

The Crew of Lancaster ND576 KM-M 44 Sqn, 15th March 1944

Sgt Joseph Sagar (2204680) Air Gunner

Joseph was 19 when he died. He was the son of Mr & Mrs H Sagar of Bramhall Cheshire. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany in grave 4E 25. Inscription " *Beloved Son of Hettie Sagar. Sadly Missed By All His Family. M.H.S. RIP* " He was killed on a night raid to Stuttgart. He was Jewish. He was posted to 44th Sqn from 1561 CU 2/12/1943

Joe Sagar was born 4th July 1924 at 40 Prince's St, Bramhall Stockport, Cheshire. His siblings were Beatrice/ Beatty later married name, Goldstein, sisters Dora and Sylvia and a brother Sydney.

His father Hyman Sagar was born in 1892 in Russia and died 16th Dec 1982 in Bournemouth, Dorset. His first wife, Joe and Beatrice's mother was Hettie/Ettie Kaufmann whom he married in Prestwich, Lancashire in 1919. He later married Marie Reilly.

Hyman's parents were Lazarus Sagar/Sagat and Rosa Gardie. Hyman's siblings were Gertrude, Rachel and Morris. Hyman was born in 1892 in Salford, Lancashire.

In 1901 the Sagar family were living at 1 Dewhurst St, North Manchester, Prestwich. Rose was a widow; she was born in 1866 in Russia and was working as a dressmaker. Daughter Gertie was born in 1891 in Russia (died 1976 the wife of Jacob/Jack Woolfe), Hyman was born 1892 in Manchester, Rachel was born in 1893 in Leeds (married Harris Cohen) and Morris born 1897 in Manchester.

Gertie attended Manchester Jews School from 1897 - her father is listed as Lazarus.

Ten years later Rose was living at 14 Haworth St, Manchester with Gertie and Rachel. Rose died in Prestwich in 1922.

In 1911 the Kaufmann family were living at 49 Morton St, Strangeways, Manchester. Hettie's father, Barnett born 1869 in Russia was a Cap Presser. Her mother Leah was born in 1871 in Russia and was self-employed working as a Hawker of Crockery. Hettie born in 1894 in Russia was a Cap Maker. Her sisters were Kate, Fanny and Sarah. Barnett died in Manchester in 1935.

Lazarus was born 11th April 1879 Nowogrod, Bialysrok, Lomza in Poland and believed to have died in the USA.

Lazarus' parents were Abram & Esther Sagat. Abram was born around 1842 in Nowogrod and died circa 1890. Abram's father was Lieb Sagat. enlisted

Hyman Sagar was in the Royal Tank Corps during WW1 No530555. He enlisted in the army 7/1/1910 in Salford into 3rd Hussars. He was a Labourer when he enlisted. He served in S Africa, India and The British Expeditionary Force from Oct 1914 to April 1917 then Dec 1917 to Jan 1919

Joseph Sagar the eldest son of Mr & Mrs H Sagar of 43 Lea Road, Heaton Moor, Stockport will read a portion of the Law on the occasion of his Barmitzvah at the Stockport Synagogue, June 12th, 1937

In 1939 Joseph's parents were living in Bramhall. His father Hyman, born 19 March 1892 was a Fur Commission Agent and his mother Hettie (Kaufmann) born 5th May 1893 was a master gown and mantles dealer.

Pilot Terry Fynn told his son Hugh, he always felt for Joe Sagar as 'Tail End Charlie' as it was very isolated and exposed in the rear during the long hours of operations over enemy territory.

AN UNUSUAL PLEA

Damages to the extent of £150 were awarded at the Manchester Assizes yesterday to Miss Gertie Sagar, a young Jewess, of Waterloo Rd, Manchester, who sued Ike Refkin, of Kensington, Liverpool, for breach of promise. For the plaintiff, Mr McCleary explained that the parties, who were distantly related, had known each other for a considerable time. The intimacy ripened, and on May 23rd last, a marriage was agreed on. It was fixed for August 29th. Apparently, the defendant intended to carry out his promise almost up to the day of the marriage.

He was in partnership with his brother in Liverpool, carrying on business as waste, rubber, metal and hair merchants, and he gave plaintiff to understand that he was earning about £5 a week and had savings of upwards of £1000.

All went well up to the 6th of August, when defendant told the lady that he ceased to care for her.

By this time preparations for the marriage had reached an advanced stage. The plaintiff had purchased her trousseau and other things to the value of close on £50. Invitations to the ceremony had been printed and sent out, and a reception and ball was arranged.

The defendant, in his defence, had filed a somewhat singular plea, continued counsel. He pleaded that the promise of marriage, which he admitted, was made under the belief that the plaintiff was, and always had been, a pure minded, virtuous woman, whereas she was accustomed to use "disgusting, impure and immoral" language in her conversation. That was denied.

Miss Sagar, in the witness box said that they were formally engaged on May 22nd. All went well until August 6th, when defendant looked miserable and said he was worried. In reply to her questions he said, "I don't want to get married; I don't care for you." He gave no reason for this.

Cross-examined by Mr Madden for the defence, she said that during the ten weeks they were engaged she only saw him about seven times. She admitted making certain apparently harmless remarks, and emphatically denied that she intended them to have any double meaning.

Further questions on this point brought forth a comment from his Honour Judge Low, who said that somebody in the case seemed to be endowed with a vivid imagination. They could not construe the meaning of words like those mentioned against the girl.

At this point, the breach being admitted, counsel agreed to leave the question of damages to the jury, without calling further evidence.

On summing up, His Honour said that a man could not play fast and loose with a woman in that way. To break off a wedding under such circumstances was to put a very great humiliation on a woman. The suggestion that the plaintiff was guilty of grossly immodest language was without a shadow of foundation.

Combat Report Sagar 1/2nd Jan 1944 T.N.A. AIR 50/186/580

Lancaster DV166 B Target Berlin

Whilst flying at 20,000ft course 094 (M) at 2.32h LAS 155mph, the rear gunner sighted an unidentified twin-engine aircraft, range 200 yards flying towards the starboard quarter. The Lancaster immediately corkscrewed to starboard bringing the aircraft to the port quarter, who attempted to follow the Lancaster in the corkscrew. The rear gunner opened fire with an approximately seven second burst, no strikes being observed, the range at this time being approximately 500 yards. The enemy aircraft did not return fire and was then lost to night in cloud and was not seen again. Visibility was poor, with haze and 10/10ths of cloud at 20,000ft, no moon. Green track indicators were going down all around the Lancaster and the unidentified aircraft. No damage or casualties were suffered by Lancaster or crew. Total number of rounds fired -400. The rear gunner Sergeant Sagar was trained at No 9 A.G.U. and No 29 OTU.



L to R Jack, Clark, Johnson, Orme. Seated Sagar, Fynn, Adder - courtesy Adder family

P/O Mervyn Adder (175073) Navigator

Mervyn was 21 when he died, he was born the 17th August 1922 at 153 Albert Ave, Hull. He was the son of Alexander & Ann Adder of Hull and is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany in grave 4E 27 Inscription *"It is Not the Span of Life that Counts, But what is Achieved however Short the Span "*

In 1939 Mervyn was a clerk in county court. He was posted to 44 sqn from 1561CU 2/12/43

His parents were married 25th Sept 1915 in Hull. Alexander had been born on 15 Aug 1881 in Osel (Saaremaa) Russia (died 1965) and his occupation was 'Mariner'. His father was John Adder and a farmer. Ann was born on 21 Dec 1893 and her father was Thomas Ingram a 'Fitter'. The couple were living at 10 Edgar St, Hull when they married. Their witnesses were W Lyons & Ada Hawksworth.

In 1901 Mervyn's father was a 4th hand on a fishing boat called Amara Poota.

In 1939 Alexander a Master Mariner and Ann were living at 153 Albert Ave, Kingston-Upon-Hull with children Edith (married name Pybus) born 1916 a Government Clerk Grade 1 and Alexander born 1920, a railway clerk. Alexander served in the RAF and married Muriel G Wilson in Howden, Yorkshire in 1945. He died in N Lincolnshire in 2003.

Alexander Snr served in the Merchant Navy during WW1 and had been awarded a medal for his service. His Merchant Navy record describes him as 5' 5" with blue eyes and grey hair. He was discharged 5/8/1936.

Alexander Adder (Ader) was naturalised 5th June 1907 and at that time was living at 31 St James St. Kingston-Upon-Hull. His father was Johannes Ader and mother Engel Allak. His father was a farmer. Alexander was said to have run away to sea around 1895 to avoid conscription.

Ann Ingram was a housemaid before she married.

In 1901 the Ingram family were living at 10 Edgar St, Hull, the same address was given for Alexander & Ann's marriage, which suggests Alexander was boarding with the family. Ann's father Thomas, born in 1857 in Hull was a Stationary Engine Driver. Her mother Mary was born in Hull in 1858. In 1901 the family had lodgers.

F/O John Raynor Berrington (160000) 2nd Pilot

He was from Rhodesia. It was his first operation with the squadron. John is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany in grave 4E 26

John had a sister called 'Dickie' who married Charles Waites who was a dentist in Salisbury (today Harare). In the 1960's they lived in Avondale, Salisbury, Rhodesia.

John Raynor Berrington is remembered on St George's College War Memorial, Harare, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). He was an accomplished athlete at the college and the photo below on display in Form 1 Dining Room when Hugh Fynn arrived at St George's.



John Raynor Berrington courtesy the Fynn family

Mick Fynn on John Berrington

John Berrington's mother heard on his 21st birthday the 18th December 1944 that he had died in the crash, so he must have been very close to that on the night. When Dad saw that he had been put

on his flight he went and saw the adjutant and asked why John Berrington was on his flight for his first op because there was a suspicion that it was bad luck for two Rhodesians to be together on one's first op. The adjutant said that John had specifically asked to be with Dad on that flight, so Dad said "OK, So long as it's his choice, I'm not worried about superstitions" But it was one of the first things that crossed his mind when they were shot down, that the crew's superstition had become a reality.

I can remember as kids we used to go and visit old Mrs "B" with Dad, because I think John was her only son and she lived in a flat in Fyfe Avenue. There was a daughter, Dickie, who married a dentist, Charles Whaites, because he was our early memories of the dentist!

John had been an exceptional sportsman at school and was one of the three photos on the wall of honour even when we were at St George's in the 1960's. He was an absolute all-rounder and excelled in every sport imaginable. Dad's younger brother John remembered John Berrington as his absolute hero at school.

(John Fynn was in training in Rhodesia to be a pilot when he got news of Berrington's death. It made him lose his nerve and he gave up training)

Sgt Gerard Clark (15754) Air Bomber

Gerard was 22 when he died. He had transferred to the squadron from 1561 CU 2/12/43. He was the son of Thomas William & Margaret Clark of Harborne, Birmingham. Gerard is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in grave 4E 28 Inscription *"Eternal Rest Give Unto Him, O Lord; and Let Perpetual Light Shine Upon Him RIP"*

In 1939 the family were living at 4 Bhamm, Connington Grove, Harborne, Birmingham. Thomas W was born 14th June 1894 and was Chief Instructor (Building) Govt Training Centre. Margaret was born 23rd March 1898

He was posted to 44 Sqn 2/12/1943 from 1561 CU

Sgt William Cameron Jack (1365209) Air Gunner

William was 23 when he died, born the 17th July 1920. He had transferred to the squadron from 1561 CU 2/12/43. He was the son of William C. & Helen Jack of Barrmill, Ayrshire. His father was a Railway checker. William is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in a collective grave 4E 30-33 Inscription *"Asleep Until The Resurrection"*

He is also remembered on a family headstone in Beith cemetery with his parents and brother and sister.

Mother - Helen 'Nellie' Dickie Jack born 1883 died 15th June 1966 Irvine, North Ayrshire.

Sister - Jane Jenkins Jack of Barrymil died aged 25 4th Sept 1939

Father - William Cameron Jack died 5th Jan 1961 aged 77

Brother - Thomas Jack died 16th April 1993 aged 80

The inscription on their headstone *Asleep Until The Resurrection*

Helen Dickie had been born in Glasgow in 1883. In 1891 the Dickie family were living at Lugton Row, Dunlop, Ayrshire. Her father Matthew was born in 1854 in Beith and was working as an Ironstone Miner. Her mother Jane was born in 1861 in Saltcoats, Ayrshire. Her siblings were: - Isabella 1889 Beith and Matthew 1891 Dunlop.

Sgt Ronald Johnson (1090092) W/Operator

Ronald was 23 when he died, he was born 23rd Oct 1920. On enlistment he worked for a confectionary company. His religion was Church of England. His height was five feet ten- and three-quarter inches and he had black hair and brown eyes. He had transferred to the squadron 2/12/43 from 1561 CU. He was the son of Mr & Mrs George William Johnson of York. Ronald is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in a collective grave 4E 30-33 Inscription *Loved, Remembered, and Longed For Always. Good Night, Ron, and God Bless. Mam"*

His niece, Liz Moran told Hugh Fynn, son of pilot Terry Fynn, that Ronnie's body was one of the few to be positively identified, because he was the only man in the crew to be married and was wearing a wedding ring.

