

## FACT FILE

### Warrant Officer Class 1 R/68549 Allan Walter Otto

Died **16 May 1943** aged 21.

Warrant Officer Class 1 R/68549 Allan Walter Otto

Pilot Royal Canadian Air Force, stationed at RAF Fairlop, rank then Sergeant, between 13 November and 15 December 1941.

Allan son of Berthold Albert and Edla Elizabeth Otto of Fort William, Ontario, Canada, is buried at Bone War Cemetery, Annada, Algeria.

Allan, born 5 June 1921 was raised in Fort William near Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. He was said to have been a quiet man who took pride in everything he did, but showed no interest in flying.

In 1940, then aged 19, he announced to his family that as there was a recruiting team in the local armoury, he intended to join up. His parents gave him their blessing, when in July 1940 he left home to commence training at a Manning Depot.

He received his wings in February 1941 followed by 18 days leave, then he reported to 57 OTU, then to 122 Squadron, based at Turnhouse. In June he flew 5 operational sorties mainly convoy patrols and a scramble to intercept an unidentified aircraft, which proved to be friendly.

He was posted to 603 Squadron at Hornchurch on **27 August 1943** with Harold Bennett, and the two men became firm friends.

**12 September 1941.** 603 Squadron were posted to the recently completed RAF Station Fairlop, under command of S/L H G P Ovendon.

The traditional segregation of officers and other ranks was maintained. They only mixed when on duty. The Officers and Sergeants messes were strictly out of bounds to each other and even off station, they drank in separate pubs. This tradition did not worry Allan or his friend Harold Bennett, being non drinkers and when off duty travelled to the West End via nearby Fairlop Station.



**Allan Walter Otto at Fairlop in 1941**  
(Archie Otto)



**603 Squadron 'A' Flight, at RAF Fairlop in 1941**  
**Left-Right F/Sgt Allan Otto, F/Sgt Prytherch, Sgt Dalley and Sgt Forester.**  
**Front F/L Bill Douglas & 'Tannoy' Jones**  
 (Archie Otto)

**8 December 1941.** 0900-1030. Allan in Spitfire Va R7333, Convoy Patrol. By coincidence at 1105 Harold Bennett also in R7333 took off on a Ramrod, but he was shot down in the Channel off Le Touquet and taken prisoner.

**15 December 1941.** 603 Squadron arrived at Dyce in Scotland.

**13 April 1942.** Allan as part of 603, posted to Ta Kali, Malta via USS Wasp.

**20 April.** Allan took off from USS Wasp to Malta via Algeria.

**2 May 1942.** Allan's first operational sortie.

**6 May 1942.** Allan flying Spitfire AB340 at 0850 crashed on landing and sustained bruising, concussion and head injuries. Although still injured Flight Sergeant Otto remained part of 'A' Flight.

**27th July 1942.** Alan sent home. In Britain he soon recovered and returned to flying duties. Soon after he went to Cranfield to join 3501 Servicing Unit.

Testing repaired aeroplanes could be dangerous and required a skilful pilot if repair work or assembly had not been done correctly. In 1943, Alan, now a Warrant Officer, was sent to North Africa to join 110 Repair and Salvage Unit. These units performed a difficult task of recovering and repairing aircraft that forced landed in the desert.

On **Sunday 16th 1943** aboard Spitfire Vb (EP688), Allan took off on a road about 21 miles east of Sbeitfe, Algeria. As the aircraft reached flying speed, a lorry carrying troops turned onto the road. Allan banked sharply at low level to avoid the lorry, but the wing-tip caught the top of a cable carrying pole, which sent Spitfire crashing into the ground.



**Grave of Allan Walter Otto**  
**Bone War Cemetery, Annaba, Algeria**  
(Commonwealth War Graves Commission)

It burst into flames and Allan aged twenty-one, died shortly afterwards in hospital. After Harold Bennett was released from being a POW, he tried to ascertain what has happened to his friend Allan. He made contact with the family in Thunder Bay and both families have since kept in close touch and remained friends.



**Bone War Cemetery, Annaba, Algeria**  
(Commonwealth War Graves Commission)

