**Lost Aircraft 44-40491 (MACR 14973) with POW’s on Board**

On 10 Sept 1945, B-24J (Liberator type bomber) #44-40491 (MACR 14973), 11th Bomb Group, 98th Bomb Squadron, took off from Yontan Field, Okinawa carrying British prisoners of war to Neilson Field, Luzon, Philippines. The aircraft was one of a flight of 11 aircraft carrying liberated POWs, many who were captured at Hong Kong in December 1941. The pilot, Second Lieutenant Willard. C. Sharp, Jr. 02062062, AC, had been instructed to proceed to the north of Formosa, down the west coast of the island and then to Manila. On board the aircraft were 5 crew and twenty passengers all ex-prisoners of war. It is understood that planks were placed across the bomb bay over the doors for the men to sit on for the journey.

When they took off, the weather report was good, but about an hour out, the flight of 11 aircraft ran into a typhoon. They altered course and headed for the coast of China to divert around the storm. The aircraft were on instruments for about two hours. When they finally broke out of the storm 50 miles north of Formosa, all aircraft were accounted for except for this one aircraft. The aircraft was reported missing and a search was conducted. This aircraft never showed up in the Philippines and no wreckage was found in the sea.  It was concluded that the aircraft went down during the storm with all aboard, with no precise location known.

The following is a list of the POW, s who were on board the stricken aircraft including five who were at Omi camp 13b. In addition, one of the men, William John Green, who sailed on the Kyokku Maru but did not go to Omi camp also perished on this flight.

1) Major Alfred Cecil Houghton. Royal Engineers. No 49563

(Ikuno POW Camp Osaka 4B)

Born November 13th 1893. Biddenden Kent. Age at death 51

 Memorial: Brookwood Military Cemetery, Woking Borough, Surrey, England. Panel 4 Column 2

1. A/Sgt Arthur Frank Compton, Bombardier, 21 AA (L) 79 Btry ,82;

Royal Artillery no 1552186

(Tokyo Branch Camp 16B. Kanose.)

Born December 31st 1914, Kingston, Surrey. Age at death 30.

Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 7

1. L/Cpl Desmond Mortimer Harrington. Royal Corps of Signals no 2323399

Captured Hong Kong 25/12/1941 (Osaka Camp 2b) 26/3/1943 to Sept 1945

Born October 29th 1918 Andover, Hampshire. Age at death 26

 Memorial. Hong Kong Island. Hong Kong. Plot: Column 10. No 15250321

1. Gunner Sydney F Bates, Royal Artillery. 8th Coastal Regiment. No 1712468

(Tokyo Camp 6b) 26/3/1943 to Sept 1945

Born October 6th 1909. London. Age at death 39.

Memorial. Chai Wan Island. Hong Kong

1. Gunner Leonard James Webb. 122 Field Royal Artillery. No 935601

(Tokyo 13b Omi)

Born July 28th 1918.Islington London. Age at death 27

Memorial, Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 33

1. Gunner William John Green, Royal Artillery,88th Field Regiment. No 1058664

Captured Singapore 15/2/1942 (Tokyo Camp 6b)

Born December 29th 1904. Cranford Middlesex. Age at death 40.

 Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 19. Grave no 56218612

1. Sgt Sidney Frederick Gilham. Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge’s Own) no 6200749

Captured Hong Kong 25/12/1941(Osaka Camp 2D) 26/7/1943 to Sept 1945

Born May 9th 1914. London W11. Age at death 31

Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial, San Wan, Hong Kong Island. No 15250098

1. Sgt William Richard James. Royal Artillery. 965th Defence Battery. No 847074

Captured Hong Kong 25/12/1941 (Osaka Camps) 26/7/1943 to Sept 1945

Born Sept 10th 1920. Manchester. Age at death 25

Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial, Cha Wan, Hong Kong Island

1. Lance Corporal John L Burke. Middlesex Regiment. No 6203596

Captured Hong Kong 25/12/1941 (Tokyo Camp 6b) 13/7/1943 to Sept 1945

Duke of Cambridge’s Own. No 6203596

Born June 25th 1919. Eire. Age at death 26

Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial, Cha Wan, Hong Kong Island. Column 14

