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Armstrong Whitworth Whitley GR Mk. VII
No. 502 Squadron

THE LAST FLIGHT OF:

WHITLEY Z.9425

A narrative of the last flight of Whitley Z.9425, of No. 51 Squadron based at R.A.F. Chivenor, which crashed between Chelfham and Stoke Rivers north of Barnstaple on 24 September 1942. The pilot, F/L PARKER, and two passengers died, but two other air crew survived.
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The Last Flight of Whitley Z.9425

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Introduction

In our lives, some relatively small and inconsequential decisions can have an unforeseen major consequences and outcomes. This was the case on 24 September 1942 when a scratch air crew was required urgently at R.A.F. Chivenor to undertake a search for a dinghy reported to be drifting in the Bristol Channel between North Devon and South Wales. It fell to No. 51 Squadron, which was then based at R.A.F. Chivenor on daytime anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay, to provide the aircraft and air crew for this sortie. Flight Lieutenant (F/L) David Shirley PARKER was available, and he required a couple of Wireless Operators/Air Gunners to accompany him. Two members of Sergeant (Sgt) BARTLETT's air crew, Sgts GOODWIN and ROBERTS were close to the Flight Office, so they volunteered to accompany F/L PARKER. Just as they were about to take off, Sgt GOODWIN called to two members of the ground crew to join them as extra pairs of eyes for the search, so Corporals DOAK and TODD jumped aboard.

In that moment, although they were not to know it, their lives were to be inextricably linked by a tragic air crash before the day was over. Three of them were destined to die, and two to survive that air crash. The two survivors were lucky, but only one of them survived the Second World War. This is the story of the five men.

The Armstrong Whitworth Whitley

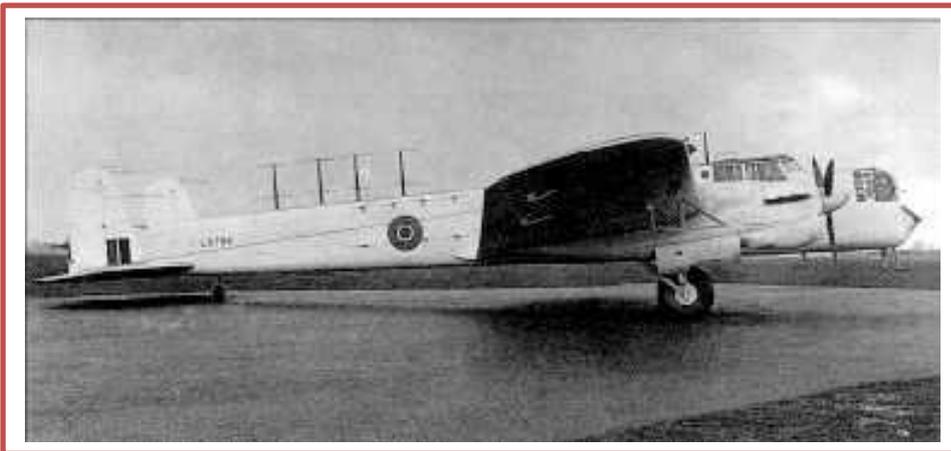
The Whitley was one of the three designs of strategic bomber aircraft that equipped Bomber Command in the early years of the Second World War. The Armstrong Whitworth A.W.38 Whitley was designed to Specification B.3/34 issued in July 1934. It was based upon an earlier design, the A.W.23 bomber/transport, which first flew on 4 June 1935, but featured a mid-wing layout, whereas its predecessor was a low-wing design. The A.W.38 was built as an all metal, stressed skin, monoplane, with a retractable undercarriage. The design of the wing was notable, being large, very thick, and set at a high angle of incidence to keep landing speeds low, as flaps were not fitted. The design of the wing gave the Whitley a distinctive nose-down attitude in flight. The fuselage was long, and thin, resembling a box, which led to the nickname of the 'flying coffin'.

The restrictive fuselage was one of the reasons that the Whitley did not have a distinguished career with the Royal Air Force, compared to its compatriot the Vickers Wellington. The wider Wellington fuselage made it more adaptable for training roles, and the installation of A.S.V. radar and Leigh Light for Coastal Command. A rear turret was provided in the Whitley, as was a turret above the bomb aimer's position in the front of the aircraft.

The prototype Whitley (K.4586) first flew on 17 March 1936 and made its first public appearance at the R.A.F. display at Hendon later that same year. The Air Ministry placed an initial contract for eighty aircraft in August 1935, before the aircraft had flown, because of the urgent need for a new bomber to replace the Handley Page Heyford and Fairey Hendon bi-plane bombers.

The first production aircraft, Whitley Mk. I K.7183, was powered by two Tiger IX radial engines, each producing 795 hp. The R.A.F. received thirty-four Mk. I aircraft, before production moved onto the Mk. II, fitted with improved Tiger engines. Performance of the new bomber with the Armstrong Whitworth Tiger engines was disappointing, so for the Mk. IV, Rolls-Royce Merlin IV engines (developing 1,030 hp) were fitted. The Merlins were liquid cooled, in-line engines, while the Tigers were air cooled radials. In addition, for this mark, a power operated rear turret replaced the manually operated predecessor. Forty Mk. IV aircraft were delivered to the R.A.F. in 1938. The next development was the Mk. V, which was fitted with 1,145 hp Merlin X engines. The fuselage was made 15 inches longer, and the tail fins redesigned on this version. Whitley N.1345 was the first Mk. V version issued to the R.A.F. in 1939, with the last LA.950 being delivered on 6 June 1943. Of the total production of 1,737 Whitley aircraft, 1,466 were Mk. V versions.

For Coastal Command duties, the Whitley G.R. Mk. VII was developed. This general reconnaissance version of the aircraft was designed for anti-submarine patrol, with extended range, A.S.V. radar installed, and the ability to carry an air crew of six, instead of the usual five. The prototype Mk. VII, P.4949, was followed into service by one-hundred and forty-six production aircraft, commencing with Z.6960.



In September 1939, R.A.F. Bomber Command had six Whitley equipped squadrons, all in No. 4 Group. On the first night of the war, ten Whitley Mk. III aircraft of No. 51 and 58 Squadrons flew sorties over Germany dropping leaflets. The Whitley was obsolete as a bomber by early 1942, with the last operational aircraft being retired in April 1942. They continued to serve as glider tugs, transport and paratroop training aircraft into 1943 and beyond.

The Whitley aircraft were built at the Armstrong Whitworth factory at Baginton, Coventry. The Mk. V had a wingspan of 84', a length of 70' 6", and a height of 15'. It weighed 19,330 lbs empty, and 28,200 lbs loaded. The Whitley Mk. V had a maximum speed of 222 mph at 17,000 feet, and a cruising speed of 185 mph. The range was 1,650 miles with 3,000 lbs of bombs on board. The Whitley had four 0.303 machine guns in the rear turret, power operated in the Mk. V. There was one 0.303 machine gun mounted in the front turret.

Many pilots saw the aircraft as an old lady, easy to fly, with no vices. The aircraft were full of character, but they were slow and could carry only a small bombload. By 1942, the Whitley was obsolete for strategic bombing operations, hence their transfer to Coastal Command as an interim measure until the provision of more capable aircraft.¹

Operational History with Coastal Command

The Whitley was designed for duties as a bomber, but early in the war, the needs of Coastal Command required the transfer of aircraft from Bomber Command. No. 58 Squadron was the first unit to be attached to Coastal Command, moving from R.A.F. Linton-on-Ouse to R.A.F. Boscombe Down in Wiltshire on 6 October 1939. The Squadron carried out convoy escort patrols over the English Channel and Western Approaches using Whitley Mk. III aircraft. It returned to Bomber Command on 14 February 1940, moving back to its previous base at R.A.F. Linton-on-Ouse.

