

# Baz

THE BIOGRAPHY OF IAN BAZALGETTE VC



*Dave Birrell*



S/L Ian Bazalgette was the only Albertan awarded the Victoria Cross during World War II. This biography tells the story of a Canadian hero and his lasting connection with the Village of Senantes in France and the Bomber Command Museum of Canada in Nanton, Alberta.



***“His courage  
and devotion to duty  
were beyond praise”***



**Bomber Command Museum of Canada  
Nanton, Alberta, Canada**



# Baz

*The biography of  
Squadron Leader  
Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC*

*Dave Birrell*

**For Baz,  
W/C D. Stewart Robertson DFC,  
and all the others who served with  
Bomber Command  
during the Second World War.**

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Front cover: "Beyond Praise" by Len Krenzler (S/L Bazalgette is buried in the churchyard, just beyond the yellow flowers.); Portrait courtesy Royal Canadian Military Institute

Back cover: Portrait by Patrick McNorgan

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## REGARDING NAMES . . .

Ian Willoughby Bazalgette's father was named Ian. So, presumably to avoid confusion within the family, the younger Ian was referred to as "Willoughby" or more often as "Will." The family continues to refer to him by this name today. When Ian left home to briefly work in business and during his time in the army, it appears that he began referring to himself as "Ian." It was likely shortly after he joined the Royal Air Force that he became known as "Baz."

Ian's older sister, Ethel, was referred to within the family as "Allie," although it was sometimes spelled "Ally." Following the war, she married John Broderick and took the name "Ethel Broderick."

In this biography, all the above names are used, the selection being based on which portion of their lives are being described and the context. In any letters or quotations that are included, the names are those that were written or spoken.

"Bazalgette" is pronounced "Baz-el-jet."

# ***Introduction to the Third and later Editions***

When the second edition of “Baz” was published in 2009, we believed that it incorporated all the material that existed regarding S/L Bazalgette’s life. We made use of information from his logbook, squadron records and other documents, and extensive videotaped interviews with Ian’s sister, crewmembers, and friends. As well, we had visited RAF Downham Market, Baz’s last posting, and the Village of Senantes where he died and is buried.

Unfortunately, only a very few letters written by Ian and none written to him by others in his family were available. This limited the picture of him that we were able to present to one largely based on comments made by others about his life and his personality. However, this changed in 2012.

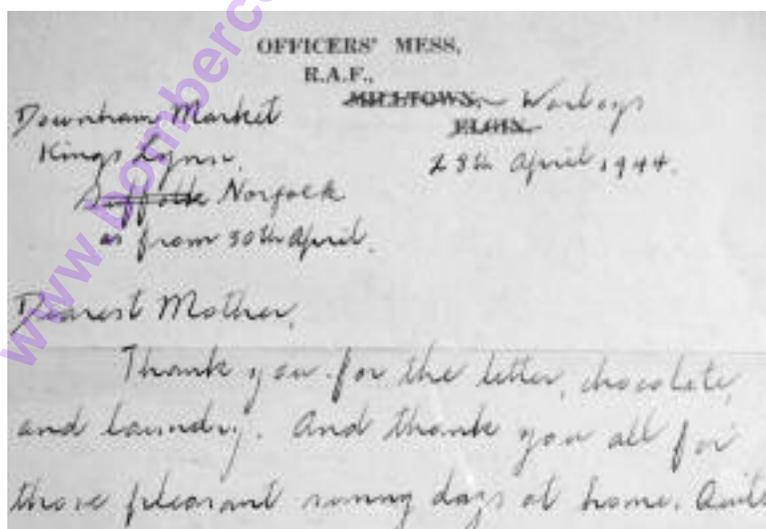
Shortly after the end of the war Ian’s mother, Marion Bazalgette, placed over one hundred letters and documents, a number of photos, and a few other special items in a wooden box. The box was then closed and placed in a storage area somewhere in her home.

Following the passing of Ian’s parents, the box was taken to the home of Ian’s older brother, Deryck, who placed it in storage at his house. Following his death in 2010, younger members of the family came across the box and it was opened, perhaps for the first time since Marion closed it a few months after the end of the war.



The Bomber Command Museum of Canada is honoured that the family has shared the contents of this special box with us, in particular the letters. As well as providing valuable information regarding Baz's military career, these private conversations between a mother and her son are a window into his personality and other aspects of his life that we had previously not known of. There are also two poignant and beautiful letters written by Ian's sister that allow us to appreciate her personality and the close relationship she had with Ian and her parents.

So Ian's biography can now be enhanced and broadened with this wonderful material.



# Foreword

by T.G. 'Hamish' Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC

*I have long been a supporter of the Nanton Lancaster Society and feel privileged that I am to have the honour of contributing a Foreword to a book that the Society has prepared on the life and times of the Canadian-born Pathfinder VC.*

*On completing my own Pathfinder tour I flew a desk at Don Bennett's Pathfinder (PFF) Headquarters with the grand title of Group Training Inspector which was translated by many aircrew in Bomber Command as "Bennett's Horse Thief" and was in all probability a much cleverer work-a-day title.*

*In the case of Ian Bazalgette he volunteered to undertake Pathfinder training and fortunately his Commanding Officer agreed with his posting. By this time I was commanding RAF Warboys and had the pleasure of receiving Ian to start PFF training. Ian had very good reports from the various sections at Warboys and once he joined 635 Squadron he progressed with some speed through the various stages of the Bennett tactics and was soon assessed as a potential Master Bomber.*

*Whilst I may be accused of bias, I had been actively associated with Baz over a prolonged period and I found that he showed all the signs of emulating some of Arthur Harris's [Commanding Officer of the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command] old lags [veteran airmen] such as Leonard*

*Cheshire, Willie Tait, John Searby, and a host of Pathfinders with whom he had immediate contact at Downham Market. I was much impressed by two particularly good operational types, Artie Ashworth and "Turkey" Rainsford, Ian's c/o at 115 Squadron. Both were seasoned operators in the style of Arthur Harris's old lags and Bazalgette showed every indication of being the kind of leader whose assessment was reviewed against this background of PFF ability, in other words, someone who was outstanding in the field of ability and in more simple words, the best of the very best.*

*Don Bennett has proclaimed and indeed written on several occasions that I selected and trained some 20,000 aircrew for the Pathfinder Force. I also mourned a quarter of that total killed in action.*

*Somehow the passing of Bazalgette hurt the most because of the dire circumstances prevailing at the time. Please-to-remember there was a change of aircraft at the last minute and indeed Ian volunteered to do that sortie when he should have been starting his leave quota.*

*Measured against the highest PFF standard, Baz and crew set a high water mark in operational ability and leadership. His zest for flying was infectious throughout the squadron and his natural boyish personality made his passing very hard to bear, more especially in the period just before victory was achieved.*

*The lasting tribute on display at Nanton immortalizes an outstanding figure of the Sir Arthur Harris Bomber Offensive and is a tribute to all Canadians who bore arms during World War II in the air, on land, and on the sea.*

*Thus, the heroic endeavours of Squadron Leader Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC RAF VR will serve as a benchmark to the youth of Canada to serve their country with the same verve and dedication as Baz - A GENTLEMAN AT ARMS.*

T.G. "Hamish" Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC joined the Royal Air Force in 1928, serving in Egypt and Iraq during the 1930's. Returning to the U.K. in 1937 as an experienced pilot, he found himself in an air force preparing for the inevitable outbreak of war. Hamish flew two tours of operations with Bomber Command, the first in the twin-engined Whitley and the second in the huge four-engined Stirling.

He went on to become a founding member of Air Vice Marshall Don Bennett's staff at Pathfinder Force Headquarters where he was appointed Group Training Inspector, responsible for the supply of crews for the Pathfinders. Following his retirement from the RAF in 1958, he became an aviation consultant. In 1989 his autobiography, "Hamish, The story of a Pathfinder" was published.

The Nanton Lancaster Society was honoured by his presence at the dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster in 1990.





[courtesy Royal Canadian Military Institute Museum]

# ***Prologue***

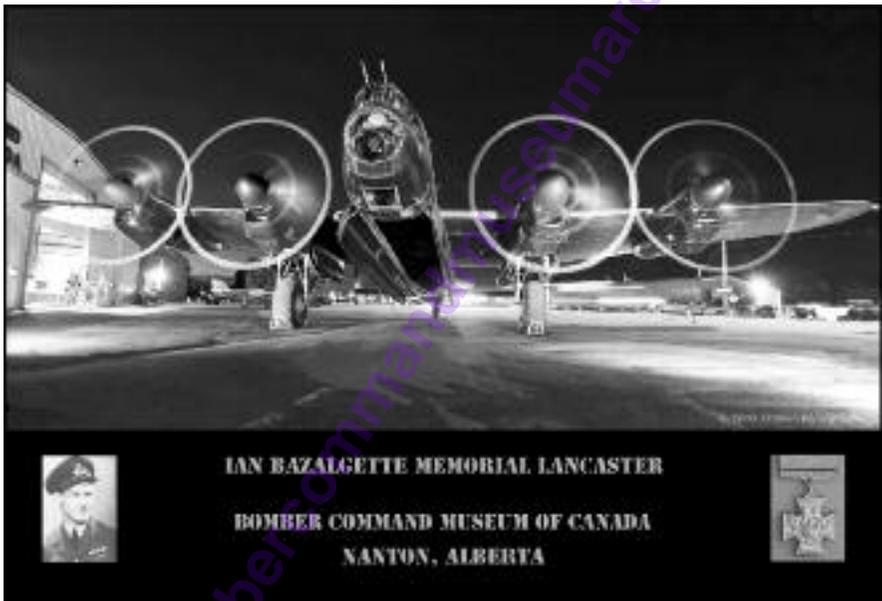
At a Dedication Ceremony on 27 July 1990, Avro Lancaster FM-159 became the “Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster.” The Nanton Lancaster Society brought together relatives, crewmembers, a fellow pilot, a senior officer, and friends to remember the respected Royal Air Force officer they all had known well. Members of the Society, guests, and through the media, tens of thousands of others were introduced to an Alberta-born hero who had been virtually forgotten.

The following year Ian’s Lancaster was rolled into the newly constructed building that would become the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. During the years since, hundreds of thousands have come to know of Alberta’s World War II Victoria Cross recipient during visits to the museum and its website, and through museum publications and promotional work.

As was mentioned several times by speakers and guests at the Dedication Ceremony, there were many thousands of other airmen who performed similar valiant acts through the six long years that Bomber Command waged war against the Nazis. We continue to hear of many of these at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. But many other stories remain untold. Undoubtedly there were thousands of other examples of gallantry in the skies aboard aircraft which

did not return to base and whose crews were all killed.

The honouring of Squadron Leader Bazalgette VC DFC, both in his being awarded the Victoria Cross and his being honoured by the Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, must be viewed as a tribute to all who served.



## The Pre-war Years

During the 1850's, the River Thames in London was a major health hazard, little more than an open sewer and devoid of any fish or other wildlife. Over ten thousand Londoners died of cholera during the epidemic of 1853 and 1854.

Ian's great-grandfather, Sir Joseph Bazalgette, was chief engineer for the London Metropolitan Board of Works and his solution was to construct 2230 kilometres of sewer lines to carry the raw sewage which up until then flowed freely through the streets and thoroughfares of London.

Joseph Bazalgette also built the Thames Embankment System that carried the major "intercepting" sewer lines through the city, diverting the outflow downstream where it entered the River Thames. The Embankments also carried the



**Memorial to Sir Joseph Bazalgette on the Thames Embankment in London**

first London underground railway and replaced the tidal mud of the Thames shore with reclaimed ground for riverside roads and gardens behind their curved river walls. Joseph was knighted for his work.

Bazalgette's foresight may be seen in the diameter of the sewers. His calculations were based on the most densely populated area and assigned every person a generous allowance of sewage production to determine the diameter of pipe needed. He then said, "Well, we're only going to do this once and there's always the unforeseen" and doubled the diameter to be used. Every Londoner should be grateful for this foresight. If Sir Joseph had used the smaller pipe diameter, the sewers would have overflowed in the 1960's. As it is, they are still in use to this day.

Sir Joseph's eldest son was Charles Norman Bazalgette. He became a successful barrister and Queen's Counsel, writing a large volume on municipal law as well as, in a sense, carrying on his father's work by becoming an authority on the treatment of sewage and water purification. Norman died suddenly just three weeks after the birth of his son Charles.

Charles Ian Bazalgette (who referred to himself as "Ian") chose to emigrate to the Hardisty area (175 kilometres southeast of Edmonton, Alberta) in 1910 where he farmed on the east bank of the Battle River, about ten kilometres south of Hardisty.

In the same year, James Bunn moved from Ireland with his family and began farming on the west bank of the river, within sight of the Bazalgette farm. Ian met and married James's daughter,



**Charles Ian  
Bazalgette**



**James Bunn**



**The Bazalgette Farm on the Battle River near Hardisty**

Marion Edith Bunn, and their two elder children, Deryck and Ethel, were born while the family was on the farm.

When war was declared in 1914, Ian enlisted with the 51st Edmonton Battalion and trained at Sarcee near Calgary. He was posted overseas with the 44th Winnipeg Infantry Battalion where he was injured and exposed to poison gas while at the front. Ian then developed trench-mouth and became ill with encephalomyelitis due to an improperly administered vaccine. After spending several months recuperating with family in England, he returned to Hardisty, the army having declared him, "medically unfit for further service."



**Marion (Bunn)  
Bazalgette c.1910**

Even prior to the war, Ian and Marion, as well as Marion's father, had become disillusioned with farming and by 1916 both families had sold their property. In February 1918, the Bazalgettes moved to Calgary where they lived at 2020 -35th Ave. S.W. which at that time was at the southwest

edge of the city.

Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was born in the Calgary General Hospital on 19 October 1918. He was referred to as "Will" to avoid confusion with his father.

His sister Ethel recalled,

*"I was four when Ian was born. I do remember very clearly the joy I felt at having a younger brother and right from the beginning we were such great friends. He was just wonderful with all ages of people. We would go to tea with friends and others and 'Will,' as we called him, would just sit there having a conversation with them, keeping them all entertained. It was the way he was. He always got along extremely well with all people and was always a lot of fun to be around."*

Marion's father had been living with the Bazalgette family on the farm. He had moved to Calgary as well, and helped support the family as young Ian's father's health continued to be a concern and the Alberta economy was not good at this time either. It was during these early years of Will's life that a close relationship developed between James Bunn and his grandson.

In 1922 the family moved to Toronto, Ontario where



**The Bazalgettes' home in Calgary as it appeared in 2007**



**Will and his cat in Calgary**



(l-r) Ethel, Will, Deryck, and Marion Bazalgette

they lived on Neville Park Boulevard and Willoughby attended Balmy Beach School. But as Ethel recalled,

*“We only lived in Toronto for about three years by which time my father’s health had really deteriorated and he wanted to get back to England, his homeland, his family, and his mother and so he took all of us to England.”*

The family settled in New Malden, in Surrey, just fourteen kilometres southwest of central London. Will continued his education at Rokeby Preparatory School and then Beverley Boys Secondary School. As well, he received some private tutelage.

When he was thirteen, Will contracted tuberculosis. For the first two weeks of 1932, he kept a detailed diary that provides considerable insight into what was a difficult and challenging time for him. There are numerous references to his illness such as, “Mother came and took my temperature which was beautifully low being only 97.2” and to his “old temperature charts.”



**Will and his dog**

JANUARY, 1932.

Epiphany. Wednesday 6

Rather a ghastly day. I woke up feeling out of sorts. I drank my early tea but didn't have much appetite for breakfast. I shouted good-bye to Ethel. After breakfast, I didn't feel like doing anything much. I just lay still until my temp. was taken at ten o'clock. It was only 98°, though, thank God. Shortly after Betty came over. She stayed downstairs a bit, and then came up, and had a chat, about films & plays mostly. Mr Ward, the man who is producing "The Rose & the Ring" by "Hackerway", is her uncle. She saw the snaps. After staying about half an hour, she went. I played my banjo and then Aunt M. and Veronica turned up. V. came up & gave me some grapes from Aunt M. I took a portrait snap of her, & played my uke. Aunt M. came up & took her away. I go to S. Business in her Riley. After lunch, I played my uke till about three, after that I rested & talked to mother. Mum went downstairs to get tea so I rested until the mum brought up tea. I went outside & the doctor came while I was there. He examined me & was quite pleased, I think. After tea, I played with my uke, one string is faulty I think, then I played Ludo with mum. After that my troubles began. I felt bad & again, of course my troubles then began thoroughly. I worried both mother & myself. After supper, I worried again, & I started reading my Bible. I felt better, in fact quite O.K. Mum wanted to bring her mattress in & lie on the floor, but I said no. Said prayers, read Bible. Prayed, esp. for M.

Will's diary entry for 6 January 1932

Will also wrote in his diary about his interests at the time that included photography -“I got up and took six time exposures out of my bedroom window. I didn’t notice I had the portrait lens on, so a few of them were spoiled,” reading -“After supper I read Deryck’s book which is called ‘Child of Storm’ and the author is Rider Haggard. His books are impossible, but nevertheless, you can’t help liking them,” art -“I amused myself by painting until lunch time,” and music with mentions of playing his banjo and ukulele.

The entries indicate that he was spending a lot of time in bed and there is no indication of any physical activity whatsoever. Arrangements were made for Will to enter a treatment centre and on Sunday the third he wrote,

*“I read the Bible until mother came in and put the light out, then I said my prayers. One more of my precious days at home gone, it won’t be long before I go.”*

Two days later he wrote,

*“It was rather a blow when she [Will’s mother] told me there was a vacancy for me at the Harpenden Sanatorium [forty kilometres north of London], and I had to go there next Friday.”*

Will entered the Sanatorium on Friday the 8th writing,

*“Travelled to St. Pancras by car and then by train to Harpenden. Said goodbye to Dad and had a preliminary farewell with poor, darling Mother, then I went downstairs and I got into the car before the others very rudely. Mother and the others got in. Waved to Deryck and saw all I could of the house before we turned the corner.”*

It is thought that Will spent about four months being treated at the Harpenden Sanatorium and at The Royal Seabathing Hospital, Margate (120 kilometres east of



(l-r) L. Reeve, Will, and R. Chrisel at  
The Royal Seabathing Hospital

London). The lengthy recovery at home that must have followed would have been challenging as well. The successful battling of this disease was an indication of a strength of character which was to show itself amply later.

Throughout his teens, Will maintained a close relationship with his Grandfather Bunn. James visited the family in Malden and travelled to Ireland with them as well. There was even consideration of his moving to England to live with Marion and her family. A beautifully handwritten letter from Will to his grandfather refers to this possibility as well as to the “precious” time the family spent together in Ireland.

During his later teens, Will pursued his interests that included music, books, roses, and photography. Although he played no instrument, he often wrote essays on classical music. The depth of his knowledge and interest is indicated in a lengthy and very detailed letter Will wrote to the Editor of “The Musical Times” commenting on an article that the magazine had recently published. Will gives his views on the article making reference to an analysis of the music in a book



**Ethel and Will in Ireland in 1938**

**“We used to go on vacations to Ireland. We had so much fun –Will just loved it over there.”**

**-Ethel Broderick**

Dear Grandad,

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1921.

Just a few lines to wish you a safe, calm voyage. I cannot tell you how much I have been hoping and praying that somehow things might be managed so that you could be with us. I suppose it was just not to be, this time, but I know we will have you with us sometime again. My memories of the times we had together in Ireland are the most precious I have, and every night I pray God to bless you, to keep you strong and well, and to grant that soon circumstances will change and you will come to us never to part again. You are always in my thoughts and I know you will like to think that here there is a place where you are often thought of and sincerely loved and wanted. Once again God bless you, sustain you throughout your journey, and grant you will soon come back to us.

Adieu, reverie,

Your loving grandson,

Villoughby, Bayalgetta

God bless Him

My dear little Man

JB

that he has.

By the age of twenty-one, as war clouds were building in Europe, Will had done volunteer work with the New Malden Auxiliary Police Force, applied unsuccessfully for employment with the Bank of England, and was trying his hand in the business field as an employee of the London County Freehold & Leasehold Properties Ltd.

The August 1939 issue of the company's staff magazine reported that "Mr. I.W. Bazalgette (Rating Department, Head Office)" had left the company to become a soldier for six months and that this was, "an effect of the Military Training Act."

20th January, 1939.

The Editor,  
The "Musical Times",  
160 Wardour Street,  
London, W.1.

Sir,

I was interested to read the paragraph on the B A C H Theme in a Beethoven Quartet, reprinted in 'Music in the Foreign Press' in the current "Musical Times".

I have a book on Beethoven, published by Doubleday, Doran & Company of New York, and written by Robert Haven Schaufliker, in which the author takes some exceedingly interesting comments on this B A C H Theme in the Slow Movement of the Op. 59, No. 2 Quartet.

Mr. Schaufliker says:-

"The skyey luminosities of this movement take one back in thought to the man whom Beethoven revered as 'the first parent of music.' And of whom he punningly remarked: 'nicht Bach sondern Meer' (not Bach (brook) but ocean). It is as near in mood to the spirit of the Bach Larghetto from the Concerto for two violins, as the nature Beethoven could be to anyone else's spirit. So that the musical anagram

(In German our B flat is B and our B natural is H )

upon which the writer recently stumbled at the point where the violoncello carries the tune near the beginning of the

The first page of Will's letter to "The Musical Times"

#### OUR FIRST MILITIAMAN.



No. 10,035,001.

The effect of the Military Training Act became apparent when Mr. T. W. Bazalgette (Rating Department, Head Office) left us to become a soldier for six months. He was very closely followed by Porter W. H. Ellerby-Stockwell of West Kensington.

We understand that Mr. Bazalgette has been attached to the Royal Engineers (22nd Searchlight Militia) and posted to Taunton, Somerset.

Under the present scheme of things we shall continue temporarily to lose the services of male members of the staff soon after they reach the age of 20, although they will, more often than not, be replaced by others who have just completed their period of training.

While it is unsettling both for those called up and also for the departments which have to carry on in their absence, it is done in the interests of the nation and should be accepted with that cheery optimism that characterises our people in the face of difficulties.

So we salute Private Bazalgette as our first militiaman and wish him, and those who follow him, all the best during their training.



**“Ian and I just remained the greatest of friends.”  
-Ethel Broderick**

# 51st Searchlight Regiment

Perhaps Ian could not visualize himself being happy as a London businessman or maybe he saw the war clouds looming and felt it his duty to serve as his father had during the First World War.

Whatever his motives, Ian enlisted in the Royal Artillery on 16 July 1939. It is likely that he began to refer to himself by his first name when he joined the army although he continued to be “Will” to his family.

While completing a three month course related to the operation of searchlights at Shrivenham, about 85 kilometres west of London, Ian became close friends with Eric Biggs who recalled that he,

*“ . . . gravitated towards Ian from the outset, he being an*



*interesting character combining a tremendous application to his duties with a bubbling irreverence and sense of fun in his social life.*

*We were commissioned together in September 1940 and travelled to Scotland out of London at the height of one of the first blitzes. Together we joined the 51 Highland Searchlight Regiment of Aberdonians stationed in the clubhouse of the Royal and Ancient, St Andrews where we were made honorary members. This had little meaning as the course was covered with close set stout poles as an anti-invasion measure.”*

The Firth of Forth and the area around Edinburgh was the location of a major Royal Navy base of great importance during the war. The first German air attack on Britain took place over the Forth Bridge, six weeks into the war on 16 October 1939. Although known as the "Forth Bridge Raid", the bridge itself was not the target and was not damaged.

Twelve German Ju 88 bombers and two Heinkel He 111's reached the Scottish coast. The target of the attack was shipping associated with the Rosyth naval base in the Forth Estuary, close to the bridge. The attack was concentrated on the cruisers HMS Edinburgh and HMS Southampton, the carrier HMS Furious, and the destroyer HMS Jervis.

Southampton and Edinburgh sustained minor damage and a combined total of ten injuries but no deaths. Spitfires from the RAF's 603 "City of Edinburgh" Squadron intercepted the raiders and during the attack shot down the first German planes destroyed over Britain in the war.

