

# THE FLYING HULLS

&

# BOK'S CREW OF 1942



Stalag Luft III





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## INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Field Detectives began a historic landscape survey at Goadby Marwood, Leicestershire. Our initial remit was to understand more about the known Romano-British site already recorded there; 1946 was certainly not on the agenda at that particular stage of the investigation.

Part of the survey took place in one of the pasture fields known as 'Orbis Field', and we were informed by Charlie Iddeson, the farm manager of Goadby Hall farm, that we may come across some 'bits of aircraft' as a plane had crashed in the field in 1946, killing the pilot. Charlie had found part of the tailplane in the wood adjacent to the field in 2014; he added that they had no idea where the plane actually came down on the field and that no one locally knew any more about the accident other than he might have been a Canadian.

A mammoth research investigation began to determine the identity of the unfortunate pilot who had lost his life on Orbis Field, and after months of historical and genealogical research, we eventually discovered that he was indeed Wing Commander George Laurence Bazett Hull DFC. We were fortuitous enough to make contact with family members in both England and the USA, and with their help and support we were able to ensure that we could produce a full and sensitive account dedicated to the lives of Wing Commander Hull and his cousin Flight Lieutenant Caesar Barraud Hull DFC.

With all that we had learned, we were filled with emotion and the utmost respect for Laurence (as he was known) and Caesar, and felt compelled to create some form of remembrance installation at Goadby Marwood which could be placed close by, to honour the memory of the pilot and to erect a memorial plaque dedicated to Wg Cdr Hull set in woodlands by the side of Orbis Field.

We began to plan a Commemoration Day to take place on Friday 17th May 2019, which developed into a two-site commemoration; the first was in the morning at Oving, Buckinghamshire, where Wg Cdr Hull is buried in the churchyard of All Saints Church, his twin sister Joan's ashes are at the foot of his grave, and the second at Goadby Marwood, where he died 73 years ago to that very day, Friday 17th May 1946. A speech was written by Wg Cdr Hull's cousin Mr Caesar Bryan, who lives in New York, USA, and unfortunately, as Caesar was unable to be with us on the day, he asked if I could read it out for him at both sites. The RAF and Commonwealth War Graves Commission were also represented at both sites.

At Oving an RAF wreath was laid on Wg Cdr Hull's grave and representatives from Oving Parish Council, the Reverend Steve Flashman, and staff at the Black Boy made the morning a very special occasion, where refreshments were provided and the opportunity to reflect with local people who prior to this day were unaware as to who lay in the grave marked with a Commonwealth War Graves headstone.

At Goadby Marwood in the afternoon, Caesar Bryan's two sisters, Mary Lubin and Diana Vigors were present alongside representatives from the Royal British Legion, the Air Training Corps, the Reverend John Barr of St Denys Church and many more. Wreaths were laid before the memorial plaque and a hugely generous offer from Vicky & Harry Westropp, of Goadby Hall, created a memorial building in the gardens of Goadby Hall, providing a place where the tailplane section is mounted on the wall and four posters telling the story of Wg Cdr Hull.

All of this would never have happened without the dedication and tenacity of Dr Alan Stevens, our dear friend and mentor, who is sadly no longer with us and incredibly missed. He and I spent hours together almost buried under mountains of paper, until between us we were in a position to put it all together for posterity, and to ensure that the memory of these brave men who fought in WWII is never forgotten. The day was inspired and instigated by Alan's determination to do his best for Laurence and his family, and it was a great honour on the day to have both of his daughters Kate and Clare present. As the day came to a close and goodbyes followed a marvellous gathering at Goadby Marwood village hall, Diana, one of Laurence's cousins, suggested something along the lines of 'we really must do this again next year'.

There were no definite plans put in place to repeat the day in 2020, as it did feel on Friday 17th May 2019, that Laurence's story had been told, we had commemorated his memory, and ensured there was a permanent set of memorials in place at Goadby Marwood to keep Laurence's story alive.

But the story did not end there, The *Blenheim Society* featured an account of the commemoration day in their July 2019 journal (issue 94), which brought a family member of Laurence's 1942 Blenheim crew to light, Peter Baker, son of the Observer/Navigator, Wg Cdr Tom Baker DFC DFM. It soon became apparent that there was still 'another story' to tell and that our association with Laurence had not been concluded. We now had his 1942 crew to add to the story and the search began for information pertaining to Wireless Operator/Air Gunners, Flt Lt Julian Francis Lock 'Butch' Morton, and Flt Sgt Harold Robert Hibbs DFM.

What followed was a meeting with Peter Baker and his wife Lorna where we discussed the idea of reuniting the Bristol Blenheim Mk IV crew that crashed in Holland on 17th April 1942: Bok, Butch & Baker - Survivors of the Great Escape and The Long March. Peter kindly shared his father's papers which included Wg Cdr Tom Baker's POW log, 1942-1945, featuring 'The Diary of a Ranker, 1929-1945', detailing Tom's career in the RAF and his movements as a POW. A rich source of information relating to Stalag Luft III, photographs, sketches and cartoons, isometric diagram of a hut, a newspaper article showing the crashed Bristol Blenheim aircraft registration Z7430, and so much more. I spent hours transcribing the diaries which had been written with a pencil in very small handwriting. Peter was called upon to translate much of the RAF 'lingo' and a great deal of emotion was felt as the diary unfolded, the loss of life, many in training accidents, bringing to light the stark reality of the courage of these men who continued to fly mission after mission, having just lost friends and comrades.

The story takes us to Stalag Luft III through the diaries of Tom Baker, a small number of letters sent by Laurence to his mother and father back in South Africa, and a post war reflection captured by Julian Morton's family many years later.

Tom and Julian lived for a good many years after the war came to an end, but for Laurence, his flame of life was extinguished far too soon. And there is one more person that must not be forgotten in this story, Group Captain Derek Richard Biggs DFC.

Derek joined the RAF in 1935 at the same time as Laurence. They trained together and were posted together from 1935 to 1941, when they became close friends. Derek and his wife and two sons lived in Oving during and after WWII, and it was Derek who arranged for Laurence's burial at All Saints Church, Oving. The

family visited the grave every Sunday and laid flowers in front of a wooden cross they had made, as at that time there was no other marker.

The Crew of 1942 evoke a spirit of brotherhood, courage and valour; we honour and salute you gentlemen.

*Catherine Pincott-Allen & Richard Pincott*



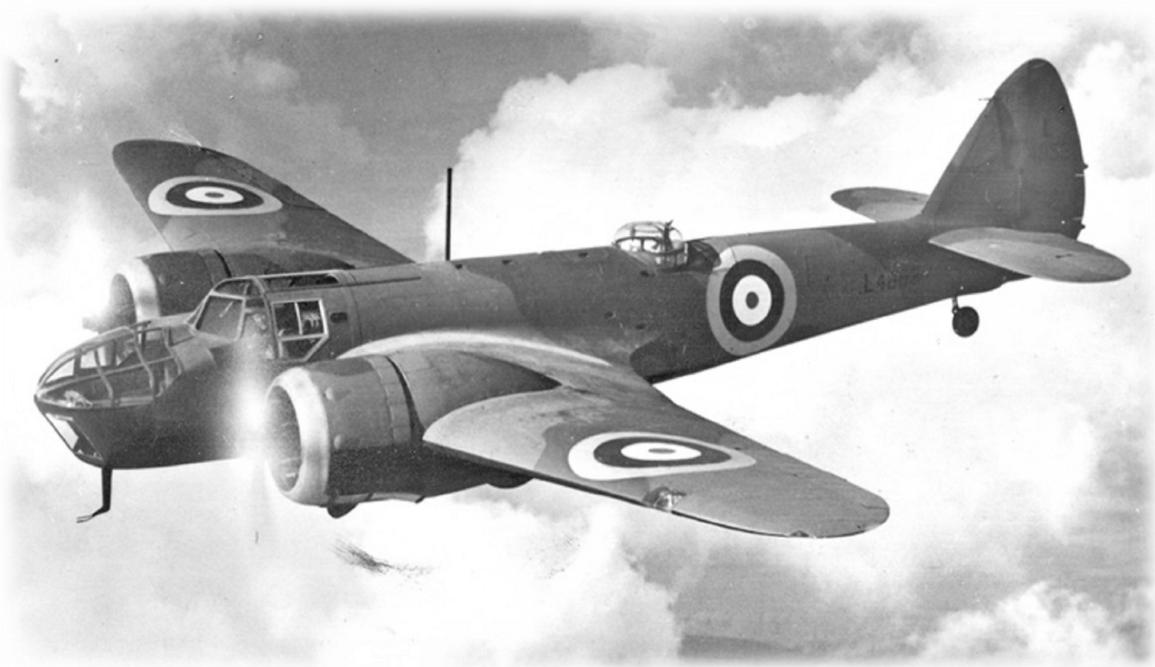
CHURCHYARD AT ALL SAINTS, OIVING, WHERE  
WING COMMANDER HULL IS BURIED



W/O RICHARD 'PEBS' PEBERDY LAYING A WREATH BY  
THE  
MEMORIAL PLAQUE

# THE FLYING HULLS

Revised Edition 2020



Compiled and Edited by Dr Alan Stevens (Field Detective)

and Catherine Pincott-Allen (Field Detective)

2019

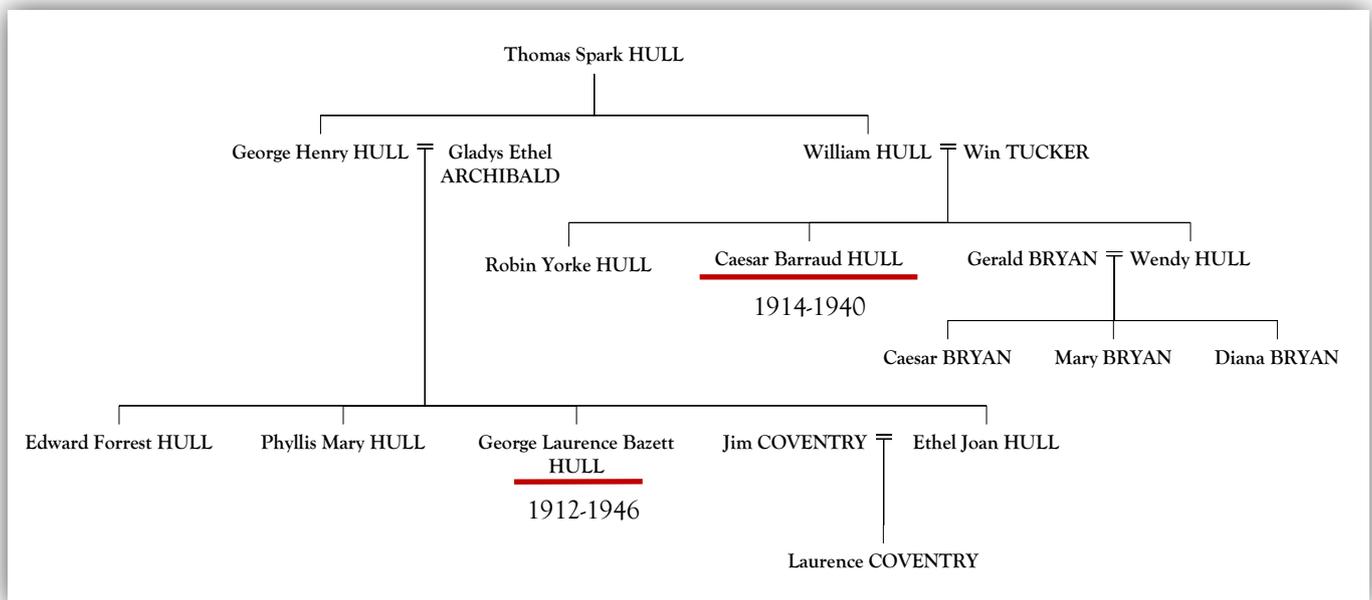
# THE FLYING HULLS

This is an account of two exceptional young men, who were first cousins, who served courageously and with distinction in the RAF in the Second World War. Both from South Africa, they came to England in 1935 to serve in the RAF. The information was obtained from many sources, including from members of the Hull family, RAF records, *The London Gazette*, and various books and websites dealing with the history of relevant RAF squadrons in WW2.

The two men are:-

**George Laurence Bazett HULL and Caesar Barraud HULL.**

## THE HULL FAMILY OF SOUTH AFRICA



## **GEORGE LAURENCE BAZETT HULL**

Service Number 37355



Known as Laurence, he was born on the 18th January 1912 at Kimberley in South Africa; he had a twin sister, Ethel Joan, and both were baptised on 5th February 1912. They were the children of George Henry Hull, a magistrate, and his wife Gladys Ethel (née Archibald). They had an older brother, Edward Forrest Hull (born 1905) and an older sister, Phyllis Mary (born 1908). Gladys Ethel died three weeks after the birth of her twins, and George married a second time to Eleanor (née Hadlow) with whom he had another daughter Eleanor.

Laurence was educated at the Diocesan College, Rondebosch, and later worked on the Rose Deep Mine in Germiston (a gold mine), along with his cousins Robin Yorke Hull and Caesar Barraud Hull. At the age of 23 he came to England by the ship *SS Winchester*

Castle from Natal, arriving at Southampton on 12th August 1935; he gave his occupation as 'miner', and his contact address as the Standard Bank of South Africa in London. He joined the RAF on the 7th October 1935. The *London Gazette* of 22nd October 1935 states: "The undermentioned are granted short service commissions as Acting Pilot Officers on probation with effect from and with seniority of 7th October 1935" - the list includes George Laurence Bazett Hull, together with another newcomer Derek Richard Biggs, who was to become a close personal friend and played an important part in Hull's life. On 19th October 1935 both Hull and Biggs were posted to No. 6 FTS (Flying Training School) at RAF Netheravon in Wiltshire.

## Early RAF career

After a period of training, 'Bok' (his RAF nickname) Hull was confirmed in the rank of Pilot Officer and transferred on 31st August 1936 to No. 101(B) Squadron (of No. 1 [B] Group) at RAF Bicester until 15th March 1937 when he transferred to No. 90 (B) Squadron. This squadron was re-formed at Bicester on that date from a flight of 101 Squadron, as a light bomber squadron, eventually equipping with Blenheim Mk 1 and then Blenheim Mk IV aircraft. In 1938 he was a Flying Officer, recommended for a permanent commission by No. 1 (B) Group, awarded in October 1939.

He remained with No. 90 Squadron until April 1940, and was promoted to Flight Lieutenant on 7th May 1940. In April 1940, No. 90 Squadron merged with No. 35 Squadron to form No. 17 OTU (Operational Training Unit), a unit formed to train light bomber crews using Bristol Blenheim aircraft. According to RAF records, Hull was with No. 17 OTU from April 1940 until July 1940, when he transferred to No. 107 Squadron at RAF Wattisham in Suffolk as Acting Squadron Leader. On 1st and 3rd November 1940, the Luftwaffe bombed RAF Wattisham, destroying barrack blocks, married quarters and a hangar. In his book *2 Group R.A.F. - A Complete History, 1936-1945*, Michael J.F. Bowyer describes the response - 'No. 107 Squadron was stung to anger by the cheek of the foe. On 5th November it held its celebrations at nine enemy airfields. At Ghent Sgt Ralston received a green to land, had the flare path lit and promptly bombed it. Flt. Lt. Warren found a bomber landing at Le Culot and peppered it. Sqn. Ldr. Hull's gunner fired at another going into Amiens, and everyone felt a little more easy'.

Apart from the above, we know little of what operations he was on, but he must have been busy (and effective), for in December 1940 he was awarded the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross). We are grateful to the Canadian military historian, Hugh Halliday, (via Julian Horn) for supplying us with the following citation :-



SQUADRON LEADER  
G.L.B. HULL DFC  
Buckingham Palace  
11th March 1941

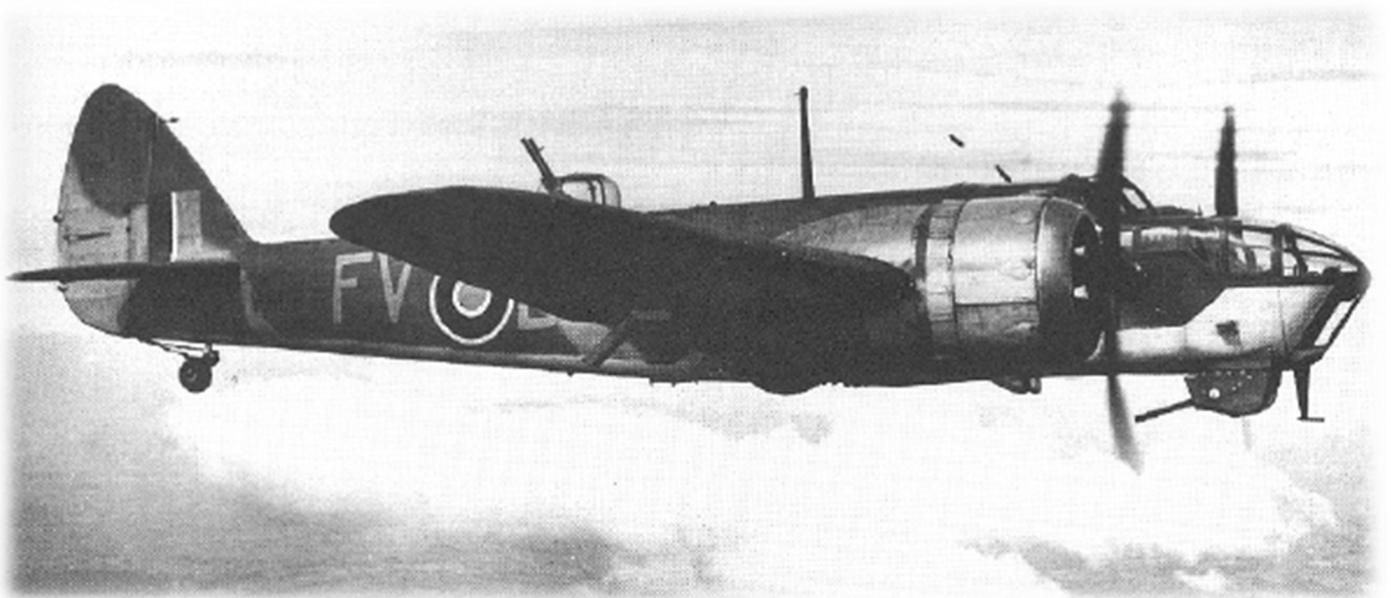
*'Squadron Leader Hull and Sergeants Baker and Hibbs have completed 26 operational sorties as pilot, observer and air gunner respectively. As a crew, they have at all times shown extreme devotion to duty, pressing home their attacks at a low level. They have developed a successful method of striking night targets by gliding approaches. This crew has set an excellent example to its squadron and has done much to maintain morale at a high level'*

*Hull was awarded the DFC, and Baker and Hibbs the DFM (Distinguished Flying Medal).*

The presentation by the King was held on 11th March 1941. The *Cape Times* reported:- Despite a cold east wind a crowd outside the palace gates was waiting to congratulate friends and relatives of those receiving medals. As soon as the first two recipients reached the gates, they were surrounded by press photographers. Squadron Leader Hull, caught in a battery of cameras, is a veteran of the Royal Air Force, having joined six years ago. With characteristic modesty, all he had to say about winning the DFC was that he got it "for long distance", in other words for long service'.

In April 1941, Hull was transferred to No. 114 Squadron as Acting Wing Commander, becoming Commanding Officer of the squadron. In July 1941, 114 Squadron participated in bombing attacks on Cherbourg harbour and the German ships docked there. In his history of 2 Group, Bowyer describes the raid, including "...114 Squadron led by Wg. Cdr. Hull facing a veritable barrage which damaged V5875's fin and elevator, and the wings of L8751 and V6391. L9382 flew home with hits in ten places".

Some time in July or August 1941, Hull had an unfortunate accident. According to his Commanding Officer and friend, Wing Commander T.G. Jefferson, "*Tales of Bok Hull's escapades in 2 Group are legendary. Perhaps the most memorable one is the time he was staying on the first floor of an Officers' Mess and decided in the night to climb out of his window and have a pee on the grass outside, thinking he was on the Ground Floor. He broke both legs in the fall, and was in plaster for 6 months*". According to Hull's nephew, Laurence Coventry (the son of his twin sister, Joan), this accident was due to his tendency to sleepwalk. Hull wrote to his parents on 13th August 1941 from hospital as follows "*I am in hospital which has temporarily robbed me of my squadron and put me off ops. It is a*



BRISTOL BLENHEIM MARK IV

Google Image

*sad blow, but my injury which was the result of a most stupid accident is not as disastrous as at first I was led to believe, and I am now up and about although still confined to the precincts of the hospital. All going well I hope to quit this place by the end of the month, but I have no idea where I will be going to. The A.O.C. promised over the phone to 'keep my squadron warm for me', and so I hope to return to West Raynham where I was very comfortable, but much depends on the progress I make. .... Only yesterday my squadron led the attack on Cologne, the biggest day attack yet by the RAF, and had I been there I would have led the formation. My worthy observer was in the leading aircraft and his accurate navigation was largely responsible for the success of the attack. They rang me up and told me all about it and were very cock-a-hoop. My squadron lost only one out of the 12 missing Blenheims. Before I 'retired hurt' I led three formations sweeps over France accompanied by our fighters. What a difference from last year when we had to go in unescorted. Now we only have the A.A to worry about and that, except for the unlucky shot, can be largely evaded. The fighters certainly give magnificent support."*

Hull is listed as Commanding Officer of 114 Squadron from April 1941 until August 1941, when he was replaced by Wg Cdr J.F.G. Jenkins (presumably following Hull's accident) until April 1942 when Hull returned as C.O after the death of Wg Cdr Jenkins on the 27th March 1942.

## **Crash and Imprisonment**

On his return to 114 squadron at RAF West Raynham, Hull resumed flying Blenheim Mk IVs on night raids, mainly on the transport infrastructure of the German forces in Occupied Europe. On one such raid, his plane was shot down and he was taken prisoner of war. The full crew were:- Wing Commander G.L.B. Hull DFC (pilot), Flight Lieutenant Thomas Herbert Baker DFC, DFM (navigator) and Pilot Officer J.F.L. Morton (wireless operator/air gunner).

**W.R. Chorley**, in his book "Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War: 1942 (Midland County Publications, 1998) describes the incident thus " - *Hull took off from West Raynham at 21.36 on 17th April 1942, in Blenheim Mk IV, Z7430 (RT:Q) for a night intruder attack on Schiphol Airport, Amsterdam; he was damaged by light flack and crash-landed at 23.22 at Aalsmeer, a small town just to the south of Schiphol*".

Hull later related further details to his fellow officer at RAF Cottesmore, **Wing Commander T.G Jefferson, DSO, AFC, AE**; *"He told me that the coup-de-grace was delivered by fighters-. He told me that after he was shot down, and crashed, an engine rolled over across his legs.\* The wretched Germans left him there until the next day, saying 'Oh we can't get a crane out tonight to move that engine'. They left him there until the next day. He then was taken to hospital, with his legs broken, obviously. He became a POW for the rest of the war."*

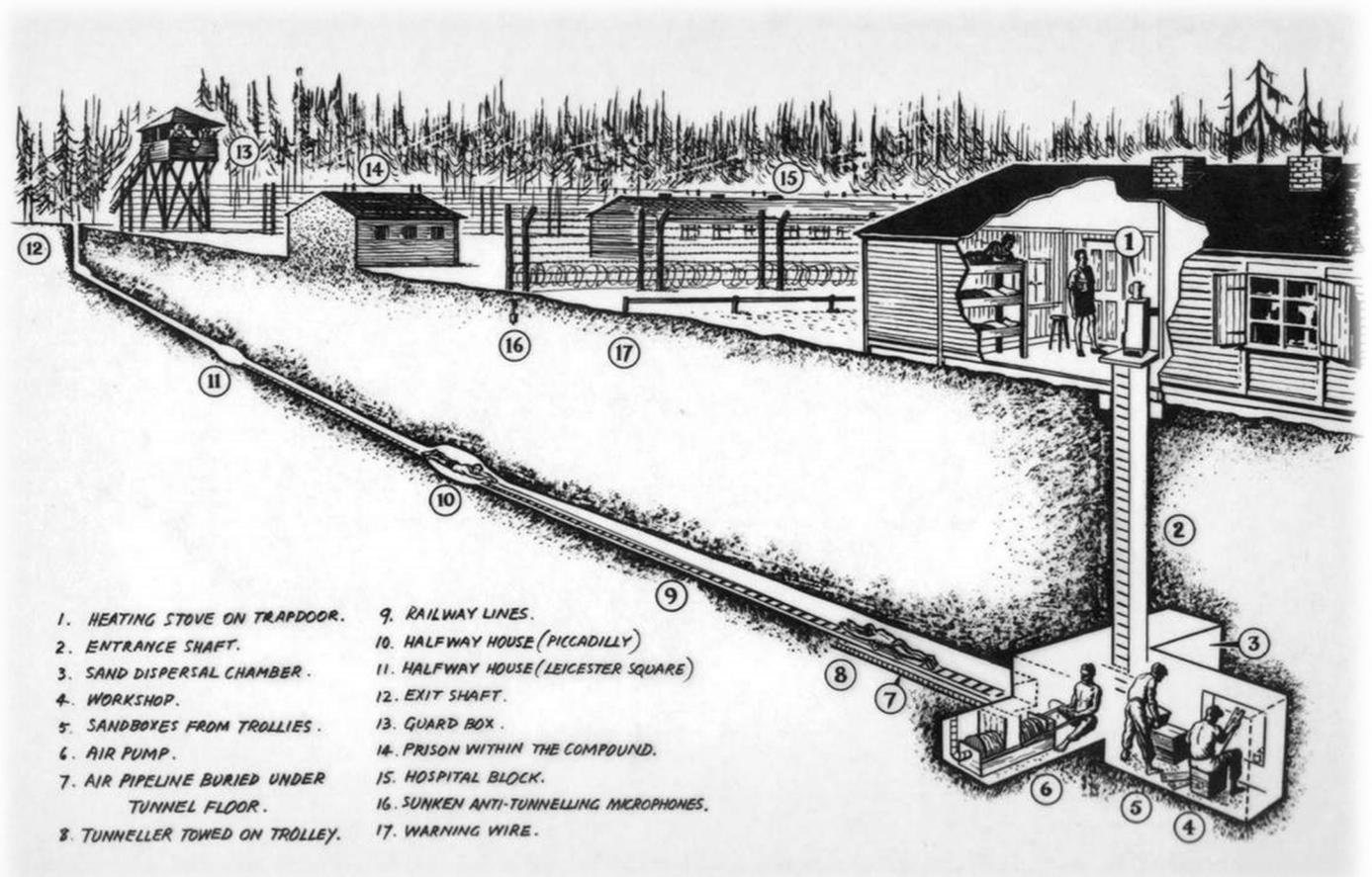
Initially, in 1942, he was at the Milag-Marlag Nord prisoner of war camp; this camp was designed to take prisoners from the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy. Hull was soon moved to Stalag Luft III, a camp at Sagan in Germany run by the Luftwaffe housing prisoners of war who were aircrew. This camp was famous for the so-called "great escape", described in detail in the book "The Great Escape" by Paul Brickhill, and later (less accurately, and with more poetic/dramatic licence) in the 1963 film, "The Great Escape" starring Steve McQueen and Richard Attenborough. Before this famous episode there were a number of escape attempts, one of which was a solo effort by Hull, described by Howard Tuck and Howard Grehan in their book 'Stalag Luft III: An Official History of the Great Escape POW Camp' :-

*\*According to Laurence Coventry, Hull's nephew, it was his chest the engine rolled on to*

"On 10th August, 1942, an attempt was made by 37355 W/Cdr G.L.B. Hull RAF. He wore a German-type white working jacket, leather belt with Luftwaffe buckle and Luftwaffe Field-Service cap, and had wire-cutters, money, maps and forged identity papers showing him to be a Dutch worker. These things were all produced by the Escape Departments. Wearing a RAF greatcoat to cover his disguise, he attended a Sick parade in the Vorlanger. On the return journey, during a pre-arranged diversion, he removed the greatcoat and walked towards a coal-shed looking like a German on fatigue duties. He hid in the coal-shed until midnight, then crawled to the perimeter fence camouflaged with a blanket. While he was cutting the wire the entanglement collapsed on top of him and attracted the attention of a patrolling guard, who arrested him".

Despite this personal setback, he continued to work towards escaping, and was a member of the select "Escape Committee", being responsible for Labour Organisation:- "The barrack representatives kept lists of volunteers for escape work ..... The barrack representatives gave the Labour Officer, Hull, the details of all volunteers, their preferences, qualifications, physical suitability etc. Hull kept a card index of every worker, and was expected to meet the demands of Heads of Department for extra staff. The card index was hidden among the records of the Education Section in the Compound Adjutant's Office".

In early 1943, an audacious escape plan was proposed whereby three tunnels would be dug (Tom, Dick and Harry) at the same time from different sites within the camp, with the ambitious aim of allowing 200 prisoners to escape. The details of the planning and digging of the tunnels are beyond the remit of this article, but are well covered in many books, including the Brickhill book mentioned previously.



PLAN OF TUNNEL HARRY

The escape began on the night of Friday 24th March 1944, and throughout the night 76 prisoners passed through tunnel Harry and escaped, but as the 77th was emerging he was detected by a guard. Hull drew a high number in the draw and was unable to escape, returning safely to his barracks when it became apparent that the escape was detected. Of the 76 escapees, 73 were recaptured and only 3 made a getaway. Hitler ordered the execution of 50 of the recaptured escapees, against the Geneva Convention.

For his activities in Stalag Luft III, Wing Commander Hull was one of 28 prisoners of war recommended for a "Mention in Despatches" by the S.B.O. (Senior British Officer) in the camp "on account of their continuous and persistent attempts to escape and also for the valuable assistance which they rendered to other escapers in the camp. Their example was a source of inspiration to their fellow prisoners and largely to their efforts can be attributed the high morale of all ranks at STALAG LUFT III. Their efforts materially assisted the SBO in running the camp successfully, and they were a constant thorn in the side of the German camp staff".

