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Vickers Wellington Mk. XIV N.2887

## THE LAST FLIGHT OF:

# WELLINGTON MP.630

A narrative of the last flight of Vickers Wellington Mk. XII, which crashed at Luscott Barton, near R.A.F. Chivenor, North Devon, in the early hours of Friday 13 August 1943. The pilot, Sgt WIDDOWS, and five air crew on board at the time, all died instantly in the crash.  
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## The Last Flight of Wellington Mk XII, MP.630

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Rob, Stephen and Graham hope and trust that this story pays due respect to the memory of  
Ken FRANCIS, Jack LOCKWOOD and the other four men who died with them  
in the early hours of 13 August 1943.

***They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning  
We will remember them.***

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## Introduction

In wartime, there are so many different roles that men and women can be involved in, whether in the Armed Forces, or as a civilian, but everybody wants 'to do their bit'. Those involved generally hope that the world will come out of the war a better place, and that history will show that they played a part. Inevitably though, different aspects of the war economy and the Armed Forces can objectively argue that their role was particularly important in the overall scheme of things.

The Battle of the Atlantic was one of the main, if not the main, politically strategic campaigns of the Second World War. Following the German invasion of The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium and France in May 1940, the United Kingdom, its Dominions and Empire, were left as the only country opposing German expansion and war aims. The U.K. is an island, and during the Second World War, relied on imports and exports to develop and maintain a war economy. If the maritime trade to and from the U.K. was severely disrupted, or stopped, the country would soon have to seek an armistice. The primary measure that Germany deployed against the U.K. to stifle trade were their submarines, or U-boats as they were known.

The U-boats had caused major disruption to the British war effort in the First World War, and a similar chain of events occurred in the Second World War. The Royal Navy organised a convoy system, and endeavoured to protect merchant shipping, but a new element was added: air power. In 1939, Coastal Command was small and unable to affect the U-boat campaign significantly, but from 1941 onwards, the use of land based aircraft, coupled with the development of radar, operational research and experience began to make a difference. With the fall of France in June 1940, the German Navy began using French Atlantic ports within a month to gain shorter and quicker access to the North Atlantic. British losses grew to a dangerous level, and the war economy was badly affected. The German U-boats tended to operate on the surface at night, where they were virtually undetectable, and submerged during daylight.

In January 1942, a new unit was established at R.A.F. Chivenor in North Devon, No. 1417 Flight. The purpose of this flight was to test the combination of Air to Surface Vessel radar, and an aircraft mounted searchlight called the Leigh Light after its inventor, S/L H. de V. LEIGH.<sup>1</sup> The concept was to use the radar to identify possible targets on the surface of the sea, and then home in and when about one mile away to switch on the Leigh Light to identify the target. If it was a U-boat, the Captain had about thirty seconds to undertake an attack.

No. 1417 Flight proved that the technology would work, and it was expanded into No. 172 Squadron in February 1942, and in June of that year, on the very first night of operational sorties, an Italian U-boat was located and attacked.

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<sup>1</sup> The A.S.V. radar was known by No. 1417 Flight, and later by No. 172 Squadron as Special Equipment (S/E), and the Leigh Light as L/E.

Suddenly, the night offered no sanctuary to the U-boat commanders, so within a short period of time, the orders were changed for the U-boats to surface during daylight and submerge at night; a major change in German tactics. This then was the role undertaken by No. 172 Squadron, and the men and women who served in that squadron and at its base at R.A.F. Chivenor. All the air crew had to undergo a significant amount of training, and then faced long, lonely sorties, out over the Bay of Biscay. This was because Coastal Command had identified the routes taken by the U-boats to and from their bases on the French Atlantic coast. It was a form of bottleneck, and aircraft from R.A.F. Chivenor were part of the aerial patrols to locate and attack the U-boats in that area.

This is the story of just one air crew from No. 172 Squadron at R.A.F. Chivenor, who came together at the Operational Training Unit and arrived in June 1943. When returning from their third sortie in the early hours of Friday 13 August 1943, they encountered bad weather over North Devon. Due to the wind conditions, one of the two shorter runways was in use instead of the main runway, and in conducting the approach, the Wellington hit a barn at Luscott Barton, north of Chivenor, and crashed. All six men died instantly.

## The Vickers Wellington

The Air Ministry issued Specification B.9/32, in 1932, for the design of a heavy bomber. Vickers developed a design, using the geodetic structure designed by Barnes WALLIS, who was a senior engineer for the company. The airframe was constructed with a metal structure and covered with fabric. Vickers used this method for the single engine Wellesley bomber, which was then entering service with the Royal Air Force. The prototype Wellington made its first flight, at the company's airfield at Weybridge, Surrey, on 15 June 1936.

The first production Wellington Mk. I aircraft were delivered to No. 9 Squadron in October 1938. They were fitted with two 1,050 Bristol Pegasus Mk. XVIII engines. These aircraft had a turret in the nose and tail, and a retractable Nash & Thompson ventral turret under the aircraft. The Mk IA Wellington had powered Nash & Thompson turrets instead of the original Vickers design, and in the Mk. IC, the ventral turret was discarded, but two beam guns were added.

The Wellington Mk. II had two Rolls-Royce Merlin Mk. X engines, each developing 1,145 hp, as the Bristol Aircraft Company anticipated a shortage of Pegasus engines. In fact, the shortage arose in the supply of Merlin engines, so the Mk. III design had two Bristol Hercules Mk. III or XI engines, each developing 1,370 hp. The Merlins were liquid cooled, in-line engines, while the Hercules were air cooled radials. The Mk. IV Wellington was fitted with American Pratt & Whitney R-1830-S3C4GT Twin Wasp radial engines. The Wellington Mk. V and VI were experimental, high altitude versions, and the Mk. VII was cancelled. The final bomber version was the Mk. X, which were delivered to the R.A.F. from July 1942 onwards. These were constructed of light alloy instead of mild steel, so the geodetic structure was lighter, yet stronger, than its predecessors were. The Mk. X had two Bristol Hercules Mk. VI or XVI engines.

At the beginning of the Second World War, Bomber Command had eight squadrons equipped with Wellingtons. Very early in the war, the R.A.F. found that daylight bombing operations against Germany were not feasible, as they resulted in heavy losses of aircraft and aircrew. Simply, British bomber aircraft were too vulnerable to German fighters and air defences to operate effectively. The British switched to night-time attacks, with the Wellington becoming the main aircraft used by Bomber Command, until the four-engine 'heavy bombers' began to make an appearance in 1942. By the autumn of 1943, the Wellington had been replaced in R.A.F. Bomber Command in operations over Germany. The Wellington continued in effective use as a bomber in the Mediterranean, and South-East Asia. The first Wellingtons arrived in Egypt in the autumn of 1940, and they remained operational in the bombing role until the end of 1944. Wellingtons flew more operational hours in the Middle and Far East than in Western Europe.

