

SGT. ALFRED EDWARD (TEDDY) COSGROVE OBSERVER/NAVIGATOR

R.A.F.V.R. 968259 - 12 SQUADRON, RAF BINBROOK, LINCOLNSHIRE.

GROUP 1; BOMBER COMMAND

BORN IN GORTON, MANCHESTER, 19TH MAY 1921-

KILLED IN ACTION AT CAISTER ON SEA, 11TH OCTOBER 1941.

Teddy Cosgrove signed up to the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserves on Saturday 9th September 1939 straight from his work place at the Calico Printers Association as a Research Assistant. He passed his medical on 11th Grade 1. He was then posted to No 3 RAF Depot in PADGATE, Lancashire where he passed another medical as fit for flying. After a written test he was accepted and sworn in as a Pilot under training- AC2 (Aircraftman 2nd Class). He was issued with full equipment and on the 3rd November, left Padgate for EVANTON in Scotland on the 4th. On the 6th November, he was posted to a small detachment at TAIN RANGES, a specialist night time bombing and gunnery depot.

On the 29th November, Teddy was posted to 4th ITW based at Bexhill on Sea, Sussex and stationed at the Metropole Hotel, where he learnt drill, did P.T. and learnt Morse code and about navigation. During this time, he was promoted to LAC (Leading Aircraftman) on 01/01/1940.

Teddy was assigned to the 51 Group Pool from ODIHAM in Hampshire in July 1940 and was moved to No 1 RECEIVING WINGS at BABBACOMBE in Devon on August 12th and from there on 15th September 1940 he was sent to No 5 BOMBING AND GUNNERY SCHOOL.

After this, he spent the winter at No 40 AACU (ANTI- AIRCRAFT CO-OPERATION UNIT) before being moved to No 6 AACU based at RINGWAY AIRPORT, Manchester in January 1941.

In April 1941, Teddy was moved yet again, this time to BASSINGBOURNE in Cambridgeshire as part of 11 OTU (OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT). This is where he met Canadian Pilot, Sgt James Douglas McKnight, who became his best friend and followed him on to 12 Squadron based at BINBROOK, Lincolnshire from 13th July 1941 and who flew alongside him in the Wellington II formation on Teddy's final mission—to bomb Cologne Railway Station.

Teddy qualified as an OBSERVER/ NAVIGATOR and it was at 11OTU that he most likely met up with his crew who joined him IN 12 SQUADRON based at Binbrook. At least four of the six man crew of the WELLINGTON II flew with him on his ten missions. We have tried to acknowledge what happened to Teddy's friends during his few months in the squadron base in Binbrook during the summer of 1941.

1. 2/08/41. WELLINGTON II W5401 (K FLIGHT) – TARGET CHERBOURG. 01.40-06.20.
BAD WEATHER PREVENTED TARGET
BEING BOMBED. BOMB LOAD OF

FOURTEEN 250LB.

ALL FLIGHTS FROM BINBROOK THAT
NIGHT WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN THEIR
MISSION.

CREW; SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT A PILKINGTON (W/O)
SGT. CHIR (FG)

SGT. A F SUCKLING (RG) -KIA-07/09/ 41 IN WELLINGTON II W5598 PH-N,
LEFT BINBROOK 21.50 ON MISSION TO
BERLIN. REMEMBERED ON THE
MEMORIAL AT REICHSWALD FOREST
WAR CEMETERY.

2. 12/08/41 WELLINGTON II W5427 (A FLIGHT) - TARGET BERLIN; 20.50-02.30.

BOMB LOAD- ONE 1000LB GP, THREE 500LB
GP AND TWO SBCs OF 25LB INCENDIARIES.
TARGET DUISBERG. BOMBS SEEN TO
BURST AND FIRES OBSERVED.

CREW- SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT A PILKINGTON (W/O)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. A F SUCKLING (RG)

3. 14/08/41 WELLINGTON II W5427 (A FLIGHT) - TARGET MAGDEBERG; 21.30-04.30.

BOMB LOAD ONE 100LB GP, THREE
500LB GP AND TWO SBCs OF 25LB
INCENDIARIES. TARGET MAGDEBURG.
BOMBS SEEN TO BURST IN TARGET AREA
AND FIRE OBSERVED.

CREW- SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. A CROSS (FG) - KIA 16/03/44. IN LANCASTER II ND447 PH-C. TOOK OFF

FROM BINBROOK 18.40 ON MISSION TO
STUTTGART. CRASHED AT HARTHEEM.
MEMORIAL AT DURNBACH WAR CEMETRY.

SGT. R H TODMAN (RG)

4. 16/08/41 WELLINGTON II W5570 (H FLIGHT) - TARGET COLOGNE [SECRET] 21.00-02.45.
BOMBS SEEN TO BURST IN TARGET AREA
AND FIRES OBSERVED.

CREW- SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. A F SUCKLING (RG).

5. 31/08/41 WELLINGTON II W 5575 (L FLIGHT) - TARGET ESSEN - 21.00-01.50.

10/10 CLOUD OVER TARGET AND NO
RESULTS OBSERVED.

CREW - SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)

SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. A CROSS (FG)
SGT. A F SUCKLING (RG)

6. 08/41 WELLINGTON II W5389 TARGET KASSEL 22.20-04.05
BOMB BURSTS WERE OBSERVED ON RAILWAYS AND
GOODS YARDS AND FIRES WERE STARTED.

CREW; SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. P J LEWIS (RG) NZ- KIA 31/08/41. IN WELLINGTON II W5577 PH-U.