Ian was placed in charge of the first radar controlled searchlights positioned to protect Edinburgh, across the Firth of Forth. After a few months of duty, he was less than enthusiastic about his posting, writing to his mother that,

*“Life goes on in much the same dreary manner –God how I want some leave. I wish I didn't feel so stale over my work. I told the Major I felt stale and was not, in consequence,*

*giving anything like my best. All very annoying because hitherto I know damn well my Troop has always been the best in the Battery –now I am slack and disinterested so it's about the worst."*



**2nd Lt. Bazalgette**

During his time with the Searchlight Regiment, Ian and his searchlight troop were deployed to various locations. On 30 September 1940 he wrote to his mother that he was located about four kilometres north of the north end of the Firth of Forth

Bridge. He sounded much more pleased with his situation there, writing,

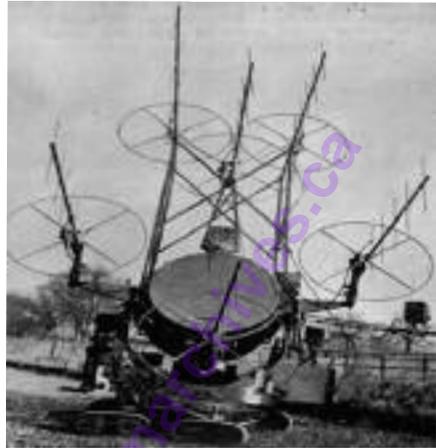
*"I am now near Rosyth –the naval docks – with a grand view over the Firth of Forth and the Forth Bridge. St. Andrews and Edinburgh and Scotland in general have made the best possible impression on me. Everything seems well ordered and tidy and healthy although it seems very old after the south."*

Just four days later, it appears that the Scottish weather may have been affecting him as he wrote,

*"This has been my most depressing day in Scotland, due chiefly to the incredible foul weather –very raw, misty, and now raining like a bastard."*

Ian was becoming more experienced and was given increasing responsibilities with the Searchlight Regiment. He wrote,

*“Alex Middleton, the fellow who was here when I came, has been posted away and I am now the Troop Officer –the poor devil who has to administer to the daily needs of some 102 men. I seem to be expected to answer anything, get them anything, and do everything except cook for them. Still it’s a grand life and I have given them lots of hell in return; they have been jerked out of their old slothful ways and now scrub everything bar the roof or else. The great thing about this place is that it is very interesting and Goering [Hermann Goering, the commander of Germany’s Luftwaffe] is bound to have a crack in some style (soon we hope) for Rosyth is the concentration of dockyards, naval repair facilities, etc. One of the grandest sights I have seen was the Rodney and Nelson steaming out to sea preceded by seven destroyers. Stupendous.”*



**Radar controlled searchlight  
[1940]**

Together with the increased responsibility, the army was considering additional training for Ian. He wrote to his mother that,

*“You will be surprised to hear that I may leave this Regiment shortly for a training regiment at Saighton, Chester. The posting has actually come through but the Colonel is fighting against it tooth and nail and may win.”*

However in a subsequent letter written on 19 October, Ian reported that,

*“The Colonel squashed the transfer (to Chester) and I am still with the 51st although not in the same job. First of all I*

*was complimented by being removed from my Troop and made a member of Battery H.Q. staff. Now I have been entrusted with a hush-hush job which I cannot discuss, but it promises to be very interesting . . . I have to go to Edinburgh tomorrow to collect some secret operational instructions.”*

Ian travelled to Edinburgh by airplane on what was his first flight in an aircraft. It may very well have had a profound influence on him. Afterwards he wrote,

*“It really was an inspiration although I was never so cold in my life.”*

A week later Ian wrote that,

*“Now I am engaged in very secret (officially) experiments in searchlight operations at a place close to the mouth of the Forth called Elie. We have some marvellous equipment here and I am in charge of the whole show which is quite a responsibility believe me. I have been getting a taste of what the London A.A. people are getting –on duty night and day, so I begin to feel jaded and long for a sight of your old face. Please don’t tell anyone where I am (except Dad and Ethel), or that I am engaged in anything unusual.”*

Ian’s good friend Eric Biggs was still with the Searchlight Regiment as well. He recalled Armistice (Remembrance) Day 1940 when another aspect of Ian’s personality was revealed. The Searchlight Troop was paraded and the youthful commanding officer gave a,

*“. . . most serious and dedicated address on the significance of the Day and, what those in the British Armed Forces were expected to do in the future.”*

Although apparently frustrated by certain aspects of being “in charge of the whole show” at Elie, Ian was also

pleased with its results. In a letter written the day following Armistice Day he wrote,

*“At the moment, I feel bloody depressed and greatly in the mood for a moan. This command is absolutely maddening; the NCO’s have to be trained as NCO’s, the men have never known discipline and the equipment breaks down technically about every five minutes. I have another officer to help me out now, but so far I have been ticked off by every brass hat in the Scottish Command. All very discouraging.*

*“We have had some fun with Jerry of late; we put a blaze of light on four targets, including one lovely Heinkel III at about 5000 feet in a clear sky.*

*“Ah well ducky. I’ll lick the stuffing out of this job yet.”*

Eric Biggs, who at least for part of the time was Ian’s second in command, recalled one incident which stood out in his memories,

*“We were in the command post one clear night when we picked up a target which aroused some excitement until, looking up into the night sky, I could hardly believe my eyes and shouted, ‘They are flapping their wings’ -we had beamed onto a flight of swans no less. Helpless mirth!”*

However, both Eric and Ian appear to have been tiring

**LEAVE OR DUTY RATION CARD**  
(14 Days)  
NAVY, ARMY AND AIR FORCE

1. Holder's Name *Biggs, Ian*  
Rank & No. *Lt. R.A.F.*

2. Unit or Ship *200 Sqn R.A.F.*

3. Leave or Duty  
Registering *Dec 20-40*  
Duty *Dec 25-40*

4. Signature and Rank of Officer Issuing *Eric Biggs 2nd Lt. R.A.F.*

Serial No. **ZG 618695**  
R.B.E. (1941)

**This “Leave Card” indicates that Ian was able to authorize his own Christmas Leave.**

of the duties with the Searchlight Regiment which offered little hope of active fighting. Eric recalled,

*“It was in March 1941 that we both went to an Edinburgh Board for possible transfer to the RAF where Ian was accepted and I was rejected for poor eyesight which is probably why I am here today. We had a highly liquid lunch at a Princes Street pub and duly honoured the Scottish custom of throwing pennies into the Forth for good luck as our train crossed the Forth Bridge for good luck!”*

Ian had been granted a commission in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

The following month, arrangements had been made for Ian’s mother and sister to journey from London to Edinburgh on the Easter Weekend.

Ian was now based at Edinburgh, and apparently teaching courses at the 3rd A.A. Divisional School –Wireless Wing there. In a letter to his mother, Ian expressed his concern for their safety, writing,

*“The only thing I don’t like about the prospect is that the Forth was really lively last night and on the night of the Glasgow Blitz and this weekend there’s a full moon. Mm! The prospect of seeing you and Ethel is divine.”*

The letter also made reference to his transfer to the Royal Air Force,

*“I take it that Ethel told you and Dad that I am expecting transfer to the RAF for training and duty as a Pilot Officer. I do want you both to realize it was as much a sense of duty as well as purely selfish inclination which made me take the step. The RAF needs pilots so badly they are even taking suitable men from the army and I felt a sense of obligation so that was that.”*

However it would be well over two months before the transfer would actually take place. On 29 May Ian wrote,

*“I am writing outside my tent on the first morning that has even faintly resembled summer –quiet, larks, sunshine, a smell of pine trees, a big appetite, and feeling rather stallion. What more could one ask?”*

*“The school has progressed quite satisfactorily –I have been dealing with the instructional aspect, and so far the Colonel and one or two other big wigs have been quite satisfied. I cannot help feeling a little disappointed that I shall not be here to finish off the School, for, beloved one, Destiny calls me to the next phase of existence.”*

As he prepared for the transfer, Ian was not altogether confident of his chances of success, writing,

*“I have just been called up by the Air Ministry and I am instructed to report at Jesus College, Cambridge on the 7th of June! My putrid lack of mathematical ability may cause me to be slung out long before I see an aeroplane.”*

Jesus College at Cambridge was the location of 22 Elementary Flying Training School.

# ***Training in the Royal Air Force***

As Ian had suggested in his letter, during mid-1941 the Royal Air Force was badly in need of pilots. The Battle of Britain had been won the previous year and there was no longer an immediate threat of invasion as much of Hitler's efforts were being directed towards the East and the invasion of Russia that began on 22 June.

However the entire European continent was under Nazi control and the enemy's submarine fleet was having a serious effect on Britain's supply lines. The Americans had not entered the war and there was no indication that they would. Britain and her Commonwealth were alone and the outcome of the war very much in doubt.

Shortly after his arrival at Cambridge, Ian summarized his situation in a letter to his mother on 8 June 1941. He reported his location as, "A' Flight, No. 1 Squadron; No. 2 I.T.W.; Clare College; Cambridge" and wrote,



*“Here I am in a very delightful part of the world living in College rooms overlooking a pleasing prospect (what a cliché) of green grass and red brick. Cambridge is quite lovely, the warmth, vegetation, lilacs and things seem absolutely tropical after the north.*

*“The undergraduates are a quaint crew –tooling around in corduroy slacks and making one feel they should be in the army. The she-students contain a high percentage of trim, rosy, well-bred little duckies who bring out the stallion in me in no uncertain way. Here’s hoping.*

*“Our spell of training here consists of six weeks ground training in navigation, armaments, signals, aircraft recognition, anti-gas, law, administration and hygiene with a spot of drill and P.T. thrown in.*

*“We get two weekend leaves and a week’s leave at the end. If one passes this initial stage, the next stage will be Elementary Flying Training School, then training for Fighter or Bomber Command at the Service Training Flying School, concluded by training in service aircraft at the Operational Training Unit –after that active service. The whole business takes about six months from start to finish. That is all I know for the moment.”*

Still concerned about the possibility of not passing his courses, Ian wrote,

*“Here I am after a full week, and I must confess to very mixed feelings about my progress. I was never more keen on succeeding in anything but I must warn you all that this attempt of mine may prove a flop. Still, if hard work can do the trick it shall be done.”*

Three weeks later, on 6 July and while still at ground school and prior to any flying training, he wrote,

*“Tonight there is a glorious moon, and the sweet air and general atmosphere is giving me an almost unbearable*

*nostalgia for Ireland. In fact, I feel in such a queer emotional whirl that I have been walking around Cambridge in a daze . . . I have made steady progress on all fronts, and I am not terribly worried about the exams, although I am still prepared to flop. We paid some very interesting visits to various aerodromes in the neighbourhood. The things we saw, in the way of the latest fighter and bombing aircraft, big beautiful bombs and photographs of bomb damage, were quite inspiring. I got two flights, one in a small Army Co-operative plane and the other in a Wellington bomber. Quite a thrill.”*

22 Elementary Flying Training School was the Cambridge-based school at which Second Lieutenant Bazalgette's learned to fly and the training was intense. His first flight was on 24 July in a de Havilland Tiger Moth D.H. 82 under the instruction of Pilot Officer (P/O) Reece who permitted the fledgling pilot to solo ten days later on 3 August. Flying almost every day, Bazalgette's flying log documents his progress as he was exposed to low flying, spins, aerobatics, precautionary landings, and the other skills which all beginning pilots must master.

The de Havilland Tiger Moth was designed as a training aircraft and first flew in 1931. A single-engined, two seat, open cockpit bi-plane, it was used extensively for initial



**Canadian-built De Havilland Tiger Moth's such as this one had a canopy.**

pilot training throughout the 1930's and for much of World War II as well. The aircraft had excellent flying characteristics and a rugged strength which inspired confidence in novice pilots. 1747 Tiger Moths were built in Canada and these aircraft equipped many Elementary Flying Training Schools as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP).

28 August saw Wing Commander (W/C) May in the aircraft with Ian for what was recorded in the logbook as the "C.O.'s Test." This must have gone satisfactorily because Second Lieutenant Bazalgette was assessed as "Above Average" as a pilot when the course ended on 3 September. At this point a decision was made that he would continue his career as a pilot of multi-engined aircraft.

Ian was then posted to the Service Flying Training School at RAF Cranwell College, about twenty kilometres south of Lincoln which utilized the Airspeed Oxford.

The Oxford was a twin-engined monoplane that was designed in the late 1930's as an advanced trainer. It was used at Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS's) throughout the BCATP and also in other roles such as a light transport. The "Ox-box," as it came to be known, was a fairly demanding aircraft for a trainer and had a considerably higher accident

Page 1

PERMIT N°P.512783

Page 1

TO ENTER *RAF Station, Cranwell.*

for the purpose of *Course*

Available from *15/9/41*

Validity expires *14/12/41*

enies with drawn, or extended by endorsement on page 2.

Issued at *Cranwell*

On behalf of *M.O.C. S.H.Q.*

by *McKinnon*

on *15/9/41*

Nationality of Bearer *British*

(Place Stamp)

LL 15 SEP 1941

This Permit does not affix to any closed part or building within a Protected Place without special permission and is valid only when the Bearer produces the following Documents on Demand:

*Military Identity Card*  
*British Military Identity Card No.*  
*British Passport No.*  
*Alien Registration Certificate No.*  
*M. 14608* No.

Signature of Bearer *L. W. Bazalgette, 2nd Lt. R.A.F.*



**Airspeed Oxford**

rate than the Avro Anson and Cessna Crane which were used in similar roles on most SFTS's in Canada.

With Flight Lieutenant (F/L) Laud as his instructor, Ian began his instruction on 15 September and on the same day the RAF saw to it that his will was written. Interestingly, Ian made specific reference to his coveted collection of "gramophone records."

Ian soloed on the aircraft only five days later. After accumulating 87 hours flying time he was assessed as "Average" on 23 January 1942. He was pleased with his results on the Wings Exam, writing to his mother that,



**Ian's Service Flying Training School Course at RAF Cranwell  
He is in the front row, third from the right.**

*“I passed, I am glad to say with an average of 81.5% which made me 15th out of 55. The maddening thing was I had a sort of breakdown while doing a paper on a subject I usually do well in –if I had done as well in that as in everything else I should have been either first or second.”*



Ian, now Pilot Officer Bazalgette and wearing the coveted RAF Pilot's Wings on his tunic, then found himself at RAF Stradishall, thirty kilometres east of Cambridge. He was not impressed with the base, writing on 28 January,

*“The atmosphere of this station has become so depressing, we have all found that we have lost interest in our work and everything else. Things just do not get done. The Group Captain here has started a fearful blitz over discipline, with bags of parading and emphasis on saluting –a truly chronic type. How glad we shall be to get back to an operational station again. Progress in flying has been disappointing, and a large proportion of our time is filled in with makeshift irritation by various unpleasant people. Oh well. The flying is certainly vastly enjoyable when we can get hold of an aeroplane, and so far, I am glad to say, I have had no trouble.*

*“One night a few of us went into Cambridge for a meal and some drinking and dancing. The eating and drinking was first class, but took Eluned to the dance and she annoyed me like hell. She kept on handing me her bag and going off to dance with undergraduates who looked like half-baked*

*versions of third rate gigolos. The worst thing about Cambridge is its undergraduate population. They stink.*

*“Within the station itself the principal occupations are eating, drinking, reading, playing table tennis, talking, going to the cinema, and using the sun lamp.”*

Ian enjoyed a leave in early February writing,

*“I feel very fit and well –greatly refreshed by my leave. You were all so nice to me, and it was so pleasant having Deryck to talk and drink with, that the whole leave was quite the best ever. Thank you for doing so much for me -every meal was perfect, down to my snack on the train, and Dad’s generosity and good nature were saintly.”*

Deryck’s relationship with the family was somewhat strained during the war. When hostilities broke out he refused to fight and was eventually categorized as a grade 2 Conscientious Objector. He established a commune for other pacifists in Ashburton, Devon, with the help of the Society of Friends. Working in market gardens on a basic agricultural wage, he was just able to support his family, which during the war, saw two children, Cary and Charles, born.

Ian’s next posting was to RAF East Wretham, about fifty kilometres northeast of Cambridge where, as he wrote,

*“Life is pretty busy actually, I have been placed in charge of a week’s ground training for the crews who were with me at Stradishall, and I am also relieving the Squadron Leader who had all the work to do whilst Fox and I were away . . . The only snag about the present is that everyone seems so dull and depressed due, I fear, to the unsympathetic nature of the Wing Co. However, we can’t have everything. The future is bright and I am full of hope that we shall do well as a squadron.”*



**Ian (left) and Deryck Bazalgette**

Ian again found himself flying Oxfords on 2 March 1942, this time at RAF Scampton just outside of Lincoln, taking a two week long course at 18 Beam Approach Training School.

In a letter to his mother dated 3 March, he wrote,

*“Here I am at RAF Station Scampton and so far I do not greatly care for it. A wonderful place, mark you, but full of that stiff-necked atmosphere which is such an unpleasant contrast to the army messes I used to frequent.*

*“The only thing that I can say about the course is that it is a B.A.T. course, as I thought; the course is very concentrated, and lasts about seven or eight days. Beyond that I can say nothing about either the course or Scampton itself –we had the daylighters scared out of us by the Security Officer his morning about discussing matters even remotely connected with the place.”*

Although the location of the Beam Approach Training Course, RAF Scampton’s primary function was that of an operational Bomber Command station. It was the home of 49 and 83 Squadrons, both well-established units that had been flying operations from Scampton since the war began.

As a sprog (rookie) pilot with no operational experience, Ian found the atmosphere on the station somewhat intimidating, writing,

*“The mess here really gets me down. I have an inferiority complex in the first place through being in a place where every other person had the DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross], and two former squadron members were awarded the VC [Victoria Cross]. The difficulty is, though, they don’t talk to you and everyone stares when you enter the mess. Oh well, bugger them.”*

One of the Victoria Cross recipients that Ian was referring to was 49 Squadron pilot F/L R.A.B. Learoyd who was awarded Bomber Command’s first VC in August 1940 for his part in a low-level attack by 49 and 83 Squadrons on the Dortmund-Ems Canal.

Sgt. John Hannah, an eighteen year old 83 Squadron wireless operator/air gunner based at Scampton, was the youngest VC recipient of the war. Following a successful attack on German barges that were being assembled for the planned invasion of England during September 1940, his Hampden bomber was subjected to intense anti-aircraft fire that started a fire which spread quickly. The rear gunner and

navigator bailed out and Sgt. Hannah could have as well, but instead he remained to fight the fire, first with two extinguishers and then with his bare hands. He sustained terrible injuries but succeeded in putting out the fire and the pilot was able to bring the badly damaged aircraft back safely.

P/O Bazalgette was assessed as "Above Average" upon the completion of his course on 16 March. He then travelled to London to spend a couple of days at home.

P/O Bazalgette's next posting was to 25 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Finningley, about 25 kilometres northwest of Lincoln. Here the training became much more serious and much more dangerous. The young airmen would now train as members of a bomber crew and they would learn how to fly operationally on an actual warplane.

When Canada's Bomber Command Memorial was dedicated in Nanton, Alberta in 2005, the danger of training at an OTU became apparent when it was noted that of the 10,643 names on the Memorial Wall, exactly ten percent (1064) had been killed while at an OTU. One of the reasons for this high loss rate was that the bombers that the trainees were given were generally old, "clapped-out" aircraft from the operational squadrons.

In a letter to his mother written on 18 March, Ian seemed very pleased with being at the OTU, writing,

*"I took a brief stroll in Doncaster, and found it depressing; but I found a nice trim WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) driving a lorry who gave me a lift to Finningley. An old Cranwell friend named Welch is here, and we share a pleasant room. Food is good, and people are prepared to talk and be pleasant. We are on ground work only for a fortnight, then we fly Wellingtons, followed by Manchesters, and then some of us go on Lancasters. Here's hoping."*

Ian was flying again on 1 April and for some reason had a flight in an Avro Manchester, the twin-engined predecessor to the Avro Lancaster that day, with two others on

the 4th and 5th. Two of the flights were piloted by W/C Lynch-Blosse and the third by G/C Boothman -quite high ranking officers. Ian noted in his logbook that they were "Met. Experimental" flights.

In another letter three weeks later, Ian wrote,

*"It really is grand getting in lots of flying again. Last night I did about three hours cross-country which was grand fun. The weather was fairly bad during the first stage, and the rain lashed down on the cabin windows with the whole scene suddenly illuminated by a lightning flash. On the way back we ran into a cloud with quite a bit of atmospheric electricity; it made the propeller disc look as though it was bordered with a circle of blue light and the radio went west with a blue flash and a loud crackle. All very interesting."*

Throughout Ian's military career, from his initial posting to the Searchlight Battalion through to his advancement to the rank of Squadron Leader, it is remarkable that Ian sent his laundry home to his mother in London to be washed and mended.

Unlike the majority of those in the military, Ian did not smoke, and his allotment of cigarettes were included with his laundry to be enjoyed by his father. Virtually all of the letters exchanged between Ian and his mother seemed to be included with the packages of laundry and cigarettes and many make specific mention of stains on collars or missing buttons.

His letter from the OTU dated 19 April begins with,

*"Herewith the usual collection of soiled intimacies wrapped around father's cigarettes. By the way did I thank you for the perfect flying boot socks you knitted for me?"*

Later in the letter he makes his first reference to the number of Canadians at the OTU, writing,

*“A large proportion of our course here are Canadian observers and air gunners, with whom I have a lot of fun in a quiet sort of way. A few nights ago I borrowed a bicycle and went for a long ride to a pretty village called Bautrey with one of the Canadians. We found the most outstanding collection of WAAF personnel with very little competition from the RAF. We were afraid of being chased up dark lanes and raped.”*

In a later letter written at the OTU, Ian wrote,

*“I have been drinking and dissipating in general with a number of Canadians in this mess. They do seem such a friendly, unconventional crowd –I sometimes have thought about going to Canada after the war.”*

By the end of April, Ian’s training was not going as quickly as he would have liked with only brief flights most days, many of which were only of an hour or less. He wrote to his mother that,

*“The days go by pleasantly enough except that there is not enough work to do. We get about one trip a day in an Anson if we’re lucky. Next week again if we are lucky we shall be getting instruction on Wellingtons. Having spent so long in training, I am just longing to start flying operational aircraft and to get to a squadron.”*

Ian returned from a leave in early May that was spent with his family. In a letter written on 24 May he specifically mentions his record collection,

*“As usual, I vastly enjoyed my leave and everything went beautifully. Nowadays the sting of the abrupt transition from the home to the service environment is dulled, but even so, I miss you all greatly and miss the joys of my records too.”*

The slow rate of training continued and was becoming

extremely annoying to Ian. His logbook records only 22 flights during May and June, all but one in Ansons and most were less than or not much more than an hour in duration. He wrote that,

*“Training circumstances are still as muddled and confused as ever, and it looks as though it will be weeks before we get on Wellingtons. Some of us are seriously thinking of applying for a transfer onto day-bombing Bostons –myself included. I consider all this waiting around with nothing to do and no attempt made at organizing our spare time, is about the worst thing possible for a man. All one’s mental processes are dulled, one is seized with a horrible lassitude, and everything is vile.”*

As P/O Bazalgette was completing his training at 25 OTU at RAF Finningley, Bomber Command was in the process of a major transformation under a new commanding officer. Air Marshall Arthur Harris had taken command during February 1942.

A study of the results of Bomber Command’s early raids had indicated that they were not as accurate or successful as had been hoped. New tactics involving tightly grouped bomber streams calculated to swamp enemy defenses were being implemented by Harris.

Harris had another idea as well. He knew that the future of Bomber Command was still in doubt and he approached both Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Charles Portal, Chief of the Air Staff, with the bold idea of assembling a force of one thousand bombers and sending them out in one massive raid. Harris wanted to persuade the doubters in the War Cabinet and catch the public’s imagination.

The first 1000 bomber raid by the RAF was code-named “Operation Millennium.” Cologne was chosen as the target and the raid took place on the night of 30/31 May 1942.

It was a turning point for Bomber Command as the new

tactics were very successful. There were losses due to mid-air collisions within the narrow bomber stream but they were considered acceptable given the advantages. In the future, the time over the target would progressively be shortened until seven or eight hundred aircraft passed over their targets in less than twenty minutes.

Bomber Command did not have the capability to launch a “Thousand Bomber Raid” without the participation of crews from the OTU’s. 25 OTU was very involved in the Cologne Raid as Ian wrote in a letter dated the day following the raid,

*“Awfully sorry to be so slow with correspondence, cigarettes, etc. but we have been c.b. (confined to barracks) all last week prior to the Cologne Raid. We went operational for the occasion, but you will be relieved (!) to hear that I did not go. I did my damndest to be taken on, but it was no good without Wellington training.”*

Ian’s training continued to progress at a rate much slower than he would have liked and at mid-June, he wrote to his mother,

*“Here I am engaged in my usual occupation of doing nothing. Now and again –about two or three times a week – we get in a few hours as second pilot on an Anson, but otherwise we do absolutely Sweet Fanny Adams.”*

The manner in which a bomber crew came together at an OTU was quite informal. Murray Peden was a Canadian pilot who served with an RAF squadron. Following the war he wrote the highly acclaimed book, “A Thousand Shall Fall” about his experiences.

Of his “crewing-up” at the OTU he was posted to, Murray wrote,

*“The instructors and Admin officers, who wasted no time getting hold of us, organized the group into classes and*

*laid out our syllabus. They dropped the word that within about ten days we would be teamed up in crews of five, each consisting of a pilot, bomb aimer, navigator, wireless operator, and air gunner. Equal numbers of each of these trades had been brought together to form our course, and we were told that if any five could agree amongst themselves that they wanted to form a crew and fly together, the Air Force would oblige and crew them up officially. But at the end of the ten day period all those who had not made their own arrangements would be crewed up arbitrarily by the staff and probably, we guessed, by purely random selection.”*

By this process somehow, Ian's crew was formed. It included: Bill Bowen, navigator; George Ross, bomb aimer; George Roberts, wireless operator; and Trevor "Tom" Molloy, rear gunner.

P/O Bazalgette was clearly frustrated with the fact that he was flying Ansons at the OTU. The Anson had never been an operational aircraft with Bomber Command and it was the Wellington that Ian was longing to get his hands on.

The Vickers-Armstrong Wellington, known affectionately as the "Wimpy", was Bomber Command's leading twin-engined medium bomber from the outbreak of the war until it was superseded by the four-engined Stirling, Halifax, and Lancaster in 1942 and 1943. However it went on to play an important role in training and continued to fly operationally until the end of the war in roles such as convoy protection, reconnaissance, mine-laying, and anti-submarine duties. Its unique geodetic structure, designed by Sir Barnes Wallis who masterminded the weapon and techniques used in the famed Dambusters Raid, made the airframe capable of withstanding tremendous damage and yet still able to bring its crew safely back to base.