Appendix B.

Recommendations for those officers whose services it is considered deserve a "Mention in Despatches" (These recommendations are arranged in order of priority.)

R.A.F. PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

STALAG LUFT III

The following list of officers from STALAG LUFT III are recommended for a "mention in despatches" on account of their continuous and persistent attempts at escape and also for the valuable assistance which they rendered to other escapers in the camp. Their example was a source of inspiration to their fellow prisoners and largely to their efforts can be attributed the high morale of all ranks at STALAG LUFT III. Their efforts materially assisted the S.B.O. in running the camp successfully, and they were a continual thorn in the side of the German Camp Staff.

1. ✓ F/Lt. B. A. JAMES	42232	
2. ✓ F/Lt. S. H. DOWSE	86685	
3. ✓ F/Lt. I. M. MUIR	42255	
4. ✓ F/Lt. J. W. STEPHENS	40028	
5. ✓ F/Lt. I.A.McINTOSH	40631	
6. ✓ F/Lt. M.M.MARSH	77361	
7. ✓ F/Lt. C.C.CHESHIRE	87635	
8. ✓ F/Lt. D.H.PINCHBECK	70902	
9. ✓ F/Lt. C.D.NOBLE	J15080	R.C.A.F.
10. ✓ F/Lt. A.R.MULLICAN	40058	
11. ✓ F/Lt. H.D.NEWMAN	36271	
12. ✓ Lt. D.G. POYNTER		R.N.
13. ✓ F/Lt. C.C.CORNISH	43282	
14. ✓ Major J.B.DODGE		British Army
15. ✓ F/Lt. T.F.GUEST	42985	
16. ✓ F/Lt. H.W.LAMOND	36174	
17. ✓ F/Lt. R. EDGE.	66002	
18. ✓ F/Lt. L.J.E.GOLDFINCH	60286	
19. ✓ F/Lt. J.W.BEST	89772	
20. ✓ W/Cdr. G.L.B.HULL	37355	
21. ✓ Lt. W.F.MORGAN	40227	S.A.A.F.
22. ✓ F/Lt. G.R.HARSH	J.7795	R.C.A.F.
23. ✓ F/Lt. A.B. GOLDIE	41281	
24. ✓ F/Lt. A. CASSIE	107280	
25. ✓ F/Lt. V. PARKER	42356 ?	
26. ✓ F/Lt. J.S.WALTERS	69463	
27. ✓ S/Ldr. LAMASSON P.T.	402460	N.Z.
28. ✓ Major DAVID JONES		U.S.A.A.F.

(Signed) R. KELLETT,  
/Group Captain/

FROM PRISONERS  
OF WAR 1715-1945  
findmypast

In July 1944 Hitler issued an order that prisoners of war in the eastern areas of German-occupied territory should be moved to various camps further west in Germany. The reason for this was that the Russian forces were gaining the upper hand and were advancing rapidly through German-occupied territory in the east. His motive for ordering this transfer was the cause of many rumours, including that he intended to use the prisoners as a bargaining counter in negotiating a peace with the Allies, or that they were to be transferred to concentration camps where they would be killed. The movement of prisoners began in the later months of 1944, and continued until April 1945. Towards the end of the war, the transport and organisational infrastructure of Germany were severely compromised, so transport by train or road was increasingly difficult, and many prisoners of war were forced to walk vast distances in appalling weather conditions.

*A harrowing account of a prisoner of war on the march from Stalag Luft III Sagan can be found at:*

<https://www.aircrew.org.uk/surrey/aircrew-stories/goto-hookings-subsite.htm>

The forced evacuation of Stalag Luft III at Sagan began on 27th January 1945, by which time the Soviet troops were only 16 miles away to the east. Over 10,000 prisoners of war were marched out of the camp, they went out on foot in staggered groups of 2,000 men throughout the night, the line was 20 miles long. The conditions were atrocious, it being one of the hardest winters in eastern Europe in the decade; the temperatures were well below freezing and the snow was very deep. One of the prisoners who experienced it said *"It was called the Long March but it was more of a long shuffle because the snow was about a foot deep"*.

Their initial destination was the town of Spremberg. After a 34 km "march" passing through Halbau \*(Iłowa), Freidwaldau (Gozdnica), Leippe (Lipna), and Priebus (Przewóz), the prisoners arrived in Bad Muskau (Mużaków ) where they rested for 30 hours before marching the remaining 16 km to Spremberg. At Spremberg, the prisoners from Stalag Luft III were split up into three groups, according to which compound they occupied in Stalag Luft III:-

**South compound** (mainly USA prisoners), and some from **Centre compound**, were transferred by train in cattle trucks to Stalag VII-A at Moosburg. However, as US forces approached Stalag XIII-D, the prisoners were moved from there to VII-A on 20th April. US forces relieved the camp at Moosberg shortly after April 29th.

**West compound** prisoners were transferred by train in cattle trucks to Nuremberg XIIIID.

It is assumed that Hull was in the group from **North compound**, as that was where most of the British airmen were quartered, and was the block from where the successful tunnel in the "Great Escape" originated, and we know that Hull was deeply involved in the organisation of that escape. They had the longest and most traumatic trek.

**North compound** (mainly UK and British Empire airmen) were told on arrival at Spremberg at 2pm that they would be moved to the POW camp at Marlag und Milag Nord, which was about 500 kms away in northern Germany. At 4.30pm they were crowded into cattle trucks and began a slow three-day journey across war-torn Germany, arriving at Tarmstedt railway station near to the Marlag und Milag camp at 5pm on 4th February, then had to march 3 kms to the camp. On 9th April, with the Allied forces only a few

kilometres away in Bremen, the prisoners were told they were to move again. On this march the column was accidentally strafed by an RAF plane, and it was agreed that the rest of the march would take place only at night. Finally, after a march of over 193 kms they arrived at the village of Hamberge where they spent five days before moving on to the town of Trenthorst. On 2nd May 1945 the village was liberated by Allied forces. "At 2pm a British armoured car of the Cheshire Regiment swept into the village and told us that we were free".

The prisoners were gradually moved back through West Germany by lorries to Rheine airport where they flew to England on 9th May.

After his repatriation, Hull spent some time (from 11th May to some time in August or September) at No. 106 P.R.C. (Personnel Reception Centre) Area 24 for rehabilitation after his years of imprisonment and hardship (106 P.R.C. was based at RAF Cosford). In September he was fortunate to get a flight to South Africa to visit family and friends, returning to England at the end of October 1945.

Further march of 193 km to Trenthorst  
 Marlag und Milag Nord  
 Spremberg to Tarmstedt by cattle truck about 500 km



MAP OF ROUTE

German = Polish

Halbau = Iłowa  
 Freidwaldau = Gozdnicza  
 Lieppe = Lipna  
 Priebus = Przewóz  
 Bad Muskau = Mużaków

## The final fatal crash

In January 1946 Bok was made Wing Commander with seniority from 1st September 1942, and on 2nd April 1946 he was attached to No. 16 OTU at RAF Cottesmore in Rutland. 16 OTU was a Mosquito Training Unit, and he began flying Mosquitoes. After only about six weeks there, he lost his life in a fatal flying accident.

The most detailed and intimate account of the incident is given by **Wing Commander T.G. Jefferson**, his Commanding Officer and friend at Cottesmore:-

*'On a beautiful cloudless, clear night with a bright moon - well after the war, no dangers about 17th May 1946, we'd got just a few Mosquitos, taking off and going to a bombing range, and "Happy" Hull was doing some circuits and bumps. He took off, two or three times, went round, and just flew around the aerodrome. By this time, it was all lit up with lead-in lights and everything - really fancy conditions. He was up there, and I remember very well, there was an aircraft called Y-Yoke who called up, saying he was on his way back from the Bombing Range. "Happy" Hull called up and said, "Well, I'm only sitting up here passing time - let Y-Yoke in first". He continued to stooge around the circuit, while Y-Yoke came in and landed. Then we called Hull up to land, and we couldn't raise him at all. In the end, I got nearly all the aerodromes in the country to switch on their lights, but there was no sign of him - we just couldn't get him. Some hours later, I think it was the Local Defence people said, we think there is some wreckage of a plane, near Melton Mowbray, I think it was the lovely village of Goadby Marwood, some six miles north of Melton Mowbray. I said, right, I'll come out. So I got the position of where it was and went out there, and there was poor old Hull, spread out on a field, and the Mosquito a wreck. What had happened was, a con-rod had gone, and come through the sump. When that happens, and you've got 2-stage superchargers, the pressure in the engine of compressed fuel vapour is so great that the whole lot goes up with a great big bang. So it just doesn't knock and rattle when it stops, because if it did you could have landed on one engine, but the whole thing, the engine, just disintegrated. Poor "Happy" Hull - I can see him there now. I went up and said, "Well, we've got a Wing Commander missing"; and they moved the covers back, so I could have a look at him. He'd got all his medal ribbons on, and badges of rank. I looked at him and said, "that's right, that's him - look after him and bring him back to Cottesmore". Poor old chap - that's a nasty thing to happen, isn't it? After all he had gone through during the war'.*

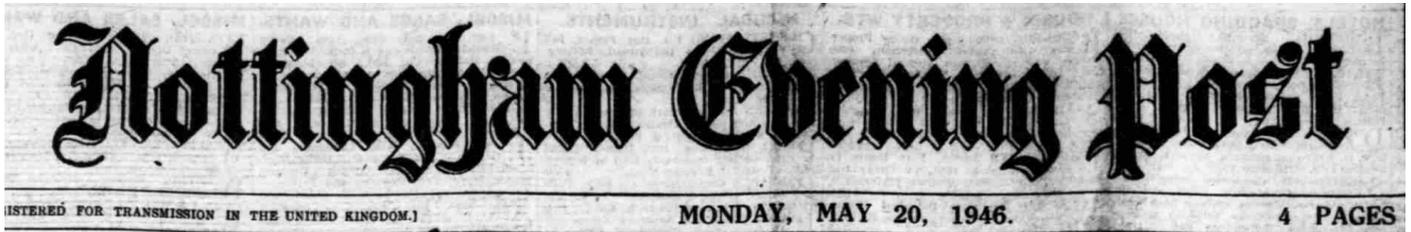
The official record of this crash may be found in Colin Cummings' book - "Final Landings: A summary of RAF Accidents and Combat losses 1946-1949" (Nimbus Publishing, 2001). "It was the starboard engine that had failed at 1,000 feet circuit height and the pilot attempted a forced landing. On the approach, the aircraft struck trees, breaking the tailplane and the aircraft then hit high ground and disintegrated. 'Bok' was aged 34 and was the only casualty. In summary then, the exploding engine made the Mosquito virtually unflyable, with 'Bok' desperately trying to do a forced landing at night, with no time to transmit a Mayday call."

A Coroner's Inquest was held on 20th May 1946; the verdict was: *Multiple injuries caused by the crashing of an aeroplane of which deceased was the pilot. Accident.*

Wing Commander Hull was buried in the churchyard of All Saints Church in Oving, Buckinghamshire, his burial there was arranged by his close friend Group Captain Derek Richard Biggs DFC, who lived in Oving,

and with whom Hull started his career. They were in the same squadrons for much of the early part of the war. The remains of Bok's twin sister Joan Coventry lay at the foot of his grave. It is tragic that a brave man who risked his life so many times in flying operations over enemy territory, and suffered immense hardship as a prisoner of war, should perish in a flying accident in peacetime.

A brief account of the crash appeared in the *Nottingham Evening Post* of Monday 20th May 1946.



**FLASH IN THE SKY**  
**R.A.F. Officer's Fatal Crash**

It was stated at an inquest at Melton to-day on Wing-Comdr. George L. Bazett Hull, D.F.C., who was killed when his plane crashed at Goadby Marwood, near Melton, on Friday night, that Lord Daresbury was the first on the scene and saw the pilot lying dead between the wreckage.

A verdict of "Accidental death from multiple injuries," was recorded.

Wing-Comdr. Hull, who was flying solo in a Mosquito from Cottesmore aerodrome, was a South African who had served throughout the war.

Wing-Comdr. Jefferson told the Coroner (Mr. A. P. Marsh) that Hull was a very experienced pilot, who was converting on to Mosquitoes.

On Friday he had already flown with an instructor. He then did three solo landings, and then took off for the fourth time at 10.42 p.m. Shortly afterwards he was spoken to and replied that everything was all right.

**THE LAST CALL.**

About 10.55 the R.A.F. station saw a light in the sky in the direction of Melton, and a voice on the radio telephone came out "Cottesmore." Then there was silence. At 11.25 it was reported that a Mosquito had crashed at Goadby Marwood.

W/O Dixon, in charge of inspection at Cottesmore, said he had made some preliminary tests but could not yet state the cause of the crash.

Capt. Gerald Desmond Simpson, of Waltham, said he saw the aircraft overhead and heard the engines cut out. He watched it circle and lose height. Then there was a flash in the sky. As soon as this happened he and Lord Daresbury went to the scene and found wreckage burning. They searched for survivors and saw the officer between two parts of the wreckage. He was dead. His parachute was lying on the ground open.

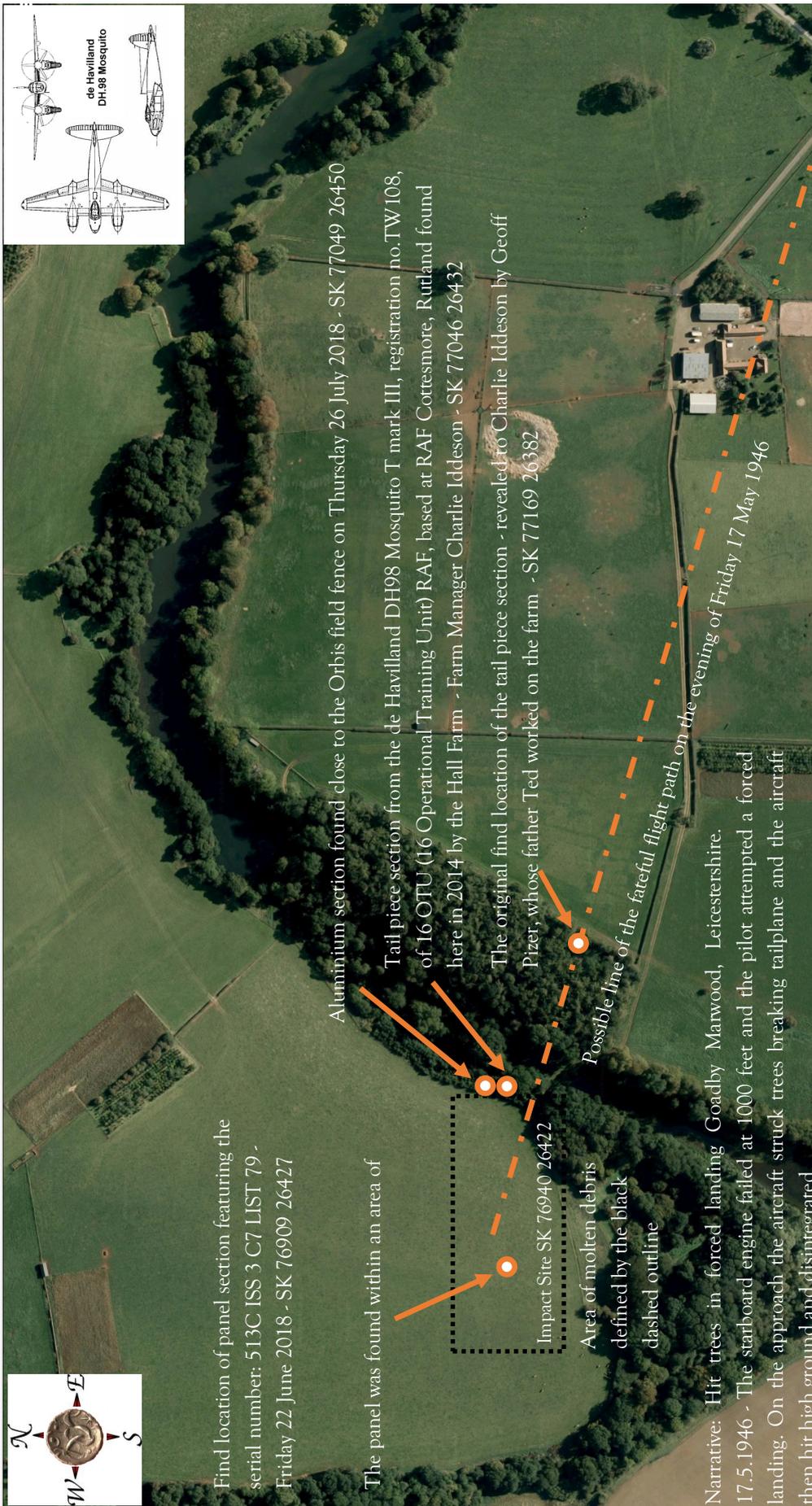


DE HAVILLAND DH98 MOSQUITO T MARK III

Google image

# THE FATAL CRASH SITE

(ALSO SEE APPENDIX I)



Crash Site  
SK76940 26422

Goadby Hall Grounds,  
Goadby Marwood,  
Leicestershire

Goadby Hall  
LE14 4LN

## Memorials

To our knowledge, apart from his well-maintained gravestone in Oving churchyard, there had been no memorial to Laurence Hull. All that changed when a memorial was erected comprising of a steel plaque set on an oak pillar, at the site of his fatal crash at Goadby Marwood, Leicestershire on 17th May 1946, the 73rd anniversary of his death. This was made possible with the generous permission of the landowner and the RAF. There is also a memorial building in the gardens of Goadby Hall, housing posters that tell the story of this courageous man.



THE DISTINGUISHED  
FLYING CROSS  
*Google image*



THE GRAVESTONES OF LAURENCE & HIS SISTER JOAN  
HAVE BEEN PLACED ADJACENT TO EACH OTHER IN THE  
GRAVEYARD OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH, OVING,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

## CAESAR BARRAUD HULL

Service Number 37285



Caesar Barraud Hull was born on 23rd February 1914, the second son of William ("Billy") Hull and his wife, Win (née Tucker). William (born 1881) was the youngest brother of George Henry Hull (born 1875) who was the father of George Laurence Bazett Hull (see above). Laurence and Caesar were therefore first cousins.

Caesar had an older brother, Robin Yorke Hull, who was in the army, and was killed in action on 1st January 1942 on the first day of the South African forces successful attempt to retake Bardia, an important port and fortress in Libya, North Africa. He was a lieutenant in the 1st Unit of the Rand Light Infantry. He had a younger sister, Wendy, who married Gerald Bryan, and had three children including a son who was named after Caesar.

William was a farmer, and at the time of Caesar's birth had a farm called Leachdale farm, in Shangani, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In 1918 the family was farming at Nylstroom in the Transvaal, South Africa, moving to Voeglestruiskvaal, near Rustenberg in 1922. Caesar and his older brother were initially educated at home by their parents; they were taught Latin, maths, French, history, English literature and many other subjects, so had a very broad education. When Robin was 16 and Caesar 13 in 1927 they were sent to St. John's College in Johannesburg. According to a master there Caesar was full of vigour and high spirits, and talented, but never took his work seriously.

Nevertheless he matriculated in 1931, and became a school prefect. He was a fine miniature rifle shot, and was probably the best shot in the school team, but it was in the boxing ring that he made a name for himself. He became school boxing champion, and held the title for three years.

After leaving school, he worked for a while on the family farm, but eventually began work at the Rose Deep gold mine at Gemiston, along with his older brother and his cousin George Laurence Hull. He continued with his boxing, and in 1934 he was selected for the Springbok team to box in the British Empire Games at Wembley in London. After his return, he applied to join the South African Air Force and attended a cadet training course, but on completion of the course he was refused admission to the South African Air Force because he did not speak Afrikaans. He therefore applied to the RAF in 1935 and came to England by the ship *Kenilworth Castle* from Port Natal, arriving at Southampton on 1st July 1935; he gave his occupation as miner and his proposed address was Castledine, Pilgrims Way Guildford, with relatives from the Tucker family.



### Early RAF career

Caesar was posted to No. 3 FTS at RAF Spitalgate near Grantham on 28th September 1935 for training and was made Acting Pilot Officer with effect from 16th September 1935. On completion was posted to No. 43 Squadron at RAF Tangmere on 5th August 1936 as a Pilot Officer. No. 43 Squadron was highly regarded,

and renowned for precision formation flying and exceptional aerobatic skills. Bill Musgrave, in the 2004 Annual Magazine of The Battle of Britain Historical Society, writes *"From the time he joined, no-one in the squadron could stand comparison with Caesar Hull, and the story of 43 Squadron while he was there cannot be told without his name coming to the fore time and time again. Much has been written of his outstanding qualities, the man of the crinkly hair and the croaky voice, the laughing warrior who possessed the magic power of creating happiness in others and inspiring them with confidence, the man who did not know what meanness meant, nor weakness, but was tolerant of both faults in others — a phenomenal pilot, bold in the air, and a cracking good shot, a great leader completely unconscious of the qualities that made him so, and because of whom the exceptional standards of morale, the high standards of flying, and a true bond of affection were achieved between all men of the squadron, from which 43 Squadron prospered so much"*.

Caesar immediately became involved in the aerobatic displays for which the squadron was renowned and performed in aerobatic displays at Hendon and other places. The most notable aerobatics display was that put on at Hendon to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI in 1937; one component was the individual aerobatics display which was open to the whole of Fighter Command from whom candidates were put forward from virtually every squadron. After a long series of elimination contests, Caesar Hull was the winner, and performed on the day in front of a crowd estimated at 250,000. In 1937, he was joined in No. 43 Squadron by Peter Townsend, who later went on to achieve fame as a highly successful and decorated Battle of Britain fighter pilot, eventually becoming Equerry to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. He was later famous for his ill-fated romance with Princess Margaret. Hull and Townsend were colleagues and friends throughout their time together in No. 43 Squadron.



PETER TOWNSEND (left) AND CAESAR HULL (right)

*Google Image*

At this time the squadron was equipped with the Hawker Fury biplane which was fine for aerobatic displays, but as the threat of war loomed in 1938, Fighter Command realised that their large stock of biplanes (660 out of a total of 750 belonging to Fighter Command) were slower and less well-armed than the Luftwaffe's stock of Heinkels, Dorniers and Messerschmitts. The Air Ministry decided the top priority was to supply Fighter Command with planes which could compete with the German planes. Thus, No. 43 and other fighter squadrons were equipped with Hurricanes, Spitfires and Fairey Battles throughout late 1938 and 1939. No. 43 Squadron was given the Hurricane, which was 50% faster than the Hawker Fury, and considerably better armed. Hull was promoted to Flying Officer with effect from 16th April 1938, and Acting Flight Lieutenant on 2nd March 1939.



HAWKER FURY BIPLANE



HAWKER HURRICANE

## War career

In the early months of the war, No. 43 Squadron were given the responsibility of protecting British shipping off the east coast from German air attack. The squadron was therefore relocated to Acklington near Newcastle, in November 1939. There was little enemy air activity for some time because of weather conditions, but on the afternoon of 30th January 1940 a convoy was attacked. Caesar Hull and Sgt Carey intercepted a Heinkel He III bomber which was shot down by Hull; this was No. 43 Squadron's first "kill" of the war. The crew of five from the Heinkel were rescued from the sea by one of the boats they had been trying to destroy. On 3rd February, a section of No. 43 Squadron led by Peter Townsend intercepted a Heinkel He III attacking a ship off the coast at Whitby, and brought it down so that it crash-landed in a field; this was the first enemy aircraft to be brought down on English soil in the war. Three other Heinkels were damaged or destroyed by No. 43 Squadron, one by Hull. Two further Heinkels were destroyed by the squadron, on 9th and 22nd of February.

On 26th February the squadron was moved to Wick to join Nos. 111 and 605 Squadrons to protect the British fleet in Scapa Flow. They saw little action as the Luftwaffe reduced their activity. However on 28th March, Hull, together with a Hurricane from No. 605 Squadron, shot down a Heinkel eight miles off Wick. The lack of Luftwaffe activity at this time was possibly related to the impending German invasion of Norway which began on 8th April. On the same day a number of German bombers headed towards Scapa Flow, and No. 43 Squadron scrambled to engage them, and destroyed four. Two days later, a lone German raider was shot down into the sea near Ronaldsway. Hull was promoted to Flight Lieutenant on 16th April 1940. On

the 9th May a Dornier Do 17 was destroyed by a Hurricane from No. 43 Squadron, bringing the total of German planes destroyed by No. 43 Squadron to 13.

On 31st May, No. 43 Squadron returned to Tangmere, and there followed a re-allocation of resources to cover losses of men and planes. Peter Townsend, who had been with Hull in No. 43 Squadron throughout, was transferred to No. 85 Squadron as Commanding Officer, and Hull was moved to No. 263 Squadron as Flight Commander. The squadron was required to go to Norway to fight the Luftwaffe and to protect British troops retreating towards Narvik as the overwhelming German land forces pressed through Norway. Unfortunately, No. 263 Squadron was only equipped with the Gloster Gladiator, a biplane which was already considered obsolescent by the start of the war, a sad comedown for a pilot who had been used to the much faster, better armed, and more manoeuvrable Hurricane.



GLOSTER GLADIATOR BIPLANE

The Gladiators and their crews were transported to Norway on aircraft carrier HMS *Furious* in the third week of May 1940. The first three planes to leave the carrier (a Fleet Air Arm Swordfish and two Gladiators) crashed into a mountain in thick mist due to a navigation error; the remaining Gladiators, including Hull's, successfully left the carrier and landed at Bardufoss. Only sixteen of the original eighteen Gladiators remained. On 24th May, two Gladiators, one piloted by Hull, shot down a Heinkel He 111 which had strayed near Bardufoss.

On 26th May, three Gladiators (flown by Flt Lt Hull, Plt Off Jack Falkson and Lt A. Lydekker of R.N. Fleet Air Arm) were detached to Bodø further south to provide cover for British troops moving northwards as the German troops advanced. Unfortunately the airstrip there was covered in mud, and the aircraft had to be moved to drier ground manually. As they were refuelling from 4-gallon cans, a Heinkel He 111 flew overhead. The pilots rushed to take off, but only one was successful as the other two were hampered by mud on the wheels; unfortunately the plane that got off had not had time to fully refuel so he was ordered back to take on more fuel. Fortunately, Hull managed to get into the air and caught up with the Heinkel and shot it down; it crash-landed at Mo and the crew were rescued by German ground troops. Hull then spotted a Junkers Ju 52 which he also shot down, followed by two further Junkers which he shot at, causing them to catch fire; one flew back behind German lines and successfully landed, but some of the crew of the other plane bailed out before it crashed to the ground, killing eight paratroops. Hull then encountered another Heinkel which he chased and shot at, leaving smoke pouring from it. In one short period Hull had destroyed four enemy aircraft and damaged another, a considerable achievement in an obsolete aircraft, and a measure of his considerable skill as a pilot.

The three Gladiator pilots based at Bodø took turns patrolling the Rognan area to cover the evacuation of 2000 British and Norwegian troops. On the morning of 27th May, eleven Junker Ju 87s and three Messerschmitt Bf 110s attacked the Bodø airfield. Hull and another pilot took off immediately, and Hull downed one of the Junkers. However he was attacked from behind by a Messerschmitt, badly damaging his Gladiator, and he tried to make his way back to the airfield. However, before he could land, the German plane attacked again, forcing Hull to crash-land short of the airstrip. Hull was injured in the head and knee, and was evacuated back to England in a Sunderland flying boat for hospital treatment. His early departure from Norway was in some ways fortunate, as at the end of May the Allied forces in Norway, including planes and pilots, were preparing to evacuate via Narvik, and two convoys of ships were sent to collect them, including three aircraft carriers. The planes and pilots of No. 263 Squadron landed on the carrier HMS *Glorious*, as well as aircraft and men from other RAF Squadrons and the Fleet Air Arm. For some reason, HMS *Glorious* decided to leave before the main convoy and set off for Scapa Flow accompanied by only two escorting destroyers. Unfortunately they were found on 8th June by two German battle cruisers, *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, who opened fire. All three Royal Navy vessels were sunk, with the loss of 1519 lives, including 26 pilots; all the aircraft on board the *Glorious* were lost, including 13 Gladiators and 10 Hurricanes. Had he not been previously injured, Hull would also have been on board HMS *Glorious*.

Whilst Hull was being treated for his injuries in England he received a telegram from the Air Ministry on 17th June informing him that he had been awarded the DFC. The citation in the *London Gazette* states:

*"After having shot down an enemy aircraft one day in May 1940, this officer, two days later, relieved the Bodø force from air attack by engaging five enemy aircraft single-handed. He shot down four of the enemy aircraft and damaged the fifth. The next day, despite heavy air attack on the landing ground, he attacked enemy aircraft in greatly superior numbers until he was wounded and forced to retire".* Some time later he was "Mentioned in Dispatches".

He was declared fit to resume operational duties and returned to No. 43 Squadron at Tangmere at the end of August 1940. It was a critical time, as the Luftwaffe were concentrating their attacks on airfield installations and aircraft. Tangmere was among the many airfields which sustained severe losses of planes and pilots, and No. 43 Squadron lost its Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Badger on 30th August. Caesar Hull was promoted to take over command of No. 43 Squadron. On the second day of his command, the Luftwaffe continued to attack, and No. 43 Squadron lost three Hurricanes in aerial combat, but shot down two Messerschmitt Bf 109s. On 4th September another big aerial combat took place when Hull led his unit, with other Fighter Command squadrons, into battle against a large formation of Messerschmitt Bf 110s over the Sussex coast. The Fighter Command squadrons largely destroyed the German planes, with No. 43 Squadron shooting down eight Messerschmitts (of which Hull got two) with only one of their Hurricanes being damaged.

