

IN MEMORY OF THE LAST CREW of LANCASTER BOMBER W4270

This is part of the story surrounding the seven young men of the above aircraft who on the night of 18th February 1943 lost their lives while flying over England. It is by no means the whole story, and due to the nature of the available information, or rather the unavailability of some information at the time of the research, will no doubt contain some assumptions that may in due course prove to be inaccurate. It has however been compiled with the best efforts of a number of people whose names appear through out, to honour and cherish the memories of these men who died for 'King and Country' in those dark days of 1943, when it was far from clear what the outcome of the war against NAZI tyranny would be.

To those who are quick to spout the rhetoric of 'Freedom of speech' I would say only this, remember the price paid by those who bought you this 'right'. For freedom is often the most expensive commodity of all. Use it well.

While some of the story is by its nature sad, this presentation is intended as a celebration of the lives of the crew, short though they were. If you can share in the pride of their achievements and feel you know them in some small way then its aims will have been fulfilled. Staunton in the Vale will always feel that these young men are a part of the village in spirit and of its history, I hope the village and the memorial can be a focus for all who are, and may be involved in the future.

**Ian Hinks
7th March 2008.**

MEET THE LAST CREW OF LANCASTER W4270



**SGT. HERB
WARNE**



**SGT. ARTHUR
HITCHON**



**SGT. JACK
PREECE**



**SGT. JAMES
WHITEHEAD**



**SGT. THOMAS
NEWTON**



**SGT. JOHN
COAKER**



**SGT. EDDIE
LOVEROCK**

MR SID BAGGALEY, THE BEGINNING and then some!



Sid Baggaley

On the night of 18th February 1943 just as Sid Baggaley, a local Farmer was retiring for the night he became aware of the sounds of an aircraft in trouble. Looking out of his bedroom window he saw an aircraft that had an engine on fire, the aircraft passed low over the top of his house and a few seconds later there was the sound of a crash. Later that night members of the RAF arrived at the farm house asking for his help in getting to the site of the crash as it was in an area that was difficult to find the route to. Sid was able to show them the way there and described how the aircraft wreckage was laying in one of his fields. The crew had been killed but had been thrown clear and they were collected by the RAF recovery team and probably taken to the Medical Centre at nearby RAF Bottesford.

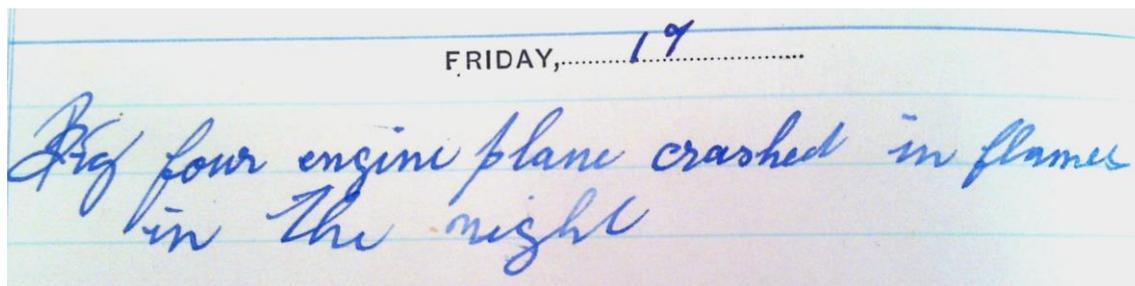
The wreckage was later removed by the RAF and Sid was left to wonder just who these young men had been that unfortunately lost their lives that night in one of his fields. While working the fields one day Sid came across a small square of metal painted black on one side and placed it for safe keeping in one of his out buildings hoping one day to learn more about the crew and what had happened, due to wartime security he had been told nothing by the authorities.

The story leaps forward now, Sid became friends with Mrs Di Ablewhite, his Chiropodist and knowing she was interested in archaeology one day late in 1999 handed her the piece of metal asking her what she made of that then. He went on to reveal that it came from a wartime aircraft crash and that he had never forgotten that night and could her group find out more information. Di hastily scribbled some notes into her work note book. The years had clouded Sid's recollection of that night a bit though and as the note book reveals the details were to set them off in the wrong direction for a while until further evidence was uncovered.

Sid thought it had been a Wellington bomber and that it had taken place in about 1940/41. The men had been thrown clear possibly due to an explosion, either in the air or on impact. There had been 5 or 6 men, one possibly Canadian, and they had been on a training flight. He had seen an engine on fire as it flew over his house.

That was what Di and her group Farndon Archaeological Research Group (FARI) had to go on. They started by researching Wellington crashes in 1940/41 using Mr Chorley's series of books Bomber Command Losses of World War 2, after much work nothing was coming to light so they expanded their search parameters, they eventually came across the most likely contender. A Lancaster, W4270 of No.61 Sqn had crashed in the area of Staunton in the Vale where Sid's field lay on the night of 18th February 1943. There were no other crashes that matched; this must be the one, now to prove it. (Years after Sid had died his daughter and Grand daughter, Barbara and Annie, found a farm diary for 1943. In it written in the space for 19th February were the

words “Big four engine plane crashed in the night”) Hind sight is a wonderful thing, Wellingtons had two engines, it would take a lot of work to prove what that line could have done in seconds.



Further entry noting investigating officers visit

The square of metal was taken to the Newark Aviation Museum, and due to an RAF Section/Reference number being stamped on it they could state it was from a Lancaster, they were also able to show where it came from on the aircraft, due to a screw plug that was part of the piece. It came from just behind the bomb bay and the plug would be removed to take an eye bolt for tying down the aircraft in strong winds.

Mr Chorley's books provided details of what had taken place and listed the crew names. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission web site provided further details of where they were buried and some details of a personal nature such as ages and parents names. Later a field walk was organised and a large quantity of small pieces were recovered, some of these were also able to be identified by various sources including The Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby in Lincolnshire, home of Lancaster bomber "Just Jane" and by people who had worked on the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's (BBMF) Lancaster, PA474.

A report of the findings of the project was prepared in time for the 2000 Millennium. As a result of the research the village of Staunton in the Vale erected a memorial to the crew next to the village church overlooking in the near distance the site of the crash. A Lancaster propeller blade was donated for the memorial by the Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group (LARG), stone for the plinth by Mr and Mrs Staunton of Staunton Hall in whose grounds the church stands, and brass plaques with the details were purchased with donations.

There things stood, shortly after more information concerning the accident came to light, and some of those involved one day hoped to be able to find out more and maybe find photos of the crewmen. Time passed, some of the information was again put on display in 2003 and received some coverage in the local press. More time passed when in 2007 the village started thinking of holding a fund raising event to be spent on the restoration of parts of the church.

It was decided to hold a Snowdrop walk day in the grounds of Staunton Hall in February of the following year. As part of the day's activities, Di was asked if the Lancaster information could be put out as one of the displays, so now seemed to be the ideal time to carry out further detailed research to answer many of the open questions.

In late October a small group of people consisting of Di Ablewhite, Barbara and Annie (Sid's kin) and Ian Hinks (ex-BBMF) set about this task. What was wanted were Photos of the crew, Headstone photos in lieu of them, contact with relatives and as much other information as could be wrung from all sources. Contact was made with the churches in the areas that the crew had come from, as well as local history groups and some local newspapers, asking for publicity with a view to finding if there were any relatives of any of the men still in the areas concerned, also for photos of the headstones in their care. Notices were also placed on several aviation web sites, notably the Nanton Lancaster site by an old acquaintance Peter Whitfield. Other sites picked up on these posts and things began to snowball.

Most who were involved would probably agree from then on things at times became a blur as information was pouring in from all sides on occasion. Contact was made with the relatives of Arthur Hitchon, the Flight Engineer on the crew. They provided photos, the first face to emerge, and other family documents and a lively correspondence ensued. Some of the headstone photos were collected and then contact was made with friends and a relative of one of the Gunners, John Coaker. They would provide photos when they had collected them, so a little longer wait, but then there would be another face to see. News from Nanton in Canada was that there was a photo in a book commemorating the war dead of Saskatchewan of the pilot, Herb Warne, three out of seven, this was beyond the groups wildest dreams. A photo of James Whitehead's headstone on the web site of The Scottish War Graves Project completed the seven headstone photographs.

There is no doubt that the more that was uncovered, the more personal was becoming the connection to the crew, particularly finding out the names they were known by, but probably the most emotional were seeing their likenesses, more than a few quiet tears were shed, at the same time, a sense of joy at bringing their memories out into the open again.

By the middle of January 2008 with the snowdrop day on 17th February fast approaching, much work was being done to collate all the information and prepare a presentation for the public. There also arose the need to involve the relatives and friends of the crew closer in all that was happening. The Snowdrop day was going to be too busy to give the attention that any relative or friend would deserve, so we also planned a gathering a couple of weekends before. Due to the distances involved, it was only the Hitchons who could attend. Arthur's nephew, David and niece, Kathryn, along with their spouses came down on the 3rd February from Lancashire and were shown all the places of relevance. RAF Syerston where they took off, RAF Bottesford where they were trying to land, the crash site field and the memorial next to the church. Di had set up a display in her house of the information and artefacts which we were able to present after a bit of lunch. A very full and rewarding day for all involved. David Hitchon works for the brewers of "Lancaster bomber" Beer, so continuing the family connection with the Avro classic.

By now you might have noticed the significance of the date of the Snowdrop walk day, Sunday 17th February, the day before the 65th Anniversary of the crash, a poignant 'coincidence' or fate? I'll leave the reader to decide. Down in Leusdon there was to be a simultaneous memorial service for John Coaker in which Snowdrops were to be transplanted onto his grave, thus bringing the two villages closer together.

Just a couple of days before the Snowdrop day, contact was made with family of one of Jack Preece's relatives in Australia, who has a daughter living in Cambridge. Family of a relative of Eddie Loverock was also aware of the events. The photo of Herb Warne in the memorial book was of a small size and so the authors had again been contacted to try to obtain a larger format copy, this arrived the day before the display, a fine colour portrait. Di, Barbara and Annie spent much of Saturday setting things up in the church, a friend of Di's, Alan, along with his spouse were bringing along a set of radio equipment as used in Lancasters to add to the display. There would also be a group of WW2 enthusiasts, some who were friends of Annie's coming along in period dress to show everyone the types of clothing and equipment that the crew would have worn. Some of the Lady members, WAAF and WRVS would put the final touches to the atmosphere.

Earlier a mild panic had been started amongst the group setting up the display, when the Snowdrop organisers suggested that there might be between 5 and 6 hundred people turning up, people had been ringing in virtually non stop to find out more about the event. If only we had known what reality would bring. The weather forecast had been good for days and so the day arrived, crisp, clear, and bright. The gates were due to be opened at 11am, so the final touches were put to the display and a bacon sandwich grabbed before the fray began. Before the last bite was taken the first of the public arrived, the rest of the day is a blur. No, honestly, a constant sea of faces passing through the narrow area of the church that the displays occupied, many questions were answered and anecdotes exchanged, information leaflets handed out, each member caught in their own little areas hardly able to swap a word through out the day. Finally 4 pm arrived, and the last of the public was leaving, where had the day gone, most of us were in a bit of a state of shock, still trying to reconcile what had taken place. Early estimates were that over a thousand people had attended; later checks on gate receipts would show that over 1100 adults had paid to come, there was no charge for children, so close on 1500 people was the estimate of final attendance. Oh, that doesn't include those who could not make it on the day and turned up on Monday asking to see the displays left up in the church.

As with all things done to a schedule, the day after an event more information comes to light, this was the case here. On the Monday, family of the Pilot Herb Warne contacted Di, saying they had heard through one of the book authors that a village was having a memorial display to the crew. They provided many useful documents over the next couple of days including Herb's Flying log book and letters, both personal and official concerning events. From these and other information it was possible to create a much more detailed account of the crew's lives between September 1942 and their deaths on 18th February 1943, a detail in one document tying in with a detail in another sometimes answering several outstanding questions.

More relatives and friends have expressed their intentions to visit the memorial when time and circumstances permit, this will in some cases mean journeys from as far a field as Canada and Australia. Should they wish all the friends and relatives of the crew will be placed in contact with each other and it is hoped that the relationship with each other and the village of Staunton in the Vale will continue that forged during wartime by the members of the crew of Lancaster W4270.

Off and on over the next six months work on tracking down more information, more obituaries and the elusive four crew photos. The RAF still hold Personnel Records for this period and they can only be released to, or with the permission of next of kin. Canada's laws are different and after 20 years records of deceased service persons can be released to anyone. This is how we were able to get copies of Herb's records and they revealed a host of information concerning where he trained, dates etc., details of enlistment and of the crash as well as much more. With the contacts we now had with some of the families we were able to get the permission to see Arthur Hitchon's records which again revealed masses of details of his time in the RAF.

August saw a visit by relatives of Jack Preece to the Memorial next to the church in Staunton, they were hosted by the group and shown what details we had uncovered to date, a very pleasant day was had by all. By September 2008, enough clues about where to look next had been gathered. It was now worth while going on a trip to Bridgwater, the Leusdon area and to the archives at Kew. First stop was Bridgwater where searching the Newspaper archives revealed Jack Preece's obituaries and notices, but disappointingly still no photo. Next stop was to the records office at Newton Abbott in hope of finding details on John Coaker from Leusdon. This was a disappointing part of the journey turning up nothing.

The next day the destination was Kew to look through documents that had been identified as possibly of interest. We knew that some units took photos of airmen and courses that passed through the stations they were on, but to be honest, what we were expecting to find were documents such as Operational Records Books showing day to day details of training flights as well as any details of combat operations against the Axis. This is just what we found; they revealed that both Gunners had flown in combat to Berlin while at a training unit. They also showed the details of Herb's two operations as second pilot once they arrived on No.61 Sqn. Many details were found covering several of the training units that they had gone through and the Anti-submarine operations they flew in between training units. Then, a box containing a large book covering 1940 to 1945 was collected from the archives desk, once it was taken out and the first page opened, total disbelief; a photo of crews on the first training course at No.19 Operational Training Unit at RAF Kinloss. Could it be possible that there were more? Indeed yes, page after page of photographs going all through the war. Turning to the pages covering the period that we knew some of our crew were there and low and behold, here they were. Arranged by trades were group photos including Herb among the pilots, Jack Preece with the Observer/Navigators, James Whitehead and Thomas Newton among the Wireless Operator/Air Gunners and finally John Coaker with the Air Gunners. In one fell swoop we now had photos of six of the seven crew members; the only outstanding photo was Eddie Loverock.

At the end of the year Jack's relatives sent for his service records, unfortunately due to a mail forwarding mix up the records went missing and they had to be requested again which would take a few more weeks before the hard working records staff could get them copied again.

Meanwhile desperation was setting in regarding the final photo, were we to be defeated, a feeling of letting the crew down was on us. It was decided to have one last go and again contact local newspapers around the area of Matlock where Eddie had come from. We wrote to three papers late in February 2009 and a couple of days later we heard from representatives of the Peak Advertiser, a local free paper. They would run the request for help in tracing his photo in the letters to the Editor section.

7th March 2009, a red letter day, this is the day that the seventh and last crewman's photo was found and included in the presentation, seventeen months of searching was over. A Lady who was due to get engaged to Eddie, or Ted as she knew him had the accident not happened contacted us through the Peak Advertiser to say she still had three photos of him which she kindly let us copy.

Another week later and Jack Preece's records were also made available to us once more a treasure chest of information came to light and has added greatly to our understanding of events. Once a detail has been uncovered, reference to books or information on the internet can take a small point and expand it into paragraphs, this then is what happened and what follows is a result of a lot of work, a good deal of time and the resources available early in the 21st Century. Oh and a good deal of luck, or maybe it was the boys lending a hand.

STAUNTON in the Vale LANCASTER CRASH

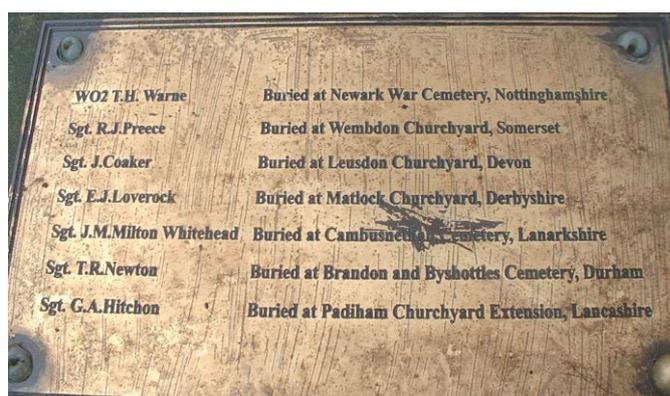
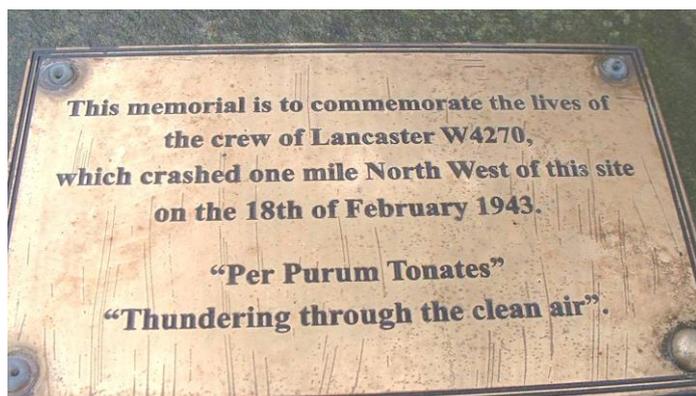
Lancaster Mk1 W4270 QR- ? of No.61 Sqn. R.A.F. Syerston, Notts.

18.2.1943

Sgt Thomas H	Warne	R/102085 RCAF	(P)	Pilot	'Herb'
Sgt George A	Hitchon	576765	(FE)	Flt. Eng.	'Arthur'
Sgt Robert J	Preece	1174086	(N)	Obs.	'Jack'
Sgt James M	Whitehead	975551	(AB)	Wop/AG	
Sgt Thomas R	Newton	1119116	(Wop)	Wop/AG	
Sgt John	Coaker	1276786	(MuG)	AG	'John'
Sgt Edward J	Loverock	950159	(RG)	AG	'Eddie'

Whilst on a Cross country training flight W4270 crashed at 2256 following an engine fire about 2 miles NW of RAF Bottesford, Leicestershire. The aircraft came down a mile from the village of Staunton in the Vale, Lincolnshire. Sgt Warne RCAF, who is listed as a Warrant Officer 2 on the CWGC site was buried in Newark-upon-Trent cemetery, his crew were laid to rest in their home towns and villages.

Staunton in the Vale Memorial to the Crew of W4270



W4270 ACCIDENT REPORT (side 1)

MONTH OF ACCIDENT: FEB

No 6 Group of Bomber Command

FATALITIES: 7

REF No of SIGNAL NOTIFYING ACCIDENT: 18243

2 miles NW of BOTTESFORD

FIRE IN THE AIR

Category of damage: E = WRITE OFF

SEVEN KILLED

* ENGINE TYPE ALL R.R. MERLIN XX

ENGINE SERIAL NOS.