Finally, Ian's training on Wellingtons began in earnest on 26 June. Four days later he soloed on the type and was clearly thrilled with doing so. The following day he wrote to his mother,



### **Vickers Wellington**

*“All my writing arrangements, laundry, postings, and so-on have all gone for a loop as we are busy at last. I went solo on a Wellington yesterday and feel more pleased with life in general. Isn’t the war news wicked, though? I expect you and Ally [Ian’s sister Ethel’s nick-name was ‘Ally’] find it hard to fight against a depressing atmosphere, but I find the inside story of the effects of our bombing is an inspiration. After all, if we beat them in Germany, we beat them everywhere so yield not unto depression.*

*“It really is terrific, the thrill of lifting a big, heavy aircraft off the deck, and heaving the brute around the sky. The main thing about our present training is that we are flying an operational type with bags of controls and tits and dials and things, and one’s mind is pleasantly occupied. Just imagine sitting in the air in the middle of about eighteen tons of iron-mongery. Good show.”*

Later in the same letter, Ian looks beyond the war, writing,

*“I can’t decide whether I shall find my future in Canada, Rhodesia, USA, or for reconstruction in Burma or some place.”*

By mid-July, Ian’s training was continuing at a good rate and he was giving some thought to his personal progress, writing,

*“What a cold, wet, blustering day it is and how like the same days three years ago. The contrast in my work and environment gives food for thought –then I was sliding around in muddy clay, wearing colossal boots and a shirt that rasped like emery cloth, and trying to persuade myself that it was only for six months, and would do me a world of good.*

*“Yesterday I wore a blue uniform with the flying badge, spent the afternoon formation flying in Wellingtons, and practised night circuits and landings on a black, dirty night. And how long is this to continue? And what am I going to do when all is finished? At any rate the past three years have taught me to fly, drive a car, and handle men, which is far more than ‘Keysign’ and its money-grubbing executive could have done.”*

Following these thoughts, his letter concludes with,

*“Could you let me have a clean shirt and pair of pants as soon as you can?”*

Two weeks later, Ian wrote that he was,

*“Flying furiously and beginning to get cracking on cross-countries, crew procedure, bombing and gunnery.”*

Ian spent the final month of his OTU training at RAF Bircotes, a satellite airfield near Finningley. He wrote of an incident that took place on 17 August at Bircotes,

*“One rather exciting thing happened. I got an aeroplane to fly which developed a technical fault in the air; flaps came down on one side but not on the other. The upshot was I had to tell the Watch Office my flaps had failed and that I was going to land without them. A flapless landing has to be made faster and is more finely judged than the normal landing. To my relief and joy, I had the good luck to do an absolute beauty. Most of the instructors were out to see the fun and the*

*Squadron Leader said nice things to me afterwards.”*

Following leave, Ian returned to the OTU where he was in the final stages of his training prior to being assigned to an operational squadron. He was not pleased when he returned to RAF Bircotes, writing,

*“I certainly had a nasty knock when I got into the mess. It so happened that a posting came through for us, whilst we were away, to a famous Lancaster squadron. But instead of recalling us (from leave) the bastards gave the posting to another crew. Was I annoyed or was I?”*

*“The next shock was that Bircotes was standing by for ops the next night and I could look forward to visiting the Third Reich in a Wellington. Actually I was not on the crew list for the next night (Dusseldorf), but I was selected for the following night. We had actually air-tested our plane, and were sitting in the ops room being briefed for Bremen when the whole affair was suddenly cancelled. We breathed again and had a lot of beer.*

*“The succeeding night was free from alarm, but again we had the warning though, and that time it looked like the real thing, Bremen again –taking off at midnight. The evening dragged on like a funeral procession, and I never piddled so much in all my life. We were actually sitting in the aeroplane with the engines running and a quarter of an hour to go until take-off when the radio-telephone gave up and we could not go.*

*“Ops again the next day. A really shaky trip to Hamburg, but the whole thing was again cancelled.”*

The following day, Ian and his crew left the OTU, writing that,

*“After all that nervous strain we got out of Bercotes and Finningley like a batch of furies.”*

P/O Bazalgette had been posted to RAF Marham, Norfolk, a rural area midway between Peterborough and Norwich and the home of 115 Squadron. Of his final evaluation at 25 OTU he wrote,

*"It means very little, but I was again assessed 'Above the Average' for my O.T.U. course which tickled my ego greatly."*

25 0-1-01

SUMMARY of FLYING and ASSESSMENTS FOR YEAR COMMENCING 1st ..... \*1942

[ \* For Officer, insert "OFFICER"; for Reserve Pilot, insert "RESERVE" ]

	S.E. AIRCRAFT		M.F. AIRCRAFT		TOTAL for year	GRAND TOTAL All Service Flying
	Day	Night	Day	Night		
DUAL	/	/	15-40	18-12	34-22	117-17
PILOT	/	/	90-40	46-40	137-20	225-60
PASSENGER	—	—	—	—	—	60-15

**ASSESSMENT of ABILITY**  
(To be assessed as — Exceptional, Above the Average, Average, or Below the Average)

(i) AS A P/O PILOT Above the Average

(ii) AS PILOT-NAVIGATOR/NAVIGATOR .....

(iii) IN BOMBING .....

(iv) IN AIR GUNNERY .....

Errors — "R", "L.B.", "G.A.", "P.B.", etc.

**ANY POINTS IN FLYING OR AIRMANSHIP WHICH SHOULD BE WATCHED.**

Nil

Date 3-9-42 Signature [Signature]

Officer Commanding Training Wing 25 OTU

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)



## No. 115 Squadron

P/O Bazalgette had been assigned to a well-established squadron. 115 had been flying Wellington bombers operationally since April 1939 based at RAF Marham in Norfolk.

Baz was clearly pleased to be there, writing on 16 September that,

*“This is a lovely station and everybody is very pleasant and helpful. The strange thing is that this squadron is about to move nearer Cambridge, where we shall fly either Stirlings or Lancasters. At the moment we have lovely, powerful Wellington III’s –probably the safest plane in service. I shall get some practise and then do two or three trips with an experienced pilot, before taking my own crew.”*



## **BOMBER COMMAND**

The bomber offensive mounted by the Royal Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the air forces of Australia and New Zealand during the Second World War has been described as the most continuous and gruelling operation of war ever carried out. It lasted for some 2000 days and for four long years, while the world waited for the tide to slowly turn, Bomber Command offered the only weapon capable of waging war against Hitler's European fortress.

For the British and for the occupied peoples alike, the bombers droning across the night skies were a symbol of hope as well as of growing might. Although primarily directed against the industrial capacity of Nazi Germany, Bomber Command successes also included the mining of enemy waters, the destruction of many of the huge barges Hitler expected would bring his invading armies to Britain, the "Dambusters" raid, the sinking of warships such as the battleship Tirpitz, pin-point attacks on Gestapo headquarters, and operations in preparation for the D-Day invasion.

The successes of Bomber Command were purchased at a terrible cost. Of those aircrew who were flying at the beginning of the war, fewer than ten percent survived. Of all the volunteers who flew, almost sixty percent (over 55,000) were killed. Even those who became operational after D-Day, 6 June 1944, suffered almost fifty percent casualties. Canadian pilot and author Murray Peden DFC recalled, "The crews faced formidable odds, odds seldom appreciated outside the Command. At times during the great offensives of 1943 and 1944 the short-term statistics foretold that fewer than 25 out of each 100 crews would survive their first tour of thirty operations. On a single night Bomber Command lost more aircrew than Fighter Command lost during the Battle of Britain. Yet the crews buckled on their chutes and set out with unshakeable resolution night after night. They fell prey to the hazards of icing, lightning, storm, and structural failure, and they perished amidst the bursting shells of the flak batteries. But by far the greater number died in desperately unequal combat under the overwhelming fire-power of the tenacious German night fighter defenders."

55,573 airmen, including over 10,000 Canadians, died serving in Bomber Command, a sacrifice which should never be forgotten.

Pilots generally flew on an operational raid as “Second Dickie” before taking their own aircraft and crew to a target. This involved having the rookie pilot go along with an experienced crew as a passenger to observe them in action. Baz flew with Sergeant Pate on 19 September 1942 on a raid to Saarbrücken.

Sgt. Pate’s aircraft was one of 118 bombers that attacked. It must have been an exciting exposure to Bomber Command operations as Ian’s logbook noted that they were “Intercepted off Le Treport” by two Focke-Wulf 190 fighters.” J.J.E. Cote, the rear gunner, shot down one of the fighters but by the time they had evaded the other fighter, the Wellington bomber had lost so much altitude that they had to return to base. There were heavy losses on the raid with 4.2% of the bombers failing to return.

This would also have been Baz’s first opportunity to witness the Pathfinder Force in action. It had been formed only two months previous to mark targets for the main force of bombers. In this case they struggled to locate the target because of ground haze.

On 21 September Baz went along on another “Second Dickie” trip, this time with Squadron Leader (S/L) Parsons. This was a “gardening” or mine laying operation.

The placing of mines in enemy shipping lanes is a lesser known aspect of Bomber Command’s role. Over 18,000 gardening flights were made and some 47,000 mines were



placed in waters frequented by the enemy, denying the Nazis the use of much of the Baltic Sea.

In a letter to his mother written the following day, Baz wrote that,

*“Most of our work here has been training in handling equipment that is new to us. My crew have not done any ops yet, but I got in my second trip last night. A very long stooge, and extraordinarily quiet; we dropped some mines in enemy shipping lanes off Germany’s eastern seaboard. I fell asleep on the way back . . . We are moving to Mildenhall, near Ely, Cambridgeshire on Thursday.”*



**Anti-shiping mine being dropped from a Bomber Command aircraft**

The mines had been placed near the German city of Kiel where an inlet opens to the Baltic Sea. S/L Parson’s aircraft returned to base without incident after a 6.5 hour flight that would have been considerably longer than Baz would have ever flown before. Although Baz described this operation as “extraordinarily quiet,” it wasn’t that way for others as three of the seventeen Wellingtons that went gardening that night failed to return to base.

Baz had also recently written to his sister. That letter obviously including some additional details of his first “Second Dickie” trip that he didn’t share with his mother. In a letter to Baz dated 23 September his mother wrote,

*“It was with mixed feelings that I read your wonderful letter to Ally. Pride in your ability to ‘take it,’ fear and anxiety*

*for your safety, proud also, to think that in the midst of the sudden and alarming happenings you were able to remember what the pilot did to help the gunners and evade enemy action. Oh yes, I know these are the things you are trained to remember but none the less, your memory for detail deserves praise.*

*“You didn’t say what was done with your ‘load’, wasn’t it tricky to land with, if you brought it back? I looked up the account of the raids on that night in the Telegraph and saw mention of the enemy plane being shot down, but what a lot of experience was crammed into your first op flight.”*

On 24 September Baz and his crew flew a Wellington marked “KO-T” to 115’s new base at RAF Mildenhall. Four days later, Baz wrote to his mother,

*“Moving from one station to another tends to disorganise everyone and life gets hectic when you find yourself detailed for six different jobs at once.*

*“I have managed to get in bags of flying, which is a very fine thing. The aircraft we fly here are wonderful compared to O.T.U. planes. Colossal engines which just leap into the air and match the plane with them. We were all set for our first solo trip as a crew last night but it was scrubbed due to expected weather conditions. The Wing Commander sent us on a night cross-country instead which we thought rather hard –the old boy is very keen on training and practice. The weather was good and misty when we got back but I managed to set us all down on the flare path intact.*

*“I have not completed a straight bombing trip, but our last mining effort was interesting. It seems unreal somehow to eat a meal in England and three hours later to be crossing Denmark on the way to the Baltic.*

*“My squadron is No. 115, but it must not, on any account, be included in the address.”*

Understandably, Baz's mother was concerned with his living accommodations at the new base, the dangers of his flying operations, and of course, her son's laundry. On 2 October she wrote,

*"Darling Will: I hope things are settling down into satisfactory surroundings for you, my love. Hot water and heating arrangements are necessary parts of general comfort to which you and the rest of the active RAF are more than entitled, can't anything be done about it?"*

*"I shall be anxious about your first lot of laundry until I hear you have received it, I sent off the rest of it yesterday."*

*"Last Sunday while Ally and I were picking apples, a bomber came over so low it seemed to brush the house tops. Ally got so excited and yelled, 'It's Will, Mother!' and waved frantically but as it did not circle and return we realized it was not you."*

*"The news, 'Our bombers were out over German Baltic ports last night – 17 of our bombers are missing,' fills me with anxiety, tho' I tell myself you may not have been sent out etc. etc. and not to be a fool. I wonder how your crew felt or will feel when you take off for your first op with them."*

In fact, Baz and his rookie crew had already flown their first operation on 30 September, a 3.5 hour gardening trip to a location near Terschelling, off the northwest coast of Holland.

From this date on Baz's crew found themselves on the "Battle Order" regularly.

The crew's third operation was as one of 257 aircraft that attacked a target at Aachen. The weather was generally bad, both in England and over Germany. Although Baz's logbook reports good visibility over the target and good pathfinding, most of the flares were placed at an incorrect location. Ten aircraft were lost and an additional six crashed in England likely due to the thunderstorms. This resulted in an extremely high loss rate of 6.2%. Baz's crew was unable to land at Mildenhall and were diverted to RAF Hemswell where,



**115 Squadron Wellington**  
**The “KO” identifier was placed on all 115 Squadron aircraft. The “Q” identifies the individual aircraft within the squadron.**

according to his logbook, one of his propellers was found to be “flak-damaged.”

Baz’s next operation was to Osnabrück on 6 October. As part of his logbook entry he wrote, “Worst opposition yet, held in searchlights.”

Baz, of course, knew a bit about searchlights but from the opposite end of the beam. Being “coned” was terrifying. In his book, “Boys, Bombs, and Brussels Sprouts,” Bomber Command Museum of Canada member Doug Harvey wrote,

*“I had just closed the bomb doors when I went blind. Absolutely blind. Terrified, I realized we had been coned. The world was a dazzling white, as though a giant flashlight was aimed directly into my eyes. I couldn’t see my hands on the control column, couldn’t see the instrument panel, couldn’t see outside the cockpit. I was naked, totally exposed, helpless. We were a very bright and shiny target in the apex of fifty or more beams that were radar directed. They weren’t going to let go easily.”*

After seven minutes of evasive action, including diving at speeds reaching 350 miles per hour, Doug was able to out-distance the lights and escaped.

Baz’s experience was similar to Doug’s. His Wellington was caught in the apex of several searchlights which made it

the target for numerous anti-aircraft batteries. Baz put the aircraft into a steep dive, losing thousands of feet of altitude and then made a steep climb. Both engines cut out due to fuel starvation but started again and Baz and his crew escaped.

The crew's eighth operation on 15 October was clearly unsuccessful. 289 aircraft attacked Cologne. The winds were different from those forecast and the Pathfinders had difficulty in establishing their position and marking the target. As well, the Main Force was attracted by a large decoy fire that the enemy had set. Most of the bombs fell harmlessly onto the decoy fire site. The new electronic navigational aids that would greatly assist the Pathfinders later in the war were not operational at this point.

Baz noted "Good Defence; Night Fighters Active" in his logbook. There were major losses to Bomber Command that night with eighteen aircraft lost —6.2% of the force.

Following this raid, the crew enjoyed a well-deserved leave. Baz, as always, spent much of it with his family at their home in southwest London. The leave coincided with his 24th



**Will at home with Allie and their parents**

birthday.

Ethel remembered that her brother was very enthusiastic about gardening, in particular flowers, and that he planted all the roses in their mother's garden and, "was always very keen to see how they were doing when he came home on leave."

Upon his return to RAF Mildenhall, Baz wrote,

*"Thanks for the glorious leave and birthday. I arrived back in nice time for a few beers and to hear what the boys had been doing. Some glorious trips had taken place; all the Italian epics and daylight raiding on western Germany. The German affair was a glorious party –they shot hell out of railways, barges, German soldiers and everything German in sight. Since I got back I have been acting as second in command of the Flight, which is a fine thing. The Wing Commander likes my crew.*

*"No real work to do, the usual sad winter's tale of disgusting weather. There is a delightful atmosphere in the mess tonight. The central heating is on, a fire is roasting the Group Captain's bum, and a little knot of pleasant people is gathered around the piano making a jolly din. I shall now join them and sing all the dirty songs I know."*

The Wing Commander Baz referred to in the letter was W/C Cousens, who for some reason accompanied Baz and his crew on a raid to Kiel on 13 October.

Baz took off for a rare daylight raid on 29 October. However poor cloud cover was present. This would have left the attacking force very vulnerable and they turned back, landing after a total flight of just less than two hours.

Baz and his crew, together with the others in 115 Squadron, were on the move again in early November, transferring their base from Mildenhall to RAF East Wretham in Norfolk, fifty kilometres northeast of Cambridge. The squadron Wellington marked "KO-N" had become Baz's regular aircraft and he flew it from Mildenhall to East Wretham

on 8 November.

Having flown operationally for almost two months, Baz would have experienced fellow aircrew not returning from an operation as loss rates of four to six percent were not uncommon. However actually watching a long-time companion crash was a hard-hitting tragedy. He described the incident in a letter to his mother written on 9 November,

*“A very sad thing happened recently –an old friend of mine landed as second pilot of a Lancaster. I went out and had words with him, and immediately the aircraft took off, crashed and he was killed. It is not known precisely why the crash occurred, but there is a certain fear that the pilot was stunting. A tragic waste.”*

Turin, Italy was the target for Baz’s thirteenth operation on 18 November. It was a long flight (8 hours and 12 minutes) and Baz noted, “Good visibility over the Alps and target” and a “Feeble defence.”

Stuttgart was the target for Baz’s next operation on 22 November. A thin layer of cloud caused the Pathfinders difficulty but the railway station and trains were severely damaged. Baz returned safely with a flak hole in his starboard wing although 4.5% of the attacking force was lost.

A letter written on 27 November included references to Baz’s recent promotion to Flying Officer, some philosophical thoughts as to the risks he was regularly exposed to, the possibility of his own death, and details of an unfortunate experience related to the laundry that he had recently sent home.

*“Many thanks for your last letter, and all your very sweet thoughts about my promotion. The Wing Commander told me that I was going to be given the chance of doing second in command of the Flight.*

*“This operational life is the most fascinating existence ever –no matter what may happen it has all been very*



**The Stuttgart Railway Station following the 22 November raid** worthwhile. *Nothing can profit a man so much as knowing his own reactions when faced with life or death and working with fine men of a like mind for the sake of a principle. With those essential facts always in the balance I have just had a couple of beers, hence this rather high-faluting verbiage.*

*“Some laundry will arrive home shortly which I want you to put straight into the tub. I used an Elsan down on the aerodrome which had been emptied that day rather carelessly –the seat was covered with crap!”*

A trip to Turin on 28 November presented a little more difficulty than Baz’s first visit to Italy. This was a low-level raid on the Fiat Works factories and F/O Bazalgette noted in his logbook, “Defences stiffer, three runs over the target, and flak damage.”

At this point in the war, Bomber Command was phasing out its twin-engined bombers and replacing them with four-

engined “heavies” and 115 Squadron was scheduled to convert to the Short Stirling.

Following leave, Baz made two flights aboard a Stirling at Oakington on 21 December. He noted in his log, “Solo on type” which he had not done following his first flights in the other aircraft he had flown. This may be an indication that he was particularly pleased with having flown the giant Stirling alone after only two hours of doing circuits and landings with S/L Crompton.

The Stirling, Halifax, and Lancaster were the Royal Air Force’s trio of four-engined heavy bombers during World War II. During May 1939, the Stirling became the first of the three to take to the air. Following a successful maiden flight, the undercarriage collapsed upon landing. Although the aircraft flew on thousands of bombing raids from 1940 through 1943, it continued to suffer from weak undercarriage and the fact that its design specifications had limited the wing-span to less than one hundred feet (so that it would fit into the “standard” RAF hangars of the day). This in turn limited its operational ceiling and Stirling crews were a lower and easier target for enemy anti-aircraft crews. As well, they were often struck by bombs dropped by the higher flying Lancasters and Halifaxes. Beginning in 1943, the Stirlings were phased out of bombing operations although they continued to serve as transports and glider tugs.

Murray Peden referred to the Stirling as,

*“Second to none as a sturdy and dependable battler. She served us loyally, not least in providing, when she first took to the air and fought in squadron service, a morale building symbol of Britain’s growing aerial offensive power.”*

Peden and many of his fellow Stirling pilots remember the aircraft with fondness and admiration.

F/O Bazalgette did not fly again until 25 January, 1943. Posted to 1567 Conversion Unit at Stradishall, he accumulated another sixteen hours on Stirlings, gaining the



### Short Stirling

necessary experience to handle the four-engined heavy bombers on operational flights. However he was not given the opportunity as it was decided that 115 should convert to the Avro Lancaster.

On 19 February Baz was back at East Wretham where he began the conversion to Lancasters. He made his first solo flight on the type after an introduction of only 35 minutes of circuits and landings. The conversion kept Baz and the squadron very busy as he described in a letter written on 13 March,

*“This is wonderful! Since I returned from leave, nearly four weeks ago, I have been on duty every day without a break. A strenuous training programme in both flying and ground matters has taken every bit of time the Squadron Leader and I could give to it, and latterly we have both rather wilted under the strain. Dougie Fox had a day off earlier this week, and I have all this blessed day to myself.”*



## **AVRO LANCASTER**

During World War II the Lancaster was the most successful bomber used by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force. The Lanc had speed, ceiling, and lifting power that no other aircraft could match. Generally flying under the cover of darkness, the Lancaster had virtually no defensive armour and carried only eight .303 calibre machine guns for defence against enemy aircraft. Air gunners manned the rear and mid-upper gun turrets. A pilot, flight engineer, navigator, wireless operator, and bomb aimer/front gunner completed the crew of seven.

The Lancaster evolved from Britain's concerns regarding the deteriorating international situation during the late 1930's. The Handley-Page Halifax, Short Stirling, and Avro Manchester were all in the planning stages as the war began in 1939. The prototype twin-engined Manchester flew in 1940 but was plagued by instability and insufficient power. Its designer, Roy Chadwick, modified the Manchester by adding two more engines and the result was the Lancaster which made its maiden flight in January 1941. By war's end, 7374 Lancasters had been built including 430 in Canada. A total of 3932 were lost in action.

The Lancaster eventually proved to be the workhorse of Bomber Command, completing more than twice the raids of any other type and carrying 64% of the explosives to enemy targets. It was also the only aircraft capable of carrying out specialized operations such as the "Dambusters" raid and the sinking of the battleship Tirpitz with the 12,000 pound Tallboy bomb.

Approximately one hundred of the Canadian-built Lancasters went on to serve with the post-war Royal Canadian Air Force, the majority in maritime reconnaissance/patrol roles during the early years of the Cold War. They were also engaged in search and rescue flights, ice reconnaissance, and the aerial mapping of much of the Canadian Arctic.

## **AVRO LANCASTER SPECIFICATIONS**

Engines:

-Mks. I, III, and X: four Rolls Royce Merlin V-12's

-Mk. II: four Bristol-Hercules VI Radials

Wing Span: 102 feet

Length: 69 feet 6 inches

Maximum speed: 275 miles per hour

Cruising speed: 185 to 225 miles per hour

Service ceiling: 20,000 feet (maximum weight)

Maximum weight: 61,500 pounds

Empty Weight: 36,500 pounds

Fuel Capacity: 2154 Imperial gallons

Range: 2530 miles with 7000 pound bomb load

1730 miles with 12,000 pound bomb load

1550 miles with 22,000 pound bomb load

Armament: Front gun turret (two .303 calibre)

Mid-upper gun turret (two .303 calibre)

Rear gun turret (four .303 calibre)



**115 Squadron Lancaster Mk. II**  
**Note the "KO" squadron code and the radial engines.**

The thrill of flying, even while just training, continued to fascinate and bring delight to Baz. Later in the letter he wrote,

*“Flying has, of course, been fascinating –did you hear a lot of aircraft on Thursday night? I was over London twice on that night, and I thought of you all snug around the fire as I played tag with searchlights. I still get a big kick out of being at the other end of a searchlight (in this country!).”*

Following four weeks of training, Baz and crew began flying Lancaster Mk II's operationally. Although the vast majority of Lancasters were powered by Rolls Royce Merlin V-12 engines, the three hundred Mark II's that were built utilized the Bristol-Hercules VI radial engine. 115 Squadron was the first to be equipped and operate with the Mk II's.

The Lancaster had a crew of seven. Baz's original crew of: Bill Bowen (navigator), George Ross (bomb-aimer), G. Roberts (wireless operator); and Tom Molloy (rear-gunner) converted to the Lancaster with Baz and two additional crew were added, Pete Skinner (flight engineer) and Arthur Milton (mid-upper gunner).

Their first raid was on the night of 22/23 March. It had been almost four months since Baz flew his last operation. The target was the French port of St. Nazaire but many of the aircraft were recalled. Baz, as well, turned back when he was fifteen miles from the coast.

The raid on Duisburg on 26/27 March must have been particularly harrowing as Baz's logbook entry indicates, “10/10ths cloud - large fires - crash landing.” On this raid the undercarriage mechanism was damaged by flak and F/O Bazalgette was forced to make a belly landing. Although the aircraft struck a tree, there were no injuries.

Baz then participated in two raids to Berlin on 27/28 and 29/30 March. Known to Bomber Command crews as “The Big City,” Berlin was one of the most feared targets because of the long flight involved and the heavy defences.

Arthur Godfrey, an Australian pilot with 626 Squadron,



**Baz gave this photo of a 115 Squadron Lancaster to his parents. Although he never flew this particular aircraft, perhaps the photo was taken from his Lancaster.**

described his vivid memories of being over Berlin which in many ways was similar to other heavily defended Bomber Command targets, writing,

*“Berlin was an angry, glaring, writhing enormity of a target. We rarely caught a glimpse of the city beneath the unbroken cloud cover, but there seemed to be thousands of searchlights. They did not move, they pointed upwards and illuminated the clouds. It was like flying across a vast, bubbling cauldron into which was poured the sky-markers and above which burst the ‘scarecrow’ flares. [Many Bomber Command aircrews believed that scarecrow flares were being used by the Germans to deceive them into believing they were bombers in flames. In fact they were bombers in flames.]*

*“We have since discovered that there were no ‘scarecrow’ flares, only exploding and burning aircraft. It was a target so bright that the spread of the bomber stream could be seen above, below, and around you. One was part of a vast armada of aircraft moving relentlessly across the target. Bomb*

*doors could be seen opening. The black crosses on the fighters were clearly visible as they dived into the bomber stream, oblivious to the bursting flak, whose muffled crump could be heard above the roar of our engines.”*

It appears that Baz’s two operations over Berlin provided quite different experiences. Following the first Baz’s logbook records, “Cloud broke over the city, pathfinding A-1, opposition weak,” but following the second the comments were, “Fiercer opposition, many searchlights.”

During April Baz flew six operations, noting in his logbook, “Fierce and accurate flak,” “Baltic full of light flak,” “Usual Ruhr display, good trip,” and “Forced to jettison and return, heavy icing.”