Further German attacks on the airfields occurred on 6th September. During the morning, twelve planes of No. 43 Squadron, led by Hull, engaged Luftwaffe formations between Mayfield and Dungeness. In the ensuing dogfights, the squadron downed five Messerschmitt Bf 109s and one Messerschmitt Bf 110; one Junkers Ju 88 and two Messerschmitt Bf 109s were badly damaged. Only one Hurricane was damaged.

## His last operation

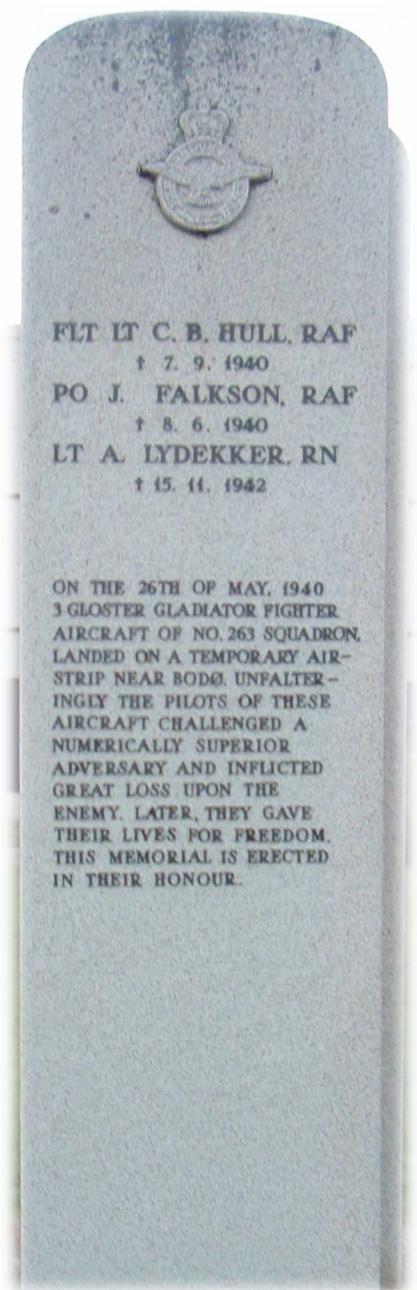
On Sunday 7th September 1940, radar detected a massive German force crossing the channel. It soon became apparent that the Luftwaffe had changed its tactics and, instead of aiming to attack airfields in the south of England, were heading straight for London for a massive bombing raid. It was estimated that there were 350 bombers and over 600 fighters in the formation, in two waves. No. 43 Squadron, comprising nine aircraft, led by Caesar Hull, attacked a group of 25 Dornier bombers, although they were aware that there was a ring of German fighters accompanying the bombers. It is unclear what happened in the melee, but Hull shot down two of the Dorniers, then went to the aid of an Australian pilot, Dick Reynell, who was being attacked by Messerschmitt fighters. It was a hopeless situation as Hull had used up all his ammunition in downing the two Dorniers, and both he and Reynell were shot down and killed. Caesar was found dead by his aircraft. He had been killed by a German bullet, and his aircraft had crashed in the grounds of a boys' school in Purley, Kent. He was buried at Tangmere.

## Memorials

To our knowledge there are three memorials to Caesar Hull :-

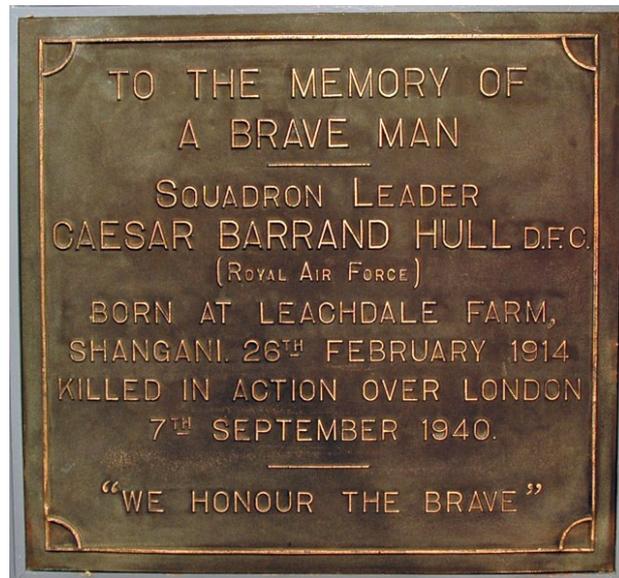
The **Bodø** memorial is situated on the Bodø airfield. It was erected there in 1977, and was officially unveiled on 17th June 1977 in the presence of the Norwegian Minister of Defence, other dignitaries and British guests. It is dedicated to the three pilots who flew to Bodø in Gloster Gladiators to provide air support and to cover the evacuation of British and Norwegian troops from Narvik. The pilots were Flight Lieutenant Hull, Pilot Officer Falkson and Lieutenant Lydekker. The Dedication on the memorial reads:

*On the 26th of May, 1940 3 Gloster Gladiator fighter aircraft of No. 263 Squadron landed on a temporary air-strip near Bodø. Unflinchingly the pilots of these aircraft challenged a numerically superior adversary and inflicted great loss upon the enemy. Later, they gave their lives for freedom. This memorial is erected in their honour.*



Google Image

The **Shangani/Tangmere** memorial was originally erected by the citizens of Shangani in Southern Rhodesia (where he was born) after news of his death reached there, whilst WW2 was still in progress. It was erected alongside the main road between Bulawayo and Gwelo, close to the Shangani River bridge. It comprised a plinth of granite bearing a brass plaque, the inscription on which is reproduced below.



In 1986, the Zimbabwean government of Robert Mugabe de-proclaimed various old monuments, including that of Caesar Hull at Shangani. The Hull family decided to save the monument and offer it to the museum at Tangmere. In December 2003 Alistair Hull (a second cousin of Caesar) and a friend attempted to remove the plaque from the plinth, but had to retreat when they were fired on by squatters camping nearby. Some time later, two patriotic Zimbabweans passing by, noted the monument and removed the plaque safely. They contacted the Hull family, and the plaque was eventually handed over to Alistair Hull in Harare. It was flown to Kent International Airport at Manston, and was eventually handed over to the Curator of the Tangmere Museum by Wendy Bryan, Caesar's younger sister, on Saturday 17th April 2004.

The **Purley/Coulsdon** memorial, erected in the grounds of the school where Hull crashed to his death (then Purley Boys' School, now Coulsdon College) takes the form of a metal sculpture representing a fighter plane and the dove of peace. It was officially unveiled on Remembrance Day (11th November) in 2013. Caesar's sister Wendy and her husband Gerald Bryan (both 92) attended the ceremony.



## APPENDIX I

### Crash Site Orbis Field SK 76940 26422

The aviation safety network record detailing the de Havilland Mosquito accident of Friday 17th May 1946 at Goadby Marwood Leicestershire, states that 'the aircraft struck trees breaking the tailplane and the aircraft then hit high ground and disintegrated'. Goadby Hall farm manager Charlie Iddeson found a section of the tailplane in 2014 just inside the wooded area to the South East of Orbis Field (SK 77046 26432), but the actual area of high ground where the Mosquito aircraft disintegrated was unknown. Following a discussion between Charlie Iddeson and local resident Geoff Pizer in October 2018, Charlie was able to clarify that the actual tailplane section had been found many years earlier. It had been removed from the original site for safekeeping after an incident involving a couple of lads from a nearby village.

The Field Detectives placed a metal detecting team into Orbis Field on Friday 22nd June 2018. All parts of the remaining aircraft were removed from the site in 1946; there were no live munitions on board the aircraft and no remaining fatalities to consider. The team was able to carry out a limited survey using GPS. A number of molten aluminium fragments of the aircraft was found, along with three small sections of intact aluminium, one of which bore a serial number.

#### Orbis Field Survey

Although severely restricted by the very dry weather conditions, long grass and the hard ground which made metal detecting difficult, we were able to reveal a concentrated area of molten debris leading up to high ground in Orbis Field as indicated by the black dashed area featured on the survey findings map along with a 'highly probable' Mosquito aircraft panel found nearby (SK 76909 26427).

#### Survey Conclusion

The associated finds along with supporting evidence from farm manager Charlie Iddeson and local resident Geoff Pizer represent a strong evidence-based case that identifies the exact locations where the tailplane 'struck trees' and where the Mosquito then sadly, 'hit high ground and disintegrated'. This very brief metal detecting survey allowed us to plot the exact location of the crash site and to outline the debris field - no further investigation of the crash site is required.



Molten Debris

Recovered from the impact area

Some of the molten pieces contain wood screws.



APPENDIX II  
Letters written by Laurence during his captivity in Stalag Luft III  
and letters from friends following Laurence's death

1.5.43

My dear Dad & Mater,

There is only time for a quick scribble. I have waited to the last in case any letters came from you. Unfortunately nothing has arrived for me for nearly 3 weeks. I dare say the Xmas holidays have upset routine. Xmas here passed quite pleasantly considering our present predicament. Most of us became merry on our home made brews and the few misdemeanours that did occur were taken sympathetically by our hosts. During the Xmas week we had a pantomime, got up by the Officers and men we all enjoyed a very good performance. The "Chorus Girls" and leading lady were especially charming, we thought. It is surprising the talent that can be found among us. We had our Xmas dinner on New Year's Day and a very good dinner too. The plum pudding was excellent. Fortunately last month was a mild one. The cold of November did not continue and there was no snow on the ground for Xmas. New Year's Day however, presented a white world which will, no doubt, last for the next two months. There was some excitement the other day when an officer took French leave but it came to nothing. We are on ½ R C Food parcels now, owing to transport difficulties in S. France. Lets hope these difficulties soon clear up.

Love to all, Laurence.

Letter written on 28th August, 1943 was received 29th November, 1943

My dear Dad & Mater,

This month I delayed writing to you in hopes that I should be able to thank you for the clothing parcel. Neither the Jan or April parcels have yet materialised however, but I hesitate to forecast their probable loss, remembering how long my last two took to arrive. Instead I must thank you for two letters from Mater, giving the welcome news of Dad's slow but steady recovery, I can only hope that by the time this reaches you, indeed even as I write, you are quite well again. In addition to your letters, four books from a London firm and a thousand cigarettes have reached me. Many thanks. The books, with the exception of the Chambers dictionary, were light novels and I have written to Mrs. A. F. asking her to let the shop know my particular wants in books. I am trying to get up my history which will be useful for the Staff college exam, I hope to take when I get back. You speak of living a quiet life in the future and it seems to me that this has much to recommend it. I have learnt, with time, to settle down and live a quiet life surrounded by the books of Austin, Thackeray, Dickens and the Brontes. Life was quiet in that pre-mechanical age but full of interest and although I still have pangs of remorse and frustration I have learnt something of how to live quietly. My life before captivity seems to have been a long chase of the moon without achievement. Glad to hear the Aunts are well and enjoying their visits. News from the outside world is encouraging but how slowly events seem to us to move. But we are naturally impatient.

Regards to all, yours affect. Laurence.

Letter to Laurence's twin sister Joan

3.12.42

My dear Ethel

The day begins with the cry "15 minutes to Appel". 72 sleepy individuals awake to uttered curses. The majority, including the Adjutant, quickly go to sleep for another 10mins. And are re-awakened by the shattering scream from the latter "Appel in 5 minutes". A general scramble ensues and we shuffle out well muffled with scarves and greatcoats into the snow for Appel at 8 o'clock. After the count has taken place we breakfast, usually on bread and marg with sardines or salmon. After this, beds have to be made, floor sometimes swept and toilet completed. A quick constitutional is followed by a brew of coffee at 11 am and then another Appel. Lunch of stew, potatoes and bread is then served and the afternoon is free for work or play. We eat our main meal at 4pm. consisting of fried meatroll or stew with bread, butter and tea to follow. Appel follows at 5pm. And then I and one other get down to our chore of the day - washing up supper things. It is dark by now and the cold slippery outside is no longer inviting for a last constitutional and, with the poor light, reading is not advisable. I usually get down to bridge, chess or an argument of some sort. At 10:25 the lights flicker and there is a rush to make beds before the lights go out finally at 10.30 and gradually, after the exchange of one or two ruderies, the 72 odd people settle down to snoring. Half way through the night we are wakened by the midnight count but for this one we are not called out. This is a description in brief of the average day. Time passed quickly in retrospect yet the days themselves drag somewhat. Hope all are well. Laurence.

### A short biography of Joan Ethel Coventry née Hull



Ethel Joan, the younger twin, later known after her marriage to Jim Coventry, as Joan, was educated at the Rustenburg Girls High, Rondebosch, where she became Head Prefect. After leaving school she trained as a nurse at the Rondebosch Cottage Hospital, qualifying as a sister. She then spent 18 months at the Johannesburg General Hospital as a Staff Nurse. In 1937 she married Jim Coventry of Cape Town. He had taken his MSc and the other degrees at the University of Cape Town and became a Meteorologist. The early years of their married life were spent in Rhodesia. During the war, Jim was a Met. Officer in the Royal Navy at Simonstown and later in Durban and he then spent some time in Ceylon with the Royal Navy. They had two children, Laurence and Alison. The family was sent to England in 1953, where they had many years of happiness at their Weybridge, Surrey home, until sorrow struck and Joan died in 1962,

after two years of illness bravely borne.

*Taken from A Family Affair written by Phyllis Mary Hull - Laurence's elder sister*

*Image courtesy of Laurence Coventry*

Letter from an unknown friend written after Laurence's untimely death:

It is hard to believe Wing Commander G.L.B. Hull, D.F.C. has gone after all. It is much harder to assess his loss in words. He was typical of those regular officers to whom we of the war time generation of pilots owe so much. He was one of the handful who survived the massacre of the light bombers in 1940, to command a Blenheim squadron in the hazardous and more prolonged low-level campaign which B Group conducted in 1941. He took over 114 Squadron the day after his predecessor and both flight commanders had been shot down, it was then that I came to serve under him. I owe my survival entirely to his leadership during those first operational hours. "Bok" Hull was a magnificent leader. Apart from the quiet strength of his personality, his knowledge both of his men and his job was complete. He fully understood and felt, the dangers involved in those fantastic operations, but fear for him only existed to be overcome. At a time when nothing was more uncertain than the next 24 hours, the confidence of his crews in his judgement was complete. The more dangerous the operation, the more certain it was that he would lead it. He had all the balance and perception of a strong and sensitive character. An injury to his back forced him to rest before his second tour of operations was completed. When he returned in April, 1942, he immediately tackled a night intruder attack on Schiphol air field - a target which had been causing persistent and worrying losses to his squadron for some weeks. He was shot down by a Ju.88 and spent the rest of the war, so vital to his career, a prisoner of war. Although his life was spared, he was denied the distinctions which would have been inevitable had he remained in 2 Group. Instead the end of the war found him tired and worn. He was one of those now dimly remembered officers of the Royal Air Force, who by their magnificent courage and resource against overwhelming odds in the first two years of the war, set a certain tradition of achievement which was the corner-stone of the subsequent victory. Their 250lb bombs may not have obliterated cities, but their spirit built the morale which made victory possible.

Flt Lt T.H. Baker, Officers Mess, R.A.F., Horsham St. Faith, Norwich, writes to Laurence's father on 21/5/46:

Dear Sir,

It was with much regret that I learned of the death of your son W/Com. George Laurence B. Hull and I wish to express my deepest sympathy with you in the great loss you have suffered.

I had the honour to serve under this gallant officer throughout the war years as his air observer, and there built between us a bond that carried us through those days of danger both in the air and in captivity, and could only be severed by some disaster as has now come to pass.

His gallant and untiring efforts in the service of his country were recognised in his decoration, and will be remembered for a long time by his brother officers in the Service, especially us who are honoured in numbering ourselves among his many friends.

I close with my heartfelt and deepest sympathy with you Sir.

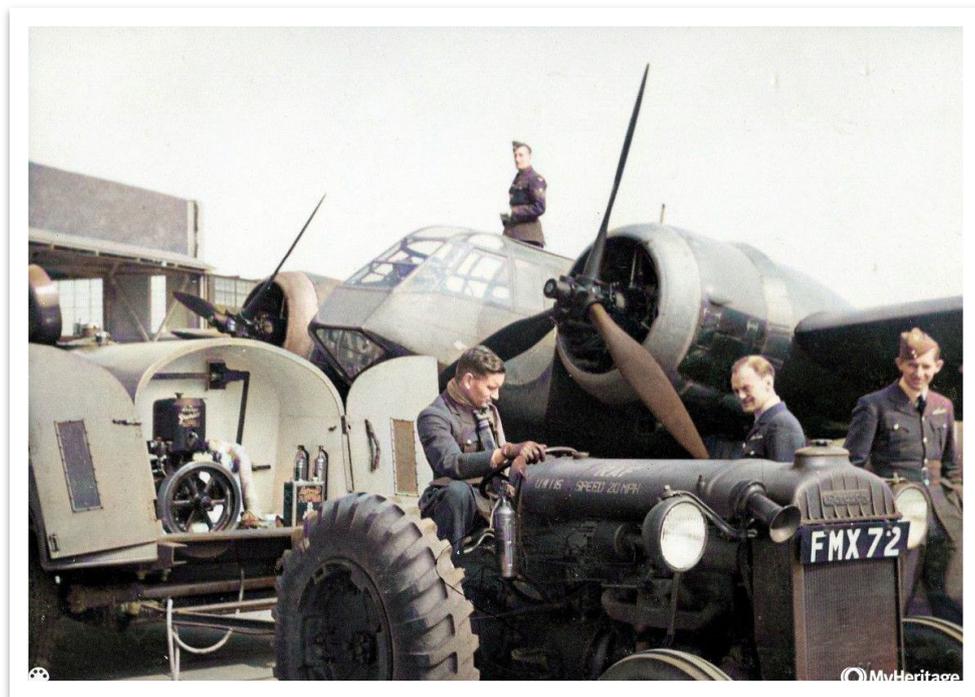
I am, Yours Very Sincerely,

Thos. H. Baker.



F/O KEMP (LEFT) BOK HULL (CENTRE), DEREK RICHARD BIGGS (RIGHT) UNKNOWN (BEHIND)  
AT A MESS PARTY

*Image courtesy of Derek Biggs' son Jason Biggs*



BOK HULL DRIVING A FORDSON MODEL N TRACTOR WITH CLOSE FRIEND DEREK BIGGS LOOKING  
ON ADMIRINGLY (NO HAT)

The Fordson became known as the tractor that helped to win the war. The photograph was most probably taken by Squadron Leader Michael Litchfield Watson at RAF Upwood, sometime between May-November 1940, during his posting to 17 O.T.U (Operational Training Unit). Michael (aged 23) along with his crew, P/O NC Alers- Hankey & Sergeant K M Poole were reported missing, believed killed on 11 June 1941.

*Image courtesy of Squadron Leader Michael Litchfield Watson's daughter Anne Hawkins*

## Sources

### George Laurence Bazett Hull DFC

- Hull Family History - prepared by Phyllis Currie (née Hull) (version available on Ancestry.co.uk - public member tree - Bourhill family in South Africa) and notes from Laurence Coventry (nephew)
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#### Books

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- Stalag Luft III: An Official History of the Great Escape P.O.W. Camp by H. Tuck and H. Grehan (Naval Institute Press - March 15, 2017)
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#### Websites

- Various websites relating to:
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- R.A.F. No. 90 Squadron
- R.A.F. No. 17 O.T.U.
- R.A.F. No. 107 Squadron
- R.A.F. No. 114 Squadron
- [www.stalagluft3.com/long-march/](http://www.stalagluft3.com/long-march/)
- [www.wartimememoriesproject.com](http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com)

### Caesar Barraud Hull DFC

- Hull Family History - prepared by Phyllis Currie (née Hull) (version available on Ancestry.co.uk - public member tree - Bourhill family in South Africa) and notes from Caesar Bryan (nephew)
- Much of the information was obtained from an account by Bill Musgrove (ex - No. 237 [Rhodesia] Squadron, R.A.F. Middle East Command 1943-1945), originally published in the 2004 Annual Magazine of the Battle of Britain Historical Society. It is now available on the website [www.rhodesia.com/archives/documents/Casear\\_Hull.pdf](http://www.rhodesia.com/archives/documents/Casear_Hull.pdf)

Other websites relating to:

- R.A.F. No. 43 Squadron
- R.A.F. No. 263 Squadron

## Acknowledgements

Vicky and Harry Westropp, Charlie, Sally, Sue and Christine (Goadby Hall), Julian Horn and Lionel 'Rusty' Russell (RAF History Advisors/Consultants), Ralph McLean (South Africa War Graves Project), Mark Davies (Light Aircraft Inspector/Pilot), Alistair Hodgson (Curator - De Havilland Aircraft Museum), Ross Sharp (The People's Mosquito Ltd), WO Richard 'Pebs' Peberdy (Station Warrant Officer RAF Scampton), WO I.T. Giles (Station Warrant Officer RAF Halton), The Rev. Steve Flashman (All Saints Oving), Sue Severn (Clerk to the Oving Parish Council), Edward Hamilton-Ely (Resident - Oving), Laura Williams (Editor of the Oving and Pitchcott Newsletter), Helen Wells (Historic Environment Records Officer Leicestershire).

Words cannot begin to express how grateful we are to the surviving members of Laurence's and Caesar's families for their support, help and guidance: Caesar M. P. Bryan, Mary Lubin, Diana Vigors, Laurence Coventry and Jason Biggs.

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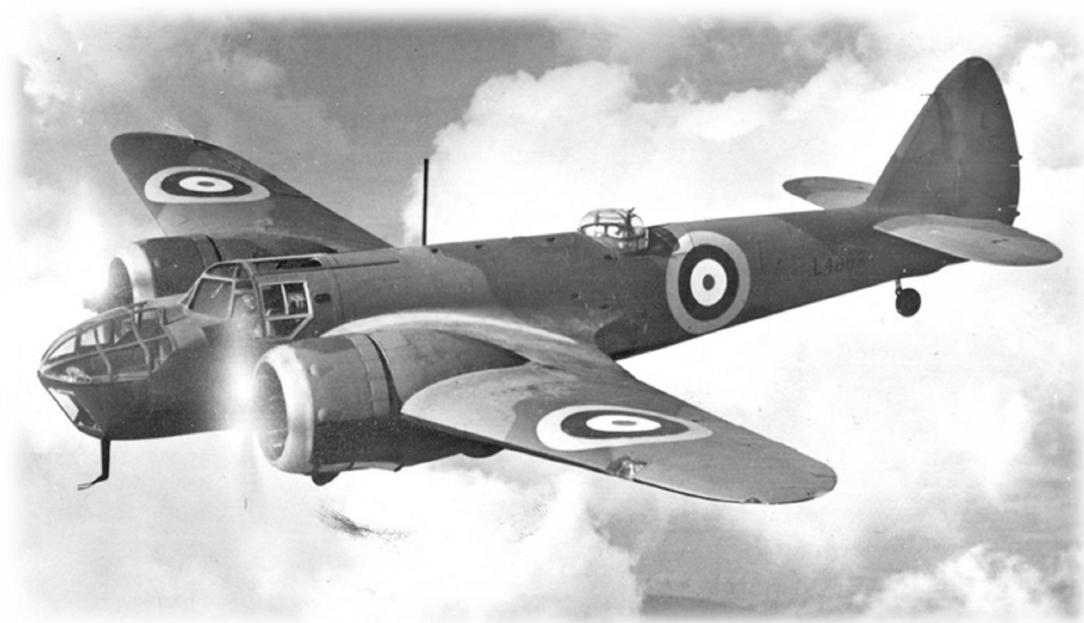
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# BOK'S CREW OF 1942

SURVIVORS OF THE GREAT ESCAPE AND THE LONG MARCH



Compiled by Catherine Pincott-Allen (Field Detective)

Edited by Peter Baker, Lionel 'Rusty' Russell and Julian Horn

2020

A Blenheim crew would have consisted of the Pilot, Observer/Bomb Aimer and Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, and at the time of their crash landing and subsequent capture and imprisonment, on 17 April 1942, Wg Cdr Hull's other two crew were **Flt Lt Thomas Herbert Baker** - Observer/Bomb Aimer and **Flt Lt Julian Francis Lock 'Butch' Morton** - Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. And we must not forget their lost comrade **Flt Sgt Harold (Harry) Robert Hibbs**, who lost his life in 1941, and whose place in the crew as Wireless Operator/Air Gunner was taken by 'Butch' Morton.

Following on from our first booklet 'The Flying Hulls' this account brings together the war diaries of Tom Baker alongside biographies of 'Butch' and Harry, and photographs kindly brought to our attention by family members and friends of each of these incredibly courageous men.

# FLIGHT LIEUTENANT THOMAS HERBERT BAKER DFC DFM

Observer/Bomb Aimer  
Service number 45552



## The Role

**OBSERVER.** The all-important role of the navigator in World War Two was to find the target, during day or night, often under atrocious weather conditions. Of course, steering his crew, or formation, safely back to Base was also a top priority. During the early years of the War (1939-1942), these navigators were known as 'Observers' and usually fulfilled the dual roles of both navigator and bomb-aimer. In the Bristol Blenheim, the latter role was achieved by adopting a prone position in the nose, using a bomb-sight and operating the 'Mickey Mouse' bomb-selector. They wore a single-winged flying badge (or 'brevet') on their left-breast pocket, containing a wreath with the letter 'O'. After the changeover, in 1942, when the roles of the Observer were sub-divided into 'navigator' and 'bomb-aimer', then the navigator's brevet displayed the letter 'N'.

During the operational years of the woefully obsolescent Bristol Blenheim light bomber (1939-1942), the Observer almost invariably had to find the target using the Mark 1 Eyeball (map-reading), backed up by Dead Reckoning (Deduced Reckoning), the latter relying on accurate forecast winds and, of course, a pilot who could nail every course correction passed to him! Inevitably, some Observers became more adept at map-reading than others on the squadron.

These gems, who were worth their weight in gold, almost invariably finished up flying with the Commanding Officer, who usually led his squadron into battle. Apart from the obvious deduction that RHIP (Rank Hath Its Privileges), this made sound operational sense, as it gave the best possible chance of the entire squadron, or flight, hitting a target accurately. In the latter years of the War (1942-1945), when the heavy bombers were equipped with such sophisticated navigational aids as Gee-H, H2S and the magnificent Oboe, map-reading became of secondary importance. The use of Oboe, in a Mosquito of the Pathfinder Force, led to some very accurate bombing raids.

*By Lionel 'Rusty' Russell*



FLIGHT LIEUTENANT  
THOMAS HERBERT BAKER  
DFC DFM MID.  
He was known as Tom.

Tom was born in Deolali, India on 16th August 1913. His father was a Lieutenant in the Royal Garrison Artillery. The Regiment returned to Europe following the outbreak of World War 1. Imagine the shock and contrast of going from the British Raj in India to the battlefield of Europe. Tom's mother, Maud, lived in Lancaster and Tom, along with his older brother attended the Lancaster Royal Grammar School. Sadly their father was killed in action in Belgium on 28th July 1917.

In January 1929 Tom joined the RAF as a boy entrant on 4AA Wing of RAF Halton School of Technical Training. He graduated in December 1931 as an airframe rigger and served on Hawker Harts, Hinds and Demons in England, Palestine and Egypt. He frequently flew in the rear cockpits of these biplanes.

Eventually in 1938 he became an Observer/ Bomb Aimer and ended up on Blenheims with "Bok" Hull; together they flew 109 sorties (48 of which were operational). At the time their Air Gunner was Sgt Harry Hibbs who died following mortal injury from enemy fire during a raid in May 1941. His place was taken by Flt Lt Julian (Butch) Morton.

Tom was awarded the DFC after being the "guest" navigator leading 36 Blenheims in a low-level bombing mission against the Knapsack power station near Cologne.

The crew were serving on 114 Sqn at RAF West Raynham where Tom met Judy Deacon WAAF. She became his wife in March 1942. As Judy's father had been killed on the Somme in 1916, the Station Commander Gp Capt the Earl of Bandon (known as the Abandoned Earl) gave Judy away at the ceremony.

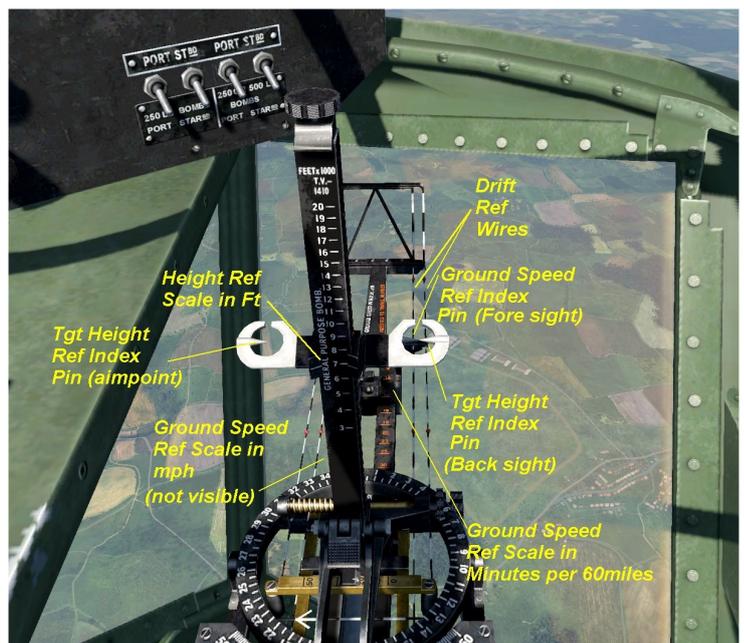
When Bok resumed command of 114 Sqn, he and his crew of Tom and now, Butch Morton, had a couple of shake-down flights followed by a night bombing mission against Schipol airfield (then a Luftwaffe base). They were hit by flak and had to crash land.

Tom, who had only been married for a month, was badly injured and taken for dead. Butch Morton protested and Tom was put back together by a German surgeon and nurses. Months later the crew were re-united in Stalag Luft III (of Great Escape fame) where they remained until the Long March and the end of the war.