LEFT BINBROOK 21.15. CRASHED OFF

FRENCH COAST. ONLY THREE BODIES
RECOVERED.

7. 11-12/09/41 WELLINGTON II W 5427 TARGET- ROSTOCK- 22.45-05.48
BOMB LOAD 3 X 500LB, 2 X 250LB GP AND 18 X 50LB
INCENDIARIES. FIRES IN TARGET AREA WERE
ATTACKED AND BOMBS SEEN TO BURST.

CREW; - SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. J W WILKINSON (RG) KIA 23/09/43. IN LANCASTER III W4991 PH-Q.
LEFT WICKENBY 19.11 FOR
MANNHEIM. CRASHED IN GERMANY.
REMEMBERED AT RHEINBERG WAR
CEMETERY.

8. 15/09/41 WELLINGTON II W 5382 TARGET HAMBURG -20.25- 02.25.
BOMB LOAD 2 X 1000LB, 3 X 500LB AND 2 X 250LB GP.
BOMBS WERE SEEN TO BURST ON THE RAILWAY
JUNCTION.

CREW; SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. BLUTE (RG). INJURED ON 07/02/42 WHEN HIS WELLINGTON II Z 8491
PH-F LEFT BINBROOK 17.39 FOR BREST BUT CRASHED ON
THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS.

9. 19-20/09/41 WELLINGTON II W 5361 TARGET STETTIN - 19.10-0030.
PILOT DECIDED TO TURN BACK BEFORE REACHING
DANISH COAST OWING TO STARBOARD ENGINE

GOING U/S. BOMBS WERE JETTISONED IN THE SEA.

CREW; SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT)
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT)
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV)
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO)
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG)
SGT. A A NORDON (RG).

10. 10-11/10/41 WELLINGTON II TARGET COLOGNE RAILWAY STATION- 23.52- RETURN 07.30?

CREW;

SGT. F H N TOTHILL (CAPT) KIA aged 25
SGT. J L S DUNLOP (2ND PILOT) KIA aged 23
SGT. A E COSGROVE (OBS/NAV) KIA aged 20
SGT. A PILKINGTON (WO) KIA aged 22
SGT. R H TODMAN (FG) KIA aged 21
SGT. A A NORDON (RG). KIA aged 20.

An eye-witness account states that Teddy was successful in his mission even though the crew sustained heavy flak attack. He goes on to say that Teddy's plane was hit in the port engine and Teddy was killed instantly with a wound to his head. The rest of the crew however, survived the onslaught but engine damage meant that the plane lost height quickly and as the hydraulics are managed from the left engine, it meant that the gun turrets couldn't turn but more importantly, the landing gear wouldn't work. Flying on one engine would possibly use up more fuel and as planes were only filled up with sufficient fuel for each mission it is possible that the plane didn't quite have the power to fly over the cliff at California Gap near Caister on Sea but instead, barely skimmed the sea and flew into the cliff killing the remaining crew.

Thanks to P.C Foyster and ARP Warden Edgar Tennant, the aircrew's bodies were dragged from the wreckage—which was salvaged a few days later by crane- and held in the garage of a Cambridge businessman's holiday home until the RAF could identify the bodies and return them to their families. Teddy's death was registred at Acle in Norfolk on 13th October 1941 with death cited as being "due to war operations."

Tragically, Teddy was due on leave the following day and was hoping to propose to his girlfriend, Teresa Bedford (a member of the W.A.A.F) in London before taking her to his parents in Higher Openshaw, Manchester. He had already bought the engagement ring and had left it in the safekeeping of Canadian friend and Pilot, Sgt James Douglas McKnight, who wrote to his dad, Alf and returned it along with Teddy's last letter, to Manchester.

Teddy was given a full military, requiem mass on October 16th 1941. RAF bearers brought the flag draped coffin into St Anne's Roman Catholic Church to the tune of Beethoven's "March of a Hero." He was later interred at St Joseph's Roman Catholic Cemetery at New Moston, Manchester, Grave no. 622 and his name is remembered on the memorial wall there.

Teddy's colleague and friend, Frank Hugh Neville Tothill was buried at St John's Church at Moggerhanger, Bedfordshire.

Co Pilot James Lennox Scott Dunlop was buried at New Street Cemetery, Stevenson, Ayrshire. His final letter showed that he was deeply religious and aware of the risks involved in flying but he deferred his ambition to becoming a brain surgeon out of duty, to fight for his country, bring about freedom and, as he put it, "a Good Earth."

Arthur Pilkington is buried at Scottow Cemetery Grave 261 and remembered at the Mercer Park Memorial in Accrington, Lancashire.

Raymond Henry Todman is buried at Littlehampton Cemetery, Sussex, Sect D, Grave 4230.

Aldwyn Anthony Nordon is buried in Barnsley Carlton Cemetery, Sect A, Grave 121 and is remembered on the roll of honour for the war dead at Barnsley Grammar School.

A STONE MEMORIAL TO THIS LOST AIRCREW OF WELLINGTON Z8397 IS TO BE DEDICATED ON SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER 2015 ON THE 74TH ANNIVERSARY OF THEIR MISSION TO COLOGNE, AT THE CALIFORNIA TAVERN, CALIFORNIA GAP, NORFOLK, THANKS TO THE FUNDRAISING AND DEDICATION OF EDGAR TENNANT'S SON, PETER TENNANT TO WHOM THE CREW'S FAMILIES OWE MANY THANKS.

WE EXPRESS OUR LOVE, RESPECT AND GRATITUDE FOR THEIR HEROISM .
MAY THEY NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.