HAPPENED IN FLIGHT

DATE	COMMAND	UNIT CLASS	AIRCRAFT TYPE	FLIGHT	DAMAGE	CAS	AIR
18 2 43	61 Jan		ANCMASTER 1 60	W4276	E		
A/C TYPE AND MARK		A/C TYPE AND MARK		GROUP	DAMAGE		
AS4 A71		ANCMASTER 1 60		5	N		
NS 034		1 PORT OUTER		339229	E		
308		2 Merlin PORT INNER		392810	E		
010215		3 STBD INNER		243209	E		
Bottesford		4 STBD OUTER		252103	E		
Warne		NAME: INIT.		RANK	No.		
Warne		WARNE		T	Sgt. K102985		
Warne		PILOT			ban K		

W4270 ACCIDENT REPORT (side 2)

PILOTS TOTAL FLYING HOURS SOLO (Handwritten note pointing to 305)

PILOTS SOLO TOTAL NIGHT FLYING HOURS (Handwritten note pointing to 15)

DURATION OF FATAL FLIGHT (Handwritten note pointing to 6 HRS 45 MIN)

Time of crash. (Handwritten note pointing to 2256)

WHILE LANDING NIGHT FLYING (Handwritten note pointing to STAGE)

REASON FOR FLIGHT TRAINING, X-COUNTRY (Handwritten note pointing to Training)

ENGINEERING OFFICER COMMENT. (Handwritten note pointing to the main text area)

ACCIDENT AT NIGHT. (Handwritten note pointing to NIGHT)

FATALITIES (Handwritten note pointing to FATALITIES)

FIRE IN AIR (Handwritten note pointing to AIR)

Investigation Officer Comments:
 This engine caught fire on descent. This seem to be a...
 Cabin - aft floor down & crashed. E/O: ...
 to fractured cow rod. Invert. Due to loss of control ...
 pilot as result of sudden fire in air. Possible that a piston ...
 likely exploded prior to impact. Flaps & up being down had ...
 bearing of control factor to loss of control. Pilot was in type

Form Fields:
 AIR: FIRE
 ERRORS: SOLO TOTAL 305, NIGHT TOTAL 43, NIGHT TYPE 15
 CAUSE: INST. LINK, DURATION OF FLIGHT 6 HRS 45 MIN, TIME 2256, STAGE Training
 COMMAND: MONTH, UNIT CLASS, AIRCRAFT TYPE, FLIGHT, DAMAGE, CAS
 NIGHT (circled)

TRANSCRIPTION OF REPORT DETAIL BLOCK

Starboard Inner engine caught fire in circuit. Fire seen to spread towards cabin – Aircraft floated down and crashed. E/O: Apparently due to fractured Con Rod. Invest: Due to loss of control by pilot as result of sudden fire in air. Possible that a petrol tank exploded prior to impact. Flaps and U/C being down had direct bearing and contributing factor to loss of control. Pilot inexperienced on type.

E/O = Engineering Officer's comments.

Invest = Investigating Officer's deduction as to why the aircraft crashed.

Basically what they are saying is that the sudden fire while in the circuit to land at RAF Bottesford caused a loss of control so that the aircraft crashed. Because the Flaps and Undercarriage were down, ready for a landing this contributed to the loss of control.

(When an aircraft is coming into land they are flying slow and are normally closer to the point of losing control than if they were higher, flying faster with Flaps and U/C up. So that if something should go wrong it is more likely to end in a crash than if they were higher up and had room and time to sort things out. This is why Take off and landing are considered the most dangerous parts of any flight).

There was a possibility that the fire could have caused one of the fuel tanks to blow up before the actual impact, but they are not sure or they would not have said "possible". They also noted that the pilot, Herb, was inexperienced on type. This is just a statement of fact as he had only had about 16 hours solo in daylight and 15 hours solo flying time on the Lancaster at night.

Rest assured there is nothing in this report that apports blame don't be confused by some of the terminology used; it just records what most likely happened from the available evidence in the opinion of the Investigating Officer. Nothing more than that.

W4270 ARTIFACTS RECOVERED FROM FIELD WALK OF CRASH SITE



PART OF RIM OF WING MOUNTED RETRACTABLE LANDING LAMP



FUSELAGE REAR BOMB BAY AREA TIE DOWN POINT
Sid's original piece kept safe for 56 years



ENGINE COWLING QUICK RELEASE FASTENER



PAXELINE BLOCK FAIRLEAD SUPPORT



**ENGINE CONTROL RUN COG FROM LANCASTER W4270
(ONE OF 34)**

HERB WARNE'S ROUTE TO OTU.

Herb was born Thomas Herbert Warne on 13th February 1920 in Fletwode, Saskatchewan to Isabel and Samuel Warne. Isabel was from Glasgow, Scotland and Samuel came from Cornwall, England, so Herb was the son of Émigrés who became Canadian citizens. Herb had 2 sisters, Janet and Francis as well as 2 brothers, Arthur and David; David also became a Pilot flying Beaufighters in the Middle East eventually returning safely to Canada.

Between 1926 and 1931 Herb attended Regina Public school for Grades 1 to 5. He then went on to Kennedy Public school, Grades 5 to 8 and finally to Kennedy High school, leaving aged 18 in 1938. In between 1938 and 1939 Herb worked in Farming for Mr. R. Warner. His service records show he attended Normal school during 1939-40, and then worked as a Teacher at Fletwode school no. 411 until he went to Normal to Join the RCAF. At some time Herb also took a correspondence course in English and Mathematics from the University of Saskatchewan.

At the RCAF recruiting office on 13th January 1941 Herb filled out an application form volunteering for aircrew, a General duties Pilot. He then reported to the Recruiting centre in Regina, Saskatchewan on 12th April 1941 where he was interviewed by F/O K. J. Macdonald. In the Interview report Herb is described as Age 21, Height 5'10 1/2" and Weight 140lbs. F/O Macdonald thought him a 'good type', intelligent and sincere with good educational qualifications; reserved and somewhat slow in response, suitable for any aircrew position. He had a confident approach, was of medium carriage (bearing), clean, neat and conservative of dress; was of slender build with clear slow speech, deliberate of response and an alert but reserved manner. In summery he thought Herb Average, not suitable for a Commission, best suited for Pilot or Observer training for which he recommended him.

As a Canadian enlisting in Canada there would be a few variations from his RAF counterpart, Herb did his training in Canada while many of those joining up in England would be shipped off to various parts of the Empire or to the USA after ITW, although some would be trained in the UK.

Thomas Herbert Warne was attested at Regina, Saskatchewan by Flt.Lt. Stewart on 2nd May 1941 allocated service number R102085 with the rank of AC2, Aircraftsman 2nd class.

No.2a M.D. (Manning Depot) Penfold, Alberta.

After attestation Herb next headed to No. 2a M.D. at Penfold staying here until the 9th of June. A Manning Depot is an administrative holding unit.

No. 4 T.C. Training Command, Regina, Alberta. 10th Jun 1941 until 15th July 1941.

Each of the Training Commands consisted of ITS, EFTS, SFTS and numerous other training units. Herb was streamed into No. 4 T.C. from here he was passed down the training program by being sent to No. 4 I.T.S.

No. 4 I.T.S. Initial Training School, Edmonton. 16th July 1941 until 19th August 1941. 'L' Flight, Course 31.

It was here that he would learn Airmanship, navigation, Morse code amongst other subjects and be subjected to hours of P.T. and Drill. Still want to learn to fly? "You bet". During WW2 Blatchford Field became an RCAF Training station under the British Empire Air Training Scheme opening in June 1941. No. 4 ITS as a ground school was located off station at the University of Alberta. Herb and his course mates were photographed on the 9th of August 1941 along with their Instructors. After successfully completing Initial training Herb was promoted to LAC, Leading Aircraftman, he would have said goodbye to some of the people he had become friends with as not all would have made the grade. Next stop learning to fly; from now on he would be carrying an extra kit bag stuffed with flying gear, helmet, 2 flying suits, gloves, boots etc.



**'L' FLIGHT, COURSE 31. No.4 I.T.S. EDMUNTON, ALBERTA.
9TH AUGUST 1941.**

Herb is 5TH from Left in the Second Row from the Top

**No. 18 E.F.T.S. Elementary Flying Training School, Boundary Bay, British Columbia.
20th August 1941 until 11th October 1941 Pupil Pilots Course No. 36.**



Here Herb would get his hands on an aircraft for the first time. Single engine bi-plane training aircraft, Tiger Moths, would be his mount to start with. After meeting his Instructor, the Instructors were all civilians, he would be taken up into the air, shown various basic manoeuvres then be expected to repeat them. A lot of his time would be taken up with ground studies learning the theories of flight and navigation etc. Once he could do the basics to the satisfaction of his Instructor he would be sent off Solo. The first solo had to be achieved by a set maximum amount of Dual training or else the prospective pilot would be chopped from the course and sent off to train for some

other job. Once the solo was complete he would be sent up on his own to practice, then more dual would show him other skills which he could go off and practice. At various stages he would be tested by the Chief flying Instructor or his stand in, satisfying them was the only way to progress. Other nearby airfields and landing strips would be used for parts of the training due to the number of aircraft operating. It is sad to relate, but from now on Herb would experience the loss of friends and fellow trainees as the result of the many accidents that would occur to inexperienced Pilots as they strove to master the intricacies of flying. There would again be many who just could not pass the course.



**No. 4 SFTS Service Flying Training School, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
12th October until 3rd January 1942.**



When the Air Force had decided what a pilot was going to end up flying they would send him to the appropriate SFTS, anyone slated to fly multi-engine aircraft would move to an SFTS with twin engine aircraft, many sent here had had visions of a life as a Fighter pilot dashed when they realised they were continuing their training on aircraft such as the Avro Anson or Cessna Crane, although a faint hope of ending up on Beaufighters or even Mosquitos could be maintained most would end up in Bomber Command or Coastal command. So now was the time to learn the art of flying aircraft of a larger size with an extra engine,

repeating many of the tasks of the earlier instruction, being shown new ones and practice, practice, practice. Again there were stage checks and ground exams, all must be passed satisfactorily. The biggest test by far though was surviving. Many hundreds of young men were to die long before reaching this stage of training.

No. 4 S.F.T.S. was part of No. 2 Training Command, building work started at Saskatoon in 1940 on 5 large hangars, classrooms, barracks, workshops, a hospital and a control tower. The usual form for the runways would be a triangular shape allowing take-off and landing into wind no matter where it was blowing from. There were two relief fields operated to reduce traffic; No.1 at Vanscoy and No.2 at Osler, Saskatchewan.



After successfully completing these schools Herb was a qualified pilot, he had not been selected for a commission so he would wear the chevrons of a Sgt, with his prized wings on his left breast. These were awarded at the prestigious Wings Parade, where if possible family and friends would attend to witness events.

“Y” Depots and RAF Trainees Pool.

4th January 1942 until 23rd January 1942

Herb had now reached the stage of his training where he was to be sent overseas, not all of the recently qualified would be going with him, a certain number were retained to help with the training of those still to come into the ever increasing training program. Herb was placed on the strength of No. 1 “Y” Depot at Halifax, Nova Scotia. A “Y” Depot was an Overseas Transit Depot where personnel were held to await a place in one of the convoy of troopships. These convoys were prime targets for the German U-boats as thousands of trained men would be crossing to the UK, the loss of any ship containing these men would be a massive blow to the war effort. On the 18th January Herb was attached to No. 3 “Y” Depot, at RCAF Debert, about 50 miles North of Halifax, from photos of Herb with his siblings and information from his relatives we know he had some home leave before boarding a ship for England. According to his service records, he had 10 days plus travelling time, so it is likely this leave fell between the 4th and 18th of January. The last part of his time in Canada was in the RAF Trainees pool ready for embarkation on board ship. From entries on Herb’s records he probably set sail on Convoy SC66 on the 23rd January 1942 out of Halifax bound for Liverpool. This convoy arrived on the 9th February after a 17 day voyage, the convoys tended to take a roundabout route to avoid the U-boat threat. During this period, known as the ‘second happy time’ by U-boat crews, they were wreaking havoc on shipping with the USA not long in the war and woefully, even negligently unprepared. Luckily for Herb, a lot of the combat was going on off the East coast of the USA diverting U-boats from the Atlantic convoy routes, small compensation for those caught in the slaughter.



David Arthur Herb
Francis Janet

HERB WITH HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS BEFORE GOING OVERSEAS.

**PHOTO USED IN SASKATCHEWAN MEMORIAL BOOK
AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM**



**THOMAS HERBERT WARNE
(HERB)**

**No. 3 P.R.C. Personnel Reception Centre. Somerset House, Bath road, Bournemouth, England.
10th February 1942 until 14th April 1942.**

After disembarkation Herb would have boarded a “quaint” little British train, tiny compared to the massive Locomotives of the Canadian railways. If travelling at night he would have to get used to being in a blacked out carriage with no view of where they were going. No. 3 P.R.C. was the reception centre that personnel coming from Canada reported to on their arrival in the UK, and was in the South coast town of Bournemouth. Here he would be held with ever increasing frustration until being allocated a place at the next training unit. Because he was one of those who had learned to fly abroad he would go to a (P)AFU.

**No. 14 (P)AFU (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit, RAF Ossington, Nottinghamshire, England.
14th April 1942 until 16th June 1942.**



These organisations were to help Pilots who had learnt to fly abroad get used to flying in the UK area; after all, some of the trainees had only flown in Californian sunshine over vast flat plains, not really an image of what was to come. Canadian winter flying would have helped, but even there the land was vast and empty compared to the crowded and enemy threatened skies over Britain. This unit operated Airspeed Oxford trainers another classic work horse of the training organisation. While with this unit Herb was attached to No.1520 B.A.T. Flight, Beam Approach Training from 16th May to 23 May 1942. Beam Approach was an electronic system that allowed the Pilot to follow Radio beams beeping in his headphones enabling him to locate and land at an airfield in Instrument Flying conditions, i.e. low cloud or at night by means of automatic signals. Once the AFU course was complete, he would know that he was Bomber Command bound and that he was heading for No. 19 OTU Operational Training Unit at RAF Kinloss. An important stage in the training program because here Herb would meet up with the various other air crew trades and form his crew.

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

SPECIAL RESERVE (ATTESTATION PAPER)

(Pages one and two, only, are to be completed in Applicant's own Handwriting)

1. Surname Warne FULL Christian Names Thomas Herbert
 2. Present Address Kennedy Sask Telephone
 3. Permanent Address Kennedy Sask
 4. Place of Birth 13-11-48 Fletwade Sask Citizenship Canadian
 5. Date of Birth Feb 13, 1920 Married, Single, Widower, Separated, Divorced Single
 6. Particulars of Children None

Name	Date of birth	Name	Date of birth
<u>NA</u>			

7. Occupation Teacher 8. Religion United Church
State denomination
 9. Languages English fluently
State proficiency
 10. Next of Kin (Full Name) Mrs Isabel Warne Relationship Mother
 " Address Kennedy, Sask
 11. Father (Full Name) Samuel Kernick Warne Birthplace Cornwall County, England
 " Address Deceased Citizenship Canadian
 " Occupation Farmer
 12. Mother (Full Maiden Name) Isabel Munro Birthplace Glasgow, Scotland
 " Address Kennedy, Sask Citizenship Canadian
 13. Details of any Naval, Military or Air Force Service: None

Unit	Place	Rank	Trade	Date		Reason for discharge
				From	To	
<u>NA</u>						

R.C.A.F. Records Office

Rec'd **MAY 9 1941**

O. K. FE C.I.B. [Signature]

R. C. [Signature]

S. [Signature]

14. Honours, Awards, Mentions None
 15. Are you now on any Naval, Military or Air Force Reserve? No
 16. Have you previously made application to join the R.C.A.F.? No If so, where? NA
 When? NA Result NA
 17. Were you ever discharged from any branch of His Majesty's Forces as Medically Unfit? No
 If so, state nature of disability NA
 18. Have you ever been or are you now in receipt of a Disability Pension? No
 If so, state nature of Disability NA
 19. Have you ever been convicted of an indictable offence? No If so state nature NA
 20. Are you in debt? No If so, state particulars NA

177-379 [Signature]

21. Particulars of Education:

	Name of school	Date		Courses—Subjects, etc.
		From	To	
Primary Education—Public or Separate School.....	Regina - Public School	1926	1931	Grades 1 to 5
	Kennedy Public School	1931	1934	Grades 5 to 8 inc.
High School—Collegiate Institute, etc.....	Kennedy High School	1934	1938	Grades 9 to 12 inc.
Technical School.....				
University or School other than above.....	Normal School	1939	1940	
Correspondence Courses, etc.....				

22. Particulars of all Civil Occupations (in full):

Employer and place	Duties, trades, positions	Date		Reason for leaving
		From	To	
R. H. Warner	Farming	1938	1939	Went to Normal
Teacher Fletwode School No. 411		1939	1941	To join R.C.A.F.

23. Flying Experience (in Hours) Solo *None* Dual *None* Passenger *None*

24. Special Qualifications, Hobbies, etc., useful to the R.C.A.F. *None*

25. Sports engaged in. State: extensively, moderately, occasionally. *Hockey, soft ball*
Basketball moderately

26. AIR FORCE DUTY you wish to enlist for Ground Duties.
Flying Duties. *yes*
 If for Ground Duties, state Air Force trade in which you wish to enlist. *Pilot or Observer*
 If for Flying Duties, state preference as (a) Pilot; (b) Observer; (c) Air Gunner (d) Wireless Operator (Air Crew).
 (Cross out words not applicable.)

27. Names of at least two persons who can give references as to character and ability.

Name	Address	Occupation
G Roste	Kennedy Sask	Principal of School
M. J. Dermody	Kennedy Sask	Business man
J. A. Warner	Kennedy Sask	Retired sect. of Municipality

28. Other information that may have any bearing on this application. *None*

29. Do you understand that vaccination, re-vaccination and inoculation are compulsory? *Yes*

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing information furnished by me is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date *Jan 13* 19*41* Signature *Thomas Herbert Warner*

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(A) Report of Interviewing Officer—

Type.....General appearance.....

Suitability for (state in what capacity).....

Date.....Signature.....Rank.....

(B) Report of Trade Test—

Trade in which tested.....

Result.....

Trade qualifications other than above likely to lead to efficient employment in the R.C.A.F.....

Date.....Signature.....Rank.....

(C) DECLARATION MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, Thomas Herbert WARNE do solemnly declare that the foregoing particulars are true, and I hereby engage to serve on active service anywhere in Canada, and also beyond Canada and overseas, in the Royal Canadian Air Force for the duration of the present war, and for the period of demobilization thereafter, and in any event for a period of not less than one year, provided His Majesty should so long require my

Date May 2nd 1941. Thomas Herbert Warne
Signature of Recruit

OATH TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION

I, Thomas Herbert WARNE do sincerely promise and swear (or solemnly declare) that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to His Majesty.

Date May 2nd 1941. Thomas Herbert Warne
Signature of Recruit

(E) CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER

The Recruit above named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answers to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided by law.

The above questions and answers were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the Oath before me,

at REGINA, Saskatchewan this 2nd day of May 1941.
Commanding Officer,

[Signature] A/Flight-Lieut., RCAF Recruiting Centre, REGINA.
Signature of Officer Rank Unit

SPECIAL RESERVE

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

INTERVIEW REPORT

SURNAME **WARNE**
 CHRISTIAN NAMES **Thomas Herbert**
 MARRIED **No** NO. OF CHILDREN **N.A.**

N.F. ADMINISTRATION.....
 TECHNICAL.....
 EQUIP./ACCTS.....
 GEN. LIST.....
 FLYING
 PILOT.....
 OBSERVER.....
 W.O. AIR GUNNER.....