Tom left the RAF in 1958 as a Wg Cdr. He worked for A V Roe on the Blue Steel project and later Hunting Engineering. He died in March 2006 aged 92.

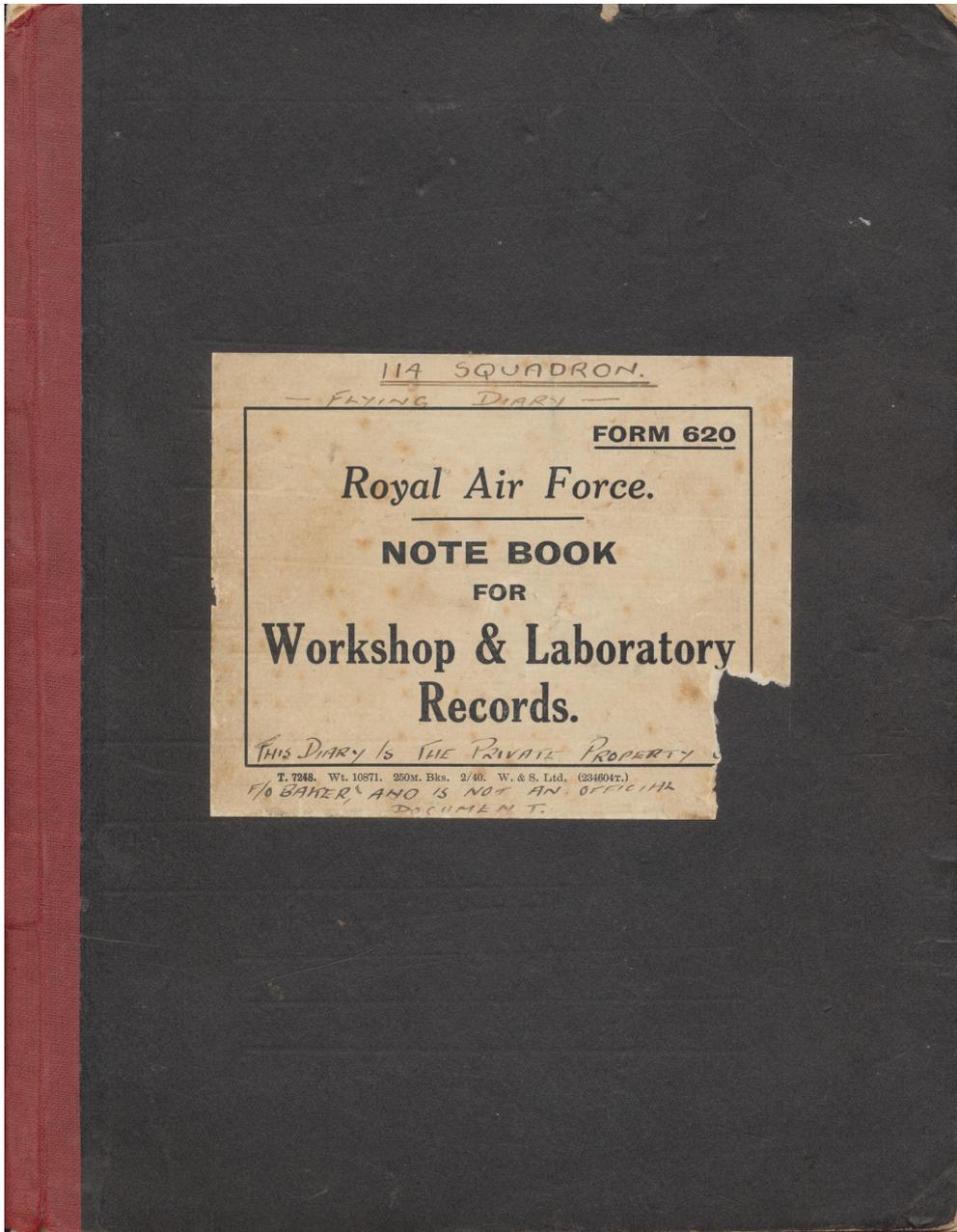
Not a bad innings for someone taken for dead in 1942! He had flown 29 different aircraft types and amassed nearly 2000 flying hours.

By Peter Baker (Tom's son)



BLENHEIM MK IV COURSE SETTING BOMB SIGHT

TRANSCRIPTION OF THE FLYING DIARY OF TOM BAKER  
SEPTEMBER 1941 - MARCH 1942  
REPRODUCED AS WRITTEN



# 114. BOMBER SQUADRON



"WITH SPEED"  
"I STRIKE"

SQUADRON PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BETWEEN APRIL & JULY 1941

Hull was made Acting Wg Cdr on 19th April 1941 and Plt Off Slade transferred to No. 21 Squadron on 4th July 1941

Information on P/O Slade kindly provided by Lionel 'Rusty' Russell

Sept 6<sup>th</sup> 1941

Stood by Six Aircraft for circus, cancelled owing to weather before we knew the target. Squadron on Stand off. Low level practice programme on Grimston Warren. Sgt Bradley took off but washed out, cloud base 400' The following crews practice bombed in the late afternoon and evening.

W/Com Jenkins	S/L Newberry	Sgt Hemus
Sgt Bradley	S/L Patterson	Sgt Shackleton

Sqdn/Ld Judson posted to 2 Group  
F/O Barnes arrived to take over Gunnery leader.  
Weather. Low cloud all day, cleared towards evening.

Sept 7<sup>th</sup> 1941

Stood off to day except P/O Cussens & Sgt Shackleton who went to Bodney to operate with 82 Squadron, this was cancelled, so they returned in the evening and proceeded straight to Horsham to stand by for a circus tomorrow. Training carried out consisted of low level bombing, formation and cross country. Sq<sup>dn</sup> L<sup>dr</sup> Patterson flew his crew on leave to Yeadon.

The following crews flew in the training programme.

W/Com Jenkins	}	Formation	Sqn/Ldr Pollard	}	Low level Bombing
F/Lt Pollard			Sgt Gillman (2)		
Sgt Gillman			Sgt Hemus		
Sgt Hemus			P/O Beatson		
Sq <sup>dn</sup> L <sup>dr</sup> Newberry			P/O Adam (2)		
Sgt Bradley			Sgt Glen		
Sgt Glen					

Sgt Davidson carried out a test, dropping soot.

OPS Sept 8<sup>th</sup> 1941 Six Crews all ready to take off on a circus early this morning to be led by W/Com Jenkins. This was cancelled at the last moment, and we were at an hours standby. Nothing happened till late afternoon when two convoys were reported off the Channel Isles. Bomb load was rapidly changed and F/Lt Pollard, P/O Adam, Sgt Davidson and Sgt Gillman took off to rendy vous with fighters at Ilsley (Nr Southampton) and intercept. 3 small trawlers towing barges were found in the area and attacked, the bombing generally was not observed, but on later evidence (fighter reports and photographs) proved to be quite good. Six Blenheims from Manston joined our formation, which was led by F/Lt Pollard on the way out. All our aircraft returned without damage or casualties. 'Flak' was encountered but was very light. P/O Coussens and Sgt Shackleton returned from Horsham, not having operated.

Sept 9<sup>th</sup> 1941

Squadron on stand off. P/O Beatson took off to practice bomb the wreck at Cromer. But returned owing to bad visibility. Sgt Bradley, Sgt Hemus and Sgt Glen carried out formation practice, no other flying was carried out due to the bad visibility.

A tactical discussion was held in the crew room and 'Doc' Turnbull lectured on "first aid in the air." W/Com Jenkins lectured on shipping attacks.

Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 1941

Squadron detailed for a shipping beat off the Dutch Coast. F/Lt Pollard, P/O Beatson, P/O Adam, P/O Cussens Sgt Davidson, Sgt Shackleton took off. They were recalled before leaving the vicinity of the aerodrome, owing to mis-timing with Swanton Moorley. The operation was eventually cancelled. Sgt Gillman and Sgt Hemus carried out practice bombing. Sgt Gillman took a 'kite' to Watton for modification. Sq<sup>dn</sup> L<sup>dr</sup> Newberry flew to Bicester and return. Sgt Glen did a spot of 'local.'

OPS Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1941 'An early morning shipping beat off the Dutch Coast with fighter escort.' This was the Squadrons task for to day. F/Lt Pollard, P/O Cussons, P/O Adam Sgt Davidson P/O Beatson and Sgt Shackleton took off about 0645, we also had three aircraft from Horsham. The rendy vous with fighters was at Swanton Morley, and each section of three proceeded independently to this beat. Two sections had no luck and saw nothing, but P/O Adam. P/O Cussens and Sgt Davidson ran onto a convoy of about 10 ships and made an attack from 0 ft on the bigger vessel (about 4000 tons). No results were observed so we couldn't claim anything. All our aircraft, Horsham's and the fighters returned safely and suffered no casualties, although Sgt Davidson's aircraft was hit in the port plane. The Squadron was then stood down for the rest of the day and also tomorrow. The 'weekend' aircraft were wheeled out and off they went well loaded. F/Lt Pollard to Upwood. P/O Adams to Kenley and Bicester & Sgt Glen to Brough.

Sept 12<sup>th</sup> 1941 'Stand down' to day no activity at all. F/Lt Pollard P/O Adams & Sgt Glen returned in the evening. The following new crews joined us. P/O Iredale & crew. P/O Fielden and crew, and Sgt Balzer & crew.

Sept 13<sup>th</sup> 1941 Squadron stood by at 1 hours notice for operations, this was changed to stand off in the morning owing to adverse weather conditions. Sgt Bradley led P/O Iredale P/O Fielden & Sgt Balzer on formation, Sgt Davidson to Horsham and back and P/O Cussens to Cranfield & back was the only flying carried out. The afternoon was taken up by exercise & games. A hectic basket ball game being played on the lawn at Weasanham.

Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stand off practice bombing and air firing programme. W/Com Jenkins took off on a weather test but washed out. No more flying was carried out. Compass swinging. Weather and visibility terrible a dull day all round.

OPS Sept 15<sup>th</sup> 1941 Operations to day, shipping had been reported near Borkum, so we dispatched 8 aircraft to hunt it. The operation was done in the form of a beat. F/Lt Pollard P/O Beatson & Sgt Hemus took the middle of the beat. P/O Adam Sgt Shackleton & Sgt Gilman took the left or East portion, and P/O Cussens and Sgt Glen the west. Cussens and Glen returned having completed the beat, with nothing to report having had a quiet and uneventful trip. The other two formations had more luck, F/Lt Pollard and his formation struck a large convoy of about 12 vessels just before reaching the beat line, and made a daring low level attack, bursts generally were not observed but the crew were sure of having made hits. Two 'snappers' (M.E.109<sup>s</sup>) tried to interfere and attacked the formation, but did no damage. This attack was followed 4 mins later by P/O Adams and his formation appearing on the scene. Once more another daring

low level attack was made and crews were confident of success. P/O Adams reported one large merchantman with decks a wash, proving success for the leading flight. The 'snappers' were still around but again failed to 'shake' the Blenheims. After interrogation inspection of photographs etc. Intelligence allowed us 1 ship definitely sunk, 2 presumed to be total losses. A good afternoons work. All our aircraft returned safely, and in spite of the 'snappers' and heavy 'Flak' we suffered no casualties and only minor damage to one or two aircraft.

Other flying included S/Ldr Patterson to Watton and back. P/O Iredale, P/O Fielden, Sgt Balzer and Sgt Bradley Bombing at Grimston.

Sgt Hemus and crew heard they were off to the Middle East, we shall be sorry to lose them, but they are keen to go.

Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stand off. Bombing and Air Firing arranged on the Wreck near Cromer. The following crews took part. W/Com Jenkins, P/O Adams, P/O Cussens P/O Iredale P/O Fielden, Sgt Shackleton, Sgt Gilman, Sgt Glen, Sgt Bradley, and Sgt Balzer. The afternoon was devoted to sport. The air crews played the ground crews at soccer and lost 6-1. Sgt Hemus and crew left us. Sgt Kennedy joined us as Sgt Bradley & P/O Batten's Air Gunner.

Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stood by this morning with twelve aircraft for a circus. The twelve took off and ready vous Watton & Wattisham, 6 more aircraft from each station formed the second box of twelve. All aircraft were led by W/Com Jenkins and our other eleven crews consisted of Sdn/Ldr Patterson F/Lt Pollard P/O Cussens P/O Adams P/O Beatson P/O Iredale P/O Fielden Sgt Glen Sgt Gilman Sgt Shackleton & Sgt Balzer. The Blenheims met the fighters over Maidstone and set course for a big industrial target at Mazingarbe near Lens in Northern France. The target was successfully bombed from 12,000', results being quite good, although one formation of six overshot. Flak was fairly heavy & on crossing the coast out Watton No 2 received a direct hit and was shot down. It is feared the crew were lost as nobody baled out. Enemy 'snappers' were about and one got right through to the Blenheims our A.G's replied but no claims were made. Six fighters and one Blenheim were lost on the operation, the enemy lost seven fighters. All our aircraft returned safely, many of them suffered minor damage from 'Flak' there were no casualties among the crews.

Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stand off today very little activity in the morning. Sgt Bradley did an air test and a mosaic of the district. S/Ldr Patterson flew to Waterbeach & Wigton where his aircraft went U/S. He eventually arrived back in a Tiger Moth. Sport in the afternoon.

Sept 19<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stood by with nine aircraft this morning for circus operations. The weather was terrible with visibility of about 200'. After briefing the show was cancelled, nothing much doing at all, no flying.

OPS Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 1941 Nine aircraft for circus operations this morning, same job as yesterday. Sqd/Ldr Patterson, Sgt Glen and Sgt Balzer took off for Bodney to work with them, W/Com Jenkins P/O Beatson Sgt Bradley, F/Lt Pollard P/O Iredale Sgt Shackleton and P/O Adams took off for Ilsley. The weather was rather duff at the time. S/Ldr Patterson led his 3 aircraft and 3 from 82 Sqdn as a second box to follow W/Com Roe. Owing to a mistake with regards to height of ready-vous, he missed the leader and fighters, and decided to abandon. The first six aircraft carried on and bombed successfully. W/Com Jenkins took his box from

Ilisley and bombed the oil ship 'Ole Wegger' at Cherbourg, bombs fell near the ship in the basin and on the dock side, the ship was not hit but damage was done to surrounding vessels and docks. Flak was moderate, we suffered no damage or casualties. P/O Fielden did an air test. Sgt Gilman and crew posted to the M/E and the following new crews joined us. P/O Bury Sgt Crosby Sgt Whittle. P/O Adams promoted to F/Lt Adams 'Good Old Bill'

Sept 21<sup>st</sup> 1941 Stand down to day, Sqd/Ldr Patterson flew to Waterbeach, everywhere deserted. Crews all over England.

Sept 22<sup>nd</sup> 1941 Stand off to day, weather rather dull in the morning, but the following crews got in some formation. Sgt Shackleton and P/O Iredale. Sgt Davidson flew to Finingley and back. Low level bombing and air firing in the afternoon on the Cromer wreck. The following crews took part, P/O Fielden, F/Lt Adams P/O Iredale, P/O Beatson, Sgt Shackleton, Sgt Glen and Sgt Balzer. An unfortunate accident occurred causing the death of three fine fellows. P/O Fielden crashed on the cliffs neat the target. He was killed also P/O Brown and Sgt Collier. We think the accident was caused through hitting the mast of the ship.

Sept 23<sup>rd</sup> 1941 Stood by with nine aircraft for circus operations, but the weather was terrible visibility about 400<sup>x</sup>. The show was cancelled in the morning and we stood off. Reading 'gen' in the crew room was all that was done. W/Com Jenkins and F/O Brancker attended Buckingham Palace to be decorated with the D.F.C. by H.M The King.

Sept 24<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stand off to day, Bombing arranged at Grimston Warren, but fog prevented us carrying it out in the morning. Swinging Compasses. In the afternoon weather cleared and the bombing programme was carried out, starting at 1400 hrs with Sgt Davidson followed by F/L Adam, S/L Newberry, S/L Patterson, Sgt Shackleton and ending at 1700hrs with Sgt Glen.

Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 1941 Nine aircraft stood by this morning for a shipping beat, weather was fine here, & everyone was preparing for the trip, when word came through to cancel it, apparently due to heavy fog over the sea. The rest of the morning was spent 'swinging compasses' and harmonising guns. Photography and formation took place in the afternoon. P/O Beatson taking a 'mosaic' of the aerodrome, and Sgt Davidson taking low level obliques of various points on the 'drome. S/L Newberry led P/O Bury and Sgt Whittle, whilst Sgt Davidson again went up & led Sgt Balzer and Sgt Crosby on formation practice.

Sept 26<sup>th</sup> 1941 Stand off today, weather was fine and sunny, and the squadron got in some formation practice, and P/O Iredale did some photography. Those on formation were P/O Beatson P/O Bury, Sgt Bradley and Sgt Whittle from "A" Flight; whilst "B" turned out a box of six consisting of S/L Patterson, F/L Adam, Sgt Davidson, Sgt Glen, Sgt Crossley and Sgt Balzer. In the afternoon flying ceased, and a game of Basket Ball was organised.

OPS Sept 27<sup>th</sup> 1941 The Squadron stood-by today for operations. The weather was fine and sunny with a little cloud about. In the morning the 'gen' came through, a 'circus' operation, once more on the industrial target at Mazingarde. Twelve aircraft, led by S/L Patterson took off to bomb the target from 15,000' The other circus consisted of F/L Adam who led the second box of six Sgt Glen, P/O Iredale Sgt Davidson, Sgt

Balzer, Sgt Crossley, Sgt Bradley, Sgt Shackleton, P/O Beatson, P/O Bury and Sgt Whittle. As before, the flights were picked up at Maidstone, and the Squadron set off to the target. Little 'FLAK' was experienced, except at one or two points on the coast and at one point inland. When nearing the target, the Hun took up the challenge and sent up large numbers of ME 109's to intercept the Blenheims. Unfortunately, the Squadron lost sight of the target, and due to enemy action no time could be lost over enemy territory, and so a railway yard some distance away from the Primary target was bombed and the aircraft set course for home. All the aircraft returned quite safely, arriving here in the late afternoon.

28<sup>th</sup> Sept 1941 Stood off to day, big preparations for the Army co-operation exercises tomorrow. The idea was to go to Molesworth and land as we expect to be moved there for a few days during the exercises. W/Co Jenkins went down there but did not land as the weather was too thick. Most of the other crews flew in the general direction but came home. F/L Adams got lost in the Bedford area causing much alarm here at the Base, he eventually turned up having landed at some small place first, Alconbury.

29<sup>th</sup> Sept 1941 First day of the 'Bumper' do to-day. The fighter boys joined us, 19 Sqdn with Spitfires, most of the time was spent in the crew room waiting for targets; talks on the exercise were given by the Group Captain, W/Com Jenkins. And the A.L.O. Major Petley. We were not called out and eventually packed up about 1900 hrs.

30 Sept 1941 'Bumper' to day, early call and stand by in the Crew Room from 0630 hrs. Targets were given to day in the Luton Area, we appear to have made a rapid advance. We are the Germans invading. The following crews flew also the fighter boys. They found their targets and beat up the British who are enemies for the exercise. Sqn Ldr Patterson, Sgt Glen, Sgt Davidson, Sgt Balzer, Flt Lt Adam, P/O Bury, Sqn Ldr Newberry, Sgt Bradley and P/O Iredale.

1<sup>st</sup> Oct 1941 Third day of the Bumper, early call again, rather a 'bind' hanging around the crew room. All crews flew, B flight attacking twice. We still seem to be winning. One or two parties organised with the fighter boys in the evening.

2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 1941 Same again today, the British appear to be getting the upper hand. All crews flew again to day attacking targets in the Luton area, bags of soot being dropped. The exercise finished as far as we were concerned this evening. The British winning the day.

3<sup>rd</sup> Oct 1941 Stood off today, saw the fighter boys off in the morning. Low level bombing on the Cromer wreck in the afternoon. The following crews bombed. P/O Iredale, P/O Beatson, P/O Bury (twice), Sgt Whittle (twice). Sqn Ldr Patterson to Bicester, F/L Pollard, P/O Cussens air testing completed the days flying.

4<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Called this morning for circus operations but this was cancelled about 0930 and we stood down.

5<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Due to operate today, this was cancelled owing to thick fog, not much doing. The officers entertained the C in C Sir Richard Pierce and the AOC AVM Stevenson to dinner Weasenham.

## VISIT OF HM'S KING & QUEEN

6<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 A big day for the Squadron to day we were honoured with a visit by their majesties the King and Queen. There was to be a flying demonstration, but the aerodrome was covered in thick fog. Their Majesties were introduced to all crews in the crew room and had informal chats with most of the crews. They were very interested in our photographs and line shoots. No flying was carried out and we packed up for the day at lunch time after the Royal visit was over.

7<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Thick fog again to day, consequently no operations, so we stood off. All this none flying weather makes it hard to keep the crews occupied. P/O Iredale & P/O Bury did a spot of 'Limp' All went walking in the afternoon.

8<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 More fog again this morning, this is terrible, everybody asking what can we do to-day. Lecture in Crew Room in A.M. Played sport in the afternoon. S/Ldr Patterson & Sgt Bradley Air Test in afternoon.

9<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Stood by for shipping this morning but weather still 'duff,' cancelled and we were stood off. Reading 'Gen' in crew room in morning a cinema bus to King's Lynn in the afternoon. The following new crews joined us F/Lt Piece minus his crew. Sgt Peters Sgt Banks Sgt Ansty & Sgt Harrison.

10<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Stood by for 'circus' this morning, but weather still 'duff' so we were stood off once again. However things cleared up towards lunch time and we manage to get in some training flying. F/Lt Pollard promoted to Sqdn Leader ('Good Old Mike!) He takes over 'B' Flight, Sqdn Leader Patterson being posted to Swanton Morley. We shall be sorry to lose young 'Pat' he's been in the squadron since April and has done very well indeed, his gunner Sgt Griffiths has gone on a Gunnery Leaders course, and we hope to have him back soon, with his commission. Sgt Havens the observer is also leaving, a damn good crew who did a good job. Good luck to them especially when they start again.

The following crews flew. Sgt Whittle, Sgt Peters, Sgt Banks, P/O Cussens Sgt Harrison Sgt Ansty on formation; Sgt Whittle Sgt Peters Sgt Banks P/O Bury W/C Jenkins Sgt Ansty, Sgt Banks & Sgt Harrison bombed the wreck at Cromer.

11<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Stood by for a circus, and after an early call it was cancelled owing to weather. Stood off then, no flying at all to day.

12<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Stood down, most of the officers, recovering from last nights dance. Sgt Glen & Sgt Bradley flew to Leuchars to collect an aeroplane

OPS 13<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 12 Aircraft for a circus to day, also 6 from 139 who landed here before take off. The target was Mazingarde once again. Sqdn Ldr Newberry led the show, and at long last the squadron took the air in operations at lunch time to rendy vous with the fighters over Manston. The weather was fairly good but there was a chance of it deteriorating. The target was reached and bombed in good weather. Results observed were on the whole good, but the photographs didn't show all the bombs, those on the photos were on one case about 200<sup>x</sup> undershoot and in the other overshoots. As all the bombs were not shown, it is quite probable that the damage was greater than we can claim, as some crews were definite in pinpointing bomb bursts. All our aircraft returned safely and we suffered no casualties among the crews. Most of the aircraft

were hit, Sqdn/Ldr Pollard being among those who fared the worst, he collected fifteen holes and a burst tyre. Other flying was Sgt Peters & Sgt Banks who did an hours formation.

14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Stand off to day, the weather being awful again. A post-mortem was held in the crew room on yesterday's show in the morning. In the afternoon the weather cleared a little and W/C Jenkins took off for Bicester. The following crews practice bombed at Grimston Warren P/O Iredale F/Lt Adams and Sgt Harrison at 6000' S/Ldr Newberry Sgt Peters Sgt Whittle and Sgt Glen at 1000'. F/Lt Adams took Sgt Ansty and Harrison round on low flying formation. An unfortunate accident occurred near King's Lynn when Sgt Ansty flew into the ground, the machine was scattered over about 400<sup>x</sup> and caught fire Sgt Ansty and his Air Gunner were killed outright, but Sgt Southwood the observer was pulled out, but only lived a few hours.

OPS 15<sup>th</sup> Oct 1941 Early call this morning for a shipping beat off the Frisian Islands, six aircraft went out behind 139 Sqdn, Sgt Davidson led our box with Sgt Balzer and Sgt Whittle on his left and right, P/O Cussens led the second flight with P/O Bury and Sgt Shackleton. Sgt Whittle had trouble getting off, and took off late in the reserve aircraft, he could not catch the formation however, and acting on instructions abandoned his task after crossing the coast, the break up point was reached successfully and all flights proceeded on their allotted beats. P/O Cussens, P/O Bury and Sgt Shackleton arrived home having attacked a large convoy about four miles from the coast, Sgt Shackleton reported hits by P/O Cussens, afterwards confirmed on the photographs. The other bombs were unobserved. This box saw no snappers and only light flak, they suffered no casualties but P/O Bury aircraft was hit causing very minor damage.

Nothing more was heard about Sgt Davidson and Sgt Balzer, and we can only assume that they must have been intercepted as they were to the East of Cussens. This also bears out with 139 who were also East of our beats and unfortunately lost 3 aircraft.

It was a blow to the Squadron to lose such a grand crowd of chaps, Davidson, Balzer and Elliott were all colonials.

Owing to leave etc, this diary has unfortunately been sadly neglected, therefore a short summary of the period missed will have to suffice. The main thing being operations. These operations have been carried out in the period covered by this summary. The first was a circus operation on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct. Twelve a/c took off for Port Reith.

They landed and took off after lunch with the fighters. The first six led by W/Com Jenkins attacked and bombed their primary target at Lannion Aerodrome, bomb bursting on the runway. The second six led by S/Ldr Newberry were not as lucky and ran into 10/10 cloud and could not locate their target at Morlaix. All a/c returned safely with no casualties or damage, but P/O Beatson forced landed at Upper Heyford.

The second operation was on the 27<sup>th</sup> Oct. Six crews for a shipping beat. W/Com Jenkins led P/O Beatson and Sgt Bradley and struck a heavily escort convoy. The convoy was bombed, the aircraft were then heavily attacked by flak and fighters. P/O Beatson & Sgt Bradley were shot down and seen to crash. It is feared that there was very little chance for the crews. The following Officers and N.C.O. were the members of the crews. P/O Beatson, P/O Jones Sgt Bradshaw Sgt Bradley P/O Batten & Sgt Kennedy. The second box, F/Lt Adams, P/O Bury & Sgt Whittle had no activity and returned safely to the base.

The third operation was a circus on Nov 1<sup>st</sup> W/Com Jenkins led nine of our aircraft and three from 82 Sqdn they landed at Predannoch and took off with the fighters to bomb Morlaix Aerodrome. This target was covered in cloud so they bombed Lannion, bombs bursting in the dispersal area. Slight flak was met but

no fighters, all our a/c return safely suffering neither casualties or damage.

— We hear that we have finished with shipping, and are going on night operations, so night flying will be the order of the day with an odd circus or two thrown in.

Nov 7<sup>th</sup> 1941 Diary back to normal, nothing much in the morning, all set for our first night flying, training only of course. Night flying tests in the afternoon. The following pilots & crews flew at night W/C Jenkins & crew, Sq/Ldr Pollard & crew, Sgt Shackleton & Crew (These crews are our night flying kings at present) F/Lt Adam P/O Iredale P/O Bury Sgt Glen Sgt Whittle Sgt Peters & Sgt Fisher as passengers. F/Lt Rolan & P/O Iredale took their crews and did one bump. A good nights work.

Nov 8<sup>th</sup> 1941 The morning off; All set for night flying but the W/Com washed out in the afternoon owing to weather. Night flying test were carried out.

Nov 9<sup>th</sup> 1941 Fairly slack in the morning, night flying test in the afternoon. The following flew with their crews doing two landings at night. S/Ldr Pollard, F/Lt Adam P/O Iredale. The following did one dusk landing P/O Bury Sgt Glen Sgt Whittle & Sgt Fisher. All crews seemed fairly confident.

Nov 10<sup>th</sup> 1941 Terrible weather all day, unable to do any flying, so organised Link, lectures etc. No night flying.

Nov 11<sup>th</sup> 1941 Booked Grimston this morning for bombing. Sgt Glen took off and bombed, but the weather closed down and he had to land at Sutton Bridge. Weather duff all day so played sport in the afternoon.

Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 1941 Fog again this morning. 'Gen' talk in the crew room. No flying except for Sgt Glen who managed to get home.

Nov 13<sup>th</sup> 1941 Weather still bad, restricted to ground training. Link, Aldis etc. Stand Down 13<sup>th</sup>.

Nov 15<sup>th</sup> 1941 Hardly seems worth writing the diary these days. Three crews have joined us Sgt Gannon, Sgt Davis and Sgt Dawes. Night flying. Sqn Ldr Newberry dusk landings. Sgt Whittle & P/O Bury local, F/L Cussens, Sgt Fisher and Sgt Glen, F/L Adam, P/O Iredale and Sgt Shackleton did a cross country, Iredale bombing at Grimston.

Nov 16<sup>th</sup> 1941 Morning off after night flying, talk in the afternoon. The fellows seem to have taken to night flying very well. F/L Adam had a slight mishap his undercart collapsed last night, very little damage and no one hurt.

Nov 17<sup>th</sup> 1941 A big nights work was carried out Sqn Ldr Newberry, P/O Bury, Sgt Whittle, F/L Cussen & Sgt Glen did a cross country. Whittle also bombed Grimston. Sgt Peters flew local and W/Co Jenkins flew Sgt Gannon round for experience. A good nights work.

18<sup>th</sup> Nov 1941 Morning off, nothing much doing. In future only operations, or other important events will be entered in this book.

