

Squadron Leader Bob Muir

Observer in Mosquito night fighters who won a DFC and also served in the Army and Merchant Navy

SQUADRON LEADER BOB MUIR, who has died aged 104, served in Army units on three occasions, in the Merchant Navy as a purser, and as a wartime observer in the RAF, earning a DFC.

Muir joined the RAF in October 1940. Considered too old to be a pilot, he trained as an observer before being posted to No 605 Squadron equipped with the Mosquito night fighter, teaming up with Wing Commander Charles Tomalin. The squadron history records that they formed "a deadly and efficient partnership".

Their Mosquitos operated in the intruder role, mainly at night, attacking enemy airfields and rail, road and river transports, action that achieved considerable success. On one occasion they patrolled over a Luftwaffe airfield and were stalking an enemy aircraft when the airfield defences opened fire, shooting down the aircraft they were pursuing.

When Tomalin left the squadron in early 1944, Muir teamed up with the new CO, Wing Commander Sammy Hoare, and they soon opened their account by destroying a Junkers 188 over Chievres and damaging a second – this was the squadron's 100th success.

During Bomber Command's intensive campaign against Berlin, the Mosquitos of No 605 roamed over German night fighter

bases, and Hoare and Muir attacked and damaged at least three aircraft and shot down a Messerschmitt Bf 109. On this sortie, one of the engines of the Mosquito failed and the crew flew 400 miles on one engine before making an emergency landing at an airfield on the Suffolk coast.

In April 1944 Muir was awarded his DFC, and a month later he and Hoare were rested. At the Dorchester Hotel in London they were presented with a silver Mosquito replica to mark their success in downing the squadron's 100th enemy aircraft.

Robert Campbell Muir was born in Deptford, London, on August 6 1909 and won a scholarship to Colfe's School, Croydon, in 1923. He served in the machine gun company of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (20th London Regiment) for four years before joining the Merchant Navy. He rose to be a purser on HM Transports *Nevasa* and *Dilwara* carrying troops to the Middle East, India and the Far East.

In 1937 he moved to Bristol and was the south-west England representative for the American Rubber and Cotton Company. On the outbreak of war he joined the 11th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment (Home Guard), and commanded a heavy machine gun platoon as a sergeant. He volunteered for aircrew duties with the RAF as the Battle of Britain came to an end.



Shadow-boxed with Frank Bruno aged 100

After leaving No 605 Squadron, Muir commanded the navigational training squadron at a Mosquito training unit. In January 1945 he returned to operations when he became the station navigation officer at the Pathfinder Force airfield at Little Snoring, from where he flew with the station commander. He flew his 59th and final operation in a Mosquito on April 23 1945, as master bomber for a raid on Lubeck.

Muir left the RAF in November 1947 after

spending two years serving in Italy and Austria, which included some flying duties and time with the Forces Broadcasting Service.

After moving to Maidstone to run a grocer's shop, Muir returned to Army uniform in 1952 as commander of "B" Company of the 11th (Maidstone) Home Guard, a post he held for four years until the force was disbanded.

In 1961 he read a newspaper article predicting the demise of local grocery shops as the supermarket chains began to emerge. He joined the Spar retail chain and moved to Whitby. After retiring in 1980 he went to live in Spain, but returned to England in 2001.

A fine singer in his early life, he was a member of several amateur operatic societies. He was a good sailor, winning a number of awards at the Whitby Regatta during the 1970s. He remained very active until late in his life: Frank Bruno attended his 100th birthday, and Muir took him on for a bout of shadowboxing.

Bob Muir married, in 1938, Anne Straiton. The union was dissolved in 1946, and he enjoyed 64 years of married life with his second wife, Margaret.

She died in 2010, and he is survived by their daughter.

Squadron Leader Bob Muir, born August 6 1909, died January 27 2014