At the other end of the spectrum from frightening experiences during operations over enemy territory, Baz found himself enjoying peaceful experiences in the rural, English countryside and his focus often turned to the young ladies he came across. In a letter to his mother written on 30 April he wrote,

*“The moorhens have hatched now. They keep their brood in shallow water amongst the reeds, but the pike snaffle an odd chick I fear. The nightingale has begun to sing on warm, clear nights, the estate abounds with lilac hedges and lambs, and everything is a very “pastoral symphony.*

*“Tonight we hope to be free to have a party; the feminine element will be supplied by nurses from Ely Hospital. I have staked a claim on a clearing in the lilacs where the scent hangs heavy and the nightingale sings. Yoo-hoo, can’t find me!”*

There is no question that Baz was very interested in the ladies and according to Eric Biggs, with whom he served in the Searchlight Regiment,

*“His favourite opening remark when introduced to a*

*new charmer was, as best as I can remember, 'Has anyone ever told you that you have eyes like the fishpools of Hesperus?'"*

Following Eric's engagement, Baz asked in a letter,

*"What about bequeathing your interest in a certain lady to me?"*

Only three ops were flown by Baz and his crew during May. His was one of 596 bombers that attacked Dortmund in which 5.2% of the aircraft were lost. Baz reported, "Many searchlights, accurate flak, and port flap holed."

An even higher 5.9% of 572 aircraft were lost on a raid to Duisburg. The Pathfinder's marking was said to have been "near perfect" and the bombing very concentrated. Baz agreed, both with the bombing accuracy and the enemy's efforts, writing in his logbook, "Most concentrated effort yet; Good Ruhr defence."

Following his participation in an 826 aircraft attack on Dortmund which Baz reported as, "Very easy," he travelled to London on a week's leave.

After returning to the squadron on 1 June, he wrote to his mother,

*"Just a brief note with my soiled drawers. The train journey went very smoothly and a group of us took a taxi to the camp. Everyone in the mess was in a very good mood –bags of laughter and dirty songs. A new WAAF officer too, quite attractive, the wolves are on her trail already. On the whole, everything quite pleasant but rather bleak after leave. "Thank you so much, all of you, for the thoughtfulness and trouble that makes my leaves so enjoyable. It manifests itself in so many ways –a 'gen' record index, whiskey and soda, good food and snacks on the train, and any amount of things which are noticed and appreciated."*

The “gen’ record index” refers to Baz’s collection of classical music. He was clearly a connoisseur, comparing different orchestras and conductors before choosing a recording. He wanted each work in his collection to be performed by the musicians he felt were most suited to the particular piece of music and to the composer.

In an 11 June letter to his mother, Baz writes of his interest in nature and flowers, the loss of another good friend, and his appreciation of his mother’s knitting efforts,

*“Another pleasing thing about these grounds is the profusion of small wild flowers in the grass; cowslip, trefoil, various forms of speedwell, buttercups and daisies, and what have you.*

*“This letter was broken off at the stage above in order to go and do a little organising. I did not have the heart to go finish it the next day as we were unlucky enough to lose Dougie Fox on ops. I miss him very much.*

*“The new Wing Commander –a very nice Irishman – has instructed me to prolong the tour as much as possible as it is so difficult to obtain a new Flight Commander. That means that I shall not work more than once or twice a week and I hope to have a further six days leave, finish the rest of my trips, and then work hard for fourteen days. Keep Your fingers crossed, my love.*



**Baz at home**

*“The Wing Commander has been most considerate, and told the adjutant to take me to a terrific party at Group H.Q. to cheer me up when Fox went.*

*“The new pull-over fits beautifully, and is really the cat’s whiskers.”*

As suggested in the letter, Baz began to fly fewer operations, only two in June. The first was to Krefield on 21/22 June. Baz noted “Fighters very active” in his logbook and indeed they were. Most of the 44 of the 705 bombers (6.3% loss rate) that were lost were shot down by enemy night fighters.

On 1 July 1943, now Acting Squadron Leader Bazalgette was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Founded by King George V upon the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918, the Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for, “an act or acts of valour, courage, or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy.” A citation describing the event or events for which the medal was presented accompanies each award.

Ian Bazalgette’s DFC citation reads,

*“This officer has at all times displayed the greatest keenness for operational flying. He has taken part in many sorties and attacked heavily defended targets such as Duisberg, Berlin, Essen, and Turin. His gallantry and devotion to duty have at all times been exceptional and his record commands the respect of all in his squadron.”*

Although the citation does not mention any particular raid, it has been written that it was the low-level attack on Turin that led to the award.

Baz makes reference to the awarding of his DFC (Decorations were referred to as “gongs” by the airmen) in the following letter dated 23 July which also describes some conflicts and their impact on the squadron and the loss of another senior squadron airman on operations,



**Distinguished Flying Cross**

*"I did a job [13 July raid to Aachen] the first night I was back (from leave), and amused myself by contrasting that method of spending an evening with my last night at home. My new aeroplane is superb; we were first back with no trouble whatsoever.*

*"The main pleasure I got out of my gong was knowing what it meant to you. Please thank Tom and all the relatives who have sent congratulations, and let me know if there is anyone I should write to.*

*"Life here has been pretty horrible. On taking over the Flight, I put in a spell of intensive work and thinking, made some rather drastic reforms, and in general was rather a new broom. Everything worked out pretty well and the Wing-Co was quite pleased I think, but he gave the other Flight Commander a raspberry and quoted my Flight as an example.*

*"That was like rubbing salt into a sore to a senior Squadron Leader and I found him and his subordinates leagued against me, and a most spiteful campaign in progress*

*decrying my methods, my promotion, my gong and everything to do with me. It all hurt rather badly. I suppose I am too thin-skinned.*

*“Anyway, I dragged it all into the open, and had it out with the other S/Ldr and the Wing-Co. I lost S/Ldr Baird as a friend, and he went missing that night. The whole thing sickened me as a revelation of spite and jealousy. The great consolation is that you all believe in me and as long as that holds good, nothing else really matters. The fact that my award came through before completion of a tour aroused a lot of ill feeling. Pardon me for enlarging on this, but it is quite a relief to do so.”*

Bazalgette and crew participated in a very successful raid on the industrial area of Hamburg during the night of 24/25 July and afterwards Ian recorded in his logbook, “Defence baffled by new technique.” This was the raid in which “Window” was used for the first time and this tactical innovation allowed the 791 attacking aircraft to pass through the enemy defences in much greater safety, at least on that night.

“Window” was strips of coarse, black paper exactly 27 cm long and 2 cm wide with thin aluminum foil stuck to one of the sides which, when dropped in great numbers, swamped the enemy’s radar with false echoes and rendered it virtually useless.

Trials in England had convinced the British that this technique would be successful against the “Wurzburg” ground based radar sets which controlled the German night-fighter interceptions and the radar directed flak guns. As well it was felt that it would be effective against the smaller airborne “Lichtenstein” radar sets which the night-fighter crews used when closing in on a British bomber. Window had been ready since April 1942 but had not been used for fear that the German Air Force would copy it and use it to counter British radar systems while making their own bombing raids.

Interestingly, the enemy had already developed a



**In this photo, a bundle of “Window” has just been released from a higher-flying aircraft.**

similar technique and had named it “Duppel.” Hermann Goering, the commander of the Luftwaffe, fearing that if the British were made aware of it that it might be used against his own defences, ordered that no one was to speak of Duppel and that there was to be no further development of the technique.

During the six major raids over a ten day period which comprised the Battle of Hamburg, it is estimated that Window saved as many as 130 aircraft and their crews which would otherwise have been lost. The technique continued to be used following this initial spectacular success, however the Germans recovered quickly and developed methods which to some extent counteracted the new technique.

In a letter written on 1 August, Baz refers to his “dead easy visit to Hamburg” as well as Canadian interest in his DFC and his interest in a “rather attractive WAAF officer.”

*“All the family and friends seem to be reacting to my good luck (DFC, I presume) in a very genuine manner. One rather interesting thing about this ‘gong’ business is that the Canadian service publications over here have printed the citation, quoting me as ‘of Calgary.’ A friend and well-wisher in the mess wrote ‘B.S.’ across the citation in the particular*

*magazine I refer to. That seems to be the last word on that matter.*

*"I haven't done anything very warlike myself, apart from one dead easy visit to Hamburg, but the Wing-Co is on leave and the other S/Ldr and I are acting for him. Late nights and disorganised sleep have been the order of the day –seeing the boys off, and checking them in again.*

*"I had the job of showing a rather attractive WAAF officer over one of our aeroplanes yesterday. She is a well known 'sporting type' and she evaded me at a party recently. When I got her into the pilot's seat and she couldn't move, I made her take my course of six easy lessons in love making. It was so hot and in such a strange place we both kept roaring with laughter and couldn't take it seriously!"*

In general, a "tour" of operations with Bomber Command was thirty operational flights against the enemy and following this, aircrew were often posted to training units. The last trip of Baz's crew's tour was a raid to Milan, Italy on 12 August. Following the trip, Baz wrote in his logbook, "Enjoyable over London and the Alps; Otherwise a bind."

Baz's logbook comments continued to become more and more informal as his career progressed. This one leaves the reader imagining Baz enjoying a beautiful night looking down on Mont Blanc which must have provided relief from what he probably felt was a long and tedious flight.

Wireless operator George Roberts remembered, "It was a good tour, no crew member was lost or wounded." Regarding his skipper Baz, Roberts wrote, "He was a very good pilot and a good friend."

On 16 August W/C F.F. Rainsford, commanding officer of 115 Squadron, assessed Bazalgette's abilities as a heavy bomber pilot as "Above the Average."

In a letter to the Nanton Lancaster Society, W/C Rainsford recalled some aspects of Ian's off-duty nature and activities,

SUMMARY of FLYING and ASSESSMENTS FOR YEAR COMMENCING on 1st SEPTEMBER 1942  
 [ \* For Officer, insert "JUNE"; For Airman Pilot, insert "AUGUST" ]

	S.E. AIRCRAFT		M.E. AIRCRAFT		TOTAL for year total	GRAND TOTAL All Service Flying
	Day	Night	Day	Night		
DUAL			5-50	7-55	9-45	127-02
PILOT			71-02	186-02	257-04	471-57
PASSENGER						60-15

ASSESSMENT of ABILITY  
 (To be assessed as:—Exceptional, Above the Average, Average, or Below the Average)

(i) AS A H.B. PILOT *Above the Average*

(ii) AS PILOT-NAVIGATOR/NAVIGATOR */*

(iii) IN BOMBING */*

(iv) IN AIR GUNNERY */*

ANY POINTS IN FLYING OR AIRMANSHIP WHICH SHOULD BE WATCHED  
*NIL*

**Assessment of Baz's first tour signed by 115 Squadron's commanding officer, W/C Fred Rainsford**

*"I remember him as a cheerful, friendly officer with a most attractive smile. He loved to gather with others around the piano in East Wretham Hall which we used as an Officers Mess and he led the singing of bawdy songs. But he was not a rowdy type, could hold his beer with any man, and because of his real gift of leadership, his warm personality, and his fine operational record, he was liked by everyone."*

Several of his contemporaries on 115 and 635 Squadrons have mentioned that Baz enjoyed the night life and that he loved to sing. It must be kept in mind that virtually all of the people involved in an active role on a wartime bomber squadron were very young and this fact, coupled with their precarious day-to-day existence, quite naturally led to a tendency to enjoy each day to the fullest.

Aircrew would have a few drinks and socialize in the Mess or the local pub one night knowing that the next they would likely be facing the terror of searchlights, flak, and enemy night fighters 20,000 feet above a fiery target hundreds of miles away over enemy-held territory.

Tom Molloy, Baz's rear-gunner during his tour with 115 Squadron, recalled,

*"Despite joining in at some of these boisterous activities, I always had a feeling that Baz's heart was not really in it, there was a sense of holding back. I gained the impression that these boyish, frivolous 'goings-on' were against his true nature but he took part occasionally because it was expected of him. He certainly never wished to be and never was, to all appearance, an odd man out.*

*"Looking at him on more than one occasion when he did not appear to be enthusiastically taking part I guessed that he would have preferred to be in his room listening to music, reading, or dreaming of his roses at home."*

It must have been with some emotion that Bazalgette and his crew, who had gone through so much together during their tour that extended over eleven months, were about to go their different ways.

Baz wrote,

*"My bomb-aimer and wireless-op were both posted with me, but managed to get Rhodesia House to cancel the posting and are still with the Squadron awaiting their fate. The navigator went on a special course and will be retained by the Squadron for a while on the training side. The rest are all over the place, when my mid-upper gunner has finished being ill he is going to join me watching the mountain goats bounding through the swirling wreathes of mist."*

Baz's reference to "the swirling wreathes of mist" relate to the fact that he had been posted to an Operational Training Unit at Lossiemouth, Scotland as a Flight Commander. This position included the responsibility of overseeing the final training and preparation of bomber crews about to begin flying over Nazi-occupied Europe.

However Baz seemed to long for the excitement of

operations and the contribution he could make flying against the enemy. In particular, he wanted to fly with the Pathfinder Force (PFF) —the “elite” Bomber Command airmen who marked the targets for the main force aircraft. It is also clear that he saw that, even in August of 1943, that the end of the war was in sight and that he did not want to further delay contributing even more than he had already.

Baz had once attended a lecture given by Group Captain (G/C) Hamish Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC at which he was introduced to the methods utilized by the Pathfinder Force which was designated as 8 Group of Bomber Command.

The challenges of becoming a Pathfinder Force pilot were irresistible to Baz and, after making application through regular channels, he appealed directly to G/C Mahaddie who was in charge of recruiting crews for the Pathfinder Force.

In his autobiography, “Hamish —The Story of a Pathfinder,” Bazalgette is referred to as, “one of many tour-expired bomber pilots that seemed to rot in our OTU’s.”

Hamish recalled that Bazalgette, “plagued me weekly with letters and telephone calls.” In a letter to the Nanton Lancaster Society, Hamish referred to,

*“ . . . begging letters I got from Ian beseeching me to*



**G/C Hamish Mahaddie in his office  
at RAF Warboys**

*take him back on operations and which I have always regretted because sadly he was killed on the occasion when he won his VC."*

While on leave at home, Baz wrote the first of these letters to G/C Mahaddie.

16 Sycamore Grove  
New Malden, Surrey

24 August, 1943

*Sir: I understand from my telephone conversation yesterday with Flt. Lt. Rogers that Air Cdre. Kirkpatrick of No. 3 Group requested that the PFF should not claim me, as there was a 'special job' for which I was required.*

*No. 115 Squadron have informed me by letter that I am posted to Lossiemouth on a routine exchange for a Flight Commander from that station, with effect from the 1st September.*

*The actual position, as I see it (and writing very unofficially), is that No. 3 Group cannot obtain the particular replacement for me they require without offering me in exchange. The upshot is that my application for the PFF is quietly squashed whilst I am on leave on the grounds of a 'special job.' The only work that I have heard of is either an OTU or a Stirling Conversion Unit.*

*The real point is where can I be of the greatest value, and I am convinced that a PFF tour does more good than a Flight Commander's job at an OTU.*

*My personal angle is that anyone missing ops this autumn and winter has "had it." I entreat you to rescue me before the 1st September if I can be of use to PFF.*

*Again, I must apologise for bothering you with my personal affairs, but the incentive is very strong.*

*I am, sir, yours faithfully*

*Ian W. Bazalgette*



**S/L Bazalgette DFC**  
**(Note the DFC ribbon below the pilot's wings)**

## 20 O.T.U.

Located on the north coast of Scotland, next to the North Sea and some 55 kilometres east of Inverness, RAF Lossiemouth was far from the “action” that Baz seemed to have relished during his first tour. Now with the rank of Squadron Leader, Baz flew a Lancaster Mk II to the OTU on 3 September 1943. Two days later he wrote his mother,

*“I was lucky enough to get an aeroplane to take me here and arrived in two and a half hours instead of two days. It was rather heart-breaking to think of no longer having such a great, ominous four-engined beauty to fly.*

*“On arrival, I found to my disgust, that my Flight was moving from Lossiemouth in a couple of days to another new aerodrome. As OTU’s go, this seem pretty good; very well organized and, on first impression, a group of really good ex-operational types as instructors. I have been walking around in a daze; masses and masses of bumph [useless paperwork], new faces, and a complex training system to master. At the moment I just feel bewildered and rather helpless, but a fortnight should get me into the swing. The countryside is lovely.”*

Two weeks later, the OTU had moved to RAF Milltown, only six kilometres southeast of Lossiemouth. Baz wrote to his

mother,

*“An operational squadron is very democratic but here the junior officers heel click, salute, and “Sir.” A good thing at an OTU.*

*“Hamish Mahaddie did not answer my last letter, so I am afraid I shall just have to accept things as they stand. Life seems curiously flat without getting shot at twice a week, and slinging an occasional bomb around.*

*“The fall of Italy makes me feel more than ever convinced that the war in Europe is well on the way.”*

Following a month at the OTU, Baz wrote,

*“I have been feeling rather worried about this OTU work because, although I do want to run my Flight efficiently, I just haven’t got the same energy and enthusiasm as I had on the squadron. The main thing is to keep on trying, and assimilate a little here and there.*

*“The weather has been bleak on the whole, but every now and again we get a day of crisp sunshine when the sweep of hill and sea is an inspiration. It would be glorious to have the time to go off and walk in the hills, even in the wind and the rain.*

*“I received a pathetic note from a POW in Germany, a F/O Larson who was in my Flight and got shot down on his first trip last July. It makes me feel selfish and ungrateful to think of a fellow like that, and here I am grumbling because existence seems flat –yet possessed of senior rank, comfort, good health, and security. It is a platitude reeking of can’t, but it is a good thing to count one’s blessings when feeling depressed.”*

One of the instructors who served under Baz at the OTU was F/L R. “Bob” Palmer DFC who, like Baz, was destined to be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross while flying with the Pathfinder Force. S/L Palmer had made over

one hundred operational flights when he was marking a target for a daylight raid on Cologne on 23 December 1944. Fighter attacks and flak set two engines on fire but he pressed on to bomb the marshalling yards accurately before falling in flames.

Baz's flying time was, of course, severely curtailed at the OTU. Following his arrival on 3 September he flew only once more that month, and just three times in October. On 15 October he wrote,

*"What an appalling run of bad luck. The weather has been vile and we have had a shocking run of really sticky crashes. Ah well, life for everyone seems to be an alternate cycle of rough and smooth running. What the hell boys, what the hell.*

*"Eric Biggs wrote to me after he had telephoned you. Biggs is a really grand type who worked with me when I was in Fife farting around with searchlights. He tried to transfer with me to the RAF, but his eyes were not up to standard.*

*"Since then he has been through the latter half of the North African and all through the Sicilian campaigns. When I do get on leave, I hope to see something of the dear lad."*

Having received a package from the family for his 25th birthday, Baz wrote to his mother on 22 October,

*"The cake and enclosure have arrived in good order, and thank you for your sweet thoughts. When I think of the hands that baked the cake, and all that they have done for me, I feel decidedly unworthy. I have not yet made my mind, as to how to expend the book token, but I have rather a leaning towards another volume of Torug's[?] Essays. The good Doctor writes on music in a very stimulating fashion. It seems awfully inadequate, but all I can say is thank you -it was a happy birthday.*

*"Last night we had a very amusing and very drunken party in Elgin and I took the precaution of having a day off in*

*which to recover. The Wing-Commander and I get on very well together –he has a grand sense of humour and is also very efficient. It seems inevitable that I shall be here for the rest of the war, so I am trying to settle down and really get weaving.*

*“My own future is somewhat thought-provoking. Anyway, I think I could probably stay in the RAF. In the meantime, I shall endeavour to work for a Second Navigator’s Certificate and save money.”*

It was during his time at RAF Milltown that Baz met F/O Douglas Cameron DFM, an experienced air gunner who was the Gunnery Leader for Baz’s Flight at the OTU. Cameron had, by coincidence, also been very much involved in the raid to Turin that Baz had participated in on 28 November 1942. This was the low level attack on the Fiat Works factories during which Baz made three runs over the target, returning to base with flak damage.

Douglas had been the rear gunner on a Stirling bomber flown by Flight Sergeant (F/S) R.H. Middleton of the Royal Australian Air Force and had two and three-quarters tours of operations on twin-engined Whitley bombers in his log when he took part in the Turin raid.

The aircraft was hit by flak and severely damaged while returning from the target. Both pilots were injured, F/S Middleton losing an eye and having half his jaw shot away.



**F/O Douglas Cameron DFM**

The co-pilot was completely incapacitated. Middleton flew the aircraft back to the Kent coast where four of the crew, including Cameron, bailed out before the Stirling crashed into the sea killing the pilot and two other members of the crew. F/S Middleton was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously.

Douglas Cameron would go on to fly an amazing total of 122 sorties during four tours of operations. He would conclude his career by bailing out of another severely damaged bomber, the pilot of which would also be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

Doug remembered Baz as,

*“An officer who was equally at home with his peers and other ranks, who earned the respect of all by his pursuance of carrying the offensive to the enemy, who won the affection and gratitude of his subordinates for his care and promotion of their welfare, not less than the approval of his fellow and senior officers.”*

Doug also mentioned the special attention and respect that was paid by Baz to his ground crew which was often included in after-hours activities.

He described how Baz’s exploits behind the wheel of a car were indicative of his irrepressible high spirits while off duty.

*“His escapades, despite his being a good driver, were more consistent with winning a DFC than conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman. It has to be remembered that he was still a comparatively young man, with all the natural instincts of his age. Most of the time I drove the car, to the relief of the crew as I was by nature more abstemious.”*

Of his work at the OTU, Doug recalled,

*“Although Baz didn’t relish idling his time on a training unit, he immediately applied himself to his new task with all*

*the energy he possessed and the knowledge he had acquired, with such a degree of professionalism that all ranks became aware that a presence had arrived."*

But Hamish had told Baz, "You just stay there [at the OTU] and I will get you out."

While at the museum in 1990, Hamish insisted,

*"This wasn't just an idle promise because there was the type of fellow we wanted; it was as simple as that. He was the type of fellow that I wanted to be a Squadron Commander eventually. I told Jerry Rogers [who was mentioned in Baz's letter to Hamish] on my staff that I wanted Bazalgette and he never stopped looking for ways to get Bazalgette."*

So according to Hamish, "He quietly did his job like a good little lad." But during this time, Baz was carefully and methodically preparing for his return to the role he wished to have, that of an operational pilot with the Pathfinder Force.

Doug Cameron recalled,

*"One day Baz came into my office and asked if I was quite happy at the OTU. I told Baz that I would like to go back on ops but that the air force had told me that I had done enough and to let some others operate against the Germans. Baz told me not to worry about that and that he had friends in high places and if I would like to come he would like to have an experienced crew. I know now that G/C Mahaddie had a hand in getting Baz back on operations."*

With the exception of the flight engineer and mid-upper gunner, the other members of his soon to be operational crew were recruited at 20 OTU in a similar manner. Baz carefully studied all of the senior instructors and determined in his own mind the ones which he felt would make the best crew. F/L Ivan Hibbert DFC, bomb-aimer; F/L Geoff Goddard, navigator; and F/L C.R. "Chuck" Godfrey, wireless operator

3rd February, 1944

*Dear Wing Commander Mahaddie:*

*A pathetic appeal from the frozen north -my six months O.T.U. tour expires at the end of this month and I must get to 8 Group at once. I feel that if I cannot break away now, I have "had" my second tour. It is my dearest wish to have another personal affair with Germany, before we deal with the yellow jobs. This all reads like a line, but believe me, I am very sincere. The main essential, as far as I can see it, is to have it organized as an exchange posting, and to insist on the six month ruling being adhered to. If there is any question of it being to my advantage to stay here (you will remember the 3 group story) please disregard it.*

*A few keen types scattered around the group are anxious to get back with me. In case there is any hope, I enclose a separate list of their names and categories. There is one point, sir, on which we urgently need your advice -shall we all put in official applications through our various units, or keep quiet and leave it all to you?*

*Yours sincerely,  
Ian W. Bazalgette S/Ldr.*

Royal Air Force,  
Castle Hill House,  
MUNSTERBURY.

DC/TBA

8th February, 1964.

Dear -

Many thanks for your letter and I most heartily endorse all you say. Please take no action officially until my own horse dealing methods have been completed. I will, however, tell you when to make the official application.

Well, the sands of time are slowly running out for you, so keep your powder dry!

Many thanks for the enclosed list. I will do my best to get these lads for you, I don't think there is going to be much difficulty. Once I get the Skipper, the others follow quite easily.

Well, cheerio Basil, and may I wish you in the near future good Path Finding.

Yours

were approached and agreed to join the crew. Each was an experienced veteran of at least one tour of operations. As the aircraft operating at Milltown were twin-engined Wellingtons, flight engineers and mid-upper gunners were not a part of the crews being trained there.

Meanwhile at home, Baz's family continued to be directly affected by enemy bombing. In a letter dated 8 November, his mother wrote,

*"I expect you will be wondering how close the shower of bombs were to us last Friday and last night, that is if you heard that Malden had got it again. The nearest last Friday fell near the sub-station which is close to Malden station and has not yet exploded or been found, all up around Beverley Park*

*got a pasting and as far south as Bodley Road.*

*“Last night one fell just beyond Woodside Road which is next to Sycamore, that one shook us a bit. I suppose the so-and-so’s are aiming for the factories or the railway or both –or most likely, not aiming at all. Putney got a real shocker last night, the death roll from that dance hall is high, I fear. When the bomb fell near the sub-station on Friday we were all plunged into darkness. Dad crawled into the shelter from the kitchen on his hands and knees.”*

It took some time, but the letters and telephone calls to Hamish Mahaddie were successful though, strangely, his posting to the Pathfinders was made conditional on the performance of the OTU. In a letter home written on 13 March 1944, Baz wrote:

*“I am now in command of the station again, and working like the very devil. My posting to P.F.F. has been made conditional on reaching certain figures in flying hours for the month –a huge commitment which is running all ragged.*

*“How I curse the way I was trapped into this place last summer –I would have had Berlin in my logbook about twelve times by now. My present C/O is a very fair and honest man, but the trouble is there will probably be no war left. Oh Hell!”*

*“The raids sound very trying. I do hope that Dad’s nerves will not be affected.”*

In a letter to his mother dated 9 April, Baz seems pleased that he will be attending the formal presentation of his Distinguished Flying Cross at Buckingham Palace and that his parents will be attending. On the other hand, he is still struggling to be able to leave the OTU,

*“I have just received the summons to an Investiture at Buckingham Palace on the 18th April. Two tickets will arrive at home addressed to me O.H.M.S. Both tickets will be for your use.*

*“There is a distinct possibility that I shall be at home round about the 16th, for a few days pending reporting to P.F.F. on the 20th. I created a terrific fuss when I arrived back, and made the Wing-Commander get busy – I have a nasty suspicion that I was nearly ‘fixed’ again, but by telling the Wing-Commander I was not prepared to do any more work, unless I was satisfied over posting, I got my own way. The position now is that I am told I shall be posted as from the 20th and I am just awaiting written confirmation before organising leave. As soon as I have everything cleared up, I shall telephone, telegram, or arrive home.”*



Following the investiture, Baz's mother received a letter from her friend, Kathleen Whiteway,

*"I am sorry Will is back on ops and as a pathfinder . . . I hope that you do not feel so anxious all the time -but I do understand what an ever present worry it is for you all. I think Will is perfectly wonderful to be so persistently keen and brave. I was very interested to hear about the Investiture at the Palace and I am so glad you were there to see him 'decorated' by the King."*

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchive.co.uk](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchive.co.uk)



## ***Pathfinder Training***

On 27 April 1944 S/L Bazalgette and his new crew made their first flight as part of the Pathfinder Force conversion course at the RAF station known as Warboys, thirty kilometres northwest of Cambridge. But being posted to Warboys did not guarantee that the crew would be accepted into the Pathfinders. Only about 50% of the selected crews were passed and considered good enough to join a PFF squadron. The course included flying four “mock ops” operations before they were accepted as a PFF crew.