Dec 8<sup>th</sup> 1941 After being held up for many weeks by bad weather, the Squadron did its first night operation to night. I call it the first as only W.Com Jenkins & crew have operated at night before. The target was the docks at Ostend, and the following nine crews took part. W/Com Jenkins. S/Ldr Pollard, F/Lt Cussens, S/Ldr Newberry, F/Lt Adam, P/O Iredale, P/O Bury, Sgt Shackleton & Sgt Whittle. The weather was fairly good, except in the target area where the crews ran into 8/10 Cumulus cloud, most crews had no trouble finding the target, but bombing results were mostly unobserved, and no spectacular results are claimed. All our aircraft returned safely, and the only damage was suffered by the W/Com, who ran into a near miss, the aircraft was well peppered and F/O Brancker received a very small wound in his foot, but is quite survivable. Other training flying was carried out and the squadron packed up at about 0600 hrs after starting with dusk landings. A very good nights work indeed.

Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> to Dec 28<sup>th</sup> Something big has been in the air for days, and it was with no surprise that the crews heard they had to move. The first shift took us as far as Driffield on Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> and on the 23<sup>rd</sup> we flew to Lossiemouth. The stay at Driffield was due to weather conditions. On Dec 24<sup>th</sup> W/Com Jenkins practice bombed getting data for the coming operations. Christmas Day was not celebrated by the Squadron, S/Ldrs Newberry & Pollard & F/Lt Adam practice bombed, the C.O. swung his compass all in preparation or the 'big op.' Dec 26<sup>th</sup> was a duff day, but the Squadron was 'briefed' for the operation. It proved to be a combined service effort. The Army & Navy raiding Norway. Our task was to bomb the runways on the Aerodrome at Herdla near Bergen; so ground a/c and putting the 'drome out of action so as not to interfere with the Army & Navy.

The attack was to be made at 250' hence the practice bombing on Christmas day. Dec 27<sup>th</sup> was fairly fine and the Squadron took off at 0920. The following crews were flying.

W/Com Jenkins P/O Bury & Sgt Glen S/Ldr Newberry P/O Iredale & Sgt Shackleton  
S/Ldr Pollard F/Lt Cussens & Sgt Fisher  
F/Lt Adams Sgt Whittle & Sgt Peters  
Sgt Dawes. And Sgt Davies took off as reserve.

Sgt Dawes had R/T trouble so Sgt Davies carried on and flew S/Ldr Pollard's formation.

The Squadron flew at 50' all the way across the North Sea, picked up the Norwegian Coast, and turned up for the target as was planned, the aerodrome loomed up and the Squadron climbed to 250' to attack in flights. A creditable piece of Navigating & Map Reading by F/O Brancker and W/Com Jenkins.

Each flight had its own area of the target to attack, the attack was carried out to perfection, and numerous hits were observed on the runways. One ME 109 crashed on take off, running into a bomb burst and is claimed destroyed. 5 E/A were seen in the target area but no attack was made.

An unfortunate incident occurred after bombing, Sgt Davis & Sgt Fisher crashed and were seen locked together when they hit the water, it is thought that Sgt Davis was hit by Flak!

The other eleven aircraft returned safely. Some excellent photographs were taken, a lot being published in the press.

The whole show was a credit to the Squadron and was hailed as the best show in 2 Group for many months. P.R.U photographs confirmed our reports.

Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 1942 Heard to day that W/Com Jenkins had been awarded the D.S.O and F/O Brancker a bar to his D.F.C. for the above show. Two well deserved decorations. Well done!

# NO: 114 SQUADRON.

# BOMBER COMMAND



S/LDR. NEWBURY P/O KENDRICKS. P/O KING



W/OPDR. JENKINS. P/O BRINKER. P/O GAY.



SGT. HAVENS. S/LDR. PITTERRSON. SGT. GRIFFINS.



SGT. HIRSHOND. S/LDR. POLARD. SGT. LYON.



SGT. BRUSHAW. P/O BRISON. P/O JONES.



P/O WIRENER.



P/O BAKER.



P/O TURNBALL.



P/O DANIS.



P/O MCHUL. P/O IRSDALE. SGT. TOWNSEND.



P/O BURY. SGT. BERNICHP. SGT. CRILLY.



SGT. CHURCH. SGT. PETERS. SGT. BIRD.



SGT. BRADLEY. P/O BITTEN. SGT. KENNEDY.



SGT. INGRAM. SGT. HARRISON. SGT. NGELL.



SGT. WHITTLE. SGT. BRANHAM. SGT. HOULIN.



SGT. WILLS. P/O ADAM. P/O STREET-FORTER.



P/O DENT. P/O CUSSENS. SGT. BURRELL.



SGT. SAUL. SGT. DUNDSON. SGT. PEPLER.



SGT. SLUDE. SGT. BALZER. SGT. ELLIOTT.



SGT. WEBSTER. SGT. GLEN. SGT. WHITE.



SGT. ERON. SGT. BRANKS. SGT. LOWCOCK.



SGT. KERRISON. SGT. ANSLEY. SGT. SCOTTWOOD.

14<sup>th</sup> OCT. 1941

No. 114 SQUADRON

14th October 1941

Air Crew 114 Squadron      8<sup>th</sup> Jan 1942

<u>W/Com Jenkins D.F.C.</u>	<u>F/O Brancker D.F.C.</u>	<u>F/Sgt Gray D.F.M.</u>
S/Ldr Newberry	P/O Kendrick	F/Sgt King
S/Ldr Pollard	Sgt Lyon	Sgt Hammond
F/Lt Adam	Sgt Willis	F/O Street-Porter
F/Lt Cussens	P/O Dent	Sgt Burrell
P/O Iredale	P/O Mc Paul	Sgt Townsend
P/O Bury	Sgt Beauchamp	Sgt Crilly
Sgt Shackleton	Sgt Eyres	Sgt Kennedy
Sgt Glen	Sgt White	Sgt Webster
Sgt Whittle	Sgt Shanahan	Sgt Hoblyn
Sgt Peters	Sgt Church	Sgt Bird
Sgt Dawes	P/O Richardson	Sgt Green
Sgt Popplestone	P/O Hawkins	P/O White
Sgt L'Hirondelle	P/O Inglis	Sgt Lang
P/O Pringle	Sgt Stevens-Jordan	Sgt Boydell
P/O Drysdale	Sgt Maynard	Sgt Pullen
P/O Wheeler	Sgt Davison	Sgt Donovan
P/O Mac Phail	Sgt Grantham	Sgt Clement
P/O Sutherland	Sgt Whitlock	Sgt Ebbage
P/O Coates	Sgt Evans	Sgt Ross McKenzie
P/O Ryan	P/O Paine	Sgt Padwick
P/O Morton	Sgt Pickering	Sgt Mills
Spare obs.	P/O Hendle	
Spare A.G	F/Sgt Coyle D.F.M.	
Nav. Off & Bombing Leader	F/Lt Baker D.F.C. D.F.M.	
Gunnery Leader	F/Lt Frayne	
Adjutant	F/Lt Warriner	
Eng. Off	F/O Dawes	
Doc'	F/O Turnbull	

Jan 11<sup>th</sup> 1942 We heard this morning that a Wellington crew were down in the 'drink' in the North Sea about 120 miles N.E of Cromer S/Ldr Pollard, F/Lt Adams and P/O Iredale took off in a formation to search the area for a dinghy. Bad visibility & snow showers were met and our fellows had to return after well searching the area. There was no sign of the dinghy. A Wellington went out after us, he also had no luck.

Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1942 Night operations to night the following crews were detailed to bomb the aerodrome at Schiphol Amsterdam. S/Ldr Pollard F/Lt Adam P/O Bury P/O Iredale Sgt Glen and Sgt Whittle. The following freshmen were sent out on their first operations to bomb the docks at Rotterdam. P/O Pringle P/O Drysdale P/O Wheeler and P/O Mac Phail. There was no moon and the weather was none too good. Most of the aerodrome people had great difficulty seeing anything, but saw flares in the area, S/Ldr Pollard seems definite about his bombing as an aircraft was also seen. The others may have been caught with a dummy. Sgt Whittle saw nothing & brought his bombs home. We never heard anything from F/Lt Adam and he is posted missing. 'Bill' Adam Sgt Willis and F/O Street-Porter are old hands in the squadron and such a popular and efficient crew will be greatly missed.

Sgt Glen had W/T failure but managed to land safely at Oakington.

The Rotterdam boys ran into worse weather than the others partly because they were flying higher. They seem to have found Rotterdam but most bombs were unobserved. P/O Mac Phail “piled up” on landing, but fortunately nobody was hurt.

Jan 28<sup>th</sup> 1942 ‘Intruder’ operations to night, the following aerodromes were the targets. W/Com Jenkins F/Lt Iredale P/O Drysdale and Sgt Glen, Soesterberg. S/Ldr Newberry Sgt Shackleton F/L Cussens and Sgt Peters Leeuwarden, S/Ldr Pollard P/O Bury Sgt Whittle and Sgt Dawes, Schiphol. The take off was started at 1800 hrs at 10 min intervals. Sgt Shackleton returned after 1 hour with a duff engine. The Soesterberg & Schiphol boys did fairly well and bombed fairly successfully but the weather was duff at Leeuwarden and S/Ldr Newberry F/Lt Cussens & Sgt Whittle had to bring their bombs back home. W/Com Jenkins caught a nasty one in the port plane, but other kites only suffered minute damage. Sgt Peters failed to return to base nothing being heard from the time he took off.

Feb 12<sup>th</sup> 1942 The squadron had been stood by for operation ‘Fuller’ for days, at last it seemed that it was the ‘gen’ this time; at about midday we heard that the German fleet had been sighted by a Spitfire in the straits of Dover. The fleet consisted of the “Scharnhorst” “Gneisenau” and “Prince Eugen” with destroyers and ‘E’ boats etc. the fleet were plotted and we were given a position between North Foreland and Ostend to attack. The following six crews took off to attack in formations from high level. W/Com Jenkins S/Ldr Pollard P/O Drysdale Sgt Dawes Sgt Shackleton & Sgt Popplestone. The weather helped the Hun and was so bad that our formation was split up. The W/Com managed to find the target in the snow & had visibility and attacked from 1200’ the results were unobserved. Flak was plentiful but the aircraft was not hit. P/O Drysdale failed to return and the other four crews brought their bombs home having failed to find the target in the bad weather. Later in the afternoon S/Ldr Newberry F/Lt Cussens and Sgt L’Hirondelle took off to have another crack at the fleet, by this time well up the Dutch coast. The formation managed to keep together, all crews bombing in formation from 11,000’ through a break in the clouds. The crews claimed a near miss or possibly a hit as the bombs were seen to straddle the target. This was a credible effort on the part of P/O Kendrick the leading observer. All these aircraft return to base undamaged, landing at night. We heard later that we were the only squadron in the group to bomb the target.

Feb 16<sup>th</sup> 1942 Three aircraft detailed for ‘intruder’ operations to night the target being the aerodrome at Soesterberg. The following crews took off at hourly intervals. Sgt Shackleton, F/Lt Cussens & Sgt Dawes. The weather was terrible and only Sgt Shackleton bombed the target. The other crews brought their bombs home. All our aircraft returned safely without damage. Sgt Dawes hit the fence coming in to land, but got away with it causing slight damage to the aircraft.

Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 1942 Six aircraft detailed for a circus to day like old times. The target was the submarine shelters in the docks at Ostend. The first flight consisted of W/Com Jenkins P/O Bury & Sgt Shackleton. The rendezvous with the fighters was made at Manston and the target attacked in good visibility from 10,000’. The first flights bombs fell short but hit a quay side, the second flights were unobserved but it is not considered likely they hit the shelters as they took the wrong aiming point. All our aircraft returned safely Sgt Shackleton’s aircraft had a near miss causing many holes, and he was hit in the parachute harness without injury to himself, his gunner Sgt Kennedy had his flying clothing torn also without injury, P/O Bury’s aircraft had a small hole in it.

## Air Crew As At 8<sup>th</sup> March 1942

<u>PILOT</u>	<u>AIR OBS</u>	<u>AIR GUNNER</u>
W/COM JENKINS D.S.O. D.F.C	F/O BRANCKER D.F.C. BAR.	F/SGT GRAY D.F.M.
S/LDR NEWBERRY	P/O KENDRICK	F/SGT KING
S/LDR POLLARD	P/O HINDLE	F/SGT HAMMOND
F/LT IREDALE	F/O M <sup>c</sup> CAUL	SGT TOWNSEND
P/O BURY	SGT BEAUCHAMP	SGT CRILLY
SGT SHACKLETON	SGT EYRES	SGT KENNEDY
SGT GLEN	F/SGT WHITE	SGT WEBSTER
SGT WHITTLE	SGT SHANAHAN	SGT HOBLYN
SGT DAWES	P/O RICHARDSON	SGT GREEN (i)
F/SGT POPPLESTONE	P/O HAWKINS	P/O WHITE
F/SGT L'HIRONDELLE	P/O INGLIS	SGT MEAKIN
P/O WHEELER	SGT DAVISON	SGT DONOVAN
P/O MAC PHAIL	SGT GRANTHAM	SGT CLEMANS
P/O COATES	SGT EVANS	SGT ROSS M <sup>c</sup> KENZIE
P/O RYAN	P/O PAINE	SGT PADWICK
SGT ATKINS	SGT SULLIVAN	SGT HARRISON
P/O MOLESWORTH	P/O DENNY	SGT BURBERRY
SGT SIMPSON	P/O VALLE JONES	SGT JENKINSON
P/O COMPTON	SGT RAMSEY	SGT WATKINS
P/O STRASSER	P/O ALLEN	SGT GREEN (ii)
P/O OWEN	P/O SPEIGHT	SGT FRANKLIN
SGT CAUSLEY	SGT SPENCER	SGT GRAY
P/O BRADY	W/OFF LUTWYCHE	F/SGT COYLE D.F.M.
F/LT - MAR 14		

BOMBING LEADER	F/LT BAKER D.F.C. D.F.M.
GUNNERY LEADER	F/LT FRAYNE
ADJUTANT	F/LT WARRINER
ENG. OFFICER	F/O DAVIS
MED. OFFICER	F/LT KRUSIN

### HONOURS LIST SINCE APRIL 1941

PILOT OFFICER	STAPLES	D.F.M.
SGT	MCELROY	D.F.M.
W/COM	NICOL	D.S.O.
S/LDR	JUDSON	D.F.C.
F/O	BAKER. D.F.M.	D.F.C.
W/COM	JENKINS D.F.C.	D.S.O.
F/O	BRANCKER. D.F.C.	BAR TO D.F.C.
F/LT	PATTERSON	D.F.M.
P/O	GRIFFITHS	D.F.M.
F/LT	BAKER. D.F.C. D.F.M	Men. in Deep

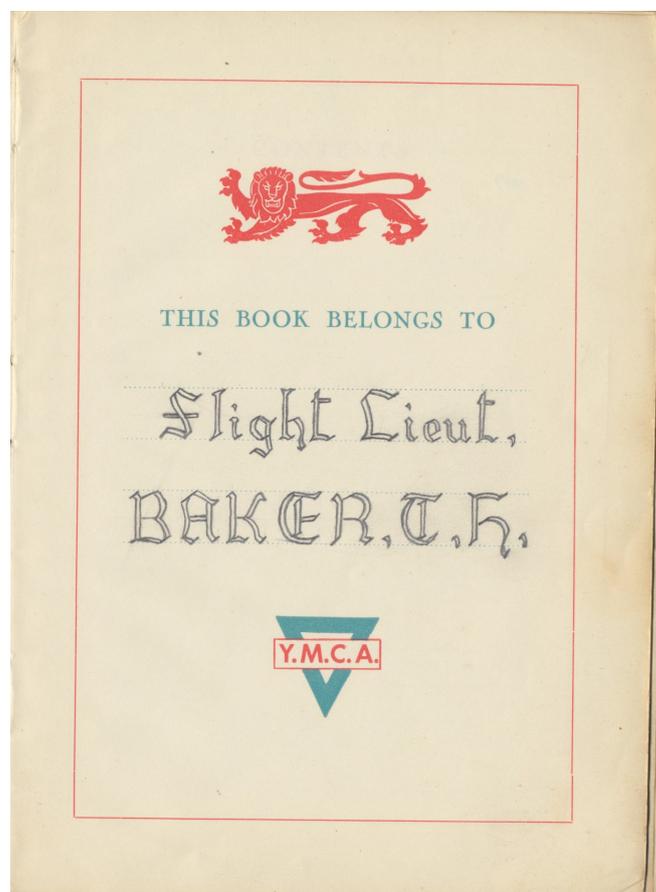
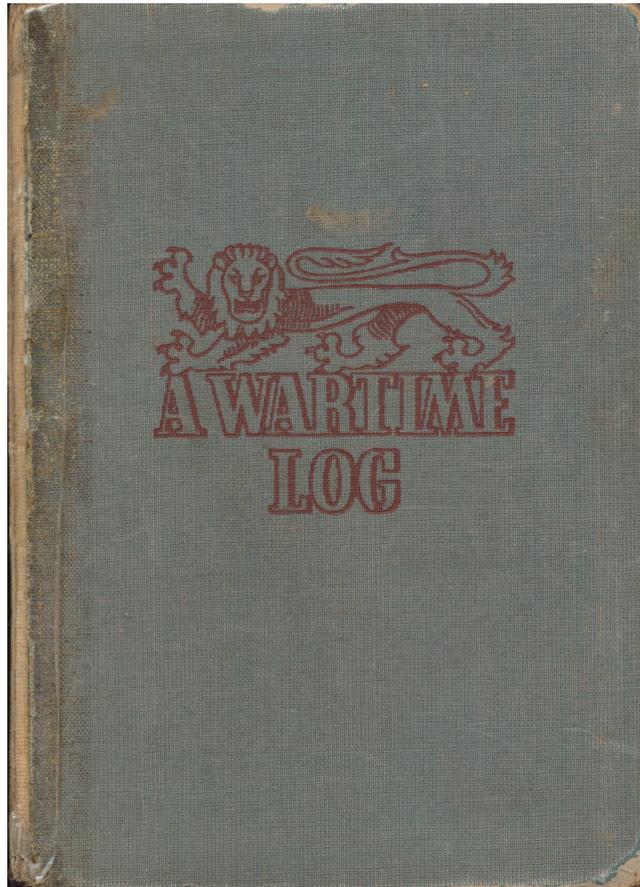
The second of Tom's diaries leads up to the fatal night when they were hit by flak over Amsterdam on an intruder mission to Schipol airport, they crash landed at Oosteinderweg 489 Aalsmeer-Oost at 23.22. Tom was severely injured and taken to the Queen Wilhemina hospital in Amsterdam with Butch, while Bok was left with his legs trapped under the engine of the aircraft overnight until the Germans brought a crane to lift it off the following morning.

Let the diary now continue to tell you a true account of Tom's life as a POW in Stalag Luft III and some remarkable and emotional memoirs.

TRANSCRIPTION OF A WARTIME LOG BY THOMAS BAKER

JANUARY 1929 - MAY 1945

REPRODUCED AS WRITTEN



### MOVEMENTS AS A P.O.W

- 17<sup>th</sup> APRIL 1942                      Shot down by light flak near AMSTERDAM  
REMOVED TO Luftwaffe Lazarette (Ex QUEEN  
WILHEMINA Hospital) AMSTERDAM
- 2<sup>nd</sup> JULY 1942                        Moved by Red Cross train Via UTRECHT COLOGNE  
And FRANKFURT (Attached to DULAG LUFT) Nr OBEREURSEL  
Nr FRANKFURT ON MAINE
- 27<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 1942                    Moved by train via FRANKFURT-ON-MAINE, ERFURT to Reserve Lazarette  
STRADTRODA (Attached to STALAG IXC ) Nr JENA
- 11<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 1942                Moved by train via JENA and LEIPZIG, to EAST Compound STALAG LUFT  
III SAGAN
- 3<sup>rd</sup> MARCH 1943                      Moved to new Compound (afterwards known as NORTH CAMP)
- 6<sup>th</sup> FEB 1945                         Moved by cattle truck to STALAG XIIIID NÜRNBERG
- 3<sup>rd</sup> MAR 1945                         Moved by cattle truck to STALAG VIIB MOOSEBERG



Aufnahme: PK-Jakobsen-Hoffmann-Stapf  
Flak und Nachtjäger haben den britischen Verbänden, die zu Terrorangriffen in das Reichsgebiet einflogen, hart zugesetzt. Auch dieser Bomber wurde vor Erreichen seines Zieles abgeschossen

#### NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPH OF OUR AEROPLANE

#### BLENHEIM MKIV Q-RT

CRASH LANDED BY W. COM. HULL AT APPROX 2300HRS 17/4/42 NO MOONLIGHT. CREW ALL SAFE, BUT ALL INJURED.

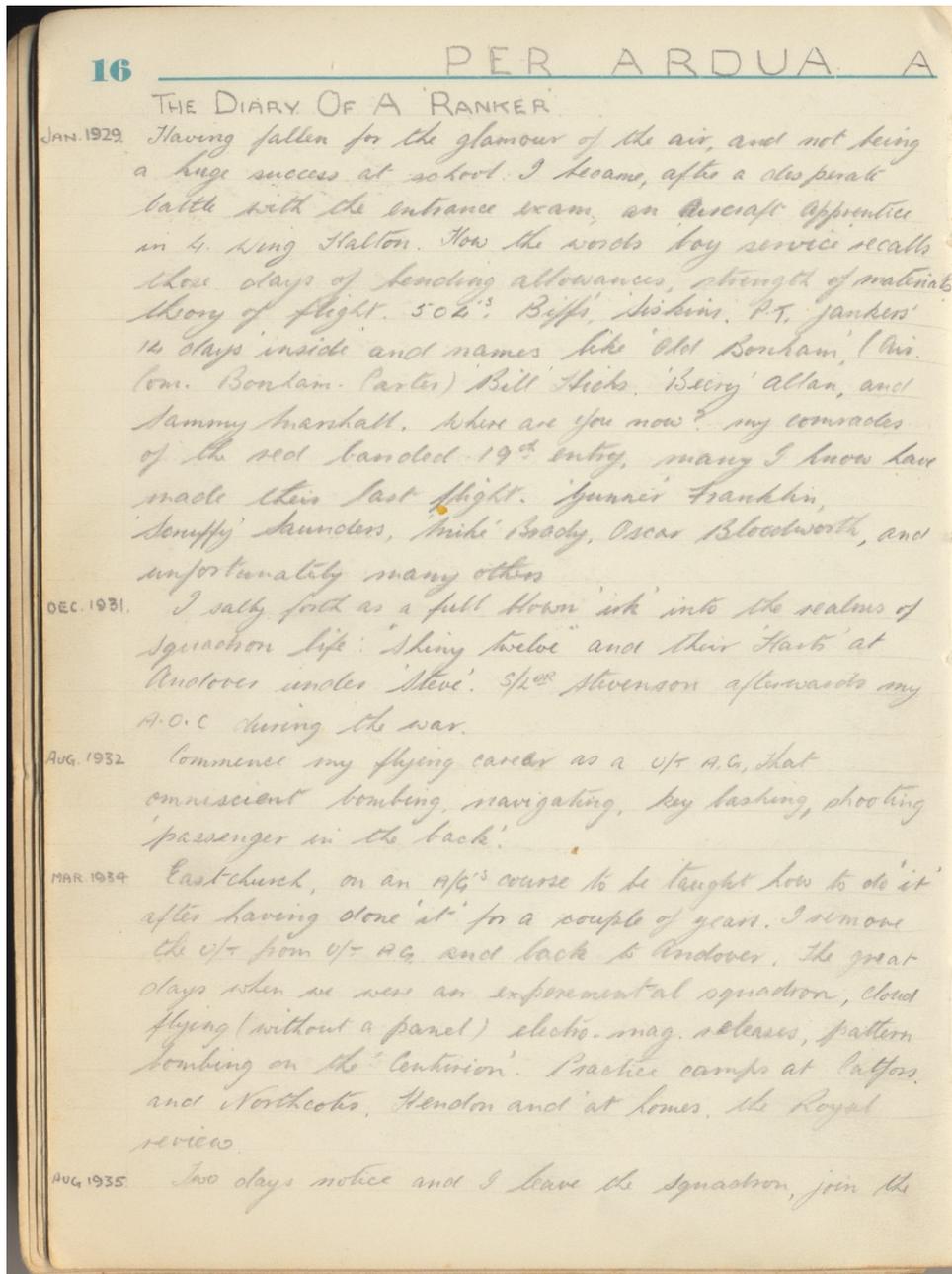
PHOTOGRAPH FROM "NEDERLANDE ZEITUNG" 1/6/42

#### Translation of Caption

'Flak and night fighters had hard engaged British Squadrons which have flown into the area of the Reich for their terror attacks. This bomber was shot down before reaching its target.

TARGET AND TASK: NIGHT INTRUDING SCHIPOL AERODROME AMSTERDAM

Registration number of Bristol Blenheim MK IV: Z7430



## PER ARDUA AD ASTRA

### THE DIARY OF A RANKER

JAN 1929 Having fallen for the glamour of the air, and not being a huge success at school, I became, after a desperate battle with the entrance exam, an aircraft apprentice in 4 wing Halton. How the words 'boy service' recalls those days of bonding allowances, strength of materials, theory of flight, 504's, Biffs, Siskins PT, 'jankers', 14 days inside and names like 'Old Bonham' (Air Com. Bonham Carter) 'Bill Hicks'. 'Barry' Allan, and Sammy Marshall. Where are you now? My comrades of the red banded 19th entry, many I know have made their last flight, 'Gunner' Franklin, 'Scruffy' Saunders, Mike Brady, Oscar Bloodworth, and unfortunately many others.

DEC 1931 I sally forth as a full blown 'irk' into the realms of Squadron life. 'Shining twelve' and their Harts at Andover under 'Steve.' S/Ldr Stevenson afterwards my A.O.C during the war.

AUG 1932 Commence my flying career as a U/T A.G. that omniscient bombing, navigating, key bashing, shooting passenger in the back.

MAR 1934 Eastchurch, on an A/G's course to be taught how to do 'it' after having done 'it' for a couple of years. I remove the U/T form U/T A.G. and back to Andover. The war days when we were an experimental squadron, cloud flying (without a panel) electro-mag releases, pattern bombing on the 'Centurion'. Practice camps at Catfoss and Northcote, Hendon and at Lomes the Royal Review.

AUG 1935 Two days notice and I leave the Squadron, join the 'Neuralgia' at Southampton and away to Malta. 'The Abyssinian Crisis'. Here I become a fighter boy in the back of a 'Demon' Aerobatics and shoot ups of the fleet from Hal Far, and bathing in the lovely clear water at Calafrana. What a year, what a squadron, 74(F) Shades of Micky Mannock, Grid Caldwell and Ira Jones. I was sorry to leave the 'pearl of the Mediterranean' the land of Goats, Smells and Bells. The Matlots..... hell.

AUG 1936 Move as a squadron on the 'Somersetshire' to Hornchurch still with the old 'Demons'. Gauntlets start to trickle in. These were many of the boys who four years later blazed their way to fame across the war torn skies of England in the Battle of Britain. Mahlan and Lock to mention the most famous of many.

APRIL 1937 Dragged away from the social life of East London to join 211 at Grantham, bound for Egypt, and sailed with them on the Lancashire.

MAY 1937 Helwan, Egypt, 211 Squadron with 'Hinds' back again now on the old day bomber routines, punctuated with a few trips to Palestine and the Depot not forgetting the landing ground recos, that always ended in a weekend party at the Rock in Mersa.

DEC 1938 Home again, this time for an air observers course at Northcotes, sailing in the Derbyshire. I seem doomed to the old troopers. What are these luxurious P&Os?

JAN 1939 Commence the old grind. My instructor 'Jack' Hannah was a little surprised to see me, as he was still teaching the same syllabus as he taught me at Eastchurch in '34. I have now risen to the dizzy height of Corporal.

JUNE 1939 Sergeant on probation. Air Observer Group 2 (9/- per Diem) Posted to 90 Squadron, West Raynham. Worry, worry, long nosed Blenheims, what a toll they had taken and we weren't even at war yet.

SEP 1939 Enter the spanner in the works. You can't expect to fly around for ever at the Country's expense and get away with it, line up your bombsights and swing your compass, we're at war now my lad. T'was not to be. The squadron was broken up and six crews were used to form the O.T.U at Upwood. I was among them. Now enter the snag of trying to teach other people how to dodge 'flax' and shoot down fighters when you haven't seen a shot fired in anger, still neither had anybody else and somebody had to start these

things. Eventually crewed up with S/Ldr Hull and Sgt Hibbs, wangled out of the training net and 'away to have a go'.

JULY 1940 Operational type at Wattisham still in Blenheims. What a life, oh for those days again. An op and then away to Ipswich with the finest collection of fellows that ever lolled across a crew room table, many of whom bought it in the hectic days of the B of B. Formation and solo stooges, cloud cover jobs, barge hunting, invasion ports etc. till Christmas and then back to Upwood for a 'rest' and a 'gong' each by way of a Christmas box. Still a sergeant incidentally but now off probation and on the 12/6 a packet.

JAN 1941 Teaching them again, but this time with a bit of experience. A Bombing leaders course in March and then - Thank Goodness...

APRIL 1941 Commissioned and away again on Ops. Hull now a Wing Co and the CO Thornaby for a couple of weeks and then Leuchars, still in the same group but 'tangled up' with Coastal Command. Mostly shipping these days off Norway, long but fairly easy trip, occasionally running into a spot of trouble, meeting the 'Lutzow' and seven destroyers for instance.

JUNE 1941 We strike our first piece of misfortune as a crew Harry Hibbs was hit by a single cannon shell that struck his turret when we were attacking a merchant ship off the Norwegian coast, he died in Perth hospital the same night. And so we lost one of the finest W/Ops in the service, one of the old school who was always jovial when things looked sticky and a fine friend to have, I only knew him once to be depressed. He had been unable to fire on a HE 111 from close range when we flew beneath it on a night intruder trip, his guns failed him due to no fault of his own. And with the thing sitting on the end of his barrels he had to let it go. Oh fortunate goon, you will never know how near you were to your 'Heldentot'.

