

102 (CEYLON) SQUADRON ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Hon. Sec. Harry Bartlett

Email 102squadronassociation@gmail.com

© Squadron Badge reproduced by kind permission of Crown Copyright

Message from the Secretary December 2020

This Newsletter comes at a particularly difficult time for us all. Our Annual Reunion and Memorial Service which should have been celebrated in May had to be cancelled because of the Coronavirus pandemic. The opportunity to try to reorganise it in the early Summer was lost when the spikes of infection caused areas where members and guests were due to travel from to be 'locked down'.

The attendance of a group of Association members and relatives at a special Memorial Service in Brissy-Hamegicourt, Northern France, and an Association group going to Lyons La Foret, near Rouen, had to be cancelled.

We had also planned to visit Mauberg cemetery, near Brissy-Hamegicourt, in May 2021 where the crew of Wing Commander Coventry are buried, along with Bill Hyatt's relative, Flying Officer George Williams. (See item 'The Irony of Fate' later in the Newsletter.) This will happen next year.

The only light on the far distant horizon is the possibility of the Reunion Weekend being held next year over the weekend of Saturday and Sunday, the 5th and 6th of June 2021.

We have a *provisional* agreement with Mo and Anne at the Wolds Gliding Club that, **if** the rules allow, we will continue to hold our Reunion Dinner there. I will have to leave making any booking arrangements until late March 2021 when, hopefully, we will know how the rules for managing the pandemic are to be progressed!

Sadly, after speaking to Bernard Kennedy, the William Wilberforce Care Home may not be available to us in June. Hopefully this situation is one which can be altered in the New Year with the roll out of vaccinations. However, accommodation may still be difficult if not booked early. (Please make sure that if you are making provisional accommodation bookings your travel insurance or booking company will let you have your deposit back if necessary!)

At the time of writing we know that our Chairman Harry Hughes is not enjoying the best of health, Ken Tinson, former Councillor and a long time friend and supporter of the Association has been very ill but is home in Pocklington. Likewise, Bill Hyett from Wales, an Association member, has been seriously ill lately. I'm sure we wish them all well and a speedy recovery to health.

Let's try to look forward and be positive about meeting the challenges this horrible disease has forced on us just as those who went before did all those years ago.

Harry

† 'To the Peaceful Skies' †

RONALD EDWARD ARCHARD

20th April 1930 - 29 January 2020

Ron was born on 20 April 1930 in Millwall, Isle of Dogs and was the youngest of a family of four. He was 10 years old at the outbreak of WWII and was evacuated to Wales where he was billeted on a farm. This was a novelty to a boy from East London and when not at school he helped around the farm, delivering milk and feeding the livestock.



At the end of the War Ron was 17. The time was fast approaching for him to be conscripted into one of the services. Ron's sister Margaret was a WAAF during the war and his brother Leonard also served in the RAF. With this family background Ron was keen to join the RAF, but knew that this could not be guaranteed when called up for his National Service.

He therefore did not wait to be conscripted but signed on for 5 years as a regular in the Royal Air Force. After the initial shock of square bashing etc., Ron quickly adapted to service life and during his time was posted to many camps throughout the UK. He particularly liked the banter and camaraderie which existed with his fellow servicemen.

Official No. 4028355 Rank: Corporal Date of Enlistment: 17/4/1947 Trade in RAF: Batman
Date of Discharge: 15/4/1953
Discharged from: RAF Bassingbourn
Date of Transfer to Reserve (Class G): 15/4/1953

Note: Ron's brother Leonard was with the 102 (Ceylon) Squadron and it is through this connection that Ron became a Member of the Association. Due to ill health in recent years Ron was not able to attend the Reunions but he always looked forward to receiving the Newsletters and invariably these were read by him within hours of dropping through the letterbox.

JAMES (JIM) VARLEY IBBOTSON

Air Gunner – 102 (Ceylon) Squadron

James (Jim) Varley Ibbotson, 95 years, served as an Air Gunner with 102 in the crew piloted by Frank Littler.