On 8 April 1942, now equipped with Whitley Mk. V aircraft, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. St. Eval in Cornwall on anti-submarine patrols. In May 1942, the Squadron began to receive Mk. VII aircraft, designed for Coastal Command duties. On 29 July, the Squadron sent a detachment to R.A.F. Wick in northern Scotland, and on 30 August, the whole unit moved to R.A.F. Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides for duties over the North Atlantic. In December 1942, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. Holmsley South in Hampshire, and began converting to Handley Page Halifax G.R. Mk. II.

The next squadron to receive the Whitley was No. 502 (Ulster) Squadron, which at the time was flying Anson aircraft on maritime general reconnaissance duties. The Squadron was based at R.A.F. Aldergrove, County Antrim, and received its first Whitleys in October 1940. On 27 January 1941, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. Limavady in County Londonderry. In February 1942, the Squadron spent a short period at R.A.F. Docking in Norfolk, but on 22 February 1942, it arrived at R.A.F. St. Eval in Cornwall.

At the same time, the Squadron started to receive Whitley Mk. VII aircraft, and it undertook duties over the Bay of Biscay and Western Approaches. In March 1943, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. Holmsley South in Hampshire to start converting to Handley Page Halifax G.R. Mk. II aircraft.

The third Whitley equipped squadron to serve with Coastal Command was No. 612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron. Based at R.A.F. Dyce, this unit was equipped with the Avro Anson for maritime general reconnaissance and convoy escort duties. In November 1940, Whitley Mk. V aircraft started to arrive to replace the Ansons, which continued in service until November 1941. In April 1941, No. 612 Squadron moved to R.A.F. Wick, Caithness, from where it was posted to R.A.F. Reykjavik in Iceland with effect from December 1941. Whitley Mk. VII aircraft began arriving in June 1941. The Squadron spent six months serving in Iceland, before moving to R.A.F. Thorney Island in Hampshire in August 1942.

¹ ROBERTS, R. N. *The WHITLEY File* (Tonbridge, Air-Britain (Historians) Ltd., 1986) p.3

A month later, it was back to Scotland and R.A.F. Wick, where it remained until April 1943. In November 1942, the Squadron received its first Vickers Wellington Mk. VIII aircraft, but deliveries were slow. In February 1943, the Wellingtons were taken away, and given to No. 172 and No. 179 Squadrons. In April 1943, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. Davidstow Moor in Cornwall, to begin operations over the Bay of Biscay. In May 1943, a move to R.A.F. Chivenor began with the conversion to Wellington Mk. VIII aircraft again, with the last Whitleys remaining at R.A.F. Davidstow Moor until the move was completed. The Squadron remained operating A.S.V. and Leigh Light equipped Wellingtons until the war's end.

In May 1942, the escalation of the U-boat campaign in the Bay of Biscay led to the attachment of two squadrons from Bomber Command to Coastal Command. On 4 May 1942, No. 77 Squadron with its Whitley Mk. V aircraft, moved from R.A.F. Leeming in Yorkshire to R.A.F. Chivenor in North Devon. The other unit, No. 51 Squadron, equipped with Whitley Mk. V aircraft moved from R.A.F. Dishforth in Yorkshire to R.A.F. Chivenor in North Devon on 6 May 1942. On 5 October 1942, with the new Wellington Mk. VIII aircraft now arriving at R.A.F. Chivenor, No. 77 Squadron moved to R.A.F. Elvington in Yorkshire and back to Bomber Command. On 27 October 1942, No. 51 Squadron moved back to Bomber Command at R.A.F. Snaith.



Special mention must be made of the detachment of aircraft from No. 10 Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Abingdon in Oxfordshire, to R.A.F. St. Eval in Cornwall, to undertake anti-submarine sorties over the Bay of Biscay flying Whitley Mk. V aircraft. The first four aircraft arrived at R.A.F. St. Eval on 1 August 1942, with aircraft operating on detachment until July 1943. These air crew, destined for Bomber Command, had to undertake long sorties out over the Atlantic, in their obsolescent aircraft, facing not only the weather but enemy fighters.

Many aircraft from No. 10 O.T.U. were lost on operations out over the Bay of Biscay, a role the air crew had not trained for specifically. Their effort was not in vain, for they had some success, and helped the British efforts to impose restrictions on the German and Italian U-boats operating from the French Atlantic ports.

The Circumstances of the Crash

The circumstances of the crash are related by Eric GOODWIN in his book 'Some Were Lucky', as he was one of the five men on board the Whitley when it crashed. 24 September 1942 was a fine, warm sunny morning and Eric GOODWIN and his crew were stood down that day. The Operations Room then telephoned across to the Flight Office and asked if a crew could be organised quickly to search for an aircraft dinghy, possibly with survivors on board, which had been reported drifting in the Bristol Channel between Lundy Island and Cardiff. Outside the Flight Office were a pilot, F/O David PARKER, two wireless operator/air gunners Sgt Eric GOODWIN, R.A.F.V.R. and Sgt Hugh ROBERTS, R.A.F.V.R. and some members of the ground crew of the squadron.

A Whitley could be flown with just three air crew, but if enemy aircraft were likely to be encountered, it was important that the rear turret was manned. In addition, for an air/sea rescue sortie, it was useful to have two additional crew to drop the Thornaby Bag (survival kit) and a spare dinghy for the survivors. F/O PARKER started up the engines of Whitley Mk. V Z.9425 (W/51) and Sgts GOODWIN and ROBERTS climbed aboard. Sgt GOODWIN called out from the fuselage of the aircraft and asked for two volunteers to join them in the sortie. A Corporal Fitter IIE and Corporal Armourer from the squadron grabbed their Mae West lifejackets and clambered on board. Both were members of the Royal Air Force, Corporal DOAK coming from Ireland and Corporal TODD from Leeds. All five men were married.

The aircraft used was Whitley Mk. V, Z.9425 (W/51) which had been delivered new to No. 51 Squadron between 24 November 1941 and 3 January 1942. The air crew were:

68819	F/L D. S. PARKER, R.A.F.V.R.	Pilot & Captain
	Sgt E. F. GOODWIN, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
1056193	Sgt H. A. ROBERTS, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
639860	Cpl R. V. DOAK, R.A.F.	Armourer or Fitter IIE
641943	Cpl H. TODD, R.A.F.	Armourer or Fitter IIE

The Whitley took off and began a low-level search starting at Hartland Point and across the Bristol Channel to Tenby, and then back again across the Bristol Channel steadily working their way eastwards up the Channel towards Cardiff and Minehead. The two Corporals were sat up front with the pilot, one was sat in the co-pilot's seat and the other in the navigator's seat. Sgt ROBERTS was acting as wireless operator while Sgt GOODWIN occupied the rear turret. After being airborne for just over two hours without seeing any trace of a dinghy, Sgt GOODWIN suddenly noticed a stream of white smoke stream down the port side of the aircraft and past his turret. Trying to keep calm, Sgt GOODWIN contacted F/O PARKER and said: "Skipper, we have a glycol leak in the port engine."

Glycol was the coolant fluid used in the Rolls-Royce Merlin engines, which were liquid cooled as opposed to air-cooled. White smoke meant that there was a rupture in the coolant pipes in the engine allowing glycol to escape. As the coolant level dropped, the engine overheated and could then seize or catch fire, or both. F/O PARKER calmly replied: "Feathering port engine now." He feathered the propeller, which meant it was not windmilling and causing any drag for the aircraft. The difficulty was compounded by the fact that the aircraft was flying at about 1,500 feet above sea level with only one engine keeping it airborne. F/O PARKER had ditched a Whitley previously and knew how difficult that could be, and so he instructed: "Give me a course for base – we'll try and make it back to Chivenor". F/O PARKER could have made for the North Devon coast and then flown around to Barnstaple Bay to give him a direct approach to R.A.F. Chivenor, but he decided to take a shorter and more direct route over North Devon. Sgt ROBERTS was reminded to obtain an emergency QDM report by Morse code to Chivenor.² R.A.F. Chivenor replied Morse code, giving the course to steer and acknowledging the emergency.