JULY 1941 Back to West Raynham with F/O Pat Madden in the back now. I'm now an F/O running the Nav Section and squadron bombing leader. We are doing 'Circuses' these days with hoards of fighters but all on our side. What a piece of cake it was safer than running the flare path. Great days till an unfortunate accident broke us up again. The W/Co broke his back. I remained screened on the squadron and find I have been mentioned in the C in C's dispatches. The squadron now on shipping. I sit in the office preparing the boy's gen and running training and watch them go out to battle against 'flax and snappers' in the grim battle they fought against terrible odds, the battle that took a great toll of the Blenheim boys.

Aug 1941 Called out of my office to lead the low level daylight raid of 72 Blenheims on \*Cologne. Pat and I with the new C.O. W/Co Nicols. Fortune favoured us and the Luftwaffe never caught up with us till we nearly reached the Dutch coast on the way home, here instead of meeting our own fighters, the 'Goons' awaited with a warm reception, we got three of them Pat knocking down an uncautious yellow nosed 109 who ventured too near and eventually reached home minus nine Blenheims, two had been shot down negotiating the fighters, hence I suppose the failure to rendy vous. We also had two casualties in hosp. We all three got a gong for the show. Pat & the W/Co went on their next trip. Pat was taking his A/G's place who was in hospital wounded. W/Co Jenkins took over and I got my Flight Lieut in December mostly night intruding these days. Christmas comes and goes and.....

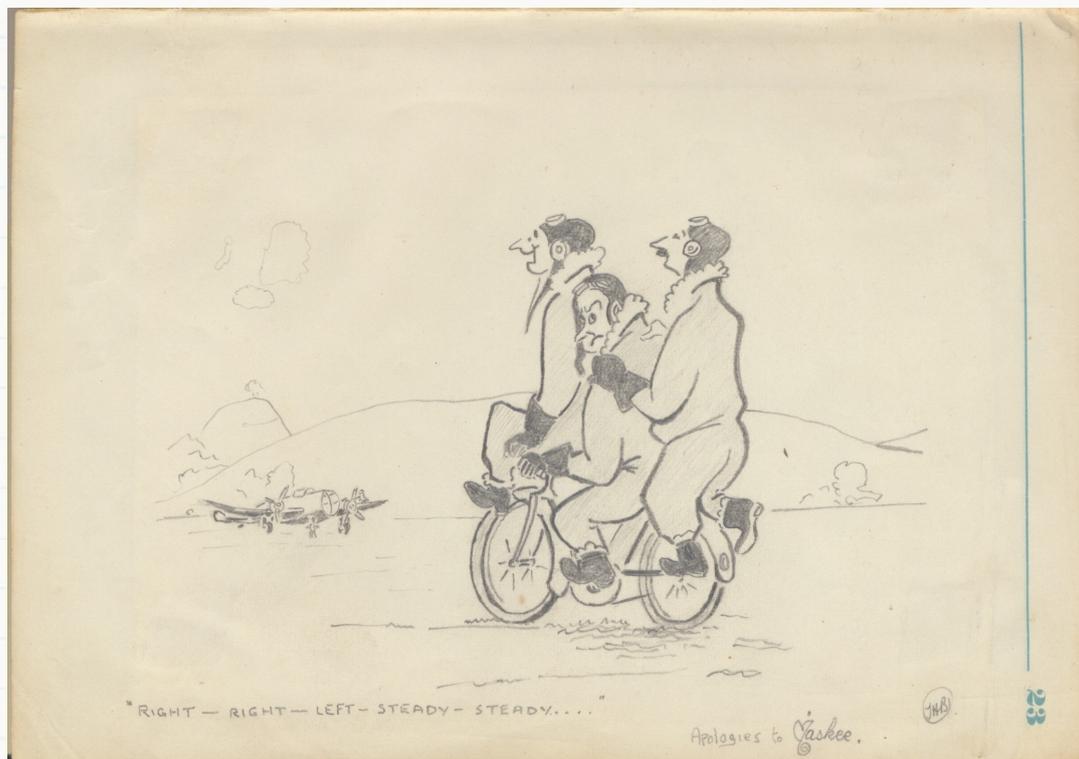
MAR 15<sup>th</sup> 1942 Stop the War. I get married in Raynham Church. As the great episode concerns only two people and would appear a little irrelevant in this diary, I will not give it much space here. Sufficient to say Judy was in the ops room and my work use to take me in that direction a couple of times a day, when I found I was going that way once an hour I ..... well anyway this is not a romantic novel and as stated we were married on Mar 15th. Very soon after my wedding Jenks and his crew bought it on a night intruder near the Zyder Zee, this great crew had a fine record and were twice decorated, their loss robbed the Squadron of a fine C.O and a very brave man, A first class navigator, photographer and mess character and a small but highly efficient W/Op AG

APRIL 1942 W/Co Hull now fit again takes over his old squadron and P/O Morton a second tour man arrives from Upwood to be our gunner. He put in 3 or 4 hours training and finally.....

APRIL 17<sup>th</sup> 1942 Away again on a night intruder on Schipol shore near Amsterdam. Misfortune played a prominent part and the first shot fired against us put out one motor. We eventually crashed outside Amsterdam and were badly smashed up. The Wing Co & Morton were up and about after about a week, but I was doomed to 8 months hospital. And after invaliding in Amsterdam, Hohemark and Stadroda, I was eventually sent to Luft III Sagan. The Airmen's Kriegsgefengnager.

DEC 12<sup>th</sup> 1942 Arrived at Sagan where on the course of my stay I met a few old faces again. W/Co Hull & Morton of course, Abbott who was with me at Halton. Marshall & Bristow (Ist tour at Wattisham) Don Gerricke, Dick Gunning, Len Trent, Phillips (all Upwood) and many others. So here I stay nothing being worthy of recording till my next writing which will be

WAR OVER! and back to U.K



SKETCH DRAWN BY TOM BAKER

JAN 21 1945 The above was a slight miscalculation. Due to the Russian push the camp was evacuated at short notice and the famous march took place. Due to a twisted knee I did not go, but eventually left by cattle truck on Feb 4th after a terrible five day journey we arrived at Nürnberg XIII D to find all the boys have gone to Bremen. Here we met up with a lot of the Americans however. This is an awful camp, no bedding, comfort, food and anything with an abundance of fleas & bed bugs. Roll on the boat!

3<sup>rd</sup> MAR 1945 On the move again this time from the western point, again I managed a ride to VII B at Moozeburg things fairly well organised here and food quite good. And finally with a small battle in the area we were LIBERATED AT 1200 HRS on 29th APRIL 1945 BY THE 14th ARM. DIV. OF GEN PATONS 3rd U.S ARMY AND SEE THE STARS AND STRIPES FLYING OVER THE TOWN AND CAMP

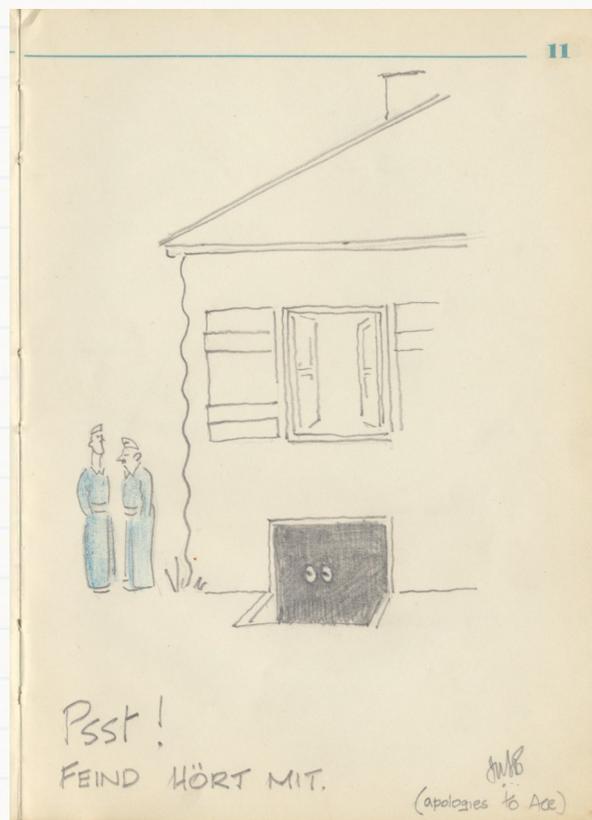
8<sup>th</sup> MAY 1945 left VVB for Landshut aerodrome

10<sup>th</sup> MAY 1945 Flown by USAAF Dakota to Rheims then after a few hours flown out by RAF Lancaster to Westcott and in to Cosford by train, and finally on leave on May 12th 1945. And repeating the words of a German Officer in April 1942. For you the war is over.

#### Air Log

10/5/42 DAKOTA 3J-H      1st Lt BARHARD R H      USAAF      LANDSHIT-RHEIMS  
0915-1150    2Hrs 35 MINS

LANCASTER BM-W      W/O BELLIVEAU      RCAF      RHEIMS-WESTCOTT  
1835-2010    1Hr 35 MINS



SKETCH DRAWN BY TOM BAKER

THE LETTER ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE GIVES A VERY TRUE PICTURE OF XIID WHEN TAKEN OVER BY THE AMERICANS AFTER THEIR MARCH FROM SAGAN. THE CAMP WAS PREVIOUSLY ITALIAN. THE STRENGTH IS NEARLY 5,200 AMERICANS AND 200 BRITISH ETC. AT THE TIME OF WRITING CONDITIONS HAVE NOT IMPROVED. IN FACT RATIONS HAVE BEEN BAD CONSIDERABLE CUTS. AND AFTER ONE MONTH WE HAVE HAD 4/5<sup>TH</sup> OF A RED CROSS FOOD PARCEL ISSUED AND ONE HOT SHOWER!

LETTER SENT TO PROTECTING POWER FROM S.A.O NÜRNBERG

To: the Commandant Stalag Luft 3 Nürnberg

FROM: S.A.O Stalag Luft 3 (Date 1st March 1945?)

SUBJECT: Complaints respecting the conditions of captivity

1. Under the provision of the *International Convention relative to the treatment of P.O.Ws* published at Geneva Switzerland July 27th 1929 of which the USA and German Reich are signatory powers Part 3 Act 5 Chap 1 Act 72 Subject "Complaints of POWs respecting conditions of captivity"

The Senior American Officer of Stalag Luft 3 Nürnberg Germany presents in writing those basic requirements violated by the Retaining Power at this camp, citing the authority as contained in the convention, and such violations are as follows:

A. POW Camps Proximity of Military targets

Stalag Luft 3 is within approximately 3kms of a major joint and marshalling yard. During the past two weeks the local area has been bombed by heavy aerial efforts with apparent attention to rail road targets. Dispersion of bombs both day and night has been considerable and many have been close to the camp there are no slot trenches or shelters POWs may use during raids. Prisoners are kept in overcrowded huts at the point of a gun. The location of this camp and local air raid precaution policy is unjust an untenable protest of the strongest nature is likely registered for the present & future consideration of the Convention.

B. Food and Clothing 1. Inadequate Diet

The present German ration to POWs according to medical opinion is less than that required for basic metabolism and will inevitably lead to loss of weight and starvation, under the present conditions of unhygienic, unhealthful circumstances resistance of men will become as low as to render them highly susceptible to disease.

2. German Issue Dehydrated vegetables are constantly wormy, no salt, jam or honey is sacred. As closely as can be figured the present ration totals not more than 1215 calories per man per day, which under comfortable circumstances is insufficient to sustain existence for a protracted period. It is impossible even with an inflated imagination to consider the present German issue as Depot troop ration.

3. Communal Issue Permission is requested to distribute food from kitchens during air raids in order that such provisions as are possible may be served warm.

4. Clothing Replacements and repair facilities, there is no stock of clothing nor is there any replacement or repair facilities provided as required of the Retaining Power. A majority of the men from the Sagan area arrived here with only the stock of clothing in which they stood. New people arriving here from the Italian

Theatre are destitute. Clothing and shoes being worn are rapidly being worn out. Boots overcoats and trousers are suggested.

C. Installation of Camps      1. Overcrowding of barracks

At the present time there is only 19sq. feet of barracks floor space and 11? Cu. Ft of air space per man. In this minuscule area men must live eat & sleep. This is a serious condition of overcrowding which may lead to respiratory born epidemics such as chloro-spinal meningitis, pneumonia, influenza etc. aggravated by the heat malnutrition & filth as well. Present conditions are apparently condoned by the respective authorities.

2. Lack of Heat No coal is provided to barracks and a shortage of exists in communal kitchens. Present rations must be used in the hospital & kitchens. 2 kitchens have been closed and still only 150 KG<sup>S</sup> per day per kitchen has been available. A minimum of 400 KG<sup>S</sup> is required. This condition enhances the unhealthfulness of the barracks, dirtiness of the food utensils & containers and means cold or lukewarm food.

3. Shortage of Beds Many men do not have the Depot troop issue or blankets, many have no bed of any kind & must sleep on the cold damp floor. At present there are 1276 men sleeping on the floor in camp 5,6, &7. Stuffing palliases are vermin ridden with no replacement or opportunity to clean those in use. It is filth that no depot troops of the Retaining Power are subjected to.

4. Poor Lighting of the barracks and aborts is below the standard for the depot troops and no convenience of acceptability is afforded between 2300 & 0600 hrs. No intelligent method of communication with the hospital for emergencies is afforded during lock up hours other than by voice from barracks to barracks. A light warning system of some kind is an immediate necessity. Night aborts having no light contribute to more filthiness.

D. Hygiene in Camps. Inadequate bathing & washing facilities It has been planned but not executed in fact to give showers to POW once each two weeks. The shower officer reports that the Abwehr Dept. has interfered unnecessarily and a little undisstanding is necessary in order to alter what few facilities are available. No laundry facilities, the lack of hot water, soap, space necessary for washing & drying clothing, dishes, food containers leads to infection and dysentery. Wash houses have no more than 2 cold water faucets add to prevalent overcrowding 450 men must depend on 2 water outlets.

2. Vermin Rats, mice, bedbugs, lice & fleas are prevalent throughout the camp. Anti vermin & disinfectants are non existent de-lousing of barracks are too sporadic to be effective. The present disinfectant is so weak that it will not destroy vermin eggs & it is doubtful that it even kills the living organism, indicative of the filthy conditions a blow torch is necessary for the elimination of eggs & larvae.

3. No cleaning materials for cleaning Barracks, Kitchens, Aborts. Clothing & Persona of P.O.Ws Soap is not available, brushes, mops and brooms are non existent. Disinfectants & vermin powders are not issued. 50 rolls of toilet paper for 5600 men for a month has been the only issue of toilet paper.

4. Lack of Cooking & Heating Materials Very few utensils for cooking & heating and most P.O.W eat from used Cans.

5. Shortage of Medical Supplies. It is practically impossible to obtain medical supplies from German sources. Emergency supplies from the move to Nürnberg from Sagan are depleted and there appears to be no possibility of replacements.

6. General Sanitation. Debris & Garbage disposal facilities are inadequate. Night abort cans leak & containers are not furnished in sufficient numbers. Chemicals in some aborts leak badly, aborts are open and will be a potential source of epidemics during the fly season. No storage space is available in barracks to keep clothing & food in a sanitary condition. Few tools for general repair & improvisation have been issued & those made locally have been unnecessarily confiscated by the Abwehr Dept. Windows & barracks are in bad need of replacement & repair.

E. Mail, Personal Parcels & Censorship

1. Mail. Mail has been at the camp more than a week without being distributed.
2. Personal Parcels. Distribution of parcels policy is badly in need of clarification
3. Censorship for the above:- It is believed that a vital item, mail is being unduly & unnecessarily delayed.

F. Religious Activities & Restricted Personnel Access to all compounds & provisions an access to outside hospitals has not been satisfactory for either Protestant or Catholic Chaplains, the absence of a guard is not only manifestly unnecessary but also seems to imply a disregard for the Chaplains office. Parole walks for protected personnel should be separate and thereby predictable to other P.O.W.s

G. Entertainment & Recreation. 1. Entertainment Books are practically non existent & congestion of billets in camps necessitate utilization of space normally used as a theatre & chapel for barracks. Intellectual & spiritual welfare is suffering under absent maintainable obstacles.

2. Recreation. Ground space for callisthenics or organized athletics is not available. This total lack of facilities adds to the mental & physical discontent of all concerned.

H. Canteen Supplies. Canteen in operative so provisions are being made for the purchase of local articles. Razors, razor blades, soap, tooth paste, tooth brushes, combs watches and barber supplies are badly needed.

Sept 11 Authorities of the Retaining Power having announced their helplessness in alleviating the present deplorable conditions due to transport shortage & material supplies. The SAO suggests the following courses of action subject to approval of the German Reich, the USA and the Protecting Power.

A. Parole March and Internment

P.O.W<sup>s</sup> of this camp undertake under parole not to escape, a march 20kms a day to the Swiss border where they will be interned for the duration of the war with Germany. Food will be procured according to the German ration or one Red X parcel per man per 75kms.

B. Parole March to a New Location

P.O.W<sup>s</sup> of this camp will undertake under parole a march of 20kms a day to any new location, out of military target area accessible to Red Cross supplies of food, clothing and medical supplies. Given proper tools and materials they will do what construction is necessary. Food supplies will be in accordance with IIA above.

iii. It is requested that a Representative of the Retaining Power be permitted to visit this camp and verify the veracity of these statements.

Signed DAN H. ALKIRE COL.AC.

S.A.O

These are a few of the notes written in Tom's diary by fellow POWs including Canadian, Australian and American airmen, probably when they learned of the liberation of the camp. Tom was well liked by the other men as he was older, and the young men looked upon him as a friend and mentor.

Robert "Spider" Stitt Walney Island 92 Ocean Road. Barrow-in-Furness.  
Nav of "Lancaster" - beating up people leaving 1/6d dance in Köln while returning from an opp.

Left hospital one year later for Sagan still in "Plaster of Paris" How did I know it was 1/6d?  
Read sign over hall— "Dance 1 Mark 50 Pfennig" 16/11/43

.....  
Victor Frank Cage WINTON 2807  
11 Mortimer Rd Bournemouth Hants.

12 months opps in Coastal, 16 months at O.T.U The pupils wanted experiences, so they were sent in the Bremen raid 25/6/42. I went as well as three other instructors in a Hudson all pupils got back but I managed to find my way to SAGAN.

.....  
SEPT. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1940 'SALOON BAR' THE BEAR, ESHER

To one of the many who didn't make it—from one of the few who did.

Keep your adjectival temper Tom, or your hair will fall out: and don't forget that when you're 30 you're nearly 40, and when you're 40.....!

R Churchill

.....  
ALAN RIGHETTI R.A.A.F  
9 EVANS COURT  
TOORAK. MELBOURNE  
AUSTRALIA.

A little south of Zuara  
Not far from Tripoli,  
He saw me first,  
Then one short burst \_\_\_\_\_  
It ended most unhappily

Alan Righetti  
22-1-43 so?

?  
Bring the wife and kids out for the next Test series Tom old son, but remember what happened at Sagan!  
KEITH BAXTER RAAF

c/o J NEWNHAM ESQ  
735 HAMPTON RD  
MIDDLE BRIGHTON. VIC.  
AUSTRALIA

Halifax II

Shot down happy valley Oct 2<sup>ND</sup> 1942 about 2100 hrs, leak, engine finger trouble - normal, don't ty to aerobat a Halifax on 3 engines!

Baled-out landed on a roof top, made the remaining 20 feet or so entirely unhindered by Mr Irvine's contraption.

All the best Tom & I still think the boy apprentices lived like kings?

K Baxter

.....

Rae & "Goose" Guess

444 Strathcona Ave

Westmount PS

Canada

I knew your boy, Mrs Guess -

He went through hell!

Montreal's a good spot, Tom; drop in sometime

.....

Bob Crot

425 S NORMAL PARKWAY

CHICAGO ILL USA

I joined the RCAF to escape the draft in '40. Hurricanes and Spits in England (in between discovering that your English beer and English girls are really worth raving about) Shot down in Sept '42 - goons say m\_\_\_\_\_ done it - the cad.

Hospital in Matruh, Athens, Italy & Germany. Spent my time as POW trying to figure out how I'll tell my brothers what I meant when I wrote home "to get a nice soft, easy, job not flying with the RAF"

Good luck Tommy; see you when I reach England on my world cruises.

Bob Crot

.....

RUMORS COME and RUMORS GO but We BOARDERS STAY ON FOREVER!

A year of English beer preceeded [sic] my becoming a Kriegie on August 1, 44 So you know I wasn't in condition for much of this.

California doesn't quite compare as a Vacation spot to Sagan but you might try it sometime. Be a guest of an indebted Kriegie

*Signature*

LT. Delbert E Harris 5311 Magnolia, Riverside, Cali



Light and Shadow

All my life, it seems, I've wasted  
 Seventeen hundred days the same  
 Dreaming of a sweet Armistice  
 Now it's time the ending came.

"Russian troops surrounding Breslau!"  
 Now, Dame Fortune - please be kind  
 "Pack your kit bags boys - we're marching  
 Those who can't march stay behind!"

What a break - you lucky kriegie -  
 Let the others run about.  
 Stay behind, right here in Sagan  
 Uncle Joe will get you out.

Ten more days - alert, expectant  
 "Heat the rumble from the line?"  
 Came the tenth day: Damn we're moving"  
 "Uncle Joe?" "No, not a sign."

Nürnberg, ok desolation  
 Filthy Stalag 13 D  
 Heatless, Lightless, foodless, crowded  
 Lice and ventilation - Free!

Nürnberg - the party centre  
 Nürnberg - what misery  
 Here we wait the final outcome  
 Lord, when will the ending be?

NH

5.3.45

.....

Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben		Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke	
Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: <b>Stalag Luft 3</b>		Nr. <u>39 677</u> Lager: <u>Stalag IX C</u>	
Name: <u>B A K E R</u>		Staatsangehörigkeit: <u>England</u>	
Vorname: <u>Thomas</u>		Dienstgrad: <u>F/Lt.</u>	
Geburtstag und -ort: <u>16.8.13 b/Bombay</u> <u>Indien</u>		Truppenteil: <u>R.A.F.</u> Komp. usw.:	
Religion: <u>C. O. E.</u>		Zivilberuf: <u>aktiv</u> Berufs-Gr.:	
Vorname des Vaters: <u>Thomas</u>		Matrikel Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaates): <u>45 552</u>	
Familiennamen der Mutter: <u>Nash</u>		Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): <u>Amsterdam</u> <u>17.4.42</u>	
		Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert: <u>verwu</u>	
Des Kriegsgefangenen	Lichtbild		Nähere Personalbeschreibung
		Grösse	Haarfarbe
		<u>1.83</u>	<u>d'blond</u>
Fingerabdruck des rechten I Zeigefingers		Besondere Kennzeichen:	
		<u>Narbe zwischen den Augenbrauen</u>	
		Name und Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen	
		<u>Frau: Judy Baker</u> <u>Avoca Stonehenge Road</u> <u>DURRINGTON Wilts.</u>	
		<u>BAKER, T</u> Wenden!	

COPY OF TOM'S POW PERSONELLE CARD FROM STALAG LUFT III

## SOMETHING SPECIAL

BY

TOM BAKER

Reproduced as written

Many of us will have often heard the old sayings such as The Devil looks after his own, Only the good die young etc etc and many more like them. They are quite prevalent during this war and nearly always applied jokingly to a friend or acquaintance who had a narrow squeak. Of course such rubbish would not apply to oneself, or would it? Let me tell you about my final operational sortie in the old Blenheim, and of those concerned.

Firstly 'Bok' Hull. I first met Bok when I was posted to a Blenheim squadron in Norfolk in the Spring of 1939. He was a Flying Officer Pilot, a South African serving in the RAF. I was a Sgt Observer with some 10 years service. Soon after war was declared we crewed up operationally and we were to do our 'Ops' together. (One exception, I was 'loaned' for the big Blenheim daylight raid on the Cologne power stations).

Bok was an excellent pilot and a perfectionist. He pushed us all very hard but it was mostly himself that carried the load. He and I worked well together and backed up by some experienced air gunners we became a very experienced and, I believe, very successful crew.

Some months prior to our final sortie Bok was the Wing Commander CO and I a Flt Lt. I was virtually his No.1. I was always to sleep adjacent to his room. Often he would dig me out in the middle of the night and we would go up to the hangars and dispersal to talk to the ground crew and check up on aircraft for the next day. He frequently consulted me and sought my advice on many aspects such as dealing with the NCO's and Erks. At the time I'm considering we had a busy spell of 'Ops' and had recently lost our gunner Harry Hibbs. We were poking around the Norwegian fjords looking for the Bremen or some such vessel when we ran into a flak ship. Bok immediately took it on and we were doing reasonably well when one cannon shell went through Harry's turret and exploded inside. He was in a very poor condition and I made to go to his assistance. Unfortunately I was unable to get thro' because of the armour plate behind the pilot's seat. My flying kit had to come off. I stripped to my vest and pants and squeezed through; there was no way I could have got back had I wanted to. I did what I could for Harry while Bok flew and navigated the aircraft to Leuchars some 2 hour flight. We landed about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Such was the poor condition of Harry that they rushed him off to Perth hospital where he died that evening. We were both very upset at losing our friend and gunner who had been with us for some 40 Ops or more.

Although we did a few more Ops after we lost Harry, we had had a long spell and no doubt a rest was advisable, especially for Bok who carried the extra load as Sqn CO. Bok, of course, would never accept such advice and only a direct order from the AOC or SASO would have shifted him. However, fate took a hand. Bok had a nasty fall and hurt his back. He was hospitalised and I was 'screened' in the squadron as the Nav Officer.

Some seven months were to pass before Bok came back as CO of the squadron. On his arrival with our new

air gunner F/O Morton we did a couple of local flights and pronounced ourselves 'operational ready'. Although we could claim to be experienced no doubt there was a 'tinge' of green around the edges, due to the long lay off.

We picked a so called easy sortie for our re-entry in the ops field. The idea was to take a quick look see over the other side, stir up the Luftwaffe on Schipol Airfield and return home. 'Night intruder' was the name of the game. Hardly likely to go down in the records as a major blow towards victory but we considered sufficient to get us back on the Ops boards.

The plot was to cross the Dutch coast well up to the north, turn down the Zyder Zee, go south of Amsterdam, west along the canal to Schipol, do our party piece and belt for home.

Night visibility was good and the great city of Amsterdam and its water ways easily identified. We had gradually dropped down to about 400ft, we had a good fix and we were ready for a quick low level dash to the airfield.

Nothing had bothered us thus far, no fighters, searchlights or flak - it was quiet. After all we were in a very hostile area, no doubt we were apprehensive but I can't remember. Something should be happening. We had not long to wait. Something did happen and very quickly.

Without a light to be seen or tracer to be dodged there was a sudden flash and an awful smell of explosives and a hell of a draught. The front Perspex and clear vision panel in the nose had gone. With papers, dust and everything else flying around, the nose of the Blenheim dipped, the speed fell off and we were looking straight down a searchlight beam. We were in, what is euphemistically usually referred to in these cases as, 'trouble'.

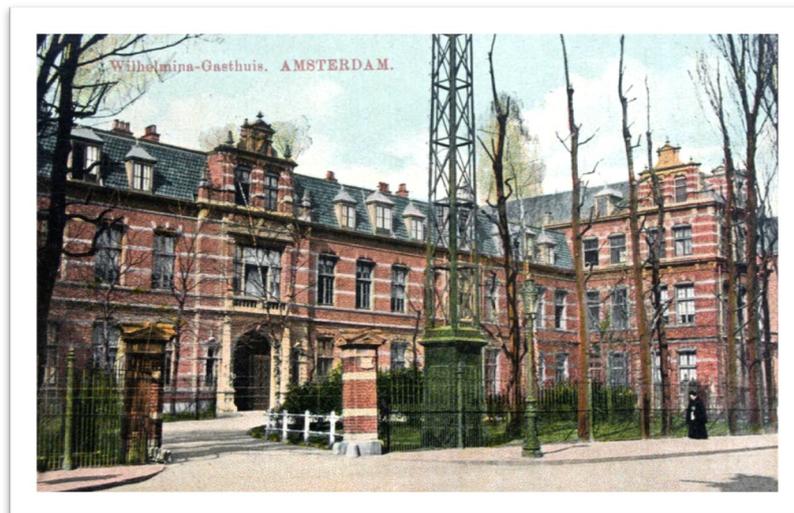
From now on the flying part of this story is hazy. Bok couldn't see to fly the aircraft because of searchlights. We had lost the port engine, the Blenheim wasn't much good on one in any circumstance, with a hole up the front it was useless. I came back up the front and held a map(?) round the panel so that Bok could see the instruments. This should have given him a chance to put the aircraft down straight and level instead of arriving in a heap. And that is the last I know of that particular sortie, my last operational flight and my farewell to Blenheims.

It would be wrong to pass without a word for the old Blenheim. I was operational in the 'long nose' Blenheim IV when the war started and I was serving in, I believe, the last squadron in 2 Group to operate them in the UK. When we were shot down we must have been very nearly the last Blenheim Bomber crew to be lost in them from the UK. When I first joined the Blenheim it was one of the best light bombers in the air. It was fast for its day, manoevarable and reasonably well liked. However, in its early days it would prove to be a killer if not flown correctly. To taxi out and then take off without clearing the engines could be, and often was, fatal. However, once mastered it was a good aircraft. Both Bok and I knew the aircraft well and we liked it. It served us excellently and got us thro' many difficult times. We had great confidence in it and thereby saved ourselves a lot of worry. Towards the end of its career it was slow, under-armed and with a small load it was outclassed. Nevertheless it remained an old friend.

Now back to our prang. There is no doubt that the a/c landed reasonably flat. It skidded across the field and was stopped abruptly by a small ditch. Bok was trapped in his cockpit with an engine on his foot. Morton's turret remained intact and suffered little damage – a few cuts and bruises. Me – I had disappeared.