Jim was a stalwart of the Association for over 30 years, attending the Annual Reunions with his wife. He lost contact with us in 2010 after a patch of bad health but was most looking forward to attending the Reunion. We hope to have a full obituary to follow in the next newsletter.

JAMES FERGUSON LATIMER

Bomb Aimer – 102 (Ceylon) Squadron & 462 Squadron

Warrant Officer James Ferguson Latimer, 97 years, emigrated to Canada as a very small child from Edinburgh and the whole family returned to Scotland during the early part of the war. James was a Bomb Aimer with 102 and wore the 'CANADA' shoulder flash. He took part in the bombing of France during D Day as part of a crew piloted by Flight Sergeant Mitchell. He flew 47 operations in total, the majority with 102 and then 462 Squadron.

(Jim was interviewed for the International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive. You can listen by clicking this link:

<https://ibccdigitalarchive.lincoln.ac.uk/omeka/items/.../20095>)

Memorial Service Lyons La Foret, France 30th August 2020

The attached photographs are from this year's Memorial Service held in the village of Lyon La Foret, and the nearby Abbaye Mortemer, to remember the life of Huguette Verhague who rescued evading aircrew and hid them in her farm. She rescued Sergeants Leverington, Joyce, Leslie and Eagle who parachuted out of LW143 DY-O who later became POWs after being betrayed by the double agent Jaques Soubrie.

The other two crew members who died, along with the pilot, Nigel Campbell RAAF, when he steered the aircraft away from the village, Jack Wilson RCAF and Noel Pardon, were remembered at the nearby new memorial dedicated to them.

Because of the restrictions placed on us by the Covid-19 pandemic, no one from the planned attendees from the Association was able to be there. The Association wreaths at the memorials to Huguette's and our crew were laid, with our thanks, by our good friend Olek Brzeski who is on the local committee for remembrance.



Harry Bartlett Sec.

Flight Lieutenant John Blair DFC



A WWII RAF Pocklington Navigator, John Blair of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron, was featured on BBC Antiques Roadshow programme (14 Sept. 2020). Entitled 'Battle of Britain and the Blitz', it was a special programme to commemorate the conflict's 80th anniversary. It included an interview with the last surviving Battle of Britain pilot, 101-year old Paddy Hemingway, and featured several descendants of heroes of September 1940, civilian and RAF servicemen.

The programme's final item was a tribute to the many air force personnel who came to Britain from all corners of the Commonwealth to play their part. It focused on the career of John Blair, with his daughter and great nephew telling his story and displaying his medals and photographs.

John Blair was a newly qualified teacher in Kingston Jamaica, aged 23, when he heard one of Winston Churchill's stirring wartime speeches and straightaway volunteered for the RAF, the first of the services to welcome coloured recruits. After basic training in Canada he was posted to 102 Squadron in Pocklington as a navigator. On the programme his family was questioned about how he was received in Pocklington as a Jamaican airman, answering that he had told them "Yorkshire was extremely friendly". John Blair liked a beer and his daughter and great nephew related that when he went into Pocklington he "couldn't buy a pint in the pub" as someone would always buy it for him.

John Blair flew 33 missions from Pocklington between December 1944 to the end of the war, his outstanding service with 102 Squadron seeing him awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1945. He turned down the opportunity to be demobbed and signed on for another tour of duty with the elite Pathfinders squadron. He remained in the RAF for another 18 years as a flight lieutenant, marrying an English nurse after the war and eventually returned in the 1970s back to the Caribbean where he died in 2004 aged 83.

(Article courtesy of Phil Gilbank Pocklington Local History Society)

Remembrance Sunday 2020

Sadly due to the Covid restrictions, the normal meeting of association members at Barmby Moor and Pocklington Airfield was unfortunately not possible. Association members Colin and Judith, who live locally, were able to attend and provide us with a brief recap of the day.

