

William Edward Wray

Born: 22 October 1903 at Nocton Grange, Nocton, Lincolnshire

Died: 05 May 1969

Occupation: Technical Clerk at Ruston-Hornsby in Lincoln

Mary Madeline 'Mollie' Wray

Born: 19 June 1910 in Richmond Road, Lincoln

Died: 11 May 1986

Occupation: Housewife

John William Wray

Born: 5 March 1933 at the Red House, Coleby, Lincolnshire

Died: 20 October 2018

Occupation: Motor Engineer

The Wray family lived at 67 Lincoln Road in Branston. Because this property had a bathroom and a spare bedroom, the family were required to accommodate a member of the armed forces. RAF Waddington was so busy that the Officers' Mess was full. Ashfield House in Branston became a Sergeant's Mess, and other aircrew were billeted in private homes all around the village.

The first serviceman to turn up at my grandparents' door was Patrick Richard Owen (61285, RAFVR) of Southgate, Middlesex, who was serving in 44 Squadron (Hampdens) based at RAF Waddington. Pat was killed on 31 August 1941 aged 21 years in a mid-air collision with a Spitfire from RAF Digby that had apparently strayed out of sector. The Hampden was undergoing an air test at the time, and all occupants were killed. Not long after his death, a large package turned up at my grandparents' house in Branston, this crammed full of toys for my father,

John Wray. The package had been sent by the parents of Pat Owen, William and Ellen Phoebe Owen. Pat Owen was their only son.

My gran, Mollie Wray, was badly shaken by the death of Pat Owen, and she refused to have any more young airmen living under her roof, so the RAF Billeting Officer next sent Desmond Ossiter Sands, a navigator from Albany, Western Australia, who was already in his thirties. Des Sands was a member of the Nettleton Victory Cross crew involved in the famous Augsburg Raid, this being one of the very first raids carried out by the Lancaster bomber. The Augsburg Raid was a daylight raid on the Mann Diesel Engine Factory by a number of Lancaster bombers from 44 Squadron and 97 Squadron. Des Sands was finally shot down on his 40th mission, and spent the rest of the war as a Prisoner of War

My grandparent, Bill and Mollie Wray, not being next of kin, received no news of Des Sand's fate so believed him to be Killed in Action. When the POW camp was finally liberated late in the war, Des Sands returned to Waddington. One Sunday morning he walked the few miles from Waddington aerodrome to Branston with his kitbag slung over his shoulder, to visit my grandparents. As he approached the house, my father John Wray, was playing out in the front garden. He soon spotted Des, and ran inside the house yelling 'Uncle Des is coming' and was not immediately believed by his mother and father.

After Des Sands, Eva Akenhead, a WAAF from the North-East of England, and who worked at the Y Service Wireless Station at Branston Mere, was billeted at 67 Lincoln Road in Branston. Eva went on training course at both Cheadle and Chicksands, and it was on one of these courses where she met her future husband, Robert William Chissell (1175708/ 191949). Robert Chissell was a Leading Aircraftsman who was commissioned on 22 March 1945

Mollie Ford, another WAAF from Branston Mere Wireless Station, also stayed at 67 Lincoln Road for a short time.

The last serviceman to be billeted at 67 Lincoln Road was Technical Sergeant Sidney Kaufman of the United States Air Force, who worked at Branston Mere Wireless Station. His home address was 14005 Mont Avenue, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