AGE..... 21
 HEIGHT..... 5' 10 1/2"
 WEIGHT..... 140

EDUCATIONAL STANDING:- Number of years
 High School.....⁴..... Technical, **No**..... Commercial, **No**.....
 University (Name and dates of Attendance).....
English & Mathematics, correspondence course.
University of Saskatchewan.
 Standing other Countries..... **None**

APPROACH
 Confident..... **X**
 Nervous.....
 Easy.....

FLYING EXPERIENCE:- Total hours
 Commercial Hours Solo..... **None**..... Dual..... **None**.....
 Private " Solo..... **None**..... Dual..... **None**..... Passenger..... **None**
 No. Hours & Types during last 2 yrs..... **None**

CARRIAGE
 Upright.....
 Medium..... **X**
 Athletic.....

MILITARY AND OTHER TRAINING:-
None

DRESS
 Neat..... **X**
 Conservative..... **X**
 Clean..... **X**
 Careless.....

SPORTS:- (What branches)
Generally all sports.
 HOBBIES: **Sports.**

PHYSIQUE
 Medium.....
 Heavy set..... **X**
 Slender..... **X**

INTERVIEWING OFFICER'S OPINION AS TO CHARACTER AND SUITABILITY FOR THE SERVICE:-
Good type. Intelligent and sincere. Good educational qualifications. Reserved and somewhat slow in response. Suitable for any position Air Crew.

SPEECH
 Clear..... **X**
 Slow..... **X**
 Hesitant.....

RESPONSE
 Quick..... **X**
 Deliberate..... **X**
 Slow.....

MANNER
 Alert..... **X**
 Confident.....
 Sincere..... **X**
 Reserved..... **X**
 Nervous.....
 Overbearing.....
 Irresponsible.....

REFERENCES CHECKED---SATISFACTORY
 " " ---UNSATISFACTORY
 " NOT CHECKED

R.C.A.F. Records Office
 Rec'd MAY 9 1941
 O.K. C.I.B.
 Observer
 R.C. N.
 S.L. P.A. *Jm*

EXCELLENT.....
 ABOVE AVERAGE.....
 AVERAGE..... **X**
 BELOW AVERAGE.....

CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR COMMISSIONED RANK?..... **No**
 BEST FITTED FOR..... **Pilot or Observer**

MARK WITH AN X THE DESCRIPTION WHICH APPLIES

DATE **12-4-41** RECRUITING CENTRE, REGINA, Sask.
 A.F.M.5

K. J. Macdonald
 K. J. Macdonald F/O
 Signature of Officer

ROBERT JOHN PREECE'S ROUTE TO OTU.

Robert John Preece was born in Bridgwater on 7th June 1920, the only child of Herbert Preece and Daisy (nee Mitchell). He was an Old Morganian having attended Dr. Morgan's Grammar school before leaving and taking up a staff position as a Clerk with British Cellophane. He was working here when he joined the RAF on 22nd July 1940. He attended No.12 A.C.S.B. (Aircrew or Aviation Candidate Selection Board) where he was tested, assessed and accepted for training as an Observer. On enlistment he was described as 5'4" tall, with brown hair, blue eyes and of Fair complexion. It is probable that his height weighed against him becoming a Pilot; there were minimum and maximum requirements, to put it bluntly, if you didn't fit the aircraft you didn't get in. As a Clerk though he would be an ideal candidate for an Observer where his written and numerical skills would come to the fore. At this time the family were living at Newbury House, 11 Wembdon Road, Bridgwater, it would be here much later that on his last leave he would bring his pilot and friend Herb Warne, but more of that later.

No.2 R.C. (Recruit Centre), RAF Cardington. 23rd July 1940 to 11th January 1941.

As soon as Jack was enlisted he was placed on the strength of No.2 R.C. at RAF Cardington with the rank of AC2, Aircraftsman 2nd Class, this does not necessarily mean he ever went there though. He is recorded as 'Reserve'; this probably meant he was left at home to wait calling forward to begin his training. The overloaded training system was struggling to cope with the vast numbers that had come forward and it took some time to catch up.

No.1 R.W. (Receiving Wing), Torquay. (Babbacombe), Devon. 11th January 1941 to 15th February 1941.

Finally on the 11th January 1941 Jack was sent to the Torquay area quite probably to Babbacombe where he was issued his uniforms and other equipment. He spent the next four to five weeks on basic training awaiting a place at an I.T.W.

No. 4 I.T.W. (Initial Training Wing). Paignton, Devon 15th February 1941 to probably 11th June 1941.

Most I.T.W.'s were located in seaside towns where the hotels had been requisitioned by the Air Ministry; here they would learn Airmanship amongst other subjects and be subjected to hours of P.T., Drill and plenty of 'Bull'. Jack was probably here until 11th of June 1941, his records fail to say exactly when he finished here, but this is when he was promoted to L.A.C. Leading Aircraftsman, a promotion that usually took place at the end of Initial Training after passing the examinations. At the end of this period he would be at the peak of fitness ready and raring to get on with his training. This could have been at any number of Observer or Navigation Schools at home or all over the Empire; Jack was eventually sent to Canada.

No.2 P.D.C. (Personnel Despatch Centre), Wilmslow, Cheshire. No date recorded.

Wilmslow was an Overseas Drafting Station, again Jack's records fail to record the dates for this entry, but it is here that the details of getting him on a convoy across to Canada would be arranged. He is recorded as arriving in Canada on 26th August 1941, three convoys fit this arrival date, ON7 departed Liverpool on the 15th, ON8 departed Liverpool on the 16th and ON9 departed Liverpool on the 20th. This means there was a period from his leaving I.T.W. until he boarded his ship that had to be filled. He could have spent this time at Wilmslow, a holding unit or on leave. The records don't show this period in detail, but he would certainly have had a period of Embarkation leave prior to sailing, probably about 10 days. If he was lucky, he could have had more time with his family, if unlucky, he could have been filling in as a guard or dogs body desperately hoping for a ship. After a danger strewn journey across the Atlantic he would be glad to set foot on Canadian soil at last.

No.33 A.N.S. (Air Navigation School), Mount Hope, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

27th August 1941 to 20th December 1941.



Situated about 12 miles south of Hamilton, Mount Hope was to house a number of units during the war. 33 A.N.S. was established not long before Jack arrived there. Here he would learn the intricate skills needed to guide an aircraft safely through the skies to its target and back again, Map reading, 'Dead Reckoning', Astro Navigation with a sextant, obtaining 'fixes' through radio bearings etc. The unit was equipped with Avro Anson

aircraft, which, after hours of ground school, he would get airborne in along with other trainees. They would take turns in carrying out various tasks and exercises criss-crossing the country side in good weather and as winter approached in the harsh conditions that prevail in Canada at this time of year. It is highly likely that at some stage they would find themselves in 'white out' conditions groping their way along. At times such as this they would hope that they had kept an accurate track and breathe a sigh of relief on gaining clear air again. The pilots on these flights could be Instructors, "screened" pilots or trainee pilots, themselves progressing through the Training Program. Many young men would fail to progress any further, some could not grasp the intricacies of Ariel navigation, and others would fall victim to poor weather, mechanical failures or just plain bad luck. These to this day lie buried in cemeteries all across Canada and the rest of the countries involved in the Empire Training Scheme. Jack completed training at Mount Hope on 20th December 1941 and was posted to a Bombing and Gunnery School for the next stage of his training.

No.31 B&GS (Bombing and Gunnery School), Picton, Prince Edward County, Ontario.

21st December 1941 to 3rd February 1942.

The camp was created over a six-week period in the autumn of 1940. Canadian National Railways brought in 600 rail cars full of building material to Picton for the construction of Camp Picton or Picton Heights as it was known at the time. In April, 1941, hundreds of officers and airmen of the Royal Air Force arrived at Picton station to take over the Bombing and Gunnery School where Six week courses were offered for observers and air gunners with up to five classes being run concurrently. The Picton B&GS was operated by the Royal Air Force, while 10 other bombing and gunnery schools across Canada were under the control of the Royal Canadian Air Force. When completed it offered aircraft hangars,

runways that were up to 2500 feet long, 5 bombing ranges and accommodation for up to 1000 officers and airmen. The unit operated Avro Anson, Bristol Bolingbroke (a Canadian Blenheim), Fairey Battle, and Westland Lysander aircraft. Jack would have flown in the first two types and maybe either of the other two. Jack arrived at Picton just before Christmas of 1941; here he would learn the skills of a Bomb Aimer. At this stage of the war an Observer was the Navigator and Bomb Aimer of a crew, he would also assist the pilot as required, later on these jobs would be divided between 3 men as the complexity of equipment and tasks increased. On the 2nd of February 1942 he passed out and was promoted to Sgt, he also received the



coveted Observer's half wing to wear on his left breast. He would now look forward to getting back to the UK and getting onto an operational squadron, this would still be a good while away as there were many phases left to his training.

No.1 “Y” Depot, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

3rd February 1942 to 7th March 1942.

Jack’s path now started to follow that of his future pilot Herb Warne, he was ‘taken on the strength’ of No.1 “Y” Depot at Halifax. A “Y” depot was an Overseas Transit Depot where personnel were held or attached for administrative purposes to await a place in one of the convoy of troopships. Here thousands of men would kick their heels trying to avoid boredom and frustration until they got a berth on a “Blighty” bound ship. The entry on his records states “1 ‘Y’ depot at 31 B&GS” though, so maybe Jack spent his time waiting at Picton while being on the strength of No.1 ‘Y’ depot for administration purposes. Jack only had to wait just over four weeks before getting a ship out of Halifax in convoy HX179, setting sail on the 9th March, now he would run the U-boat gauntlet for the second time on the 13 day voyage. Convoys took a roundabout route across the Atlantic, the fast Liner troopships such as the Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary could sail on their own at full speed to avoid U-boats crossing in 5 or 6 days. Weather could delay the convoys and add the misery of seasickness to the dangers of a U-boat infested ocean. Jack finally made it back to the UK arriving at Liverpool on the 22nd March and landed on the 23rd, he would have struggled down the gang plank with his kit bags bulging with presents for the family, things that were in short supply in war time Britain.

No. 3 P.R.C. Personnel Reception Centre. Somerset House, Bath road, Bournemouth, England. 24th March 1942.

Just as Herb Warne had done Jack went to No.3 P.R.C. a reception centre at Bournemouth, in fact Herb was still here when Jack arrived, and would be for another three weeks, so it is possible that they met. As he had done his training overseas, Jack should have gone to an (O)A.F.U. to get further training in operating in the European skies. He would be held here until a place became available. There is no mention of this in his records, but they also show he did not get to No.19 O.T.U. until 31st August, this is a mistake, we know he got there about 17th June and the course ended about 24th August, so it looks like a couple of entries on his records have got fouled up during transcription by a clerk at some stage.

(O).A.F.U . (Observers) Advanced Flying Unit Possibly mid April to Mid June 1942.

Although it is not recorded on Jack’s records he would have gone to one of the (O)A.F.U.s to bring his skills into line with the UK operating conditions. Some of the Observers would have trained in the clear sunny skies of the USA and South Africa; even Canada had large open skies compared to the congested and dangerous skies over the UK. So here they would get a few weeks extra training to get up to speed ready for a posting to an O.T.U. Once Jack had finished with this stage he would have found out that he was Bomber Command bound as soon as he saw that he was heading to Kinloss and No.19 O.T. U.



Jack Preece

JAMES MILTON WHITEHEAD'S ROUTE TO OTU.

James was born in Cambusnethan in 1920 and was the only son of Willie and Janet Reid Greenshields Whitehead (nee Wilson). His mother and father were married on 31st December 1918 in the Constabulary buildings at Newmains. Janet's father George Wilson was a Sergeant in the Lanarkshire Constabulary. James was named after his paternal Grand father and was probably brought up to be a hard working God fearing young man, his photo has the look of a man who knows his place in the scheme of things, proud and confident in his abilities. I would expect that he stood out among his peers and that when he went to enlist would be considered ideally suited to becoming air crew. At the time of his death James would have been in the RAF for about 1 1/2 years, this would mean he had joined up about mid 1941. Unless he initially joined up as some trade other than Air Crew and then later re-mustered, or else some other event happened to delay his progress through the training system. After selection he would, like most of the others, have attended an I.T.W. The only information we have on James comes from the CWGC site, his headstone and two small death notices in the Wishaw Press. A few more details of his later training from OTU onwards come from entries in Operational Records Books.

ITW Initial Training Wing,

Without access to James' service records it is impossible for us to know the exact route he took through training until he met up with the rest of the crew at O.T.U. However it is here that he would learn Airmanship amongst other subjects and be subjected to hours of P.T., Drill and plenty of 'Bull'. After Initial training he would have to wait for a place on a course at Radio School where he would start the process of learning the trades of Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

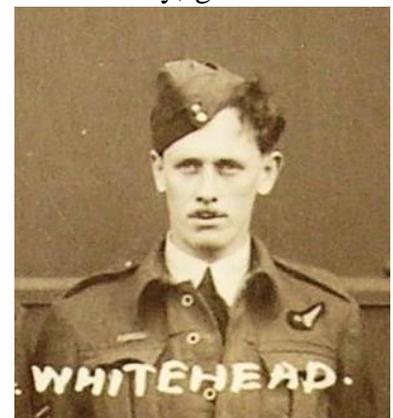
R.S. Radio School.

There were several Radio schools around the country and again without access to James' service records we don't know which he attended. The syllabus at each would be fundamentally the same where he would learn the skills needed to be a Wireless Operator. Over the next ten months or so he would have to reach, in stages, a set level of proficiency in all the allocated tasks. The sort of things he would learn would be Radio theory, maintenance, radio procedures and of course Morse code. Failure in any area would result in a minimum of back coursing, if not scrubbing from the course and re-mustering to another trade. On completion of the training here Thomas was awarded the 'Sparks' upper arm patch (shown here), at this stage of the war there was no Wireless Operator Brevet. He would also probably been promoted to L.A.C. (Leading Aircraftsman). The next step on his journey would be to a Gunnery school.



B&GS Bombing and Gunnery School.

Like Radio Schools there were multiple Bombing and Gunnery schools, and again we don't yet know which one James attended. Once here though he would be taught all the skills necessary to be an Air Gunner. The sort of things taught would be Aircraft recognition, ballistics theory, gun maintenance and stoppage drills on a number of in use machine guns and various types of gun turrets. There would then be the practical skills of shooting on the ground and in the air. Whilst in the air there would be camera shooting as well as shooting at a towed drogue target. Towing these drogues was a job carried out by pilots on a rest tour; rumour had it that they would rather face the Luftwaffe than some of the more wildly shooting trainee gunners. By mid June 1942, when all was completed and the course passed James was awarded his Air Gunner Brevet and promoted to Sergeant on 7s 6d per day. Next stop off to an OTU to join with other aircrew trades and form a crew. It is now that he would know he was Bomber Command bound when he got his orders to proceed to No. 19 OTU at RAF Kinloss, Scotland.



THOMAS NEWTON'S ROUTE TO OTU.

Thomas Raine Newton was born about mid January of 1922 and was the second son of Herbert and Gertrude. From the age of 10 months Thomas was brought up by his Aunt and Uncle, Mr. & Mrs. A. Aberdeen of 5 Broome Lane, Ushaw Moor, Durham. Thomas attended Ushaw Moor council school as a youngster and was a keen footballer winning many medals. As well as football, Thomas was a member of the Ushaw Moor Church Lads Brigade. After he left school he served his time as an apprentice painter and prior to enlisting in the RAF was working at Bearpark Coke Works. At the time of his death Thomas had been in the RAF for 2 ½ years according to his obituary, this would mean he had joined up about August of 1940. This is quite a long time to reach the stage he did, so it is possible that he initially joined up as some trade other than Air Crew and then later re-mustered, or else something happened to delay his progress through the training system, probably the usual bottle neck. Thomas' brother was in the Durham Light Infantry and had been at Dunkirk as well as with the 8th Army in North Africa. The information on Thomas comes from Obituaries and the CWGC. Without access to his service records it is not possible to trace his path through the training program exactly until he joined up with his crew at the O.T.U.; but the following would cover it in general.

ITW Initial Training Wing,

As we have already seen with most of the others of our crew Thomas would have gone through the mill at I.T.W. Like James Whitehead after Initial training he would have to wait for a place on a course at Radio School to start the process of learning the trades of Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.

R.S. Radio School.

Also like James without access to Thomas' service records we don't know which Radio School he attended. His time here would likely have been very similar to the experience that James Whitehead went through; it is possible that they were at the same school and knew each other. On completion of the training here Thomas was awarded the 'Sparks' upper arm patch (shown below), was promoted to L.A.C. and got ready for the next step on his journey which also would be to a Gunnery school.



Wireless training rig



B&GS Bombing and Gunnery School.

Once again Thomas' time here would be similar to the experiences of James Whitehead and if we follow the premise that they were at the same Radio School, it is just as likely that they then went on to Bombing and Gunnery School together. So again around mid June 1942, when all was completed and the course passed Thomas was awarded his Air Gunner Brevet, promoted to Sergeant and got his orders to proceed to 19 OTU at RAF Kinloss.



JOHN COAKER'S ROUTE TO OTU.

John was born around late 1920 early 1921 to George and Edith Coaker of Leusdon, Poundsgate a small Hamlet on the edge of Dartmoor. A few years later a younger brother Walter was born and they grew up surrounded by the beautiful hills, valleys and pasture land that makes up this part of the world. The photos show them at play in an almost Swallows and Amazons way, I wonder how many times they fell in the Dart.



John (right) with younger brother Walter



John (again right) with friends on the River Dart

It is only natural then in this farming area that on leaving school John went to work on a nearby farm belonging to Mr. Hannaford at Sherrill. At this time farming was very much a horse dependant industry and the photos show John handling some of the farms horses around harvest time.



John, working for Peter Hannaford at Sherrill on Dartmoor

Once war was declared there was a policy of bringing women onto the land, The Women's Land Army, to release manpower for the Armed Forces.

Sometime towards the end of 1941, John volunteered for air crew and was accepted for training as an Air Gunner. He then probably had to wait a while to be called forward, maybe as much as 6 months to begin his journey that would lead him to join the crew of Herb Warne and bombing raids on the German capital.

I.T.W. Initial Training Wing.

Without access to John's records we have no way of knowing exactly where John did his training, but, once again, like all recruits into the RAF John had to go through I.T.W. Starting the process of learning his trade as an Air Gunner by learning Airmanship amongst other subjects and being subjected to hours of P.T., Drill and the usual 'Bull' previously described. At the end of this stage of his training he would find out where he was going next and to which school he would attend.

A.G.S. Air Gunnery School.

We don't know which Gunnery school John attended, but below is a description of what took place at No. 10 A.G.S. at RAF Walney, north of Barrow. Other Gunnery schools would have run on similar grounds.