Although Baz had plenty of experience flying Lancaster Mk. II's during his time at 115 Squadron, his training at Warboys would be on Lancaster Mk. III's. This type was powered by the Rolls-Royce Merlin V-12 engine rather than the radial engines that powered the Mk. II's.



**Merlin-powered 424 Squadron RCAF  
Lancaster “Picadilly Princess”**

## **THE PATHFINDER FORCE (8 Group)**

The idea of using an elite corp of crews with high navigational ability evolved from the somewhat limited accuracy of bomber crews during the early years of the war together with the development of more sophisticated and difficult to use electronic navigational aids. Although originally opposed by Marshall of the Royal Air Force Arthur Harris, the officer in charge of Bomber Command, hand-picked crews from operational bomber squadrons began to be transferred to form the Pathfinder Force (PFF) in August 1942.

The PFF was commanded by veteran Australian bomber pilot, D.C.T. Bennett, who retained command throughout the war. It began operations within a few hours of its formation and continued its work of leading the main force against the enemy until the bomber offensive ceased shortly before V.E. Day.

A variety of techniques for marking targets with green, red, and yellow flares were utilized depending on cloud conditions. Generally an initial marking of the target was improved upon or altered as the raid progressed. Circling over the target, a Master Bomber would radio instructions to other Pathfinders as well as to the main force aircraft.

The gallantry of the Pathfinder Force is legendary and its contribution to the war effort immense as it significantly improved the accuracy of the main force's bombing. Probably the greatest of its many successes was its part in the sustained Battle of the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Nazi Germany.

The PFF flew a total of 50,490 individual sorties against some 3440 targets. The cost in human lives was grievous as 3727 members were killed on operations.

405 (City of Vancouver) Squadron was the only Royal Canadian Air Force squadron to serve with 8 Group. It began operations with the PFF in April 1943 and served until the end of the war. As its last operation before V.E. Day, the squadron marked the aiming point for other Bomber Command aircraft detailed to drop food supplies to the starving Dutch civilians at Rotterdam.

At Warboys, F/L Bob Hurnall was chosen to be the mid-upper gunner on Baz's crew.

In a letter from Warboys, Baz mentioned the Investiture at the Palace during his leave and his training at Warboys,



**F/L Bob Hurnall**

*“Thank you for the letter, chocolate, and laundry. And thank you all for those pleasant sunny days at home. Quite one of the happiest memories I have. Seeing the King and Eric gave me a great kick. Ally’s gin gave me an even greater kick. Here’s to the next time and may it be soon.*

*“As you will see, my stay here is quite a short one. Just long enough to get in the basic training and get used to the aeroplane. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and the boys I took with me likewise.*

*“There will be quite a lot of training to do on the Squadron yet, and I will find out about leave as soon as I can. All the staff here are very pleasant, and the whole thing is a glorious contrast to the O.T.U.”*

Baz and his crew completed their final “Mock Op” on 30 April, successfully completing the PFF course which, surprisingly, only involved eight flights. They were immediately assigned to 635, an operational Pathfinder squadron, and were flying with them on 5 May.



**8 Group (The Pathfinder Force) crest in stained glass at Ely Cathedral, near Downham Market**

# 635 Squadron Operations

Downham Market is a small town located on rising ground overlooking “The Fens,” an extensive, former marshy region in Norfolk. Most of the fens were drained several centuries ago, creating a flat, damp, low-



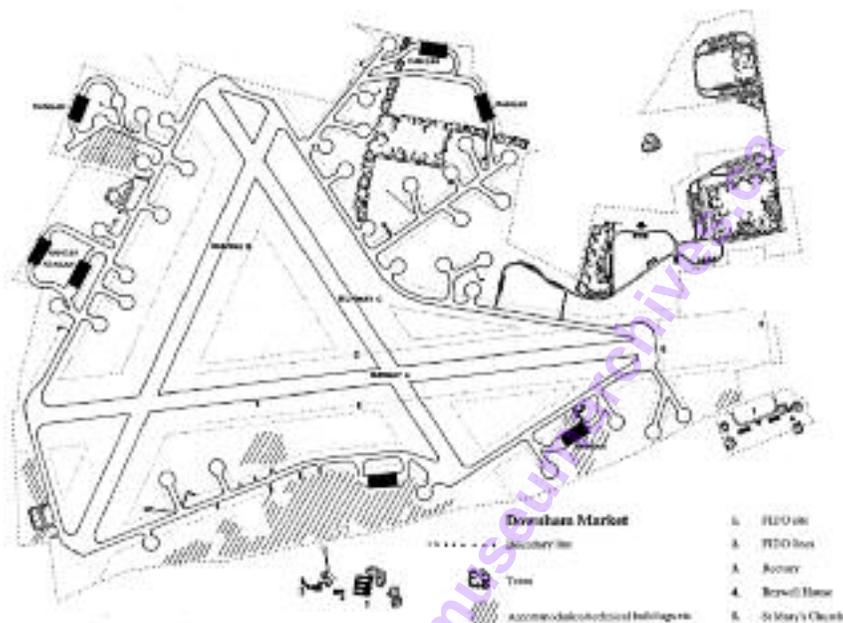
**The Downham Market railway station**

lying agricultural region. The Great Ouse River, together with a large relief channel that parallels it, passes just to the west of the town near the railway station, taking water removed from the reclaimed area to the sea at “The Wash.”

Opened during the summer of 1942, RAF Downham Market was located on high ground, just 1.5 kilometres east of the town and adjacent to the tiny village of Bexwell. The station owed its existence to the war and there were precious few home comforts. Baz’s wireless operator, Chuck Godfrey, remembered that, “The camp really took over the village.”

The massive Stirling Bombers were the first to fly from RAF Downham Market, beginning with 218 Squadron in July 1942, and later 623 and 214 Squadrons. The Stirlings left in January 1944 and the Lancasters of 635 Squadron PFF arrived in March.

635 had a brief but intense existence during the last



### RAF Downham Market

[from Lancaster at War IV by Alex Thorne]

sixteen months of the war. Experienced aircrew from two other squadrons, "B" Flight of 35 Squadron and "C" Flight of 97 Squadron formed its nucleus.

In August 1944, the squadron began sharing the station with another Pathfinder Force unit, the 608 Squadron Mosquitoes of the Light Night Striking Force. This unit specialised in "nuisance," small-scale attacks on enemy industrial centres, and are best remembered for the 36 successive night raids they made on Berlin early in 1945. Interestingly, 608 flew Canadian-built Mk XX Mosquitoes.

The two squadrons often operated jointly as markers on the same targets and according to Don Currie, a 635 Squadron navigator,

*"There was always a friendly feeling of*



**de Havilland Mosquito**



*competitiveness between them. When going to the same target, 608, in their much faster Mosquitoes, would take off long after 635 had disappeared and would be over the target finishing their marking as the 635 primary markers were arriving. This confirmed to the Germans the night's target, and they were ready for us and the main force. 608 missed most of the anti-aircraft fire and the German fighter aircraft we had both going and coming. They were also first at the bar when they got back!"*

608 and 635 Squadrons operated from Downham Market until the end of the war, both being disbanded in the late summer of 1945. 170 aircraft either failed to return or crashed during operations from the station -109 Stirlings, 40 Lancasters and 21 Mosquitoes.

A bomber squadron was made up of about eighteen operational aircraft and during 635's thirteen months of wartime operations, a total of 36 Lancasters were lost to



**Bexwell Church's rectory was the Officers Mess at RAF Downham Market. Dormitories for the officers were built behind the rectory.**  
[courtesy Elizabeth Howard]



**Baz's Crew: (l-r) Baz, Geoff Goddard, Ivan Hibbert, Chuck Godfrey,**

enemy action. The loss rate was high and although many experienced crews joined the squadron, few completed their tour of operations.

S/L Bazalgette and his crew began flying from RAF Downham Market in May 1944. Upon their arrival, they were joined by George Turner who became the crew's flight engineer. George had just completed his training at 1658 Heavy Conversion Unit. Unlike most of the aircrew on the station, he was inexperienced in combat, having only completed one operation prior to being posted to the Pathfinders. He first flew with Baz on a training flight on 4 May.

In the first letter written to his mother from Downham Market, Baz seemed to be very pleased to be back on an operational base,

*"Life here is extremely pleasant. The weather is glorious, and we are training day and night. I always seem to be in an aeroplane, in bed, or tight. Grand.*

*"My crew are all extremely keen and hard-working. I was very lucky to be able to hand pick them as I did. And we are all as happy as a bee with a bum full of honey.*



**Bob Hurnall, Doug Cameron, George Turner**

*The general crew standard is higher than my first tour."*

Chuck Godfrey remembered Ian's dry sense of humour which made him one of the most popular members of the Mess. He also recalled Baz's expertise in, "Doing the Muffin Man." This feat involves placing a pint of beer on one's forehead while standing. The next step is to sit down and eventually to lie flat on your back, all the time of course, balancing the pint of beer on your forehead. If you are successful to this point, you simply have to regain the standing position. "Baz was a real expert at that," recalled



**The pub in the Crown Hotel was a favourite of the airmen based at Downham Market**

Chuck after demonstrating the technique, without the pint of beer, in a video-taped interview for the Nanton Lancaster Society.

The role of Bomber Command had changed considerably by May 1944. Instead of focusing on the destruction of enemy industrial sites, most of the operations were in support of the anticipated invasion of occupied France. Like all squadrons of the Pathfinder Force, 635 was being asked to mark much smaller targets and a new, higher standard of bomb aiming had to be achieved.

S/L Bazalgette's first operation with his new squadron was on 6/7 May, an attack on the railway marshalling yards at Mantes-Grassicourt following which their aircraft was attacked by a fighter. However there was no damage to the Lancaster they were flying which was known as "N-Nuts."

Baz flew four other operations in May, noting in his logbook his role in the first three as a "Supporter." These Pathfinders placed secondary target marking flares as required after the "Markers" placed the initial ones. The operation on 8/9 May was to Haine-St-Pierre where the railway yards and locomotive sheds took a pounding with the help of Canadian Halifaxes from 6 Group. Baz's logbook notes a "Full moon and Much Fighter Activity." Bomber Command's losses were heavy though, losing nine (7.3%) of 123 aircraft.

A raid on the railway yards at Hasselt on 12/13 May was less successful. Although Baz and the other Pathfinders marked the target, the Master Bomber called off the attack while it was in progress as thick haze obscured the markers and the main force bombers were not bombing accurately.

On 15 May George Turner recorded a thirty minute training flight the crew flew in "M-Mother, ND850." He went on to refer to it as, "Our own aircraft."

This Lancaster was marked F2-M, "F2" being the designation for 635 Squadron and "M" identifying the aircraft that had serial number ND850. From this point on, it appears that M-Mother was "Baz's Lanc" as he flew it on almost all of



**635 Squadron Lancasters carried  
the squadron identifier "F2"**

his subsequent training and operational flights.

Following leave, Baz flew his first operation in M-Mother on 27/28 May. He noted in his logbook that this was his "First Marker Trip," and that he carried target marking flares as well as eight, thousand pound bombs to the target. This was an attack on Rennes, one of the most important enemy airfields in northwest France. Much damage was caused and there was a large explosion that was thought to have been the bomb dump.

George Turner wrote that,

*"We were one of the first on target and illuminated it with flares before dropping bombs —plenty of flack and we were hit in one of our engines."*

Unlike the more experienced members of the crew, this was only George's fourth operation and he would have been learning quickly of the dangers of flying with Bomber Command.

The following night, Baz noted in his logbook his role as an, "Illuminator" in which he would have dropped flares to light up the target area for other Pathfinders who would mark the aiming point. The target was again railway yards and a junction at Angers. George wrote that,

*"We were again early on target and illuminated again, a good raid, target plastered."*

Bomber Command reports refer to a “good, concentrated attack” with the tracks and rolling stock seriously damaged. Sadly, a report written in the French city following the raid indicates that 254 French civilians were killed.

Baz’s next operation was on 5/6 June, D-Day, and his mother wrote a letter to him on that historic day. She was obviously aware of the invasion as she refers to “the news,”

*“Just a short letter to tell you my thoughts, prayers, hopes, and wishes are with you today –and tho’ you are seldom out of my thoughts, these critical days will be busy one’s for you, or I suppose I should say nights in your case.*

*“We have been listening at intervals to the news and getting on with work in between times, which is the best way to pass the time. On Sunday night, just at 10 pm, a Lancaster went over here, very low, with a light on. I stood outside the drawing room door and waved, pretending to myself ‘twas you, it was soon out of sight in the haze. We shall be anxious to hear from you as soon as it’s possible. I can understand how you felt when you decided that NOTHING would keep you out of this.”*

Bomber Command’s operations in support of the D-Day invasion were divided into three major support groups—destroying Normandy coastal batteries, supporting operations, and diversionary operations. The biggest by far of the three and the one which Baz took part in were the attacks on the enemy’s coastal batteries. Baz piloted one of one hundred bombers that attacked ten coastal batteries.

Following his D-Day operation, Baz wrote in his logbook, “D-Day – Longues Coastal Battery – Supporter – Channel full of shipping – Sky black with Lancs.” In an apparently hastily written p.s. following his signature on a previously written but unmailed letter to his mother, he wrote, “P.S. Hurrah for D-Day, I was there!”

Following her receipt of Baz’s letter, his mother wrote

back on 12 June,

*“We are all terribly thrilled to hear you were taking part in our invasion on D-Day, we shall be looking forward to hearing about it on your next leave. Egad Sir, what a mighty business it all was, and it’s ever growing intensity from hour to hour, is mightier and mightier. The never ceasing drone of aircraft overhead night and day makes one realize what a gigantic air force we must have.”*

Baz flew another operation the day following D-Day in support of the invading army. The attacking bombers attacked enemy tank concentrations which had the Allied Army pinned down near Caen. George Turner recalled that the target was Foret de Cerisy and that they attacked, “A big forest with hundreds of tanks in it.”

Baz’s actions on this day were typical of the way he exercised his duties. He defied orders and bombed from an altitude of only 800 feet with such accuracy that he earned a commendation from the army but a scolding from senior officers of the RAF. After the raid he marked his triumphant return to Downham Market by buzzing the airfield with, as Doug Cameron remembered, “All the enthusiasm of a ‘sprog’ [novice] pilot.”

Unfortunately, six of the main force Lancasters were lost as they had to wait for the target to be properly marked and then fly over an area full of German units and guns at bombing altitudes of less than 3000 feet.

During the night of 9/10 June, Baz was bombing the Luftwaffe airfield at Rennes. It was his fortieth operation. Located south of the battle area, the airfield was targeted to prevent enemy reinforcements from being flown closer to the front. The attack on Rennes was said to have been particularly successful as the Pathfinders were ordered to mark the target from an altitude of only 6000 feet. The airfield was left shrouded in smoke and as the bombers left the target, a succession of secondary explosions were German

fighters exploding on the airfield.

At some point during June, Baz “buzzed” his sister. As Ethel recalled,

*“I was with the American Eighth Air Force stationed near Ascot and one morning a bomber came over, very low, buzzing the camp and I just knew it was Will, but out came the General and all the others and they were looking up at this aircraft.*

*“That evening Will called me and said, ‘Did you see me?’ It’s a wonder they didn’t take his number or something because it was quite wrong what he did actually. But that was his sense of humour.”*

Ethel told her mother, who wrote to Baz,

*“I’m jealous that Ethel should have seen you in your Lanc. She was very thrilled.”*

As they gained experience with the Pathfinder Force, additional responsibilities were placed on Baz and his crew. An operation on 12/13 June was Baz’s first as a “Deputy Master Bomber.” The Master Bombers were responsible for placing the initial target markers on the target and their “Deputy” followed them into the target prepared to take over if necessary. They then orbited the target, ordering whatever adjustments were necessary to other members of the force as the raid progressed.

Although Baz would never know it, this operation was very significant in Canadian military aviation history and the fact that Baz was very involved in it, a remarkable coincidence.

S/L Bazalgette’s was one of eight 635 Squadron crews ordered to mark the target at the railway marshalling yards at Cambrai, France, near the Belgian border about one hundred kilometres southwest of Brussels. As Baz was marking the target, F/O Art de Breyne of 419 Squadron RCAF was

approaching Cambrai. As he descending from 5000 feet to 2000 feet to bomb from a very low level, his Lancaster was attacked by a Ju 88 night fighter.

Both port engines were knocked out and the wing was set on fire. Ordered to bail out, P/O Andrew Mynarski, the mid-upper gunner, stayed in a futile attempt to free the rear gunner who was trapped in his turret. During his efforts he was set on fire. The rear gunner eventually convinced Mynarski to jump and try to save himself. Before doing so, P/O Mynarski turned to his doomed crewmember



**Luftwaffe Ju88 fighter with radar equipment mounted on the nose**



**Andrew Mynarski VC**

and saluted.

Although he parachuted safely from the aircraft, Mynarski was very badly burned and soon died of his injuries. The rear gunner, still trapped in his turret, was the only one aboard when the flaming Lancaster crashed and, amazingly, he survived to tell the story.

P/O Mynarski was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions, the first Canadian airmen with Bomber Command to be so honoured. S/L Bazalgette, who was marking the target over Cambrai at the time of Mynarski's actions, would become the second less than two months later.

Baz had seen the fighters too, noting in his logbook following the raid, "Many Fighters."

Again with the role of "Deputy Master Bomber," Baz marked the target for a raid on the marshalling yards at Lens on 15/16 June. George noted that "the target was wiped out."

The V-1 Flying Bomb was one of two surface-to-surface, un-manned weapons developed by the Nazi's during World War II. Launched from a firing tube built onto an inclined 160 foot long ramp, it navigated its way to the target by means of a preset guidance system. The V-1 delivered almost two thousand pounds of explosive and had a maximum range of 370 kilometres.

The first V-1 was launched against London on 13 June 1944, one week after D-Day. Within a month, more than one hundred V-1's a day were being launched towards southeast England. Some 35,000 were built, of which 9251 were successfully launched. The number that reached England decreased as the launch sites were destroyed or overrun by Allied troops until October 1944 when the last V-1 site in range of Britain was captured by Allied forces. The flying bombs had killed 22,892 people.

"Crossbow" was the code name for Bomber Command operations against the enemy's long-range weapons program or "Vengeance" weapons. The first of many heavy attacks on Flying Bomb sites was on 16/17 June when 405 Lancasters, Halifaxes, and Mosquitoes bombed four targets in the Pas de



**V-1 Flying Bomb shortly after launch**

Calais area. The attacks against the V-1's would continue until the end of August.

At first, Bomber Command's losses were few as the sites were lightly defended and enemy fighters were not in abundance over the area. This changed on the night of Baz's next operation when the enemy fighter controllers realized what the targets were and began sending their fighters westward rather than holding them back. Five Pathfinder Lancasters were lost.



**A portion of a V-1 launch ramp preserved at Watten, France**  
courtesy Claire Bennett

An operation to Coubronne on 23/24 June was Baz's first operation against a "Crossbow Target," an attack that George Turner referred to as "well concentrated." Later analysis reported that the bombers bombed through clouds and that the attack was unsuccessful with only three fresh craters in the target area although two of them were near misses on the launching point. Baz wrote in his log book that he was "Jumped by ME-110 twenty miles off coast." The Messerschmitt Bf 110 was a twin-engined, night fighter, one of the Luftwaffe's most successful.

Baz operated the following night as well, to a "Crossbow" target at Le Grand Rossignol. He noted in his logbook that things were "Very Quiet" that night. George Turner provides more detail describing the target as,

*"Another flying bomb release point; obtained direct hit on it; this is shown by the photos taken when we dropped our bombs; carried out duties of Visual Backers-Up. This is re-marking the target at different intervals of the raid."*

Following these two attacks on V-1 Flying Bomb sites, Baz went home to spend what, sadly, would be his last leave with his family. As with most crews, Baz's spent much of their leisure time together and in these situations Baz was just another member, neither skipper nor Squadron Leader. Wireless Operator Chuck Godfrey remembered that when they went on leave they would always spend the first two days together, "having a bash," before Baz went home to spend the remainder with his family.

Baz's family had been suffering the effects of the V-1's, his mother writing,

*"We had another hellish, noisy night last night. I hope we shall soon be coping satisfactorily with the thing, counter-steering it back to Germany for instance."*



**Baz with his mother at New Malden  
in southwest London**

When Baz arrived home, he too found himself on the receiving end of the V-1's as they continued to strike the Bazalgette's neighbourhood on a regular basis.

Ethel recalled,

*"The Germans were sending a lot of flying bombs over. Will was on leave and he was quite amazed, appalled really. There were so many coming over this last night that I remember him that my mother and father went into their shelter and Will and I went under a mattress in the hallway. That was the last memory I have of him. The thing that struck me was that this raid [the Victoria Cross Flight] was bombing the flying bomb sites at Trossy St. Maximin and there seemed a connection because the last time I saw him was when these flying bombs were raiding us."*



### **A V-1 Flying Bomb falls onto London**

Following his leave, Baz was very busy, flying again on 4 July. His mother wrote to him the following day,

*“Here is some more of your laundry, I shall hope to get your soiled clothes in exchange soon.*

*“Your leave seemed more than usually short and I am missing you, I hope the next weeks ‘tween leaves go by quickly. I hope your journey was comfortable and went smoothly. We had a nice lull on Monday night, lasting all night. Yesterday began with one flying bomb coming down on a cottage in Traps Lane, our nearest yet. Houses on our opposite side had glass broken and ceilings down. We were lucky, only blackout blinds down. There were no casualties, one old lady crawled into the Morrison [a type of indoor bomb shelter] and was taken out unhurt; though considerably shocked. They came over at intervals all day, but only a few*

during last night, two were in Malden.

*“The milk rounds woman left you a nice pint of milk yesterday. I wish you were here to enjoy it!”*

During his leave, Baz had spent time improving the outdoor bomb shelter that his parents used. Regarding these efforts, his mother wrote,

*“Dad levelled the soil in the hole yesterday, remarking on the terrific amount of work you managed to accomplish.”*

Following his return to the squadron, Baz flew an astounding fourteen operations over the next four weeks—an average of one every two days.

His first was a daylight sortie on 7 July, the first daylight operation that he had flown. The raid was to the Caen area in support of the Canadian and British Armies. Baz noted in his logbook that he was, “Softening up for army” and that there were, “Bags of fighter cover,” indicating that RAF fighters had been escorting the bombers. This too, would have been something Baz would not have experienced before.

Again, flight engineer George Turner provides details,



**635 Squadron Lancasters on a daylight raid  
as photographed by rear gunner P/O Jack Catford  
[courtesy [www.635squadron.com](http://www.635squadron.com)]**

*“This was the big raid on Caen in support of our troops; the raid was more than successful and we had a message waiting for us when we returned from the army commander to say that the troops had been able to go through without any trouble after the raid.”*

Baz then flew two more daylight operations against V-1 Flying Bomb targets at L’Hey on 9 July and the storage caves near Nucourt the following day. He noted in his logbook that he was, “Tired and tight after party” during the raid to Nucourt.

During May another Canadian pilot, F/S Larry Melling, joined 635 Squadron. He clearly recalled being impressed by Baz on his first day at the squadron when he walked into the Flight Office,

*“He had a tremendous sparkle in his eye is the best way to describe it. He stood out amongst the people who were there. He was an inviting sort of a person, a person that you wouldn’t hesitate to approach. I had no hesitation at all introducing myself to him and then through him to the rest of the guys who were there.*

*“He was a very open, very outgoing type of a person, always ready for fun and games whatever that might be.*

*“He was always the first to volunteer for a job, no matter what sort of job it might be. Even though he was a Squadron Leader he wasn’t above pushing a car to get it started or pumping up someone’s bicycle tire . . . He was just an all-round great guy—he really left an impression.”*

For part of their time together on the squadron, Larry and Baz shared “F2-M,” as Larry recalled,

*“We did our target marking blind, by instruments, and they did their target marking visually, by actually seeing the target. If it was visual Baz would go, if it wasn’t, I would go with my crew.*

*“His ground crew had a great respect for him and when*

*I first went to fly his aircraft they were very very insistent that I take care of the bloody airplane and not bend it or scratch it or do anything like that. I think they were a little leary of me being just a flight sergeant taking the squadron leader's aircraft."*

Despite their sharing of "F2-M," Larry Melling had flown on the sortie to L'Hey on 9 July as well and it had almost been his last. He recalled that following their run over the target,

*"Just as we were leaving the target area I came within range of the heavy flak batteries. There were puffs all over the place and all of a sudden one almighty 'bang.' The aircraft lurched suddenly, the port wing came up and there was a rattling of shrapnel against the fuselage. A glance out of the port cockpit window showed white smoke coming from the port inner, meaning that we were losing coolant, but of the port outer there was not sign at all -just the bare firewall with some cables dangling loose . . . Then began the struggle to trim the aircraft to fly on two starboard engines. Full right rudder trim and full aileron trim were not sufficient to accomplish this. It took full right rudder and a somewhat starboard-wing-down attitude to maintain anything like a semblance of a straight course."*

It took a huge physical effort as Larry needed both feet on the right rudder peddle to maintain the pressure on the controls during the hour and a half long flight to the nearest English aerodrome. As they reached land, he offered the crew the option of bailing out as he was not sure he would be able to land the aircraft successfully. However his crew stuck with him and Larry did land safely at RAF Manston.