“Judith and I were fortunate that we were in a position to help the Association to pay its respects at this difficult time. Thank-you for a special memory.

Sunday dawned grey, overcast and drizzling, with moderate fog. However by the time we had packed the car to depart for Barmby Moor the drizzle had ceased and the morning was brightening, with nil wind.

The Reverend Jan was parked outside St Catherine's churchyard when we arrived. Judith and I went ahead into the Commonwealth War Graves plot (looking beautifully tended as always) to place the cross for the grave of Doug Harper ahead of the formal service. Then we and the Rev Jan chatted whilst the other official attendees arrived, all suitably distanced and masked. There was a good additional attendance of members of the congregation and or villagers. Rev Jan led us in a short service; wreaths from Barmby Moor Parish council and 102(Ceylon)Sq Association were laid, Gordon delivered the Kohima exhortation and Paul, our faithful trumpeter, played the haunting Last Post.

Judith and I departed for the airfield and as we had some time in hand I was able to scatter your poppy seeds in the grass at the rear of the memorial.

The final attendees were the Rev Jan, Pocklington Mayor Dean Hodgson and Lady Mayoress Ruth Hodgson, Barmby Moor Parish Councillor and daughter, Paul our trumpeter and his wife, and Judith and myself. The service and wreath laying followed the pattern earlier at St Catherine's Commonwealth War Graves plot. The Rev Jan made a point of thanking Wolds GC for allowing the assembled party to pay their respects whilst the club was closed.”

FLT. SGT. Frederick Thomas Dunn

This article is based on information to assist Christopher Dunn in finding out what happened when his uncle Flt. Sgt. Frederick Thomas DUNN, Bomb Aimer who was killed in a mid-air collision when returning from an operation on the 21st of November, 1943 near Pocklington.

LW333 DY-K

Roy Alfred DABNOR, Pilot Officer (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner), 162864. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 102 Squadron, Royal Air Force. Died Monday 22 November 1943. Aged 21. Son of Alfred Harry Peter and Sarah Dabnor of Knockholt, Kent, he is buried in St. Katherines Churchyard, Knockholt, Kent.

Roy had been amongst the seven man crew on Halifax bomber LW333 DY-K, when it took off from R.A.F. Pocklington, North Yorkshire at 1631 hours on 21 November 1943. Halifax

bomber LW333 DY-K was being flown on the mission by 24 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot), Walter Hughes of Walton, Liverpool, Lancashire.

The Halifax was amongst a force of 764 aircraft which was comprised of 469 Lancasters, 234 Halifaxes, 50 Stirlings, and 11 Mosquitoes that were taking part on a raid on Berlin, Germany. The raid on the night of 21/22 November 1943, was carried out by the largest force of R.A.F. aircraft that had been sent to Berlin at that time, and was also the last raid in which Stirlings were sent to Germany. Bad weather kept most of the German night fighters on the ground, and the bomber force was able to take a relatively 'straight in, straight out' route to the target without suffering undue loss of aircraft or life.



Of the 26 aircraft that were lost on the mission to Berlin, 11 were Lancasters, 10 Halifaxes, and 5 Stirlings. Berlin had been completely cloud covered, and returning bomber crews could only estimate that the marking and bombing was accurate. It was later revealed that the mission which cost Roy his life, was in fact the most effective raid on Berlin during the Second World War. A vast area of destruction stretched from the central districts of the city westwards across the mainly residential areas of Tiergarten and Charlottenburg, to the separate suburb city of Spandau. Because of the dry weather conditions, several 'firestorm' areas were reported, and the following day a German aircraft measured the height of the smoke cloud as reaching 6,000 metres (almost 19,000 feet). It was estimated that approximately 175,000 people were bombed out as the result of the raid. Interesting entries among the lists of buildings destroyed or severely damaged are:- The Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche (the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church) in West Berlin, the Charlottenburg Castle, the Berlin Zoo, much of the Unter den Linden, the British, French, Italian and Japanese embassies, the Ministry of Weapons and Munitions, the Waffen SS Administrative College, and the barracks of the Imperial Guard at Spandau. Among the numerous industrial premises that had been hit, were five factories of the Siemens electrical group, and the Alkett tank works which had recently moved to the city from the Ruhr.