Some German troops arrived and took charge of Morton. It was decided that Bok would have to sit it out until daylight, then a crane would arrive and lift the engine off his foot. I was found some yards ahead of the a/c in a heap, with no further interest in the proceedings. Being stood up and not strapped in when the a/c came to an abrupt halt I continued the flight thro' the Perspex into the night.

Morton and I were taken by ambulance into Amsterdam to the magnificent Queen Wilhelmina hospital which had been taken over by the Luftwaffe. I was carted off to the mortuary under protest from Morton who said he had heard me groaning. The orderly told him that was only air escaping from my lungs as we bounced over the cobbled streets. Morton persisted, a doctor appeared, a quick check and I was brought back into the land of the living. It was to be some 4 days before I was aware of my surroundings. I awoke in bed in a large glass cage surrounded by pulleys, wires, weights, tubes and the usual paraphernalia one would expect to find around an aviator who made a landing without the aid of an a/c.



THE QUEEN WILHELMINA HOSPITAL, AMSTERDAM

*From Wikipedia*

I was to spend some 3 months in that hospital ward and a further 5 months in other hospitals before I joined up with Bok and many others in Stalag Luft 3. The medical treatment I received was excellent; the German surgeons, doctors and nurses not only saved my life, but their skill and care ensured that, although badly bent and broken, I was not to remain a disabled cripple for the rest of my life. After some 2 months I was visited by the Swiss Commission who considered my repatriation. They told me I would be permanently disabled in my walk and I would probably be repatriated, they would visit me again in 6 months. This did not suit me at all; I had no intention of being repatriated as a permanent cripple. As things turned out I never saw the Swiss Commission again. After 8 months in various hospitals I was 'released' to Stalag Luft 3. I was to return to the UK some 3 years later reasonably fit. I was to get my AIGI medical category back and be accepted for a permanent commission.

My companions in hospital were mostly war wounded; Germans and British, U-Boat men, Luftwaffe aircrew, RAF, Allied Air Forces, all were represented. Many didn't stay very long before breathing their last breath. Other made rapid recoveries. Others like myself were to spend many weeks there. There was an air of comradeship among us all and we who were the enemy were given cigarettes and little luxuries of sweets, fruit that the German patients received. The one difference was that the POW patients were never walking wounded. If there was the slightest possibility that you could walk a few yards you would be moved before the Dutchmen could get you out.

One had to be careful to remember that one was a POW. It was the easiest thing in the world to chat when you discovered that one of your companions spoke excellent English. My first intervention resulted in a sharp rebuff from my interrogator. One morning not feeling very bright I was confronted by a very smart Luftwaffe officer resplendent in flared pantaloons, shining jack boots, tailored tunic and cap. He stood at the foot of my bed. I'm sure he had a twinkle in his eyes and a faint smile on his lips. Not a bad bloke I thought. He spoke in excellent English;

"Fluger Hauptman Baker"

"Yes Herr Major I am he"

"I wish to talk to you about your accident when you were wounded"

"Accident Herr Major? It was not an accident it was deliberate" I jested

The twinkle and smile vanished; I realised I had overestimated the German sense of humour. I resorted rapidly to 45552 Flt Lt T H Baker Royal Air Force".

I was visited a few times in hospital by interrogating officers. I wondered what was so special about me. It wasn't until some 9 months after I was shot down and I met Bok again that I knew. Both Bok and Morton had been interrogated time and time again for many months.

Just before we crashed I had jettisoned the bombs safe. This meant the racks were 'clean' and there were no fuzing links hanging from them. When the bombs are dropped live the links remain in the racks. The Germans obviously had not found the bombs (they are probably still at the bottom of some dyke) and they wondered what we were up to without a bomb load. Moreover, the crew of a Wing Commander, a Flt Lt Observer was very rare in those days and a F/O Gunner rarer still, seemed to them a powerful combination. Obviously they had inadvertently let it be known to Bok during interrogation that they thought we were up to 'something special' and they wanted to find out what it was.

A highpowered crew, no bomb load, no target maps..... up to 'something special'. Perhaps... who knows.

How did I know the fate of the aircraft? Some weeks after I was shot down I was looking thro' the German papers that somebody had put on my bed. I picked up the Nederlander Zeitung to see if I could make any sense of it. Suddenly I saw the picture of a Blenheim astride a small ditch. The letters were RT-Q, our very own. I still have the picture out of that paper. The interesting point was the caption; it translated roughly as.....

"a terror bomber shot down, before reaching its target"

Nothing about 'something special'

Some 8 months after our prang I arrived at Stalag Luft 3 reasonably fit although I was to have frequent visits to a hospital in Breslau.

I met up again with Bok and Morton also many old 2 Group friends, Len Trent VC, Dicky Gunning, Ron Gerniche and many more.

Stalag Luft 3 was of course the aircrew home for the duration. The stories from it are many and some famous; The Wooden Horse, The Great Escape etc. Oh yes, we still carried on the war against Germany. We were a highly disciplined lot stuck right in the heart of enemy country and we made the most of it. Few got home, many got killed but all worked hard to let the 3<sup>rd</sup> and last Reich know that we were there. In all my travels in Kriegedom I met hundreds of prisoners of all sorts and nationalities. I never heard of an Officer or NCO who was a traitor, Quisling, stooge call them what you will. We had “plants” of course but at Luft 3 they had little success. You had to be positively identified before anybody would speak to you. A hard life – well, I suppose so. We had our spells of cold and hunger but mostly we had each other. A frightening life sometimes but generally the Luftwaffe looked after us. There was always the chance that you could fall into the hands of the Gestapo if they thought you knew anything. Bored, never, most of us had a job to do and many studied or read.

The famous words often quoted “For you the war is over” were not quite true. We tried to keep it going.

Jan 1985

PS What happened to the three persons in this story after the war?

In 1946 Bok was promised a Mosquito Sqn in Germany. He contacted me, I would join him after he had converted at Cottesmore. He was killed night flying on his conversion course. I was having a minor operation to my nose at Cosford so was not with him.

I converted to Coastal Command Lancasters and carried on my career. I retired as a Wing Commander GD having done Staff College. Duncan Sands said “there was no longer a requirement for aircrew”. We were made redundant by the missile. I joined Hawker Siddeley Dynamics making missiles for 13 years. Morton, I never saw or heard of again, after the war.

Tom Baker





From: Wg Cdr T H Baker DFC DFM RAF (Rtd)

*Reproduced as written*

To: Warrant Officer M S Simpson RAF

ECRF

Royal Air Force

Wattisham

Dear Mr Simpson,

Seeing your appeal in the RAF News for information regarding RAF Wattisham history, stirred my memory. I thought I would make a few notes covering my tour at the station, which I hope may be of interest to you.

Sqn Ldr Hull, myself (Sgt Baker–Air Observer and Sgt Hibbs, Air Gunner, were posted to 107 Sqn at Wattisham. We were a pre-war crew who had been instructing at Upwood on the Blenheim Mk 1V (Long Nose) OTU. Sqn Ldr Hull was to take over “A” Flight. We arrived on 8th July 1940. We served on the Sqn for 6 months. I consider that period the most active and exciting in Wattisham’s history. It certainly was in mine.

I touch on, below, some of the main activities during that time. No doubt you will have covered most of them. I am unable to give actual dates as I must rely on my log book to remind me. The latter only covers my flying.

The station was commanded by Group Capt O Grayford affectionately known as “Long Distance Grayford”, He had flown the Fairey Monoplane with Nicholetts to get the world long distance record prior to the war. The station operated two Blenheim 1V Sqns, 107 and 110, under 2 Group Bomber Command.

The Germans were preparing for Operation “Sealion” – the invasion of England. During the period they were assembling barges and shipping in the Channel Ports, the Luftwaffe were tasked with neutralising the RAF airfields and destroying Fighter Command as a military force. The winning of the Battle of Britain in Sept 40 put a stop to this strategy and the Luftwaffe switched to bombing our cities at night.

The Blenheims were employed on bombing the shipping and attacking airfields in Northern France. The raids were in daylight without Fighter cover. The Fighter boys were too busy keeping the enemy off our doorstep and rapidly reducing his air strength. The Blenheim losses were very heavy and broadened to include other targets. Later in the period much of their effort was switched to night.

Wattisham, because of its location, was frequently attacked by the Luftwaffe in their efforts to destroy Fighter airfields. A barrack block was hit about 7 am one morning causing considerable damage and fatal casualties. The airfield, all grass in those days, was attacked using butterfly bombs, which were anti-personnel devices with spring loaded arms. If picked up they exploded about chest height with fatal results. They were a new innovation and caused the death of a Flt Sgt at Wattisham. The bombs caused us a lot of trouble as they had to be marked and destroyed. However, the airfield was always useable after a short delay as we were not committed to taxiways and runways. I remember that the London Standard quoted the German news who claimed “The Luftwaffe attacked an enemy airfield in England. The airfield at Wattisham was destroyed”.

A German Bomber attacking us one morning was hotly pursued across the airfield by a Hurricane at low level. Lead was flying everywhere as the ground gunners joined in. Also the wire traps on parachutes were fired. The Bomber piled up a few miles from the airfield and the crew of three ended up in Wattisham's Guard-room. The Fighter boy trailing glycol also force landed with his radiator shot away. He walked into the station certain that the ground gunners were responsible. I believe that the Fighter boy was accredited with the Bomber much to the disgust of the ground gunners.

No doubt you have covered the heroic act of Wg Cdr Sinclair. A 107 Sqn fully bombed up for a night raid crashed on take-off. The Wg Cdr, then commanding 110 Sqn, was catching up with his paperwork and saw the accident through his office window. He dashed out and ignoring the flames and armaments of the burning wreck, dragged out one of the crew (it may have been two). The pilot I believe was Sgt Merritt who was killed. Wg Cdr Sinclair was awarded the George Cross for his gallant act.

Finally, Wg Cdr Basil Embry, who was shot down in May 40 at St Omer. He arrived back some 10 weeks late and visited his old Sqn 107 soon after. His evasion exploits and subsequent return to the UK are fully covered in Anthony Richardson's "Wingless Victory". Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Embry ended up with 4 DSOs, DFC, AFC and other decorations, surely one of the RAF's greatest airmen to have operated out of Wattisham.

I end by wishing you all the best in your writings and in your 50 year celebrations. I have not seen Wattisham since 1940 - it must be a very different world now

I know you will allow an old aviator his ramblings but if I can be of any assistance please ask.

Yours,

Tom Baker



MEMORIAL AT RAF WATTISHAM

Google Image

# FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JULIAN FRANCIS LOCK 'BUTCH' MORTON

Wireless Operator & Air Gunner

Service number 47436



## The Role

WIRELESS OPERATOR/AIR GUNNER. As in the case of the Observer in the three-man Bristol Blenheim crew, the WOp/AG, or Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, fulfilled a dual role until the larger crews of the 'heavies' required them to be separated for operational and safety reasons. In the Blenheim, the WOp/AG was highly valued by his other two crew-members. Even with his inadequate Vickers K Machine Gun ( or Vickers Gas Operated Machine Gun) in 1939/1940, he could rescue his crew from a vicious fighter attack.

The odds of survival were increased when the Blenheim was equipped with Twin Brownings in 1941. Many an Air Gunner was credited with shooting down a Messerschmitt Bf 109. Regrettably, others who achieved this remarkable result lost out due to lack of confirmation! From 1923 to 1939, an Air Gunner would wear a brass winged bullet on his upper right sleeve. From 1939, this was replaced by a standard aircrew brevet with the letters 'AG' .

On some raids, Air Gunners were required to temporarily abandon their gun vigil and operate an F24 camera or a slick hand-held Leica. They were credited with capturing some excellent photographs for raid evaluation and, of course, for posterity. The operating of the 'Wireless', or W/T (Wireless Telegraphy) proved immensely helpful when an aircraft was temporarily 'uncertain of position' (lost!) when a swift QDM (magnetic course to steer back to Base) could be requested, or two or more bearings for a 'fix'. Blenheim WOp/AGs found their wireless equipment impossible to operate with gloves on, and thus dreaded any flight at altitude, when their hands would almost freeze. To denote his expertise as a Wireless Operator, he would wear on his upper right sleeve a cloth patch featuring lightning bolts.

It should be remembered that these brave souls started the War as lowly airmen, with associated poor pay and conditions. They were not considered worthy of the bravery honours and awards of the higher-ranked other crew members (VCs, DFCs, DFMs etc). Not before time, on 27th May 1940, all airmen aircrew were promoted to the minimum rank of sergeant. In the latter War years (1942-1945) the roles were well spread. For example, in the Lancaster heavy bomber, the crew consisted of pilot, navigator, bomb-aimer, flight engineer, wireless operator, mid-gunner and rear-gunner.

By *Lionel 'Rusty' Russell*



**FLT LT JULIAN FRANCIS LOCK  
'BUTCH' MORTON**

*Image courtesy of Nicholas Morton*

Julian was born on 30th August 1919 in Winchmore Hill, London, the youngest son of William Roland Morton, a horse auctioneer and advertising agent, and Gertrude Frances (née Lock). He had two brothers, Richard William Lock Morton born in 1911 and Anthony Roland Lock Morton born in 1915.

Although Julian was not part of the Great Escape he did endure the Long March, and after his return to England following his release from Stalag Luft III in May 1945, he married Doreen Foster-Stevens in late 1945.

Evidently Julian did not talk much about the war. However, from various sources we have been able to gather enough snippets of information to understand that Butch was considered a highly regarded, experienced air gunner, and this experience came to the fore during the Knapsack raid on 12th August 1941 (see Appendix III). Less than four weeks earlier, on 19th July 1941, he had been wounded in the foot.

On 16th September 1941 Julian was transferred from No. 226 Squadron to 17 O.T.U. Upwood, and by April 1942 he had joined Bok and Tom Baker at No. 114 Squadron, which soon led to the fateful night of 17th April 1942 when they were shot down and taken POW.

After the war Julian left the RAF and worked in a Shipping Insurance Company travelling around the world, he could speak fluent German, and hated swedes and turnips as they were just about all they had been given to eat in Stalag Luft III.

During the 1960s he lived in Southgate, London, and later he moved to Brighton where Lionel 'Rusty' Russell caught up with him when he was researching for his book Mast High Over Rotterdam. (see next page)

Julian married for a second time to Carola Bartley; they lived in Surrey, and it came to light that Julian and Carola were members of the Chertsey Film Society, indeed Julian being Treasurer and Carola the Membership Secretary.

Julian died in 1997, aged seventy-eight, in Addlestone, Surrey, after which Carola went to live with her sister in New Zealand.



**GUNNERY TRAINING**

*from:*

<https://wallswar.wordpress.com/gunnery-course/>

FLT LT JULIAN FRANCIS LOCK MORTON  
(WOp/AG IN ONIONS CREW)

Reproduced by kind permission of Rusty Russell author of  
**Mast High over Rotterdam**  
2015

I never did find out how 'Butch' Morton acquired his famous nickname. When I first contacted him, he admitted that it had not been used for many years, but did not elucidate further. Perhaps the answer lies simply in <sup>1</sup>Arthur Asker's description of him: 'An ebullient, outgoing character'.

Butch was no stranger to guns when he enlisted in the RAF in January 1938. He had just completed one year's service as a sapper in the 26th Battalion RE (Territorial Army). After seven months training at an E&W School, Butch joined Hurricane-equipped 111 (F) Squadron at Northolt as a fully-fledged WOp. Looking for airborne service, he transferred to 226 (B) Squadron at Harwell just a few weeks later, operating Fairey Battles.

Granted that promotion for WOp/AGs was rather slow in those days, it would appear somewhat unusual that when war was declared Butch had still not upgraded from AC2. Several reconnaissance sorties of enemy territory were flown from Reims, with an officer pilot and a sergeant observer. In November 1939, Butch was finally upgraded to AC1, holding this rank steadfastly until the retreat from Dunkirk, when he rocketed to Temporary Sergeant (in common with all other qualified WOp/AGs).

When the *Blitzkrieg* came in the west, Butch was attached to an armament training station, and did not catch up with his old squadron until they had reached Belfast. The first time that the Onions/Warmington/Morton crew were fully constituted was not until November 1940.

The most dangerous moment during this period of anti-submarine patrolling seems to have occurred on 3rd March 1941, when Jack Onions and Daddy Kercher encountered two Royal Navy destroyers southwest of the Mull of Kintyre. The aircraft challenged the destroyers, which replied with 'RRR' instead of the usual barrage...

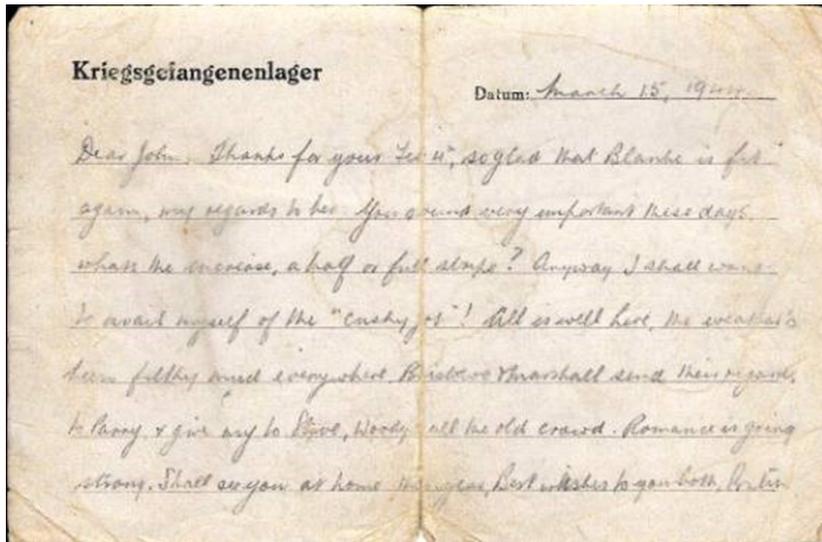
June 1941, and Butch was a Blenheim WOp/AG in 2 Group, Bomber Command. The highlights of this hair-raising interlude include the attack on Cherbourg on 14th July, when Butch machine-gunned the railway station and some warehouses; the attack on Rotterdam docks two days later, when he obtained photographic evidence of his pilot (Jack Onions) bombing a hospital ship; and an attack on a heavily-defended convoy on 19th July, when he was wounded in the foot. On the latter sortie, it is interesting to note that Butch managed to fire off 480 rounds of ammunition before the loss of hydraulics put his turret out of action. (See the biographies of Jack Onions and Warmy Warmington).

Jack Onions takes up the story from here:

"Butch" Morton, the air-gunner, went to Upwood (17 OTU) on recovering from his wounds. Some months later, he wrote to me at Bicester saying he had been invited and accepted the offer of crewing up with a Wing

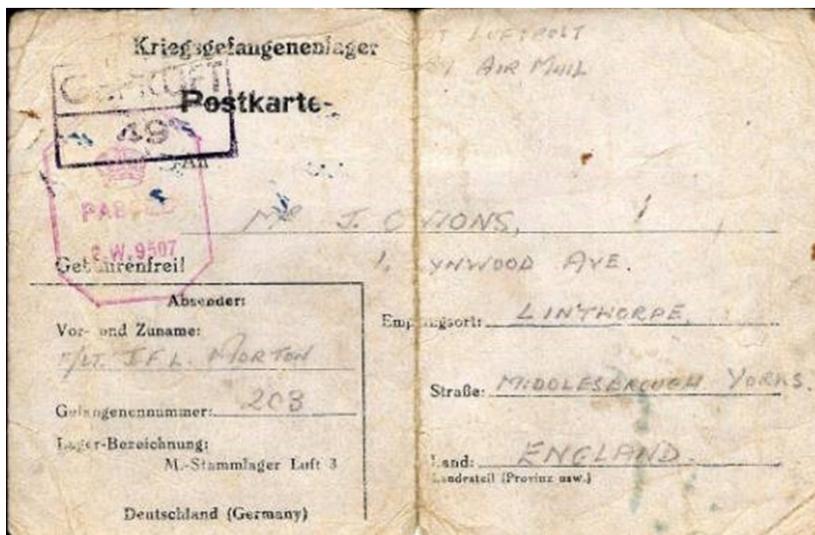
Commander Hull - a better chance of survival he thought, and he was operating that night. By the time I received the letter Butch was in *Dulag Luft* and he finished the war in *Stalag Luft III*.' Discussing this with Butch, he disagreed with his old pilot on the niceties of the crewing-up: he was *ordered* to, he told me. At least Butch had been commissioned by the time he became a POW!

A *Kriegie Postkarte* from *Stalag Luft III* addressed to Jack, and dated 15th March 1944, generally avoids censorship with harmless remarks about the foul weather and suchlike, but the punch-line managed to get through: 'Shall see you at home this year'. The censors most probably interpreted this as an earnest wish that the war would soon be over - a sentiment with which they would wholeheartedly agree; but the 'Great Escape' from *Stalag Luft III* took place just nine days after the card was posted...



Kriegsgefangenenlager Postkarte (POW postcard) from Butch Morton to Jack Onions, dated 15th March 1944 (*Stalag Luft III*). The 'Great Escape' took place just nine days after the postcard was posted. It reads:

Dear John, Thanks for your Feb 4th, so glad that Blanche [John's wife] is fit again, my regards to her. You sound very important these days. What's the increase, a half or a full stripe? Anyway I shall want to avail myself of the "cushy job"! All is well here, the weather's been filthy mud everywhere. Bristow [?] & Marshall send their regards to Parry & give my to Steve, Woody & all the old crowd. Romance is going strong. Shall see you at home this year. Best wishes to you both,  
Butch (Jack Onions)



The reverse side of  
Butch Morton's POW  
postcard to Jack Onions  
(Jack Onions)

Soon after the war, Butch, and many other ex-members of 2 Group including Richard Passmore (*Blenheim Boy*), were saddened by the death of Wg Cdr 'Bok' Hull, killed in a Mosquito near Melton Mowbray, on a training sortie from Cottesmore on 17th May 1946 (see Tom Jefferson's biography).

Butch now lives on the south coast of England. His biography would be incomplete without the following amusing anecdotes contributed by his old pilot, Jack Onions. Jack recalls the occasion when Butch informed him of a pair of Ju.88s which were catching them up fast. Jack responded by applying full throttle and then - the ultimate resort - operating the 'plus 9 boost' lever. But the Ju.88s could not be shaken off that easily and doggedly hung in. Almost casually, Butch remarked on how closely Ju.88s resembled Blenheims. Jack replied: 'Are you *sure* they are not Blenheims?' They were, of course - two sprog pilots on their first operation!

The other incident concerns the time when Butch had had his back peppered by flak. Jack asked him if he would like to land at Swanton Morley instead of Wattisham. 'Hell, no!', Butch replied. 'I've got a date with \*\*\*\*!'

.....

**Ode To An Air Gunner**  
by Sgt Charlie Darby

If I must be straight rear gunner  
then please God grant me grace,  
that I may leave this station  
with a smile upon my face

I may have wished to be a pilot  
and Joe along with me,  
but if we were all pilots  
where would the Air force be.

A pilot is only a chauffeur  
and he's there to fly the plane,  
it's the Gunner who does the fighting  
though he may not get the fame.

It takes a man to be a Gunner  
to sit out in the rail  
when the Messerschmitts come at you  
and the slugs fly like hail.

But we're in here to win the war  
and 'till the job is done.  
let's forget out personal feelings  
and get to work behind the gun.

## GENERAL HINTS FOR AIR GUNNERS

from <https://wallyswar.wordpress.com/gunnerycourse/>

Search the sky before take off and landing when your aircraft is most vulnerable.

If gun fire is observed search for fighter and take evasive action.

Patrol across the sun, never into it or away from it.

If using tracer at night, remember it tends to momentarily destroy your night vision; hold your fire if necessary. The aim of an enemy fighter is to destroy; the aim of a bomber air gunner is to get safely to the target and back to base.

Never fire until fired upon, in the event of gunfire search for fighter and take evasive action.

Always watch your own tail.

Conserve your ammo; if you are fired upon from long-range instruct the pilot to take evasive action.

Never fly straight or dive when under attack; never turn away from an attack, always toward.

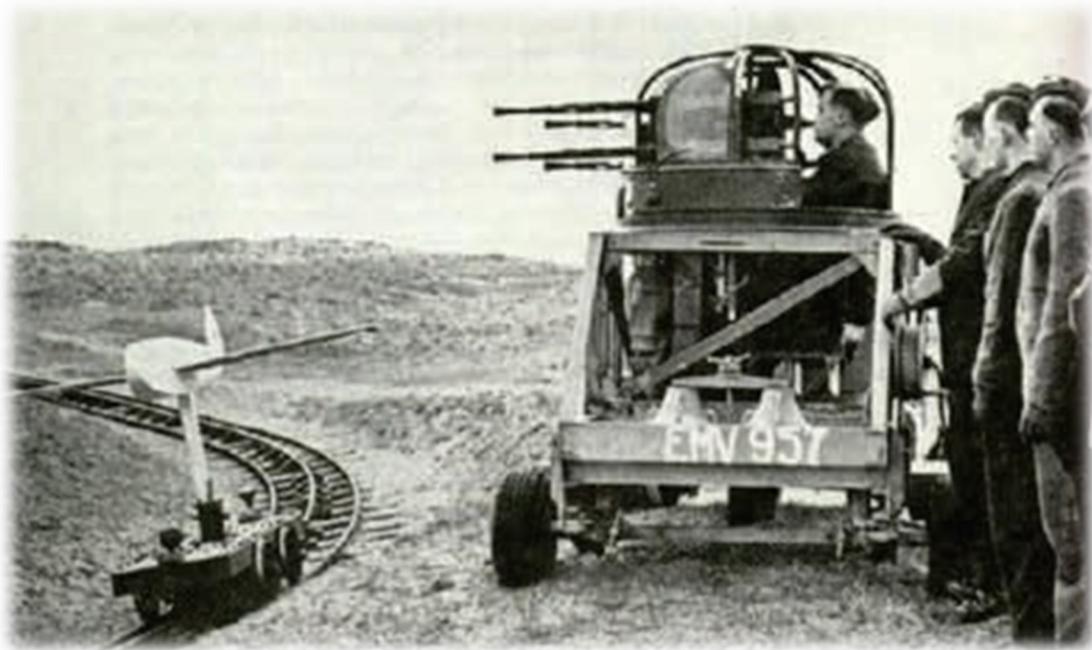
Use good teamwork with the rest of the crew.

If on reconnaissance aircraft, your job is to return with information; not to seek combat with enemy aircraft.

All aircraft approaching are considered to be the enemy until identified otherwise.

If your own guns fail or are damaged during an attack use your ingenuity to outwit the attacker.

REMEMBER: TO BE SURPRISED IS TO BE LOST



STUDENT AIR GUNNERS PRACTISE THEIR SKILLS DURING A GROUND GUNNERY EXERCISE.

*Google Image*

## FLIGHT SERGEANT HAROLD (HARRY) ROBERT HIBBS DFM

Wireless Operator & Air Gunner

Service number 545913



FLT SGT HARRY HIBBS DFM

*The images of Harry have been kindly provided by his nephew Peter Hibbs.*

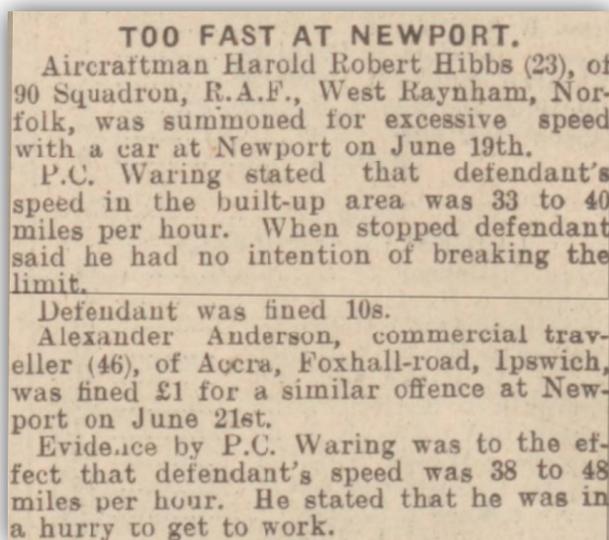
*Image colourised on  
<https://www.myheritage.com>*



Harry was born in 1915 in Orpington, Bromley, Kent, the eldest son of Henry Hibbs, a carpenter and Florence (née Harris). He had a brother Stanley born in 1921, and the family lived in St Mary Cray.

Although not one of Bok's crew of 1942, Harry is an extremely important part of this story.

We know that in 1939, Harry was stationed at No. 90 Squadron, West Raynham at the same time as Tom Baker, and the following excerpt from The Cambridge Daily News, 13th July 1939, tells us that 'Harry was in a hurry to get to work'.



In September 1939 Harry crewed up with Bok and Tom at 17 OTU, Upwood and from July 1940 they were stationed together at No. 107 Squadron, Wattisham. It was here that they began to develop the special bond they had between them, and their effectiveness as a crew was duly noted; in December 1940 Harry was awarded the DFM, while Tom received his DFM and Bok his DFC.

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 24th DECEMBER 1940

Issue 35022, Page 7214

**545913 Sergeant Harold Robert Hibbs, No. 107 Squadron.**

# D.F.M. FOR ST. MARY CRAY SERGEANT SPLENDID RECORD IN AIR FORCE

In a list of official awards for distinguished work in the Royal Air Force there appears the name of Sergeant Harold Robert Hibbs, who has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal.

Sergeant Hibbs is the son of Henry Hibbs, of Westwood, Derry Downs, St Mary Cray. He joined the R.A.F. in November 1937, and his progress has been rapid. He has the honour of being the first old St. Mary Cray schoolboy to be awarded a decoration in the present war.