The threat posed by German mines around the coast of the United Kingdom grew to serious proportions by early 1940. The advent of magnetic mines was a major problem, so as one of the British responses, a Wellington Mk. I bomber was fitted with a ring around the entire aircraft, which was magnetised by a generator on-board the Wellington. This created the Wellington DWI Mk. I aircraft, which proved to be of limited effect operationally. The use of Wellingtons in the maritime role had commenced, with No. 221 Squadron being the first equipped with Wellingtons for the maritime reconnaissance and strike role.

The Germans and Italians both had large submarine fleets within their navies. These submarines were known to the British as U-boats. The term U-boat is an anglicised version of the German word U-boot, a shortening of the German Unterseeboot, which literally means 'underseaboat'. The U-boats commenced operating in the Atlantic from French bases shortly after the collapse of France in June 1940. They could operate on the surface with impunity at night, as they were virtually undetectable by British aircraft and warships because of their low silhouette. The scientific development by the British of Air-to-Surface Vessel (A.S.V.) radar meant that enemy ships, including U-boats, could be detected on the surface at night. Although A.S.V. could detect a surfaced U-boat from up to twelve miles away, as the aircraft closed in for an attack, the background returns from the surface of the sea obscured the location of the U-boat within a mile of the target.

A Squadron Leader LEIGH invented a mechanism by which a searchlight could be fitted in the vacant space left by the former retractable ventral turret underneath a Wellington aircraft. Using the generator fitted to a DWI Mk I aircraft to power the searchlight, a Wellington was modified to carry the A.S.V. Mk. II radar and searchlight (known as a Leigh Light). The initial trials proved successful, so other aircraft were modified and designated as General Reconnaissance Mark VIII versions. No. 1417 Flight was formed at R.A.F. Chivenor equipped with G.R. Mk. VIII aircraft to develop these aircraft for operational use. This Flight grew into No. 172 Squadron in early 1942, and the first operational sorties in June 1942 resulted in an Italian U-boat being located, illuminated and attacked. The impact on the U-boats in the Battle of the Atlantic was dramatic and long-lasting.

The Wellington G.R. Mk. XI was a maritime version of the Mk. X aircraft, and although fitted with the A.S.V. Mk. II radar, few (if any) were fitted with the Leigh Light. These aircraft were used for attacking enemy surface vessels, particularly in the Mediterranean region. The Mk. XII Wellington was another maritime version, with some fitted with the Leigh Light. The invention of the centimetric A.S.V. Mk. III radar, with a revolving scanner, led to two further General Reconnaissance versions of the Wellington. Both the G.R. XIII and G.R. XIV had the new radar installed in the nose, covered by a blister, and were powered by the improved Hercules Mk. XVII engines. The Mk. XIII was used for shipping strikes, and could carry two 18" torpedoes, and the G.R. Mk. XIV was fitted with the Leigh Light and armed with depth charges to attack U-boats. It is believed that the maritime versions of the Wellington accounted for in whole, or in part, the sinking of twenty-seven U-boats.

11,461 Wellingtons were built at Weybridge, and satellite factories at Chester and Blackpool. The last Wellington built by Vickers was delivered to the R.A.F. on 25 October 1945, one of the few R.A.F. aircraft to be built throughout the six years of the Second World War. The last Wellingtons used by the R.A.F., were retired from their training role in 1953.

The Wellingtons operated by Coastal Command usually had an aircrew of six: a pilot (who was also the captain of the aircraft), a second pilot due to the length of the sorties, an observer/navigator, and three dual rolled wireless operators/air gunners. These three men would rotate around between the W/T (wireless telegraphy), S/E (special equipment, or radar set) and rear turret seats during the ten-hour long sorties.

All versions of the Wellington were 60 feet, 6 inches in length, with a wingspan of 85 feet, 10 inches. As the engines became more powerful, from the 1,000 horsepower Bristol Pegasus Mk. XX fitted to the Mark I aircraft, to the 1,675 horsepower Bristol Hercules Mk. XVI engines in the Mk. X, XIII and XIV, so the performance of the aircraft improved. The maximum speed of 245 mph for the Mk. I, rose to 254 mph with the Mk. X and derivatives. The ceiling increased slightly from 21,600 feet to about 22,000 feet, but this was irrelevant in the maritime reconnaissance roles, as the usual operating height was only about 1,500 feet.

## **No. 172 Squadron**

This squadron was the pioneer in the operational deployment of the Leigh Light and A.S.V. radar in night-time operations against the U-boats in the Bay of Biscay. In addition, it was the longest serving squadron based at R.A.F. Chivenor during the Second World War, being based there from April 1942 (when it formed), until September 1944, when it moved to R.A.F. Limavady in Northern Ireland where it remained until the end of the Second World War.

At 00.23 hours, on Thursday, 8 January 1942, R.A.F. Chivenor received a signal from the Air Ministry (07) authorising the formation of No. 1417 Flight in 19 Group, to be based at R.A.F. Chivenor. The signal stated that the flight would be equipped with four (plus two reserves) Wellington aircraft, Mark VIII, fitted with Leigh Lights in addition to the normal equipment.

The purpose of the flight was to develop knowledge of, and experience with the Leigh Lights, under the control of No. 19 Group, in order to undertake operational sorties when ready.<sup>2</sup> On 18 January 1942, the War Establishment for the Flight was issued by the Air Ministry, with a Squadron Leader as officer commanding, one Flight Lieutenant and four Flying or Pilot Officers as pilots, and one Flying Officer and two Flying or Pilot Officers as observers. There were to be five Sergeant pilots, two Sergeant observers and fifteen Sergeant wireless operators/air gunners. The ground personnel included Aircraft Hands, Maintenance Assistants, Armourers (Bombs), Armourers (Guns), Clerks General Duties, Electricians Class I and II, Equipment Assistants, Fitters Class I, II (A) and II (E), Fitter (Armourer), Fitter (Armourer Bombs) and Fitter (Armourer Guns), Flight Mechanics (A) and (E), Instrument Repairers Class I and Class II, Radio Mechanics, and Wireless Mechanics. In total, No. 1417 Flight comprised nine officers and eighty-four airmen.