Courses averaged 40 pupils made up of all ranks from LAC to Sergeant with 5 courses in progress at any time. Training started on the ground in a turret trainer. Then, still on the ground, two parallel tracks were laid, one with a powered turret moving backwards and forwards and the target on the other track moving in the opposite direction, this simulated air to air firing. All shooting was out to sea! When competent, pupils were taken up in the Boulton Paul Defiant aircraft to shoot from the rear-powered turret at drogues and targets in the sea. Many different aircraft were used by the Gunnery Schools, but they served the same purpose as the Defiant mentioned. The trainee dipped the tips of the bullets he was to fire in paint so his accuracy could be assessed when the drogues or targets were inspected. Later, cine-gun cameras were used as well. With this course passed John received his Air Gunner half wing and was promoted to Sergeant, next step No. 19 O.T.U. at Kinloss where he would meet the men who would form a crew of Bomber Command.



A Gunnery Training Room



THE ORIGINAL CREW FROM OTU TO HEAVY CONVERSION FLIGHT

19 OTU Operational Training Unit, RAF Kinloss, and Forres, Scotland. 91 Group, Bomber Command.

17th June 1942 until 24th August 1942. Course No. 41.

RAF Kinloss was the H.Q and Forres was a Satellite airfield, both were situated on the Southern side of the Moray Firth. In good weather this is a beautiful part of the world, but in bad weather the surrounding mountains could be a treacherous area to trap the unwary. Once here all the newly arrived aircrew were put together and told to get on with finding a crew, a bit haphazard seeming, but it seemed to work most often.



19 O.T.U. were flying Armstrong Whitworth Whitley MkV, twin engine bombers, these aircraft would soon stop flying on operations with Bomber Command. This version used Rolls Royce Merlin engines and had a crew of five. So Herb needed someone to navigate, drop bombs, work the Wireless equipment and an Air Gunner for the rear turret. At the stage of the war when the crew were here the separate specialisations of Navigator and Bomb Aimer were just coming into existence. Instead of an Observer doing all the tasks, now one would Navigate and another drop the bombs, although some Wireless

Operator/Air Gunners were trained for the later role, as we will see James Whitehead was one of these. Jack Preece's records show that on 23rd July he was now mustered as Nav 'B', he would still wear his 'O' brevet though. Crew composition changed often during the war, but from records these positions were filled by the following men chosen by Herb for his crew;

Sgt. Jack Preece,
Sgt. James Whitehead
Sgt. Thomas Newton
Sgt. John Coaker

Observer (O)	the Navigator.
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG),	the Bomb Aimer.
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (WOP/AG),	the Wireless operator.
Air Gunner (AG)	the Tail gunner.



The other gunner would normally join later on in the training scheme along with a Flight Engineer when they moved on to Heavy Bombers. After a period of ground school Herb would have gone up for some dual flying with an Instructor on board. Once he had demonstrated he could do circuits and landings he would be allowed to fly solo, now the crew would fly various exercises to meld them together as a team, they would fly cross country navigation flights, bombing range flights, air to air gunnery and practice evading fighter attacks etc.

Eventually they would put all these things together on exercise flights at the end. Sometimes crews under training would support the Main Force on an operation as well. Details of the period they were here are included in the 19 O.T.U. Operational Records Book appendix of this book. Once this was all completed they would then likely move to a Heavy bomber Conversion Unit, under normal circumstances that is, however things were not normal. Five crews including Herb's were temporarily attached for Coastal Command duties.





HERB WITH SOME OTHER PILOTS ON 41 COURSE.



JACK PREECE WITH OTHER OBSERVERS ON 41 COURSE



JAMES WHITEHEAD AND THOMAS NEWTON WITH OTHER WOP/AGs ON 41 COURSE.



JOHN COAKER AND OTHER GUNNERS ON 41 COURSE.

**No. 10 O.T.U. Operational Training Unit (detachment), RAF St. Eval, Cornwall, England.
2nd September 1942 until 16th October 1942.**



At this stage of the war the German U-boats were wreaking havoc on the Atlantic convoys, something desperate needed to be done. Some squadrons were diverted from Bomber Command to Coastal Command, as well as this, a detachment from No. 10 O.T.U. was sent to St Eval in Cornwall where Anti Submarine Patrols were flown by senior trainee crews. It is from this time that Herb's last Log book begins so we have an idea what they were doing. Herb's service record shows they arrived at 10 O.T.U. on 2nd September 1942 a day on which flying had been cancelled due to bad weather.

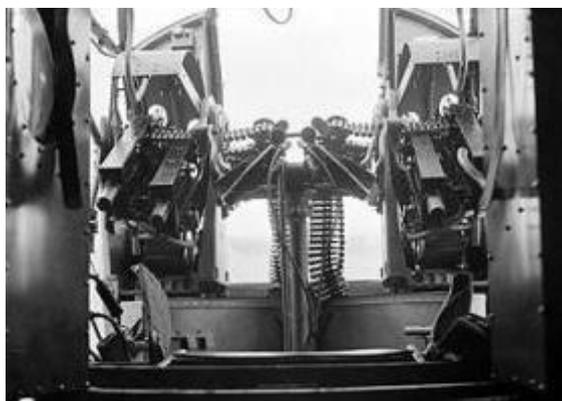
Their first flight was on the 5th September, a Navigation exercise lasting 5 hours 20 minutes. The Detachment sent out six 12 hour sweeps on this day, one of which was aborted. These flights took place over the Bay of Biscay and the Western Approaches, long dangerous flights in old, well worn Whitley aircraft, constant threat of German fighter attack and terrible weather would kill many crews before they could move on to HCU.

The next day Herb's crew flew their first operational flight; the Detachment sent out five 12 hour and two 8 ½ hour sweeps, one of the latter was Whitley BD282 flown by Herb, they were up for a total of 8 hours 50 minutes. One of the other crews attacked a U-boat, but no Kill was claimed. On the 7th there was a 30 minute air test in Z6485 to prepare her for an operational sweep on the following day. The 7th also saw the Detachment dispatching five 12 hour and this time three 8 ½ hour sweeps, again a U-boat was attacked without success.



September was the units second month on Anti-submarine patrols, the frequency on which the U-boats were being sighted and attacked must have begun to cause concern to Admiral Dönitz. 8th September, having air tested Z6485 the day before, Herb and the crew were airborne in her on an Anti-submarine patrol lasting just over 11 ½ hours, the unit flew another four 12 hour sorties and three 8 ½ hour ones all returning safely. After a busy four days Herb and the crew were rested on the 9th, they probably needed it after spending over 26 hours in the air during this time. The 9th though was a busy day for the unit, out of the five patrols sent out one aircraft ditched with the crew being saved, and one Whitley was attacked by three Arados, one of which they claimed as destroyed.

Back on duty again on the 10th Herb air tested Z6579, while they were thus occupied the unit had four sweeps out one of which found and attacked a U-boat. On the 11th Herb's crew again air tested



Z6579 ready for the next days operations; while this was going on there were five patrols sent out, one of which had to return early. The 12th found Herb's crew out as one of five 12 hour sweeps landing after a trip lasting 11 hours and 43 minutes. No flying by our crew on the 13th but eight sweeps were flown, three 8 ½ hour and five 12 hour ones. An air test of Z6974 was all the flying on the 14th by Herb's crew making sure she was serviceable for a long patrol to come. The unit once more had five aircraft out on patrols sighting one U-boat which crash dived before it could be attacked, no doubt putting the wind up a few Kriegsmarine sailors.

Whitley rear turret interior. (I.W.M.)

On the 15th Z6974 was up for 11 ¼ hours with Herb and the rest of the crew scouring the waters for the elusive U-boats, four other crews were also out that day, one having to return home after an hour due to a faulty port engine. Over the next two days 10 OTU Detachment flew eleven 12 hour sweeps, Herb's contribution was an air test on the 17th in Whitley Z6959 again. The next day they took Z9434 out on patrol for 10 hours 40 minutes, maybe Z6959 went unserviceable and they had to change aircraft, never the less the unit flew a total of six patrols that day. The 19th and 20th were rest days for Herb's crew, six patrols being flown on the 19th, but bad weather grounding all aircraft on the 20th. The 21st was a black day for the detachment, Herb and his crew in Z9434 again were detailed along with five other crews to fly anti-submarine patrols, one crew managed to attack a U-boat but claimed no hits. Unfortunately two aircraft ditched near the coast on their return, a drastic change in the weather caused Navigation errors and presumably shortage of petrol, no trace of the aircraft or crews were found by Air sea rescue.

Over the next two days there were ten 12 hour patrols, two 8 ½ hour patrols and a search for the ditched aircraft of the 21st lasting 6 hours. One aircraft was attacked by two FW190's on the 23rd but were able to evade them without sustaining any damage. Back on operations again on the 24th, Herb and his crew flew an 11 hour patrol in Z9285, one of five sweeps taking place that day. The 25th saw the loss of another Whitley Z6485, it was forced to ditch after being shot down by a Ju88, the crew being rescued from their dinghy, the other four patrols returned safely. Six more sweeps were sent out on the following day with nothing of note occurring. Another sortie on the 27th had Herb and the crew out over the cold dangerous waters of the Atlantic; they were aloft for just over eleven hours in Whitley Z6580 having air tested her the previous day. One of the other four aircraft detailed for sweeps crashed on take off and was burnt out, there were no casualties though. Once again on the 28th bad weather forced the cancellation of operations.

A promising attack on a U-boat was made by one of the six aircraft patrolling on the 29th; another aircraft was attacked by an Arado. Herb carried out an air test lasting 55 minutes on Z9484. They took this aircraft out on their last patrol with 10 OTU Detachment the next day, the 30th. Five patrols were flown this day, two U-boats were sighted and one attacked unsuccessfully though.

Herb and the crew flew 9 Patrols in September totalling 99 hours; this almost doubled his total day time multi-engine solo flying and completed their time at 10 OTU. Due to the nature of these Anti Sub patrols it is just possible that they could have had a sixth crewman on board. The final entry for this period in Herb's Log Book was a total for the detachment and was signed off on the 5th October.



Whitley BMk.V

Herb wrote home on 29th October saying he was on leave, the third week, waiting to be told where to report to next and that he expected to go on Lancasters. He said he was staying with relatives of his Wireless Operator, Thomas Newton, yet in Herb's records it shows that he was meant to be at No. 44 Conversion Flight at RAF Waddington on the 16th October. Jack Preece's records confirm this date as well. It looks like that for some reason the message had not reached Herb, and presumably Thomas. If we had access to Thomas Newton's records we could see if he also was hauled over the coals as we will see
Herb was.

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT						PASS- ENGINEER
1942		Type	No.				DAY		NIGHT		DAY		NIGHT				
MONTH	DATE					DUAL (1)	PILOT (2)	DUAL (3)	PILOT (4)	DUAL (5)	1ST PILOT (6)	2ND PILOT (7)	DUAL (8)	1ST PILOT (9)	2ND PILOT (10)	(11)	
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD						29:30	25:10			67:25	113:15	9:45	17:15	28:20	7:40		
- CORNWALL																	
Sept	5	Whitley	Z6789	self	crew												
"	6	"	80282	self	crew												
<i>Allocated after</i>																	
<i>oc: B flight</i>																	
SUMMARY "B" flight.																	
Date. 4/42																	
Unit- 10 O.T.U. Detachment.																	
Sig- J.H. Wanne.																	
Sept.	7	Whitley	Z6485	self	crew												
"	8	"	Z6485	self	crew												
"	10	"	Z6579	self	crew												
"	11	"	Z6759	self	crew												
"	12	"	Z6959	self	crew												
"	14	"	Z6974	self	crew												
"	15	"	Z6974	self	crew												
"	17	"	Z6959	self	crew												
"	18	"	Z9434	self	crew												
"	21	"	Z9434	self	crew												
"	24	"	Z9285	self	crew												
"	26	"	Z6580	self	crew												
"	27	"	Z6580	self	crew												
"	29	"	Z9484	self	crew												
"	30	"	Z9484	self	crew												
GRAND TOTAL (Cols. (1) to (10))						29:30	25:10			67:25	219:45	9:45	17:15	28:20	7:40		
4.04 Hrs. 50 Mins.																	
TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD						(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	

Extract from Herb's Log book.

LETTER HOME FROM HERB WHILE IN BETWEEN 10 OTU AND 44 CF

Write
address in large
BLOCK letters
wholly within
this panel

TO:- Mrs. I. WARNE,
KENNEDY,
SASK,
CANADA.

948548



The address
must NOT
be typewritten.

Write the message very plainly below this line.

Sender's Address: R102085 Sgt. WARNE T.H.
Attached to RAF.
RCAF. OVERSEAS.

DATE Oct. 29, 1942

Dear Mother,

I am still on leave having not been told where to report to yet. Therefore I have not had any mail lately as it will all be kept at my last station until I send in a new address. This is the third week I have been on leave and I have been staying with relatives of my wireless operator. For the past week I have been staying at an Uncle's who has a son out in Canada training to be a pilot. At present he is at ~~Weyburn~~ so that isn't very far from home.

David and I are both doing fine, but regret that we will be unable to send Christmas presents, so you will have to buy something you like with our money.

I expect to be going onto Lancasters now, whereas David is on beaufighters. Well chorio for now

All my Love
Herbert.

This space should not be used.

ARTHUR HITCHON'S ROUTE TO HEAVY CONVERSION FLIGHT.

Arthur was born George Arthur Hitchon on 25th August 1923 the eldest son of Edwin and Lilian Mary (nee Walker) of Padiham, near Burnley. As a young boy Arthur attended St. Leonard's school Padiham where he won a scholarship to Clitheroe Royal Grammar School. While at Grammar school Arthur studied towards service in the RAF as he intended to make the RAF his career. Studying for the common entrance exam was not going to be an easy achievement as elementary schools in those days did not cover the syllabus the Common Entrance Examination required, so without the scholarship it is doubtful if he would ever have made it. Arthur sang as a choirboy at St. Leonard's church and while at school he enjoyed playing Golf.

Shortly before the outbreak of war probably in May 1939, Arthur sat the entrance exam he had studied for so long; having passed it and after an interview he was accepted into the RAF as a boy aircraft apprentice. These exams were subscribed to by hundreds of eager boys all trying for one of the prestigious places as a "Trenchard Brat" as they were known after Lord Trenchard, the Father of the Royal Air Force. It was he at the formation of the RAF in 1918 that realised the back bone of the force would need to be highly trained and skilled men, the post WW1 RAF was like all the armed services a small shadow of their wartime strength and so needed to make the most of its resources. His foresight served the country well, for when troubled times approached, it was these highly trained specialists who were able to take the rapidly expanding manpower and teach them what they needed to know and to be in positions of responsibility over them once they were trained in narrower areas of knowledge and skill than the pre-war apprentices.

No.1 School of Technical Training, RAF Halton, nr. Wendover. Buckinghamshire.

29TH Aug. 1939 to 25th Mar. 1942.

RAF Halton is nestled amongst the Chiltern Hills about a mile north of Wendover, the Estate was offered to the Army by Lord Rothschild as an area to help train the huge New Armies in 1914. In 1916, the Royal Flying Corps moved here, having outgrown Farnborough where air mechanics were trained. The complex that later was known as the Old Workshops was built in 1917, using German PoW's, and the current airfield was set up. After the Great War, the Air Council bought the whole estate from the Rothschild family to house No.1 SofTT which moved in from RAF Cranwell in 1919. There now began a massive building program to replace the temporary wartime structures with permanent barrack blocks, messes and a schools block. In 1920 the Aircraft Apprentice program was started, this would see over 40,000 apprentices in 155 Entries pass through to its end in 1993. RAF Halton also ran many shorter and other specialist courses for adult entrants to the RAF. In 1927 a major hospital was opened, Princess Mary's, here, until its closure in 1995, thousands of Medical trades and nurses were trained.

When Arthur arrived at Halton there were 4 Wings, 2 large parade grounds each had 2 Wings. The Parade ground (Maitland) closest to Wendover was the turf of No. 3 and 4 Wing. To the north of this were No. 1 and 2 Wings, one on the West, (Groves side) and the other on the east, (Henderson side closest to the woods)

On joining the RAF as an Apprentice on 29th August 1939, 4 days after his 16th birthday, Arthur was allocated service number 576765 and posted to RAF Halton, No. 4 Wing until the rest of his entry arrived. As a regular airman, he signed on for a term of 12 years, although as a boy entrant, this time would not start until he was 18, so he would not be due for release from the RAF until 24th August 1953. Arthur was described on entry as 5'7 ½" tall, with Auburn hair, brown eyes and of Fresh complexion. He listed his home address at the time as 54 Blackburn Road, Padiham, Nr. Burnley, later his parents would move to 28 Bridge street, an address that will crop up as events unfold. It will not go unnoticed that within another 4 days of his enlistment the country declared war on NAZI Germany and uncertain times were ahead.

At Halton Arthur along with hundreds of other boy's was sworn in, had Medicals and was issued uniforms, this would take a few days, as part of his uniform he would get the brass apprentice wheel badge to be worn on his upper arm, the symbol of an apprentice; a different coloured hat band denoted each wing.



THE APPRENTICE WHEEL

One week after joining on 5th September 1939 Arthur was transferred to No. 3 Wing, still at Halton. This intake of apprentices was to be No.40 Entry, and if all went according to plan they would be together for the next three years. They would first undergo basic training; learning drill, airmanship, basic weapons training and undergoing masses of P.T. to build up young bodies for what was to come. As an Aircraft Apprentice (Airframes) Arthur, would spend the next few years learning the intricacies of his trade, Riggers learned to make sheet metal fittings, welding, tin bashing, heat treatment of metals, plating and, of course how to rig an aeroplane. They also learned to use fabric and about doping, hydraulics, pneumatics and many other such subjects, there was also a course on metallurgy. From time to time throughout the course, the boys had to make test jobs; a test job would be included in the trade exam. Arthur's time would be split between classroom work and practical work in the workshops and down at the nearby airfield. There would also still be a good deal of drill and P.T. as well as 'Bull', or spit and polish.

All this for the sum of a Shilling a day (5p), paid at the rate of 6 Shillings per fortnight, the balance being paid when he went on leave, this happened at Easter, Summer and Christmas. There are stories of Apprentices going on leave clutching a £5 note and not being able to buy anything to eat or drink as no one could change such a large sum for them. Next time they would make sure they had saved a couple of shillings from their pay until a bank could change their leave pay.



Arthur's time at Halton did not go easy as his service records testify, on 5th March 1940 he was admitted to the Princess Mary RAF Hospital, also at Halton for what turned out to be a very lengthy stay, it was not until 9th May 1940 9 weeks later that he was finally discharged. For what reason he was in hospital we do not know, if illness, it must have been very serious, or else it could have been an injury, either way this stint in hospital would have put him well behind on his training.

With the German attack in the West steamrolling on, the B.E.F. and a large part of the French army fell back on Dunkirk. A masterful evacuation took place until by the 4th June 1940 About 330,000 troops had been removed from the clutches of the German Army.

The records show Arthur being transferred to No. 2 Wing 28th June 1940; this would have been to "back course" him, he had missed so much training that he would not have been able to catch up, so he joined another course, No.41 Entry which had arrived six months after Arthur about 600 strong. No.2 Wing was divided into A, B and C Squadrons, each of the Squadrons was controlled by a WO II and a Flight Lieutenant.

