

COMBAT REPORT

Lancaster X (ED. 655) of 57 Squadron over target on night 22/23rd September 1943 2142 hours at 18,000 feet.

No moon, coned in about 25 searchlights over target, no other unusual phenomena.

Monica gave warning of enemy aircraft just after bombs had been dropped and Lancaster was commencing to carry out banking search again. As enemy aircraft (identified as JU.88) came in to attack, searchlights went out. M.U. was first to see E/A on port quarter up approximately 300 yards. M.U. and R.G. simultaneously opened fire (firing 200 rds.) and hits were observed. E/A returned fire causing damage to Lancaster. E/A dropped starboard wing and dived to starboard leaving a smoke trail behind. When E/A was directly below Lancaster, flame was seen to emerge from starboard engine, but it was impossible to observe if E/A crashed, as another E/A then came in to attack from starboard quarter up. E/A (also identified as JU.88) came into attack at 600 yards range and R.G. opened fire (firing 50 rounds), but hits were not observed. E/A did not return fire. R.G. ordered the pilot to turn to starboard and dive, E/A broke away to starboard and was not seen again.

First E/A definitely claimed as destroyed.

M.U. could not get his guns to bear on second E/A.

Damage to Lancaster - Engine sub-frame Cat AC.

R.G. Sgt. MOAD - No. 3 B & G. S. McDONALD, MANITOBA.
16 O.T.U. UPPER HEYFORD, 1661 CON. UNIT, WINTHORPE

M.U. Sgt. LEWIS 24 C.A.O.S., MOFFIT, RHODESIA,
16 O.T.U. UPPER HEYFORD, 1661 CON. UNIT, WINTHORPE

Signed
Gunnery Leader, No. 57 Squadron.

Between them I have managed to build up the following picture of this much-loved young man:-

PILOT OFFICER DOUGLAS PARK, 162548 (VR) NAVIGATOR

Douglas was 20 years old and the fourth of six children born to Sarah Hayton and Joseph Deakin Park, who lived in Hull, Yorkshire. Charles, Hester and Mabel came before Douglas who was born on the 26th of August 1923, and then followed Dennis and Betty.

He attended Mersey Street School and, after gaining a Scholarship, went on to Riley High School. On leaving, he became an apprentice to Rose, Downs and Thompsons, where he stayed until January 1942 when, at the age of eighteen, he joined the Royal Air Force. After spending his first few weeks at No.1 Aircrew Reception Centre in St John's Wood, he then underwent his navigator's training in Paignton, Devon. In March 1943, now Sergeant 1435432 he would then have met up with the rest of the crew at the Operational Training Unit.

Confirmation of his appointment to Pilot Officer was sent to his family after his death.

The Park's were a lovely family who took young Mary Tock to their hearts and she always went to stay with them when Doug was on leave. By this time, they had moved a short distance out of town to Beverley, to try and avoid some of the bombing.

Douglas was a good friend of the mid-upper gunner, Roy Lewis and was best man at his wedding in July 1943.

As the navigator, it was Douglas's duty to keep the pilot informed of their position throughout the flight and to make sure the Lancaster was on course for the target. Once on the bombing run, it was then up to the bomb aimer to take over until the bombs were dropped. Douglas would then have to plot the course for home, not an easy task when you think of everything that would be going on around him.

Douglas now rests in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F7).

WIRELESS OPERATOR

The next person I struck lucky with was Ivor Groves, the young wireless operator. I had been told that the best way to trace relatives of the crew was to write letters to them all and send them to the Ministry of Defence, asking if they would forward them on to the last known addresses of the next-of-kin. As these addresses would probably be over 50 years old, it seemed unlikely that I would have any replies, but I sent them off and once again waited patiently to see if there was any response.

After about two months, all but one of my letters had been returned marked "not known", "incorrect address", etc. Several more weeks went by and then a letter arrived from Birmingham.

There was still one family living in the old road who remembered the Groves' and, by a stroke of luck, my letter was brought to their notice. These kind people took it upon themselves to try to track down any remaining relatives and, by scouring the telephone directories, they found Dennis Groves, who is one of Ivor's brothers.

I had my doubts about trying to trace relatives by letter, because it could obviously be very distressing to suddenly find a stranger enquiring about a lost member of your family. I realised that it was unlikely that a parent would still be living and I knew I had to rely on there being a brother or sister, or some other younger relative.

I was fortunate with Dennis because he sent me a very friendly reply and he was and still is quite happy to write to me. Once again we exchanged photographs and he also sent me a copy of Ivor's log book and a video about East Kirkby airfield. It was from Ivor's log that I discovered they had shot down a JU88 on a raid to Hannover on the 22nd of September 1943.

