

Flight Lieutenant Jack Frost

Veteran of RAF Coastal Command who nursed his stricken Liberator bomber to a successful crash-landing

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JACK FROST, who has died aged 103, served as a pilot in Coastal Command, which fought the air war over the sea, from the first to the last day of the Second World War. He flew throughout the Battle of the Atlantic and in support of Russian convoys.

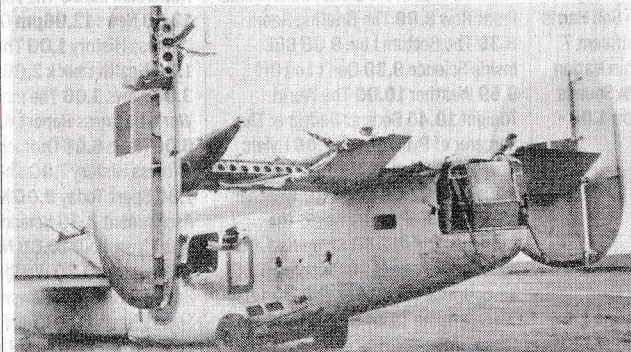
On November 15 1944, Frost and his crew took off from Leuchars in Fife in their four-engine Liberator of 206 Squadron to patrol off the coast of Norway. Flying close to Bergen, his heavy bomber was attacked by three Messerschmitt Bf110 long-range fighters and very badly damaged.

An air gunner was killed and another severely wounded. One of the Liberator's engines was put out of action, the hydraulic system was rendered useless and the intercommunication between the crew was made unserviceable. This made taking evasive action particularly difficult, but Frost maintained control.

When one of the attacking fighters was severely damaged, the engagement was finally broken off after nearly an hour of combat. Despite flying on three engines, losing fuel, and with extreme damage to the aircraft's control surfaces, Frost managed to nurse the crippled bomber to Sumburgh in the Shetlands, where, unable to lower the undercarriage, he made a crash landing.

Frost was awarded an immediate DFC and two of his crew were awarded the DFM. The shared experience forged a strong bond between the surviving crew members and, after returning to their own countries, they all held November 15 as a special date and sought to contact each other in memory of their Sumburgh "arrival".

Marshal John Gibson Frost, always called Jack, was born in Brixton on July 28 1919 and educated at what is now Haberdashers' Hatcham College



Frost and, above, his damaged Liberator bomber after its crash landing

in New Cross. Following the death of his father in 1933, he declined a sixth-form place and started work as a clerk with the Eagle Star Insurance Company, continuing his education

at night school. To supplement his income he joined the Territorial Army, but in 1938 he was allowed to transfer to the RAF Volunteer Reserve, where he started training to be a pilot.

Mobilised as the war started, he completed his flying training and was posted to fly the Anson with 608 Squadron based near Middlesbrough, known as the "Kipper Patrol" and mainly employed on shipping patrols over the North Sea. During a transit flight from Wick, Frost's Anson was forced to ditch in the sea. He was picked up by the destroyer *Electra* as the only survivor.

Having recovered from his injuries, he re-joined 608, now flying the American-built Lockheed Hudsons on anti-shipping tasks off Norway. In early 1942, on promotion to warrant officer, he was posted to 53 Squadron at North Coates in Lincolnshire, also flying Hudsons.

He led anti-shipping sorties on "Rover" patrols against enemy convoys off Heligoland and participated in an abortive strike against the battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* after their dash from Brest through the English Channel.

When 53 Squadron was taken "out of line" due to excessive losses in April 1942, Frost was posted to a unit training aircrew for Coastal Command – sometimes known as the "Cinderella Command", since Bomber and Fighter Command attracted more attention.

Frost then became a pilot instructor on Wellingtons, using the powerful "Leigh Light" searchlight which was mounted on the wing and used to illuminate surfaced U-boats.

Requesting a return to operational flying, in August 1943 he was dispatched via the RMS *Queen Mary* to Oakes Field, Nassau, in the Bahamas, to train on the Liberator. Returning with his constituted crew, he joined 206 Squadron at St Eval in Cornwall,

flying anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay.

In the build-up to D-Day, he flew over the Southwest Approaches during the highly successful Operation Cork, which sealed the Channel from enemy naval activity that could have menaced the huge armada heading for Normandy. In July, 206 Squadron moved to Leuchars, where the anti-submarine war continued; Frost attacked *U-299*, inflicting minor damage. A few days later, he had his encounter with the enemy fighters off the Norwegian coast.

After the armistice, Frost flew several patrols rounding up surrendering U-boats, one of which had to be "persuaded" with the help of a depth charge and a few rounds of cannon fire. At the end of hostilities, 206 Squadron Liberators were converted for passenger duties. Operating from Oakington near Cambridge, Frost flew long hauls to RAF Mauripur, near Karachi, to collect personnel returning from the Far East.

After the war, he continued to fly with the RAF Reserve and attended Birkbeck, University of London, gaining an honours degree in geography and then a Master's. He held several posts in education, eventually becoming vice principal of Newbury College of Further Education.

Frost was a founder member of the 206 Squadron Association and he supported the organisation, attending events until his health began to fail. He was awarded the Air Efficiency Award with Clasp and received the Russian Federation's 50th Anniversary of the Great Patriotic War medal for his support of the Arctic convoys.

Jack Frost is survived by Kyllikki, his Finnish wife of 58 years, and their two daughters.

Jack Frost, born July 28 1919, died June 12 2023