Roy's aircraft was not lost due to enemy action, as it collided in the air with a 77 Squadron, R.A.F. Halifax bomber (LW 264 KN-K) in the Pocklington circuit, which was returning to R.A.F. Elvington North Yorkshire from the same raid on Berlin. Both of the aircraft crashed at 2345 hours, near Newlands Farm, (Mohair Farm) on the York Road, Barmby Moor, Yorkshire. In November 1984 fourteen oak trees, each of which was named after an airman killed in the above tragedy, were formerly commemorated at Newlands Farm. Formerly a Sergeant (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner), Roy was commissioned as a Pilot Officer, R.A.F. (V.R.) on 10 November 1943.

(Source: <http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20REPORTS/KNOCKHOLT%20LYCH%20>)

The crews were:

LW333 DY-K 102 (Ceylon) Squadron, Pocklington

Pilot Officer. Walter Hughes - Pilot - Aged 24 – RAFVR
Sgt William Waterson Cottle - Navigator - Aged 28 - RAFVR
Sgt Roy Alfred Dabnor - Wireless Operator - Aged 21 - RAFVR
Sgt John Boxall - Flight Engineer - Aged 28 – RAFVR
Sgt Roland Barnsley Bainbridge - Air Gunner - Aged 23 - RAFVR
Sgt David Willington - Air Gunner - Aged 32 - (R.C.A.F.)
Sgt. Frederick Thomas Dunn - Bomb Aimer - Aged 22 - RAFVR

LW264 KN-K 77 Squadron, Elvington

Flight Sgt (?Flt Lt?). Lineham – Pilot
Sgt. West
Flight Sgt. Godsen
Sgt. Twedle
Sgt. Elder
Sgt. Bennet
Sgt. Thompson



Left to right: Rowley(midupper), Roy Dabnor (W/op) Bill (Navigator), Wally (Skip), Fred (Dunn) (B/A),Jack(Engineer) Dave (Rear gunner Canada (Photo shows only 1st names only)

Sergeant James Kenneth Campbell 1065510 RAFVR

By Paul Campbell

My Uncle Ken was born in Widnes on February 2nd 1921 to James & Maria Campbell. As a boy he attended Wade Deacon Grammar School, which was right at the other side of town and which was the school that I attended in the 1960s, although I didn't know it at the time. I must have walked beneath the memorial in the main entrance hall thousands of times without realizing that his name was up there on it.



As a typical West Bank teenager living near to the River Mersey (tidal and polluted), Ken and his friends often went swimming, until the day he got into difficulties and almost drowned – an exploit that got him into the local newspaper.



In the photograph to the left Ken is pictured with his friends, aged about 16 and standing second from the left. They are on Mersey Shore, with the river and the (now demolished) Transporter Bridge behind them.

1940

Aged just 19, and working as an accounts clerk, Ken volunteered for the war effort and enlisted in the RAFVR as an Aircraftsman 2nd Class on August 23rd 1940. After a short induction at RAF Padgate (near Warrington) he was posted to No. 5 Recruits Centre in West Kirby (on The Wirral), where he underwent a month of basic training.

The remainder of 1940 saw Ken take up two further postings. He spent seven weeks with 942 Squadron as a Trainee Wireless Operator based at No. 17 Balloon Center until, on December 28th, he was posted to Station Horsham St Faith near Norwich. Here he continued his training as a wireless operator, probably gaining hands on experience in ground to air communication.