SERGEANT IVOR FRANCIS GROVES, 1576028 (VR), WIRELESS OPERATOR

Ivor was 20 years old, born on the 7th of June 1923 and was the second of four sons born to Florence and Harry, who lived in Greet, near Birmingham. His father was an ex-regular soldier of the First World War, and all four sons joined the forces, two in the Army and two in the Royal Air Force.

Ivor attended the Golden Hillock Road School, Sparkbrook, where he enjoyed playing football in the school 1st Eleven. He left there in 1937 and started work for the well known Cadbury Bros., in Bournville, where he also played football for the Bournville Youth Club. He was a member of both the ATC and Home Guard before joining the R.A.F. in 1941.

He was a very brave and caring young lad and on one particularly bad night during a Blitz on Birmingham, he helped to dig out two men who were trapped under the rubble.

A bomb had destroyed several of the neighbouring houses and all around there were fires that lit up the streets. Fortunately, most of the residents had taken shelter, but two men had been buried under the fallen buildings. One of these was Rolly, a well known local character who was a great favourite with the youngsters for his story-telling.

Ivor, first on the scene, was quickly joined by his father and several other people, who managed to get the first man out. They were just about to start digging again for Rolly, when some of the German 'planes that had been shooting up barrage balloons, suddenly turned their guns on the streets. Everyone scattered except for Ivor, who could hear Rolly calling from under the rubble. He shouted out for the others to come back and help, but by the time they had returned and managed to reach the body, it was sadly too late.

Needless to say, this upset young Ivor very much and shortly after this occurred, he applied to join the aircrew in the Royal Air Force. Although it had been something he had intended to do, his brothers are quite sure that this incident 'speeded up his decision.

After initial training at Blackpool, Ivor went on to Hereford and joined the No.5 Entry Air Crew at No.4 Signals School. Here he took a refresher course spending from October to December 1942 flying in both the Dominie and the Proctor, before progressing to Course No.98 at No.8 Air Gunnery School, Evanton for a month, from January to February 1943. Here, the aircraft was the Botha, and he finished the course with flying colours, passing out with excellent exam results. In the March, he met up with my father at the Operational Training Unit in Upper Heyford, and they stayed together from then on.

As the wireless operator, Ivor would have been down in the fuselage of the Lancaster behind the pilot and flight engineer, and also the navigator. This meant he could see very little of what was going on around him, as he was mostly in the dark and had to rely on anything he could hear over the intercom from his fellow crew members. On the bombing-run, he would keep watch from the astrodome, but apart from that, he would be busy listening out for broadcasts from his radio set. He would be particularly pleased when he heard the welcome call-sign 'Silksheen', which would let him know they were nearly 'home' when returning, weary and shaken, after long, dangerous operations. As Ivor had also received training as an air gunner, he would have been expected to take over if one of the regular gunners was injured.

Now at peace, Ivor rests in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F1).

REAR GUNNER

I wasn't sure how to go about tracing Harold Moad, the rear gunner, as he was a Canadian. The only clue you have to the whereabouts of any crew member, is solely the information contained in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records. From these, I knew his parents' names and their last known place of residence which was in Minnedosa, Canada.

I put off trying to trace his relatives for a while, because I didn't think I would meet with much success, but when I was failing to find relatives in England for the other crew members, I thought I might as well give it a try.

First of all, I wrote off to the National Archives of Canada, and after a wait of six months or so, received a reply saying they were unable to help me. Off went another letter, this time I simply addressed it to the Mayor of Minnedosa and within two to three weeks I received a reply - no not from the Mayor, but from a lady who is married to Harold's brother, Hubert. The Mayor had passed my letter on to them and she had been kind enough to reply to me. After a couple of letters, I had a photograph of Harold and some information about the family:-

FLIGHT SERGEANT HAROLD ALEXANDER MOAD R134973, RCAF, REAR GUNNER

Harold was aged 23 and was born in 1920 in Clanwilliam, Manitoba, a small town about nine and a half miles from Minnedosa. His parents, John and Ethel Moad were farmers and had nine children, four sons and five daughters. Another of the sons, Calvin, was also serving in England, in the Royal Air Force like his brother Harold, but he was shot down and taken a prisoner of war. He was held captive for three years before finally being released, and sadly died just two years after returning home.

Harold enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1941 and after initial training was sent to No.3 Bombing and Gunnery school at Macdonald in Manitoba in September 1942. He stayed there for almost three months learning about Morse-code, map-reading, aircraft recognition etc and, of course, target practice using rifles and Browning machine guns both on the ground and in the air.

