

THE SUPERB POSTHUMOUS 'MALTA 1941' D.F.M. AWARDED TO A MARYLAND I AIR-GUNNER WHO IN TANDEM TO HIS PILOT, WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR DAMAGING OR DESTROYED AT LEAST ' THREE ITALIAN FLYING BOATS AND, IN ONE MACHINE GUN ATTACK ON AN ENEMY AERODROME, DESTROYED ONE ENEMY AIRCRAFT AND DAMAGED SEVERAL OTHERS.' HE DIED OF WOUNDS ON THE RETURN FROM HIS 45TH OPERATIONAL SORTIE



DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, G.V.I.R. '550958. SGT. C. CLARK. R.A.F.'

D.F.M. *London Gazette* 16 September 1941, the original citation states:

'Sergeants Clark and Mutimer have displayed a high standard of ability throughout the 40 operational missions in which they have participated as wireless operator-air gunner and air observer respectively. Sergeant Clark showed great keenness to engage the enemy, using his guns with damaging effect, while Sergeant Mutimer always willingly co-operated with his pilot when the opportunity for offensive action occurred. They have damaged or destroyed three Italian flying boats and, in one machine gun attack on an enemy aerodrome, destroyed one enemy aircraft and damaged several others.'

Sergeant Campbell Clark joined 69 Squadron on Malta as a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner on 14 March 1941, taking part in his first mission on 19 March 1941; a patrol of the Sicilian Straits with Pilot Officer Wylde. Equipped with Glenn Martin Maryland I's, the squadron had just 7 of this type on 31 March 1941, to which was added a Hurricane in April and a 2nd Hurricane in May. However over the following few months, the squadron usually had only 5 or 6 serviceable Maryland's and at the end of August it had just 1! The Maryland I was a twin engined light bomber, mainly used for reconnaissance by the British, however it had good speed, manoeuvrability and was heavily armed, having a fuselage turret and four wing mounted guns. The armament made it good for ground attack duties and it could hold its own in combat, indeed one pilot, the famed Wing Commander Adrian Warbuton DSOx2, DFCx3, even became an Ace on the type (Clark flew with him once):

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Maryland

During March and April, Clark took part in 10 sorties, flying with 7 different pilots but in May, he joined the crew of Pilot Officer Drew with whom he would fly with for the majority of his time with 69. Taking part in 9 sorties in May, mainly patrols of Sicily, Tunis and Tripoli, on 25 May they 'descended to 50 ft and machinegunned a flying boat' in Lampedusa harbour.



On 5 June 1941, flying a reconnaissance mission over Corfu. They attacked and damaged an enemy aircraft, forcing the rear gunner to bail out and were themselves unsuccessfully attacked during the engagement. A total of 12 such missions occurred throughout the month, seeing Clark and Drew hunt for Italian Naval forces moving through the Mediterranean.

On 3 July 1941 they took part in a reconnaissance to ascertain the results of a raid over Tripoli and Zuara, the Operations Record Book states the following:

'Recc. Tripoli, 4 merchant vessels, and one merchant vessel on fire was result of Swordfish attack; Zuara, machinegunned from 100 feet 1 S.M.81 on fire, other aircraft (S.M.79s and prob. S.M.82s) damaged one badly. Effective smokescreen observed.'

The Air Ministry report on Clark's award adds detail to this exploit and other the trio undertook, stating:

'An immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Medal has been made to 581062 Sergeant Richard Saxby Mutimer and 550958 Sergeant Campbell Clark of Number 69 Squadron Sergeant Mutimer R.S. (Air Observer) and Sergeant Clark C. (W. OpTr. A/G) The crew of Flying Officer Drew have carried out 40 Operational Flights from Malta. Sergeant Mutimer has at all times used the highest standard of work. Although this airman has had no offensive armament to operate in the front cockpit of a Maryland aircraft he has shown a great willingness that the pilot should take offensive action when the opportunity has offered. Sergeant Clark has at all times produced a high standard of work both as wireless operator and air gunner. He has displayed a keen desire to engage the enemy when opportunity offered and when Flying Officer Drew has made attacks on Italian Seaplanes and aircraft on the ground he has produced accurate fire with his rear guns with damaging effect. This crew has damaged or destroyed 3 Italian Flying Boats and on the afternoon of 3/7/41 they machine gunned parked aircraft on the Aerodrome at Zuara and destroyed 1 aircraft and damaged others.'



A further flight over Syracuse on 9 July saw an H.E.115 set on fire by Clark's machinegun and three other aircraft damaged. Further flights continued until 10 August when Clark joined Mutimer and a Flight Lieutenant Wylde on a reconnaissance over Catania. The Squadron Operations Record Book for the day their award was announced states:

'Sergeant Mutimer was killed on August 10th on returning from Sicily, and Sergeant Clark died the following day, on their return a signal was received saying that they were returning on one engine, the starboard motor having failed. The aircraft AR.739 crashed short of the aerodrome while making an approach, the pilot A/F/Lieut. P.R. Wylde, and Sergeant Mutimer being killed instantly. Sergeant Clark received burns and severe concussion and was taken to Hospital, where he died the following morning. The aircraft was burnt out but the observer's log and the camera were saved.'

At the time of his death, Sergeant Clark had taken part in 45 operational sorties with 69 Squadron



CENTRAL CHANCERY OF
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD,
ST JAMES'S PALACE, S.W. 1.

27th February 1942,

CONFIDENTIAL.

Sir, I have the honour to inform you that your attendance is requested at Buckingham Palace at 10.15 o'clock a.m. on Tuesday, the 17th March next, in order that you, as next of kin, may receive from The King the Distinguished Flying Medal awarded to your son, the late Sergeant Campbell Clark, R.A.F.

DRESS: Service Dress, Civil Defence Uniform, Morning Dress or dark Lounge Suit.

You may be accompanied by one relation only (children under seven may not attend) and I shall be glad if you will complete the enclosed form and return it to me immediately. Two third class return railway vouchers will be forwarded to you (if resident outside the London area) if you so desire, and I shall be glad if you will give the details required on the enclosed form.

This letter should be produced on entering the Palace as no further cards of admission will be issued.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Secretary.

T. Clark, Esq.



Condition NEF, complete with its original ribbon pin. Sold together with an original Central Chancery invitation to Buckingham Palace and copied research, including copies of his original recommendation and all his sorties extracted from the 69 Squadron Operational Record Book (digital)

A particularly fine and scarce 'Malta' Squadron to an air gunner who had considerable success with his guns.