Service Record - Courtesy Liz Moran

3RC Recruiting Centre – Padgate, Warrington, Cheshire - 5.2.41

3RC Reserve 6.2.41

Reserve RDU B'pool 1.7.41

10(S) RC 7.7.41 With code 605/41 confirming arrival

3 RC- 10 SS - Signals Recruiting School - Uxbridge - 7.7.41 until 26.9.41

3 SS - Signals School - 26.9.41 until 15.1.42

Stn Leeming - 15.1.42 until 18.5.42

14 (P) AFU – Pilots Adv. Flying unit – Flying Training Command, Ossington - 18.5.42 until 7.7.42

Advanced flying unit – (No 2 AFU RAF Millom)

RAF College Cranwell - 7.7.42 until 25.10.42

4 SS - Signal School- 25.10.42 until 20.1.43

10 AGS - Air Gunner School - 20.1.43 until 16.3.43

29 OTU - Operational Training Unit, Bruntingthorpe (Wellingtons) - 16.3.43

Rauceby Hospital (Burns unit) - 3.5.43 until 24.5.43

1661 CU (Conversion Unit) – Winthorpe, 3.10.43 until 30.11.43

44 Squadron - 30.11.43 – Dunholme Lodge

20 Dec 1943– Frankfurt - Flt Sgt Curatolo's crew

5 Jan 1944– Stettin -Flt Sgt Fynn

14 Jan 1944– Brunswick - Flt Sgt Fynn

27 Jan 1944– Berlin - Flt Sgt Fynn

28 Jan 1944– Berlin - Flt Sgt Fynn

30 Jan 1944– Berlin - Flt Sgt Fynn

15 Feb 1944– Berlin - Flt Sgt Fynn

19 Feb 1944– Leipzig - Flt Sgt Fynn

20 Feb 1944– Stuttgart -Flt Sgt Fynn

24 Feb 1944– Schweinfurt - Flt Sgt Fynn

25 Feb 1944– Augsburg - Flt Sgt Fynn

1 Mar 1944– Stuttgart - Flt Sgt Fynn

15 Mar 1944– Stuttgart - Flt Sgt Fynn

Liz Moran, great niece of Sgt Ronnie Johnson wrote this memorial for him in May 2020

This is the photograph of Ronnie, which my Great Granny Liz put on her wall above the grand piano for everyone to see. On top of the piano, she would always have a small vase of freshly cut flowers - her way of remembering him.



Ronald Johnson courtesy of Liz Moran

Ronnie was my great uncle. I was born after Ronnie was killed, but the family said he was the most loved and wanted baby ever. He was adopted from an Irish couple called Kinsella.

When he joined the family, he was adored by his older siblings, and soon charmed his way into becoming an unforgettable Johnson family member.

His parents, Elizabeth and George Johnson were my great grandparents. The family sibling structure was as follows:- Alice Emma Johnson born 1901 - my grandmother, Connie Johnson, born 1903, Edith Johnson born 1905, Edward Johnson born 1905, Hilda Louisa Johnson born 1906 - known as Molly, who tragically died in a house fire age five. (Ronnie's child Molly was named after her) Albert Johnson born 1910 who died following the after effects from the same fire.

As you can see, by the time Ronnie joined the family in 1920, his siblings were all quite grown up. His older doting sisters mothered and relentlessly fought over who should hold him! Alice was married and in 1922 had my mother Pearl, so her and Ronnie, being similar ages, grew up together. They were more like a brother and sister, and very close. He was a good sport, and loved doing the "boogie woogie", and apparently was a terrific swing dancer. He had a great gift for making you laugh and making you forget your troubles with his fooling around. His mother would say he was a loveable rascal, with a gentle heart, who was loving and caring.



Courtesy Liz Moran

This is a photo of Ronnie with his wife, and daughter, Molly, who was nine months old. The photograph was taken September 1941.

Though Ronnie lived his life being a Johnson, when he got married, in May 1940, the registrar would only accept his 'given birth' name on the marriage certificate. After a heated discussion, the registrar finally agreed to add the name Johnson, and eventually the certificate was recorded with, "Ronald Kinsella, otherwise Johnson". My mum was a bridesmaid at his wedding. His daughter Molly was born later that same year in the December, and was formally registered as Molly Johnson, making her a 'legal' Johnson, and he couldn't have been happier! She was the apple of his eye, as the saying goes.

Dorothy and Ronnie lived with his parents in the war years. By this time, Ronnie was in the air force on active service, and, like most RAF men, saw very little of the family. Molly was two when Dorothy became tired of waiting for him, and had an affair, and left him, taking Molly with her to go back home to live with her father. The marriage irretrievably broke down, and Ronnie felt helpless to do anything about it until he could get leave to sort things out.

Sadly, he never got the chance, as a few weeks later, he was killed.



Courtesy Liz Moran whose family received it from CWGC

In the ensuing years following Ronnie's death, Dorothy cut as many ties as possible between Molly and Ronnie's family. Molly was only allowed to see the family, when Dorothy couldn't find a reasonable excuse to prevent it. It broke his mother's heart. Though, in later years, Molly herself renewed a closer relationship with her grandparents, and was told many stories about her father, his sense of fun, how he loved her, and what a wonderful Dad he was. Sadly, Molly died in 1985.

For 24 years, whenever the vase of fresh cut flowers started to die, his mother would replace them with new ones. This was her little shrine to him. There was never a day went by, that she did not think or talk about him.

In 1967, on Remembrance Sunday, I called in to see her. By now she was ninety-one years old and a widow, living alone. I found her sitting in her rocking chair with her crochet shawl around her shoulders, silently crying. I put my arm around her and asked her what was wrong, and she looked up at Ronnie's photo and said "I'm crying for the loss of my Ronnie. I really, really loved him, and I miss him terribly". She was inconsolable.

She died on 16th May 1968. She had held Ronnie in her heart for 8,828 days, until her heart finally broke completely, and she was at last reunited with him.

His remains were initially buried with Military honours at 14:30hrs on the 21st March 1944 in the Alter Friedhof Cemetery, Ludwigsbur. Major Dr Witzel was in attendance.

He was finally laid to rest with his crew in Durnbach War Cemetery near Bad Tolz, which is a beautiful peaceful place in the foothills of the Bavarian mountains.

His Mam left a heartfelt, loving tribute on his headstone which will be with him in perpetuity.

In 1911 the Johnson family were living at 4 Bexley Square, Cemetery Road, York. Dad George born in 1867 was a Corporation carter. Mother Elizabeth Annie nee Haigh was born 27th Jan 1877 in York (Parents John Haigh b.1854 & Emma Precious 1857). George was baptised 26th Sept 1869 in Market Weighton with parents William and Elizabeth in attendance.

George married Elizabeth 25th Dec 1900 St Maurice York. She was living 36 Monkgate, York and he was living at No 30.

In 1881 the Haigh family were living at 6 Bexley Square Gate, Fulford, York with Elizabeth's Dad was working as a Glass Blower. Her sister Alice was 2 years younger.

In 1939 the Johnson family are living 43 Dove St, York.

An email was received by Liz Moran in 2003 from Ludwigsburg City Archives which included an eyewitness report of the crash by Karl Heinz Dreher. Thanks to Liz Moran for the translation.

TRANSLATION OF EMAIL from Ludwigsburg City archive

English couple looking for traces in Ludwigsburg (Liz Moran)

The uncle died about 62 years ago in the plane crash on Strombergstrasse

On March 15, 1944, shortly before midnight, when the attack on Stuttgart was cornered by the then very strong night fighter defence, two four-engine LANCASTER bombers collided over the airspace of Ludwigsburg and crashed north of Schillstrasse and about 80m east of Strombergstrasse at the former anti-aircraft warehouse near Ludwigsburg and the other machine on Gröninger Weg near Kornwestheim, south of the water tower at Römerhügelweg.

By e-mail about the city of Stuttgart and the Ludwigsburg city archive, one came across the hobby historian and employee of the LKZ Karl Heinz Dreher, who was at the crash site 62 years ago when he was 13 and described the "crash" in Eglosheim's home chronicle:

"In the night from March 15th to 16th, 1944 between 11.10pm and 0.13am, an air raid on Stuttgart also left its mark on the Eglosheimer Markung. The attack, launched with 863 bombers, encountered very strong night fighter defense, according to British data the loss rate was 40 Lancaster bombers, 63 were damaged. Presumably while avoiding German night fighters, two bombers collided and crashed at Gröninger Weg in Kornwestheim or between Schillstrasse and Strombergstrasse in Ludwigsburg. At least 12 dead were found in the rubble. The collision of these two planes over Ludwigsburg airspace was also observed by many Eglosheimers who had ventured out of the basement.

The attack targets marked with light marks (popularly known as "Christmas trees") and the fireball created by the collision of the two planes offered an eerie spectacle. Many onlookers immediately flocked to the crash site north of Schillstrasse. Body parts of the crew were stuck to the widely scattered wreckage. The crash site was almost exactly the area that was covered with explosive devices during the attack on February 21, 1944. A large, round inflatable boat was found in Gneisenaustrasse. A rather macabre event on the edge of the crash site: on Schillstrasse the other day, part of the vertical tail covered a hand with a golden ring on it. When curious people raised the aircraft part a little later, the ring was gone while the hand was still there!"

In his current research has found a witness Dreher, who portrayed, such as 2-uniform controlled the ring from the hand deducted. It could have been his wedding ring. After the 14 man crew of both machines were married only 2, it could even have been the uncle.

The English couple coming on 3 May in Ludwigsburg and wants the other day to visit both places crash. On 5 May, a reception in Ludwigsburger Hall with Mayor Spec planned. Before 62 years, 6 man

crew of the first in the "old cemetery" in Ludwigsburg and later buried at a cemetery fliers reburied near Bad Tölz. This gravesite wants the couple on 6 May visit.

The documents of the 2nd LANCASTER in the Kornwestheim city archive are rather poor. The exact location of the bomber's crash on the Korn-westheim marker was not described by the authorities. The entry corresponds to "on the northern part of the marking". One suspects south of the Ludwigsburg water tower on the Römerhügel on the Gröninger Weg near Kornwestheim. The 7 crew members were initially buried in Korn-westheim and later transferred to Bad Tölz.

In 1989 a meeting took place at the parking lot and entrance to Monrepos Castle between the last airfield commander of Großsachsenheim, Captain Peter Spoden and the Englishman Jim Hudson. Spoden shot down three English Lancaster bombers in 11 minutes during the attack on Heilbronn. One of them crashed at the "Sturzbucket" on the border to Heut-ingsheim. Six inmates survived, of whom Jim Hudson gave his opponent the picture of the shot down "Lancaster".

Spoden was the holder of the German cross in gold with a total of 24 kills and became a pilot at Deutsche Lufthansa after the war and finally flew a jumbo. For his grandchildren, he wrote the book "I was a night fighter at Goering's Luftwaffe", an honest document of an abused generation.

Karl Heinz Dreher

(The last paragraph was not really relevant, except in further correspondence with Herr Dreher, Spoden claimed to have been the one who shot down ND576. Yet on different correspondence later, I found a man called Herr Koch who claimed to have shot down ND576 and M573!) ... not sure either is true as I have been unable to verify this.)



The crew Feb 1944 courtesy the Fynn family

Sgt Dennis David Orme (1603414) F/Eng

Dennis was 20 when he died. He was the son of William P. and Stepson of Alice L. Orme. He transferred to the squadron on 2/12/43. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in grave 4E 29 Inscription *In Loving Memory. Lord, Now Lettest Thou Thy Servant Depart in Peace - His Family*"

His Dad, William Percy Orme died 2nd April 1943 in The European Hospital, Mombasa in Kenya. His UK address was 27 Crawford Place St. Marylebone, London. He was a Chief Steward in the Mercantile Marine. He was survived by wife Alice Louise Orme. In 1939 Alice was living at the family

home 6 Connaught Mansions, Battersea, London. She was born in 1901. She and William had been married in 1938 in Marylebone.

Sole Survivor Pilot Terence Hugh Fynn (126988)

Fynn was from Rhodesia and was made prisoner of war. (No 3814) He was held in Stalag Luft 1 Barth Vogelsang. He returned to Rhodesia after the war and went on to have 4 sons with wife Mary Christie 'Robin' Ritchie. Robin was born and educated in Sydney. The couple lived on a farm at Gadzema. She died in September 1991.



Terry Fynn courtesy of the Fynn family

Terry Fynn was 88 when he died in Nazareth House in June 2004. After Robin's death he married Peggy. He was born in King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Whilst farming he was ambushed and was shot in the arm.