1941

After seven weeks, on St Valentine's Day 1941, Ken was posted to 3 Signals School at RAF Compton Bassett in Wiltshire where he remained for almost four months. A week after arriving he qualified as a Wireless Operator (part 1), was remustered as WOP/WOP, and began the second phase of his training. At the end of his course in May he passed his examination (with a mark of 45% !!!) and was presented with his 'Sparks' badge.

Following leave, Ken went directly to Station Headquarters, Colerne in Wiltshire. Here he became a Ground Operator in the Signals Section, now on active service. On 19th June he underwent a medical, following which he was classed as fit for pilot, observer, wireless operator/air gunner and radar operator. After five months he was posted to Air Crew

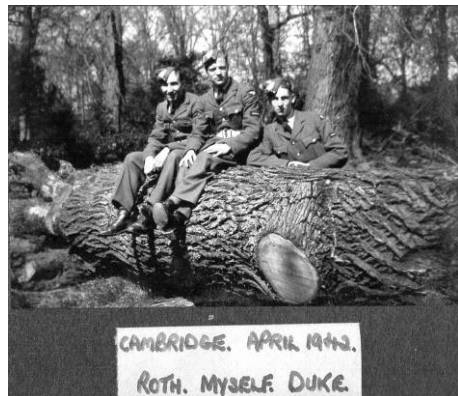
Receiving Centre at RAF Regents Park, where he arrived on November 3rd. He was one of airmen in the 19th intake.

Ken remained here for six weeks, undergoing further training and possibly aptitude tests for flying and psychological tests to determine the most suitable trades. Then, on 13th December, he was posted to No. 2 Initial Training Wing, based at Jesus College, Cambridge. 2 ITW specialized in training for Pilots, Navigators and Air Bombers.

1942

Whilst training, like many of his comrades, Ken took many photographs. He assembled four albums but I only have two, so his photographic record only begins at April 1942, the month that he left Cambridge.

Below are some photos of Ken and his pals enjoying some R&R around Cambridge. He had been promoted to LAC and remustered as a u/t Pilot. On some of the photos you can see his two bladed “propeller” arm patch.



Ken was only in Cambridge for 18 weeks, but while there he met, and struck up a friendship with, a girl who we only know as Jo.



In May 1942 Ken was posted to 5 Air Observer School at RAF Jurby on the Isle of Man. Here he learned many of the skills that he would later put into practice in his short combat career. Along with observation he was taught photography (he was responsible for taking photos of the bomb drop), navigation (as backup to the navigator), gunnery (he manned the front machine gun) and bombing (the observer became the air bomber), amongst many other things.

The pamphlet ‘You Are Going To Be An Air Bomber’, describes this pretty succinctly.

“...acting as the eyes of the navigator on the outward and homeward journey.....guiding the aircraft to the target, identifying the aiming point and placing the bomb on it.....manning the front gun in the event of attack by enemy aircraft”.



JURBY, I.O.M. MAY 1942.
THOUGHTS OF HOME.



HOMeward BOUND. JULY 1942.
JACK. DAVE. SHAG. SELF.
TISK.



JURBY, I.O.M. MAY 1942.
AFTER A FLIGHT.

During this spell of training at Jurby Ken had a couple of spells on leave. In May he went to Cambridge to see Jo, and in July, when he and his pals took the Isle of Man ferry Snæfell from Douglas to Liverpool, he called in to see his parents and my father (his brother Gordon).

I say ‘called in’ because Ken was on his way to Cambridge again to spend a (very important) few days with Jo – as the following set of photographs show.



CAMBRIDGE JULY 1942.
ALL DRESSED UP.



CAMBRIDGE. JULY 1942.
AND SOMEWHERE TO GO.



CAMBRIDGE. JULY 1942.
A HAPPY COUPLE.



CAMBRIDGE. JULY 1942.
JUST ENGAGED.