The Whitley crossed the coast somewhere between Lynton and Porlock and it struggled up the Doone Valley. The route crossed the high ground of Exmoor and they avoided the highest hills by following a road that climbs up from Simonsbath. By now, the starboard engine was beginning to overheat and backfire. F/O PARKER came over the intercom and said: "It's no good, we can't make it. Sorry, But I'll have to put her down as best I can. Crash positions everybody." Sgt GOODWIN clambered out of the rear turret and made his way forward to the bomb bay step about halfway up the fuselage. The two Corporals remained in the cockpit and when Sgt GOODWIN motioned for them to come and join him, they shook their heads. Calmly, F/O PARKER said: "Hold tight, there's a field ahead. We're going in."

Sgt GOODWIN sat down on the bomb bay step, facing rearwards, taking hold of one of the fuselage ribs with one hand and the Beam Approach aerial with the other. There was a juddering sensation accompanied by a cacophony of indescribable screeching. Suddenly, there was silence. Sgt GOODWIN's first thought was that this was death, but then he heard birds squawking and he opened his eyes. He was lying on his back still in the aircraft, with both hands bleeding and the right knee of his battledress torn open revealing a bloody right knee. Then he heard a voice calling out: "For Christ's sake, is there any one in there?"

This brought Sgt GOODWIN to his senses, and realising the threat of fire, he started to come around. The rear turret was split off from the fuselage, and by his side there was a hole in the side of the Whitley where the rear door had been. Behind him, where the front of the aircraft should have been, there was nothing. As he tried to scramble out, a young man came to his assistance, the same man who had shouted a few minutes earlier. He put his arm around Sgt GOODWIN and half carried, half dragged him away from the aircraft. After taking him to a safe distance, he lowered him to the ground and immediately went back into the Whitley.

² QDM is the R.A.F. code for 'What is my course to steer with zero wind to reach you?'

Sgt GOODWIN took in the sight of the crashed aircraft. From halfway along the fuselage to the twin rudders, the Whitley was more or less intact. Forward of this, separated by a distance of about thirty feet, was an unrecognisable tangled mass of wreckage. Incredibly, out of this wreckage crawled the wireless operator seriously injured but still alive. F/O PARKER and the two Corporals were not so fortunate and had died instantly.

The Whitley had come down at North Horridge Farm, near Chelfham, north of Barnstaple. This farm was owned by the PRIDEAUX family, who were just finishing their midday meal when the aircraft came down near their farmhouse. Their peaceful world had been shattered by firstly the noise of the aircraft's engine, then the crashes as the Whitley disintegrated. The son, who was in his mid-twenties, rushed out of the kitchen to the crash site. It was he who shouted and then dragged clear Sgt GOODWIN from the wreckage. He was carried into the kitchen and sat in a chair while Mrs PRIDEAUX tended to his wounds. The local vicar's wife came up to the farm on hearing the crash to offer her support in tending the wounded. The telephone lines had been severed by the Whitley as it came down, so a member of the Home Guard had to cycle to a neighbouring village to raise the alarm. Eventually, some ambulances arrived and conveyed Sgts GOODWIN and ROBERTS to the North Devon Infirmary in Barnstaple.

Court of Inquiry

It is not known if a Court of Inquiry was held, although the Operations Record Book suggests that it was planned to convene one. The circumstances of the accident were obvious, aided by the evidence of the two survivors. It became apparent that although only ten miles from Barnstaple, F/L PARKER had realised that the Whitley would not reach Chivenor airfield. He searched for some relatively flat farmland, and seeing what he thought was a flat field, he warned his crew and then crash landed the Whitley. The touchdown was perfect, and the Whitley slid across the grass field at about 90 mph. From the air, it probably seemed that the field in which the aircraft landed was separated from the next field by a hedge, but in fact, the hedge bordered a sunken lane typical of the Devon countryside. The aircraft crashed nose first into the sunken lane destroying the front section of the aircraft up to and including the cockpit. The wings and engines were ripped off the aircraft which prevented a fire taking hold in the wreckage. The rear half of the aircraft had rolled over and over until coming to rest next to the farmyard.

The weather was cloudy with occasional heavy showers and some slight thunderstorms in the morning. It remained cloudy in the afternoon with further occasional showers in the evening. The cloud cover was 6/10 to 9/10 with its base at 2,000 to 2,500 feet in the morning. This improved during the rest of the day. The visibility was between six to twelve miles, and again it improved in the afternoon. The Squadron's Operational Record Book (Form 540) records that Z.9425 crashed one mile east of Chelfham viaduct.³ It records the deaths of F/L D. S. PARKER as the pilot, and two passengers Cpl H. TODD and Cpl R. V. DOAK.

³ The Form 540 incorrectly spells the location as Chelpham.

It states:

It is believed that there was an internal coolant leak, and the aircraft crashed while attempting a forced landing in hilly country, but an inquiry is being held. Two other members of the crew, Sgt H. A. ROBERTS and Sgt E. F. GOODWIN had miraculous escapes, sustaining only minor injuries. The fuselage of the aircraft was completely broken up and scattered over a considerable area.

Accidents Investigation Branch

The loss of Whitley Z.9425 was not referred to the Accidents Investigation Branch of the Air Ministry, as there was no merit in doing so in view of the circumstances of the loss.

The Air Crew

68819 Flight Lieutenant David Shirley PARKER, R.A.F.V.R.

David Shirley PARKER was born on 18 December 1916 in Bromley, Kent. His parents were John Anthony and Ethelwynne PARKER, and the family lived at 12, Homefield Road, Bromley. John PARKER was a solicitor as was his father, and in 1911, he lived with his parents. John and Ethelwynne married in July 1914 in Bromley. Their first child, a daughter Ethelwyn was born on 6 June 1915 in Bromley. David was the next child born to the couple, to be followed by Josephine on 23 March 1921. In 1939, the family were living at 10, Homefield Road, Bromley, with a relative called Edmund PARKER and his family living next door at Number 12. Edmund was a retired solicitor.

Not surprisingly, David followed in his father's footsteps and following his education at Westminster School, he became a law student in his father's firm. David rowed for his school while at Westminster, and was a member of Bromley Cricket Club, with which his parents had been associated for many years. He also played tennis and was an Assistant Scoutmaster for St. John's Troop in Bromley. Lastly, David was a member of an amateur dramatic group called 'The Quavers', and with them had appeared on stage in several productions.

David PARKER decided to join the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (R.A.F.V.R.) following the outbreak of the Second World War. He attended No. 5 Air Crew Selection Board on 3 July 1940, and was selected for training as a pilot, or secondly as a wireless operator/air gunner. Just three days after appearing at the Air Crew Selection Board, David enlisted in the R.A.F.V.R. at No. 1 Reception Centre at R.A.F. Uxbridge in Middlesex. He was granted the service number 1255393.

He began his service at No. 9 Recruits Centre which was based at R.A.F. Blackpool. At the outbreak of the war, the Royal Air Force requisitioned several hotels in seaside resorts to form initial training centres for the large number of recruits joining the service. David arrived on 12 July 1940 and was fitted out for his uniform and began basic training.

