

## **Awarded Distinguished Flying Medal**

Transcript from London Gazette 22<sup>nd</sup> Oct. 1943

### *Distinguished Flying Cross*

Pilot Officer Anthony BIRD (155025)

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 61 Squadron

### *Distinguished Flying Medal*

1101769 Sergeant Harry ASPINALL.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 61 Squadron

1214631 Sergeant Edward James KEMISH

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 61 Squadron

1388233 Sergeant Bernard KENDRICK

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 61 Squadron

This officer and airmen were pilot, air gunner, wireless operator and flight engineer respectively of an aircraft detailed to attack Hanover one night in September 1943. When approaching the target, the aircraft was illuminated by searchlights and immediately attacked by 3 fighters. Sergeant Aspinall resolutely attempted to drive off the attackers but the bomber was repeatedly hit by the fighters' bullets. One engine was set on fire and rendered useless, while other damage was sustained. The aircraft went into a steep dive but, by a strenuous effort, Pilot Officer Bird succeeded in regaining control being assisted by Sergeants Kemish and Kendrick who acted with great promptitude. Having evaded the hostile aircraft, Pilot Officer Bird went on to the target and released his bombs, afterwards flying the damaged bomber to base. This pilot displayed superb skill, great courage and determination. Throughout the return flight his efforts were well supported by his comrades who did everything possible to assist. Their exemplary conduct was worthy of the highest praise.

Comments from Anthony Bird latterly (in person and from his book "A Bird Over Berlin")

"When we were hit by the night fighters' bullets, whilst in a steep dive I was knocked unconscious. The navigator, who was the second in command, saw me slumped over the controls and announced "Pilot's bought it; bale out!" He and the bomb-aimer exited through the nose hatch; the radio operator pulled himself up the interior of the aircraft; pulled the mid-upper gunner from his turret (it transpired that he was mortally wounded); clipped on his parachute and pushed him out of the side door. The radio operator (James Kemish) was about to go himself when the plane levelled out. Whilst all this was going on, the rear gunner (Harry Aspinall) was stuck in his turret as the engine which had been rendered useless was the one that worked the hydraulics. James Kemish then made his way back to the cockpit to find the flight engineer (Bernard Kendrick) had stayed with me (Anthony Bird) and attempted

to pull me off the controls when I regained consciousness. Due to the damaged control surfaces, the plane was very difficult to handle, and the engineer was able to jam a piece of apparatus under the pedals to allow me to maintain control. As the target was in front of us and we still had our bombs on board, we decided to go on and drop our bombs and then make our way home without a navigator. The radio operator was able, using a direction-finding aerial homing in on signals sent out from the south of England and the north of England used to guide aircraft. We were thus able to make a course between the two signals and arrived back at our base where our ground crew were still waiting for us. The Squadron Leader came out to meet us and was surprised to see only four crew members exit the aircraft, as the normal crew was seven in number.”