Terry's parents were Edward Hugh McDonald Fynn, born in 1892 King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa and Winifred Burgess born 1884 in the same town as her future husband. His siblings were elder sister Daphne (who married Sir Arthur Benson, who retired as Governor of Northern Rhodesia), younger brothers Henry Francis and John Edward Fynn. Terry's sons were Hugh Gullon Fynn, Terence Michael Fynn (Mick), Patrick William Fynn (Paddy) and Donald Sinclair Fynn.

A Pride of Eagles: The Definitive History of the Rhodesian Air Force 1920-1980 Beryl Salt

Terry Fynn at age 84 (May 2000) recalls: 'As we left the target, the aircraft suddenly shuddered, a new experience. We had been hit from below ... either by a direct hit from flak, a fighter, or possibly a collision. The impact tilted the control column.

Berlin raid 28th January 1944 and Fynn's 11th operation and 7th visit to Berlin.

I thought it was a very good attack. When we arrived, many fires were burning. The whole attack seemed well concentrated. I saw two explosions, the second when we were just about to come away from the city. In each case the cloud was lit up for miles around. The ground defences fell off as the attack developed and at one stage they seemed to be overwhelmed (Rhodesia Herald 1st Feb 1944)

On a different operation over Stuttgart before his final one: -

We had just finished our bombing run when we saw the first of them. It was in the target area right underneath us and at first I thought it was our own 4,000 pounder going off, but it was too big for that. It lit up the whole sky over Stuttgart and something very big must have gone up to show through the clouds in that way. The second explosion was five minutes later and again there was a great red flash. We also saw fires glowing through clouds. Fires were joining up quickly while we were there (Rhodesia Herald)

Hugh Fynn (son of T.H. Fynn) gave the following account

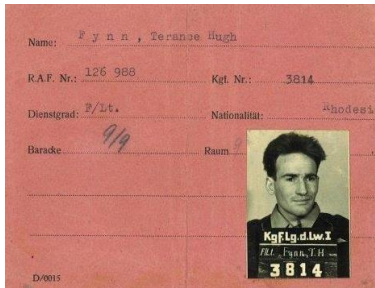
Dad left school in 1933 and went to the UK to become a Jesuit priest. He did 6 years training, but eventually decided it wasn't for him. By then the war had broken out and, after having some doubt, he joined the RAF. He qualified as a pilot and after his first tour of operations he spent a year in Canada training pilots there. When he returned from Canada, he was appointed to 44th (Rhodesian) Squadron and was a Lancaster pilot.

On the fateful night of the crash a new pilot who had just joined the squadron, John Berrington, aged 20 asked if he could fly his compulsory first operational flight with my father as he was a fellow Old Georgian, from St George's College in Salisbury, Rhodesia and a former classmate of my father's youngest brother John. Dad was 10 years older than John Raynor Berrington.

Dad's crew said that it was a bad omen to have two Rhodesians in the crew and my father should turn John down. Dad told them not to be superstitious and accepted him as his second pilot. They were on a night raid and moving in on the target area at about 28,000' when they took what must have been a direct hit. The way my father described it was that the joystick went limp in his hands and the plane went into a dive. He saw his navigator fall into the bomb aimer's position below the pilot. Whilst the aircraft was spiralling earthwards Fynn prayed the 'Memorare' As the Merlin engines were reaching fever pitch there was an almighty thump and my father passed out momentarily. When he regained consciousness there was silence all around and he thought that this was the afterlife. He then realised that he was in freefall. He always flew in his parachute's harness even though it was uncomfortable as he felt that it would be unlikely in an emergency that he would have time to put it on.

He pulled the rip cord and made a soft landing in a ploughed field. He hid up overnight in a hay stack, took off his RAF insignia and waited until the workers in the field were knocking off to try to appear as one of them. He was hailed by the farmer who he just waved at, but the fellow ran over to him remonstrating. My father realising that his time was up and indicated to the farmer he was 'Luftwaffe'/ airman at which the farmer got a huge fright, regained his composure and told my Dad to put his hands up. He marched him to a pub in town to show his mates before turning him over to the SS.

Dad was kept in solitary confinement for a number of days while he was cross examined. After about two weeks he was put in a cattle truck and went by rail to Barth Pomerania over a couple of days and spent a year as POW in Stalag Luft 1.



Terry Fynn POW courtesy the Fynn family

Subsequently to my dad's death Liz Moran a niece, of his wireless operator, Ronnie 'Johnnie' Johnson investigated the German war records when they were made public. She found that on that night the pathfinders had laid the flares short of the target and were making a second attempt at laying them. My father's plane was at a greater altitude and took what seems to have been a direct hit and was plummeting towards the earth. As it did so, it had a mid-air collision with one of the Lancaster, as two of that crew ended up in my Dad's fuselage and vice versa.

Where the other aircraft hit the deck, the incendiaries burnt with such intensity that the soil is still infertile. Where my father's plane went in with its full bomb load, there is a crater next to a house. My father was the only survivor out of both crews.

When Dad was handed over to the SS, he was marched in front of them and he very much feared that at any moment, he might simply be shot in the back.

To his dying day in 2004 he was not aware of exactly what happened that night. He was finally liberated by the Russians and always said that he was more afraid of them than he had been of the Germans. He always described them as being the Mongolian horde, that the Russians sent ahead of the more disciplined troops. Before liberation, the POW's had discovered that there had been a concentration camp alongside the airport, next to their camp. He told me the inmates were too weak to even walk out of the camp. On being flown out by the American air force and returned to England, he made sure to visit the families of all his English crew and tell them as much as he knew. Hugh remembered reading letters from the parents of Dad's crew to his grandparents when his father was still missing in action, presumed dead. Then there were more once the news arrived saying Terry was alive. The way that Hugh's grandparents heard this wonderful news was from an Indian shop owner in the town of Gatooma (today Kadoma) - his grandfather was a District Commissioner there - Mr Kewada heard the news from one of Lord Haw Haw's broadcasts and ran to tell Terry's parents.

On returning to Rhodesia, he visited John's mother, Mrs Berrington. She lived in a very humble flat in 4th Street, Harare, just diagonally opposite the Catholic Cathedral. She was a dress maker and lived very humbly and had a lovely sense of humour and hearty, throaty laugh. I visited her on some Sundays when I was at the college and she took me out on one occasion, but then said that she'd rather not come to the college again as it was too painful for her, with the memories that it evoked of her son John. Terry Fynn had a photo of Berrington in RAF uniform on his desk until the day he died and now Hugh looks after the photo.

In the 1980's Dad was able to visit the graves in Germany.

Michael Fynn gave this account of his father's experiences: -

He just spoke of the initial impact of the flak or other plane that clipped them on the tail, and as they started to spiral down, and he pulled at the joy stick without being able to get the nose of the aircraft up again - he heard the rear gunner (Sagar) shout they had been hit. As it went out of control, the navigator and maybe others, flew past him into the nose bombers compartment. He said he was the only one who sat on his chute as instructed, but most others preferred to hang the chute up beside themselves because it was uncomfortable to sit on and they said they'd grab it if they ever needed it. He carried on pulling at the non-responsive joystick until it came away in his hands.

The centrifugal force of the spiralling had reached such proportions that the G Force blacked him out. The screaming deafening engines made any shouting useless and inaudible. In this chaos he started to say his memorare as a final prayer.

He thought he had died when he heard the final loud explosion followed by sudden silence, peace until the feel of air suddenly rushing past his skin brought him to his senses and he realised he was falling. He then pulled his cord, his chute opened and floating down he noticed the huge fires in the field below. He wasn't sure which was his plane but thought there could be no survivors in the inferno. He only ever spoke about a huge explosion and the plane disintegrating - never about another aircraft.

He had a few days with the authorities and Gestapo in solitary, whilst they told him more about his crew, colleagues, and history than he knew himself. They knew where people slept back in the UK and it seemed pointless to try to lie to them.

The Gestapo had kept him so long without reporting his survival to the Red Cross that Grandpa & Granny Fynn were sent the news he was lost in action and had even been sent his personal belongings, as well as letters from the squadron padre and senior officers confirming his death and good behaviour in the Air Force, attending Church etc..

Right to the end of his life, Dad said that what he was looking forward to, was getting to the other side to see what happened that night, and where all his crew are.

He always had the photo of his crew next to his bed.

Memoir of F/Lt Gordon Cruickshank held in the IBCC Digital Archive

Cruickshank was Terry Fynn's Mid Upper Gunner in his first crew in 44th Sqn.

Extract concerning Fynn: -

Pupil crew - was it possible to go to 44 Squadron? If the others were agreeable it would be arranged. I asked them and next day we were on our way to 44 Sqn - now at Dunholme Lodge a mile and a half from home.

F/O Terry Fynn was a Rhodesian - 44 Sqn was a Rhodesian squadron, I took him home with me, also the lads to our village locals, but our crews were to be ill fated when it came to flying.

Wing Commander Nettleton VC had been the CO of 44 sqn, but he had gone down on a raid - his place was taken by Wing Commander Bowes. We were in 'A' Flight under S/Ldr Lynch, started flying for the first time on Oct 16 1943.

It was Oct 22nd when we did an N.F.T. and later briefing - our target Kassal. After our flying meal we made for our aircraft, 'K' for King at the far side of the drome. Everyone was keyed up, including myself - and wondered how this crew would shape up to things. With everyone aboard - I was mid upper gunner, thought a change from flying rear, engines were running up, got my intercom plugged in, my guns loaded and turret rechecked - called up to Skipper for checking intercom, then sat back waiting for them to make for the runway in use and take off. We made a good take off - and undercarriage and flaps up, flew to Nottingham and back, gaining height - height reached we set course over base.



Fynn's first crew: L to R Sgt Peter Hatton, Sgt Willett, Fynn, P/O Smythe, Sgt Morris (F/Sgt Schott and Gordon Cruickshank are missing)

Having joined the French coast, our Navigator, a Sgt, broke the silence he couldn't cope well. Well, Terry asked me for my advice - had a talk with the Navigator in respect to time and how much off route, and said to Terry it would be wise to drop our bombs in the sea and find our way back to base. This we did.

On landing at base, we were before the CO. After we explained the trouble, our Navigator was asked what his excuse was, he said he thought of my wife and son - nice maybe, but I like to do the worrying on their behalf, not any members of my crew! He was later reduced to the ranks. Time airborne 2hr 15mins

Things were not quite the same as before I noticed, bombing heights were nearly twice that of my first tour. No pigeons now and a thing called 'Window' was dropped when over enemy territory, this was to mess up enemy radar screens. Also, height was reached before setting course for the target - and not gained on route, which meant for me the testing of guns was now out of the question.

I like to test mine, for I will always remember the time we had been on twice and was unable to clean my guns due to the fact of needing my sleep, ready for the next raid. So, my guns were done by someone else. When we had taken off and was clear of the English coast, I asked for permission to fire my guns, when I tried doing so nothing happened, this I repeated. On inspecting them closely, I noticed the breech blocks were not touching the firing pins, which meant all my breech blocks were

in the wrong guns. By now I was sweating, but set to, to change them, which was a slow job. What with taking off my gloves, doing a little, putting them on again to warm up my hands, looking at the sky for enemy fighters, you understand why I only had two guns serviceable by the time we reached the target area. After bombing the lads wanting to come down for a little shoot up. That I wasn't at all pleased about, for I like to have all my guns in working order, in case we run into trouble and didn't believe in looking for it.

Anyway, I didn't let on, but believe me I was blessing someone for their careless mistake, which could have easily cost us our lives had I not checked them.

Also, the gunners flying clothes were different now, and a new suit had been issued, which I took an instant dislike to, far too bulky when on and you sweated terrible until you reached a reasonable height to cool off, and a hell of a job getting in and out of your turret. I often wondered if you would manage it if in a hurry.

Also, the temperature was often -50 or 50 below as some would say and not unusual to keep clearing your oxygen tube and mouthpiece of ice which formed there.

Shortly after being at Dunholme Lodge, I was made a Warrant Officer, this was unusual in respect to gunners in the RAF at that time.

We were free up to Nov 3 1943, being so near home, I was home whenever possible. Our target for that night was Dusseldorf. Having had briefing half an hour before take-off, we proceeded to our dispersal point, still 'K' for King on the far side of the drome. Things went fine on this trip and our time was 4hrs 35mins. - fairly good bombing. The next 14 days consisted of a height test 26,500', fighter affiliation at Digby and NFT's.

18th Nov finds us being briefed for Berlin, usual bomb and petrol load, a really good raid - time 8hrs 35mins. Bar a couple of short flights we were free up to November 26th.

At briefing, we find our target is again Berlin. After take-off, and well on our way, we had trouble from the rear gunner complaining about his turret. Terry was really fed up, I said nothing. Terry decided to return to base. We had been airborne 3hrs 25mins.

I wondered what would happen now, and it was not long after when Terry said to me that he was going to take over another crew and he was sorry in respect to me, but I said don't worry about me Terry, I'll ring up my old pilot at Swinderby and see if he's returning.