On 23 July 1940, David was posted to No. 15 Maintenance Unit at R.A.F. Wroughton in Wiltshire. The majority of recruits were posted to operational bases early in their career to gain experience of the Royal Air Force in reality. On 26 August 1940, Aircraftman 2nd Class David PARKER was posted to No. 1 Receiving Wing based in several hotels in Babbacombe, Torquay, Devon. On 6 September 1940, AC2 PARKER was posted to No. 3 Initial Training Wing in Torquay. This unit was part of R.A.F. Torquay, with its headquarters at Torre Abbey on Torquay seafront, and the trainee pilots living at various hotels in Torquay. David PARKER completed his initial training on 6 November 1940 and received promotion to the rank of Leading Aircraftman. He was posted to No. 3 Service Flying Training School based at R.A.F. South Cerney in Gloucestershire. Here he learnt to fly, commencing on single engine aircraft and progressing onto twin-engine Avro Anson aircraft. David PARKER was admitted to the R.A.F. hospital at Innsworth on 7 April 1941, and he was discharged on 2 May 1941.⁴

David PARKER gained his flying brevet ('Wings') on 14 June 1941 and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on the same day. He had obviously impressed the authorities during his training, as he was appointed to a commission with effect from 19 June 1941, in the rank of Pilot Officer on probation. David PARKER was granted a new service number of 68819, and his date of commission was later amended to 15 June 1941.

P/O David PARKER was then posted to No. 2 School of Air Navigation, based at R.A.F. Squires Gate to the south of Blackpool, Lancashire. He was a student on a course to train him in the more advanced navigational techniques required for flying over the sea and foreign territory. The students was also trained to become captains of their multi-engine aircraft, as the Royal Air Force always used pilots to be captains of multi-crew air crew, whereas other air forces would use the most senior air crew in terms of rank, such as the Observer.

On 23 August 1941, P/O PARKER was posted to No. 12 Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Benson in Oxfordshire but was soon re-posted to No. 19 Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Kinloss in Morayshire, Scotland. This unit was equipped with Armstrong Whitworth Whitley twin-engine bombers, and P/O David PARKER formed an air crew at this base.

On 19 November 1941, P/O PARKER was posted to No. 51 Squadron, based at R.A.F. Dishforth in Yorkshire, along with three other Pilot Officer pilots and four Sergeant pilots. Only one Sergeant Observer and one Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner were posted from No. 19 O.T.U. on the same date, suggesting that P/O PARKER and his colleagues were posted as spare pilots and not with their own air crew. This was a difficult time for the squadron as during the month of November they had lost both Flight Commanders (S/L DICKENSON and S/L McCULLAGH) on consecutive nights during attacks on Berlin and Essen. The squadron had also gained a new commanding officer in W/C 'Pick' PICKARD, who later became famous as he starred in the war time film "'F' for Freddie' which shows a fictional wartime bombing operation using real R.A.F. personnel and bases.

⁴ There is no record of an aircraft accident at R.A.F. South Cerney on this date, so it is assumed that David PARKER either was injured as a result of an accident or became seriously ill.

Twenty-five-year-old 33238 S/L Peter George Scott DICKENSON was a pre-war member of the Royal Air Force and came from Letchworth in Hertfordshire. He was lost on a mission to bomb Berlin and is buried in the Sage War Cemetery in Germany. S/L DICKENSON was married with a family. Thirty-two-year-old 70421 S/L Harold Featherstone McCULLAGH was a Reserve R.A.F. officer recalled to duty at the outbreak of the Second World War. He had studied at Trinity College, Dublin, where he had stroked the College Eight rowing team for three successive years. He was married to Marjorie who came from Cirencester in Gloucestershire. He is buried in the Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery in the Netherlands.

P/O PARKER had to wait until 17 December 1941 for his first operation. He flew as second pilot to S/L PEVELER, who had been appointed one of the new Flight Commanders. The air crew for this mission were:

S/L PEVELER	Pilot & Captain
P/O PARKER	Second Pilot
Sgt ARMSTRONG	Observer
Sgt KENNERLEY	Wireless Operator
Sgt TURNER	Air Gunner
Sgt ROSS	Air Gunner

They took off at 17.21 hours in Whitley Mk. V Z.6879 (B/51) on a mission to attack the German battle cruisers in the harbour at Brest, one of eighteen aircraft tasked for this operation. Their aircraft carried three 500 lb armour piercing bombs, and six 250 lb general purpose bombs. B/51 came in to attack at 13,000 feet and encountered intense light flak over the target. Several British aircraft were held in German searchlights as they bombed the harbour. There was between 5/10 and 8/10 cloud cover over the target, and B/51 landed safely back at base at 01.07 hours. This was the only operation P/O PARKER undertook in the month of December 1941, as he did not take part in the sorties undertaken by the squadron on 23, 27 and 28 December.

In January 1942, the weather was poor as one would expect in winter, and the squadron was limited in the operations it was ordered to carry out. P/O PARKER did not take part in operations that took place on 7, 17 or 21 January, but on 26 January, he was briefed to participate in an attack on Emden in Germany. The squadron was tasked with providing seventeen aircraft, plus two 'Freshers', and P/O PARKER is presumed to have been one of these Freshers. His air crew were:

P/O PARKER	Pilot & Captain
Sgt RAWLING	Second Pilot
Sgt KAY	Observer
Sgt COLLETON	Wireless Operator
P/O COLLER	Air Gunner
Sgt JACKSON	Air Gunner

They took off at 17.08 hours in Whitley Mk. V Z.9206 (A/51) with orders to attack Emden. The aircraft was loaded with one 1,000 lb general purpose bomb, three 500 lb and one 250 lb bombs. They reached the target at 20.00 hours and attacked at 16,000 feet. Fairly intense light flak was experienced over the target and there was no cloud to protect the British bombers. A/51 returned safely to base where it landed at 23.24 hours, but two aircraft from the squadron failed to return.

On 30 January 1942, No. 51 Squadron was ordered to send sixteen air crews and aircraft, together with the necessary servicing elements, to R.A.F. Andover in Hampshire for a month-long Army Co-operation Exercise. Only a small base element was retained at R.A.F. Dishforth. The squadron was used for training paratroopers in the fledgling airborne forces of the British Army. On 27 February 1942, five Whitley aircraft took part in the Bruneval raid, when a small group of British paratroopers and R.A.F. engineers were dropped on the French coast to dismantle key parts from a German radar system. P/O PARKER did not participate in this raid, although Whitley Mk V Z9425 was used being flown by Sgt HUGHES. In May 1942, No. 51 Squadron was transferred to Coastal Command, based at R.A.F. Chivenor, for anti-submarine patrols over the Bay of Biscay. The squadron was paired with No. 77 Squadron, also equipped with Whitleys, and the two squadrons shared the responsibility of mounting the patrols out over the Western Approaches and Bay of Biscay, often flying operational sorties on alternative days.

On 15 June 1942, P/O PARKER was confirmed in his appointment and promoted to the rank of Flying Officer, war substantive. He flew his first operational sortie on 18 June 1942, At 15.12 hours, P/O PARKER took off in Whitley Mk. V BD.191 on his first sortie since the Squadron's arrival at R.A.F. Chivenor. The air crew were:

68819	P/O D. S. PARKER, R.A.F.V.R.	Pilot & Captain
1068083	Sgt J. D. SHAW,	Second Pilot
113918	P/O G. BOND, R.A.F.V.R.	Air Observer
	Sgt F. C. ANNAND,	Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
	Sgt S. HODGES,	Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
R/83563	Sgt C. A. EASTWOOD, R.C.A.F.	Air Gunner

They were tasked with anti-submarine patrol U/B.16 and the Whitley was armed in the usual way with six depth charges and two bombs. They started their patrol at the Bishop's Rock Lighthouse at 16.14 hours and at 17.32 hours they sighted two French trawlers, and sometime later they sighted two more trawlers that they assumed were Spanish. The patrol was shortened by about one-hundred miles and it was completed at 19.38 hours. They landed safely at 20.44 hours.

On 20 June, seven aircraft were detailed for operations, one of which, BD.191, flown by P/O PARKER crashed into the sea. He had taken off at 05.24 hours to undertake Anti-Submarine Patrol U/B 18. His air crew were the same as his previous sortie, except that Sgt HODGES and Sgt EASTWOOD did not fly on this mission, and they were replaced by Sgt SEPHTON.