In December 1942 he graduated as an air gunner and then had a spell of embarkation leave before being sent to England in January 1943. After spending a few weeks at a Personnel Reception Centre in Bournemouth, he found himself at 16 OTU in Upper Heyford where he joined up with my father.

He was a very important member of the crew because it would be his responsibility, when under attack, to relay to the pilot instructions

for evading enemy fighters. Harold's position in the Lancaster as a rear gunner, which kept him apart from the rest of the crew, must have been the loneliest place in the aircraft.

One of the many small lakes in the North of Manitoba has been named 'Moad Lake', in his memory.

Harold now rests in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F6).

BOMB AIMER

Despite all my efforts to trace the relatives of the remainder of the crew, I had been unsuccessful. Letters to the MOD and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission had turned up no useful information, nor had notices in the Bomber Command Newsletters, 57 Squadron Newsletter, advertising on Channel 4 Teletext 'Service Pals' section, or in the RAFA or Air Crew Association magazines.

I knew the names of Ernest Patrick's parents and also the area of London in which they had lived 50 years ago, so I thought I would try a letter in a local newspaper in case someone recognised the name. I wrote off to a publication in Enfield and, lo and behold, a few weeks later I received a letter from Ernest's brother, Alan.

It was a lucky find because it wasn't a newspaper that Alan himself bought, but his neighbour saw the letter asking for help in tracing relatives of the Patrick family and she popped next door and showed him. He was overjoyed that someone was trying to track down his family in order to pass on photographs of the graves in Berlin, as well as other relevant information, and in return I have learned a little about his older brother.

PILOT OFFICER ERNEST HAROLD PATRICK, 162550 (VR), BOMB AIMER

Ernest was 25 years old and was the eldest of two sons born to Juan and Mabel Patrick in Stamford Hill, N16, his birthday being on the 23rd of May 1918. He attended St John's School in North London, later followed by a Technical College, and was a member of the local Scout Troop.

He started working for his father in the engineering trade and later took up employment in a munitions factory in Gloucester, before volunteering for the RAF. Ernest was selected as air crew, and attended No.1 Air Crew Reception Centre in London, closely followed by 11 ITW in Scarborough. From there he went on to No.6 Elementary Flying Training School at Sywell, AC & W in Brighton, and then P & C at Padgate.

After this, he was shipped out to South Africa, starting off at No.75 Air School in Littelton. By February 1942, Ernest was at No.47 Air School in Queenstown, undergoing training as a bomb aimer/navigator, flying in both Oxfords and Ansons. He was taken off his first course owing to appendicitis, but on the 4th of November 1942, successfully passed the No.23 Navigation Course. A few days were then spent at No.43 Air School in Port Alfred, before going to IPTC in Pollswaar and then shipping home to No.7 PRC in Harrogate, as Sergeant 1431075. Confirmation of Ernest's appointment to Pilot Officer came through after he was reported missing.

March 1943, found Ernest at No.16 OTU in Upper Heyford, but before joining up with my father, he spent a few days of map-reading whilst flying in Ansons and then a couple of weeks high-level bombing. He also spent fourteen and a half hours Link-Trainer flying from the 5th of April to the 14th of May.

Besides manning the front gun turret, Ernest was responsible for directing the pilot when they were on their bombing-run, to ensure that the aircraft was over the target before he released the bombs. You needed nerves of steel while this was going on because a straight and level run was needed to ensure accuracy, so 'corkscrewing' and other evasive action was out of the question. There was also the interminable wait over the target after the bombs were dropped whilst waiting for the photoflash to go off, which would record the outcome of the bombing.

Ernest is laid to rest in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F8).

MID-UPPER GUNNER

I must admit to shedding a few tears when I first made contact with Moya, the young wife of Roy Lewis, the mid-upper gunner.

There was no record of Roy's family or home town anywhere that I could find, but luckily Mary, the navigator's fiancée, remembered the name of Roy's wife and that they had been living in Sale. Once again, it was by placing a letter in a local newspaper of this last known town that I was able to trace her, but I found it most upsetting to learn that this young couple were only just starting out on their life together, when it was so abruptly destroyed, just four short months after their marriage.

After several letters and phone calls, and by exchanging photographs, I can now tell you a little about this young man.

PILOT OFFICER ROY ARTHUR LEWIS 161699 (VR) MID-UPPER GUNNER

Roy was born in January 1922 in Eastleigh, Hampshire, the only son of Walter Benjamin and Elsie Lewis. He attended Peter Symonds School in Winchester until 1937, when his father moved north to become the manager for the Mode Wheel Workshop, for the Manchester Ship Canal. Here, Roy then went to the Chorlton Grammar School where he enjoyed playing rugby. On leaving school, he went to the Ship Canal as a garage mechanic apprentice.