On 26 January 1942, Squadron Leader (S/L) J. H. GRESWELL transferred officially from the Coastal Command Development Unit at R.A.F. Carew Cheriton, to assume command of No. 1417 Flight at R.A.F. Chivenor.<sup>3,4</sup> Four Wellington Mk IC aircraft, not fitted with Leigh Lights, were allocated to the Flight for training purposes, and the Flight Commander had to prepare a training programme for the three pilots, one observer and eight wireless operators/air gunners who were to join the Flight having flown Hudson aircraft across the Atlantic from Canada where they had been trained. By the 24 January, the Flight comprised only fifteen personnel, but by the thirty-first of the month, five pilots (one a Sergeant), two observers (one officer and one sergeant), eight wireless operators/air gunners and three air gunners had arrived and joined the Flight.<sup>5</sup>

In February, the strength of the Flight built up steadily. On 2 February, Pilot Officer (P/O) A. W. R. TRIGGS was appointed to be responsible for flight stores, P/O H. W. RUSS for navigation, and P/O G. V. SYER for the armoury. Flight Sergeant (F/Sgt) CARTWRIGHT was made responsible for signals. On 8 February, the first operational aircraft, Wellington W.5733 arrived, with the first training aircraft, P.9223 arriving on 13 February, the latter aircraft being the one in which S/L LEIGH carried out his original searchlight experiments. Two more aircraft arrived before the end of the month, L.4319 on 20 February, and R.1231, both Wellington's Mk. IC, arrived from R.A.F. Cranwell on 24 February.<sup>6</sup>

At 09.00 hours on Thursday, 26 February 1942, a signal was received from the Air Ministry stating that No. 1417 Flight was to be expanded to a squadron of sixteen Wellington Mk. VIII aircraft, with four reserves. The squadron was to be known as 172 Squadron, and it was to be based at R.A.F. Chivenor, but was to come under No. 19 Group (an operational group), even though R.A.F. Chivenor was still primarily a training base under No. 17 Group. The allotment and issue of the specially equipped Vickers Wellingtons Mk. VIII was to be carried out by No. 41 Group.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Air Ministry Files (AIR) 29 868 – *Miscellaneous Flights* (London, Air Ministry 1945)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Rawlings gives the date of formation of 1417 Flight as 18 March 1942.

<sup>5</sup> The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Air Ministry Files (AIR) 29 868 – *Miscellaneous Flights* (London, Air Ministry 1945)

<sup>6</sup> The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Air Ministry Files (AIR) 29 868 – *Miscellaneous Flights* (London, Air Ministry 1945)

<sup>7</sup> The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Air Ministry Files (AIR) 29 868 – *Miscellaneous Flights* (London, Air Ministry 1945)

The Operations Record Book (R.A.F. Form 540) commences from the month of March 1942. On 8 March, Wellington W.3657 arrived at R.A.F. Chivenor for 172 Squadron to use as a training aircraft. At 09.00 hours, on Monday, 9 March 1942, H.Q. Coastal Command signalled R.A.F. Chivenor to inform them that S/L J. B. RUSSELL, of No. 502 Squadron based at R.A.F. St. Eval, was to assume command of No. 172 Squadron from S/L J. H. GRESWELL with effect from 11 March 1942, and that on that date he would assume the rank of Wing Commander (W/C). On 17 March, the inventor of the Leigh Light, S/L LEIGH arrived at R.A.F. Chivenor on a liaison visit to meet Wing Commander RUSSELL and the Squadron, staying for two nights. On the day of his arrival, the promotion of W/C RUSSELL was announced in the London Gazette.

On 9 April 1942, P/O NOBLE and P/O Le BON arrived on being posted from 233 Squadron at R.A.F. St. Eval. Four days later, S/L GRESWELL asked P/O RUSS, a Canadian, to take a crew and fly down to R.A.F. St. Eval to collect W/C RUSSELL. He took off in a Wellington Mk. VIII, Z.8721, at about 14.00 hours for the short flight to R.A.F. St. Eval. His crew comprised P/O E. A. BLAIR, a New Zealander, as second pilot, P/O L. NOBLE as navigator, and two wireless operators/air gunners, P/O Le BON and Sergeant (Sgt) C. T. DANIEL. After the aircraft took off, nothing further was heard from the crew, and the aircraft did not arrive at R.A.F. St. Eval. At 16.00 hours on 21 April, news was received by No. 172 Squadron that a pilot from No. 5 (C) O.T.U. had located the remains of Wellington Z.8721, which had crashed on the cliff-side at a point midway between Clovelly and Hartland Point. W/C RUSSELL immediately formed a search party, which included the Medical Officer, F/O W. S. NOBLE. The coast was searched at the area indicated by the pilot and, after some difficulty, the wreckage was found by P/O A. W. R. TRIGGS scattered over a charred area at a most remote and unfrequented spot at about 21.00 hours. Little more could be done that night, other than reporting the location of the crash site to P.C. NORCOMBE at Hartland, so the party returned to R.A.F. Chivenor.

At 09.00 hours the next day, W/C RUSSELL organised a party to descend the cliffs and recover the five bodies. All five deceased were badly burned and crushed, but were recovered safely and were identified as the five air crew of Wellington Z.8721. An inquest was held at 17.00 hours on 23 April at the S.S.Q. at R.A.F. Chivenor. The verdict was one of accidental death due to the crashing of an aircraft. The five deceased air crew were all interned in the local cemetery at St. Augustine's Church, Heanton Punchardon at 15.00 hours on 26 April. Full services honours were extended to the five men, and relatives of P/O F. LE BON, P/O L. NOBLE and Sgt DANIEL attended the service. They were met on their arrival at R.A.F. Chivenor by the Squadron Adjutant, who accompanied them up the hill to the church for the service.

June 1942 saw the first operations in the Bay of Biscay for the new squadron. A signal arrived from H.Q. 19 Group on 2 June, requiring four aircraft to be operational from 15.00 hours. This marked the climax of all the training for the embryonic squadron, and was greeted with enthusiasm. This was dashed when the night's operations were cancelled due to the weather, but they were back on for the night of 3 June. Air Vice Marshal G. R. BROMET, C.B.E., D.S.O., the Air Officer Commanding 19 Group, arrived by air to confer with the Station Commander, Group Captain (G/C) P. D. CRACROFT, A.F.C., and W/C RUSSELL.

He attended the briefing, after which the four aircraft took off at approximately five-minute intervals. The first away was D/172 (BB.503), captained by P/O F. BLACKMORE, which became airborne at 20.33 hours. At 20.37 hours, W/C RUSSELL lifted off in C/172 (HF.828) with his crew, followed by the third crew to take off captained by F/L SOUTHALL in D/172 (BB.503), which left at 20.44 hours. Finally, at 20.54 hours, F/172 (ES.986) took off, flown by S/L J. H. GRESWELL.

The first to land at 05.11 hours was D/172 and F/L SOUTHALL, who had an uneventful patrol but had sighted some fishing vessels, and used their S/E to locate and illuminate some Spanish trawlers. Next back at 05.16 was B/172 with P/O BLACKMORE as Captain; another aircraft to have completed an uneventful patrol. Then at 05.20 hours, W/C RUSSELL landed having sighted a merchant vessel of about 1,000 tons, but had little else to report. At 05.57 hours, S/L GRESWELL landed in F/172, with much to report. This aircraft had opened the scoring for 172 Squadron at 01.44 hours. F/172 obtained a contact on the search aerials six and half miles to starboard. The subsequent homing procedure produced another and separate contact. A run up to one of these contacts was made, and the Leigh Light was switched on about one mile distance from the contact. A U-boat was sighted on the surface, three-quarters of a mile dead ahead. After a couple of runs, the Leigh Light was switched on again at one mile distance, and the U-boat was illuminated at three-quarters of a mile. The aircraft descended to 50 feet, and four depth charges were dropped, three of which were seen to explode and straddle the U-boat. This notable success on the first operational effort was hailed with great enthusiasm throughout the Squadron as it had proved the whole 'outfit' to have been an outstanding success. W/C J. B. RUSSELL, S/L H. de V. LEIGH and S/L J. H. GRESWELL all felt immensely satisfied with this initial and surprising achievement.