They reached the Bishop Rock Lighthouse at 06.27 hours but had an unsuccessful patrol. At 08.05 hours, P/O PARKER was diverted to search for a Wellington aircraft which had been forced down in the sea. While flying towards the Scilly Isles at 1,000 feet, the port engine developed a Glycol leak. The aircraft lost height very gradually to about 500 feet. The depth charges and bombs were jettisoned. P/O PARKER feathered the port airscrew, but the aircraft failed to maintain a safe speed and height, and then while he was attempting to unfeather the port airscrew, the aircraft stalled and fell onto the sea from about 100 feet. The Whitley hit the water at a speed of about 60 to 65 mph, and there was no time for the air crew to reach dinghy stations. In addition, the wireless operator did not have time to send an S.O.S. signal, although he had sent a preparatory signal and given their position. The rear gunner, with great promptitude, got the dinghy out and all the crew were able to scramble into the dinghy safely before the aircraft sank.

In fact, the aircraft floated for some four minutes. The position of the ditching was about thirty-seven miles from the Scilly Islands. After the crew had been floating for about twenty minutes, they sighted a Whitley aircraft on the horizon. It was not known to P/O PARKER and his air crew at the time, but the Whitley was another diverted to search for the downed Wellington aircraft. The crew in the dinghy fired a distress flare, which the Whitley saw from above, and came in to circle the dinghy with the five men aboard. It dropped a dinghy and emergency bag which the men in the dinghy were able to retrieve. The Whitley was seen to climb, presumably to send a sighting report, and it was joined by two other Whitleys which did not stay in the area for long. Shortly afterwards, a large motor launch found the men and picked them up safely. They were landed at St. Mary's on the Scilly Isles at 16.30 hours. P/O PARKER and his colleagues had been in the dinghy for about two hours before they were rescued. The Whitley circling above believed that they had found the air crew from the Wellington, not their own colleagues, and considering they had completed their mission, they returned to base. The air crew of the Wellington, A/172, were in fact found two days later and also rescued successfully.

The aircraft that found P/O PARKER was flown by S/L MEADE and his usual air crew. They had been detailed as a strike aircraft, but shortly before 08.30 hours, they were tasked with an air sea rescue search for the air crew of Wellington A/172 which had come down in the sea. A course was set from Bishop Rock and at 10.55 hours, a message was received to proceed to a given position and to start a square search. At 11.25 hours, a dinghy was sighted with six air crew on board.⁵ A Thornaby Bag and spare dinghy was dropped to the men who were able to reach them. A Corvette then arrived and picked up the survivors. Once the men had been rescued successfully, S/L MEADE turned for base and landed safely at 14.15 hours. The weather was hazy with visibility decreasing.

P/O PARKER returned to operational flying on 6 July 1942. His crew was the same other than Sgt S. WOOLHOUSE replaced Sgt ANNAND. P/O PARKER flew Whitley Mk V Z6813 on Anti-Submarine Patrol U/B11, and they took off at 06.02 hours.

⁵ NOTE: This report states there were six air crew in the dinghy, but the O.R.B. states that the air crew onboard BD.191 numbered only five.

The aircraft developed engine trouble, and so P/O PARKER did not take any chances and made for R.A.F. St. Eval in Cornwall where he landed safely at 08.55 hours. It is presumed that the engine was repaired, and they flew back to R.A.F. Chivenor later that day.

The next operational flight was on 14 July, and for this trip, J/7897 P/O H. E. SULLIVAN, R.C.A.F. acted as the Second Pilot. It appears that P/O BOND did not fly on this sortie, which left P/O PARKER without an Air Observer. The other three air crew were Sgt F. C. ANNAND, Sgt S. HODGES and Sgt C. A. EASTWOOD. They were airborne at 10.21 hours in Whitley Mk. V Z.9222 on Anti-Submarine Patrol BP12 carrying the usual six 250 lb depth charges and four 250 lb anti-submarine bombs. The aircraft commenced its patrol at 11.24 on reaching the Bishop Rock Lighthouse. Apart from sighting a few sailing fishing vessels, they had nothing else of interest to report when they landed at 18.36 hours back at base.

On 20 July, P/O PARKER flew his fifth operational sortie from R.A.F. Chivenor, this time flying Whitley Mk. V Z.9164 on Anti-Submarine Patrol BP26. His air crew included P/O Geoffrey BOND again, with Sgt ANNAND, HODGES and EASTWOOD as wireless operators and air gunners. As Second Pilot is listed Sgt J. M. McDONALD, which is confusing as R/71718 John Melville McDONALD, R.C.A.F. was a wireless operator and not a pilot. They took off at 13.11 hours carrying the usual armament and passed the Bishop Rock at 14.13 hours. They sighted a couple of fishing vessels, but then had trouble with the compass. As they were flying in low cloud, this was a serious problem to occur. They attempted to obtain radio bearings from German stations, but this proved unsuccessful. Thanks no doubt to Geoff BOND's skills as a navigator, they passed the Scilly Islands at 18.15 hours and landed safely at R.A.F. Chivenor at 19.19 hours.

Two days later, on 22 July, David PARKER flew his first operational sortie since details of his promotion had been received by the Squadron. Although his promotion was dated 15 June, it was not unusual for there to be a delay in this information reaching operational squadrons. In addition to his official promotion to the rank of Flying Officer, war substantive, he was further promoted to the rank of Acting Flight Lieutenant.⁶ They took off at 06.03 hours on an Air/Sea Rescue sortie in Whitley Mk. V Z.9164 with the usual air crew except that P/O H. E. SULLIVAN flew as Second Pilot and Sgt W. DUDGEON replaced his friend Sgt HODGES. The aircraft was armed with depth charges and bombs as usual even on this sortie. They commenced the search at 06.45 hours and sighted the dinghy with six occupants shortly afterwards. A Thornaby Bag, dinghy, two smoke floats and a flame float were all dropped, and they also fired three Pyrotechnics. F/L PARKER circled the dinghy until assistance arrived. At 09.40 hours, Z.9164 received the message that 'Surface craft at 11 o'clock', but at 09.57 hours, they lost sight on the dinghy. At 10.25 hours, a rescue launch was sighted but Z.9164 was unable to find the dinghy again. They returned to base where they landed safely at 15.20 hours.

⁶ All the references to D. S. PARKER from this date onwards state his rank as Flight Lieutenant. This is not confirmed in the London Gazette, so is presumed to be an acting rank. GOODWIN in his book refers to him as Flight Lieutenant.

On 26 July, F/L PARKER and his air crew were listed for another operational sortie. This was back to anti-submarine patrols, and the specific patrol was BP22. Sgt J. D. SARGEANT replaced Sgt SULLIVAN as Second Pilot. They were airborne at 04.17 hours in Whitley Mk. V Z.9164 and reached the Bishop Rock at 05.23 hours. They saw four Tunneyman and five Spanish trawlers, but nothing else of note. They landed at Chivenor at 13.03 hours.

On the penultimate day of the month, 30 July, F/L PARKER and his air crew undertook another anti-submarine patrol. For this sortie, P/O S. G. PRICE replaced Sgt C. A. EASTWOOD. They were airborne at 03.31 hours on Anti-Submarine Patrol BP24 in Whitley Mk. V Z.9222. The patrol was uneventful, and they passed the Bishop Rock on their return at 11.21 hours, and landed at 12.44 hours.

In the following month, F/L PARKER flew his only sortie of the month on 12 August. F/O F. D. SMITH replaced P/O Geoff BOND, with Sgt HODGES back in the crew instead of Sgt DUDGEON, and Sgt R. E. SMART replacing P/O PRICE. They were airborne at 18.05 hours in Whitley Mk. V Z.9222 on Anti-Submarine Patrol BP14. There was nothing to report during the patrol, and they landed safely at R.A.F. Chivenor at 00.18 hours. This was the last operational sortie before the fateful crash on 24 September 1942.