1. Corporal Cyril Walter Wooll. 4th Suffolk Regiment. Infantry. No 5825494

(Tokyo Branch Camp 16 Kanose)

Born July 8th 1912. Wisbech, Cambridgeshire. Age at death 33

Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 53. No 56238670

1. Corporal John James Arthur Botting. Royal Air Force Volunteers. No 930078

(Tokyo Branch Camp 16. Kanose)

Born March 22nd 1922. Eltham, London S E 9. Age at death 23

Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 452. No 56213398

1. Corporal William Doxford. Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps No 3736

(Narumi POW Camp. Osaki 11b became Nagoya 2b.)

Born January 9st 1912. Sunderland. Age at death 33

Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial, Cha Wan, Hong Kong. No15249746

1. Lance/Corporal Charles Henry Price. Royal Corps of Signals No 2324244

(Osaka Camps) 9/11/1943 to Sept 1945

Born February 5th 1917. Ebbw Vale, Wales. Age at Death 28

 Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial. Cha Wan, Hong Kong. Column 9

1. Private Harold Oliver Solomon. 6th Royal Norfolk Regiment no 5776798

(Tokyo camp 13b Omi)

 Born April 18th 1919 Costessey, Norfolk. Age at death 26

Memorial Kranji, North west, Singapore

1. Private Thomas Patrick Malone King. Middlesex Regiment

Duke of Cambridge’s Own. No 6213522

(Osaka Camps)

Born August 13th 1918, Fulham, London. Age at Death 27

 Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial. Cha Wan, Hong Kong. Column 15

1. Private Harold Peete, Suffolk Regiment. No 5950583

(Tokyo Branch Camp 16. Kanose)

Born February 22nd 1919 Mansfield Nottinghamshire. Age at death 26.

Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 56. No 56231813

1. Private Ernest Arthur Pargeter. Middlesex Regiment.

Duke of Cambridgeshire’s Own. No 6203984

(Osaka Camps)

Born June 8th 1919 London. Age at death 26.

 Memorial: Sai Wan Memorial, Chai Wan Hong Kong Island. Column 16

1. Private Arthur James Tuck (Took) Cambridgeshire Regiment. No 5933902

(Tokyo Camp 13b Omi)

Born April 8th 1921. Manea, March, Cambridgeshire. Age at death 24

 Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. No 56237371

1. Private Edward Arthur Clarke. 5th Royal Norfolk Regiment. No 5781783

(Tokyo camp 13b Omi)

 Born March 17th 1920. Thetford Norfolk. Age at death 25

 Memorial: Kranji, North West, Singapore. Column 49

1. Private James William Barks 5th Royal Norfolk Regiment. No 5888045

(Tokyo Camp 13b Omi)

 Born February 19th 1918. Derby Derbyshire. Age at death 27

 Memorial: Kranji, North West Singapore.

The aircraft crew were:

Pilot: 2nd Lieutenant. Willard Calvin Sharp Jr. 20262062

Co-Pilot: Flying Officer. George Roger Mortensen. T-7497

Navigator: 2nd Lieutenant. Arden Darrel Daoust. 0206—33

Engineer: Sergeant. Jean Barrow 36679488

Radio Operator: Staff Sergeant. Glenn Lake Jr 37570473

Another aircraft that took off from Okinawa about an hour later, also carrying 20 POWs as passengers also ran into the typhoon. This aircraft attempted to divert around the storm south towards Formosa (Taiwan) but unfortunately it crashed into a mountain. All personnel were later recovered from that crash site.

There was no aircraft correlating to MACR 14973 recovered from the island of Formosa. It is assessed that the aircraft crashed into the ocean while attempting to divert around the typhoon.  The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has classified the MACR 14973 incident as Non-recoverable. Non-recoverable cases are those that have negligible potential for accounting, such as cases in which the remains are lost or buried at sea, or were cremated and/or systematically destroyed.

Our thoughts go out to the families of these men who after enduring years of captivity and hardship, they suffered the further horror of the airplane that was taking them on the first part of there journey home should crash with the loss of all their lives.

We would like to offer our thanks to Captain James O'Leary, who was, Defence Attache US Embassy Tokyo, for helping us with this information.