The build up of troop numbers in the UK meant that there were thousands of troops that needed to be accommodated, as part of the plans for this it was decided to rush through the Apprentices that were nearing

the completion of their apprenticeships. So the 38th and 39th Entries found themselves entering the real Air Force a bit earlier than planned, and in about October the 40th Entry took over No. 2 Wing at Groves and 41st Entry moved across the parade square to No. 1 Wing, Henderson. The now empty 3 and 4 Wing areas at Maitland were used to accommodate some of the troops that were jammed into the UK. Eventually Hostility only airmen would move in here while they went through their training as flight mechanics and fitters to feed the Air Force's huge appetite for man power.



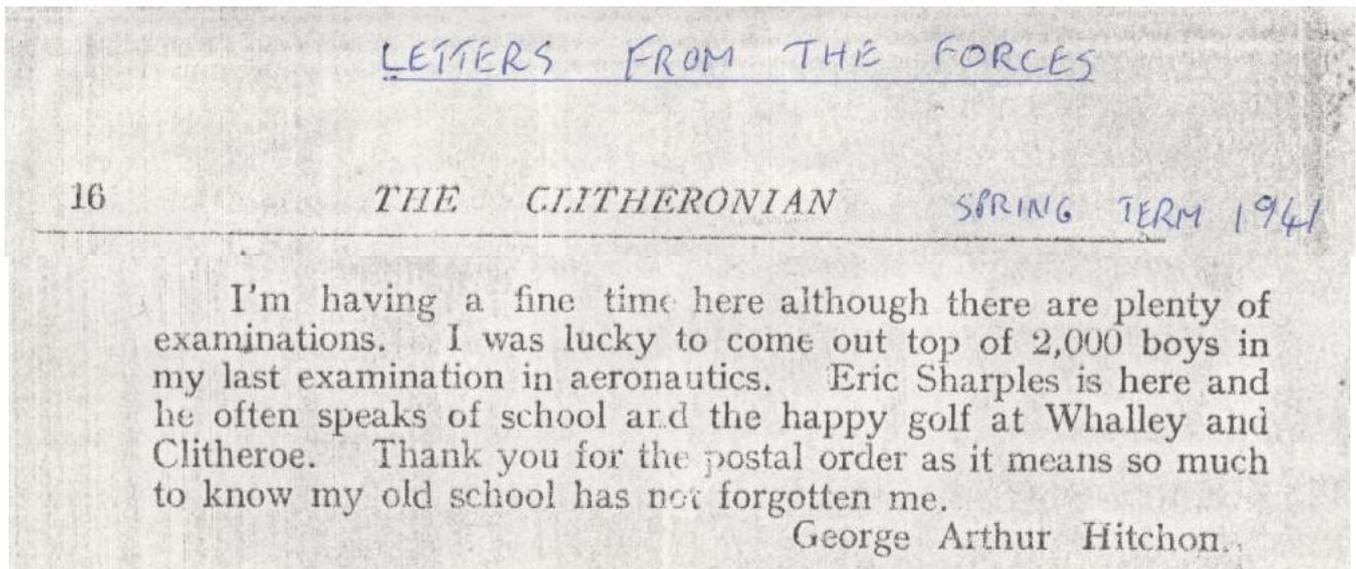
**Halton 1941, comrades three.
Claude Phillips – “Swede” Blee – (Self) Arthur**



**Halton 1941
(Self) Arthur and “Swede” Blee**

Things seem to settle down again for Arthur, there is a part of a letter that Arthur sent to his old school published in the spring of 1941 edition of the Clitheronian, his old school magazine, where he thanks them for a cash Postal order they have sent him. The school had a comforts fund which provided small sums to its ex-pupils to allow them to buy small items and was a way that the school could show that it was thinking of its old alumni. He also says he is having a fine time, although there are plenty of exams, he had

recently come top out of 2,000 boys in his last exam on Aeronautics (possibly a misprint, 200 is approximately the amount of Riggers in his entry), and that another of his school mates, Eric Sharples is there.



Extract from school magazine Spring 1941 term



Arthur with Mum and Dad.

Due to the shortage of skilled tradesmen it had been decided to shorten the length of the Apprenticeship from 3 years to 2 years, the working day had been increased to make up some of the time

On the 29th August 1941, 2 years after enlistment and 4 days after his 18th Birthday, his records show he is awarded progress pay, this is a pay raise that could be because he had now started his adult service and would be a boost to his spending power, the boy rates of pay were not very generous even for those times. A few days later though, on the 2nd September Arthur was again to be found in hospital, although only 18 days being released on the 20th.

One of the last phases of training was a month spent at the airfield working on complete aircraft, it was February and there was no heating in the hangar where a Hurricane and a Spitfire were housed to be worked on by the apprentices. By March Arthur had just about finished his Apprenticeship, and this month saw him sitting his final examinations. One of these was his Fitter IIA exam, his Airframe trade qualification exam on the 18th. The marks for continuous assessment of practical work was averaged, weighted and the final school exam added, giving Arthur 51.2%. (Artificially low due to the shortening of the course).

The day of the Pass Out parade arrived, March the 25th, there was a formal parade with a few spectators and speeches, if it had not been for the war many of the apprentices families would have attended. The next day Arthur was awarded his Fitter IIA grade and the rank of AC2, Aircraftsman 2nd Class, an Apprentice could pass out with one of three ranks depending on how well he had done; AC2, AC1 or LAC.

To make it to LAC they had to be exceptional, not many got AC1 either, almost all got AC2 rank. As an Aircraftman Second Class his pay was now about 3 shillings and six pence a day (17.5p). After 2 ½ years, almost 7 months more than the other apprentices with the reduction in course length Arthur was let loose on the 'real' RAF.



Arthur with Mum.

**No. 34 M.U. Maintenance Unit, The Aerodrome, Monkmoor road, Shrewsbury.
26th Mar. 1942 to 28th Jul. 1942.**

After completing his training as a Fitter IIA Arthur was posted to No. 34 Maintenance Unit where he worked on Airspeed Oxfords. These aircraft were used for communications and extensively for training of most aircrew trades. Accommodation for those on Base was 60 men to a barrack room; the beds arranged in four rows of fifteen, some were off base in billets though. The factory like workshop environment and working on second line aircraft must have been disappointing for a keen and eager young man. Notices had gone out asking for volunteers from the Fitter trades to become Flight Engineers on the new Heavy bombers. So while here he saw the notice and made the decision to volunteer for air crew as a Flight Engineer, due to his background as an Apprentice trained Fitter he was ideally suited to the new trade of Flight Engineer. After an interview his application would have gone through for consideration. In the meantime Arthur continued with his assigned duties. On 19th July Arthur was sent on an Oxford aircraft Airframes course of Instruction at Messers Airspeed Ltd. of Portsmouth, the company that manufactured the Airspeed Oxford, an aircraft that we saw Herb Warne flying earlier. It must have been while here that Arthur learned he had been accepted for aircrew because on 28th July he was sent to No. 4 S. of TT where Flight Engineer training was undertaken as a U/T Flight Engineer.



**No.4 School of Technical Training, RAF St. Athan, South Wales.
28th Jul. 1942 to 11th Oct. 1942.**

Before, and early in the War the RAF used Pilots and second Pilots in their aircraft, the amount of time it took to train a pilot and the shortage of pilots in the expanding RAF would not allow for the continuance of this system, hence the Flight Engineer was introduced. It was much quicker to take suitably educated young men with technical backgrounds and train them in the areas they would need as a Flight Engineer, their course was the shortest of any of the Air Crew trades. The course was taught based on the

aircraft that the trainees were to fly operationally, so Arthur would know that he was going on Lancasters as soon as he arrived and was put onto the Lancaster course.

On entry into one of St. Athan's large hangars Arthur would have been presented with the site of components of a Lancaster, a Halifax, and Sterling 4-engine bombers, as well as a Sunderland and Catalina flying boats laid out on the floor and on the walls. There could even have been sectioned engines of various types in the hangar as well. The Instructors were enthusiastic and took every effort to ensure that the course was interesting and entertaining as well as very instructive. The course was very intense and covered the whole range of Airframe and Engine construction, hydraulic, fuel, pneumatic, oxygen and electrical systems. Other aspects were engine handling, knowing which combinations of power and propeller settings to use to get the best performance for differing flight conditions. There would be much practice on flight drills such as feathering propellers, dealing with engine fires etc. As well he would learn how to make small airborne repairs and cover many other interesting subjects. It is probable that like his earlier attachment to Airspeed Ltd., there would have been a week or so spent at the AVRO factory receiving more Gen from the manufacturer, if he was lucky it might have been at one of the locations near enough to home to allow him to see his folks.

The nine weeks would have flown by until on the 8th of October with his training here complete Arthur passed his final exam, was awarded his Flight Engineer's Brevet and promoted to Sergeant. It was now time for him to join a crew that had completed an Operational Training Unit (OTU) course, by the time Arthur was ready this would be at a Conversion Flight. This meant that Arthur had not been with the crew when they first formed and bonded as they progressed through the earlier flying training and that he was not with them while they were flogging over the Bay of Biscay on the Anti-submarine patrols. In fact it is highly possible that before arriving onto Heavy bombers Arthur might not have flown at all. Heading across country from St. Athan, maybe after a couple of days home leave, Arthur arrived on the 12th October 1942 at the home of No.44 Conversion Flight at RAF Waddington, Nr. Lincoln, an operational Station with Avro Manchester and Lancaster aircraft belonging to No's 44 and 9 Squadrons. It must have been an eye opener for him to finally be in the big league surrounded by men who had faced the dangers of flying over enemy territory and being eager to meet the men whose crew he would become a member of.



Arthur Hitchon

EDDIE LOVEROCK'S ROUTE TO HEAVY CONVERSION FLIGHT

Eddie was born on 27th December 1921 to Fredrick and Mabel Loverock (nee Bagshaw), in Newborough, Staffordshire, near Burton on Trent. Eddie's Father came from a farming family near Newborough and had been a soldier during WW1. On his return the farm could not support all the family, so he joined the G.P.O.. Eddie's Mother was a school teacher and married Fredrick in 1918 near Burton upon Trent. Eddie had an elder brother Fred, born 1920, who unfortunately died very soon after his birth, a younger sister Joyce, born 1926 and a younger brother David born 1928. At some time before Joyce was born, the family moved to live in Matlock, where Eddie went to the Matlock Council School and won a scholarship to attend Ernest Bailey Grammar School.

As a boy and young man he was known for his remarkable voice with which he won many prizes at festivals around the Midlands, and along with his sister and brother David he sang in the All Saints' Church choir. He was also a keen sportsman, playing for the Matlock Bank Church Institute in the local Table Tennis league. Along with these activities he still found time to play an active role in the 5th Troop Matlock Boy Scouts. After he left school he was employed by the Post Office from 9th March 1938, and obviously had thoughts of joining the RAF as he became a member of the Air Training Corps when this organisation was set up rising to the rank of Corporal.

On 9th February 1940 not long after his 18th birthday, Eddie enlisted in the R.A.F. for the duration of the present emergency as an ACH/WO, Aircraft Hand/Wireless Operator. Upon enlistment he was described as 5'5 3/4" tall with Dark Brown hair, blue eyes and with a fresh complexion.

No.2 R.C. (Recruit Centre), RAF Cardington.

9th Feb. 1940 to 24th Jun. 1940.

Like Jack Preece, Eddie was put on the strength of No.2 R.C. at Cardington for admin purposes and immediately placed on the Reserve as an AC2 to wait calling forward.

No.3 E&WS. (Electrical and Wireless School), RAF Compton Bassett, Colne, Wiltshire.

24th Jun. 1940 to 9th Oct. 1940.

Unusually Eddie was sent to No.3 E&WS to begin training as a Wireless Operator apparently without undergoing any basic training, unless he did it here, or at Cardington, or it might just be an error in his records. It is not clear either if he was training as a Ground Wireless Operator or as Air Crew; since he had not been before an ACSB or attended an ITW it is assumed that he was a Ground Wireless Operator trainee. A good deal of the training was the same for both and they trained side by side. For some reason though Eddie was re-mustered as an Aircraft Hand/General Duties on 13th September 1940 and posted to No. 421 Flight the following month. It would take longer than this to fully train as a Wireless Operator, so it looks like Eddie did not complete the course.

No.421 (Reconnaissance) Flight, RAF Gravesend near Rochester, Kent and RAF Hawkinge near Folkestone.

9th Oct. 1940 to 11th Jan. 1941.

Eddie was posted to this unit the day after it was formed at Gravesend near Rochester in Kent. It was equipped with Spitfires, to carry out shipping reconnaissance and to monitor the movements, tactics and markings of the enemy. As an Aircraft hand he would be assisting in non technical tasks, although the time spent training as a wireless operator might have seen him used by the Radio trades as more than a general dogs body. There is a cancelled entry in Eddie's records for 6th Dec. 1940 that show a posting to No.3 Wing, RAF Halton as an FM u/t, (Flight Mechanic under training). Since it was cancelled though it must be assumed that he continued with his normal duties. Some time during this period the Flight moved to RAF Hawkinge near Folkestone, then on 11th January 1941, 421 Flight was re-designated No.91 Squadron.

No.91 (Nigeria) Squadron, RAF Hawkinge.

11th Jan. 1941 to 7th Nov. 1941.

Eddie was promoted to AC1 on 13th March, but he must have wanted to be even more involved in the war effort and he decided to apply for Air crew. On 28th June 1941 he was recommended for training as an Air Gunner. No.91 Sqn. became a normal fighter squadron in the summer but also continued to carry out weather

reconnaissance mission and ASR patrols, the latter were eventually taken over by dedicated ASR. Another promotion for Eddie to LAC followed on the 16th September.

A.C.R.C. Aircrew Reception Centre.

7th Nov. 1941 to 15th Nov. 1941.

Unfortunately the records do not show which ACRC Eddie went to, it could have been the famous, or infamous one at Regents Park where thousands of airmen passed through on their way to various training establishments, any way he did not have long to wait before he was on his way as a u/t Air Gunner to No.14 I.T.W.

No. 14 I.T.W. Initial Training Wing. St. Leonard's, in Hastings, later Bridlington.

15th Nov. to ?

14 ITW was at Hastings when Eddie arrived; later in 1942 it moved up to Bridlington to escape the hit and run raids on Hastings by the Luftwaffe, but by that time Eddie should have progressed further down the training route. When did he leave 14 ITW? The next entry in his records is a posting to Air Gunners school on 5th September 1942, what happened to him until then is not shown, but ITW should not have taken longer than a few months, maybe he was sent somewhere else such as to a B&GS and it was not recorded or there could have been an injury or an illness, but there is still a good while unaccounted for. Never the less eventually he received his orders and made his way North to No.4 A.G.S. at Morpeth, Northumberland.

No. 4 A.G.S. Air Gunnery School, RAF Morpeth.

5th Sep 1942 to 19th Oct. 1942

Situated 3 miles SW of Morpeth, the accommodation for personnel was in 10 dispersed sites to the north and east of the airfield. The main aircraft used during the time Eddie was here for teaching air gunners was the Blackburn Botha, this was a very heavy and under powered 'failed' Torpedo bomber that had been dumped on the training organisations.

The standard course lasted six weeks, starting with ground instruction and followed with about 15 training flights. Most of the air gunnery practice occurred off shore at Druridge Bay. The usual flight path took the aircraft over the coast at Blyth, out to sea for gunnery practice and back inland over the Aln estuary. Three or four pupils were carried on each flight, usually with an instructor. They did live firing at a drogue towed by the Lysander target tugs or used a camera gun whilst another aircraft made simulated attacks on them. These attacks were often made by pilots flying Miles Masters, an advanced trainer in service with some of the fighter Operational Training Units in Northumberland. Having successfully completing the course on 17th October Eddie added the Air Gunner's half wing and Sergeant's stripes to his uniforms and prepared to set off to join a crew at No.44 Conversion Flight at RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire. This is where he would finally join the rest of Herb's crew and eventually get to visit Berlin.



Eddie pictured in his flying kit.

THE FULL CREW FROM CONVERSION FLIGHT TO OPS.

44 C.F. Conversion Flight, RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire 16th October 1942 until 9th November 1942.

It was at 44 CF that the Flight Engineer, Arthur Hitchon and the other Air Gunner Eddie Loverock joined the crew, one Air Gunner would be the tail gunner while the other occupied the mid-upper turret, the Bomb Aimer would also man the front turret if need be. John Coaker had been the tail gunner while the crew were flying Whitleys, but after talking with the crew he was to occupy the Mid-upper turret now leaving the Rear turret to Eddie. In the 1661 HCU ORB section there is evidence that supports this, concerning the positions they occupied on raids to Berlin. It is also mentioned in Eddie's obituary that he was a Rear Gunner. Arthur's service records show him arriving on the 12th October, so he at least had a couple of weeks to kill before Herb and Thomas turned up, time he might have spent getting airborne on air tests and other flights. Jack Preece's records show he arrived on the 16th October and Eddie on the 17th. There is an entry again in Herb's records showing that Herb received a severe reprimand on the 30th November and forfeited 8d pay award between 16th October and 3rd November. I wonder if Herb was charged for not reporting to 44 C.F. on time, a bit harsh if he had not received his orders. But the RAF has never considered ignorance as an excuse, as I said, harsh. Herb's crew was now complete, seven in number.

At this time some Operational Squadrons had their own conversion flight, so 44 C.F. was part of No. 44 Squadron for admin purposes and operated Manchester and Lancaster aircraft. This situation was inefficient and so dedicated conversion units were formed. Herb did not get any flying done while he was on the strength of this conversion flight.

1661 HCU Heavy Conversion Unit, RAF Waddington, Lincs., RAF Scampton, Lincs. and RAF Winthorpe (now Newark Air Museum). 9th November 1942 until 31st January 1943.



Avro Manchester (I.W.M.)



Manchester cockpit (I.W.M.)

1661 HCU was formed from the conversion flights of No.s 9 and 44 Squadrons at RAF Waddington, Lincs. on 9th November 1942 flying a mix of Manchester and Lancaster aircraft. No. 49 Sqn's conversion flight at RAF Scampton joined and became 'C' Flight. The Avro Manchester was a twin-engine heavy bomber powered by Rolls Royce Vulture 24 cylinder 'X' configuration engines. The Manchester was a failure due to the unreliability of the Vulture engines, Rolls Royce could not spare the resources to sort them out so the decision was taken to redesign the Manchester to take 4 Rolls Royce Merlin engines and the Lancaster was born. It is a sobering thought when you realise that had the Vulture worked then the RAF would have been left without the best bomber in the European theatre.

All the specialist raids that took place because of the Lancaster bombers capabilities would not have been possible.

On the HCU's formation the crew first went to 'A' Flight at RAF Waddington and learned to fly the Manchester, 3 hours 25 min Dual and 9 hours 35 min Solo in daylight.



Manchester interior



Eddie's new home

With this under their belt it was over to 'C' Flight at nearby RAF Scampton to finally get their hands on a Lancaster. Towards the end of December there was some ferrying around of aircraft from one station to another; on 31st December the crew were taken to RAF Winthorpe in a Lancaster flown by P/O Fletcher.