David Shirley PARKER left an estate worth 2,619 8s 9d to an Emma Andros PARKER, who is shown as a widow. His address shown on the Probate Calendar is Packwood, 10, Homefield Road, Bromley, Kent. He was married in 1941 to Moira McNEILL, who was a Flight Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (W.A.A.F.)

Sergeant Eric Ford GOODWIN, R.A.F.V.R.

Eric was born on 6 February 1920 in Stockport, Cheshire, the only son of Stephen and Mary Elizabeth GOODWIN. His family managed a public house in the Tiviot Dale of Stockport called the 'Crown and Mitre'. It was here that his grandfather was drowned when the River Tame was in full flood. Eric began his education at Banks Lane School, from where he gained a scholarship to Stockport Secondary School in Greek Street when he was eleven years of age. Eric left school as a sixteen-year-old with few academic qualifications and gained employment at the London Midland and Scottish Railway station at Poynton.

Eric GOODWIN was determined not to be conscripted into the Army, as his father had seen active service at Ypres and Paschendale during the First World War. It must be remembered that at the beginning of the Second World War, people expected it to be similar in conduct that the previous war which had ended only twenty-one-years ago. Eric therefore volunteered for service with the Royal Air Force as air crew, was called up in August 1940 and ordered to report to R.A.F. Padfield in Lancashire. He was selected to train as a wireless operator and air gunner and began his trade training at R.A.F. Blackpool where he learnt Morse Code. He progressed on to R.A.F. Yatesbury in Wiltshire where he flew for the first time in De Havilland Dominie biplane.

In March 1941, GOODWIN was posted to R.A.F. Mount Batten on Plymouth Sound as a ground radio operator to gain experience of operational radio procedures, and to await a place at an Air Gunners School. During his time at Mount Batten, he witnessed several air raids on Plymouth and an attack on R.A.F. Mount Batten, having to dive into a trench just in time to avoid being caught in the blast of the bombs. The blast, however, lifted him out of the trench.

After serving at R.A.F. Mount Batten for three months, he was posted to No. 5 Bombing and Gunnery School at R.A.F. Jurby on the Isle of Man. He flew in Bristol Blenheim bombers that had been relegated to the training role and qualified as an air gunner. On completion of this course, he was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant wearing the Air Gunner's brevet and the Wireless Operator's shoulder flash. He was posted to No. 19 Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Kinloss, which used Armstrong Whitworth Whitley twin-engine bombers. With a total of forty-four hours daylight flying and eighteen hours at night, he was posted to No. 51 Squadron at Dishforth in Yorkshire.

Soon after joining No. 51 Squadron, Sgt GOODWIN was posted to R.A.F. Chivenor with the Squadron to come under Coastal Command for operations over the Bay of Biscay. Sgt GOODWIN flew with Sgt BARTLETT as Pilot and Captain, and Flight Sergeant 'Pop' ACREE as Second Pilot. Sergeant ROBERTS was also part of Sgt BARTLETT's air crew. As such, Sgt BARTLETT and his air crew flew several operational sorties over the Bay of Biscay. During one sortie, they sighted and attacked a surfaced U-boat. The air crew were granted a period of leave, and he went home where his father stated that his son had aged ten years since joining the Royal Air Force. Eric GOODWIN was married in March 1942 at Macclesfield, Cheshire, and their first son was born a year later.

Then came that fateful flight on 24 September 1942. He was rescued by a member of the Prideaux family and spent some time in hospital. He started to suffer from delayed shock and was granted a period of extended leave. When he was fit enough to resume duty, Eric GOODWIN was honest enough to state he was not keen to fly again, so was posted to R.A.F. Uxbridge for reclassification. In March 1943, he received a surprise call to attend an interview in London for an interview with an Army officer. GOODWIN was posted to R.A.F. West Kirby on the Wirral destined for service overseas. He joined a troopship called the 'Duchess of York' and he sailed to Algeria. He found himself attached as a R.A.F. Signals Liaison Officer to the 1st Airborne Division. Having expressed a desire not to fly again, GOODWIN found himself in a glider being towed during the invasion exercises. He was sent to a desert air strip in Tunisia where he and another wireless operator called SMITH maintained links with the U.K., Tripoli, Tunis and Algiers. Once the men of the Airborne Division had completed their tasks, GOODWIN and SMITH were stood down and told to find their own way back to the U.K.. Both managed to secure lifts on Halifax aircraft returning to the U.K., with GOODWIN making it back safely, but SMITH's aircraft disappeared without trace.

After three weeks leave, GOODWIN was posted to R.A.F. Hurn for radio maintenance and testing, where he witnessed another Whitley crash. In the autumn of 1943, GOODWIN was posted to R.A.F. Cranwell to train as a wireless mechanic.

In February 1944, he qualified as a Wireless Operator Mechanic and Air Gunner and was sent to Pwllheli on North Wales and passed his driving test in just two weeks. His next posting was to Calshot on Southampton Water where he joined the crew on a high-speed air/sea rescue launch. The launch was deployed on D-Day and they helped pick up survivors from H.M.S. Blackwood on 15 June 1944. In late 1944, Eric was transferred to R.A.F. Tiree in the Hebrides and then found his way to India as part of a R.A.F. Concert Party. After such a varied career, he was demobilised and later wrote a book called 'Some were Lucky' about his time in the Royal Air Force.

Eric GOODWIN's first wife, Nora, died in 1980, by which time they had settled near Wetherby in Yorkshire. He remarried in the following year and lived until July 1998 when he died at Leeds in Yorkshire at the age of seventy-eight years.

1056193 Flight Sergeant Hugh Alan ROBERTS, R.A.F.V.R.

Hugh Alan ROBERTS (known as 'Alun' to his family) was born on 14 February 1916 and was the son of High and Elizabeth ROBERTS. In 1939, the family lived at The Lodge, Marl Hall, Llandudno Junction, Caernarvonshire. He was the eldest of four children, with one sister and two brothers. His service number indicates that he enlisted at R.A.F. Padgate in Lancashire sometime between September 1939 and April 1941. He qualified as a wireless operator and air gunner following a similar path in training to that undertaken by Eric GOODWIN. He was also posted to No. 51 Squadron on completion of his training.

Sgt ROBERTS returned to operational flying after this traumatic air crash and joined an air crew that had converted to four-engine Halifax bombers with which the Squadron was now equipped. He died during the night of 12/13 May 1943 when Halifax HR.786 was shot down by a night fighter over Holland on a sortie to Duisburg. All seven air crew died. F/Sgt ROBERTS was aged twenty-six years when he died, and was married to Lilian Megan ROBERTS of Llandudno, Caernarvonshire. He has no known grave and is commemorated on Panel 138 of the Runnymede Memorial. In addition, his name appears on the Llandudno Cenotaph in Prince Edward Square in his hometown.

639860 Corporal Robert Victor DOAK, R.A.F.

Robert Victor DOAK came from County Antrim in Northern Ireland and was the son of Mr and Mrs Samuel DOAK. He joined the Royal Air Force as an apprentice prior to the commencement of the Second World War, and probably trained at the R.A.F. at Halton. He became a member of the ground crew for No. 51 Squadron and served at R.A.F. Chivenor, where he was employed as either an Armourer or a Fitter Class II (Engines).

He was one of the two ground crew that volunteered to join the fateful flight on 24 September and was in the cockpit when the aircraft crashed. He was thirty-two years of age, and his body was taken back to County Antrim, where he was buried in Sec B., Grave 318 of the Seagoe Cemetery, Portadown. He was married to Cloda Phyllis DOAK of Streatham, London.