F/Sgt Peter James Hatton along with Gordon Cruickshank crewed with Terry Fynn

Peter (1266780) was an Air Bomber - he was 21 when he was killed in 44 Sqn on the 25th March 1944 whilst on a raid to Berlin. He was flying in Lancaster III ND565 KM-C and is buried in grave 7 B 9 in the Reichswald Forest Cemetery.

Due to exceptionally high winds that night the aircraft strayed off course and was shot down at 00:01h by flak at Angermund near Dusseldorf and crashed at 00:07h. In Bomber Command that night was to become known as 'the night of the big wind'.

Peter was remembered by another airman in the squadron as 'a tall good-looking chap, interested in sports cars and intended to buy an MG after the war'.

He was the son of Montague and Mabel Hatton and husband of Betty Crompton Hatton of East Molesey, Surrey.

44 Sqn Operational Record Book

November 1943

3/4th Nov 1943 - Lancaster III 175 X (**Only FYNN** flying) Target Dusseldorf Up 16:54h Down 21:34h Dusseldorf 19:37h 20,500' 037 degrees 165 IAS. Clear. Horizontal & vertical vis good. Target identified by PFF flares and TI's red and green. Bombed estimated centre of 3 TI's red. Marker seen to cascade. Fires seemed concentrated round TI's. One third of an SBC (80X30lb) hung up. 26 ?? Windows dropped. Pilot's remarks: Route good, PFF good. Met forecast mostly accurate. Flight planning good. A fairly successful effort.

18/19th Nov 1943 - Lancaster DV 238 'M' (**Only FYNN**) Target Berlin. Up 17:06h Down 01:38h Attacked 21:05h at 21,000' 170 IAS 10/10ths Str. Cu 10-12,000'. Horizontal & vertical vis above cloud good. No moon. Saw TI's green cascading. Centre of 3 TI's green seen through cloud. Scattered green TI's, Red TI's also scattered, possibly over much wider area. Fires scattered over wide area. Monica defective. Pilot's remarks: Route good. Markers appeared to be very scattered - which reflected on the effort. Flight plan timing slow. PFF scattered at target, not clear as forecast, otherwise accurate.

Start of the Battle of Berlin. 9 Lancasters lost. Berlin was covered in cloud. Marking and bombing was carried out blindly.

26/27th Nov 1943 - Lancaster DV 238 'M' (**Only FYNN**) Target Berlin Up 17:23h Down 20:52h Berlin not attacked. 1X4000lb (?) jettisoned 19:20h 19,500' Incendiary bombs returned to base. Rear turret intercom would not operate for transmission but could receive. On return this intercom rectified itself and both received and transmitted. Pilot's remarks: The rear gunner did not want to carry on in with the fault in his equipment. This created an uncertain atmosphere in the rest of the crew, in view of which I decided to turn back.

December 1943

1) 23/24th Dec 1943 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Berlin Up 00:27h Down 07:48h Attacked at 04:09h 21,000' IAS 160 5/10ths cloud at 15,000'. Horizontal vis good. Target identified by GEE. Red & green TI's cascading on ETA. One green TI in bombsight. This was the only one visible at the time. Two green TI's were seen in the target area. Hang up owing to ??? cause over target. Pilot's remarks: Route was good. Route markers were good. Over target PFF markers were rather fewer in number. Bombing appeared to be well concentrated, but no flares or explosions seen. Spoof attack on Leipzig was well timed and effective.

16 Lancasters lost. PFF aircraft had trouble with their H2S sets.

2) 29/30th Dec 1943 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Berlin Up 16:52h Down 00:??h Attacked at 20:18h 035 degrees 165 IAS 10/10th Sc. tops above 8000' Good horizontal vis. Starlight. Target identified by route marker. A single red/green sky marker, the only remaining one of a group seen in bombsight. saw 2 glows possibly 5 miles apart which might be reflections of fires. Pilot's remarks: Route satisfactory but noticed a heavy concentration of flak Leipzig to Berlin. If the PFF were on the spot, the attack should be a good one.

Few fighters over Berlin. 20 aircraft lost.

January 1944

3) 2/3 Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'R' Target Berlin Up 23:46h Down 06:52h Attacked at 02:55h at 22,000' 165 degrees IAS 165 10/10 cloud up to 18,000' Target identified by GEE with Wanganui flares and green stars on ETA. 7 Wanganui flares in bombsight. Seven flares were concentrated with some 6 others well scattered. Glow seen on clouds as if from fires. Five green flares with yellow stars were good. Green flare with yellow stars not very effective. Pilot's remarks: Route satisfactory PFF markers were not seen owing to cloud on route. On the target they were seen but not very well for they seemed scattered. Attack seemed fairly good, as the rear gunner could see a glow in the sky up to 80-90 miles away. Unfortunately our 'Monica' was u/s

German fighter controllers followed the bombers all the way to the target. 27 Lancasters lost. Monica was a range radar for bombers.

4) 5/6th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'R' (Sgt T Hughes flying with the crew) Target Stettin. Up 23:49h Down 08:10h Attacked at 03:35h from 20,000' 35 degrees IAS 165. Clear no cloud, perfect vis. Centre of six green TI's in bombsight. Very good concentration of green TI's and bombing was very accurately concentrated around the TI's. Very large fire in town centre, completely ablaze. Green flares with yellow stars very good. Yello TI's below cloud - glow seen. Green flares with yellow stars very good. Monica u/s in later stages. Pilot's remarks: Route good. PFF route markers were very effective. PFF over target very good. Weather at time of bombing was clear and attack was seen to be very good, with good fires taking hold of blocks of buildings. Rear gunner could see fires from 90 miles away and altogether a very good trip.

A Mosquito diversion at Berlin successfully kept German fighters away from the main force of the bombers.

5) 14/15th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Brunswick Up 16:44h Down 22:27h Attacked at 19:18h at 20,000' 145 degrees IAS 155. 5/10ths Str. Cu. at 5000-10,000' Horizontal and vertical vis both good. No moon. Target identified by GEE & PFF marker red followed by flares red/green, stars green. Centre of 3 flares red and green stars seen in bombsight. Flares seen scattered over small area, fires only just starting at time of bombing in rough circle of 3 to 4 miles in diameter. Pilot's remarks: Route good, flight plan timing good. PFF scattered but on target. Met fairly good, winds slightly out. Glow from fires seen approx 70-80 miles away.

38 Lancasters lost. German fighters entered the bombing stream soon after Bremen and continued attacking until the bombers reached the Dutch coast, on the return journey. The raid was not a success.

6) 27/28th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Berlin. Up 17:29h Down 02:??h Attacked at 20:33h at 20,000' 100 degrees IAS 165 10/10 cloud up to 17,000'. Target identified by GEE. Numerous Wanganui flares green with red stars on ETA. Centre of line of 6 Wanganui flares in bombsight. 12 to 15 Wanganui flares over area at the time. Six of these were in clusters and the others were more scattered. Nothing seen beneath cloud. Red flares quite good. Pilot's remarks: Route was too long, considering the slow ground speed on return. Met was accurate. PFF were quite good on target and first markers were very punctual. A quiet trip. Nothing was seen of the attack over the target itself, but the glow of fires could be seen on the cloud about 90 miles away on homeward route.

The target was cloud covered. 33 aircraft lost.

7) 28/29th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Berlin Up ??:25h Down ??:20h Attacked at 03:30h at 20,000' IAS 165 10/10 cloud. Good vis above cloud. Centre of 4 flares red with green stars and strong fires in close vicinity in bombsight. Target identified by GEE. Flares red with green stars going down on run up to target. Extensive fires below cloud. Flares very concentrated. Green TI's seen in same area as flares but going down before them. Big explosion 03:27h. Pilot's remarks: Route goo. Flight plan good. PFF good. Met quite good. Broadcast winds good. A very successful attack.

Many aircraft shot down over the target by night fighters. 46 aircraft lost.

8) 30/31st Jan 1944 - Lancaster III DV 166 'B' Target Berlin. Up 16:51h Down 00:01.5h Attacked at ??:32h from 20,000' 155 degrees IAS 165. Weather 10/10 cloud up to 10,000'. Target identified by GEE. Wanganui flares and red and green TI's on ETA, centre of green TI's in bombsight. Large widespread glow from fires seen on cloud. Pilot's remarks: Route was good. Met forecast was accurate. PFF were very good in route markers and over the target. It was a very concentrated attack although the cloud cover was so thick and the fires could be seen about 100 miles away.

An attempt by German controllers to intercept the bomber stream over the sea failed. 33 aircraft were lost.

February 1944

9) 15/16th Feb 1944 - Lancaster III ND 576 'M' (P/O C L Fox was flying as extra in the crew) Target Berlin Up 17:20h Down 00:15h Berlin attacked at 2:30h from 23,500' 165 degrees LAS 165 mph. Weather 10/10 cloud. Target identified by GEE. Red & green TI's and Wanganui flares on ETA. Centre of 4 Wanganui flares in bombsight. 4 Wanganui flares only dropped on target at time of bombing. Two small red glows were seen on cloud. Possibly ?? fires. Pilot's remarks: Route was good PFF markers were dropped on time, but PFF effort was poor on the whole, insufficient backing up on indifferent patches. Glow on cloud from fires seen 100 miles away. If the markers were accurate, it was a poor attack as the bombing was unconcentrated.

891 aircraft were sent to Berlin. Berlin was covered in cloud but some of the most important war industries were hit. 38 aircraft lost.

10) 19/20th Feb 1944 - Lancaster III ND 576 'M' Target Leipzig Up 23:42h Down 07:00h Attacked at 04:00h from 22,500' 200 degrees 165mph. 10/10ths Str. Cu. 10,000. Target identified by ??. Centre

of 10 green & red stars in bombsight, 4 red TI's in close vicinity. Flares concentrated in small area with TI's very close. Pilot's remarks: Route good. Plan timing bad. Met good. PFF highly concentrated. Forecast winds good. Successful attack. Heaviest concentration of markers yet seen by this crew.

The bomber stream was under attack all the way to the target. Wind badly forecast and the bombers had to wait for the Pathfinders. 4 aircraft collided and 20 were shot down by flak. In total 78 aircraft were lost.

11) 20/21st Feb 1944 - Lancaster III ND 576 'M' Target Stuttgart Up 00:01h Down 07:21h Target attacked at 04:02h at 23,000' 020 degrees 165 mph. Generally 5/10th at 6 - 10,000'. Horizontal vis fair. Vertical vis good. Target identified by GEE. PFF first seen on target at 03:58h. Red TI's backed up with green and followed by Wanganui. 1 Wanganui went down after first TI red. Centre of 10 flares green/red stars, see through centre of bombsight. One green and two red TI's were in close vicinity. A concentration of Wanganui flares approx 5-10 miles in diameter. Fires seemed to be starting below Wanganui flares. Pilot's remarks: Route and flight timing slow. Met accurate. PFF good. Prediction winds fairly good. The most concentrated attack I have seen, better than yesterday attack on Leipzig.

9 aircraft lost over the target. 5 aircraft crashed in the UK.

12) 24/25th Feb 1944 - Lancaster III ND 576 'M' Target Schweinfurt Up 20:32h Down 04:42h Attacked at 01:07h at 22,000' 050 degrees IAS 165. No cloud, smoke haze, otherwise vis good. Target identified by GEE. Fires and PFF seen on ETA. Centre of red TI's seen centre of bombsight, saw 4 red TI's first and one and half minutes later saw 5 reds further NE, saw 3 very scattered fires area about 2 miles west of main target. Pilot's remarks: Route satisfactory, forecast winds very good. PFF very good and on time. I think all the fires from the first attack were scattered and off the target to S and W, but the second attack fell on the east part of the town with a creep back to the west.

First raid on Schweinfurt which was where Germany's main ball bearing factories were in production. Ball bearings were vital components in aircraft, tanks, guns and submarines

13) 25/26th Feb 1944 - Lancaster ND 576 'M' Target Augsburg Up 21:30h Down 04:29h Attacked at 01:19h from 22,000' 355 degrees. Weather - no cloud, clear, vis good, smoke haze. Target identified by GEE. Red and green TI's cascading in target area. Centre of 6 red TI's in bombsight. Whole area was covered by a pall of smoke, but fires could be seen burning through it. Fires were well concentrated around all markers. 16X30lb were brought back to base. Probably an electrical defect. Red TI's were effective. H2S became u/s on return journey. Pilot's remarks: Route was good. PFF were very good. We were in the second attack and the fires were still burning from the first attack, which appears to have been very successful. Large fires were burning and the whole area was ablaze when we left. It should be a successful mission.

Outstanding raid with weak flak. The Germans publicised it as an example of terror bombing.

March 1944

14) 1/2nd March 1944 - Lancaster III ND576 'M' Target Stuttgart Up 23:24h Down 0:731h Attacked at 03:??h from 22,000' 070 degrees LAS 165 mph Weather 6/10 cloud. Visibility good. Target identified by vanguard flares. Scattered fires. No TI visible. H2S defective. Pilot's remarks: Attack

fairly well concentrated in spite of scattered markers. One large explosion seen after bombing. Broadcast good.