That aircraft was Lancaster ND811 marked "F2-T." It was repaired and would be the aircraft that Baz would fly on his Victoria Cross flight less than a month later.

On 12 July, Baz wrote what would be his last letter to his mother, beginning by referring to his recent leave,

*“My last leave was an amazing experience and you were all utterly delightful to me as usual. I do feel that I leave you in greater danger than I am called upon to undergo. A very sad thought —my fingers are permanently crossed for you all.*

*“Work has been very interesting since I returned, and in general we have had a grand time. One very good dance at Ely Hospital —bags of nice nurses with starched white jerkins. Tonight I am going to see ‘Gone with the Wind’ with a WAAF officer —my next victim. My crew are all happy and raising lots of hell. We seem to create more trouble than anyone else on the camp, but we do have fun.*

*“There seems little else to write about. My navigator on my first tour, Bowen, put up a frightful black. It seems he was sent back on ops as a punishment for absconding from the RAF for three months! Very strange.*

*“My mid-upper gunner has had it and will not be allowed to fly on ops again. He was found sick in bed when required for a job at short notice and has remained there. I have not been given a substitute as yet.*

*“Love to all, Will.”*

Baz’s replacement mid-upper gunner was F/S Vernon Leeder, a member of the Royal Australian Air Force.

An attack on the railway marshalling yards at Revigny Sur Ornain on 14/15 July was aborted when the railway yards could not be identified. Baz noted in his logbook that the Master Bomber had “Boobed” and that they had, “Flown 1300 miles for S.F.A.” George Turner wrote that,

*“This raid was cancelled at target on Master Bomber’s instructions after we had dropped flares and were just going in to drop markers. Our duty on this trip was Visual Backers-up.”*

The following day Baz flew as an “Illuminator” on a second raid to the V-1 storage caves at Nucourt. After lighting up the target, Baz’s crew dropped their bombs from 6500 feet.



**A 635 Squadron Lancaster on a daylight raid  
over a railway marshalling yard**  
[courtesy [www.635squadron.com](http://www.635squadron.com)]

Follow up reconnaissance revealed that a V-1 had apparently exploded, wrecking the launching platform.

A synthetic oil factory at Wesseling was Baz's target on 18/19 July and it was reported to have been a very successful raid. 194 aircraft placed approximately one thousand high-explosive bombs inside the area of the plant within twenty minutes.

George Turner wrote that,

*“Our duty was Blind Marker and Illuminator. The bombing was very well concentrated with plenty of flak and we were coned by searchlights but received no damage.”*

Two days later it was the V-1 facility at L'Hey again and this time Baz was designated as the Master Bomber. George wrote in notes that he prepared in late 1944 at Baz's mother's request,

*"Your son carried out duties of Master Bomber on this raid and also made four runs over the target to get rid of our bombs; flak heavy and we were hit but no serious damage."*

Baz noted in his logbook that they returned with his "Port wing holed" following "Accurate flak." Despite the effort, later analysis showed, "No fresh damage at L'Hey."

On 23/24 July the target was Kiel, the first major raid on a German city for two months. Baz reported moderately heavy flak as the crew carried out their duties as "Blind Markers" with 10/10th cloud over the target area.

Recently developed electronic navigation aids such as Oboe and H2S were now being utilized to release the markers over unseen targets. The target indicators used were on parachutes to give an aiming point that could be seen by the main force. This was also known as "Sky Marking."

The change of target and other deception techniques surprised the enemy and only four of 629 bombers failed to return from the German city. The attack was particularly successful in the port areas of the city including the U-Boat yards and naval facilities.

Another German city, Stuttgart, was the target on the following night. Baz, whose role was that of Secondary Blind Marker, seemed pleased, writing in his logbook, "What a stooge; Dropped a mean Wanganui."

Wanganui was another name for the "Sky Marking" technique used by the Pathfinders when the target was obscured by cloud, industrial haze, or a smoke screen. Oboe or H2S (electronic navigational aides) were used to release the markers.

However, the enemy was not taken by surprise this time and 4.6% of the 624 bombers were shot down.

Baz and crew flew to Stuttgart again the following night, their third operation in as many nights. Again their role was that of Secondary Blind Marker. The weather was clear over the target and Baz reported that they, "Bombed visually on Reds and Greens." George Turner noted that,

*"This time the target was clear and the whole place seemed to be a mass of fires and smoke."*

Baz's role on a night raid on Hamburg on 28/29 July was that of a Visual Marker and the Pathfinders were able to place red Target Indicators that could be seen through gaps in the clouds. George Turner clearly remembered this operation as, "a hot one" and Baz wrote in his logbook, "Lots of Fighters."

The fighters appeared on the homeward flight and had a field day destroying a total of 22 (7.5%) of the 187 Halifaxes and 106 Lancasters which attacked the city. The Halifax casualties were 9.6%. 431 Squadron, part of 6 (RCAF) Group, lost 5 of its 17 aircraft. George recalled,

*"We were lit up all the way back by aircraft going down in flames and the fighters were having a hay-day."*

Baz flew the violent, corkscrew evasive manoeuvre all the way back to avoid the fighters. This, of course, made for a wild ride for the rear gunner, who that night was not Doug Cameron. Upon landing the rear gunner remarked,

*"I've never had a trip like that. I don't know how I stood it."*

During his July operations, Baz received three letters from home, the first written on 12 July in which his mother reflects on his achievements over the five years that he had now been in the military and his contributions to the family,

*“Darling Will: I expect you, as well as I, shall be remembering five years ago to the day, next Sunday. Can it really be five years ago! In some ways it seems like a lifetime, in others like yesterday. How splendid a record you have for those five years, but yours is the individuality which would get on in anything and anywhere you had a fair chance. And you are the link in the chain which keeps this family together, very often, for instance a letter from you will often restore the happy atmosphere to this household like the magic wave of a wand, no, this is not a hint. The mere fact that your value has in no way spoiled you, further adds to your personality.”*

The last letter we have from Marion Bazalgette to her son was written on 20 July as the V-1's continued to cause terror in their neighbourhood,

*“We had a hell of a night with F.B.'s, none but a couple were near here, tho' all sounded too damn close. Yesterday one fell on Hore Belecha's house at Warren Farm. One on the railway line opposite Carter's last Sunday, and one on the Goods Yard at Walden Station did a lot of damage for a wide area. They are coming over all this morning again. As Dad says, thank God they made these and not fighters and bombers to strafe and combat our troops with.*

*“Ally shared the shelter with me last night. Thank you love, for your 'crossed' fingers on our behalf. Your remarks gave me much satisfaction for they show how very fit and confident you feel over your own 'job of work', in our opinion, dangerous in the extreme.”*

In a summary of Baz's 635 Squadron operations that George Turner had prepared at the request of Baz's mother, he described the daylight operation on 30 July as,

*“ . . . your son's most successful raid. It was an army support raid near St. Lo. He carried out the duties of Master Bomber and brought all the main force down to 2000 ft. The*



**A Master Bomber's view of a 635 Squadron Lancaster over the target on a daylight raid**  
[courtesy [www.635squadron.com](http://www.635squadron.com)]

*bombing was very well concentrated. Your son was first at the target and last to leave; the raid was a great success and no aircraft were lost."*

Baz's logbook entry noted that he was, "M.B. at Point 'F' in battle area and that the "Marking and bombing were grand."

On 1 August, Baz was Deputy Master Bomber on a daylight raid on Chapple Notre Dame but the raid was cancelled at the target by the Master Bomber due to weather. An incident during the return flight was clearly remembered by George Turner as a "close call."

*"We were on the way back from the target and had just*

*about reached the French coast. We always considered that sort of a safe point on the return journey. Suddenly Doug's voice came over the intercom, 'Skipper there's a fighter to port.' Baz said, 'All right, keep your eyes on him.' A few moments later the mid-upper gunner called and said, 'There's a fighter to starboard.' Baz replied, 'All right, keep your eyes on him.'*

*"We were going along, nice and quiet, when all of a sudden there was a shout, 'Skipper! Dive to port! Now!' At that moment Baz stood the aircraft down to port and tracer bullets came up over the starboard wing. They just got the outboard starboard propeller. That was all. The first two were acting as decoys for the one that attacked from underneath. Baz dived the aircraft 8000 feet. I consider Doug Cameron saved all our lives that time."*

*"When asked to describe Baz's emotional state following this extremely close call and the 8000 foot dive, George Turner laughed, "We levelled out in some clouds at 4000 feet and Baz asked me to pour him a cup of coffee. We were safe for the time being."*

*"We decided to go out between Dunkirk and Boulogne, missing the two defences. So we did that and just as we got out to sea between the two -the flak ship was awaiting us. He threw up everything but the kitchen sink. Tracers went everywhere. It's amazing after all that how nothing gets you, as if it's your lucky day."*

Despite terrifying moments in the skies over enemy territory and the regular loss of friends in the squadron, Baz seems to have appreciated and even enjoyed his particular role in the war. In the last letter he wrote to his good friend Eric Biggs, with whom he served in the Searchlight Regiment in Scotland, Baz wrote,

*"Barring the occasional sticky effort, I feel that the RAF fights very luxuriously. If ever I prayed sincerely, I did for the Army as we did our stuff on 'D-Day.' I am as happy as a bee*

*with a bum full of honey these days. My crew are a grand bunch, and I am serving with a really grand Squadron.”*

Eric recalled having dinner with Baz and his parents at their home in New Malden. Here he learned of Baz’s great interest in classical music, somewhat out of the ordinary for a young, wartime bomber pilot. In a letter to the Society, Eric referred to,

*“The many-sided qualities of a true friend and great patriot—dedication, appreciation, consideration, love of life, a very human, human being. I have always felt honoured to have had him as a friend and he stays in my memory.”*

It is clear that S/L Bazalgette had already demonstrated his determination, courage, and confidence. He was a talented pilot and an effective leader. Outwardly he presented a casual and easy going personality but was definitely very serious about his duties.

George Turner praised him as a natural leader.

*“He was a disciplinarian and he had complete control at all times. I think I can speak for all the crew, that everyone felt comfortable, safe, and in his confidence at all times.”*

All the surviving crewmembers have commented on his professionalism, highly disciplined nature, and leadership qualities when the Lancaster was in the air. There was no joking or chit-chat on the intercom. During an operation, Baz was strictly business.

In Doug Cameron’s opinion,

*“Pride, so often the spur to self-confidence, feeds on the ability of and respect for comrades sharing the same hazard. Baz and his crew were, like most crews, a very close and tightly knit unit. Above all, Baz had the diplomacy to consult individual crew members on any issue concerning*

*their responsibility, and the decision taken always appeared to be that of the particular member, thus promoting the collective confidence of the crew.”*

There was one more entry in Squadron Leader Bazalgette's logbook. Then, simply, the word "Missing" and the signature of one of the squadron's senior officers.



**635 Squadron aircrew**  
**This photo was taken in mid-1944 but**  
**Baz and his crew were on leave.**

# ***The Victoria Cross Flight***

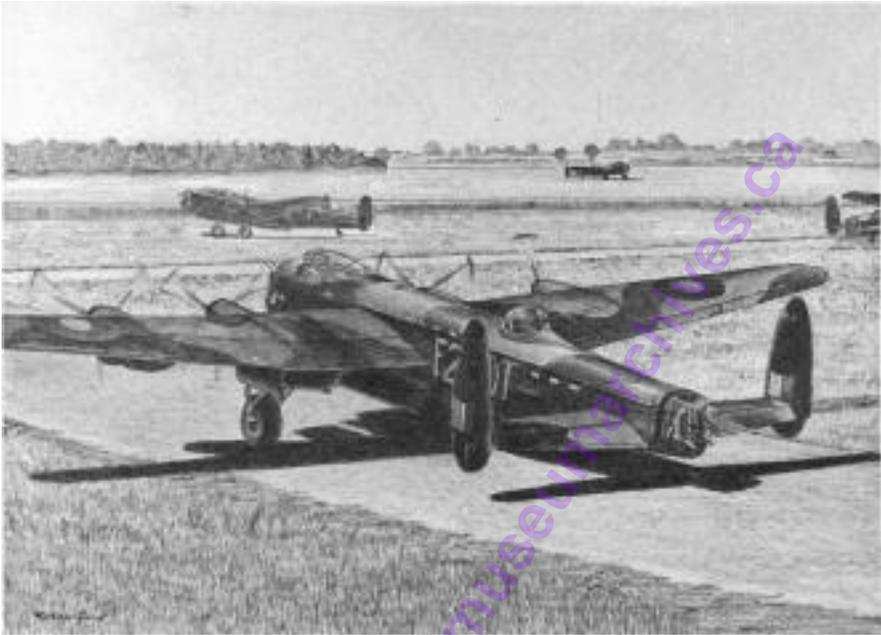
Following the raid on Chappelle Notre Dame, Baz and his crew were not scheduled to fly on 4 August and were preparing to go on leave that night. The squadron was to lead an attack against the V-1 Flying Bombs by attacking the storage caves at Trossy St. Maximin, forty kilometres north of Paris.

Chuck Godfrey recalled,

*“We were due to go on leave and we were not on the Battle Order to start with. But one of the other pilots had taken an aircraft to York and hadn’t got back because of fog. So we said, ‘We’ll get another one in before we go on leave. It wasn’t going to be a long hop. The target was just north of Paris. It wouldn’t take long.”*

This would be Baz’s 58th operational flight and he was close to completing his second tour of operations. But Baz and his crew had already volunteered for a third.

On their previous sixteen raids, the crew had flown in “their” Lancaster, “M for Mother.” But because of the late decision to place the Bazalgette crew on the Battle Order, “F2-M” was not available. “M for Mother” would be lost on a raid to Kiel three weeks later.



**635 Squadron Lancaster “F2-T” taxiing**  
by John Rutherford

On this day Baz would be flying Lancaster ND-811, “F2-T,” known as “T for Tommy.” Although the crew had previously flown on two operations in this aircraft, there was some uneasiness as “Tommy” had a history of incidents, “most of which,” as Doug Cameron recalled, “could be termed a nuisance rather than dangerous.”

According to Chuck Godfrey,

*“‘T for Tommy’ was usually flown by Red Henson who used to, ‘cook his engines.’ If he went on a raid, ‘T-Tommy’ was always the first one back.”*

Comments were made about, “Drawing the short straw.”

Paddy Cronin was aboard another 635 Squadron Lancaster that was designated to “back-up” the markers that the first pathfinders over the target dropped. In a letter to the museum, Paddy recalled,

*"I was one of the last people to speak to Ian on the ground before take-off. That morning, as I was going up the steps to the briefing room, Ian was coming down to get airborne and he said, 'Good morning Paddy.' I replied, 'Good morning Ian,' little thinking at the time that this would be the last time I would see and speak to him."*

An unsigned letter received by Baz's mother on 18 August, 1945 reads,

*"I drove them out to their aircraft that day – Ian, Ivan, Geoff, and the rest of the crew – we sat talking and eating WAAFI buns until takeoff. Then I waved them good-bye and waited for them to come back."*

Bazalgette and his crew in "T for Tommy" took off at 11:15 A.M. Ten 635 Squadron Pathfinders were to mark the target for a main force of 61 Lancasters. The V-1 storage facilities at Trossy St. Maximin had been bombed on each of the two preceding days and the enemy air defences were ready.



**RAF Downham Market personnel waving off  
a squadron Lancaster**

[courtesy [www.635squadron.com](http://www.635squadron.com)]

Doug Cameron recalled that,

*“When we arrived, a solid sea of flak filled the width of the bombing run.”*



**Doug Cameron**

As they headed into the target at an altitude of 12,000 feet, the bomb aimer, F/L Hibbert, was lying on his stomach, staring intently through his bombsight while Chuck Godfrey watched through the perspex astrodome above his wireless operator's station. There was no alternative but to fly straight and level in order to mark the target accurately for the main force bombers which were following. This made “T for Tommy” and the other Pathfinders easy targets.

The Deputy Master Bomber, F/L R.W. Beveridge DFC, who was to drop the first markers was leading by about half a mile. Struck by a direct hit, the flak blew his Lancaster's tail off. The aircraft then burst into flames, and fell to the ground. All eight airmen aboard were killed. The Master Bomber, W/C C.D. Clark, dove to about 8700 feet but was put out of action when flak struck the length of his Lancaster's fuselage and the starboard elevator was damaged. W/C Clark later recalled that, “It was by far the hardest daylight raid I had ever flown on, owing to the flak being so well primed and on target.”

The next Lancaster was “T for Tommy.” Baz had followed W/C Clark to a lower altitude and the aircraft was rocked by the heavy flak but S/L Bazalgette held his course. As they approached the target at 8000 feet and with the Master Bomber and Deputy Master Bomber out of action, his duty as the “Primary Visual Marker” was clear. It was up to Baz to mark the target. Suddenly the aircraft shook violently. Chuck recalled,

*“It went right through our starboard wing. It set the petrol tanks on fire, and both engines were knocked out.”*

At the same time, flak struck the fuselage at the front of the bomber. George Turner heard Hibbert, the bomb aimer, call out on the intercom, "I've been hit." Hibbert's right arm had almost been torn off at the shoulder.

From his position in the rear turret, Doug Cameron could see that,

*"Both starboard engines were put out of action and the wing was a mass of flames."*



**Ivan Hibbert**  
courtesy J.G. Bramley

With flames streaming behind, Baz pressed on with only his port engines operating and dropped his target markers accurately. With the bomb aimer out of action, Baz had to release the markers and bombs himself from the cockpit. The main force bombers made good use of the markers and the raid was later assessed as a complete success.

Suddenly, perhaps because of the release of the bomb load, the Lancaster went into a spin. After losing considerable altitude wildly twisting and turning, Baz succeeded in regaining control. Turner and Godfrey managed to get F/L Hibbert from his position in the nose of the aircraft back to the rest bed which was located behind the aircraft's main spar. Chuck administered morphine.



**Chuck Godfrey's wireless operator position with the astro-dome above**

The fire on the wing continued to burn and from his position in the cockpit on the starboard side George Turner could

see that,

*“The starboard wing was one mass of flames, with pieces flying off it. In fact it was looking more like a skeleton.”*

The tanks had been badly damaged and George watched his flight engineer’s instrument panel helplessly. He could see the fuel gauge needles for the starboard wing tanks moving as the fuel leaked out and was burned.



**Lancaster flight engineer's panel**



**The fire in F2-T's wing was likely very similar to that burning in the starboard wing of this doomed Halifax Bomber. The photo was taken from an RCAF aircraft and the burning aircraft was likely Canadian as well.**

According to Chuck Godfrey,

*“Baz knew we couldn’t make the Channel so we headed towards the area where our army was pushing across France.”*

In the rear turret, Doug Cameron heard a tapping on the turret door. He looked back into the aircraft to see the mid upper gunner, F/S Leeder, standing in gasoline, that had filled the rear fuselage to a depth of six inches. Fuel from the damaged fuel tanks in the starboard wing had been draining into the fuselage.

The experienced rear gunner understood the severity of their situation.

*“Removing my oxygen mask, I shouted to him to get down to the front and await the order from the skipper to bail out. ‘This aircraft is going in and it won’t be long.’ He nodded and moved away. I shut the door and turned the turret to the beam. I could not believe my eyes. The starboard wing was like a herringbone after all the flesh has been eaten off it. I could hardly believe we were still flying. I knew we were a doomed aircraft.”*



Vernon Leeder



**Baz’s Lancaster approaching Senantes as described by Doug Cameron  
by Len Krenzler**

At the same time, recalled Turner,

*“Baz was asking the navigator for a course to take us to the nearest airfield.”*

F/S Leeder was not seen after his conversation with Cameron. It is thought that he was likely overcome by the fumes which were filling the rear fuselage as fuel continued to pour into it.

Baz had managed to fly the aircraft for approximately forty-five kilometres (perhaps eleven minutes or so of flying time) towards the allied lines when suddenly the port-inner engine stopped running.

George told his pilot,

*“You’ll have to put her down Baz.’ I told him that we had no chance, only to get out of the aircraft as quickly as possible. With that he gave the order to put on parachutes and jump. We were just a flying bomb. The rear fuselage was awash with fuel swishing around. It only wanted a spark from the starboard wing to make contact and we would all have been blown to bits.”*



**George Turner**

Baz knew what he was going to do. Hibbert was badly wounded and, over the intercom, told Baz that he couldn't jump. Leeder was thought to have been overcome by fumes although Baz was likely uncertain as to his condition or where he was. Leeder had not been connected to the intercom after going to speak with Cameron in the rear turret. The Lancaster was down to 1000 feet and only one of the four engines was running. The fire in the starboard wing that had erupted over Trossy St. Maximin earlier continued to rage.

But Baz had no intention of bailing out and leaving his

two wounded crewmembers. He asked Turner to fix his crash belt tightly around him.

Baz must have known that the odds of his being able to crash-land the flaming Lancaster on one engine without sustaining serious injury or having the aircraft explode were very low. Even if this first step was successful, his chances of being able to drag his two wounded crew members from the burning wreckage to safety were probably even less. Baz's decision not to escape the burning aircraft with the others was probably instinctive. He could not leave his injured crewmembers.

At this point, Lancaster "F2-T" was losing altitude and at less than 1000 feet. Flying towards the west, it was heading directly towards the small village of Senantes. The time was early afternoon, the weather sunny and clear, and Baz would have seen the spire of the village church directly ahead.

Doug Cameron in the rear turret was the first to abandon the aircraft after Baz gave the order. He opened his turret door and reached for his parachute which was stowed just inside the aircraft. After clipping it on he turned the turret sideways (fortunately for Doug, the rear turret's hydraulic power source was the port outer engine, the only one still operating), opened the access door, and tumbled out backwards. Shortly after leaving the aircraft he was struck by a piece of engine cowling which had flown off of the wing and momentarily knocked unconscious. He came to as he floated earthwards and recalled, "I thought I was dreaming, it was so peaceful."



**Lancaster rear turret turned sideways, with access door partly open**

The Lancaster's emergency escape hatch was located on the floor of the now abandoned bomb aimer's

compartment, in front of and below the cockpit. Turner clipped on his parachute, opened the cover, and jumped though. He was quickly followed by Goddard, and Godfrey, Chuck being the last one out. He had been tending to the injured bomb aimer and, "It wasn't until I saw the navigator beckoning me forward that I realized we were getting out." Godfrey clipped on his parachute and leapt through the escape hatch. They had almost waited too long.

As Goddard and Godfrey exited the aircraft, it was close to Senantes. Baz turned the aircraft to port, away from the village. Both Goddard and Godfrey landed immediately to the northwest of the small village.

The residents of the Village of Senantes were watching the drama unfold. They felt that Baz made efforts to avoid the possibility of crashing into Senantes.

F/L Hibbert remained incapacitated on the rest bed behind the main spar and Leeder was likely overcome by fumes in the rear section of the Lancaster. Baz was now alone in the cockpit, descending, banking to port, and choosing a field in which to land the blazing Lancaster on one engine.

Now at a very low altitude and having made a complete 360 degree turn, he passed directly over the Desloges' farm, 1.8 kilometres north of Senantes, as nine year old Siméon Desloges and his younger brother watched in terror from the



**George Turner, Geoff Goddard, and Chuck Godfrey all exited the Lancaster through the escape hatch on the floor of the bomb aimer's position.**



**Geoff Goddard**



**“Beyond Praise” -Baz over Senantes**  
by Len Krenzler

yard in front of their house. Sixty-four years later, Siméon clearly recalled the huge amounts of flame trailing behind the aircraft as it passed only a couple of hundred feet overhead.

Baz continued his turn to port, and levelled out in a steady approach run to attempt to land in a field just 800 metres south of the farm and about one kilometre from the Village of Senantes.

Chuck Godfrey recalled,

*“I could see it all. He did get it down in a field about two fields from where I landed, but it was well ablaze. And with all the petrol on board it just exploded.”*

The huge fireball killed the three on board instantly and tore a crater in the field.

Paddy Cronin, who had exchanged “Good mornings” with Baz was overhead in his aircraft and watched “F2-T” touch-down. In a letter to the Society he wrote,

*"I saw the whole event, even to the landing of the crippled plane by Ian which blew up. I thought at the time he had made it as he landed. But unfortunately there was a ditch in the way which the plane struck, and this caused the explosion which killed them all. I was very sad as I think I was one of the last people to speak to Ian on the ground before take-off."*



**Baz landed "T for Tommy" in this field,  
one kilometre north of Senantes.**



YEAR	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1st PILOT	2nd PILOT, POIC, OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
	Type	No.			
1944					TOTALS ENDPOINT, FORWARD
JULY	18	WANG 15	HP950	SELF	W/THUNDER CREW } MASSIVE SYNTHETIC AN FACTORY - B.M.I - GOOD TIP - VERY FAST RUN
	20		HP950	SELF	CREW CROSSBOW W/RY - D.O. DISTRIBUTION AM JAMMER - ACCURATE PLAN - PROTECTIVE BOARD
	21		HP950	SELF	CREW VIEW - PENITENT ANGLE - B.M.I - 18/12 CLOUD - OPERATE HEAVY PLAN.
	24		HP950	SELF	CREW STUTTGART - S.M. - WHAT A SCORCH - DROPPED AT AN WANGANVI
	25		HP950	SELF	CREW STUTTGART AGAIN - WHAT WEARINESS - S.B.M.S - BOMBED VISUALLY IN REDS GREENS
	27		HP950	SELF	CREW HAMBURG - V.C. - THIN CLOUD OVER TARGET - DROPPED RED T'S THROUGH GAP - LOTS OF
	30		HP950	SELF	CREW GREAT POINT IN BATTLE AREA - TARGET 2000 - MARKING AND BOMBING GRAND.
	31		HP950	SELF	CREW Y RUN
SUMMARY FOR					JULY 1944
UNIT					635 SQUADRON 'B' FLIGHT
DATE					1/8/44
SIGNATURE					Gen W. Bazalgette 1/8/44
POST	8		HP950	SELF	CREW OFF - TROOP BY NORTON - MISSING
	1		HP950	SELF	CREW OFF - CHARLES NUTTS DAME T.M.B.
W/C					D.C. 635 SQDN R.A.F.