641943 Corporal Harry TODD, R.A.F.

Harry TODD came from Leeds, Yorkshire, and was the son of Harry and Edith TODD. He joined the Royal Air Force as an apprentice prior to the commencement of the Second World War, and probably trained at the No. 1 School of Technical Training at R.A.F. Halton in Buckinghamshire. He became a member of the ground crew for No. 51 Squadron and served at R.A.F. Chivenor, where he was employed as either an Armourer or a Fitter Class II (Engines).

He was one of the two ground crew that volunteered to join the fateful flight on 24 September and was in the cockpit when the aircraft crashed. He was twenty years of age when he died, and his body was taken back to Yorkshire, where he was buried in Sec 2., Grave 1984 of the Hunslet Old Cemetery in Leeds. The inscription on his grave reads: *WE MISS HIM MOST WHO LOVED HIM BEST.* He was married to Eva TODD from Leeds.

Conclusions

When attempting to draw any lessons from history, one can become involved in 'if only' analysis. The phrase commonly heard today from individuals or organisations after some form of tragedy is 'that we will learn lessons' from that experience. If these concepts are applied to this air crash, is there anything to be gained? One can see that as so often in a tragic incident, there is no one event that led to the eventual outcome, but rather a causal chain of otherwise insignificant events. This is very much the case here. The decision to search for a dinghy (which history does not relate was ever found) and then the decision to send up an aircraft to search for it. No. 51 Squadron was asked to send an aircraft on this sortie, and F/L PARKER was either the duty pilot, or just happened to be available and said something like: "I'll do it." Then we have the two Wireless Operators/Air Gunners who happened to be near the Flight Office and volunteered to go.

The next event in the chain was the magnanimity of the two ground crew who readily volunteered to join the flight. In all probability, they did not even think about the risks, and in a split second, their fates were sealed. The search was negative, and then the coolant system in one of the engines failed – a not uncommon occurrence in wartime Merlin engines. F/L PARKER was probably influenced by his previous experience of ditching and chose the most direct course back to base. Sadly, he had to crash land the aircraft about eight miles short of the runway; about five minutes flying time. For some reason, the two ground crew decided to stay in the cockpit, and this decision led directly to them losing their lives. The last factor in this chain was the lack of a suitable field for the crash landing, and the presence of Devon banks and sunken lanes so prevalent in this county.

The outcome cannot be changed, and neither are there any specific lessons to be learnt. What can be deduced from this air crash is the nature and conduct of the five men involved. Readily willing to volunteer for an impromptu flight on the basis that some air crew or sailors may have been in distress and drifting in an open dinghy in the Bristol Channel in poor weather.

As Eric GOODWIN acknowledges in his book 'Some Were Lucky', but on the converse side, others were unlucky on that day. Why the engine failed where it did, we shall never know, and in spite of the valiant efforts and undoubted skill of F/L PARKER, the aircraft came down short of R.A.F. Chivenor and safety. We are also left with the nature and conduct of the Prideaux family, sat at home oblivious to events about to unfold before them. The bravery to rescue Eric GOODWIN and Hugh ROBERTS, and the search for the others on board was notable. In addition, the care and kindness shown by the family in tending the two wounded men, summoning assistance and assisting the authorities is praiseworthy indeed.

The final conclusion lies with us, the readers, to remember with affection and respect the five men involved in this tragic event, and to understand that they were not unique, but typical of so many people at that period in history, but also today.

In Memoriam

24 September 1942 – Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Mk. V – Z.9425

No.	Surname	Forenames(s)	Age	Date of Death	Rank	Role	Service	Service Number	Place of Burial	Grave
1.	PARKER ⁷	David Shirley	25	24/09/42	Flight Lieutenant	Pilot & Captain	R.A.F.V.R.	68819	Plymouth City Crematorium	Panel 5.
2.	TODD ⁸	Harry	20	24/09/42	Corporal	Fitter II E	R.A.F.	641943	Leeds (Hunslet Old) Cemetery	Sec. 2 Grave 1984.
3.	DOAK ⁹	Robert Victor	32	24/09/42	Corporal	Armourer	R.A.F.	639860	Seagoe Cemetery	Sec. B., Grave 318.
A	ROBERTS ¹⁰	Hugh Alan	26	13/05/43	Flight Sergeant	AG	R.A.F.V.R.	1056193	Runnymede Memorial	Panel 138

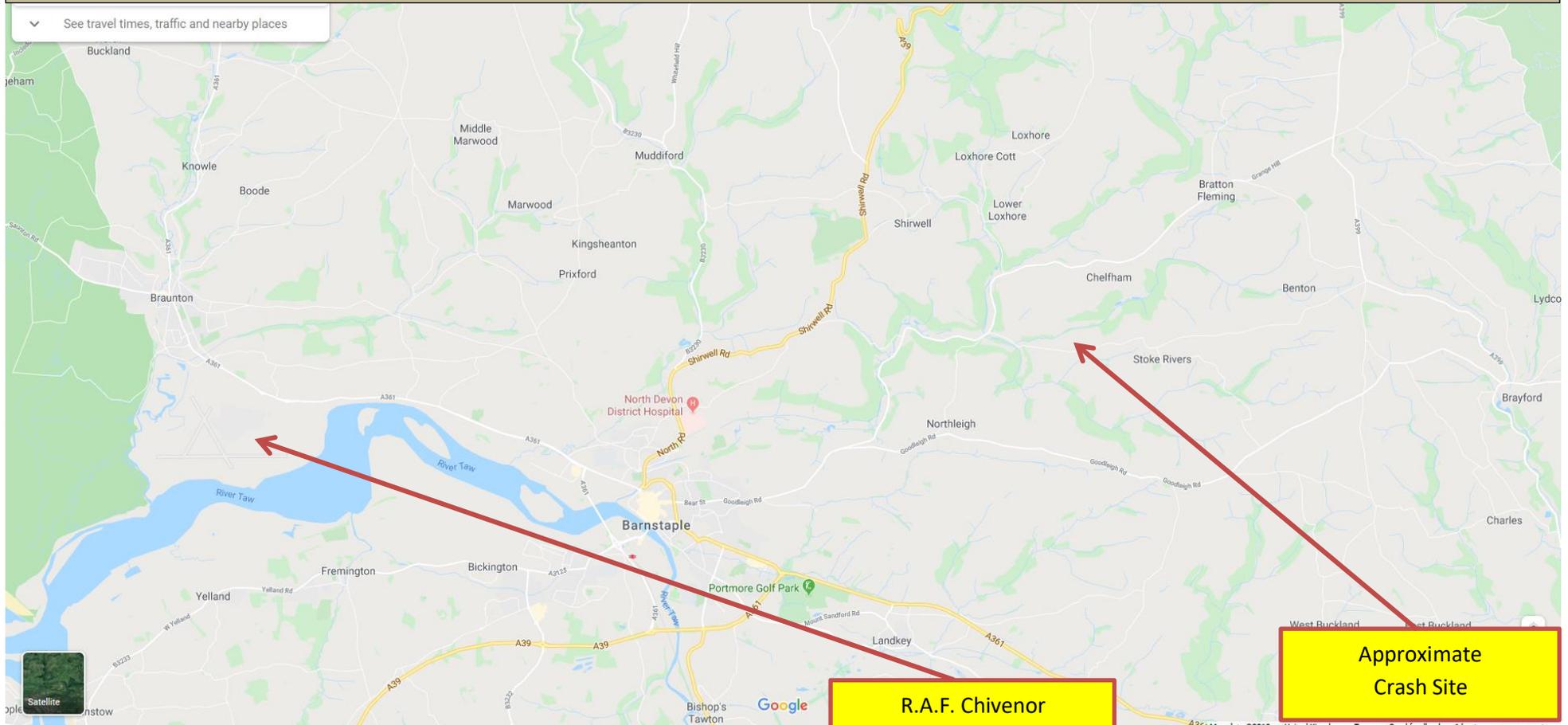
⁷ Son of John Anthony and Ethelwynne PARKER of Bromley, Kent; husband of Moira PARKER.