In August, having completed his training at Jurby, Ken was posted to 14 Operational Training Unit at Cottesmere in Rutland. Here began the intensive, hands on training to learn how to be part of a crew. Cottesmore had a squadron of twin engined Handley Page Hampdens (known to the crews as “Flying Coffins”). 14 OTU was involved in some of the 1000 bomber raids that the RAF had begun, targeting Cologne, Essen, Bremen and Dusseldorf (when there was a shortage of planes in the squadrons designated for the sortie). I often wonder if Ken ever flew in one of those raids, but without his log book I guess I will never know.



MELTON AUGUST
MOWBRAY. 1942.
VAN AND SELF.



COTTESMORE AUGUST
HOUSE. 1942.
SMITHY. MICHAEL SELF.



COTTESMORE AUGUST
HOUSE. 1942.
IN THE GROUNDS.



At the end of November Ken was posted to 102 Conversion Flight based at Pocklington, which was absorbed into 1652 Conversation Unit at Marston Moor. Here he spent 7 weeks converting his training in Hampdens into a readiness for operations in the Halifax Mk II heavy bomber used by 102 Squadron.

(PART 2 TO FOLLOW IN NEXT NEWSLETTER)

Squadron Archivist - Claire Wilson

The Pocklington Post wrote an interesting article about the Barmby Moor graves based around the work of our squadron archivist Claire Wilson.

Wednesday, May 27, 2020 www.pocklingtonpost.co.uk facebook.com/pocklingtonpost Twitter @PockPost

YOUR NEWS, YOUR VIEWS

Professional genealogist's amazing work on WWII heroes



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAIRE WILSON

The war graves at St Catherine's Churchyard in Barmby Moor.

Project shines light on Barmby Moor war graves

By PHIL HUTCHINSON
news@pocklingtontoday.co.uk
Twitter: @PockPost

A new project focusing on the war graves at St Catherine's Churchyard, Barmby Moor, was recently launched on the 75th Anniversary of VE Day.

Clare Wilson, a professional genealogist with Treehouse Genealogy, has compiled a detailed dossier about the men buried in the churchyard.

An avid bomber command researcher, Clare's great uncle had served with the strategic force in World War Two.

While attending the 102 Squadron reunion at Pocklington last May she became interested in the war graves at St Catherine's Church in Barmby Moor.

During the reunion Clare held a conversation with Reverend Jan Hardy who, being curious about her career, mentioned that it would be nice for the local children to learn more about the men.

She felt it was hard for children to relate to the men when all they could see were names in stone.

On top of her usual client work, the project took up most of her spare time for about six months.

Clare said that as a genealogist a lot of her work revolves around researching deaths, though the more positive events like marriages, births and other achievements in people's lives often outweigh the sad stories.

Clare said: "These stories are sad. These men came from all corners of the world, many

married just after enlistment. Some had amazing job prospects and many would never see their children, but they chose to fight and paid the ultimate sacrifice.

"The amount of information uncovered relating to these men and their families has been astounding making it hard not to identify with them."

Her hope is that as people read through the details of the war heroes' lives they will spare a thought for each and every one of them.

Clare has hinted that she may follow up on certain aspects of this project, so watch this space.

• People can read more about the project and the men at <https://www.treehousegenealogy.co.uk/barmby-moor-war-dead>

Article by Bill Hyatt on his uncle

THE IRONY OF FATE.

The confusion and calamity of any wartime situation, brings with it instances of unexpected and heart rendering events which frequently defy any rational explanation. The intense and pressurised nature to which R.A.F. Bomber Command was subjected during WW2 must have given rise to many such occurrences. This short article reflects how three, separate situations, several months apart, have a remarkable combined outcome. Significantly, two relate to 102 (Ceylon) Squadron, Bomber Command.