S/L Bazalgette's last logbook page



ROYAL AIR FORCE  

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PATH FINDER FORCE  

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*Award of  
Path Finder Force Badge*

This is to certify that

SQUADRON LEADER I. W. BAZALGETTE.

118131.

is hereby

*Permanently awarded the Path Finder Force Badge*

Issued this 5<sup>th</sup> day of AUGUST in the year 1944.

*Air Officer Commanding, Path Finder Force.*

**S/L Bazalgette's coveted Path Finder Force  
Badge was issued the day  
following his last flight.**

## ***The Days following the Victoria Cross Flight***

The citizens of Senantes and area had watched the drama unfold overhead and seen the four parachutes billow open below the flaming Lancaster. Some felt that the pilot had maneuvered the aircraft to avoid crashing into their village.

Geoff Goddard recalled his thoughts as he left the aircraft,

*“My main memory is of bailing out and expecting to be taken prisoner.”*

Chuck Godfrey suffered a jolt to the ribs when he hit the ground hard having jumped from a very low altitude. He landed near the edge of the village.

*“I landed in a corn field and Geoff was in the next field hanging by his parachute in a tree. I hid my parachute and went and helped Geoff down. Then a lady came running across to us. We didn’t know if she was friend or foe. She beckoned to us to come over and we went into the garden of the schoolmaster’s home and lay down among rows of vegetables and potatoes. Within minutes we were provided with civilian clothes to wear instead of our uniforms.*

*“After dark we went into the schoolmaster’s house. A man came to the door and was given our escape*

*photographs. The next morning he reappeared with forged French identity cards.”*

Chuck and Geoff were then taken in a cart to a farm where they stayed for about ten days. Resistance members came by every day to check on them and the two evaders earned their room and board by picking apples and helping to make cider. Then they were moved to a camp in a forest where they stayed until the area was liberated by units of the British Army.

On 6 September, upon his return to the UK, Chuck wrote to Ian's mother,

*Dear Mrs. Bazalgette:*

*No doubt you have been notified that Ian, your son and our skipper, was unfortunately killed when our plane crashed in northern France on August 4th. It's a very sad thought as he was a real good captain, and everyone in the crew really owe everything we have to him.*

*Geoffrey Goddard, George Turner, Douglas Cameron, and myself were lucky enough to escape by parachute thanks to the excellent piloting of a helpless aircraft by Ian. After a month in hiding we managed to evade capture and returned to the U.K. last Sunday having been liberated by the army.*

*The French people informed us after about a week that Ian had lost his life, but I'm afraid I've no further details as to where his body lies in peace. I do know that the Germans took F/L Hibbert and F/Sgt Leeder, the two remaining crew members, to Beauvais and I'm told that they were apparently buried in the military cemetery.*

*If I can give you any further information I shall be very pleased to do so, but I think the other boys will be writing to you. Please accept my deepest sympathy. Our skipper was a grand fellow and I wish that he could have been with us still and carry on with the work we have to do.*

*Yours Sincerely,  
C.R. Godfrey, F/O*

Date	Time	From	To	Day	Remarks	Time	Alt
1-1-44	10:15	Downham	St. Martin	Wed	1st flight with 635 Squadron, 1st mission, 1st flight	0:15	1000
1-1-44	10:30	Downham	St. Martin	Wed	2nd flight with 635 Squadron, 2nd mission, 2nd flight	0:15	1000
					TOTAL FLIGHT TIME	0:30	
					ASST. BY		
					SHOT DOWN BY FLAK OVER FRANCE		
					CREW COMED BACK AND WAS KILLED		
					HUNTER KILLED. BOMB CAPTURED		
					AND RETURNED TO ALLIED HANDS		
					(KILLED BY FLAK IN FRANCE)		
1-1-44	10:45	Downham	St. Martin	Wed	F/O JONES PASSENGER	0:15	1000
1-1-44	11:00	Downham	St. Martin	Wed	F/O WALKER	0:15	1000
					NUMBER OF - 2000		2:30
					AND - 1000		
					AND - 1000		
					AND - 1000		

**Chuck Godfrey's logbook page chronicling the VC Flight and his evasion and return to the UK**

Soon afterwards, Chuck Godfrey was back at Downham Market, completing 36 more operations over enemy territory with 635 Squadron. He flew until the end of the war including two flights on "Operation Manna," the dropping of food to the Dutch people who were cut off and starving in western Holland. These were the 98th and 99th operations of an outstanding wartime career.

George Turner landed in a corn field as well but suffered a back injury. He had been the first to leave the aircraft through the emergency escape hatch in the floor of the bomb-aimer's compartment and had landed about seven hundred metres east of Senantes.

At this point George must have been feeling very fortunate to have survived, even though he was in enemy controlled territory. He cut off a piece of his parachute cord and carried it with him for the rest of his life for good luck.

A man was walking across the field and George was relieved that he turned out to be a member of the French Underground. After spending the first two or three days behind enemy lines in a hayloft, the French moved him to a house.

George recalled that Nazi soldiers twice visited the house. The first time he concealed himself behind a door but

the second time his hosts suggested he hide in the dog kennel. George laughed as he remembered,

*“They were very smelly dogs and it was a very smelly kennel but I didn’t mind.”*

George felt that his back injury might be serious. A French doctor suggested that he should go to a hospital but that would have meant becoming a Prisoner of War so George put up with the discomfort. He and his French friends were liberated at about the same time as Chuck and Geoff were freed by the British Army. George’s injuries prevented him from returning to operational flying.

Douglas Cameron took a little longer to return to England. He had left the aircraft several seconds before George. Upon landing, he escaped into a forest with Nazi soldiers spraying machine gun fire in his direction and tracking dogs baying behind him. Emerging from the trees early the next morning, he avoided the French civilians, finally making contact with the Underground organization and,

*“I was given the choice of remaining in hiding at all times or becoming a saboteur living by the gun.”*

Doug chose to work with the Underground, blowing up railway lines and causing as much inconvenience as possible to the enemy. Having taken off his RAF battledress, capture by the Nazis would mean certain execution and Doug was given a deadly pill for use if he was captured.

Following his return to England, George Turner visited Baz’s mother and described what happened in the days following 4 August.

Marion then wrote to F/S Vernon Leeder’s father,

*“The French people went to the plane and brought Vernon and F/L Hibbert into the little church where they held a service [on 6 August]. Following the service, the villagers*

walked to the field where the Lancaster had exploded and placed their flowers at the site.

*“The remains of Vernon and Hibbert remained in the church until the next day when the Germans came and took them to Beauvais Military Cemetery where they rest in peace. The French wanted to keep the bodies and bury them at Senantes but the Germans would not permit it.*

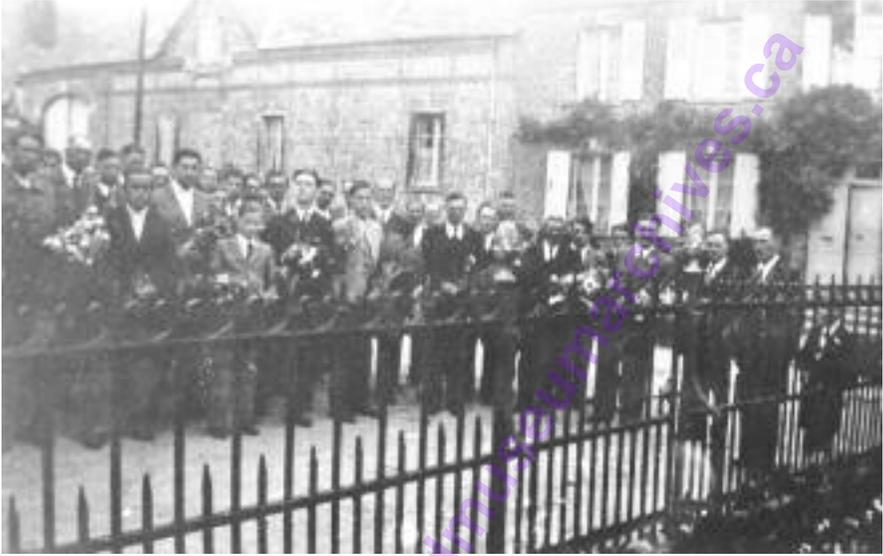
*“After the Germans had gone, the French people searched the burned out plane and found all that remained of my darling son and placed them in a little casket.”*

According to a speech by Mr. Labard, Chairman of the local veterans association, that was given on 4 August, 1994 at a fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the VC flight,

*“In the afternoon [of 4 August], two corpses were drawn out of the wreck, namely F/L Hibbert and F/S Leeder, two coffins were ordered, and the community intended to honour them with funerals and to bury their remains in our village cemetery on Sunday August 6 afternoon, but on this very Sunday morning, the Germans came and fetched both coffins of the heroes to bury them in the military cemetery of Marissel nearby Beauvais. The village people had already gathered together for the funerals, which were cancelled, so, all flags leading, a cortege headed to the wreckage to lay flowers on the Lancaster and take photographs while looking out for any coming again of the Germans.*

*“Later, when the wreckage of the aircraft was removed from the field, some remains of the ill-fated S/L Bazalgette were discovered.”*

The French hid Baz's remains in a cellar and guarded them in order to be able to honour him appropriately at a later date.



**The citizens of Senantes gathered at the village church where funerals for F/L Hibbert and F/S Leeder were to be held [courtesy Simèon Desloges]**



**The group walking to the field where F2-T exploded following the arrival of the Germans and the cancellation of the funerals**



**Some of the wreckage of Lancaster F2-T**



**Looking northwest to the church at Senantes**

The population of Senantes, united in the  
spirit of heroism, at the call of the French  
Government, has inspired, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1914  
firmly to wage to its allies who generously  
here to their return from the front  
of St Maximin (Oise) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August  
to the sacrifice of these courageous men  
to the cause of the great human brotherhood  
for which we are all fighting.

May this family receive our respect  
and condolences and the assurance that their dear  
dead ones will forever be proudly honored  
in this country of France which they have so  
magnanimously aided in liberating from a  
civil enemy

M. Lalvet,  
instructor

Senantes school teacher, M. Lalvet, described the service held at the church on 6 August.

Three weeks later, the Allied armies reached Senantes and the enemy soldiers left the area. Liberated, the citizens of Senantes were now able to plan their service.

Ethel Bazalgette had been working for the American military and become the secretary to the commanding officer of the Intelligence Section; 9th American Air Force. By a remarkable coincidence, she had recently been posted to a base just fifty kilometres southeast of Senantes. On 4 October, exactly two months after her brother died, she was able to visit Senantes.

In a video-taped interview with the Society Ian's sister recalled,

*"I was stationed at Creil, France [fifty km southwest of Senantes] with the U.S. 9th Air Force Service Command working for the Chief, Intelligence Unit, and we drove out to Senantes in October and saw the site of the wreckage and visited with the Lalvets. M. Lalvet was a schoolmaster and I think at that time Mayor of Senantes."*

Following the visit, Ethel wrote to her parents. The letter refers to Chuck Godfrey having visited the Bazalgette family following his return to England,

4th October, 1944

My Darlings,

*Yesterday I went with Colonel Eisele and Captain Shaw, who speaks fluent French, to where our beloved Will's plane crashed. We arrived at the little village where the first thing I saw was the church steeple that Chuck told us about. We were directed to the schoolmaster, and he met us on the steps to the school. Captain Shaw introduced us and he, the schoolmaster, knew our name at once. He invited us in, and dismissed the school. He then told us the story just as we heard it from Chuck.*

*The boys who parachuted out landed just behind their garden, while Will stayed with his plane as it flew dangerously*



**Ethel Bazalgette**

low over their village, and they are loud in their praise of him for saving them from a crash in the village. The Germans came and took Hibbert and Leeder and buried them, and we visited their graves at the place Chuck mentioned in his letter. The particulars are recorded in the files of the guardian of the cemetery. The Germans made only a superficial examination of the wreckage of the plane. The French people held a service, for the airmen, and then marched out to the plane carrying bouquets and wreaths, and laid them on the wreckage.

Then, after Chuck and the boys had gone, and after the Germans had gone, the French searched the wreckage and at the position where the pilot's cabin would have been, had it been intact, - indeed, at the helm – they found some ashes of our precious Willoughby. They placed them in a casket and were awaiting what they called a “Crown” from Paris before holding a service and this had just arrived and they planned to hold the service on Sunday next, the 8th October. As I was here, they said they would hold it any time I can be there, so I am going, darlings, next Sunday at 2:30. It is all so, so agonizing – I only pray that I will bear up as he would have



**The citizens of Senantes with Baz's sister at the site where "F2-T" exploded. The arrow indicates Ethel Bazalgette.**

*liked. But, it is so wonderful that I have arrived in time, and it must be arranged so by some power we cannot understand. I will take some flowers for Will, and some for Hibbert and Leeder too.*

*The schoolmaster asked if we wished the burial to be permanent, at any rate till the end of the war, and I said "Yes," because it will not be possible to make other arrangements till the end of the war and even so it may be that Will would have liked to remain there permanently.*

*The Frenchman took us to the wreckage, which is quite untouched. It is just completely shattered. What made me ache with the poignant beauty was that all around the wreckage and even amongst it, in that green field, were flowering lovely blue crocuses, profusely. It is nature's tribute, because they were nowhere else.*

*Will cannot have felt anything, that is certain, my darlings.*

*The Frenchman gave me a set of the photographs he took of the service they held at the plane and church. He also gave me the shoulder piece showing the three rings of the Squadron-Leader. I am not sending the photographs now but will do so when I hear from you asking me to send them. Perhaps it would be better for me to keep the epaulette till I see you, but just as you say.*

*If only we could be together now but I pray it won't be so long till I can come over and see you.*

*The schoolmaster also gave me some money of Hibbert and Leeder, and a set of photographs each for their people. I am not sending that either or writing to them till I hear from you what I should do.*

*The French people are so kind and wonderful. I just can't tell you how good to me Colonel Eisele, and Captain Shaw, and Colonel Rogers who lent me his car, are being. They are doing more than one could ever hope to repay. I think today you may have had a phone call from a Wing Commander here, who was going over for a day, and said he would call you as I am so worried about the lack of*

mail. Colonel Eisele hopes to go over next week and he too will call you.

It is terrible just now that the mail should be so delayed. I haven't had any yet at all.

My dears, I think I have told you everything. Please write and ask me anything and everything. I try hard to think of everything I should ask the schoolmaster, but if there is anything we want to know in the future we can write or I will be able to go again, especially when civilian transport gets going.

I know this letter will make you feel as I am feeling, but bear in mind as I am trying to do, the wonderful heroic thing that he did for everybody, and that he was happy being 'in ops' again.

And, too, remember how wonderful it is that I have been able to come here, and above all, to be present on Sunday.

Be proud and strong.

All my love to you both,  
Allie



**Walking to Senantes for the Service**

Four days later, Ethel returned to Senantes for the service. During an interview at the museum she recalled,

*“Our Headquarters at Creil were represented on that occasion by Wing Commander Edwardes, who was RAF liaison with our Headquarters.*

*As our cars approached Senantes we passed many, many French people coming on foot to Senantes carrying flowers. It was a really moving sight to see these roads just covered with French people who didn't know Ian or anything, but knew that he had managed to avoid this little village and so on.”*

Following the service she wrote to her parents.

8th October, 1944

*Darling Mother and Dad,*

*I don't know how to begin to tell you about today. It has made me proud & humble & full of wonder at the kindness of people. My thanks have seemed & are so inadequate.*



**Citizens of Senantes with flowers**

*I will just begin at the beginning & describe it as best I can.*

*We had some four cars from the Post & a Jeep & almost the whole section came & Colonel Rogers. They brought such lovely flowers. Through the F.G.I. & of course Col. Eisele, I got a spray of red carnations for Will & a bunch of mixed flowers for each of the other boys. I put a note on the carnations from all of us.*

*The service was at 2.30 this afternoon. As we neared the village we passed French people coming along the roads carrying flowers. We reached the school and everything was arranged there so very, very beautifully. They had a small Union Jack and a French flag & we placed the big Union Jack we had borrowed there with the French flag on it. Darlings, it was so lovely & I've never seen so many flowers. All the people were there with flowers.*

*The schoolmaster and his wife and children are charming & so young & and have been so wonderful. The Mayor was there. And then a Major of the French Forces arrived. He is a Liaison officer nearby & arrived to represent the French Forces & he was most helpful and considerate. He speaks English & told me what to do all the time. He has an English wife in the ATS & wants me to write to her. Then, ten men of the Royal Artillery arrived. Wasn't that wonderful.*



**Procession forming**



**The Procession**



**The French at the church**

*Squadron-Leader Martin of our Post came to represent the R.A.F.*

*French Army men of the last war were pall-bearers & we formed a procession to the pretty little church. The service was beautiful & all sung. The RA men stood to rigid attention beside the coffin which was covered with the flag & heaped with flowers everywhere. There is so much beauty and detail which somehow I cannot write but which will always be vivid to me & I will be able to tell you about when we meet. We again formed a procession out of the church & round the churchyard to the grave, where we stood and the service was finished.*

*Then the Mayor made an address to me in French, from the people, and Commandant de Chauvigny, the French Liaison Officer, very kindly addressed them for me in French, to try & express our thanks and gratitude & he told them that by their kindness and friendliness I didn't feel it was a foreign country but might have been England. The Commandant then said a few words to me in English & I tried to say "Thank you" but was really speechless.*

*Then darlings, I had to stand at the gate while the people went past & shook hands. God must have indeed given me strength today but I kept on telling myself how Will would hate any public demonstration of emotion & how he would have appreciated the beauty & simplicity & sincerity, & so I think I pretty well managed to keep my chin up most of the time. I thought of you both too & how I was there, by the Will of God, for you too. Outside in the little village, the schoolmaster gave me a letter to us all. These things I am having translated & will send you copies but hesitate to send any originals in case they get lost, but if you ask for them I will send them.*

*We were then asked back to the school & two officers of the Royal Artillery had arrived. They had only just heard about it, so arrived too late for the service. The French officer & the R.A. officer took my name and Will's & my address here & at home & will let me know anything, as the R.A. officer said*

*they would be going to the crashed plane for a search for identity. Would you please, darling, let me have Will's number in this connection.*

*The schoolmaster & his wife gave us wine and cake. Oh, they have been so very, very good. I just can't tell you how good & how wonderful everybody has been. I have their names! They have said that if ever I return they would like me to stay with them, & they can always provide a meal. I told them I would return and that we will come there after the war. Commandant de Chauvigny gave me his phone number and says any time I want to go there to ring him up & he will come and fetch me by car and bring me back. I have the nicest letter too from the Sergeant of the R.A.*

*I don't know how to describe to you the wonderful, wonderful way in which everything was done. The way the officers and men of our Section turned out & all they have done and said & the lovely flowers they brought, all move me beyond words & I only hope you get an inkling of what I feel towards them for this.*

*The sincerity of today I shall never forget. It is a dear little village & our beloved Willoughby will rest in peace there near the door of the little church. The French people say they will never leave the grave unattended to.*

*On the way back we stopped at the cemetery where Hibbert & Leeder lie & left the flowers for them. I have also a letter from M. Labert, the schoolmaster, to their families. I keep these till I know what to do. The money which I told you about previously, which was theirs, I may have to turn over to the RAF here who are handling things now.*

*Photographs were taken today and in time I will send copies. I have copies of the other photographs for Chuck and Geoff & will be writing to them.*

*Mother and Dad – isn't it an amazing thing that I am here and that I arrived in time for this service today.*

*Take great care of yourselves.*

*Very best love*

*From Allie*

As Ethel mentioned in her letter, the service featured an address directed specifically to Ethel Bazalgette. It was read by the Mayor of Senantes. The language seems somewhat excess, “flowery” perhaps. But the gratitude felt by the French is obvious as is the hatred directed towards the Nazis. When reading the translation it must be kept in mind that the citizens of Senantes had only days before been liberated after well over four long years of occupation by an invading army.

Some of these people had risked their lives to hide the surviving crew of “T for Tommy” and had undoubtedly been involved in similar acts throughout the occupation. All had known fellow citizens who had been arrested and executed by the Nazis. As well, although they were now free, the war was not yet over. The text of the address is as follows:

**A Translation of the Mayor of Senantes’  
Address to Ethel Broderick.**

*Mademoiselle,*

*The population of Senantes, for whom I am speaking, has assembled in this spot to give your brother, Squadron Leader Bazalgette, the supreme farewell worthy of a noble hero.*

*On Friday, 4 August 1944 about 1:30 p.m. a Lancaster in flames rent the heavens above our countryside. Parachutes opened at a very low level and the plane crashed a short distance from here. Quickly reacting to its first impulse, the population seized the four who had escaped and stealthily hid them from our common foe. Soon, alas, we were to learn that there were victims over whom to grieve. We recovered them on the same day, two comrades of your brother, Aviators Leeder and Hibbert. We wished to keep them, but*

*the enemy, this cruel enemy, would not leave them with us. The next day we succeeded in freeing the pilot from the wreckage, your brother, whom we have fiercely guarded in order to be able to honour him as free and grateful Frenchmen and to return him to his Fatherland.*

*Mademoiselle Bazalgette, English officers and soldiers, we therefore return to you today this hero so beloved by his crew, this brave soldier and magnificent comrade who has preferred to die rather than to abandon his wounded subordinates. We sincerely share the grief which you are experiencing at the loss of a brother, of such a courageous soldier. May his example guide us in the complete accomplishment of our duty, may his bravery excite the hearts of all the soldiers of Liberty, may his kindness and sense of justice be imbued in the soul of our leaders, then, yes then, his noble sacrifice will not have been in vain. Then humanity will know the brotherhood for which are flowing these waves of blood which the barbarous German, with savage resolve, makes gush forth from the wounds of humanity.*

*To you Commandant Bazalgette, soldier of the Liberation of the World, a Norman from across the Channel, who comes to rest at the premature end of your glorious career among your brothers, the Normans of France, we express to you our deep gratitude and we assure you that we shall piously keep you until the day when you return to Great Britain, the day of our common victory.*

*To the family of this hero we all extend our deepest sympathy and condolences. To you, English officers and soldiers who combat for the good cause, we swear in this sacred spot and at this sacred hour that we shall be by your side to avenge our dead until the victory of justice and truth.*

A temporary marker was placed at the gravesite and at some point following the awarding of the Victoria Cross the RAF placed a new, but still temporary, cross that included the Victoria Cross designation.

Later, a permanent Royal Air Force headstone was placed. It includes the outline of the Victoria Cross beneath which is inscribed, "Greater love have no man than this. That a man lay down his life for his friend."

It is unusual that a Canadian airman is buried in a churchyard in France. Ethel Broderick and her family could have insisted that Baz be buried in a military cemetery, perhaps at Beauvais where F/S Leeder and F/L Hibbert were interred. Royal Air Force and British or Canadian officials could have intervened as well.

But a strong bond had been forged between the citizens of Senantes and S/L Bazalgette. Ethel made it clear to the French that, "He was lying forever in 'our' village graveyard in Senantes."



**This temporary marker placed at S/L Bazalgette's grave includes the Victoria Cross designation.**

27. 9. 44

Dear Mrs Bazalgette.

I am deeply grieved to receive your sad news of Ian. Little I can say can be of any comfort to you in your loss but I feel for you all in your sorrow.

I shall always hold happy memories of Ian as the best of pals straight, fun and reliable and I too have lost a very great friendship.

His last acts were so typical of him and he leaves a memory of which you can always be terribly proud.

Sincerely yours  
Eric Biggs.

A letter to Marion Bazalgette from Baz's good friend Eric Biggs



**This gravestone currently marks the grave. The quotation below the Victoria Cross was selected by the Bazalgette family.**



**Baz's grave (foreground) in the churchyard at Senantes**



Looking southeast to the Village of Senantes.

# ***The Awarding of the Victoria Cross***

The war carried on and the Royal Air Force was very busy, but eventually the story of S/L Bazalgette's last flight was told. The officer who wrote the citation which accompanied the presentation of the Commonwealth's highest award for bravery in the presence of the enemy was a highly decorated veteran of the Royal Air Force.

Originally from New Zealand, Wing Commander Artie Ashworth DSO DFC & Bar AFC & Bar flew 110 wartime sorties and an incredible total of 76 different aircraft types, both fighters

and bombers, during his career in the Royal Air Force. His experiences included bringing a Wellington home single-handed after it caught fire over Saabrucken and his crew bailed out. This highly regarded career placed him in a good



**W/C Artie Ashworth**

position from which to judge the significance of Ian Bazalgette's actions.

W/C Ashworth became a member of the Nanton Lancaster Society after hearing of the museum's association with Ian Bazalgette. In a letter to the Society he wrote,

*"It may interest you to know that, although I did not know Ian Bazalgette, I am the bloke who wrote the citation which resulted in his award of the V.C. I did this with information from various sources, including the French and his crew."*

### **THE VICTORIA CROSS**

Instituted by Queen Victoria in 1856, the Victoria Cross is the highest award which may be given to a Canadian for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It is awarded in recognition of, "most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy." The medal was first awarded during the Crimean war and among the recipients was a Canadian lieutenant, Alexander Roberts Dunn, who won the V.C. for heroism during the charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaklava. Over the years some 93 Canadians have been awarded the Victoria Cross.

The medal is cast in bronze from the cannons captured at Sevastopol in the Crimean War, measures 1.5 inches across, and hangs below a crimson ribbon.



