

Emmanuel, known as Monty by his family and Mike by his crew members was born 2 Nov 1917 in Henley, Oxfordshire. In April 1931, at the age of fourteen he attended Portsmouth Grammar School until July 1932. Many Jewish boys attended the school for their day schooling while studying and boarding at Aria College, a Jewish seminary in Portsmouth. Monty is remembered on the Portsmouth Grammar school Memorial. When Monty was fifteen, he moved back to London and attended University College School.

When Monty was twenty-two in 1940, he married Renee Berenbaum in Hendon. Renee was the daughter of David Berenbaum and Rachel Guralnik. Monty and Renee did not have children and after Monty's death she remarried a year later to Frank Leslie.

Monty's Final Operation

Wellington JA453 was delivered to the RAF between June and December 1943 and was assigned to 83 Operational Training Unit. On the 23 August 1944, it took off from RAF Peplow on a night training exercise over the Irish Sea. *'Whilst approaching the Welsh coast from Cardigan Bay both engines began to misfire and gave cause for concern as the aircraft was now losing height because of insufficient power. The pilot desperately began to look through the darkness in what was blackout conditions for an area suitable for a forced landing. Suddenly the starboard engine failed completely and came to a sudden stop. On one remaining engine that was now coughing and spluttering the pilot summoned up all his skill and strength to keep the aircraft from entering an uncontrollable spin. The Wellington was an extremely difficult aircraft to fly on one good engine, but with it banging and whining and producing hardly any power the aircraft howled through the black darkness in a shallow dive. Skimming over trees and hedges the Wellington crash-landed heavily into a field at the village of Cenarth, Cardiganshire. Both wings were sheared off immediately rupturing internal fuel tanks causing a fireball as the aircraft ploughed across the field leaving a trail of bouncing burning wreckage in its wake. Miraculously two of the trainee air gunner Sergeants survived but two fellow pupils, the navigator and pilot who against all odds had succeeded in locating the only suitable flat ground in the area in total darkness were all killed. At ten minutes to midnight it attempted to land across Argoed meadows but crashed into the river Teifi, ending in a quarry on the riverbank.'*

(Thanks to Alun Evans)

The crew were:

Monty Hartstein, Pilot, killed

Rolf Lindahl, Navigator, Royal Norwegian Air Force, killed

Thomas McKenna, Air Gunner, killed

Frederick Simons, Air Bomber, killed

John Robertson, Radio Operator, survived

Howard Hawkins, Rear Gunner, survived

Howard Hawkins the rear gunner managed to escape from his rear turret and John Robertson got out from a hole in the fuselage where the wings were torn back.

Monty's younger brother John received letters from the surviving crew after the war. They described how most of the crew were killed outright and as they were being ushered out of the burning plane the aircraft exploded killing Monty.

The village held a Memorial service to mark the 50th anniversary of the crash in 1994 and the two survivors attended the ceremony. The airmen who died are commemorated on a plaque at the villages War Memorial.