⁸ Son of Harry and Edith TODD of Leeds, Yorkshire; husband of Eva TODD, of Leeds. Inscription: *WE MISS HIM MOST WHO LOVED HIM BEST*

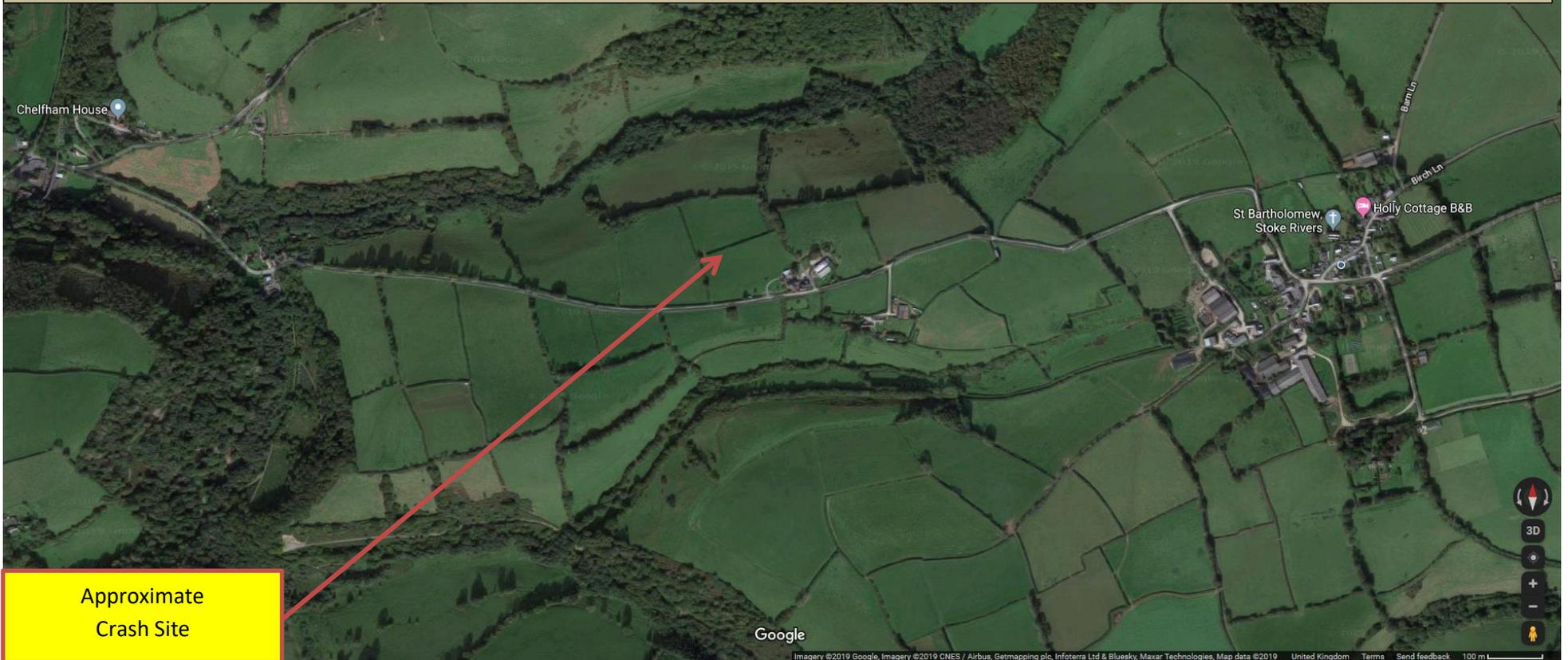
⁹ Son of Mr and Mrs Samuel DOAK; husband of Cloda Phyllis DOAK, of Streatham, London.

¹⁰ Son of Hugh and Elizabeth ROBERTS; husband of Lilian Megan ROBERTS, of Llandudno, Caernarvonshire.

Map of the area to the North-East of R.A.F. Chivenor



Map of the crash-site between Chelfham and Stoke Rivers





Left – David Shirley PARKER as a Pilot Officer with his cousin Lionel STANCOURT on the left in Army uniform.

Above – David PARKER in flying uniform, probably during his initial flying training.

Courtesy of: Hazel DALES (Family Member)

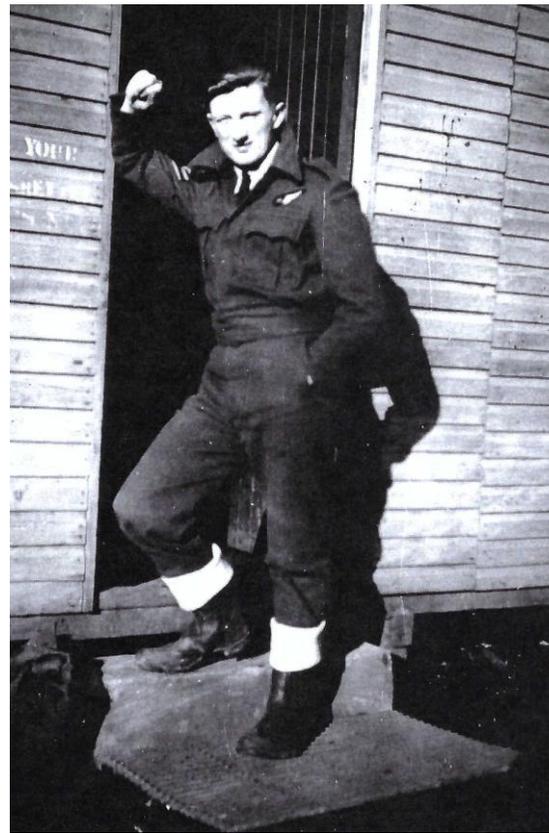
ROLL OF HONOUR.
DEATH ON SERVICE.
Flight-Lieut. D. S. Parker.

Mr. and Mrs. John Parker, of Packwood, Homefield-road, Bromley have received many expressions of sympathy in the loss they have sustained by the death on active service in September of their only son, Flight-Lieutenant David Shirley Parker, R.A.F.V.R. at the age of 25. He joined the R.A.F. in June, 1940, and became a pilot officer a year later; and in June, 1942, he was appointed Flight-Lieutenant. As a bomber pilot, he had taken part in many operational flights over enemy territory.

Last year he was married in Glasgow to Miss Moira McNeill, who is a flight officer in the W.A.A.F. His wife, too, has received numerous expressions of sympathy.

David Parker was educated at Westminster where he rowed for his school, and before joining the R.A.F. he was a law student in his father's firm.

He was a member of the Bromley Cricket Club, with which his parents have been associated for many years, and he was noted for his keenness as a tennis player. He was Assistant Scoutmaster for St. John's Troop, and shewed ability on the stage, having taken part in several productions by "The Quavers."



Left –The newspaper obituary to F/L David Shirley PARKER

Above Centre – Sgt Eric GOODWIN

Above Right – Corporal Harry TODD and his wife.

Courtesy of: BOLER family, GOODWIN family and TODD Family



Alun second from right

Above Left – Alun ROBERTS at his wedding.

Above Centre – Sgt Alun ROBERTS with his Air gunners brevet and Wireless Operators flashes on each shoulder.

Right – Alun ROBERTS with his Halifax air crew after he resumed operational flying with No. 51 Squadron.

Courtesy of David WILSON via Ancestry.co.uk



Above – The Cremation Memorial in Efford Cemetery, Plymouth, where the name of F/L PARKER is inscribed.

Above Right – The grave of Cpl DOAK in County Antrim.

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<http://www.cwgc.org>

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Robert PALMER, M.A.

Published by: The Author.
