

Colin Edward Ridley Maitland D.F.C.

Squadron Leader 102627, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve



Colin was born in July 1922 in Rochford, Essex. He was the son of Cyril James Maitland and Edith May Maitland nee Radcliffe. Colin was a member of 1st Shipley Scouts and is commemorated on the Scouts Roll of Honour displayed in Shipley Church. The 1939 UK Register shows his mother Edith was living at Blenheim Cottage, Smithers Hill and in the legal papers following Colin's death in 1944 she was granted the right of administration. Colin joined the Royal Air Force at the onset of war and attained the rank of Squadron Leader. He was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross for gallantry and was listed in the London Gazette on 23rd June 1944.

In September 1944 he assumed command of RAF Squadron No. 2, which in July had been assigned to the 2nd Tactical Airforce Group, operating in close cooperation with the Army. This was a tactical support role as opposed to an air combat role. Starting on 30th July 1944 the Squadron had returned to French soil accompanying the 21st Army Group on the left flank of the Allied advance which proceeded to advance east from Normandy towards the Netherlands. In November 1944 the Squadron changed from flying Mustangs to Spitfires.

On the 18th of March 1945 Colin set out on a photo reconnaissance mission flying a Spitfire XIV with serial RM812. His mission was never accomplished. His aircraft was abandoned near Emmerich, Germany, believed to have been shot down over Doetinchem. German records claim his Spitfire was hit by flack. Photo reconnaissance missions were immensely valuable to the war effort, but incredibly dangerous as the Spitfires were stripped of unnecessary weight (guns and radio) and all panel lines were filled in to reduce drag. This made them faster with greater range but unable to defend themselves.

Colin was laid to rest at Doetinchem (Loolaan) General Cemetery in the Netherlands. In addition to his decoration for gallantry Colin was awarded the War Medal 1939 – 1945 and the 1939 - 1945 Star and the Aircrew Europe Star. His will shows his home address as Blenheim Cottage, Smithers Hill. His mother submitted a newspaper entry "...previously reported as missing, now known to have been killed in air operations in March having attained the acting rank of Squadron Leader. Aged 22, dearly loved only son of May Maitland".

Mrs Maitland remained in Shipley until her death in 1975 at which time she was living at Church Cottages. Local knowledge tells us that in 1944 the line of oaks bordering Blenheim Cottage was felled to clear a flight path to the Advanced Landing Ground at Coolham. Mrs Maitland replanted the oaks after the war in honour of her son.



Left: Distinguished Flying Cross



Right: Air Crew Europe Star

In Memory of
Squadron Leader Pilot
Colin Edward Maitland
D F C
102627, 2 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 18 March 1945

Remembered with Honour
Doetinchem (Loolaan) General Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The central image is a commemorative page for Squadron Leader Pilot Colin Edward Maitland. It features a photograph of a row of white headstones in a cemetery. The page is framed by a thin red border. At the bottom, it includes the logo of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and text stating that he is commemorated in perpetuity by the commission.

Left: 1939 – 1945 War Medal



Right: 1939 – 1945 Cross