Three crews returned to operational duties on the night of **6 June**, with more sightings of U-Boats being made. S/L GRESWELL and his crew took off at 22.09 hours in F/172, followed at 22.25 hours by W/C RUSSELL and his crew in C/172, and then one minute later, P/O BLACKMORE and his crew in B/172. W/C RUSSELL had an uneventful flight and landed at 06.56 hours, but both S/L GRESWELL and P/O BLACKMORE obtained contacts on their S/E.

S/L GRESWELL's crew obtained their contact at the range of seven and half miles, and attacked, but the altimeter was set incorrectly and on the first run the Leigh Light beam was trained inaccurately, and the U-boat dived as the Wellington approached, making any attack pointless.<sup>8</sup> P/O BLACKMORE gained a contact at eleven miles range, sighted a U-boat near to that sighted by S/L GRESWELL (which could have been the same submarine), and made a run in but was unable to drop the depth charges. The rear gunner fired two-hundred rounds at the U-boat as it dived.

Five planes were detailed for operations overnight 19/20 June. This night turned out to be eventful for more than one crew. F/L SOUTHALL lifted off at 22.30 hours in D/172, F/Sgt VIRGO in A/172 at 22.32, W/C RUSSELL took off at 22.40 hours in C/172, P/O BLACKMORE in B/172 at 22.47 hours.

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<sup>8</sup> This problem was not unusual in the early days of operation. The altimeter was set according to the barometric pressure at R.A.F. Chivenor, which could be very different to that encountered in the Bay of Biscay. Unless the altimeter was recalibrated over the Bay, it could give a false reading of the aircraft's height above the water.

At 01.47 hours on the outward track, D/172 obtained a S/E contact as the A.S.V. operator was dropping a flame float. The aircraft homed towards the contact with its Leigh Light exposed, and a U-boat was illuminated to starboard. The aircraft approached two points on the starboard quarter of the U-boat, and depth charges were released from a height of approximately 100 feet.

At about 02.30 hours, A/172 received a message to attack a submarine reported nearby. It proceeded to the position given and obtained an S/E contact, but lost the contact and could not regain it; although the rear gunner saw a swirl of foam on the sea as if a submarine was diving. They searched for a further forty-five minutes then set course for base. At about 06.15 hours, the port engine cylinders gave a shower of sparks and then blew off followed by the engine cowling. The aircraft sent an S.O.S. and F/Sgt VIRGO managed to ditch it safely at about 06.42 hours, in a position about one-hundred and twenty miles south of the Scillies and one-hundred miles west of Ushant. The crew of six took to the dinghy, and were sighted by Whitley F/502 at between 10.00 and 12.00 hours. The aircraft circled but then headed off to the west where it appeared to attack a U-boat. This aircraft did not reappear although the men in the dinghy could hear the sounds of an aircraft in the vicinity for about another two hours. At about 15.00 hours, on 21 June, the dinghy was sighted by Whitley G/58, which dropped some smoke floats. A Sunderland flying boat, Y/10 R.A.A.F. from R.A.F. Mount Batten appeared on the scene as well, and the crew of A/172 in the dinghy fired a signal flare. Then two German Arado 196 float planes came onto the scene, and bursts of cannon fire were heard, resulting in the Sunderland losing height rapidly. Smoke was seen issuing from the position where the Sunderland was last seen, followed by a large explosion. During this exchange, the Whitley made off, and the two enemy aircraft circled over the dinghy at about two miles radius. The crew of A/172 were picked up safely by a motor launch at about 22.30 hours, and landed at St. Mary's on the Scilly Islands at about 08.45 hours on 22 June. Apart from a few scratches, the crew were fine after their ordeal.

On 6 July 1942, F/L SOUTHALL and his crew took off at 21.42 hours in D/172, and were the first to sight a U-boat that night. At 01.23 hours, while on patrol in the Bay of Biscay, D/172 was flying at 3,500 feet when an S/E contact was obtained at a range of eight miles, 15 degrees to starboard. SOUTHALL turned towards the contact and homed to three miles, when the contact disappeared owing to returns on the radar from the surface of the sea. D/172 turned on a reciprocal course, lost height, and a second contact was registered two and half miles ahead, with the aircraft now flying at 600 feet. D/172 homed and the Leigh Light was exposed at three-quarters of a mile, and a fully surfaced U-boat appeared in the beam. SOUTHALL made an attack that was delivered from three points on the port bow of the U-boat. Four, 269 lb Torpex filled Depth Charges were released from 100 feet, and were estimated to have straddled the U-boat's track twenty yards ahead of the bow, and at an angle of 130 degrees to its track. Flame floats were dropped, one being seen to ignite with the depth charge explosions by the rear gunner, who observed a sheet of flame lasting about one second, in the position of the explosion.

The rear gunner fired one burst of 30 rounds from each gun, just over the explosion. D/172 continued to circle the area, but no further contacts were obtained. At 01.54 hours, D/172 left the position, returning at 02.59 hrs when two contacts were homed on but proved inconclusive. D/172 remained in the vicinity until 04.00 hrs and then set course for base. During the patrol, three fishing vessels were also sighted. The radio altimeter had been showing intermittent faults throughout the patrol but during the attack functioned correctly.

At 04.55 hours, in a nearby location, the crew of H/172 gained a contact on their Special Equipment homing aerials seven miles ahead. The Leigh Light was switched on when the target was one mile ahead, and HOWELL released four Torpex depth charges at a height of 50 feet, while flying across the bows of the U-boat from starboard to port as it was diving. Due to the eruption of the water as the depth charges exploded, the rear gunner was not able to see where the four landed, but the crew estimated that at least two were within lethal range. The rear gunner fired 400 rounds into the explosions, and as the spray subsided, he saw a mass of swirling water.

HOWELL turned H/172 around to fly back over the scene, and dropped a flame float into the mass of swirling water, which was extending and becoming darker. The aircraft remained in the area until 05.13 hours, but observed nothing else of interest. They flew back to R.A.F. Chivenor, arriving back at 07.45 hours after a patrol of nine hours and six minutes. During the patrol, H/172 also sighted a small, single merchant vessel, and medium sized convoy. Subsequently, the assessment by the Admiralty, confirmed by recent research by Neistle, was that the attack by H/172 had sunk the Type IXC U-boat U-502. Laid down on 2 April 1940 at Deutsche Werft AG in Hamburg, it was launched on 18 February 1941, and commissioned on 31 May 1941 under the command of Kapitanleutnant Jurgen von ROSENTSTIEL. U-502 joined 2 Flottille under training until 1 September 1941, when it commenced active service. The U-boat undertook four war patrols, sinking fourteen ships of 78,843 G.R.T., and damaging two others, serving with the Reissewolf wolfpack between 21 and 30 October 1941. U-502 was lost with all fifty-two crew dying in the attack. This was the first successful attack by an A.S.V., Leigh Light equipped Wellington during the Second World War.

