

KEITH BARNET FILES

Sgt. 523740 Royal Air Force

Born 5 Oct 1913 - died 11 January 1941

In the course of World War 2, over 200 airmen lost their lives as a result of air accidents over the North Yorks. Moors. Their names are included on a Roll of Honour posted on the yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk website which carries a great deal of information about these incidents.

KEITH BARNET FILES was born on 5 September **1913** to James and Ethel Files (née Fogg) of Astley House, Boothstown, and baptised at St.Mark's Church one month later, on 5 October, by John H. Mason, the curate. In the baptism register, his father, James, was a colliery manager in the area. On 11 January **1941**, a Lockheed Hudson, serial number N7298, took off from RAF Leuchars, but sadly did not return. The crew on board this flight was P/O Basil Lincoln Fox (aged 26 - pilot); **Sgt. Keith Barnet Files** (aged 27 - pilot/navigator); W/O/Air Gunner Sgt. William Robert Martin (aged 25); and P/O John McDonald Scott Wylie (aged 21 - Air Gunner).

Keith Barnet Files is buried in the churchyard together with both his parents. Although his name and grave appear on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission 's website, he is therefore not to be found with the traditional war memorial stone above the grave. His mother died on 25 April 1933, aged 51, and his father in 1965, ages 86. On the 72nd anniversary of the fatal crash, in **2013**, a memorial stone and plaque was dedicated to the lost airmen, close to the scene of the crash. It reads:

In Remembrance

When returning from a North Sea night time patrol, Hudson aircraft N7298 of 224 Sqn., Command, RAF Leuchars, crashed half a mile north of this point in the early hours of 11 January 1941. There was no fire and the crew of four, although injured, survived the crash. Tragically, they had died of exposure before discovery two days later.

Pilot: P/O B. L. Fox - New South Wales, Australia aged 26

Navigator/Pilot: **Sgt. K. B. Files** - UK aged 27

WirelessOp/AG: W. R. Martin - UK aged 25

Airgunner: P/O J. Macdonald Scott Wylie - UK aged 21

They died in the cause of freedom



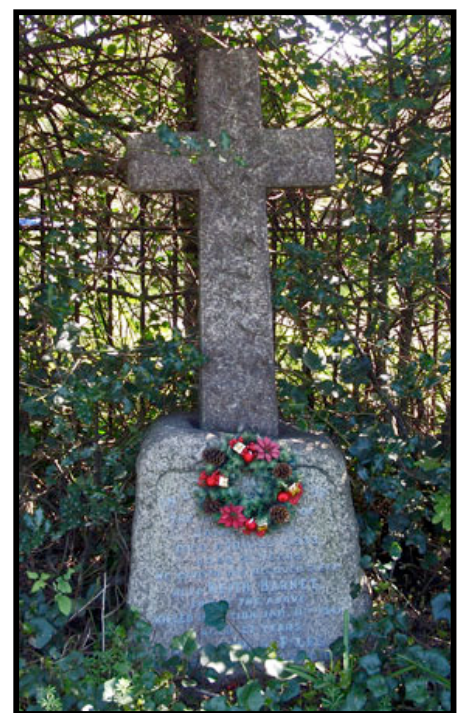
Baptism: 5 Oct 1913 St Mark,
Worsley, Lancs.

Keith Barnet Files - [Child] of
James Files & Ethel

Born: 5 Sep 1913

Abode: Astley House
Boothstown

Occupation: Colliery Manager



The story surrounding this flight has been recorded in great detail by the yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk website and its manager, and the details below are taken from that website. The photo of Keith Barnet Files above was supplied to the website by his cousin Mr. Keith Files.

The winter of 1940-41 was a very severe winter in the North of England with deep snow in the hills for many weeks. On this flight Hudson N7298 took off from Leuchars, Scotland at 01.17hrs on 11th January 1941 and flew in a south-easterly direction out into the North Sea to undertake a night time operational flight. The precise details of the flight are not fully known, as the RAF's crash card for the incident refers to the operation, as being a "special task" and what this task was has not yet been learnt. One suggestion is that the crew had flown some fifty miles out into the North Sea from Leuchars looking for vessels trying to cut through minefields. What exactly happened then is not recorded, but the aircraft probably flew too far south. The crash investigation initially thought that during the flight the wireless equipment and direction finding equipment might have failed. The crew probably were unsure of their position and possibly flew a rough westerly course to make landfall in order to try and work out where they were, but then they should have headed along the coast. Instead of this, the aircraft drifted over land and struck high ground. The aircraft struck the top of the area of high ground on Warren Moor, above Kildale, in the early hours of the morning, but did not catch fire. The exact time for the crash is not known. This webpage and other accounts of the incident suggested that Warren Moor was covered in snow at the time of the accident but in 2013 a witness to the incident stated at the memorial service that there was in fact no snow present at the time but that the night was a stormy one and that the crew were flying in poor visibility.

All four of the crew survived the crash and, although injured, they managed to scramble clear of the plane but probably later returned to it after the danger of fire had passed, to shelter from the weather. Sadly, all four men had died before they could be rescued. They had all died probably through a combination of their injuries and of exposure before being found at 16.30hrs on 12th January 1941. Their bodies were found under a wing of the Hudson huddled together. Local recollection recounts that the owners of nearby "Park Farm" thought that they heard voices on that night but as the weather was so bad they did not venture out to investigate. The crew must surely have all been seriously injured. Had they been able to explore their surroundings, they would have found the Kildale to Baysdale track (a few yards away) or farms just down from the moor top. I have been contacted by a local man, Mr Bell, whose father was farm manager at Baysdale Abbey during the War and he recalls his father telling him of seeing something odd on the moor the next morning which was noticed whilst he was tending to sheep in the valley bottom. Upon exploring, it became clear that it was an aircraft on the moor. He recalls his father being one of the first to the crash site and that a good clean up job was done by the RAF in the weeks after the accident. This story probably relates to the Hudson accident.

The operations logbook lists all the flights made by other 224 Squadron aircraft and crews in the search for the missing Hudson, with six Hudsons undertaking flights - four in the late morning and two in the afternoon, with only one of these later aircraft carrying out a search as far south as was needed. This aircraft searched the coast around Scarborough and Flamborough Head and upon landing the crew reported that the weather was too bad to go inland on their search so returned to base.

The death of **Sgt. Keith Barnet Files** is also recorded in the Roll of Honour in the Scouts records, in which it is stated that he belonged to the 1st Manchester Grammar School Group and that he died whilst on active service. On 3 June **1927**, he was one of a small number of boys from Manchester Grammar School who boarded the 'Mooltan' (P&O) in London for Gibraltar, with two schoolmasters. Then, on 17 June, he arrived back in London with the school party on the 'Maloja' (P&O), which had originated from Sydney. His name also appears as a member of the Royal Aero Club. This record shows that Keith was living at "The Hurst" on Leigh Road and that he was an engineer. He received his certificate on 24 August 1937 at the Northern School of Aviation at Barton, flying a Hillson Praga.

