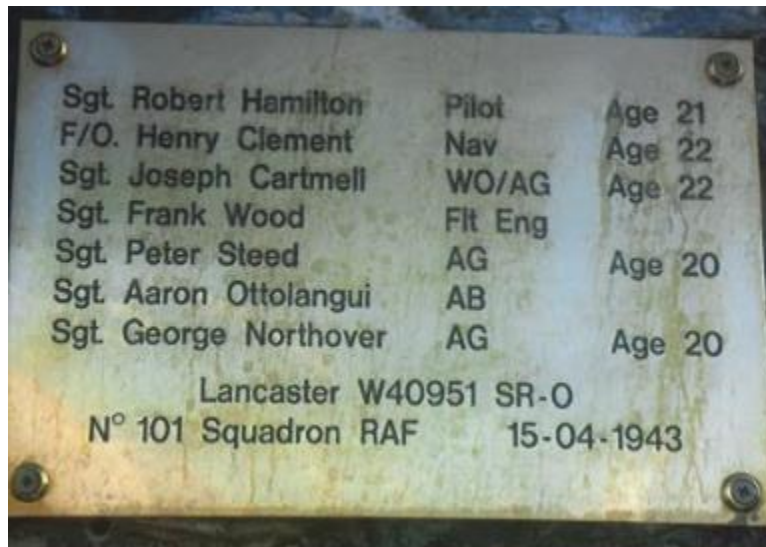
Aaron shares a headstone with his Flight Engineer Sergeant Frank Wood alongside the rest of the crew



Note the small pebble atop the stone, a Jewish tradition to indicate that the grave has been recently visited

On the wall of the cemetery there is a brass plaque with the names of the aircrew which was donated by Dr. Tommy and Michelle de Tournay of Belgium, in perpetual memory of the gallant crew of W4951. The dedication took place on Sunday 5th May 2016 with participation of the Mayor and Council of Eppe Sauvage, as part of the village commemoration of the end of the Second World War.

The crew are given special mentions every time there is a ceremony in the village on the anniversaries of VE-Day and the liberation of the village by US forces as well as on Remembrance Sunday.



Look at the age of the crew members – average 21½

Never to be forgotten.

My thanks for their assistance and participation in preparing this tribute go to Cathie Hewitt, curator of



THE JEWS OF
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and

William (Bill) Hyett
Family friend of F/O. Henry Eifon Clement
Navigator of W4951