In August 1942, a detachment was sent to R.A.F. Skitten in northern Scotland. In September, this detachment expanded to become 179 Squadron. In December 1942, the squadron upgraded to the new Wellington Mk. XII. The second successful attack came on 19 February 1943 with the sinking of U-268 in the Bay of Biscay. In March 1943, the squadron commenced receiving the improved A.S.V. Mk. III radar sets, and this proved effective with the third successful attack, on U-665, taking place on 20 March 1943. This came only two days after Coastal Command launched Operation 'Enclose', its first large scale operation to seek and destroy U-boats in the Bay of Biscay.

Further successes came on 10 April 1943 with the sinking of U-376 in the Bay of Biscay, followed by U-119 on 24 June 1943 north-west of Cape Ortegal. On 24 July 1943, U-459 was sunk in the same location, with U-126 being sunk on 3 July 1943 and U-614 on 29 July 1943. In August 1943, the squadron began to receive new Wellington Mk. XIV aircraft, with improved engines, and equipped with A.S.V. Mk. III and a Leigh Light.

When R.A.F. Chivenor suffered severe flooding in September 1943, this squadron remained at Chivenor, although 304 and 407 Squadrons were both transferred to R.A.F. St. Eval. In January 1944, the squadron had two further successes, with the sinking of U-364 on 30 January, and U-231 the next day; the first to the west of Bordeaux and the second north of the Azores, where a detachment from the squadron was then based. In May and June 1944, the squadron was heavily involved in the operation to blockade the English Channel against U-Boats attacking the invasion fleet. By September 1944, there were fewer sightings of U-boats as the German Navy lost control of the key French bases as the Allies advanced through France. In consequence, the squadron moved for the only time in its operational life, transferring to R.A.F. Limavady in Northern Ireland. From September 1944 until the end of hostilities, the squadron operated from Limavady, but with the U-boat threat over, the squadron disbanded on 4 June 1945.

## No. 179 Squadron

The second squadron in Coastal Command equipped with the Leigh Light Wellington aircraft, No. 179 Squadron was formed on 1 September 1942 around a detached flight from No. 172 Squadron. Its first base was R.A.F. Skitten, in Caithness, close to the town of Wick, and the aircraft were Vickers Wellington Mk. VIII, allocated from No. 172 Squadron.

In November 1942, the squadron moved to R.A.F. North Front, Gibraltar, in order to cover the coast of Portugal and southern Spain, and the approaches to the Mediterranean. In August 1943, the Squadron began to receive new Wellington Mk. XIV aircraft. In April 1944, No. 179 Squadron returned to the U.K. to be based at R.A.F. Predannack in Cornwall. The reason for this move was because their area of operations had become quieter, and the squadron was required to bolster the Coastal Command commitment to the forthcoming invasion of France. In September 1944, the Squadron moved to R.A.F. Chivenor in North Devon, but later that same month, it moved again to R.A.F. Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides. In October, the squadron returned to R.A.F. Chivenor, but the following month, it moved to R.A.F. St. Eval in Cornwall and converted to Vickers Warwick Mk V aircraft, the only unit in Coastal Command to do so.

With the end of the Second World War, No. 179 Squadron remained operating from R.A.F. St. Eval. In February 1946, it received its first Avro Lancaster A.S.R. Mk. III aircraft, the conversion being completed by May, when the last Warwick was retired. During this period, 'Y' Flight kept the Warwicks, while 'X' Flight received the Lancasters. Once the entire squadron was using Lancasters, 'Y' Flight became No. 210 Squadron. No. 179 Squadron was disbanded in September 1946.

## The Circumstances of the Crash

Sgt WIDDOWS and his air crew arrived at R.A.F. Chivenor on 2 June 1943.

1121303	Sgt E. R. H. WIDDOWS, R.A.F.V.R.	Pilot & Captain
658536	Sgt J. S. LOCKWOOD, R.A.F.V.R.	Second Pilot
A/414601	F/Sgt R. G. SALTER, R.A.A.F.	Navigator (B)
1123419	Sgt W. F. O. SAYLE, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
1314970	Sgt K. H. FRANCIS, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
1382529	Sgt S. C. HASLER, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG

Their first operational sortie took place on 7 July 1943. They took off at 22.42 hours in Wellington Mk. XII, P/172, on an anti-submarine patrol. The crew had the Special Equipment (radar) switched on throughout the flight, but it was uneventful. They landed safely at 06.41 hours.

Sgt WIDDOWS and his air crew had to wait until 1 August 1943 for their second sortie. This was a daytime sortie, which was unusual for the Squadron. They took off at 10.36 hours flying Wellington Mk. XII, MP.536, on an anti-submarine patrol. The weather was bumpy, and Sgt WIDDOWS decided to use cloud cover following the sighting of three unidentified twin-engine fighters. Otherwise, the patrol was uneventful and they landed safely at 18.15 hours.

The third operational sortie for Sgt WIDDOWS and his five colleagues was scheduled for the night of 12/13 August 1943. The aircraft allocated to them was a Vickers Wellington Mk. XII, MP.630 (H/172). Their anti-submarine patrol was one of five flown by No. 172 Squadron that night. Sgt WIDDOWS and his air crew were the last of the five to become airborne, which occurred at 20.35 hours. On making a circuit on their return to base in poor visibility, at 04.30 hours, the aircraft crashed into a building and then exploded. The aircraft was carrying six depth charges, which all exploded shortly after the crash damaging the nearby farmhouse. All the air crew were killed, and the aircraft completely wrecked.

The Operations Record Book for R.A.F. Chivenor records:

*A plane of 172 Squadron crashed at Luscott Barton Farm about 5 miles N.E. of this aerodrome this morning. Depth charges exploded. Portions of bodies of Sgt LOCKWOOD, Sgt WIDDOWS and Sgt SALTER recovered. These remains had been hurled about ½ a mile. Six people sleeping at the farm escaped injury, even though all ceilings and window panes collapsed. All the air crew killed. Plane was destroyed by fire.*

It is sad to reflect that the three Wireless Operators/Air Gunners would have been in their landing positions above the bomb bay, and would have died instantly. Due to the scale of the explosion, R.A.F. personnel were deployed in searching the scene and recovering the human remains.

Under the circumstances, the personnel at R.A.F. Chivenor decided it was best to bury the three Wireless Operators/Air Gunners together in one coffin, as the remains were indistinguishable. Although the policy of the Royal Air Force was to keep from the families, as far as possible, the realisation of the disfigurement or dismemberment so often resulting from air crashes, the families of the three wireless operators/air gunners were informed of the intention to bury the three men in one coffin.