On the Friday night of 16/17 April 1943, operation "Frothblower" required 102 Squadron to detail fourteen of their Halifaxes' to join the five hundred and ninety-six other aircraft on this task. The target for the night was to be a joint effort against the Skoda armament works at Plzen, Czechoslovakia and a, smaller, diversionary raid on Mannheim. Whilst the result on the Skoda effort was disappointing due to haze and obscured vision over the area, the fourteen '102' aircraft only suffered the loss of one Halifax. This was HR663 piloted by Squadron Leader Wally Lashbrook. They were caught whilst on the return leg over the French/Belgian border by a lurking German night fighter and the bomber crashed near Eppe Sauvage. Of the seven crew, six successfully parachuted to safety with amazingly four evading capture and returning to England in months. The sole casualty was my Uncle, Flying Officer George Williams G.M., the rear gunner.

Among the other thirteen '102' Halifax's on this operation was JB 867 piloted by Wing Commander H.R. Coventry, the newly appointed Commanding Officer of the 102 Squadron. As was the customary procedure, a telegram was swiftly sent to the next of kin of the HR663 Lashbrook crew explaining that it was 'missing' on operation and that further information would be sent once the situation became known. On 18 April, Wg Cmdr Coventry, no doubt as part of his Squadron Commander responsibilities, drafted an expansive hand written note to Georges' wife (of just four days) explaining that Lashbrook was highly experienced and that it is possible that the crew, including George, might be safe and that he would write again as soon as more details were reported. George's body was recovered from the crashed tail portion of the Halifax at Eppe Sauvage and buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission section of the Maubeuge Municipal Cemetery. Yet it was a further six weeks before the Red Cross was able to report this outcome and Mrs Williams duly informed.

Meanwhile, the concentrated effort by Bomber Command to take the offensive against the enemy continued unabated. The 102 Squadron, as was the same for most of the 'Halifax' squadrons, were frequently detailed to contribute aircraft to the various operations. Unfortunately, in doing so, the 102 suffered further losses, with some nineteen aircraft failing to return home between mid-April and early July.

On Tuesday, 13 July there was a 374 strong operation with Aachen being the target. Some 214 Halifax's, 74 Wellingtons, 55 Stirling's, 18 Lancaster's and 11 Mosquitoes made up the offensive. The raid was largely considered to be successful with concentrated bombing and damage on the target being observed. However, there were expensive losses of 20 aircraft; 15 Halifax's, 2 Lancaster's, 2 Wellingtons and 1 Stirling, making 5.3 % of the

force. Regrettably of the 15 Halifax losses, two were of '102' aircraft. They were JB894, piloted by Sgt R.G.Amos with only Air Gunner Sgt D.H.Brown surviving as a P.O.W., and JD297 piloted by Wg. Cdr H.R.Coventry and his entire crew. I am not completely sure, but I believe that Squadron Commanding Officers were generally prohibited from operational flying, yet it is clear in many cases that this stipulation (if it existed) was not adhered to.

Coming forward to more recent years when I started to seriously research the service record of the Uncle whom I never knew but greatly admired, we decided as a family to visit his grave at Maubeuge. My Aunt, George's widow, who had previously visited, had mentioned that on an adjoining war grave headstone to my Uncle was one with a Welsh inscription. We sought this out - with incredible results. It was the grave of a 101 Squadron lad, Henry Eifon Clement, who died with his entire Lancaster crew in a crash just a few days prior to my Uncle, and a mere three miles away. But that was not all, Eifon was the uncle to my wife's best childhood friend and lived just a few miles away from my wife's family. And more remarkably, Eifon's family did not know of the whereabouts of his grave!

An astonishing discovery, but there was more.....

Resting adjacent to my Uncle, just a grave or two away, I discovered Wg Cdr Coventry and his fellow JD297 crew members. At that time I was totally unaware of the detail, significance and influence which brought Wg Cdr Coventry into my Uncles background. However, noting the grave details meant that on returning home and making further investigations I slowly began to unravel and piece together the astounding series of coincidences. I am totally bemused and dumfounded that of the immeasurable geographical area which Bomber Command operated, the Maubeuge cemetery is now the immediate, silent, resting place of those war time colleagues and a family friend.