Winthorpe was intended as a satellite station for RAF Swinderby when the country finally woke up and began rearming. It opened in September 1940, and the following month it was used by aircraft from two Polish squadrons from nearby RAF Swinderby. The airfield was attacked in November 1940 when a parachute landmine was dropped making a huge crater, but two dispersed aircraft were undamaged. Through out 1941 the airfield continued to be used for training, when Swinderby was unable to be used.



aircraft falling on this factory would be a major disaster disrupting vital ball bearing production on top of the loss of life that would ensue.

In November 1941 control of the airfield passed to RAF Ossington and in February 1942 it became another satellite station for RAF Syerston but not a great deal happened during this period.

In October 1942 the airfield again came under Swinderby's control and on the 31st of December 1942 it received its own unit, No. 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit of from RAF Waddington and RAF Scampton. The unit was operating a mix of Avro Manchesters and Avro Lancasters at the time. These aircraft were ferried to

When the airfield runways were laid out, the main runway direction was such that a bomber taking off would pass over Newark, not an ideal situation, especially as right in the path was a major ball bearing producing factory. A bombed up



Winthorpe by the crews during the first week of January.

As of 1st January 1661 HCU moved it's H.Q. to RAF Winthorpe, on the 4th and 9th the crew were taken to RAF Waddington returning with a Manchester and a Lancaster as the unit's aircraft continued to be relocated. The 12th of January was a red letter day; this is the first time the crew flew a Lancaster at night when they were up for 2 hours of Night Dual training.

On the 15th all Lancasters were grounded in preparation for flying on operations. 1661 HCU was to provide 5 aircraft to contribute to a Main Force attack on Berlin on night of 15/16th, the first for over a year; the operation was to be flown from RAF Swinderby. Both of the gunners were to fly on this raid, but in different aircraft which were to be flown by Instructors. Due to various reasons only one aircraft made it on this night, the one in which John Coaker was flying as Mid-upper Gunner. The aircraft were however retained at Swinderby for another operation on the 16/17th, again to Berlin and by the same route. Four out of the five made it to the target and back, one returned early. No doubt when the Gunners got back the rest of the crew were eager to know how things went on a 'Big City' raid, especially as Eddie's aircraft was three times approached by a night fighter which was avoided. Thomas Newton's obituary records that he also took part in these raids although he does not appear on the crew lists for 1661 HCU; it is possible that he flew in one of the aircraft of Swinderby's resident unit, or simply a misunderstanding by his family.



On the 20th another training flight was flown from RAF Winthorpe, but from January 21st things become a bit confused. On this day the crew flew a Lancaster R5842 to RAF Waddington, a 30 minute flight; there is no record of them returning by air to RAF Winthorpe. Weather at Winthorpe for the next two days was poor and very little flying took place. On the 24th January, Herb his crew and a Sgt. Good were up with P/O Fletcher for night dual, this could be from Waddington as at the end of the duty Herb logs 30 minutes as a passenger, this could be while they flew back to Winthorpe with either P/O Fletcher or Sgt. Good at the controls. It is recorded that for various reasons some flying took place from airfields other than home base.

The only recorded 3 engine flying the crew did in a Lancaster was on the 23rd December 1942 and 28th January 1943. So, 4 hours 40 min Dual and 16 hours 20 min Solo in daylight plus 3 hours Dual and 5 hours 35 min solo at night. That was it; their last HCU flight was night landing practice on the 29th January 1943, all they were going to get, next stop an Operational Squadron and the prospect of flying 200 hours over enemy territory, later a tour length would consist of 30 trips regardless of hours flown.

MORE OF THE CREW POSITIONS



In the nose



James' work place



Jack's curtained off area



Thomas' office



John's new position



Eddie brings up the rear.

YEAR
1942

DATE	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	
	Type	No.				
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD						
<p><i>Alcock - Sher</i> O.C. A FLIGHT.</p>			<p>Summary for Sept. 1942</p>		Whitler	
<p><i>R. G. F. Clark</i> O.C. 10 O.T.U. SQUADRON.</p>			<p>UNIT - 10 O.T.U. Detachment.</p>			
			<p>Date - Oct. 5, 1942.</p>			
			<p>Sig - J. H. Wynn</p>			
1661 CONVERSION FLIGHT. "A" FLIGHT. WADDINGTON.						
NOV 23	MANCHESTER	7430	1/3 KNIGHT	SELF	familiarization	:30
25	"	7430	1/3 KNIGHT	SELF + CREW	CIRCUITS & LANDINGS	:55
26	"	7430	1/3 KNIGHT	SELF + CREW	CIRCUITS & LANDINGS	1:25
DEC 1	"	7481	1/3 KNIGHT	SELF + CREW	CHECK	:35
1	"	7481	SELF	CREW	CIRCUITS & LANDINGS	:55
5	"	5790	SELF	CREW	CIRCUITS & LANDINGS	1:50
8	"	7481	SELF	CREW	BOMBING DNCO	:55
9	"	7453	SELF	CREW	BOMBING & AIR FIRING	2:10
12	"	7481	SELF	CREW	S.B.A. BOMBING	2:30
15	"	7481	SELF	CREW	BOMBING	1:35
<p><i>Row Sadler</i> Pilot O.C. A FLIGHT.</p>					Summary Nov 23 to Dec 15	MANCHESTER.
<p>O.C. 1661 Conv. Flight.</p>					UNIT - 1661 Conv. Flight.	
					DATE - Dec. 16 - 1942	
					Sig - J. H. Wynn	

GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]

417 Hrs. 50 Mins.

TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD

SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT						PASS- ENGER	D E C I D
DAY		NIGHT		DAY			NIGHT				
DUAL	PILOT	DUAL	PILOT	DUAL	1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT	DUAL	1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT	(11)	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)		
29:30	25:10			67:25	219:45	9:45	17:15	28:20	7:40		
				Total - 10 a/c. Detachment. 106:30							
				8:25 9:35							
				70:50 229:20							

Extract from Herb's Log book.

YEAR	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				PASS- ENGER	
	Type	No.				DAY		NIGHT		DAY		NIGHT			
MONTH			DATE	DEAL (1)	PILOT (2)	DEAL (3)	PILOT (4)	DEAL (5)	1ST PILOT (6)	2ND PILOT (7)	DEAL (8)	1ST PILOT (9)	2ND PILOT (10)	(11)	
					TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD					70:50	229:20				
					"C" FLIGHT 1661 CON. FLIGHT SCAMPTON.										
DEC	20	LANCASTER	R5850	P/O HARTLEY	SELF + CREW										
	21	"	R5850	P/O HARTLEY	SELF + CREW. Sgt Good										
	22	"	R5842	P/O HARTLEY	SELF + CREW Sgt Good.										
	22	"	R5842	SELF	CREW										
	22	"	R5842	SELF	CREW										
	23	"	R5842	P/O HARTLEY	SELF + CREW										
	23	"	R5842	SELF	CREW										
	24	"	R5547	SELF	CREW										
	28	MANCHESTER	7496	SELF	CREW										
	28	LANCASTER	W4258	SELF	CREW										
	31	"	R5547	P/O FLETCHER	SELF + CREW										
					SUMMARY DEC 20 - 31.										
					UNIT - 1661 CON. FLIGHT.										
					DATE DEC. 31 - 1942										
					SIG. J. H. WARR										
1943															
JAN	4	MANCHESTER	7496	P/O KNIGHT	SELF + CREW										
	4	"	7281	SELF	CREW										
	9	LANCASTER	4122	P/O MANIFOLD	SELF + CREW										
	9	"	R5904	SELF	CREW										
	12	"	R5842	P/O RODLEY	SELF + CREW										
	13	"	R5904	SELF	CREW										
	20	"	R5850	SELF	Sgt. LAND + CREW										
					GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]										
					433 Hrs. 40 Mins.										
					TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD										

Extract from Herb's Log book.

**OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT**

R.A.F. Form 541

For the month of January 1943

By 1661 Conversion Unit.

No. of pages used for day____

Date	Aircraft Type and No.	Crew	Duty	Time up	Time Down	Details of Sortie or Flight	References
17.1.43	LANCASTER 5904 ' '	F/L OAKLEY R. CAPT.	"	1645	0201	Successful. Landed Lakenheath after being diverted from base. Arrived target area during allotted bombing time on E.T.A. spending 25 mins. in area trying to identify target. Made bombing run over target, dropping bombs 10 mins. After bombing time, the incendiaries lighting up the streets and starting a fire. Several other sticks were dropped after this. Searchlights across the target, no flak was fired.	
		Sgt. COWAN W. F/ENG					
		F/Sgt. ROBERTSON J. NAV.					
		F/Sgt. MURTOUGH G. B/A					
		F/Sgt. NORMAN P. W/OP					
		F/Sgt. COOK C.S. M.U.G.					
		F/Sgt. BICKLEY W. R/G.					
						All operations on the 16th and 17th January 1943 were carried out from RAF Station Swinderby.	

TO AN OPERATIONAL SQUADRON

Syerston located ten miles north-east of Nottingham between the A46 and the River Trent was again part of the RAF expansion. Work began in 1938 and was completed late in 1940. It was to the standard pattern with a collection of permanent buildings near the A46. Two hangars provided aircraft repair and maintenance cover. At a later date four more hangars were erected on the airfield.

Allocated to No. 1 Group, the station was first occupied in December 1940 by Squadrons, manned largely by Poles. These squadrons flew their first operation from Syerston during April 1941. In July, Syerston was transferred to No. 5 Group, the Polish squadrons departing to No. 1 Group, and No. 408 Squadron, an RCAF unit, arrived at Syerston. Like the Poles when they first arrived at Syerston, the Canadian squadron had not become operational; its first raid came in August. In December that year, No. 408 moved to Balderton so hard runways could be laid at Syerston, which had problems with a high water table after rain.

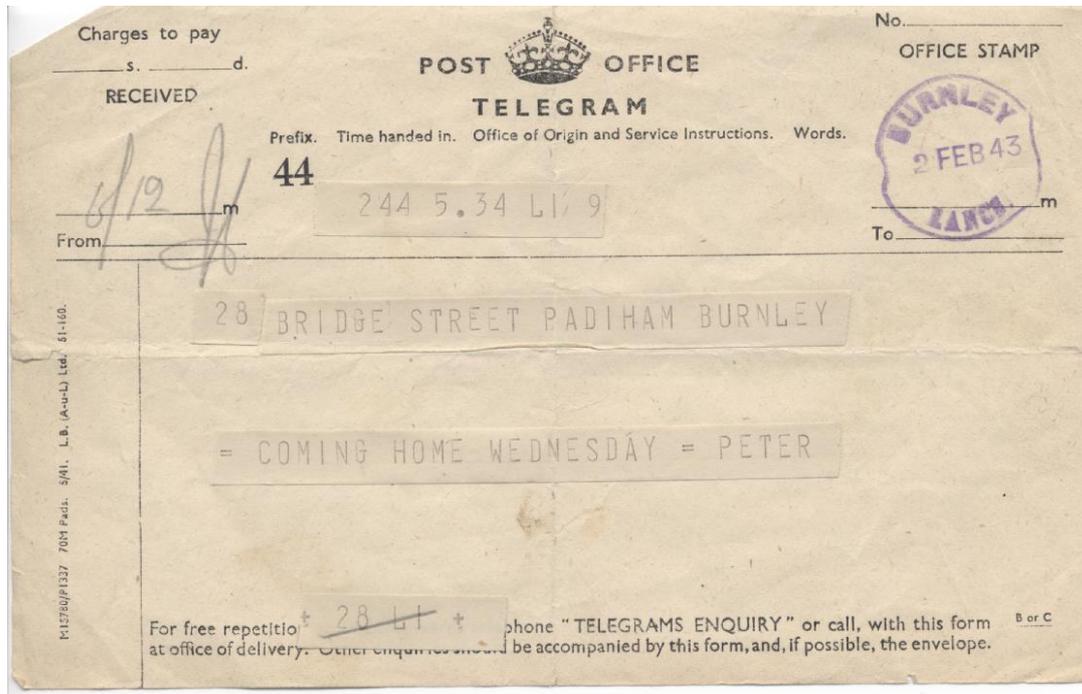
The three runways were the main one at 1,950 yards long, and two alternative ones, both at 1,400 yards. There were 36 pan type hard standings dispersed around the perimeter track. Additional domestic sites were built on land to the north-east providing accommodation for almost 1,800 males and 400 females. The station was ready to receive flying units again in April 1942. No. 61 Squadron with Manchesters and Lancasters arrived in May from Woolfox Lodge, joined in September by No. 106 Squadron from Coningsby, both units remaining until November 1943.

No.61 Squadron, RAF Syerston, No. 5 Group, Bomber Command. 31st January 1943 until 18th February 1943

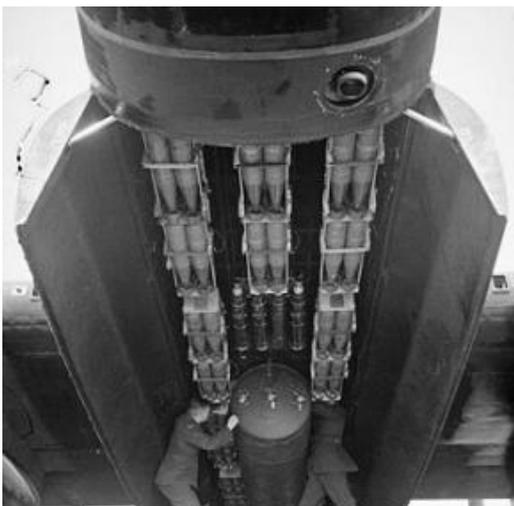
Herb's Log book shows the crew made their first flight with No.61 Sqn on February 12th, in a letter from their Sqn. Commander to Herb's mother after the accident he said they had just returned from 9 days leave. Herb spent his leave with Jack Preece at Jack's parents in Wembdon, nr. Bridgwater, Somerset. It is likely then that they all arrived at Syerston on the 31st January, completed their arrivals, getting signatures from the various sections on the station so they went into the relative files and records, and then were sent on 9 days leave by their Flight Commander. A telegram in the possession of the Hitchon family dated 2nd February 1943, states "Coming home Wednesday", presumably for the 9 days leave. Wednesday was the 3rd, so 9 days later they arrived back at RAF Syerston by midnight on Thursday the 11th February. From Herb's Log book we can see they went to 'B' Flight; a Bomber Sqn at this time usually had 3 Flights, 'A', 'B' and 'C'.

After returning from leave they started their work up to get ready for their first Operational trip. On the 12th February they carried out an air test on a Lancaster, serial unknown, and flew this aircraft that night on a "Bullseye" exercise. This meant they pretended to be an 'enemy bomber' attacking the UK so that the Ground Radar controllers could practice guiding British Night Fighters onto the 'target'. All concerned, controllers, night fighters and bomber crews could get useful practice from these exercises.





ARTHUR'S LAST TELEGRAM HOME. (PSEUDONYM PETER)



The next night, the 13th, on his 23rd birthday, Herb was detailed to go along on an Operation with an experienced crew to see how things were done. He flew as Flight Engineer with Sqn Ldr P. Ward-Hunt D.F.C. to Lorient in Lancaster Mk1 W4767, a 6 hour 20 min trip, probably after the docks and U-boat base, 11 aircraft were lost. Herb would have known Sqn Ldr Ward-Hunt as this officer had been 'C' Flight Commander on 1661 HCU and arrived at No. 61 Sqn on the same day. It is highly likely that he took Herb with him for this reason, happy birthday Herb. The crew would have eagerly awaited his return and wanted to know all that had happened.

On the 14th Feb, Herb again flew as Flight Engineer, this time with Sgt. Walters in Lancaster Mk1, W4269 to Milan in Italy, a long 8 hour 40 min trip, only 2 lost, those to Italy were usually safer than flying to Germany, unless you were in aircraft such as the Short Sterling that could not climb over the Alps and had to weave through the valleys in and out. Having returned from these 'second dickey' trips safely, a lot of second dickets were lost on these trips, it was just a case of waiting for the crew to be listed on the Battle Order for their first Op.



A 61 Squadron crew walk out



Lancaster main entrance

After a few days rest they were scheduled for a cross country training flight on the 18th February, a Thursday, in Lancaster W4270, a final chance to practice, it is very likely they would have gone on the next Op as a crew for the first time together. After being airborne for over 6 ½ hours they had returned to their home base, but because operational aircraft were circling, they were diverted to nearby RAF Bottesford. While in the circuit at Bottesford, the Starboard inner engine failed and caught fire just as they were cleared to land. This clearance was not replied to and soon after their aircraft crashed at 22-56 hours near the village of Staunton in the Vale, there were no survivors.

THEIR FINAL JOURNEYS

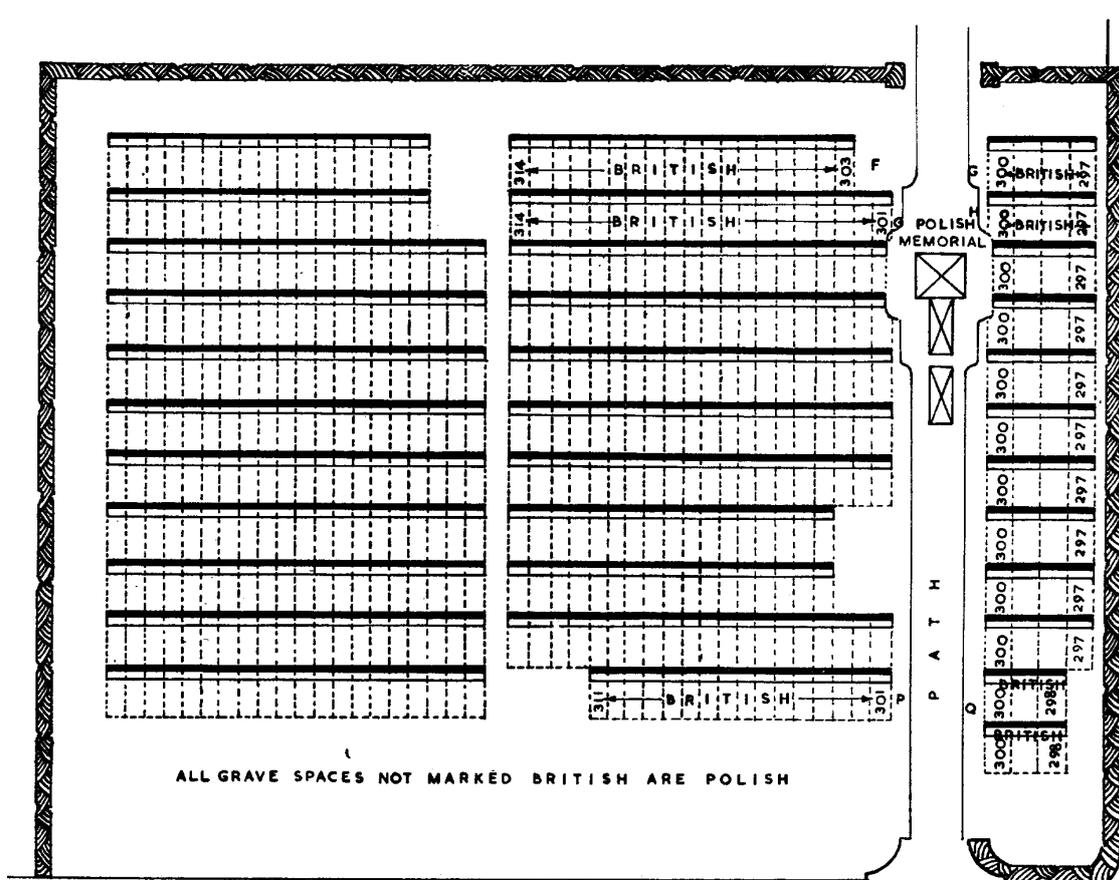
Herb Warne was buried in the RAF Section of the Newark upon Trent cemetery at 2.30 pm on 24th February 1943. The service was conducted in the cemetery chapel by the Reverend C. Bouchier, with the Reverend B.P. Smythe, the local area RCAF Padre present. There were full military honours, the coffin was draped with the Union Jack and borne past an honour guard by aircrew of the squadron. The Commanding Officer of No.61 Squadron arranged that photos were taken to send to his parents and family back in Canada showing the care that was being taken of their son now he lay so far from home.