It is apparent from correspondence that there was confusion about the situation which led the families to believe that their son's bodies had been recovered. Mr and Mrs FRANCIS wished to bring their son Kenneth's body back to Yeovil for burial, but were told that was not possible. This caused the FRANCIS family deep distress. Subsequently, in further correspondence, the Royal Air Force accepted that it may have been better if three coffins had been prepared, one for each family of the three Wireless Operators/Air Gunners. In addition, the Director of Personal Services accepted that the families of the deceased should have been given better information, albeit however distressing that may have been, for them to make an informed decision regarding the burial.

## Court of Inquiry

The Form 765 (c) 'Report on Flying Accident or Forced Landing Not Attributable to Enemy Action' states that there was no evidence of any technical failure, and failure was not suspected as no signal had been received from the aircraft, and the Airfield Controller stated that the aircraft was flying normally with both engines running. It was also stated that the inspection of the aircraft rendered any technical opinion impossible to reach as the aircraft had exploded on impact, and the wreckage covered an area of about one square mile. The two Hercules engines were found one mile apart, such was the violence of the explosion.

The aircraft was seen to fly over the aerodrome and asked permission to land. The Airfield Controller '*gave him a green*' and switched the chance light on. The aircraft answered by switching the downward recognition light on and commenced a circuit prior to the approach. The aircraft then disappeared over the brow of the nearest hill and almost immediately a violent crash and explosion followed. All the aerodrome lighting was switched on – Drem Mark II flare path and Drem Mark I circle and funnel.

The weather was deteriorating at the time of the crash and may have been a contributory factor for the aircraft crashing. The Form records simply: '*No apparent mechanical failure: pilot flew into hill at approximately 350 feet.*' G/C C. E. CHILTON, the Commanding Officer of R.A.F. Chivenor added his endorsement as follows:

- (i) *The weather conditions at the time of this accident were as follows:- Vis 4 -5 miles, Cloud 10/10ths 1,000 feet, occasionally 5 – 8,000 feet, with occasional slight rain, Wind south-westerly 25 mph.*

- (ii) *Pilots had been briefed that the above conditions would be prevailing at this period and they were instructed to be careful about setting their altimeters and, therefore, they should obtain a Q.F.E. on the return, since barometrical changes were to be expected.*
- (iii) *The aircraft was equipped with a radio altimeter and the W/T was working at the time of the accident as the pilot had obtained Q.D.M. a few minutes before approaching the aerodrome.*
- (iv) *The pilot did not call for a Q.F.E. on W/T or R/T before landing, neither did he make a full circuit of the aerodrome before attempting to land.*
- (v) *In my opinion, this accident was due to faulty airmanship in that the pilot failed to take adequate precautions to maintain a safe height, particularly since his approach to the runway in use must be made over the sharply rising ground to the north east of the aerodrome.*
- (vi) *The airfield lighting was in operation and the pilot should have seen the red light marking the top of Heanton Church which is an excellent land mark to all pilots.*
- (vii) *It would appear most likely that the pilot grazed the top of a barn on the rising ground and then struck the ground some 50 yards higher up, with the result that there was a violent explosion when all the D.C.'s were detonated and the machine completely disintegrated.*
- (viii) *I consider that no useful purpose is likely to be served by holding a Court of Enquiry or Investigation, especially since the wreckage is disposed over several miles, and the pilot had excellent local knowledge of the conditions prevailing in the vicinity of this airfield, as he had completed one operational tour as second pilot at Chivenor prior to his Captain's course.*
- (ix) *This is the second accident which has occurred on this ridge, but there is no need for it if pilots exercise all the care which is normally necessary for landing at night, and particularly when approaching a short runway.*

## Accidents Investigation Branch

This accident was not investigated by the Accidents Investigation Branch of the Air Ministry.

## The Air Crew

### 1121303 Sergeant Edgar Robert Howard WIDDOWS, R.A.F.V.R.

Edgar Robert Howard WIDDOWS, who was known as 'Bobby', was the second child, and only son, of the Reverend Henry Charles WIDDOWS, and his wife Florence (nee WILKINSON). The eldest child was Constance Winifred, who was born on 3 September 1918, followed by Bobby who was born in 1919, and then Alice Ruth Eveline, who was born in 1921. All three siblings were born in Westbury, Shropshire. The Reverend WIDDOWS gained an appointment at Christ Church, Walshaw, in Bury, Lancashire. Bobby WIDDOWS attended Seaford College in Sussex and Bury Grammar School, graduating with his School Certificate.

Pre-war, WIDDOWS was a well-known member of Bury Rugby Club, and after leaving school, he went to the University of Manchester where he was studying an honours course in architecture and art when the Second World War broke out. Bobby WIDDOWS enlisted at R.A.F. Cardington on some date after April 1940, and he commenced his flying training in the U.S.A. in June 1941. The now Sgt WIDDOWS arrived at No. 172 Squadron in August 1942, and served as the second pilot to Sgt Arthur Desmond Stanley MARTIN, R.A.F.V.R. and his air crew. Sgt MARTIN was born in 1920 in Dublin, but moved to live in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia before the Second World War. He was employed as a clerk until he enlisted in the R.A.F.V.R. in 1940. His first operational sortie took place on 9 September 1942, when they took off in Vickers Wellington Mk VIII, A/172, at 21.18 hours, on an anti-submarine sortie. They landed safely at 05.39 hours.

Sgt MARTIN, with his air crew including Sgt WIDDOWS, transferred to the newly formed No. 179 Squadron, which was established at R.A.F. Wick, and its satellite station of R.A.F. Skitten, in Caithness, Scotland. Their first sortie over the North Sea took place on 16 September 1942, and they completed two more that month. They completed eight sorties in October 1942, including a memorable one with a successful outcome. On 22 October 1942, the now F/Sgt MARTIN was piloting a Wellington Mk. VIII, HX.776 (B/179) flying out of R.A.F. Skitten with his usual air crew of:

778417	F/Sgt A. D. S. MARTIN, R.A.F.V.R.	Pilot & Captain
1121303	Sgt E. R. H. WIDDOWS, R.A.F.V.R.	Second Pilot
	Sgt G. A. KIRKWOOD, R.A.F.V.R.	Navigator (B)
	Sgt C. H. BRAMWELL, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
	Sgt A. STABLER, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
	Sgt R. W. TOZER, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG

The aircraft was flying north of the Shetland Islands, and commenced a creeping line ahead search at about 00.55 hours. About one hour later, the S/E operator obtained a radar contact at a distance of five miles on the port beam, but this was immediately lost. F/Sgt MARTIN continued his patrol, and at 01.06 hours, a further contact was made, again at five miles distance. F/Sgt MARTIN began homing and brought the Wellington down to low level. About one and a half miles from the target, the Leigh Light was switched on, illuminating a U-boat on the surface. F/Sgt MARTIN attacked, dropping four depth charges from about 150 feet in height. All the depth charges exploded, two each side of the U-boat. All that the air crew of B/179 could see after the attack was a patch of oil and some bubbles.