As a boy Harold Hibbs attended Cray School, in the High-street, from which he obtained a scholarship at the Beckenham County School for Boys. After leaving school he joined his father in the corn trade, but having a keen wish to be among aircraft and to learn flying he went into the Royal Air Force after his 21st birthday and was specially selected for training in the event of a war. At the outbreak of the war in September 1939, he was attached to the fighting squadrons and later went into one of the bomber squadrons picked for night raids over Germany. For months past these squadrons have been making history in their raids over Berlin and other important towns in Germany. Sergeant Hibbs has endured the privations and risks of night-flying and for his distinguished work the King has approved the award of Distinguished Flying Medal to him.

When asked on Saturday afternoon if he liked flying over Germany, Sergeant Hibbs replied, "All I know is that it is very cold work at night-time."

Like most heroes of the Royal Air Force, Sergeant Hibbs prefers to talk about everything but his own achievements in one of England's famous bomber squadrons.

His Squadron Leader has been awarded the D.F.C., and Sergeant T. Baker, who has been flying the same bomber as Sergeant Hibbs has also been awarded the D.F.M.



The image above would have been taken sometime before February 1940, as the Blenheim MK IV that Harry is walking by crashed and burst into flames near Upwood aerodrome on 18th February 1940, killing the entire crew.

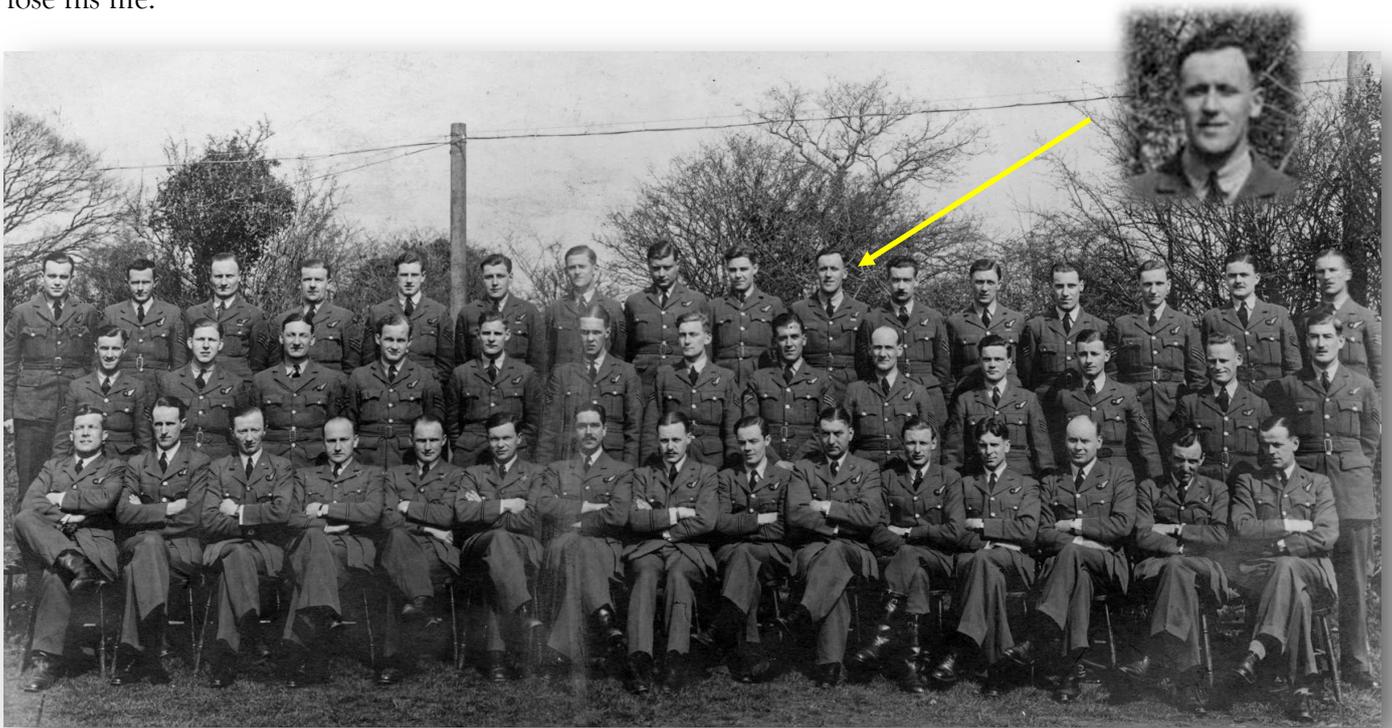
PO J A D McLean, Sgt A C Haigh, AC2 W McEwan lost their lives in a training accident.

The image below shows the wreckage of aircraft L4875 in which these three young men died.



*Google Image*

The image featured below was taken on 28th March 1941, at No. 16 Course Central Gunnery School R.A.F. Warmwell, Dorset. Sadly, on 25th May 1941, only two months after this photograph was taken, Harry was to lose his life.

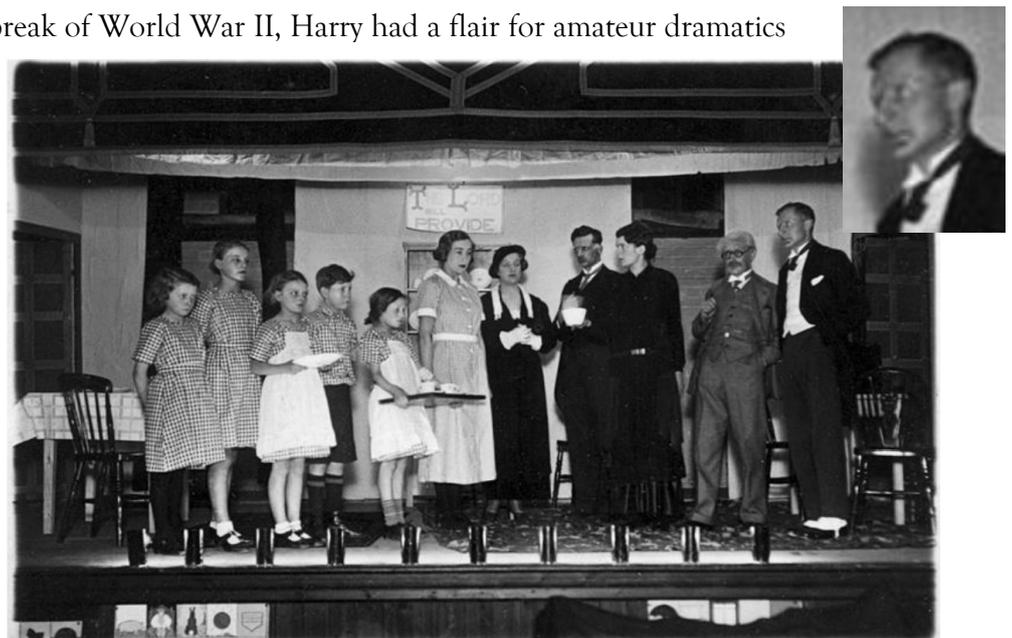


From Wikipedia:

*The Central Gunnery School (CGS) was formed on 6th November 1939 after the RAF recognised the need for both continuing and advanced instruction, initially for air gunners in Bomber Command. Its first base was RAF Warmwell and the CGS ran its first course in April 1940, where the main focus was on turret-gunnery.*

In civilian life prior to the outbreak of World War II, Harry had a flair for amateur dramatics and starred in a production of 'Daddy Long Legs', by the Temple Dramatic Society, which took place on the 11th & 13th April 1935. Harry played the part of Jervis Pendleton, and a local press cutting described his performance thus:

*'Mr Harold Hibbs as Jervis Pendleton, the generous trustee, who became Judy's lover, played a difficult part with success.....'*



Harold is pictured far right

He was also a scout and the email received from: [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) confirms this.

*Dear Richard, Yes it would appear Harold Robert Hibbs was a scout with St Mary Cray Group. He received a Distinguished Flying Medal in June 1941 and appeared in the Roll of Honour in July 1941 in The Scouter magazine. We have also found him in the Second World War Roll of Honour book. Kind regards, Sally*

Harry lost his life on 25th May 1941, his cause of death is given as multiple severe shrapnel wounds of head and right arm at Bridge of Earn emergency hospital. From [www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?2922-410525-Unaccounted-airmen-25-5-1941](http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?2922-410525-Unaccounted-airmen-25-5-1941)

The excerpt below from Tom Baker's flying diary tells us:

*JUNE 1941 We strike our first piece of misfortune as a crew Harry Hibbs was hit by a single cannon shell that struck his turret when we were attacking a merchant ship off the Norwegian coast, he died in Perth hospital the same night. And so we lost one of the finest W/Ops in the service, one of the old school who was always jovial when things looked sticky and a fine friend to have, I only knew him once to be depressed. He had been unable to fire on a HE 111 from close range when we flew beneath it on a night intruder trip, his guns failed him due to no fault of his own. And with the thing sitting on the end of his barrels he had to let it go. Oh fortunate goon, you will never know how near you were to your 'Heldentot'.*

The passage Tom Baker wrote in his memoir 'Something Special' elaborates further on that tragic night:

*We were poking around the Norwegian fjords looking for the Bremen or some such vessel when we ran in to a flak ship. Bok immediately took it on and we were doing reasonably well when one cannon shell went through Harry's turret and exploded inside. He was in a very poor condition and I made to go to his assistance. Unfortunately I was unable to get thro' because of the armour plate behind the pilot's seat. My flying kit had to come off. I stripped to my vest and pants and squeezed through; there was no way I could have got back had I wanted to. I did what I could for Harry while Bok flew and navigated the aircraft to Leuchars some 2 hour flight. We landed about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Such was the poor condition of Harry that they rushed him off to Perth hospital where he died that evening. We were both very upset at losing our friend and gunner who had been with us for some 40 Ops or more.*



Harry is buried in Grave 1573, at St Mary Cray Cemetery, Kent.



THE  
DISTINGUISHED  
FLYING MEDAL

## EPILOGUE

### GROUP CAPTAIN DEREK RICHARD BIGGS DFC

Pilot

Service Number 37342



The story of these incredible men would not be complete without including Bok's close friend Derek Richard Biggs DFC.

Derek was born on 19th August 1913 in Wandsworth, London, the second son of George Nixon Biggs and Gladys Victoria Ermynttrude Archer. He joined the RAF in 1935, and *The London Gazette* announced on 22nd October 1935 that Derek was granted a short term service commission as Acting Pilot Officer alongside George Laurence Bazett Hull. They were posted to RAF Uxbridge and began training at No.6 Flying Training School, Netheravon; the two young officers became close friends. Derek and Bok were both allocated to No.101(B) Squadron in August 1936 at RAF Bicester and in March 1937 transferred to No. 90 (Bomber) Squadron at Bicester to fly Blenheims. No. 90 Squadron was also posted to West Raynham from May to September 1939.

In 1940, and probably before, they were both with No.107 Squadron, Wattisham, Suffolk, each holding the rank of Flight Lieutenant. They were also at 17 O.T.U for a short time from May to December 1940, at the same time as Tom Baker. Derek and Bok were posted together from Netheravon up until Derek was posted from No.107 Squadron to No.101 Squadron on 16th May 1941. By 11th June 1941 Derek was Acting Wing Commander, officer in charge of night flying and was awarded the DFC on 2nd July 1941 for his duties on No.107 Squadron.

When WWII broke out on 1st September 1939, the young officers of the RAF were thrown into a war where for the first time aircraft would play a vital role. The loss of life, especially at the beginning of the war before they became properly organised, was catastrophic and officers were promoted to higher ranks overnight as the gaps had to be filled when men were killed.

As the war raged on Derek did marry; he wed Alison Morris in late 1941 in London. These pilots lived life on the edge never knowing if they would survive their next mission and would marry their sweethearts much sooner than they might have done in peacetime. It was also not uncommon for officers to marry the widows of their lost comrades, and this was the case for Derek.

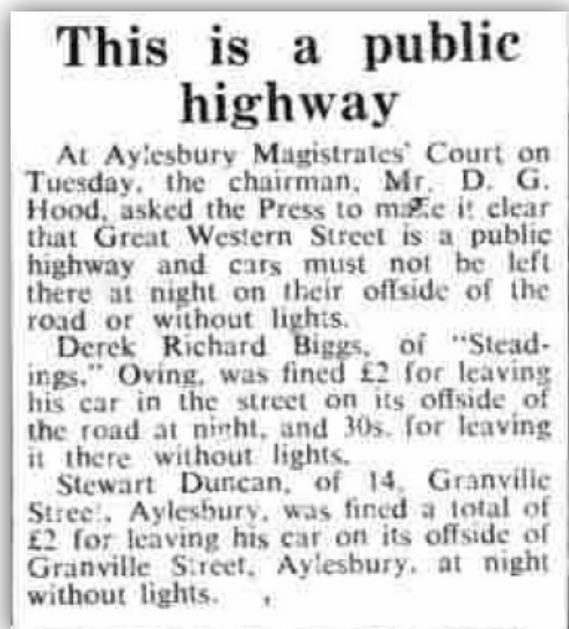
Alison, known as Diana, had first married in 1936, to Flight Lieutenant Mervyn Lascelles Morris, a Blenheim pilot from No.110 Squadron, Wattisham; he was also South African, and their son Barry was born in 1939. Derek, Bok, Tom and Mervyn were all at Wattisham between October 1939, to the day when Mervyn sadly lost his life on 15th April 1940. Evidently he and his two crew, Sergeant L. Bancroft and Leading

Aircraftman R.H. Mercer, left Wattisham to reconnoitre Heligoland Bight on the German coast, and during the course of the operation the crew attacked an enemy patrol boat, but were shot down by the return fire. There were no survivors, Mervyn's son Barry was just a baby.

After Derek and Diana married they had a son of their own, Jason, and they lived in Mentmore, a small village about ten miles away from Oving. One of Jason's early memories is of viewing a house in Oving with his mother, and 'Uncle Bok' going with them. The house is called Steadings, and the Biggs family lived there for many years. It was Derek who arranged for Bok to be buried at All Saints Church, Oving. Jason spoke fondly to us about him, telling us how as a small boy they would visit Bok's grave every Sunday and lay flowers in front of a wooden cross they had made and put on the grave, as there was no other marker.

Thankfully, Derek survived the war and continued to serve in the RAF becoming a Senior Intelligence Officer. He retired in 1962, achieving the rank of Group Captain. It is understood from Jason that his father found it very difficult after the war as he felt that the courageous pilots of WWII were not treated well and soon forgotten about.

Like Harry Hibbs, Derek also made car-related appearance in the Bucks Herald on Friday 10th October 1952.



He died on 6th June 1983 aged 70, of Motor Neurone Disease. His son Jason said that it had been brought on by the bad oxygen and aircraft fuel fumes from his years as a pilot.

A sad and horrible way to end the life of a brave and courageous man.

WE MUST NOT  
FORGET TO  
REMEMBER



DEREK TAKING A PHOTOGRAPH AT 17 O.T.U

*Image courtesy of Anne Hawkins*



FLAK



THE CONSEQUENCES OF FLAK



Blenheim IV - P4924 - 107 Sqn  
Belly landed Lossiemouth. 17 April 1940

*Image courtesy of Jason Biggs*



BOK AND CREW SUMMER/AUTUMN 1938

NO. 90 SQUADRON AT BICESTER

*Image courtesy of Peter Baker*

*Image colourised on <https://www.myheritage.com>*

### Additional Information

*Kindly provided by Lionel 'Rusty' Russell*

**Squadron.** This normally comprised 12 aircraft. Bombers usually flew in 'Vics' of 3. Fighters used 'finger 4' - this upgrade was first used during the Battle of Britain, copying the much more effective Luftwaffe *modus operandi*.

**Wing.** This normally comprised 3 squadrons.

**Group.** This would vary. Perhaps around 10 squadrons.

**RAF ranks.** These were misnomers. A squadron was normally led by a Wing Commander. A wing was normally led by a Group Captain, and a group by someone of air rank - Air Commodore or Air Vice-Marshall. However, there were notable exceptions. For instance, Douglas Bader commanded 242 Squadron as a mere Squadron Leader.

## APPENDIX III

### The Raid on the Cologne Power Stations at Knapsack and Quadrath on 12th August 1941



On Tuesday 12th August 1941, Bok's crew played a pivotal role in the RAF's largest low level bombing mission since the outbreak of the war. Tom Baker and Wing Commander Nicol joined Wing Commander Kercher to lead fifty-four Blenheims 250 miles over enemy territory in broad daylight and without fighter escort, to launch an attack on two heavily defended power stations near Cologne: Knapsack & Quadrath.

Tom later described the mission as "almost suicidal - it was the only time in my life that I saw my fellow aircrew grey and shaking".

An example of their collective strength of experience and bravery under extremely perilous conditions can be seen through Wing Commander Nicol's absolute faith in his squadron's ability and the following account taken from *The Reich Intruders: RAF Light Bomber Raids in World War II - By Martin W. Bowman*, which describes the return home of No. 114 Squadron following the Knapsack raid.

Sqn Ldr Charles Patterson recalls:

I settled down in formation and another chap formed on me. The whole formation got together. On to Holland we went. No interception yet. Then we flew into a rainstorm and for a wonderful moment I thought we were going to get cloud cover but it was only a shower and we emerged shortly afterwards into the brilliant sun again and no cloud above us. On and on, past little villages and hamlets, occasionally an individual diving into a ditch beneath us. Just before we got to the Dutch border, we flew over a baronial German mansion. In the garden, beside a cedar tree, I just got a glimpse of a table with a large white table cloth, all laid out for lunch and a group of people standing around it. As we whizzed over the top my gunner let fly and it broke up the party. He felt that any rich Germans who were living like that while the war was on deserved it.

On across Holland, now it suddenly seemed to me that we were going to make it. Nothing was going to happen after all but it's always when that psychological moment comes that you're brought down to earth. Ahead of us, just as we were coming up to the Schelde estuary, black dots appeared. For a moment my navigator thought that they might be Spitfires that had come out to escort us home but of course they were not. They were not Whirlwinds either, which had escorted us out and were due to escort us back. Nicol called out 'Snappers!' Before I knew where I was, I was flying on straight into these Messerschmitts, which were circling around about a thousand feet above us.

Nicol told us to close in tight. He led us right down onto the water, sparkling in the sun, not more than ten, fifteen and occasionally perhaps twenty feet below. I got as tight into him as I could, with my wing tip practically inside his. I knew this was life or death. It took all the flying concentration and skill I possessed to do it, which drove out most of the fear of the fighters. The others closed in. Then Nicol handed over to the leading gunner, **Pilot Officer Julian Morton**, a very experienced second-tour man. He directed the formation because the gunners, looking back, could all see the fighters coming into attack. He had to decide when it was the right moment to open fire and when to take evasive action.

Then I heard the rattle of machine-gun fire and realised that our guns were firing. Every now and then the water was ripped with white froth, which was of course the cannon shells of these 109s. On one turn, out of the corner of one eye, I caught a glimpse of a 109 right in front peeling off from the attack. It was so close that I could see the pilot in the cockpit, let alone the black crosses and the yellow nose of the 109. My reaction was simply one of interest in seeing a 109 so close. We all knew that the only safety was out to sea and out of range of these 109s. Would we make it? After each attack we just had to crouch down and prepare for the next. This carried on all the way up the Schelde. Yet we seemed to survive them.

Then, unbelievably, the islands to each side of us suddenly ceased and we were in the open sea. We'd hardly gone any distance when the leading gunner told us over the R/T that the fighters had broken off the attack.

Unfortunately, Bok had to sit this one out due to a fall from a first floor window, and on Wednesday 13th August 1941 he wrote to his parents: "my thoughts are always with the lads whom I left at West Raynham. Only yesterday my squadron led the attack on Cologne, the biggest day attack yet by the R.A.F., and had I been there I should have led the formation. My worthy observer was in the leading aircraft and his accurate navigation was largely responsible for the success of the attack. They rang me up and told me all about it and were very cock-a-hoop."



DSO

As a tribute to their calm-courage and resolute determination, in September 1941 James Lauder Nicol received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), Thomas Herbert Baker received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and Wg Cdr John Cecil Owen Kercher (DSO)



DFC

Twelve Blenheims were lost and a full account of the operation can be found in Michael J.F. Bowyer's *2 Group RAF, a Complete History, 1936-1945*. Faber and Faber Limited, 1974.

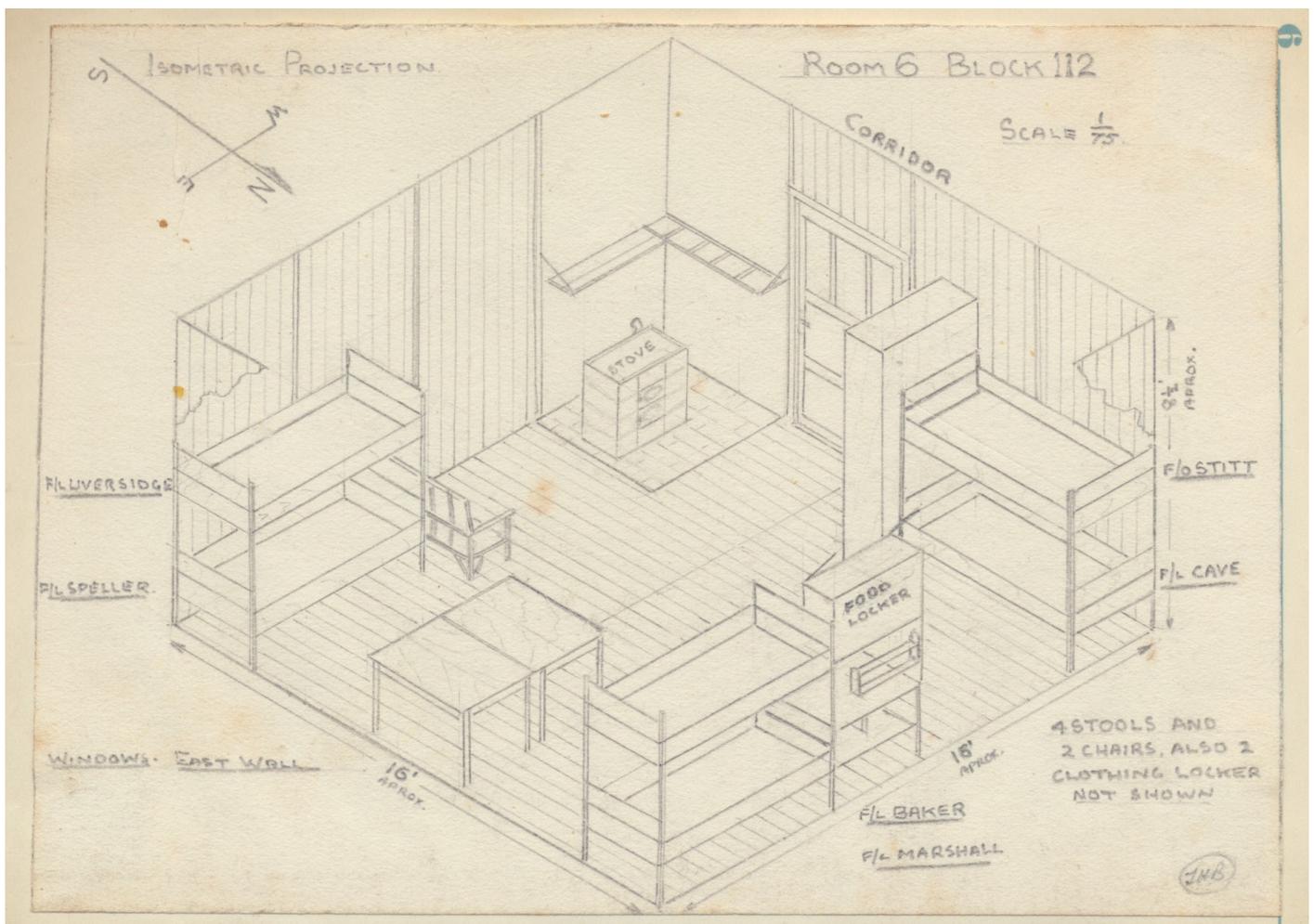
## APPENDIX IV

### Tom's Drawing of Room 6, Block 12, Stalag Luft III

Tom Baker, pictured right, in the North Compound of Stalag Luft III and Tom's quite remarkable scale drawing of Room 6 in Block 112 pictured beneath.

The room is facing east, so we now know exactly where Tom was living at that particular moment in time.

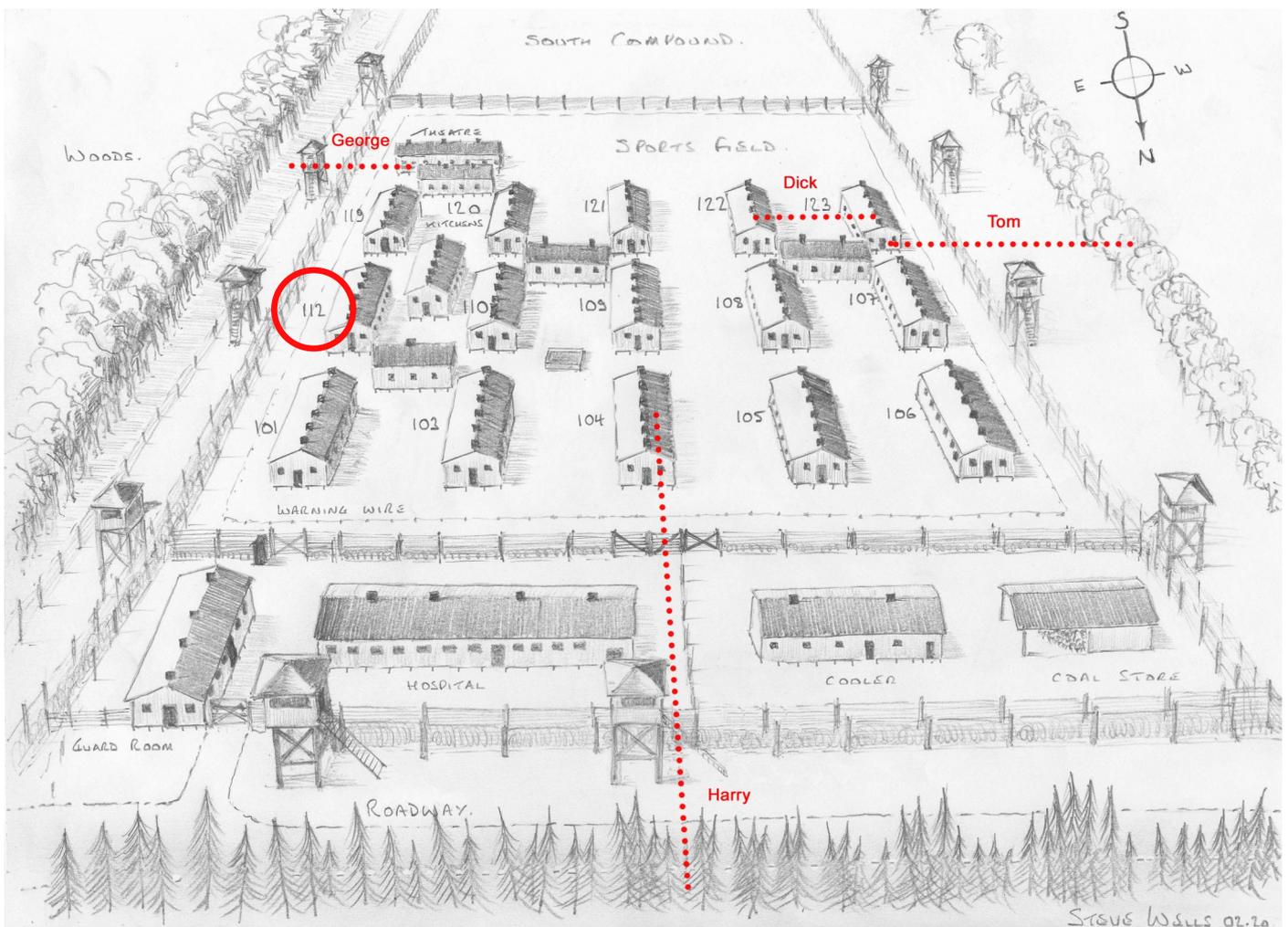
Tom's block 112 is marked with circles on the two images featured on the next page.





STALAG LUFT III MODEL OF THE SET USED TO FILM THE MOVIE THE GREAT ESCAPE

The model was based on an original drawing of the camp attributed to Flt Lt Ley Kenyon, a renowned artist; some of his work is kept in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. He was also a POW in Stalag Luft III along with Bok, Tom and Julian.



Drawing by Steve Wells (Field Detective) based on the model of the camp, which is currently in the museum at Sagan in Poland

## Acknowledgements

Bringing together these two booklets into one account, that bears witness to the selfless acts of so many, would not have been possible if it were not for the encouragement, support, advice, guidance and kindness of the following people.

Caesar & Gail Bryan, Mary & Lem Lubin, Diana Vigors, Peter & Lorna Baker, Pat & Alan Craig, Laurence Coventry, Peter Hibbs, Jason Biggs, Nick & Patricia Morton, Gillian Morton, Anne Hawkins, Vicky & Harry Westropp, Charlie, Sally, Sue & Elaina, Sue Severn, Ambrose McGinn, Laura Williams, Rev. Steve Flashman, Craig McLoughlin, Steve Manning, Megan Kelleher, John Blundy, Richard 'Pebs' Peberdy, Ian Giles, Lionel 'Rusty' Russell, Julian Horn, James Dale, Marilyn Walton, Sally Webb, John Briggs, Andreas Smulders, Group Captain Shaun Harris, Annabel Copper & many, many more



GEORGE LAURENCE BAZETT HULL DFC PICTURED WITH HIS NEPHEW LAURENCE COVENTRY

The photograph was taken in September/October 1945 in Durban when Laurence visited family following his release from Stalag Luft III, seven months before the fatal crash at Goadby Marwood, Leicestershire

*Image courtesy of Laurence Coventry*



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**Steve Wells**  
Finds Photographer, & Historic  
Landscape Detective



**Dr Alan Stevens**  
Passed Away 10.04.19  
*memoratus in aeternum*



**Sophie Chell**  
Historic Landscape  
Detective



**Martyn Brown**  
Historic Landscape  
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**Alan Brown**  
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