FUNERAL OF HERB WARNE, HONOUR GUARD FROM HIS SQUADRON.



HERB'S COFFIN BORNE BY AIRCREW OF NO.61 SQN.



Newark Cemetery (Military Section)

In line with Royal Canadian Air Force policy of time promotion for aircrew serving overseas Herb was posthumously promoted, to F/Sgt. Back dated to 2nd July 1942, then to WO2 back dated to 2nd January 1943.

The rest of the crew were returned to their home towns;

Arthur Hitchon returned to his family in Padiham, Lancashire where he was laid to rest by his parents Edwin and Lillian in the St. Leonard churchyard extension. The service being held in St. Leonard's church, where he had been a choir boy, on the afternoon of 25th February 1943 and was attended by family and friends, we do not know if his fiancée Irene was able to be there in person as the mourners are not listed, but it was probably a military funeral with representatives of his Squadron present.

Jack Preece went home to Wembdon, Somerset, where on Wednesday the 24th February an hour after Herb's funeral began he was laid to rest by his parents Herbert and Daisy as well as his fiancée 'Kitty' Petherbridge and her parents, Herbert and Mabel. There were full Military honours again with the coffin borne by six Sergeants with other representatives from his squadron in attendance. Many of Jack's family, friends and pre RAF colleagues were there to pay their respects and to say their farewells. In the letter to Mrs Warne, Herb's C.O. said that a request had come from the Preece's to see if Herb could be buried next to their son, but unfortunately the request came too late.



Wembdon St George's Church

James Whitehead went back to Cambusnethan, Lanarkshire, where he lies buried in the same grave as his maternal Grand parents, Janet and George Wilson. His name is inscribed on a family headstone in between their names and also shows that his parents were living near Perth where his father Willie was in the prison service, a job that would likely require them to move from time to time. This is probably why he is buried with his Mother's parents instead of in Perth where his parents were based for the present. He is the only one of the crew not to have a Commonwealth War Grave Commission headstone. The Scottish area representative of this organisation maintains his details on the headstone in the same way that they would tend a CWGC grave; in this case the letters are picked out in black so they show clearly on the granite back ground.

Thomas Newton returned to Ushaw Moor, Durham and was buried from the home he had had with his Aunt and Uncle from 10 months of age in Brandon and Byshottles, Ushaw Moor cemetery after a service in St. Luke's church. His parents Herbert and Gertrude were present along with his fiancée **Myra** Jackson, her father and many other family and friends. No.61 squadron was represented by an officer and his coffin was borne by members of the Home Guard with the Church Lads Brigade sounding the last post at his graveside. Once again there were many floral tributes including those from neighbours, his old school and pre RAF workplace.

John Coaker was returned to his family in Leusdon, a tiny village on the edge of Dartmoor, a truly beautiful part of the world a mixture of hills, steep valleys and pasture land. It is here in the nearby Leusdon church yard that his father George, mother Edith and young brother Walter buried their John after a service in the church. Snow drops now adorn his resting place as a connection to the village of Staunton in the Vale where snow drops surround the Manor house in whose grounds the church containing the memorial to the crew lies. Forever more in these two parts of the world these flowers will open their petals around the same time of year that seven young men left this world.



LEUSDON CHURCH GRAVEYARD

Eddie Loverock was taken back to Matlock, Derbyshire where on the 23rd February he was buried in Matlock's St. Giles' lovely churchyard in Old Matlock along side the River Derwent after a service at All Saints' church, not far from his parents Fred and Mabel's house in Hopewell terrace. There were many family and friends in attendance as well as his fiancée to have been, Eleanor Patterson. Members of the Post office where he had worked prior to joining the RAF and of the Air Training Corps Squadron he had been in formed an honour Guard. No more would his remarkable voice be heard at the Music festivals around the Midlands.



Matlock (St. Giles) Church

*Gone but not forgotten,
There names liveth forever more,
Lest we forget.*

**In Memory of
Warrant Officer Class II THOMAS HERBERT WARNE
Royal Canadian Air Force
R/102085, 61 (R.A.F.) Sqn,
who died age 23
on 18 February 1943
Son of Samuel Kernick Warne and of Isabelle Warne (nee
Munro), of Kennedy, Saskatchewan, Canada.
Remembered with honour**



NEWARK-UPON-TRENT CEMETERY

Section P, Grave 307

**Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

**In Memory of
Sergeant GEORGE ARTHUR HITCHON
Flight Engineer
576765, 61 Sqn., Royal Air Force
who died age 19
on 18 February 1943
Son of Edwin and Lilian Mary Hitchon, of Padiham.
Remembered with honour**



**PADIHAM (ST. LEONARD) CHURCHYARD EXTENSION
Row 3, Div. 7, Grave 5.
Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

**In Memory of
Sergeant ROBERT JOHN PREECE
Observer**

**1174086, 61 Sqn, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 22
on 18 February 1943
Son of Herbert and Daisy Preece, of Bridgwater.
Remembered with honour**



WEMBDON (ST. GEORGE) CHURCHYARD

Sec. C. Row A. Grave 14.

**Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

In Memory of
Sergeant JAMES MILTON WHITEHEAD
Observer/Wireless operator/Air gunner
975551, 61 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 22
on 18 February 1943
Son of Willie and Janet Reid Greenshields Whitehead, of
Riddrie, Glasgow.
Remembered with honour



CAMBUSNETHAN CEMETERY

Sec. A. Grave 824

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

**In Memory of
Sergeant THOMAS RAINE NEWTON
Wireless operator/Air gunner
1119116, 61 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 21
on 18 February 1943
Son of Herbert and Gertrude Newton, of Durham.
Remembered with honour**



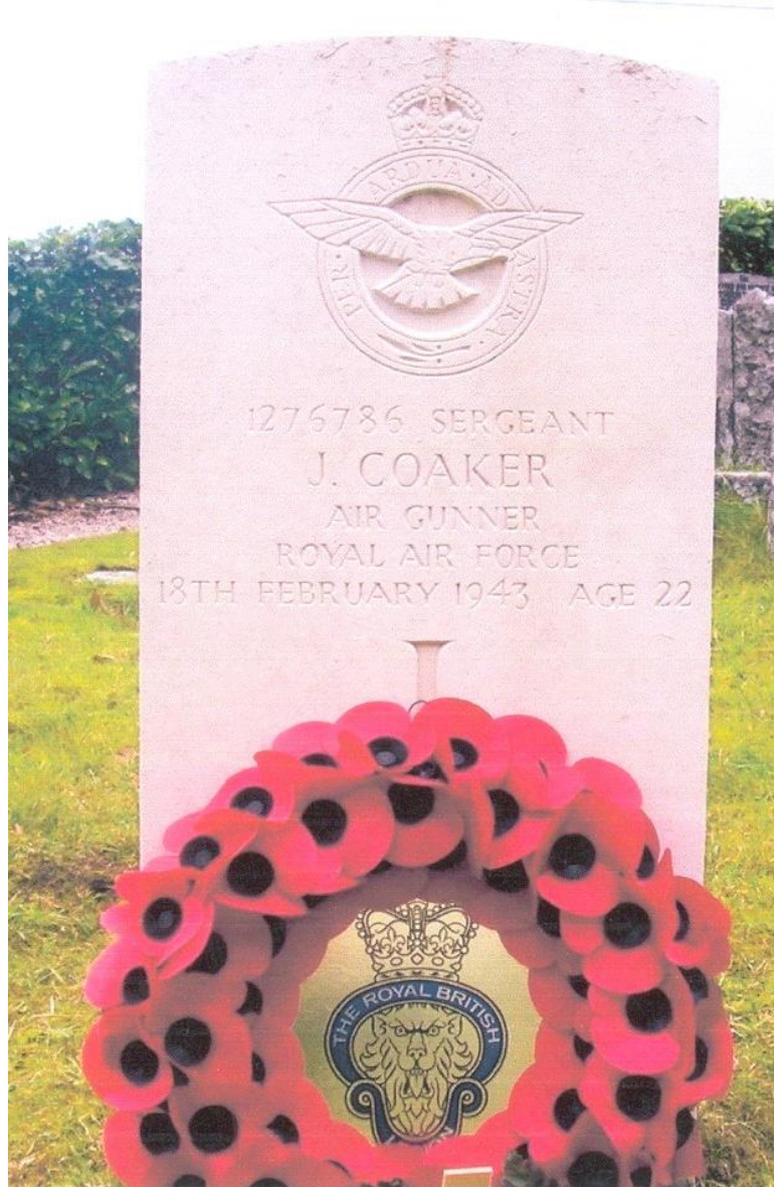
Son to have you with us
In the same old way
Would be
Our dearest wish today

**BRANDON AND BYSHOTTLES (USHAW MOOR)
CEMETERY**

Grave 46.

**Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

**In Memory of
Sergeant JOHN COAKER
Air Gunner
1276786, 61 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 22
on 18 February 1943
Son of George and Edith Amy Coaker, of Poundsgate.
Remembered with honour**



**LEUSDON (ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST) CHURCHYARD
Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

In Memory of
Sergeant EDWARD JOHN LOVEROCK
Air Gunner
950159, 61 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
who died age 21
on 18 February 1943
Son of Frederick and Mabel Victoria Jubilee Loverock, of
Matlock.
Remembered with honour



MATLOCK (ST. GILES) CHURCHYARD

Plot 1. Row 12. Grave 15.

Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

FLIGHT MAGAZINE

APRIL 8TH 1943

Page 378

CASUALTY LISTS

ROYAL AIR FORCE

KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE.—Sgt. K.H. Austin, Sgt. R. Badcock; F/O. B.H. Bailey; Sgt. C.F. Beechey; Sgt. L. Bill; LAC R.H. Bryson; P/O. W. Burt; Sgt. K. Clitheroe; Sgt. J. Coaker; Sgt. W.H. Donnelly; Sgt. F.J. Emberson; Sgt. B.P. Enright; Sgt. J. Gibson; Sgt. G.A. Hitchon; LAC G.H. Ironmonger; Sgt. P.V. Jerome; Sgt. J.J. Kenny; Sgt. E.J. Loverock; Sgt. H. Lowe; LAC. O. Loy; AC1. D. Mann; Sgt. J. McGinnes; Sgt. A.L. MacLachlan; Sgt. M. McMillan; Flt. Sgt. J.C. McPherson; LAC. W. Melville; Sgt. F.H. Mitchell; Sgt. T.R. Newton; Sgt. G.C. Nielson; Sgt. R.J. Preece; Sgt. C.A. Ravenette; Sgt. F.J. Richardson; Sgt. T.J. Ruff; Sgt. A Sephton; Sgt. J. Sindon; Sgt. G.D. Singleton; Sgt. N.J.G. Smith; Sgt. H.J. Sterne; Sgt. T.J. Symons; F/O. R.S. Tovey; P/O. J.R. Walker; Sgt. T.J. Whalley; Sgt. J.M. Whitehead; Sgt. F.G. Wilkinson; P/O. A.B. Wilson; Sgt. T. Wishart.

ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE.— P/O. G.F. Brown; Sgt. J.S. Cornfield; Sgt. D.J. Farrell; P/O. R.P. love; P/O. D.R.A. MacDougall; Sgt. M.S. Kahn; Sgt. J.V. O'Neill; Flt. Sgt. H.J. Palmer; Sgt. A.C.C. Piercey; Sgt. J.J. Snyder; P/O. W.B.C. Thompson; Sgt. T.H. Warne; P/O. I.M. Wilson.

**LOCAL NEWSPAPER OBITUARY OF
ARTHUR HITCHON**

R.A.F. Casualty

Mr and Mrs Hitchin, 28 Bridge Street, Padiham, have received official notification of the death of their elder son, Sgt. Flight Engineer Arthur Hitchon.



SGT. HITCHON

Sgt. Hitchon, who was 19, joined the R.A.F. as a boy apprentice shortly before the outbreak of the war. He had previously studied for the Service at Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, as he intended to make the R.A.F. his career.

As a young boy he attended St. Leonard's School, Padiham, where he won a scholarship to Clitheroe Royal Grammar School. He was a choir boy at St. Leonard's Church and the funeral will be preceded by a service there tomorrow afternoon.

**THE BURNLEY ADVERTISER.
24TH FEBRUARY 1943**

SGT. ROBERT JOHN PREECE

Bridgwater Mercury

AND BURNHAM, HIGHBRIDGE, AND WESTON-SUPER-MARE
CHRONICLE,

INCORPORATING BRIDGWATER INDEPENDENT AND COUNTY PRESS
SERIES

BRIDGWATER, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1943

PREECE. — On February 18th, 1943
Sergt. J. Preece, only son of Mr. and Mrs.
H. Preece, Newbury House, Wembdon
road killed on active service. Funeral
Wembdon Church, Wednesday, February
24th at 3.30 p.m.

DEATH OF SGT. JACK PREECE

WELL-KNOWN SOMERSET FAMILY BEREAVED

It is with deep regret that we
announce the death on Thursday on
active service of Sergt Jack Preece,
R.A.F.V.R., only son of Mr. and Mrs.
H. Preece, of Newbury House,
Wembdon road, Bridgwater.

A week earlier he reported back from
his last leave at home, on which he was
accompanied by his pilot, who was a
Canadian school Master before joining
the RCAF.

Jack Preece was an old Morganian, and
after leaving school was on the staff of
British Cellophane until volunteering
for the RAF in 1940. He completed his
training recently in Canada. He is
deeply mourned by his parents and his
fiancée, Miss Kathleen Petherbridge,
and his many friends.

The funeral service will be at
Wembdon Church on Wednesday at
3.30 p.m.

OBITUARY

The Bridgwater Mercury
2nd March 1943, page 3.

WITH R.A.F. HONOURS

**WEMBDON FUNERAL OF
SERGT. JACK PREECE.**

**PUBLIC SYMPATHY FOR
BEREAVED FAMILY.**

Many public tributes were paid when with the last honours of the R.A.F. the funeral took place at Wembdon Parish Church on Wednesday of Sergt. Jack Preece, R.A.F.V.R., aged 22, only son of Mr. and Mrs. H. Preece, of Newbury House, Wembdon road, Bridgwater, who died on active service, as reported in last weeks "Mercury".

The large attendance at an impressive funeral service testified to the deep sympathy felt by many friends for the late airman's parents and fiancée.

FINAL SALUTE

The Vicar, the Rev. H.B. Haynes, officiated. The organist, Mrs. Kuner, immediately before the service played Handel's "Largo". The service closed with Mrs. Kuner playing "O rest in the Lord," and the sun broke suddenly through an overcast sky as the cortege emerged from the church.

An officer from the squadron represented the RAF, and the coffin draped with a Union Jack, was borne by a party of six Sergeants, who gave a final salute at the committal.

FAMILIES AND PUBLIC MOURNERS

The mourners were: Mr. H. Preece (father); Miss Kathleen Petherbridge (fiancée); Mr. Graham Preece, Mr. Roy Preece, Mr. Sidney Preece, Bristol, Mr. Alfred H. Mitchell, Bourton, Mr. Herbert Mitchell, Wellington (uncles); Mr. C.W. Porter, Burnham (cousin); Mr. H. Wilkins, Mr. and Mrs. H. Petherbridge, Mr. F.J. Welland, Mr. and Mrs A.J. Coombes, Mr. and Mrs. B. Knightbridge and Mrs. W. Howlett (friends). Mr. W. J. Wide, Bristol, an uncle was unable to attend owing to indisposition.

Among the large number also present were Mr. A Wooldridge and Mr. F. Hill (representing British Cellophane. Ltd), Rev. R.G. Thomas, Mr. Leonard Bowering, Mr. and Mrs. F. Vivien, Mrs. S. Mansfield, Miss Buttle, Miss F. Wakeham, Miss Davys, Mrs. Foster, Mrs. M. Preece, Captain and Mrs. Brightwell and Mrs. Bert Brightwell, Mr. J. Berry, Butcher, Mr. W. Williams, Miss I. Martin, Mr. and Mrs. O. Pole, Sergt. A. Greenwood, RAF, Mrs. Webber, Mrs. H.B. Hayes, Mrs Hawkins, and Miss Channon.

TOKENS IN FLOWERS

Floral tokens numbering over 30, were sent as follows: Your loving Kitty; Mum and Dad; Aunty May and Uncle Will, Bristol; Uncle Alf, Aunty Olive, Cecil and Eric Bourton; Aunty Maud and Uncle Gilbert, Bristol; Uncle Bert and Aunty Deene, Wellington; Reg, Trevor and Aunty Loo; Mr. and Mrs. Criddle; Cousin Mary (Porter), Bristol; Cousin Clifford and family, Burnham; From Aunty Liz Chilton, Polden; Uncle Roy and family; Cousin Ethel, London; Mr and Mrs H. Petherbridge; Ken and Marguerite; Mr. and Mrs. Coombes; Officers RAF Station; Uncle Harry and family; From Les and Fanny; Uncle Graham and family; Bertie and Gertie Knightbridge; Bill and Kit Howlett; Mrs. Greenwood and family; Corporals and ranks, RAF; Mr. and Mrs. F.J. Welland; From Joan and Ken Giles; Warrant Officers and SNCO's RAF; Redvers and Ann Holford; Mr and Mrs. Boobyer; E.A. Wakeham; Freda and Joan Davys; Mr. and Mrs. T. Hill, North Street; British Cellophane Ltd; From Cyril Connolly, RAF; Myra and Jack Clarke; Mr and Mrs. Boobier.

Messrs. Biddick and Co. carried out the funeral arrangements.

Mr. and Mrs. H. Preece and Miss Petherbridge, in their sudden bereavement, wish very gratefully to thank all for the many expressions of sympathy received, and for floral tributes sent.

**LOCAL NEWSPAPER DEATH NOTICE AND OBITUARY OF
SGT. THOMAS RAINE NEWTON**

Flying Accident: - Official news has been received by Mr. and Mrs. Bert Newton, 9 Laurel Ave., Sherburn Road, Durham, that their second son, Sergeant T.R. Newton, R.A.F.V.R. has been killed in a flying accident, on February 18th.



He has been taking part regularly on raids on the continent as a Wireless operator and Gunner in a Lancaster bomber, he celebrated his 21st birthday by taking part in two raids on Berlin. He was on leave a week before his death. He has been in the Air Force for two and a half years and gained his wings in England. Previous to joining the services he was a painter. His brother is with the 8th Army, and was at Dunkirk fighting with the D.L.I.

**The Durham County Advertiser
26th February 1943.**

OBITUARY

The Durham County Advertiser
5th March 1943.