Thick cloud made it difficult for German fighters.

15) 15/16th March 1944 - Lancaster III ND576 'M' Target Stuttgart Up 19:31h Aircraft reported missing without trace. No signals were received.

37 aircraft were lost on this operation. It was Barrington's first in 44th Squadron.

The wreckage from both aircraft fell around 2km apart. Where ME573 landed body parts were collected into three coffins. The farmer who owned the field had to leave it fallow as it was so polluted with aviation fuel etc nothing would grow. Liz Moran " *when we visited the relatively small field, the charred imprint of the bomber could still be seen in the dark burnt like soiled area where this toxic mess was. It was just like scorched earth with puny bits of stubble barely showing. The soil was darker than the surrounding soil and covered an area in the shape of a broken up plane.*

I was told in Germany that the crash was witnessed by a German look-out near the water tower and also by the family who owned the field"

The crash investigators at the time were told nobody had seen it.

German night fighter versus Bomber Command 1943-45 By Martin W Bowman extract: -

Bomber Command's first heavy raid of the month was directed against Stuttgart on 15/16th March. In an attempt to avoid contact with night fighters the 863 bombers that were dispatched split into 2 parts, flying a roundabout route over France. This deception worked well until just before the force reached the target, when 93, 1 Jagddivision crews were fed into the bomber stream and they returned with claims for 30 'kills' (27 were Lancasters). The night fighters would infiltrate the bomber stream sliding behind bombers or underneath. The underbelly of the bombers in the bomb bay area was unprotected and an easy target for the upward firing cannons in the cockpit of enemy fighters.

Stuttgart had few searchlights.

Luftwaffe night fighter combat claims 1939-45 by Foreman, Parry & Matthews

15/16th March Stuttgart area - Lancaster 'kills'.

23:19h 4 W S. Stuttgart 4/NJ61 Oblt Fritz Lau

23:23h 1 W N Stuttgart 1/JG301 Uffz Hans Muller ***

23:25h 1 W Stuttgart 1/JG301 Uffz Gerhard Koch ***

23:28h 2 W N Stuttgart 1/JG301 FW F. Laubenheimer

23:35h 2 W SW Stuttgart 1/JG301 Uffz Gerhard Koch ***

23:36h 4 W Nr Stuttgart 7/NJG1 Uffz Heinz Amsberg

*** Possibility these Luftwaffe pilots from the nearby fighter base were responsible for shooting down ND576 & ME573. Roberts aircraft was at a lower altitude, perhaps already stricken, when the pilotless ND576 smashed into it. Fynn had no idea another aircraft involved as he was already outside the aircraft on his parachute and saw the burning debris on the ground. A theory, until proved or otherwise.

A book exists where Gerhard Koch describes what happened that night and mentions that the following day, he was told the first aircraft was burnt out at a farm and the second crashed at Artolsheim. That aircraft was not the correct one it was a Lancaster of 550 squadron LM392.

463 Sqn notable remarks in the debriefing 16th March 1944

Pilot Schonberg up 1919hrs down 03:16hrs bombed at 21,500ft at 24:24h Very little enemy activity on whole route (the 93 fighters came from a base near Stuttgart so the route in would be quiet) Quite a few fighters over target, but no encounters

Pilot Trimble up 1932hrs down 03:25hrs bombed at 22,000ft at 23:?? Enemy were seen 20 miles approx south of target

Bombed from 2319hrs up to 2342hrs from 18,500ft (this aircraft was the only one as low) to 23,000ft - 2 Lancasters lost.

44 sqn

Pilot Wiggins up 1917hrs down 0303hrs bombed 22,500ft at 23:22hrs Violent dive just after incendiaries released *to avoid collision with another Lancaster.*

Pilot Butt up 1946hrs down 0320hrs bombed at 22,500ft at 23:24hrs Had to dive during camera cycle to avoid being hit by lead from a Halifax.

Lanc. LM306 up 1925hrs down 0312hrs 23:19hrs concentration of aircraft over target area was extremely tight. I spent all my time avoiding other aircraft over the target area.

Fynn took off at 1931hrs - Delivered route - Heading Selsey Bill 4918N 00.05W - 48.ION 01.30E 47.55N 09.00E - Stuttgart

Return 4903 - 0915 4825 - 0740 4905 -0325 5000 - 0115 Selsey Bill - Reading - Base

Selsey Bill is a headland just to the west of Bognor Regis. The bombers headed south and out to sea then crossing to the Le Mans area in France then Switzerland and finally heading north to the target, Stuttgart.

All pilots of both squadrons reported the marking by Pathfinders as poor and scattered and one reported that 'Monica' was only working part of the time.

Lancaster ND 576 of 44 Sqn collided with Lancaster ME573 of 463 Sqn

F/O John Roberts DFC RAAF (416893) ME573

John was 23 when he died. He had been awarded a DFC. His parents were Alfred and Doris Ada Roberts of Brighton, South Australia. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in grave 4 E 30-33. Inscription "*Ever Remembered By His Loved Ones*" John was the pilot of the Lancaster.



John Roberts courtesy National Archives Australia

Report 25th Feb 1947 No3 Missing Enquiry & Research Unit F/O Nicholls

I was shown a Wehrmacht record entitled Burial of English Terror Flyers which stated that at 23:45hrs on the night of 15th March 1944, an English 4 engine bomber taking part in a raid on Stuttgart, crashed into a field near Flakgeraetelager 101/VIII in the Schlieffenstrasse.

It was thought likely there were 7 men in the crew, but only pieces of their bodies were found, and these were all put in one coffin. The identity discs were found in the field, but no names were mentioned on the report.

The remains were buried with Military honours at 14:30hrs on the 21st March 1944 in the Alter Friedhof.

An engine was found one and a half miles from the scene of the crash.

Report 22nd Dec 1947

Crew of Lancaster ND576 (CE696)

Rhod. 126988 F/O Fynn T.H. SAFE

1603414 Sgt Orme D.D.

1459790 F/Sgt Adder M

1575494 Sgt Clark C

1090092 Sgt Johnson R

1365209 Sgt Jack W.C.

2204680 Sgt Sagar J

Rhod. 160000 F/O Berrington

Crew of Lancaster ME573 (CE327)

Aus 416893 F/O Roberts J

1584370 Sgt Wilby J

145370 F/O Brown P.C.R.

Aus 413526 F/S Benzie J.M.

Aus 415677 F/S Palmer S.J.F.

NZ 414863 P/O Childs J.L.

1818530 Sgt Pead R

1. Because of confusion existing between Casualty Enquiries CE696 and 327, it was to these casualties. Accordingly, I accompanied F/Lt Nicholas of No.13 section to Ludwigsburg and Kornwestheim.
2. Re-interrogation of police and civil witnesses and of cemetery directors and grave diggers, at both Ludwigsburg and Kornwestheim confirmed the general story of all previous reports ie: that it was considered probably, although not certain, that the two aircraft collided in mid-air.
3. The above story is refuted, however, by A.M. signal attached in which P/O Fynn states that the a/c was hit, presumably by flak - and out of control when he was blown out.
4. It was hoped to find some explanation for the fact that the body of BENZIE (ME573) was found with those of BERRINGTON and CLARK (ND576) and one unknown - presumed to have been from the latter aircraft also - but this proved impossible, as did all attempts to clarify definitely the reports of Totenliste NO 251, which stated WILBY and PALMER to have been buried in Kornwestheim. In respect to this latter report, it can only be reiterated that 3 identity discs were found in the general vicinity of the aircraft debris and human remains in the field near Schlieffen - Strasse in Ludwigsburg, and that these may have included the discs of Wilby and Palmer. The above supposition is confirmed on paper at least, by the later German documents quoted in A.M. letter Ref P.414764/P.4147558/S.14 Cas.C.7 dated 16/7/47 (reporting Wilby and Palmer to be buried in Ludwigsburg Old Cemetery)
5. Re-checking at the above cemetery failed to find any mention of specific names in respect of the remains buried there.
6. Attached hereto please find a sketch of the vicinity concerned. It will be seen that Kornwestheim and Ludwigsburg lie directly north of Stuttgart, direct distances being Stuttgart-Kornwestheim 7 miles, Kornwestheim-Ludwigsburg 2 miles and also that the presumed lines of flight of both aircraft returning from Stuttgart would pass directly over Kornwestheim and Ludwigsburg. These factors may account for Benzie's body being found with those members of the other crew, since in the event of the aircraft being hit by flak barrage, it is possible that Benzie in the nose as Air Bomber, could be blown clear - by extreme coincidence admittedly - fall beside members of the second crew,

while the remainder of his crew were in the aircraft until such time as the final explosion and a crash occurred.

7. From the foregoing and in the light of the fact that it is confirmed that 7 complete bodies were buried in Kornwestheim, it would seem that the only possible conclusions to draw are:

a) That on concentration to a British Military Cemetery the remains in graves 278, 279, 283 and 284 should be concentrated to individual graves for SAGAR, BERRINGTON, BENZIE, CLARK and ORME respectively, while those in graves 280 and 281 in Kornwestheim to be buried with the remains at present in Ludwigsburg Old Cemetery as representing all remains found of the remaining members of the two crews.

b) That registration of the collectively buried unidentified remains (as above) must necessarily be only in terms of remains of an unknown member, since only 7 complete bodies were found at Kornwestheim, which means that either the remains of one of the crew of Lancaster ND576 have not been found, or that one crew member was disintegrated completely by the explosion on crashing.

8. It is regretted that it has proved impossible to solve this case in such a way as to give more satisfactory commemoration for Childs.

Investigation Report 14th Feb 1947

Search Officer F/O Topple Section 13

Ref: 1301/4688/P.3 Casualty Enquiry No. G.327

Result of Investigation and Findings:

In Kornwestheim there are five graves containing the remains of seven bodies. Three are known and the others are buried as unknowns.

Each of the five graves bears a white cross and a union Jack is painted on three of them. The graves are set out as follows:

22.3.44 UNBEKANNT , 22.3.44 BERRINGTON T.R. , 22.3.44 UNBEKANNT, 22.3.44 BENZIE T., 22.3.44 CLARK

It can be seen that these are members of two crews (the other case being G.696) and extensive enquiries in the neighbourhood give me very little information.

It seems that the majority if not all of the present inhabitants of Kornwestheim were in their shelters, on this particular night and nobody can be found that actually witnessed the disaster.

From all sources I received the same story. At approx midnight on the 15th March 1944, a terrible explosion was heard over Kornwestheim. The next morning pieces of aircraft were scattered over a very wide area in the streets of this town. Bodies and parts thereof were found also in various places in this medium sized town.

The Friedhofmeister was instructed to collect these remains, which he did, and he found seven bodies in all. From these bodies' identification tags etc., were taken by the Luftwaffe and have since been destroyed.

The remains were buried in PLOT II B in graves numbered 278 to 284 inclusive. On the following day, apparently the men were buried with full Military honours by the Luftwaffe unit from Boeblingen.

Although enquiries have not ceased in this connection, I believe there is a strong possibility of two aircraft colliding over Kornwestheim (G.696)

The aircraft remains have been removed from the town and no trace is left of them at all.

If further information is not forthcoming from enquiries in the Stuttgart area, exhumation of the unknown will be carried out to determine the identity of same and registration will be affected.

It is highly probable that the other missing members of this crew perished in the great explosion, following the collision and no trace can be found of them.

I will endeavour to locate further information regarding this case, but it seems that, due to the position and size of Kornwestheim and the high probability of a mid-air collision, my assumption is correct

Letter 28th Jan 1949

Dear Sir,

I refer to your previous communications concerning your late son, Flying Officer John Roberts DFC and now advise that a report has been received from the Missing Research and Enquiry Service operating in Germany. The report which is based on investigations made at the scene of the crash and interrogation of local authorities and residents, states that your son's and another aircraft crashed near KORNWESTHEIM on the 15th March 1944, presumably as the result of enemy action. Kornwestheim is situated approximately 7 miles north of Stuttgart. The report adds that the bodies of the deceased members of both crews were recovered from the wreckage by the Germans who interred the remains in the cemeteries of Kornwestheim and the nearby village of Ludwigsburg.

Following exhumation, it was unfortunately not possible to effect the individual identification of your son, but the identification of 2 members of his crew and 5 members of the other crew was established.

The remains of the deceased members of both crews have been reinterred in Durnbach British Military Cemetery located 26 miles south of Munich. Plot IV Row E - multiple graves 30-33 have been marked with the names and service particulars of your son and the other unidentified members.

Those members whose individual identification was established are buried in separate adjacent graves.