Yes, the irony of fate!

The crew of Halifax JD297

Wg. Cdr Henry Reginald Coventry	Pilot	27
Flt Lt Fredrick Edward King	Nav	21
Sgt William Brown	W.Op	23
Sgt Walter Hardy	A/G	20
Flt Lt George Frank Hogg	A/G	33
Sgt Geoffrey Tristram Pine-Coffin	Eng	21
Fg Off Crosby Frank Read	B.	24

CREW OF 102 SQUADRON HALIFAX, JD297 DY-Q

Lost on 13th July 1943 whilst on operation raid to Aachen. Reportedly crashed near Maubeuge, and shot down by *Hptm* August Geiger, *St Kap 7/NJG 1* who claimed a Halifax at 0210hrs, 14 July 1943 near St Aaysles-Veneur.
(All crew members are buried at Maubeuge Cemetery, Row A, Graves 3 - 9)

HENRY REGINALD COVENTRY	Pilot	33133	Wing Commander	Age 27	RAF
Son of The Hon. T. G. Coventry and Alice Coventry, of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.					
FREDRICK EDWARD KING.	Nav.	119303	Flight Lieutenant	Age 21	RAFVR.
Son of Herbert Edward and Rose may King, of Willesden, Middlesex, England.					
WILLIAM HARDY.	A.G.	1738601	Sgt.	Age 20	RAFVR
Son of William Henry and Florence Hardy, of Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, England.					
WALTER BROWN.	W.Op	990520	Sgt.	Age 23	RAFVR.
Son of Leonard and Clara Brown; husband of Jean Brown of Gilesgate, Devon, England.					
GEORGE FRANK HOGG.	A.G.	76910	Fight Lieutenant	Age 33	RAFVR.
Son of Charles Thomas Hogg and Matilda Hogg; husband of Ellen May Hogg of Criccieth, Caernarvonshire, Wales.					
GEOF'ry TRISTRAM PINE-COFFIN.	Eng	568487	Sgt.	Age 21	RAF.
Son of William and Emily Pine-coffin; husband of Bridget Pine-Coffin of Chelsea, London, England.					
CROSBY FRANK READ.	B.	127125	Flying Officer	Age 24	RAFVR
Son of Crosby and Vera Read; husband of Beryl Read of Lower Clatford, Hampshire, England.					

374 aircraft - 214 Halifaxes, 76 Wellingtons, 55 Stirlings, 18 Lancasters, 11 Mosquitos ordered to Aachen. A strong tail wind brought the first waves of the Main Force into the target area before Zero Hour with the result that, when the first Pathfinder markers were released, an unusually large number of aircraft bombed in the first minutes of the raid. The visibility was good and large areas of Aachen appeared to burst into flame at once. In the words of the report from Aachen, 'A *Terrorangriff* [Terrorattack] of the most severe scale was delivered.' 20 aircraft - 15 Halifaxes, 2 Lancasters, 2 Wellingtons, 1 Stirling - lost, 5.3 per cent of the force.

W. H. Hyett

(Service and family details sourced from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Website)

11 March 2010

Website

John Saville has done an excellent job on the website and there are more articles being added as we go.

102ceylonsquadronassociation.org

Please continue to let us have your stories, your photos, your memories to develop this. Have a look and see what you think.



‘And when you come to 102
And think that you will get through
There’s many a fool who thought like you
It’s suicide but its fun.’

Anonymous 102 Squadron member, 1941.



© 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Association
© Squadron Badge reproduced by kind permission of Crown Copyright

Royal Air Force Pocklington Airfield

The home of 102 (Ceylon) Squadron RAF and 405 (Vancouver) Squadron RCAF No 4 Group Bomber Command during World War II from where so many gave their lives in the cause of freedom.

This memorial was raised by Old Comrades in gratitude to all those men and women who served in both squadrons in War and Peace