The citation written by W/C Ashworth describes the events of 4 August 1944 and concludes,

*“His heroic sacrifice marked the climax of a long career of operations against the enemy. He always chose the more dangerous and exacting roles. His courage and devotion to duty were beyond praise.”*

The award was formally announced on 17 August 1945 and the Bazalgette family was advised by a telegram from Arthur Harris that read as follows,

“HIS MAJESTY THE KING HAS BEEN GRACIOUSLY PLEASED TO CONFER THE VICTORIA CROSS UPON YOUR SON IAN STOP ON EVERY OCCASION YOUR SON PROVED HIMSELF A DETERMINED FIGHTER AND A MOST GALLANT RESOLUTE CAPTAIN OF HIS CREW STOP ON HIS LAST MISSION HE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE VITAL TASK ALLOTTED TO HIM WITH GREAT COOLNESS AND COURAGE DESPITE SEVERE DAMAGE TO HIS AIRCRAFT STOP THEREAFTER HIS ONLY THOUGHT WAS THE SAFETY OF HIS CREW STOP THIS HE ACHIEVED AT THE COST OF HIS OWN LIFE STOP HIS DEVOTION TO DUTY AND COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR HIS OWN SAFETY WILL REMAIN AN EXAMPLE AND INSPIRATION TO US ALL STOP SEND MY HEARTFELT SYMPATHY IN THE LOSS OF SUCH A GALLANT SON AND TRUST THAT THE SUPREME AWARD, SO HEROICALLY EARNED WILL SERVE IN SOME MEASURE TO COMFORT YOU IN YOUR GREAT SORROW.  
AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR ARTHUR HARRIS AIR OFFICER COMMANDING IN CHIEF BOMBER COMMAND”

Following the awarding of the Victoria Cross, Ian’s father received a letter from W/C James W. Fordham, C/O of 635 Squadron at Downham Market. It reads, in part,

*“To those of us who really knew him, he was ‘Baz’ and his sense of humour plus a charming personality often ‘held’ the Mess at Downham Market, and yet, as the citation says, ‘He chose the more dangerous roles when it came to duty.’”*

Ian’s mother and sister Ethel were presented with the Victoria Cross by King George VI at an investiture on 18 December 1945.

Baz’s aunt, who was living on a farm near Viking, was interviewed by a Toronto Star reporter who quoted her as saying,

*“When he grew older he (Baz) always talked about Canada in his letters, and how much he wanted to come back. We felt so badly when he was killed a year ago. His grandfather, James Bunn, 95, who lives all alone in Viking, didn’t get over it for a long time. He was so proud of the boy and corresponded with him regularly.”*



**S/L Bazalgette’s parents donated his medals were donated to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon, London where they are on display.**

In a letter to his daughter, James wrote,

*“Yes Darling, I had dreams, of seeing him in the body, but I am quite satisfied that I will meet him in the Spirit World, by and by.”*



**Baz gave this portrait to his Grandfather, signing it, “Your affectionate Grandson, Will.”**

In Canada the awarding of the Victoria Cross to S/L Bazalgette made the headlines in Alberta and across the country. The Globe in Toronto headlined, "Calgarian with RAF Given Posthumous V.C." and the Calgary Herald's front page headline was, "Former City Boy Wins V.C. for Heroic Flying Exploit."

A letter from the Prime Minister of Canada was immediately sent to Baz's father.



## V.C. Wasn't Scheduled To Fly 'Death Trip'

*3/5/76 - Alberta*

### S/L Bazalgette Was To Have Gone on Leave Day After

Squadron Leader Ian Wiltonchy Bazalgette, D.F.C., Calgary-born winner of the Victoria Cross, was not scheduled to go on the operation which won him the Empire's highest gallantry award, at the same time costing him his life.

This was told by his father in Frederick Griffin, Toronto Star staff correspondent overseas, who visited the flier's family at New Minden, Surrey.

Griffin states Charles Ian Bazalgette, the father, is a 100 percent disability veteran of the 1914-18 war, who spent months in Christie Street hospital at Toronto.

"I found out later," his father told Griffin, "that he and his crew had volunteered for a third tour of ops. I can add so very little to what has been told officially although I have met and talked with surviving members of my son's crew. There is just one point which I was told by his flight engineer. Just before Ian gave the order to his crew to bail out he ordered the flight engineer to fix his own crash belt around him. That showed that he had no intention of trying to bail out himself."

#### 'TENSELY PROUD'

"At the end of his first tour of ops," continues Griffin, "Bazalgette was awarded the D.F.C. On one raid in particular, his father said, he had made the most successful low-level bombing attack made up to that time. First word of the supreme award for valor came to his family with an air ministry notice. Then a dispatch rider brought the citation and official notice.

"Yes," said his father, "we are all terribly proud."

Mr. Bazalgette told me that he had lived in Canada for 17 years and had very happy memories of the west where he farmed for some time at Horvath, Alta.

"The name was originally French, for the Bazalgettes were Huguenots.

#### HAD VOLUNTEERED

"I can add little to the citation," said Mr. Bazalgette. "The terribly sad fact is that Ian was to go on leave the day after he was killed winning the Victoria Cross. He should not really have gone on this operation but he and his crew volunteered to take the place of a crew who could not make the trip."

"This was his 30th operation and he was within a hop or two of completing his second tour of ops. All of his second tour was in Pathfinder. The day of his gallant death he was 'master of ceremonies,' the deputy master having been shot down. It was his real on the key job of master bomber that impelled Ian Bazalgette to carry through to his mark—and his death—in a blazing falling aircraft.

"You have every right to consider Ian a Canadian," said Mr. Bazalgette. "He was born there and spent his young boyhood there and my Canadian service gives us an extra tie that we never forget."

"Derrek, Ian's older brother, was member of a territorial regiment

but was found unfit for active service. His sister Ethel is serving as a British civilian volunteer in Germany where she is secretary to the officer commanding the intelligence section of the U.S. 8th Air Force.

Clipping from "The Albertan" (a Calgary newspaper) -18 August 1945



Ottawa, August 18, 1945.

Dear Mr. Bazalgette:

May I extend to you and Mrs. Bazalgette warmest congratulations on the award of the Victoria Cross to your heroic son, Squadron Leader Ian Bazalgette, together with an expression of deepest sympathy in your bereavement.

No word of mine can lessen your sense of loss. I can only hope that you find consolation in the knowledge that your son gave his life so nobly, in his gallant attempt to save helpless comrades in a crippled and blazing bomber.

It is a matter of deep pride and gratification to all of us in Canada that His Majesty has recognized the magnificent action of your son by the highest award for valour that can be given to any in our armed forces.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Ian Bazalgette, Esq.,  
Sycamore Road,  
New Malden, Surrey, England.

A letter to Ian Bazalgette sr. from the Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie-King following the awarding of the Victoria Cross

## ***Post-war and the Nanton Lancaster Society***

With the end of the war, the people who had been associated with Ian Bazalgette went their separate ways.

George Turner enjoyed a thirty year career in civilian aviation, working as an overseas representative for British Aerospace in India and South America. George's son was named Ian. Chuck Godfrey returned to his pre-war career, completing forty years of service as a local government administrator in England. Over the years, Chuck and George returned to Senantes on several occasions to honour their skipper and visit with their French friends who helped them evade capture.

Douglas Cameron settled in his native Scotland to continue his career as a gamekeeper. He named his only



**George Turner (left) with Doug Cameron at Doug's home -1989**

daughter Margaret Middleton Bazalgette Cameron as his tribute to the two pilots he had flown with on Victoria Cross flights.

Geoff Goddard named his son Ian in memory of his courageous pilot.

Ethel Bazalgette had met John Broderick in France while both were associated with the United States Army Air Force and served with him until the end of the war in Europe. They were married in Pennsylvania and spent the remainder of their lives there. Their son is named Willoughby and a grandson, Ian.

Hamish Mahaddie continued in the Royal Air Force for a time and then became involved as a consultant for aviation films and electronics pertaining to the military. One of his major projects was acquiring and organizing all the aircraft for the epic film, "The Battle of Britain."

Ian's parents presented his Victoria Cross, other medals, and logbook to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon which placed them on display with those of some of the other airmen who had been awarded the Victoria Cross.

On 7 May 1983 S/L Bazalgette's Victoria Cross citation was read prior to the unveiling of a Memorial at Bexwell, adjacent to the former site of RAF Downham Market. Located at the entrance to Bexwell Church, the Memorial honours all those who gave their lives flying from the base.

However there are special plaques in memory of Baz and F/S Arthur Louis Aaron, a 218 Squadron Stirling pilot who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions during his last flight from Downham Market.

The historic church, a "round-towered" type of Saxon origin, was built prior to 1087 and is surrounded by large trees and a stone wall. Inside are photos of some of RAF Downham Market's aircrew and to the right of the altar is a Memorial to the airmen. Many of the kneeling cushions in the church feature needlework of RAF crests and aircraft. We know that Baz kept a bible next to his bed while stationed at Downham Market and undoubtedly he and numerous other airmen would

have attended services at Bexwell Church.

In 1949, a mountain northeast of Jasper, Alberta was named Mount Bazalgette.

Together with some 44,000 others, the name of “S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC” was inscribed into the Second World War Book of Remembrance that was placed within the Peace Tower’s Memorial Chamber on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Remembrance Day, 1957. The page with Baz’s name may be viewed each year on 24 May.



**The Memorial at Bexwell Church**



**Bexwell Church**



association with the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario of the story of Andrew Mynarski VC. Canadian Warplane Heritage was restoring a Lancaster to flying condition and it was to carry the marking of Mynarski's Lancaster, "VR-A."

With this in mind, a Society member was browsing through a book of Canadian war heroes at the Nanton Public Library hoping to find one with which the Nanton Lancaster could be associated. A page was turned and there was a photograph of Ian Bazalgette, not only another Canadian VC recipient who flew Lancasters, but one who had been born in Alberta and only eighty kilometres north of Nanton. Obviously, here was the perfect man to associate with the Society's objectives which included building a museum and preserving and restoring the Nanton Lancaster Bomber.

But little information could be found about Ian Bazalgette. The names of his crew were uncovered but their whereabouts, if they were still living, were unknown. There were no Bazalgettes in the Calgary telephone book and the project was put on a "back burner."

Then in 1987 a Nanton resident presented a book to the Society titled, "Memoirs of an Accidental Airman." It was the recently published autobiography of her uncle who lived in England and it had a Lancaster on the cover. She hoped the Society would be interested. While glancing through the introduction it was noticed that the name Ian Bazalgette was mentioned as one of three individuals of whom the author had particularly fond recollections after a very extensive career with the Royal Air Force. Here was a hint that this was a special and memorable individual and perhaps a link to his former aircrew and family.

The book, which contained little additional information about Baz, was by Air Commodore F.F. Rainsford who, as it turned out, was the commanding officer of 115 Squadron when Baz completed his first tour and had signed his "Summary of Flying and Assessments." An address was obtained through his niece and a letter sent. Mr. Rainsford

provided some personal recollections of Ian but could offer no assistance in the Society's efforts to find his surviving crew other than suggesting we attempt to contact a gentleman named Hamish Mahaddie who, he thought, had also known Baz. His address was c/o RAF Club, Picadilly, London.

A letter was sent to Hamish who seemed most interested in the Society's project and offered to have his "ferrets" look for information but there was no progress and again the search seemed to be at a dead-end.

But luck was with the Society and in the January 1989 issue of "Airforce," the Canadian magazine carried an article entitled "Our Forgotten V.C. Winner." It had been written by Douglas Cameron DFM with the assistance of Gordon Fraser. Contact was made with Mr. Cameron who, "was interested in doing anything to highlight this brave airman's life."

Doug Cameron was able to provide Chuck Godfrey's address, and again by coincidence, Doug had just had a visit from George Turner two weeks previously. His letter stated,

*"It was the first time I had seen him in 42 years when I warned him a German patrol was in our area."*

Letters were sent to S/L Bazalgette's former crewmembers asking for information which they were pleased to provide.

After hearing of the Society's plans to honour Baz, a Society member at Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton called to introduce us to one of their pilots, none other than Larry Melling who had shared the flying of "F2-M" with Baz. Larry had gone on to complete 54 operations with 635 Squadron. He accepted our invitation to attend.

So the Society had located the three surviving crew members, (navigator Geoff Goddard having passed away), two senior officers who knew Baz well, and a fellow pilot from 635 Squadron. A formal decision was made to dedicate the Nanton Lancaster in memory of Squadron Leader Bazalgette VC DFC and plans were made for a special Dedication Day to

be held on 27 July 1990. Only one thing was missing, the Bazalgette family. None of Baz's crew had heard anything about Ian's sister since 1945. All that was known was that she had moved to the United States after the war and had been married.

Plans for the Dedication Day proceeded with commitments by George Turner, Larry Melling, and Hamish Mahaddie to attend as well as representatives from the McFarland family of Wainwright, Alberta who are directly related to the Bazalgettes. At the end of May, a press release was prepared to announce the upcoming Dedication and associated events. Through another amazing coincidence, the day before the press releases were to be mailed a letter arrived from Chuck Godfrey with the news that he had located Ian's sister and providing her address in Pennsylvania together with a telephone number.

Ethel Broderick was contacted by the Society, advised of its plans, and invited to participate. In speaking to her over the phone it was clear that the past had suddenly been opened up. She had not heard from anyone who had known her brother since the war, had never met his crewmembers, did not know of Hamish Mahaddie who was so involved in Ian's reassignment to operations with the Pathfinder Force, and what was this Society from a small town in southern Alberta? Mrs. Broderick was provided with some additional information, thought things over for a few days, and agreed to attend together with her daughter, Marion Hildebrand.

The press releases were revised and mailed and the stage was set for what was to be an emotional and very special event in Nanton, Alberta on 27 July 1990.




**THE NANTON LANCASTER SOCIETY**  
 Invites you to our  
**DEDICATION CEREMONY AND BANQUET**  
**Friday July 27, 1990**  
 Nanton Community Centre - \$25.00 / Person  
**8:00 P.M. - DEDICATION OF THE NANTON LANCASTER TO S/L M GAGLIETTE, VC, DFC**  
**8:15 P.M. - PORTRAIT OF A PILOT & ACCESS AIRCRAFT**  
 - CF-14 (4) Sgt  
 - CF-144 Sgt  
 - CF-144 Sgt  
 - CF-144 Sgt  
**8:30 P.M. COCKTAILS**  
**9:00 P.M. DINNER**

**TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM:**  
 Glen Ze Marl 231-5212 or 241-040 (Orange)  
 Larry Wright 285-1700

We're so glad the Skyline B-30 Series is Nanton and York in Calgary

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## ***The Dedication of the Nanton Lancaster***



**Ethel Broderick unveiling the Dedication plaque  
[courtesy Frank McTighe]**

The Dedication of the Nanton Lancaster Bomber to the memory of S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC was a memorable event for all concerned.

The evening prior to the Dedication Ceremonies, a reception was held at the home of George and Dori White. It was George who had the idea of acquiring the Lancaster Bomber for the town in 1960 and he was the founding president of the Nanton Lancaster Society. During the evening several of the people who had played major roles in Baz's life met each other for the first time.

The following morning, museum director Milt Magee recorded extensive videotaped interviews with all of the special guests. Everyone concerned realized that this was a very special gathering that would never be repeated.

The Dedication Ceremony was conducted during the late afternoon, next to the Lancaster which had yet to be placed in a building. Wing Commander Duke Warren DFC, a



**(l-r) George Turner, Hamish Mahaddie, Milt Magee, Ethel Broderick, and Marion Hildebrand at the reception**



(l-r) George Turner, Ethel Broderick, Marion Hildebrand, Larry Melling, and Chuck Godfrey



Chuck Godfrey (left) and George Turner prepare to unveil "T for Tommy's" markings

Nanton-born pilot who, together with his identical twin, flew Spitfires during the war, read the Victoria Cross citation. Baz's crewmembers, Chuck Godfrey DFC and George Turner, then unveiled the freshly painted markings, "F2-T," on the sides of what then became the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster. Ethel Broderick unveiled a plaque honouring her brother and commemorating the occasion.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the Canadian Armed Forces' salute included a CF-5 jet fighter which thundered over the site at high speed and low altitude. The fighter was immediately followed by a four-engined 407 Squadron Aurora which had flown from Canadian Forces Base Comox on Vancouver Island, British Columbia to be involved in the ceremony. The Society's Lancaster had served with the squadron at Comox during the 1950's in a maritime reconnaissance role. The squadron's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Terry Chester, was in attendance as was an aircraft from 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron based at CFB Edmonton.



**A 407 Squadron Aurora salutes the  
Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster**

408 Squadron had flown Lancasters during the war.

Following a banquet, the evening program began with Duke Warren as Master of Ceremonies. George Turner and Chuck Godfrey expressed their appreciation to the Society for honouring their "Skipper." Guest speakers Larry Melling DFC and Hamish Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC and Bar held the audience spellbound with their recollections of commitment and sacrifice. During Hamish's speech it was obvious that the loss of Baz and so many others of those which he had personally selected for the Pathfinders was, even forty-five years after the end of the war, still felt very deeply.

Throughout the day the poise and quiet dignity of Ethel Broderick impressed all who were there. Her character and the qualities she demonstrated were similar to those that her brother undoubtedly had. Through her presence, all who attended this special day felt close to the man who was being honoured.

In an interview following the Dedication Day Ceremonies, Mrs. Broderick said with a laugh and a smile,

*"I sometimes get a strange feeling that Will is up there, somehow witnessing all this and getting quite a kick out of it, and finding something funny to say about this tremendous gathering."*

[www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca](http://www.bombercommandmuseumarchives.ca)



*“You really did start something, something wonderful  
-right there in Nanton” -Ethel Broderick*

# *Epilogue*

The completion of the Bomber Command Museum of Canada's building in 1991 ensured that the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster would be protected from the elements and that restoration to its wartime configuration as a taxi-able aircraft with runnable engines could begin.

Chuck Godfrey and George Turner returned to Nanton to be present at the official opening of the museum building in 1992. George Turner presented the museum with his flight engineer wing and a piece of his "lucky" parachute cord that he cut from his parachute on the outskirts of Senantes on 4 August 1944.

On 4 August 1994, fifty years to the day following the fateful flight of Lancaster F2-T, the mayor of Senantes, France hosted a commemoration ceremony during which wreaths were placed on Baz's grave by George Turner and Chuck Godfrey, and Margaret Cameron, the daughter of Baz's rear gunner, Douglas Cameron. In the presence of many of the villagers and former members of the French Resistance movement, a Memorial was unveiled on the roadside adjacent to the site where "F2-T" exploded.

Each year on 4 August the citizens of Senantes place flowers at the roadside Memorial and at Baz's grave in their churchyard. As well, the Bazalgette family sees that flower are placed at the grave on Will's birthday.



**The Roadside Memorial**



**The citizens of Senantes remembering Baz at his grave in their churchyard.**

**Note the presence of the Canadian flag.  
(courtesy Siméon Desloges]**



**Portion of a taxiway at former RAF Downham Market in 2008**

At Downham Market, the buildings of the old air station are abandoned, overgrown, and continue to deteriorate. Each year on “Battle of Britain Sunday”, the Royal Air Force Association holds a ceremony at the Bexwell Church Memorial to honour S/L Bazalgette and F/L Aaron.

In the town of Downham Market, the 450 year old pub in the Crown Hotel is still serving beer and good food. The airmen that ate, drank and sang songs around the fireplace have not been forgotten. Framed 635 Squadron photos are on display in the pub, likely left by the departing airmen when the squadron was disbanded.

Since the 1990 Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, the museum has had some important visitors who have a direct connection with Baz including Trevor “Tom” Molloy, a member of Baz’s 115 Squadron crew.

Doug Cameron’s daughter, Margaret Bazalgette Middleton (Cameron) McGready visited the museum in 1996. She was thrilled to be able to climb into and operate the museum’s operational rear turret and wrote in our guest book that she was, “proud to have been here and seen the reconstruction of Baz’s Lancaster.”

During the museums “Salute to the Air Gunners” in 2004, Baz’s nephew, Charles Bazalgette, participated in the



**Margo (Cameron) McGready  
at the museum's Lancaster's  
rear turret**



**Charles Bazalgette (left) with  
museum president, Dan Fox**

Dedication of the museum's operational rear gun turret to the memory of his uncle's rear gunner, Doug Cameron DFM.

A very special visitor was Ian's older brother Deryck Bazalgette who, together with his wife Ruth, toured the museum in 1998 with his son Charles and Charles' wife, Trish Bazalgette. Those of us who spoke with Deryck were struck, not only by his likeness to the photos of his brother, but by a personality similar to that accorded to Ian. It was a moving experience, to say the least, as Deryck Bazalgette entered the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster. His words of support were most appreciated.

Since the Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, the Bomber Command Museum of Canada has clearly become the Canadian museum that takes the lead in honouring the Canadians who served with Bomber Command.

The most impressive indication of this is the presence of Canada's Bomber Command Memorial at its entrance. The 10,659 names on the wall include those of all the Canadians



**Deryck and Ruth Bazalgette  
at the museum in 1998**



**The Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster forms a backdrop to  
Canada's Bomber Command Memorial**



**Baz's name on the  
Memorial Wall**

who were killed serving with Bomber Command.

As for the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, its restoration continues. During the summer of 2013 all four engines were run-up for the first time. The unforgettable sound of the Merlins brings the aircraft to life and this attracts considerable attention to the museum and to Ian Bazalgette.

As the museum is very focused on the history of Bomber Command, every visitor leaves the facility with knowledge of this important history and a sense of the huge effort and sacrifice that was made. The story of Ian Bazalgette VC is presented as an example of the sacrifices made by the young Canadians involved in this effort.

The actions of S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC will not be forgotten.



**Night Run of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster  
at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada**



**Siméon Desloges presented this piece from the wing of Baz's Lancaster to the museum where it is now on display.**

# **Appendix I**

## **The Citation which accompanied the awarding of the Victoria Cross**

*On August 4, 1944, Squadron Leader Bazalgette was master bomber of a Pathfinder squadron detailed to mark an important target at Trossy St. Maximin for the main bomber force. When nearing the target his Lancaster came under heavy anti-aircraft fire. Both starboard engines were put out of action and serious fires broke out in the fuselage and the starboard main plane. The bomb aimer was badly wounded. As the deputy master bomber had already been shot down the success of the attack depended on Squadron Leader Bazalgette, and this he knew. Despite the appalling conditions in his burning aircraft he pressed on gallantly to the target, marking and bombing it accurately. That the attack was successful was due to his magnificent effort. After the bombs had been dropped the Lancaster dived practically out of control. By expert airmanship and great exertion Squadron Leader Bazalgette regained control, but the port inner engine then failed and the whole of the starboard mainplane became a mass of flames. Squadron Leader Bazalgette fought bravely to bring his aircraft and crew to safety. The mid upper gunner was overcome by fumes. Squadron Leader Bazalgette ordered those of his crew who were able to leave by parachute to do so. He remained at the controls and attempted the almost hopeless task of landing the crippled and blazing aircraft in a last effort to save the wounded bomb*

*aimer and helpless air gunner. With superb skill and taking great care to avoid a small French village nearby, he brought the aircraft down safely. Unfortunately it then exploded and this gallant officer and his two comrades perished. His heroic sacrifice marked the climax of a long career of operations against the enemy. He always chose the more dangerous and exacting roles. His courage and devotion to duty were beyond praise.*

*London Gazette, 17 August, 1945*

The RAF officer who wrote the citation was, as previously mentioned, Wing Commander Artie Ashworth DSO DFC & Bar AFC & Bar who later became a member of the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. It should be noted that although the critical aspects of S/L Bazalgette's actions on this day are correctly presented in the official citation, there are two significant errors. The first is in stating that Baz was the "Master Bomber." The second is the reference to a fire in the fuselage that, according to the crewmembers on board, did not occur.

# Appendix II

## The Twinning of the Village of Senantes with the Town of Nanton

### Twinning Agreement between the

Village of Senantes, France



and the



Town of Nanton, Canada

*The Community of Senantes and the Town of Nanton share a bond in the person of Squadron Leader Ian Willoughby Bazalgette in that:*

*S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was killed near the village of Senantes on the 4th of August, 1944 while returning from an operation against the enemy. A memorial has been placed at the site in his honour and he is buried near the entrance of the village church,*

*and*

*S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was born in Canada near the Town of Nanton and is honoured at the Nanton Lancaster Air Museum by the Dedication of the museum's Lancaster aircraft to his memory.*

*The Councillors of the Village of Senantes and the Councillors of the Town of Nanton acknowledge that a firm bond exists between their two communities. It is our hope that we may work together to ensure that the events related to his sacrifice on 4 August, 1944 will not be forgotten and that a special relationship between the citizens of our communities will continue to develop into the future.*

On behalf of the citizens of the Village of Senantes and the Town of Nanton, we, Christian Gavelle, Mayor of the Village of Senantes, and John Blake, Mayor of the Town of Nanton, hereby proclaim the Twinning of our communities and affix our signatures to this document.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christian Gavelle".

Christian Gavelle  
Mayor, Village of Senantes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Blake".

John Blake  
Mayor, Town of Nanton

As part of the museum's celebration of Canada's Centennial of Flight, a special event was held on 15 August 2009. "Remembering Baz" commemorated the sixty-fifth anniversary of S/L Ian Bazalgette's Victoria Cross flight and celebrated the official "Twinning" of the Village of Senantes, France with the Town of Nanton.

The museum's special guests included the Mayor of Senantes, Christian Gavelle and his wife Sylvie and Siméon Desloes and his wife Nelly.

Mayor Gavelle and John Blake, Nanton's mayor, signed the twinning document that, "acknowledges that a firm bond exists between the two communities," and refers to the hope that S/L Bazalgette VC, "will not be forgotten and that a special relationship between the citizens of the two communities will continue to develop into the future."



**Mayor Gavelle of Senantes (left) and Mayor Blake of Nanton  
sign the Twinning agreement on 15 August 2009  
(courtesy Ian Watson]**

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Trish Bazalgette's book, "Go West, Old Man!" documents the life of Baz's grandfather, James Bunn, and

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## The Author

A geophysicist, teacher, and interpretive guide in the Canadian Rockies, Dave was a founding director of the Nanton Lancaster Society. One of hundreds of the museum's volunteers, he has been primarily involved with the development of display material for the museum and with the research and organization associated with its special events.

Dave is also the author of: *People and Planes, FM-159 —The Lucky Lancaster, Nose Art -The Clarence Simonsen Collection, Big Joe McCarthy -The RCAF's American Dambuster, Calgary's Mountain Panorama, 50 Roadside Panoramas in the Canadian Rockies, www.peakfinder.com* and numerous mobile device applications for the Canadian Rockies.



**Dave Birrell (left) at the museum  
with Deryck Bazalgette**



**Bomber Command Museum of Canada  
Nanton, Alberta, Canada**