F/O Peter Charles Russell Brown (145370) ME573

Peter was the son of George Wallis & Marjorie Eleanor Brown of Rayleigh, Essex, England. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in grave 4E 30-33. Inscription "*He Is Not Dead, He Doth Not Sleep - He Hath Awakened From The Dream of Life*" He was the Navigator of the aircraft.

Peter was born in 1924 in Edmonton, Middlesex. His mother's maiden name was Priestley, his sister, Marjorie P Brown was born in Edmonton in 1919. Their parents had married in 1918 in Rochford Essex.

Marjorie Eleanor died 23 Nov 1975. She was living at 191 Eastwood Rd, Rayleigh, Essex.

In 1901 the Brown family were living at 25 Ridge Rd, Hornsea, Edmonton, Middlesex. Charles Brown born in 1856 in Clipston, Northamptonshire was a Baptist Minister. His wife Florence was born in 1857 in Brixton, Surrey. They had the following children: - Charles B born 1889, Julian C born 1891, George Wallis born 1893, Arnold born 1896, Winifred 1885, Muriel 1887 and Phyllis 1901.

Ten years after Julian Clifford Brown was an Insurance Clerk and George Wallis Brown a Drapers apprentice, living with their parents at Crouch Hill, London.

The Chelmsford Chronicle 13th Sept 1918

Lieut G W Brown & Miss M E Priestley

The Rev Charles Brown, DD, performed the ceremony at Rayleigh, Wesleyan Church on Tuesday, when his third son, Second Lieut George Wallis Brown, Royal Fusiliers, married Miss Marjorie Eleanor Priestley, younger daughter of Mr & Mrs J R Priestley, of Holly Tree Farm.

The bride wore a robe of cream wool back satin. Little Joan Priestley (the bridegroom's niece and bride's cousin) was the attendant maid, in pale green crepe de chine. The bride was given away by her father and Lt Julian Brown was the best man. Donald Priestley ARCO LRAM was at the organ. Dr Brown was assisted by the Rev CJ Wright BB. The bridegroom had been thrice wounded and is now on leave from hospital, where he has been under treatment for upwards of a year

In 1913 Rev Charles Brown DD was Pastor of Park Baptist Church, London. In 1921 he was President of the Baptist Union.

Donald Priestley was a professional organist and lived at Holly Tree Farm.

Essex Newsman 27th June 1925

Rayleigh Man's Sad End

An inquest was held at Rayleigh on Wednesday on George Wallis Brown, 32 Downhill Rd, Rayleigh who died on Tuesday following a fall from his bicycle. The widow stated that on June 18 deceased had a fall from his bicycle but went to London as usual next day. He consulted a doctor, and returned home. Deceased served in the war, and was wounded three times, also gassed. Dr F J G Battersley said death was due to rupture of a weakened lung and the fall from the bicycle helped to bring about the rupture. The war gassing undoubtedly affected the lungs. The Coroner returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

The Gloucester Citizen 12th Sept 1947

Probate:- Rev Charles Brown DD of Fursefield, Chorley Wood; Herts., retired Baptist minister, Pastor Emeritus and former President of the National Free Church Council and once Pastor at Nailsworth and Kings Stanley, who died on June 6 last, aged 91, left £24,076 - 17s-8d

In 1939 the airman's uncle, Julian Clifford Brown born 24th Jan 1891 an Insurance Clerk was living at Parkhill Rd, Torquay, Devon. He died in Barnet, Middlesex in 1977.

F/Sgt James Macadam Benzie RAAF (413526) ME573

Jim was 20 when he died. He was the son of Robert and Jean Benzie of Australia and husband of Ivy Benzie of Etwell, Derbyshire, England. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery in Grave 4 E 23. Inscription "*Greater Love Hath No Man Lovingly Remembered*" Jim is remembered on the Lane Cove Memorial & Book of Remembrance in Sydney He was the Air Bomber. Jim was born in Woollahra, Sydney 29th April 1923. He was a member of the Church of Christ. He enlisted 12th Sept 1941 and was a Clerk at the Egg Marketing Board. His parents were living at 27 William Edward St, Longueville, NSW. Dad was an Engine Driver. His brother Robert Benzie jnr, lived at 283 Burns Bay Rd, Lane Cove, Sydney, NSW. He was engaged to Jean in 1939. The airman's sister, Jean Kennedy Benzie born 1909 was a nurse in the army Service No NX119286.

Jim had a brother called David Watson Benzie, born 9/10/1917 in Duntroon, who was also in the air force. He enlisted in Sydney 30/5/1940 whilst living in Longueville, NSW. His next of kin was his father Robert. Service No. NX24396, 32653. Rank Sergeant in 21 Squadron. Benzie's father had worked at the Royal Military College, Duntroon from 1913-1919. David first enlisted in the army as a Gunner with 1 Anti-aircraft Regt but was discharged 23/7/1940 so he could join the RAAF. He served in 21 Sqn operating out of the base at Nadzab, New Guinea.

The Sydney Morning Herald 8 July 1944 reported *Benzie (nee Ludlum) - July 2, at Cronulia private hospital, to Nancye and Sgt DW Benzie (RAAF) - a daughter, Sandra Joan.*

James Benzie disembarked in the UK 17/3/44

(Married to Ivy Lees in Derbyshire 18th Dec 1943. In 1944 she was living Eggington Rd, Ettwell, Derbyshire - later in 1948, Mrs Ivy Stanley living 6 Sandcliff Rd, Burton-On-Trent, Derbyshire)

James Benzie's postings: -

1660 CU 17/8/43

467 Sqn 23/9/43

463 Sqn 25/11/43

Jim was 5ft 10 inches and weighed 143lbs with blue eyes and brown hair

Report dated 14th Dec 1945

Casualty Enquiry No. G 327

1. Lancaster III ME573 reported missing on operations on 15/16th March 1944, against Stuttgart from No. 463 (RAAF) Sqn.

2. Crew

Aus 416893 P/O J Roberts Pilot MISSING

158469 RAF Sgt J Wilby F/Eng M.B.K.

145370 RAF P/O P.C.R. Brown Nav MISSING

Aus 413526 F/Sgt J.M. Benzie Air/Bomber M.B.K.

Aus 415677 F/Sgt S.J.F. Palmer W/Op/AG M.B.K.

NZ 414863 P/O J.L. Childs M.U.G. MISSING

1818530 RAF Sgt R. Pead R/Gnr MISSING

3. Information forwarded by the International Red Cross Committee quoting German sources stated that, Benzie and Palmer of this crew were killed, and a later telegram reported the death of Wilby.

4. A German official Totenliste No.251 states that Benzie, Wilby and Palmer were buried in the cemetery at Kornwestheim (GSGS 4346 L 49/S 03) in graves No. 292 278 281 together with 4 men from another aircraft namely: -

1458700 Sgt ADDER Grave 280

1575494 CLARK 283

160000 BERRINGTON J. B. 284

May these burial places please be confirmed, and an investigation made to ascertain the fate and burial place of the four remaining members of this crew.

F/Sgt Stanley John Fielding Palmer (415677) RAAF ME573

Stanley was 26 when he died. He was born in Subiaco, West Australia 2nd Nov 1917. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany in grave 4 E 24. Inscription "*One Of The Best. His Duty Nobly Done*" He was the Wireless Operator. His parents were Stanley Lyle and Ellen Jeanette Palmer of West Perth, West Australia.

In 1915-17 Stanley Lyle Palmer was 23 and living in Subiaco, Perth and working as a farm labourer and horse driver when he was registered for the Armed Services.

Stanley and Ellen had a daughter called Cicely Elizabeth who died, aged 4, in July 1921. They were living at Kurawann, but were formerly of St Arnaud, Victoria. They buried her in the Anglican portion of Kalgoorlie Cemetery. She may have been the airman's twin.



Stanley Palmer courtesy National Archives Australia

In October 1939 Stanley's sister, Violet was engaged to marry Richard Thomas Birch. Her father was a widower.

Stanley has an Honour Avenue Plaque of Remembrance in Kings Park W.A. (MW 44) which is dedicated by his family.

He enlisted 7th Dec 1941 and at that time he was a taxi driver. His next of kin was listed as his father S.L. Palmer 31 Railway Parade, West Perth W.A., then later at 57 Mabel St in North Perth.

Letter dated 2nd May 1945 to S. L. Palmer 111 Tower St, Leederville, WA

Dear Sir,

I wish to advise you that an identity disc belonging to your late son, F.Sgt Stanley John Fielding Palmer, has been received at this headquarters from RAAF overseas headquarters London, and is forwarded to you herewith. This disc was received from captured German documents by the British authorities in Europe

In May 1947 Mr Palmer requested his son's Logbook and Service Colours. In January 1946 he had been sent his son's ID discs which had been recovered from captured German documents by the British.

P/O Jack Leslie Childs DFC RNZAF (414863) ME573

Jack Leslie Childs was 31 when he was killed 15th March 1944. He was awarded the DFC. He is buried in Durnbach War Cemetery Grave 4 E 30-33. He was an Air Gunner.

Jack was an Air Gunner. He was born 29th June 1912 Lyttelton, Christchurch, New Zealand. He was a Storeman when he enlisted. He was the son of Mrs Elizabeth Mary Childs of Lyttelton, Canterbury New Zealand, born 26/3/1893 to 1979 and John Joseph Childs born in 1884 the son of John Richard and Margaret Childs. The airman and his parents were living 24 Ripon St, Lyttelton in 1935.

During WW1 John Joseph living on Ripon St, registered to enlist in the armed services.

Training: RCAF 2 Wireless School, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Course 1: Class 30. Graduation 14/8/1942. RCAF 4 - Bombing & Gunnery School, Fingal, Ontario. RCAF 34 - Operational Training unit, Pennfield Ridge, New Brunswick.

Lyttelton News 5th Dec 1945

Obituary - Pilot Officer Jack Childs who was reported missing during air operations over Germany about 18 months ago, and was recently officially declared presumed dead, was born in Lyttelton 33 years ago. He was the elder son of Mrs and the late Mr J Childs and was educated at the Lyttelton District High School and the Christchurch Technical College. He was a member of the Lyttelton Men's Swimming Club, the Te Whaka Tennis Club, the Lyttelton branch of Toc H and was a keen member of the Charteris Bay Golf Club. Since a boy he had been an active member of the Loyal City of Norwich Oddfellows Lodge. Before his enlistment in 1941, Pilot Officer Childs was a member of the staff at Macfarlane & Co auctioneers at Christchurch.

Jack was awarded the DFC in 1946.

He was slightly injured on active service with 467 Sqn the entry 'Sgt J.L. Childs July 1943'

Combat Report TNA AIR 50/269/101 467 sqn Pilot Baker 28/29th June 1943

Target Cologne. At 0236 hours height 2400 feet (?) when attacked by an identified enemy aircraft from the starboard quarter level. This was the dark part of the sky and visibility at the time was poor. The first indication of the fighter's presence was tracer streaming at the Lancaster. The Lancaster pilot attempted to meet the attack by turning to starboard but with no success. The starboard aileron had been shot away by cannon fire. At realisation of this the pilot did a diving turn to port, losing 3000 feet in height. Only a fleetly glimpse of shadow gave away the fighter position and at each presentment of this the gunners opened fire. During the dive and loss of height the fighter was successfully evaded and lost from sight.

Combat Report TNA AIR 50/266/28 463sqn Pilot Baker 15 Jan 44

Time 19.17h Course 195 M Height 21,500ft Speed 170 LAS Position Target Area.

Mid Upper Gunner (Sgt Bushell) sighted ME 110 at 1500 port beam commencing attack, on a second Lancaster on starboard beam down 1200 yards. The enemy aircraft opened fire on the other Lancaster from his quarter at which the mid upper gunner opened fire with a long burst, continuing to fire until the enemy aircraft broke away underneath. The Engineer and Wireless Operator observed bits of the enemy aircraft which disappeared without attack on 'J'. The Lancaster attacked went down in flames without returning fire. 800 rounds expended. Rear Gunner (Childs) trained at 2 BAGS and 27 OTU., M.U.G. Bushell trained at 4 A.G.S. and 1660 CU

Sgt James Wilby (158469) ME573

Son of James Morphet Wilby and Doris May Wilby of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. 21y buried Durnbach Cemeter Germany Grave 4 E 30-33. Inscription *His Presence We Miss, His Memory We Treasure. Ever Near and Very Dear To Us*" Flight Engineer. He was born in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire in

1923, his mother's maiden name was Shelley. He had a sister called Ethel born in Wolstanton in 1921. She went on to marry John F Chapman of the Royal Navy in 1944 in Stoke-on-Trent. They lived at 77 Albion St Burslem and Ethel was there when she gave birth to a son, Malcolm John Chapman.

James Morphet Wilby was born in 1900 in Wolstanton, Staffordshire, his mother's maiden name was Mansfield.

Coventry Evening Telegraph 9th July 1947

When James Morphet Wilby (46) labourer, pleaded guilty at Warwick assizes today to committing bigamy at Nuneaton on Oct 5th 1946, it was stated that the matter so preyed on his mind and conscience that he went to the police in London and confessed.

