

Flight Lieutenant John Hope Clark, Royal Air Force of Church Stretton

died 26 January 1943, St. Ives, Cambridgeshire, aged 32.

John Hope Clark was born on 21 August 1910 in Grafton Underwood, Northamptonshire. John was the only son of John Charles Clark, a farmer and his wife Susan Ethel neé Hope who were married on 22 September 1909.

John senior was from a family of farmers. He was born in Warwickshire, and the family had moved to Northamptonshire by 1891. Susan was born in Wolverhampton and had qualified as a nurse. She was working in Northamptonshire before her marriage.

In the 1911 census the Clark family of parents and John were living in Grafton Underwood with two servants. John's younger sister Margaret Hope Clark was born in October 1911; she later followed her mother's career by becoming a nurse. A 1914 Directory gives the family's address as Park Farm, Grafton Underwood.

At the time of the 1921 census John was at Aldwich Park Preparatory School, a boarding school near Bognor Regis in West Sussex, and his parents, presumably on a visit to see him, were staying at the Royal Norfolk Hotel in Bognor. John senior describes himself as farming on his own account still at Grafton Underwood.



John Hope Clark in RAF uniform

John senior died in January 1933 by which time he was living in Northampton itself. John Hope is described as a Bank Clerk in the probate index. John's mother Susan moved to Church Stretton and was living on Sandford Avenue by 1937 in a house she named Grafton Underwood and may have had built. In the 1939 register she is the only resident at the house.

In 1941 John's sister Margaret married a Canadian serviceman. John also married though the details have not been found – he may have been married in the Isle of Man which is the address given in his probate entry.

We know little of John Hope Clark's war service though he did qualify as a pilot before war broke out. At the time of his death, he was a Flight Lieutenant with 29 Operational Training Unit based at RAF North Luffenham in Rutland which was built as a training base in 1940.

HOPE BOWDLER

FLYING OFFICER'S DEATH. —

The funeral took place on Monday of Flight Lieutenant John Hope Clark, R.A.F., V.R., aged 32, who met his death on active service on January 26. The only son of Mrs. Clark, of "Grafton Underwood," Church Stretton, he gained his wings before the war, and volunteered for service on September 3, 1939. The Ven. H. E. Whately and the Rev. A. P. Matthews officiated. Mr. Lewis being at the organ. Soldiers bore the coffin to its resting place, and among the mourners were: The Widow; Mrs. Clark, mother; Capt. and Mrs. Shea, brother-in-law and sister; Mr. A. Buchan, father-in-law; Mrs. Marshall, aunt; Flight Lieutenant Benjamin, representing R.A.F. Station; Dr. Gepp, Mrs. Matthews, Mr. and Mrs. Farquhar, Miss Auden, and Mr. and Mrs. Carter.

Shrewsbury Chronicle, 5 February 1943

John died in January 1943. He was killed when the plane he was piloting, a Wellington bomber, stalled and dived into the ground one mile east of Wyton Airfield in Cambridgeshire. The plane was caught in searchlights during a training exercise at night. The plane had a crew of five, all of whom were killed in the crash.

John is buried in Hope Bowdler Churchyard, with a gravestone chosen by the family. A description of his funeral, attended by his family and others, is also shown here. He is commemorated on the Church Stretton War Memorial.

John's will was proved on 27 July 1943 to his mother Susan and widow Patricia. His address is given as The Balmoral Hotel, Port Erin, Isle of Man. He left assets worth £1,251 5s 4d. It has not yet been possible to trace further details of his mother's or widow's postwar lives.



John Hope Clark's grave in Hope Bowdler Churchyard