Military Funeral. – The funeral took place at Ushaw Moor Cemetery of Sergeant T.R. Newton (21), No.61 Squadron R.A.F., who was buried from the home of his aunt and uncle, Mr and Mrs A. Aberdeen. 5 Broom Lane, Ushaw Moor, where he had lived since he was ten months old. Sergeant Newton had been accidentally killed. He had served in the R.A.F. for 2 ½ years and previous to joining up was employed at Bearpark Coke Works. He has also served his time as a painter. Sergeant Newton was a pupil at Ushaw Moor Council School and was a keen football player for which he won quite a number of medals. He was also a member of Ushaw Moor Church Lads Brigade. The service was conducted in St. Luke's Church, Ushaw Moor by the Rev. J.H.P. Welby and the under bearers were members of the Home Guard. At the graveside the Last Post was sounded by the Church Lads Brigade and an aeroplane gave the salute. Chief mourners: Mr and Mrs B. Newton (father and mother), Mr and Mrs A. Aberdeen (aunt and uncle), Mr and Mrs B. Lythall (sister and brother-in-law), Hazel (sister), Masters Billy and John Newton (brothers), Mr and Mrs T. Newton, Mr L. Newton, Mr and Mrs G. Chapman, Mrs A. Newton, Mr and Mrs W. Bradley, Mr and Mrs M. Cail, Mrs Littlewood (aunts and uncles), Mrs A. Newton, Mr and Mrs W. Akin (cousins), Miss Jackson (fiancée). Other representatives included an officer from No.61 Squadron, Home Guard, Church Lads Brigade, and Mr A. Fawcett (head master) of Ushaw Moor Council School.

Among the many floral tributes were flowers from father and mother and brother Jackie. Cissie and Bob. Billy. Fremwellgate Moor Women's Social Club. Aunt Lena and Uncle Mosey. Aunt Pop and Uncle Len (Devonport). Teachers and pupils of Ushaw Moor Council School. Aunt Bella and family, Ruby and Bill, Aunt Cissie and Uncle Alby, Mira Jackson, Mr Jackson and family, officers of No.61 squadron, NCOs and other ranks, Aunt Maggie and Uncle Billy, R.O.F. factory work mates of Mrs Aberdeen. Aunt May and Uncle Tommy, Aunt Evelyn and Uncle George, Mrs Eason and Jinnie, Mrs Dowsey, William and Martha, Mrs Steward and family, all the neighbours at Broom Lane and many others.

**LOCAL NEWSPAPER DEATH
NOTICES OF
SGT. JAMES MILTON
WHITEHEAD.**

WHITEHEAD. –Killed on active service in February, 1943, Sgt. Observer James Milton Whitehead. Aged 22 years, only beloved son of Mr W. Whitehead and Mrs Whitehead. H.M. Prison Cottages, Perth, and grandson of ex-Sgt. Wilson, of Newmains.

Killed on service

The death on active service is announced of Sgt. Observer James Milton Whitehead, only son of Mr W. Whitehead and Mrs Whitehead, Perth, and grandson of ex-Sgt. George Wilson, of Newmains, formerly of the Lanarkshire Constabulary. The young airman was only 22 years of age, and deep regret is felt by all who knew him.

Wishaw Press 26th February 1943

OBITUARY OF SGT. EDDIE LOVEROCK.

AIRMAN BURIED AT MATLOCK

The funeral took place at Matlock Churchyard yesterday, following a service at All Saints' Church, of Sgt. Gunner Edward (Eddie) Loverock (21), R.A.F., of Hopewell Terrace, Matlock, who was killed on active service.

Sgt. Loverock was employed at Matlock Post Office before joining the R.A.F., and was a member of the Matlock A.T.C.

As a boy he had a remarkable voice, and won many prizes at musical festivals in the Midlands. He was a member of All Saints' Choir.

Members of the A.T.C. and Post Office staff formed a Guard of honour.

**The Derby Evening Telegraph, P.4.
February 1943**

OBITUARY TRANSCRIPTION OF SGT. EDDIE LOVEROCK

High Peak News, February 27th 1943.

MATLOCK AIRMAN KILLED

Sgt. E. J. Loverock.

Another young Matlock airman has paid the supreme sacrifice. – Sgt. Edward John Loverock (21), son of Mr. and Mrs. F. Loverock of 6 Hopewell Terrace, Matlock, was killed last week while serving with the RAF, in this country.

Sgt. Loverock had been in the RAF for about three years. He was educated at the Matlock Council School, and was later employed for four years at the Matlock Post Office. He took a keen interest in many activities, and was well known in sporting and musical circles. He was formally a member of the 5th Matlock Troop of the Boy Scouts, and played for the Matlock Bank Church Institute in the Matlock Table Tennis League. He was also a member of the Liberal Club. When the Air Training Corps was established he joined that organisation and became a Corporal, and also served as a Civil Defence messenger. He had seen a good deal of active service with the RAF as a rear gunner, and had taken part in many raids on Germany.

Sgt. Loverock was well known as a vocalist and as a competitor at music festivals at Buxton, Chesterfield, Sheffield and Winster, and had won numerous certificates and medals. His sister Joyce and his brother David are both similarly talented, and all three were members of All Saints Church choir.

Members of the A.T.C. formed a guard of honour at the funeral which took place on Tuesday afternoon, the internment in St. Giles's Churchyard being preceded by a service at All Saints conducted by the vicar, the Rev. W. W. H. Nash. The coffin was carried in by six RAF Sergeants, and was covered with the Union Jack. The service was choral, and Mr. L. Newton was at the organ.

The mourners were: Mr and Mrs Loverock, Miss Joyce Loverock, Mr David Loverock, Miss Eleanor Patterson, Mr and Mrs David Loverock, Mr John Farmer, Mr T. Loverock, Miss A. Loverock, Mrs De Ville, Mr R. Bagshaw, Mrs F. Tipper; Mrs F. Williams, Mr. D. Williams, Mr F. Williams, Mr T. Waltho, Mr W Boden, Mrs W. Turner; Mrs Farley, Mrs F. Elding, Mrs Millward, Mr R. Wherrett.

Pilot Officer McDermott represented the deceased's squadron, and other representatives present were:-

ATC; Messrs H. Wright Smith, E.O. Simms, and L. Slater.

C.D.; Mr. G.A. Banks, Area Organiser.

G.P.O.; Messrs C.W. Lowe, (Post Master), S. Fowkes, L. Newton, J. Allwood, T. Ancliffe, Coney, Andrews, E. Smith, J. W. Slater, Marriott, S.H. Smith, Lill, J. Evans, A.C. Ward, W. Medland, Betts Mosley, Woodhouse, Rawson, Bentley, Miss Birch and Mrs Mansell.

Flowers were sent by, Father, Mother, Joyce and David; Eleanor; Uncle David and Aunt Bessie; Uncle Fred and Aunt Alice; Aunt Emily; Uncle Ham and Family; Uncle Bob; Aunt Edie and Uncle Fred; Aunt Ida, David and Fred; Uncle Tom; Mr. W. Boden; Mrs Towe; Mrs McDonald and Mr McDonald; Mrs Millward; Mrs Mansell; Mr and Mrs Byron; Mr and Mrs Evans; Mr and Mrs Hurst; Mr and Mrs Elding and Ronnie; Mrs Slack and Family; Head Postmaster and P.O. staff; Union of Post Office Workers; Engineers; Mr and Mrs S.W. Turner; Mrs Ward and Family; Mrs Wheelden and Family; Mrs Bradbury and Family; Mr and Mrs W. Boden; Mr and Miss Bowden; Mr and Mrs A.E. Ward; the Culland boys; Mr and Miss M. Platts; Eileen and Geoffrey Hurst; Mr Tom Wherrett; Mr and Mrs Bailington; Mr Bonsall and Family; Mrs F. Wildgoose; Mrs Farley; Officer Commanding Squadron; Warrant Officers and Senior N.C.O.s; Corporals; and Airmen; Mr and Mrs Farmer and Family; All Saints Choir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

Mr and Mrs Loverock, Joyce and David wish to thank all friends for their kind letters, sympathy and beautiful floral tributes in their sad bereavement, and also the RAF personnel.

6 Hopewell Road, Matlock.

VISIT OF HITCHON FAMILY PRIOR TO SNOWDROP SUNDAY

About two weeks before Snowdrop Sunday, relatives of Arthur Hitchon came down from Padiham to be shown the memorial and sites associated with the story including a very windy crash site. They were also given a preview of what was going to be on display in the Church on Snowdrop Sunday.

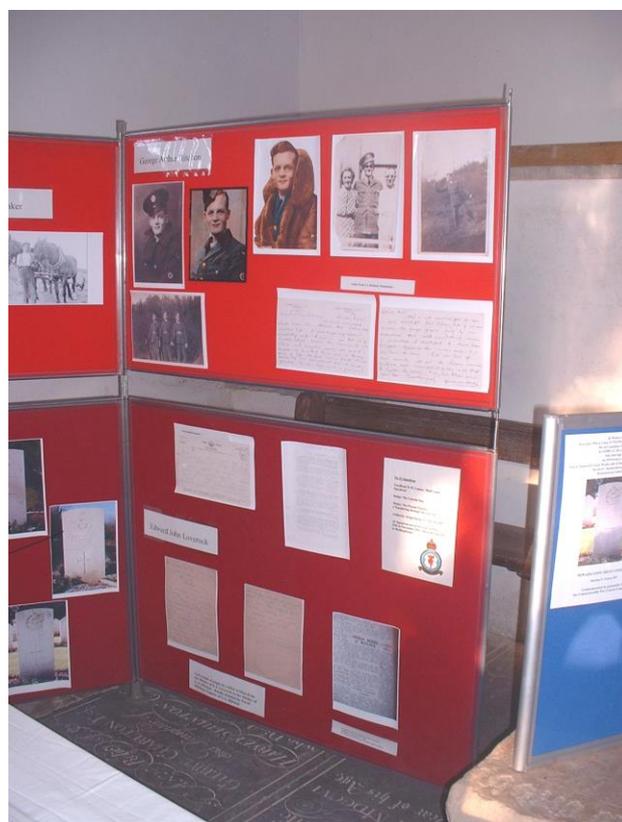


**Arthur's Nephew David (centre), Niece Kathryn (2nd Left) and Spouses.
Also from right, Barbara, Di and Annie.
Visit to crash site 3rd Feb. 2008.**

65TH ANNIVERSARY ON SNOWDROP SUNDAY 2008



Display set up to tell the story of the crew of W4270



Details of individual crew members



Alan along side his display of Lancaster radio equipment



Di and Ian explain some of the details



**WW2 Enthusiasts pay their respects at the Memorial
Demonstrating the uniforms and equipment of wartime Aircrew.**





The crew memorial by Staunton in the Vale church



**Sid's daughter Barbara and Granddaughter Annie.
A toast to the crew after Snowdrop Sunday
Almost 1500 people attended.**

MEMORIES OF JACK PREECE
by his cousin Robert James 'Jim' Preece and his family.



Annie, Heather Strang, Di, Barbara, Joan Preece

Joan was dating Robert James 'Jim' Preece, Jack's cousin before Jim also joined the RAF, and she used to see Jack sometimes when he came home on leave to Bridgewater. Towards the end of 1944 Joan and Jim married, and after the war they emigrated to Australia, it was here that Heather, their daughter was born. Whenever they returned to the UK Jim would visit Jack's grave in Wembdon, nr. Bridgewater. Joan says that Jack's parents never got over his death, which is understandable.

Heather has a letter that her father Jim wrote to her own daughter Alex in 1990. Alex was 11 years old and she had apparently asked him about war service by members of the family as a class project in relation to Australia's Anzac Remembrance Day; after writing about several other family members he says this about Jack: "Jack, was the only son (*in fact the only child*) of my Uncle Bert and Aunt Daisy and joined the RAF early in the 1939-45 war, at which time the navigators still wore the 'Observer' brevet, a reminder of the main function of those who flew in reconnaissance missions during the 1914-18 war. Jack trained as an Observer at Prince Edward Island in Canada (*actually this should be in Prince Edward County, Ontario, a different part of Canada*). The 'Observer' brevet and those who wore it were highly esteemed by those who came later and wore the 'Navigator' brevet. Jack was killed flying a Liberator bomber (*sic.*) in February 1943. I do not know the details of his death. He lies with his parents in Wembdon churchyard on the outskirts of Bridgewater. His grave is easily found, the headstone being the simple CWGC type, the only one in the churchyard." He finished by urging her to visit saying it was a very peaceful place. Time had played a trick on Jim's mind though, the Liberator was an American aircraft, although as a four engine aircraft with twin tails it bore a passing resemblance to the Lancaster that Jack had helped crew.

We know from a letter from the C.O. of No.61 Sqn to Mrs Warne, and from Jack's obituary, that Herb had spent his final leave with Jack's family in Wembdon just days before the crash. Also in the letter he mentioned that he had heard from Mrs Preece asking if Herb could be buried next to Jack. Unfortunately the request came through too late.

Jim died before the people involved in the Staunton project were able to make contact with the Preece family. So it has fallen on Joan and Heather to hear the story and to see all that is being done in the crew's memory. As the above photo shows, Joan and Heather were able to visit the memorial in August 2008 while Joan was over visiting from Australia; they were also able to see the latest details that had come to light.

Jack's fiancée, Kathleen 'Kitty' Petherbridge

Kitty was born in Bridgwater at the end of 1918 to Mr Herbert Petherbridge and Mabel (nee Lang), she had an elder brother Kenneth born two years earlier in 1916. We do not know when Kitty and Jack became engaged or if they knew each other before Jack went to Canada. Jack's family were well known in the Bridgwater area, so it is highly likely that any wedding would have been a grand affair, wartime restrictions and service commitments permitting, this was not to be though, as with the other members of the crew with fiancées and sweethearts, no weddings were to take place and their lives took a different route to that which might have been.

Arthur's fiancée Irene



Hazel and Pat, August 2008.

On the death of Irene in 2003 her daughter Pat found a photograph of an airman in a flying jacket. When she asked Hazel, Irene's sister about it Hazel said it was Irene's fiancée 'Ginger' as she knew him. Hazel could remember the visits to their family home in Worksop of Ginger when she said he used to treat her like a little Princess.

Irene had been in the WAAF during the war and had served at RAF Waddington. She once told Pat just before Pat's wedding a little about Ginger and that she had been on duty in the Ops room on the night of the

accident in which Ginger had died. After the war, Irene married someone else and Pat was born, unfortunately later Irene and Pat's father were divorced.

At the time of Irene's funeral, Pat very nearly put the photo of Ginger into the coffin with her mother but something stopped her, instead she and Hazel decided to try and find out about Ginger. Hazel thought that Ginger's names were Peter Anthony, (this would go along with the telegram sent to the Hitchon's and signed Peter). She could not remember any surname, but on the back of the photograph was a pencilled name that looked like Fletcher to them. This was to frustrate their search as will be seen below.

The photo of Ginger was placed on multiple web sites in the hope that someone might recognise him, no record could be found of a Peter Fletcher and it looked like their search could be in vain. Then in mid-2008 another try was made, this time a Lady recognised the name of the photographer and knew he worked in Padiham. She also thought the pencilled name looked like Hitchon not Fletcher. This Lady, Maureen, had gone to school with a David Hitchon and knew of the recent visit to the Staunton Memorial by David and his sister Kathlyn. Maureen went to the library in Burnley and looked up the obituary for Arthur Hitchon and



**Irene, Arthur's fiancée
at Waddington.**



Arthur in an Irvin flying jacket.

sent it to Pat. As soon as Hazel saw the photo in the obituary she exclaimed "That's Ginger, you've found him". Maureen put David and Pat in touch with each other and an exchange of photos and newspaper cuttings revealed that Pat and Hazel's 'Ginger' was indeed none other than our "Arthur", George Arthur Hitchon, thus bringing their search to an end. The search had now brought them into contact with all on the W4270 project, but more especially with family of Ginger after 65 years.

So many details in this story had to mesh to bring this about, just like the rest of the project's research; it would have been so easy for it never to have happened.

The story rolls on.....

Eddie's Fiancée Eleanor

Eleanor was living with her parents in Cromford, her father was the Miller there, when in 1942 aged 19 she met Eddie Loverock at a dance in Matlock. Eddie or Ted as she knew him was in uniform and home on leave at the time. She had not known him before this, although she knew of his father through his work as an Inspector at the Post Office. Over the course of the rest of the year they were to go to many dances together, as



and when Eddie was home on leave. One of the regular places was the Ballroom at Masson Mills. There was a large Army presence in the area and these units had dance bands that performed at venues all over the area. Eleanor tells of him walking her home from the dances and then, as there were no buses, walking back to his parent's home in Matlock. The area around Cromford and Matlock is very hilly, as anyone who knows the area will agree, but I guess he was a fit young man at that age.

Romance blossomed and during Eddie's last leave in February of 1943 it was arranged that they would get engaged on his next leave, which as operational aircrew would be in about 6 weeks time. As we now know the accident was to intervene and change all their plans.

Later in the war Eleanor wanted to join the WREN's as a driver so she could learn to drive, but they only wanted cooks, ditto for the WAAF's. Eventually she joined the ATS and served in Egypt in a secretarial capacity, she didn't get to be a driver and learned to drive once she was demobbed. After the war she married, had children and grand children. Fortunately for the crew's story she was still living near Cromford at Wirksworth, within the catchment area of the Peak Advertiser. On the 6th of March 2009 she

responded to our request in this local free paper for help in finding a photo of Eddie (Ted). Sixty six years later there were still three photos of him in the family photo album. It is these photos that completed our task of uncovering the images of all seven crewmen of Lancaster W4270. Once more they sit side by side.

**“Per Purum Tonates”
Thundering through the clean air.**

MEMORIES OF EDDIE LOVEROCK

“Eddie Loverock's father also worked for the Post Office. Edward was a boy treble of some renown in the county and sang in the choir at All Saints Church.

There was a brother, David, who I think also worked for the Post Office but who died quite young. They were a very nice family but with the loss of both sons basically they just died out in the area.”

by an old friend of Ann Andrew's Father.

“Eddie's sister Joyce married an Alan Lowcock. There was a photo I remember taken when Eddie was home on leave. My Father organised a fund raising event during the war. There was a coffin made and positioned outside the Post Office. People bought a 6d savings stamp and got to hammer a nail in “Hitler's coffin” at the same time. The photo was taken by Harry Gill, a photographer from Matlock Bath, and had Eddie on one side of the coffin and me on the other.

by Mary, the widow of David Loverock.

“I was a Post Office messenger with Eddie's brother David, one of our tasks was taking out Telegrams; this of course included those notifying next of kin of the loss of their loved ones. One day I saw David coming down the hill and he told me that his brother had been killed. I remember David used to have a small piece of yellow and blue painted metal clipped to the handle bars of his bicycle, nobody used to touch it as he said it came from his brother's aircraft.”

by Gordon Andrews, friend of Eddie's brother.

HIGH FLIGHT

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth
and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
of sun-split clouds, - and done a hundred things
you have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
high in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
my eager craft through footless halls of air...*

*Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with easy grace
where never lark or even eagle flew -
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
the high untrespassed sanctity of space,
put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

**Pilot Officer John Gillespie Magee, Jr., RCAF
18th August 1941**