He was married to his legal wife in May 1920 and they were separated in 1923. Det Sgt Bailey said accused had been employed by Coventry firms who described him as a satisfactory worker. Passing sentence of 9 months imprisonment, Mr Justice Atkinson said bigamy was far too rife.

James Morphet Wilby (born 1900) married Mary (?) Shelley in 1920 in Wolstanton.

The Wilby's were living at the Railway Inn, 125 Newcastle St, Burslem in 1901. Father, Henry born in Cheshire in 1855 was a Beer Seller. Daughter Sarah E. born in 1882 was a dressmaker, son Thomas born 1885 was a Joiners Apprentice, Mary was born 1887, Martha 1889, William 1895 and James 1900. Mary born in 1859 was looking after the family.

The parents of Henry Wilby born in 1855, (the airman's grandfather) were Mary Hardy Frost and Joseph Henry Wilby who married in Manchester in 1848 (Mary died in 1886). In 1871 Mary Hardy Wilby born in 1825 in Derbyshire, was letting lodgings and living with her son Henry who at that time was working as a painter & plumber. They lived on Haugh Rd, Bollin Fee, Altrincham, Cheshire.

In 1911 the Wilby family were living at 29 Albion St, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. Mary the mother was a widow. She had been born in Burslem in 1859 and at the time of the census was a beer seller with an outdoor license. Her daughter Mary born in 1888 was her assistant. Son William born 1895 was a butcher's assistant and the airman's father, James was still at school.

Doris Wilby was living at 77 Albion St Stoke-on-Trent in 1939. Born in 1901 she was a house to house canvasser. She describes herself as married. She is living with Abraham Sayer (married) was born 1901, a Colliery hewer. There are two closed records in the entry - presumably James the airman and his sister Ethel.

In 1923 Abraham married Millicent Goodwin, then Doris in 1956. He died in 1963.

In 1939 Abraham's wife Millicent Sayer born in 1904 is a housekeeper living at 3 Wignall Rd, Stoke-on-Trent with William E Bailey born 1894 who is a Fitter in the Motor Works. Millicent marries William in 1954.

This seems to be a case of people marrying the wrong people and being unable to pay for a divorce. In search of happiness they lived the life they could.

Sgt Ronald Pead (1818530) ME573

Buried in Durnbach War Cemetery Grave 4 E 30-33 Air Gunner

In 1939 Ronald Pead, born 16th May 1924 in Mansfield, was working as a Lathe Hand was living at 5 Wilsthorpe Road, Shardlow, Derbyshire, with his mother Sarah E Pead born 15th April 1894 a Staff Cook for Marks & Spencer (she died in 1950 and is buried in Breaston cemetery). One entry on the 1939 register is closed but probably refers to Ronald's sister Winifred Violet Pead (known as Violet) born in 1921 in Mansfield. Her mother's maiden name was Lawton.

Harry Pead married Sarah E Lawton in 1920 in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. Sarah Ellen was born in 1894 in West Derby. In 1911 she was a servant in West Derby and once WW1 started, served in Queen Mary's Army Auxilliary Corps Service No. 30895. She was awarded a medal for this service.

In November 1941 Ronald's sister Violet married William Archibald Longdon in Breaston.

Derby Daily Telegraph

Miss Violet Winifred Pead, daughter of Mr & Mrs H Pead of 5 The Grove, Breaston, was married to Mr Willam A Longdon, son of Mr & Mrs W Longdon of 10 Breedon St, Long Eaton, at St Michael's Church Breaston, on Saturday. Bridesmaids were Misses Pat & Margaret Timmins and matron of honour was Mrs R G Atkinson. Mr R N Wildsmith was best man

Derby Daily Telegraph 23rd Jan 1945

IN 10 BERLIN RAIDS

Posted 'missing' last march on operations over Germany, Sgt Air Gunner Ronald Pead RAF of 5 The Grove Breaston, is now officially presumed to have been killed. He was 19. He had been in the RAF a year and had already been on 27 operational flights, including 10 over Berlin. He was previously employed in a butcher's shop in Long Eaton.

Derby Daily Telegraph 15th March 1946

Pead - Proud and treasured memories of a dear son and brother, Sgt Ronald Pead AG RAFVR, missing presumed killed over Germany 15th March 1944. Also, his dear friend Jum Benzie (AUSTR) and all the crew.

"Nothing to us can ever replace his happy smile, his beloved face. "

Mum, Dad, Vi and Grandma

Derby Daily Telegraph 15th March 1947

Pead - Proud and treasured memories of our dear son Sgt Ronald Pead A.G. RAFVR, aged 19 years, missing presumed killed over Germany March 15th 1944. Also, his dear friend Jim Benzie and all the crew.

"Not just today, but every day, in silence we remember. Too dearly loved to be forgotten.

Mother, Father, Vi and Grandma

Pead - In ever loving memory of Sgt Ronald Pead, AG RAFVR.

"Beautiful memories treasured for ever, of happy times we spent together"

Always loved and missed by Auntie Evelyn and Uncle Ted (Mansfield)

Derby Daily Telegraph 15th March 1948

Pead - Treasured memories of our only son and brother, Sgt Ronald Pead A/G RAFVR aged 19 years, missing presumed killed over Germany March 15th 1944; remembering also his friend Jim Benzie and all the crew.

" And with the dawn those angel faces smile, which we have loved long since, and lost awhile"

Mum, Dad, Vi, Archie and Grandmas.

467 Sqn Operational Record Book

June 1943

16/17th June 1943 - Lancaster III ED547 **Baker / Childs** Target Cologne. Up 22:22h Down 03:25h Sortie completed. 2/10ths cloud. Bombed green Ti which went out just prior to bombing from 21,000' at 01:20h

21/22nd June 1943 - Lancaster III ED547 **Baker/Childs** Target Krefeld Up 23:24h Down 03:59h Sortie Completed. Bombed Red TI's cascading at 02:10 from 10,000' Raid concentrated with large fires seen. A few loads just short of target. Route flak free. Target burning well when left and appeared well concentrated.

22/23rd June 1943 - Lancaster III ED547 **Baker/Childs** Target Mulheim Up 23:12 Down 03:53h Sortie completed. Cloudless - vis clear. Bombed red TI from 17,500' Several heavy bursts, good concentrated fires. Whole place alight. Heavy flak well predicted and leaving target but route fairly free. Fighter attacks seen and fire engaged. Port inner hit, oil leak, MUG perspex damaged, bomb doors damaged due to flak.

24/25th June 1943 - Lancaster III EE145 **Baker/Childs** Target Wuppertal Up 22:58h Down 04:27h Sortie completed Bombed red Ti disappeared in smoke cloud at 01:38h from 17,500' Attack really well concentrated - as good as Krefeld. Icing forced us down to 16,500' and still descending at Dusseldorf as jettisoned two cans and gained 2000 to bomb. Target well alight and good concentration. Big smoke cloud. Target free from flak but outward route dotted with heavy flak.

25/26th June 1943 - Lancaster III ED567 **Baker/Childs** Target Gelsenkirchen Up 22:40h Down 04:05h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud 10,000' Bombed on red flare with green stars from 19,500' at 01:29h Cookie flash seen but unable to see results owing to cloud. Very difficult to assess results. Fairly quiet trip. Barrage flak over target.

28/29th June 1943 - Lancaster III EE145 **Baker/Childs** Target Cologne Up 23:??h Down 04:49h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud Bombed red/green star TI's from 19,500' at 02:12h Glow of own burst seen

below cloud. Scattered fires seen below cloud. Cannon shell damage to atbd ????, rear turret hydraulic shot away, trimming controls broken. Encounter with enemy fighter at 23,000 and weaving violently. Attack probably started from below but developed into downward atbd quarter attack. On attempt to turn into attack a/c fell away to port. We took the shortest way out of enemy territory. No more flak or enemy a/c seen.

September 1943

16/9/43

NZ414863 F/Sgt Childs R A/G posted from RAF Bottesford to be N.E. sick (non-effective) Childs had been shot in the ankle on ops 28/29 June 1943 when his turret was hit by cannon fire. His pilot was Geoffrey Francis Baker born 4/12/1918 in Sydney. He joined 467 squadron May 1943 with his first operation as 2nd pilot to P/O J Good on 11/12th June 1943 target Dusseldorf. After 22 ops he was transferred to 463 squadron on 25/11/43. Baker's 7th operation was on 28/29th June 1943 with Childs as rear gunner in Lancaster EE143 they were attacked by a night fighter and the aircraft badly damaged. Determined gunnery and evasive action beat off the fighter.

G.F. Baker gave this account to Stan Hurd: -

"When returning from a raid on Cologne 28th June 1943, the aircraft was attacked by an enemy fighter and the starboard aileron was jammed, the trimmers shot away, the rear turret made unserviceable, the hydraulics damaged and a lot of perspex shot away.

The first thing we knew about the fighter was when we felt the Lanc shudder as a cannon shell hit the starboard wing and a stream of tracers went across the nose from starboard to port," said P/O Baker. He tried a diving turn to starboard, but the starboard aileron was jammed, with the result that the aircraft remained straight and level. Baker then turned to port and threw the a/c into a corkscrew. Just before, the enemy fighter hammered another burst along the centre of the Lancaster, which was out of control at that point and Baker gave the order to abandon the aircraft, but his crew remained. P/O Baker with great skill and determination got the aircraft back under his control having dived 5000'. All evasive action had to be controlled by rudder alone. An enemy fighter followed them over the coast but it was unable to catch them up. On landing they ran off the runway as one of the tyres had been punctured. Baker was awarded the DFC for this action.

During the attack several bullets had torn through the rear turret setting off some of Jack Child's ammunition which caused a minor fire. Jack was injured on an ankle when a cartridge case exploded. He was the only member of the crew injured. (Baker flew his first operational sortie 14/15th June 1943 in LM311 flying 2nd pilot to F/Sgt S A Chapman.)

23/9/43 A416893 F/Sgt Roberts J Pilot / 1584697 Sgt Wilby F/Eng/ A416448 Sgt Miller JW Nav/ A413526 Sgt Benzie JM A/B/ A415677 F/Sgt Palmer W/Op/AG/ 1818530 Sgt Pead R A/G posted from 1660 Conversion Unit.

22/23rd Sept 1943 - Lancaster III EE135 P/O **GF Baker** pilot F/Sgt J L Childs Rear gunner. Target Hannover. Up 18:59h Down 00:31h Sortie completed No cloud good vis. Bombed concentration of green Tl's from 19,000' at 21:42h Own bombs slight overshoot possibly. Attack appeared well

concentrated and fires taking good hold. Route very good, practically flak free. S/Ls ineffective and no flak over target. No fighters seen.

29/30th Sept 1943 - Lancaster III ED949 **Roberts** flying 1st operation as 2nd pilot with P/O G F Tillotson. Target Bochum. Up 18:03 Down 23:28h Sortie completed. No cloud. Bombed flare, red with green stars from 19,000' at 20:59h Bombing concentrated, incs seen igniting and fires starting. Flares and TI's on target were a little late causing a few a/c to bomb green flares at Poan x. S/Ls numerous and endeavouring to cone. Flak moderate and mainly barrage type except when firing into cones. Fighters in great number at target and red fighter flares being fired everywhere over target. No defences encountered on route. Weather quite fair.

October 1943

1/2nd Oct 1943 - Lancaster III JA902 **Roberts** crew. Target Hagen Up 18:42h Down 23:59h Sortie completed. Low cloud 10/10th tops about 5/6000'. Bombed green concentration of TI's from 18,000' at 21:08h. Good fires seemed to be developing judging by glow beneath cloud. Own bomb load believed to have fallen well within target area. Cloud cover most of route. S/Ls unable to contact. Flak very light. Nothing unusual.

This raid was a complete success. 2 Lancasters lost.

2/3rd Oct 1943 - Lancaster III JA902 **Roberts** crew. Target Munich. Up 18:33h Down 03:00h Sortie completed. Good vis. Bombed red TI from 19,000' at 22:18h. Huge fires at time of bombing. Well concentrated. Great amount of smoke. Met winds good. PFF good. Fighter seen. Fighters all way along track to ???? coast.

8 Lancasters lost.

7/8th Oct 1943 - Lancaster III EE135 **J Childs/ Baker** crew. Target Stuttgart Up 20:26h Down 02:??h Sortie completed 9/10th cloud over target. Bombed middle lot of 3 lots of green TI's from 20,000' at 00:12h. Very early in attack and results difficult to observe. Fires beginning to develop. Greater weight of bombs along run-in-track and well within limits of two outside groups of green TI's. Fighters seen. Flak over target moderate and heavy. Landed at TANGMERE.

Only a few night fighters reached Stuttgart thanks to a diversion raid on Munich. 4 Lancasters lost.