It transpired that B/179 had in fact sunk U-412, a Type VII.C U-boat, which had sailed from Kiel on 17 October 1942 on its first operational patrol. Kaptainleutenant W. JAHRMARKER and his entire crew were lost when the U-boat sank. F/Sgt MARTIN received the Distinguished Flying Medal in May 1943, and Sgt KIRKWOOD received the same medal in July of that year. The citation for F/Sgt MARTIN related how he had flown three-hundred and twenty hours on night anti-submarine operations as captain of the aircraft. During this period, he had flown in all weathers in the Bay of Biscay, north of Scotland, and from Gibraltar, and had made three excellent attacks on U-boats.

He was seen as a particularly keen and conscientious pilot, who had handled and trained his air crew with conspicuous skill and efficiency. His first attack, and indeed the first successful attack made by an aircraft from No. 179 Squadron, was assessed by the Headquarters of Coastal Command as *'impressive'*. It added: *'Persevering search suitability rewarded in a very good attack. As usual, the night after evidence cannot be certain, but it would be difficult, even by searchlight, to identify oil immediately after the explosion in the disturbed area. The fact that apparent oil was seen on final circuits fifteen minutes after the attack.'* Air Vice-Marshal G. B. A. BAKER endorsed the citation adding: *'An excellent action and one which gives reasons to hope that the U-boat was at least seriously damaged. Unfortunately, searchlight aircraft suffer from an even greater handicap where the production of evidence is concerned.'* F/Sgt MARTIN's second attack took place on 5 December 1942 off the coast of North Africa, and he made a third attack on a U-boat on 10 January 1943 off the coast of Algeria. The citation concludes: *'Although the successful operation of Leigh Light Wellingtons is the result of efficient crew drill and all members of the crew take part in the attack, the major credit must go to the Captain, and Flight Sergeant MARTIN, who is a Rhodesian, has undoubtedly merited recognition.'*

No. 179 Squadron moved to North Front airfield at Gibraltar in early November 1942, and F/Sgt MARTIN and Sgt WIDDOWS soon returned into action. On their first operational sortie from Gibraltar, they sighted a U-boat and were fired upon by a British convoy. They completed four more sorties that month, and ten in December. On 1 December, during an air test, F/Sgt MARTIN and his aircrew sighted a periscope, and then later that day on an operational sortie, they sighted a U-boat. A U-boat was attacked on 5 December, without a conclusive result.

Sgt Bobby WIDDOWS completed a full tour with F/Sgt MARTIN, and was then posted to No. 3 General Reconnaissance School at R.A.F. Squires Gate at Blackpool for his Captain's Course. From there, he was posted to No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Cranwell to form his air crew and train for their operational posting. As a fully qualified Sergeant Pilot, Bobby WIDDOWS was paid 12s 6d daily, with an enhancement of 6d a day War Pay.

By the date of the crash, Sgt WIDDOWS had flown a total of four-hundred and fifty hours, of which ninety-four hours were flown on Wellingtons. Thirty-seven hours of the total had been flown on Wellingtons at night, meaning that the pilot was still relatively inexperienced as a Captain of an aircraft, in spite of his full tour as a second pilot.

Sgt Bobby WIDDOWS is buried in his father's churchyard in Walshaw, Bury, Lancashire. He was twenty-three years' of age when he died. He left a sum of £196 8s 1d in Probate to his father. F/Sgt MARTIN, his tutor, went on to survive the Second World War. He was commissioned as a Pilot Officer on probation, with effect from 25 January 1943, with the new service number of 160049. He was promoted to the rank of War Substantive Flying Officer on 25 July 1943, and War Substantive Flight Lieutenant on 24 January 1945. After the war, he transferred to the Southern Rhodesia Air Force on 13 February 1946.

**658536 Sergeant Jack Saul LOCKWOOD, R.A.F.V.R.**

Jack Saul LOCKWOOD was born in September 1920, the eldest son of William Storm LOCKWOOD and Margaret Ellen LOCKWOOD (nee SAUL). Jack had an elder sister, Betty Margaret, who was born in 1917, and a younger brother, Arthur William, who was born in 1924. His family were farmers, and Jack grew up with a love of horses. The family lived at Scampton Houses, just behind the church. The village of Scampton in Lincolnshire was the location of an aerodrome during the First World War, which had returned to agricultural use after the war. It was selected to become a new bomber airfield in the R.A.F. Expansion Plan of the 1930's, and it opened in October 1936.

Jack was happy living in the countryside, and developed his skills as a keen horseman, winning several point-to-point events. In 1938, Jack took over the running of Spridlington Grange Farm, and became a farmer in his own right. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, Jack was in a cinema when an Army Major came in and made an appeal for recruits. As a farmer and skilled horseman, it was natural for Jack to join his local Territorial Army cavalry regiment. Jack joined the Leicestershire Yeomanry in May 1939, and was called up in September of that year, but he became unhappy when his regiment was converted into an artillery unit in February 1940.

Jack decided to transfer to the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and his service number is from the batch allocated to transferees from the Army post September 1939. He undertook his elementary and service flying training in Canada and the U.S.A., and met a woman called Elaine MCINNES with whom he formed a relationship. When Sgt LOCKWOOD returned to the U.K., he would have to have completed a course at an Advanced Flying Unit to familiarise himself with flying in wartime conditions in Western Europe. From there, he was either posted direct to R.A.F. Chivenor as a second pilot, or met up with Sgt WIDDOWS and the others at R.A.F. Cranwell. Jack LOCKWOOD was also paid 12s 6d daily as a Sergeant Pilot, with the 6d a day War Pay in addition to his daily rate of pay.

At the time of the accident, twenty-three year-old Sgt LOCKWOOD had flown a total of one-hundred and thirty one hours, of which just twenty-three hours and forty-five minutes were on Wellingtons, and none had been flown at night. He is buried in the churchyard of St. John the Baptist at Scampton, Lincolnshire, as this was his local church as opposed to having any connection with the R.A.F. base nearby. His grave is the only one in that churchyard not associated with the nearby R.A.F. base

**A/414601 Flight Sergeant Russell George SALTER, R.A.A.F.**

Russell George SALTER was born on 9 May 1915 at the town of Inglewood, Queensland, Australia. In respect of his religion, he was a Roman Catholic. He attended the State School at Acland, and then moved on to the Grammar School at Toowoomba until he was sixteen years' of age. After leaving school, SALTER worked as a truck driver.

He enlisted in the Australian Army joining the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse as a Trooper in May 1940 and left in October 1941 to join the Royal Australian Air Force. At this time, he lived at the Post Office, Kingaroy, Queensland. SALTER enlisted at No. 3 Reception Centre, R.A.A.F. at Brisbane on 12 October 1941, and was given the rank of Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, and the service number 414601. At the time of his enlistment, he was described as being 5' 7" tall, weighing 128 lbs, with a fair complexion, blue eyes and light brown hair. SALTER commenced his initial training at No. 3 Initial Training School, after which he was posted to No. 1 Air Observer School at R.A.A.F. Cootamundra on 2 April 1942 for familiarisation training. He had been promoted to Leading Aircraftman (LAC) on 31 January 1942, on completion of the first stage of his training.