Moya first saw Roy when on a church parade with the Scouts. She was a 'Ranger' and Roy was a 'Rover'. It was at this same church, St. Mary's, that they were to marry on the 31st of July 1943.

Early in 1942, Roy enlisted in the Royal Air Force and after his preliminary training in the UK, he was then sent overseas to Bulawayo in Rhodesia where he underwent his gunnery training, returning home in April 1943. In the June, at 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit, Winthorpe, as Sergeant 1501109, Roy would have joined the other members of the crew and started flying in the four-engined 'heavies' for the first time.

Roy's appointment to Pilot Officer was confirmed after his death.

As in the case of the rear gunner, Roy would have had the difficult task of defending the Lancaster against attacks by German fighters when they were flying on operations.

Roy is now at rest alongside his companions in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F4).

FLIGHT ENGINEER

Again it was by advertising in a local newspaper that I made contact with a relative of Leonard Brown, the young flight engineer.

Mrs Baker is still living in Bermondsey and saw my letter in the 'Southwark and Bermondsey News' asking for help in tracing the Brown family who were known to have been living there in the mid 1940's. She wrote to tell me that she was the niece of Auntie Nell and Uncle Charlie, thereby making her Lennie's cousin. At one time their maternal grandmother lived next door to her family in Bush Road.

Mrs Baker didn't see a lot of Lennie during the war because she was in Scotland training to be a nurse, but she well remembers when he was killed because she lost her own youngest brother in the same month. He was serving in the Navy and was killed on the 21st of December at the age of 21.

SERGEANT LEONARD CHARLES BROWN 1615648 (VR) FLIGHT ENGINEER

Leonard was 20 years old and was the only son of William Charles and Ellen Brown who lived in Bermondsey, London.

Unfortunately, this young man would not have been well known to the other members of the crew as this was his first operation with them. He would normally be seated next to the pilot in the cockpit, and would assist him, particularly at take-off and landing. Being the engineer, he would know the workings of the Lancaster probably better than any of the others and would keep a general eye on the various instruments and gauges to ensure that all was well with the aircraft.

Leonard is now laid to rest in the Berlin War Cemetery Plot 8 (F3).

I am afraid I was unable to obtain a photograph of Leonard.

THE SECOND PILOT

My final success was to find someone related to Jack Dalton, who was flying with the crew as a second pilot on the 2nd of December.

I didn't think there would be any chance at all of discovering much about this young man because he had only been on the squadron for three days and this was his very first flight with the crew. None of them would have got to know him very well and there was no published record of any of his family or even what part of the country he came from.

None of my previous methods of advertising had brought forth any news about him and I couldn't place a letter in a newspaper without knowing a town in which the family had lived. I couldn't give up without a fight though, and after much perseverance, and finally a little gentle persuasion, I managed to discover his father's name and home town of 50 years ago. I immediately wrote off to the local newspaper, and within days I received a phone call from Mrs Whalley. She turned out to be Jack's cousin as her father and Jack's mother were brother and sister.

PILOT OFFICER JACK PROCTER DALTON 161782 (VR) SECOND PILOT

Jack was born on the 26th of February 1921 and he and his sister Jean, were the children of Arthur Rushton and Mabel who lived in Burnley, Lancashire. He attended a private school before going on to the local grammar school in Burnley and when he left, he went to work for his father who was a well-known local businessman and the owner of two Men's Outfitters. One of the shops was situated in Burnley and the other in Padiham, then in 1938 he expanded into the mail-order business as well, specialising in outsize clothing for men.

Jack worked in the mail-order firm until he enlisted in 1941 and after successfully completing his pilot training, went on No.61 Course at 16 OTU, Upper Heyford as Sergeant Pilot 1088500. He then finished off at a Heavy Conversion Unit before being posted to 57 Squadron stationed at East Kirkby, on the 29th of November 1943. Whilst at Upper Heyford, Jack spent several hours flying with Roland Hammersley DFM, a wireless operator who also went on to fly with 57 Squadron.

The news of Jack's appointment to Pilot Officer, was confirmed to his family after his death.

This is another tragic story of a young pilot who never got to fly on an operation with his own crew, as was so often the case. An experienced 'safe crew', nearing the end of their own tour, would be asked to take a young 'second dickie' on a raid with them so that he could experience what it was like, but in too many instances these crews didn't make it back to Base. It must have been very difficult in the

confined space of the cockpit to have an extra person there, and on the night Jack flew with my father, he already had a new flight engineer. Leonard Brown, who was on his first operation with them as well.

Jack is laid to rest along with the other members of the crew in the Berlin War Cemetery, Plot 8 (F5).