7/8th Oct 1943 - Lancaster III ED606 **Roberts** crew. Target Stuttgart. Up 20:38h Down 03:45h Sortie completed. 10/10 S. Cu. Bombed red TI's from 20,000' at 00:23h Apart from one area that had four concentrations of fires, attack appeared scattered. Cloudy over most of the route. S/Ls practically nil. Flak moderate over target - nothing unusual. Landed at TANGMERE.

18/19th Oct 1943 - Lancaster III EE135 **J Childs/ G F Baker** crew. Target Hanover Up 17:42h Down 22:43h Sortie completed. 9/10 cloud. Bombed centre of 3 green TI's from 20,000' at 20:21h. Slight glow could be seen through cloud on leaving target area. Route Flak free and target at time of bombing Flak free. One fighter seen. As we bombed one minute after TI's went down, no results of raid were visible.

The raid was scattered. 18 Lancasters lost. One of them was the 5,000th Bomber Command aircraft lost on operations since the start of the war. At the end of this night, Bomber Command had flown approximately 144,500 sorties - 90% of them by night.

20/21st Oct 1943 - Lancaster III EE135 **J Childs/ G F Baker** crew Target Leipzig Up 17:40h Down 00:50h Sortie completed. 9/10 cloud below, tops 20,000'. Bombed on ETA. Few scattered fires seen through gaps in cloud. Route almost flak free. Severe icing in front and was losing height, jettisoned two cans and after ASI iced up we jettisoned all mcs. No TI's seen and after ETA we bombed biggest concentration of bombs and incs. No fighters seen and flak over target very light.

This was the first serious attack on this distant city. Weather conditions were very difficult with Bomber Command records describing them as 'appalling'. 16 Lancasters lost.

20/21st Oct 1943 - Lancaster III ED606 **Roberts** crew. Target Leipzig. Up 17:35h Down ??:07h Sortie completed. Icing caused mission to be abandoned. Negotiated front for about ?? minutes, but severe icing and loss of port inner caused loss of height from 21-17,000'. Conditions most unsuitable for operations.

22/23rd Oct 1943 - Lancaster III ED606 **Roberts** crew Target Kassel. Up 18:07h Down 23:59h Sortie completed. Vis clear. Bombed centre of green TI's from 21,000' at 21:10h. Good concentration of fires seen, burning well on leaving target. Also 21:20h large explosion seen - reddish colour. Second explosion seen of whitish yellow colour. Very light defences on target. Very few night fighters appeared to be operating.

43 aircraft were lost. The fires were so concentrated there was a firestorm, but not as extensive as Hamburg.

22/23rd Oct 1943 - Lancaster EE135 **J Childs/Baker** crew. Target Kassel. Sortie not completed. Oxygen supply failed. Early return

463 (RAAF) Sqn Operational Record Book

November 1943

463 Squadron was formed in Waddington from C Flight 467 Squadron on the 25th November 1943 and became A Flight. **J Roberts** and **GF Baker** DFC were among the first 6 pilots in the new 463 squadron.

26/27th Nov 1943 - Lancaster I DV 338. **J Childs** in the crew of **G F Baker**. Target Berlin. Up 17:10h Down 01:13h Sortie completed. Visibility clear. Fires all over.

26/27th Nov 1943 - Lancaster I DV374 **Roberts** crew. Target Berlin Up 17:00h Down 00:34h Sortie completed. Visibility clear with haze. Some good fires burning.

Only a few German fighters over Berlin where flak was the main danger. However the fighters caught the bombers on the return journey and 28 aircraft were lost with 14 more crashing in England. The Berlin zoo was heavily bombed. Many of the animals had been evacuated but the

bombing killed most of those that remained. However, several dangerous animals escaped - leopards, panthers, jaguars and apes and had to be hunted down and shot.

December 1943

2/3rd Dec 1943 - Lancaster I DV338 **J Childs** in the crew of P/O Wilson Target Berlin. Up 16:49h Down 23:40h Sortie completed. Clear east side of target. 8/10ths medium on west side. Wanganui flares 18,000' 20:30h At 2:27h a large explosion going in to target. Fires were well concentrated compared favourably with previous attacks. Target illuminated by fighter flares and searchlights.

There were no diversions and the bomber stream took a direct route across the North Sea and Holland and then to Berlin. Many enemy fighters were waiting for them when they reached the target. Despite this, two more Siemen factories, a ball bearing factory and several railway installations were badly hit.

2/3rd Dec 1943 - Lancaster I DV374. Roberts crew. Target Berlin. Up 16:43h Down 23:35h Sortie completed. 3/10 cloud. Centre of green TI's 22,000' 20:20h. A number of incendiary fires around markers with incendiaries in surrounding area. TI's scattered. Attack believed to be in southern part of city. Bombing very scattered. Route markers and broadcast very good.

16/17th Dec 1943 - Lancaster I DV338 **J Childs** in the crew. Target Berlin. Up 16:23h Down 00:28h Sortie completed. 10/10th medium cloud. No ground visible. TI's were concentrated after leaving target. Routing good. Impossible to say what damage may have been inflicted owing to cloud, but PFF TI's and flares were well concentrated.

Again, the bomber route was direct. German fighters met the bombers over the Dutch coast and more were waiting over the target and many combats engaged by the aircraft gunners. The bombers shook the enemy fighters off on the homeward journey by taking a route over Denmark. The National Theatre and the building containing Germany's military and political archive were destroyed. The damage to the railway held up German supplies to the Russian front.

January 1944

5/6th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III EB545 **F/S J Childs** flying with P/O C E Baker's crew on a raid to Stettin Up 00:08h Down 08:27h Sortie Completed. 1 fighter sighted.

This was the first large raid on Stettin since September 1941. A Mosquito diversion at Berlin successfully kept most of the enemy fighters away from the main force over Stettin. 16 aircraft lost.

14/15th Jan 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Roberts crew with the addition of Miller. Target Brunswick Up 16:25h Down 21:59h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud at about 15,000'. Reasonable glow under cloud. Route good.

This was the first major raid on Brunswick. The German running commentary was heard following the progress of the bomber force and many enemy fighters joined the stream over Bremen. The enemy aircraft attacked from then until the Dutch coast on the return journey. The raid was not a success. 38 aircraft lost.

20/21st Jan 1944 - Lancaster 1 DV374 Roberts crew. Target Berlin Up 16:23h Down 23:44h Sortie completed. 10/10 above 10-15,000' Vis good. Centre of cluster of red TI's 21,000' at 19:49h. Large glow on cloud apparently from fires.

The bomber approach route swung north but the German controller managed to get his fighters into the bombers stream and remained until well on the homeward journey. The diversions did not deceive the enemy. Berlin was cloud covered.

21/22nd Jan 1944 - Lancaster III ED545 **J Childs** in Baker's crew. Target Magdeburg Up 20:13h Down 02:42h No flak. Defences over target negligible. Only 2 searchlights seen.

The first major raid on Magdeburg. Once again the enemy fighters infiltrated the bomber stream. 57 aircraft were lost

21/22nd Jan 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Robert's crew. Target Berlin. Up 19:56h Down 03:??h Sortie completed. 9/10 cloud. Bombed on ETA 22,000' at 22:55h. Route good.

27/28th Jan 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Robert's crew. Target Berlin. Up 17:19h Down 01:35h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud tops around 15,000' Of 3 groups of skymarkers the middle group of 6 or 7 flares green with stars 21,000'. A red glow could be seen below cloud after leaving. No results could be observed. Broadcast, winds good going, but not so good on return. Spoof yellow TI's and fighter flares between Bremen (?) and Hanover.

The German fighters were sent out 75 miles over the North Sea to enter the bombing stream. Half of them were lured away by the Heligoland mining diversion. The target was cloud covered again and skymarking had to be used. 33 Lancasters lost.

27/28th Jan 1944 - Lancaster III ED545 **J Childs** in Baker's crew. Target Berlin. Up 17:25h Down 02:30h Sortie completed. Good concentration of Wanganui flares. Slight red glow on clouds. Large explosion, orange in colour lasting 3 to secs. Landed ???? Island.

30/31st Jan 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Roberts crew. Target Berlin. Up 17:??h Down 23:32h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud tops 12,000' MPI of Wanganui flares with red green stars 21,500' at 20:21h. On leaving target fires were catching hold. Clouds too thick to observe own bombing results. Good route. Broadcast, winds not so good.

There were no diversions this night and the German controllers failed to intercept the bombers over the sea. The main force was well on the way to Berlin before encountering any fighters, but the Germans were on their tail well into the return flight. 33 aircraft lost.

30/31st Jan 1944 - Lancaster I ME614 **J Child's** flying with a different pilot. Target Berlin. Up 17:15h Down ????h Sortie completed. No target attacked. Jettisoned at 19:04h owing to heating up of interior of aircraft although no heat turned on. Main spar became very hot and Navigator very exposed to excessive heat. Two inner motors started surging soon after crossing English coast outward.

February 1944

15/16th Feb 1944 - Target Berlin. Crew: Roberts*, Wilby*, Miller JW, Benzie*, Palmer*, McCabe H, Pead*. Up 17:06h Down 00:04h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud at 5000' with some thin in cloud up to 10,000'. Vis good. Red TI's flares followed by Wanganui flares and green TI's. Flares illuminated cloud and prevented observation of results. Route quiet - enemy fighter flares seen. Spoof flares seen.

This was the largest bomber force sent to Berlin. The German controllers were able to plot the bomber stream soon after it left the English coast, but the route north over Denmark proved too far for many of the enemy fighters. The German controller ordered the fighters not to fly over Berlin, which left the target area free for the flak, but many fighters ignored that order. Berlin was covered in cloud. Some of Berlin's most important war industries were hit including the important Siemensstadt area. This was the end of the Battle of Berlin. 43 aircraft were lost.

19/20th Feb 1944 - Target Leipzig - Same crew as above. Up 23:47h Down 06:45h Sortie completed. 10/10 cloud tops about 12,000'. Centre of well concentrated Wanganui flares. 22,000' at 04:04h Good glow of fires seen. Good surprise attack although most aircraft appeared to be early. Spoof attack good. Route good.

Winds were not as forecast and many aircraft reached the Leipzig area too early and had to orbit waiting for the Pathfinders. The bomber stream was under attack all the way to the target. The spoof attack didn't work as effectively as Roberts after operation debriefing indicates. The fighters sent to Kiel spoof attack hurriedly returned. 77 aircraft lost

20/21st Feb 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Target Stuttgart. Same crew as above. Up 00:02h Down 06:38h Sortie completed. 4/10 cloud. Many clear patches over target. Visibility good. Good concentration of green flares with red stars. Concentration of fires appeared to be developing in intensity. Could be seen 200 miles away. Broadcast was not so good.

The North Sea sweep and Munich diversion successfully drew the German fighters up 2 hours before the main bomber force flew inland. 9 aircraft lost.

24/25th Feb 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Same crew with addition of F/S Graham as 2nd pilot. Target Schweinfurt. Up 20:33h Down 01:55h Sortie completed Thin low cloud. Centre of all TI's visible 22,000'. Some good fires with incends. The TI's were well clustered. Good broadcast. On arrival there were fires and a good pall of smoke, but whether these were from the day attack is difficult to say. Stuttgart still burning.

This was the first bombing raid on Schweinfurt, the home of Germany's main ball-bearing factories

25/26th Feb 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Target Augsburg Crew the same with addition of Miller. Up 18:29h Down 01:54h Sortie completed Clear vis - good. 4 red and 2 green TI's. Aiming point confirmed visually 21,700'. Fires seen to be getting hold round the target area. An explosion which resulted in a huge yellow flame shooting up on our homeward journey. Route very good.

The bombing of Augsburg was outstanding in clear weather conditions and weak defences. The Pathfinder marking was accurate. The Germans publicised it as "terror bombing". 21 aircraft lost.

March 1944

1/2nd March 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Target Stuttgart. Crew - Roberts*, Wilby*, J.W.Miller, Benzie*, K M D Lyons, Childs*, Pead*, C A ??? Up 23:03h Down 07:11h Sortie completed. 9/10 cloud tops 14,000' then clear. Through occasional breaks could be seen fires burning, appeared to be scattered. TI's seen. Good. PFF opened with good concentration. The flares were either shot down by flak or dropped into cloud.

Thick cloud on the routes to and from the target made it difficult for German fighters to enter the bomber stream. 4 aircraft lost

9/10th March 1944 - Lancaster I DV374 Target Marignane (near Marseilles). (Crew includes JW Miller) Up 20:49h Down 05:39h Sortie completed. Cloud base hazy. Spot fire and centre of fire area 8000'. Stick of incends to port ?? in target building. Stick of HE and incends on ??? and to our starboard. Smoke to 6-7000'. Target appeared well hit.

Accurate raid in bright moonlight - no losses.

15/16th March 1944 - Lancaster ME573 Up 19:04h Target Stuttgart. Failed to return.

37 aircraft lost on this operation.

Written and researched by Dorothy V. Ramser May 2020