On 20 May 1942, while playing football at No. 1 A.O.S., he fell and injured his hand. The X-Ray failed to show a fracture, but the symptoms suggested a fracture, so his arm was encased in plaster. This must have delayed his posting to the next stage of his training. On 27 June 1942, he was posted to No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School at R.A.A.F. Evans Head, from where he progressed on to No. 1 Air Navigation School at R.A.A.F. Parkers with effect from 24 August 1942. At both bases, he was a member of No. 23 (Observers) Course. He was awarded the Air Observer's Brevet and promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant on 17 September 1942. Russell SALTER married Eunice Agnes COOKE on 22 September 1942 in Australia, before he left for his posting overseas.

Sgt SALTER was sent to No. 3 Embarkation Depot, R.A.A.F. for his voyage to Canada. This was because he was streamed for Coastal Command, and was required to undertake additional training for that role. He arrived at No. 2 Embarkation Depot, R.C.A.F. Bradfield Park on 12 October 1942, and travelled by train to No. 3 'M' Depot at Edmonton, Alberta, to await a place on the required course. On 7 November 1942, he commenced his course at No. 1 General Reconnaissance School, R.C.A.F. Summerside, on Prince Edward Island. He embarked at Halifax, Nova Scotia on 14 December 1942, bound for the United Kingdom.

He arrived at No. 11 (R.A.A.F.) Personnel Dispatch and Reception Centre, at Bournemouth on 8 January 1943.<sup>9</sup> During his training, his conduct had been excellent. Sgt SALTER was posted to No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit on 30 March 1943, where he joined up with Bobby WIDDOWS, and the others to form a new air crew. On completion of their training, they were posted to No. 172 Squadron at R.A.F. Chivenor on 2 June 1943. Russell SALTER was promoted to the rank of Temporary Flight Sergeant on 17 March 1943, although it appears that neither he nor the squadron had been notified of this promotion by the date of his death. As a Sergeant Air Observer, Sgt SALTER's daily rate of pay was 12s 6d, with 6d a day as War Pay. As a Flight Sergeant, the daily rate of pay rose to 15s, but it was unlikely that he received prior to his death.

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<sup>9</sup> No. 11 P.D.R.C. was located in Brighton, but his personnel record also states 'RAAF B'mouth', which is presumed to relate to Bournemouth and No. 3 P.R.C.. No. 11 (RAAF) P.D.R.C. did not open in Brighton until May 1943, so it is possible it was formed in Bournemouth in late 1942, or early 1943, and moved to Brighton in May.

As was usual, Mrs Eunice SALTER was informed of her husband's death by telegram. There was some confusion about the delivery of the message as she was staying with a Mrs. THOMAS at Royal Street, Virginia, Queensland. The first letter to her from the R.A.A.F. was sent on 18 August 1943 to a house called 'Homewood Vale', Jondaryan, Queensland. A second letter was sent to her at Royal Street explaining that her husband had been buried at Heanton Punchardon, near Braunton, England, on 17 August 1943.

The Commanding Officer of No. 172 Squadron, W/C Rowland MUSSON, wrote to Mrs SALTER on 13 August 1943 to express his condolences to her.<sup>10</sup> He explained how Sgt SALTER had taken off on an operational flight on the evening of 12 August, and as his aircraft was returning to base, for some unknown reason, it crash landed in the vicinity of R.A.F. Chivenor. He added that although assistance was available to attend the scene, owing to the violent nature of the crash, it was not possible to recover the body of her husband. He added that a search party had been instituted, and it was hoped to hold a communal funeral from R.A.F. Chivenor in due course. The letter describes how Sgt SALTER's personal effects had been collected by the Station Chaplain, and would be forwarded in due course. The final paragraph states:

*Although your husband had only been with the Squadron a short time, he proved himself an efficient member of his flight, and was popular amongst all ranks, by whom he will be missed. Please accept on behalf of the Squadron and myself, our deep sympathy with you during this anxious and sad time.*

In a letter dated 24 March 1949, his widow was informed that he had been buried in Grave No. 413 of the Service Plot, Heanton Punchardon (St. Augustine) Churchyard, Devonshire, England. A photograph of the temporary wooden cross on the grave was enclosed. By this date, she had moved and was now living at 'Homeward Vale', Jondaryon, Queensland. The grave is now listed as Row P., Grave 6, at Heanton Punchardon churchyard.

### **1123419 Sergeant William Frederick Oliver SAYLE, R.A.F.V.R.**

William was the only male out of twelve children born to Frederick SAYLE and Emily Eleanor SAYLE (nee SHIMMIN). William was born on 21 August 1915 in Seacombe, Wallasey, Cheshire, where the family lived. William married Nora RATCLIFFE in 1938, and they lived at 31, School Lane, Wallasey. Their daughter, Brenda, was born in 1940. Following William's death, Nora remarried in 1946 to Bernard STEEL. William enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve at R.A.F. Padgate sometime after September 1939. His career path was similar to his colleague, Ken FRANCIS, and they might have met up while undergoing their course at R.A.F. Prestwick. They came together as air crew at No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Cranwell, and moved as an air crew to R.A.F. Chivenor on 2 June 1943.

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<sup>10</sup> Within two weeks, W/C MUSSON and his air crew were all killed when their Wellington crashed at Higher Clovelly, North Devon.

Following the crash, the remains of the three Wireless Operators/Air Gunners were buried in one coffin, in Row P., Collective Grave 3 – 5 at the Heanton Punchardon churchyard. It is presumed SAYLE was known as 'Eric', as that is the name used by the parents of Sgt FRANCIS on the memorial stone placed in front of the grave. It appears that within the family, SAYLE was known as 'Freddie' or simply 'Fred'.

### **1314970 Sergeant Kenneth Harry FRANCIS, R.A.F.V.R.**

Kenneth Harry FRANCIS was born in Yeovil, Somerset, on 2 October 1921. He was the third child, and eldest son, of Arthur Harry FRANCIS, and Beatrice Lily FRANCIS (nee CULLIFORD). Margaret was the eldest child, born in 1917, followed by Dorothy in 1919, and Ken in 1921. Arthur and Beatrice had two more boys after Ken, named Keith and Colin. Arthur had originated from the nearby town of Bruton, but moved to Yeovil for work. The family lived at 139 Goldcroft, Yeovil, and Arthur worked as a boot repairer. Margaret married Douglas PALMER in 1942 and had a family, and Dorothy married Harold TOMPKINS in 1941 with whom she had a family. Keith married and had a son that he named after his brother, Kenneth.

Ken FRANCIS started work as a shop assistant, but while he and his father were together in a shelter during an air raid, he mentioned that he wanted to go up and stop the invaders. His father advised him to keep his feet on the ground, but within a matter of weeks, Ken did what he said he wanted to do. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force at Oxford on 18 February 1941, and was streamed to train as a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner (service number 1314970 and his rank was Aircraftman 2<sup>nd</sup> Class). He had to wait until 15 April 1941 to begin his initial training at No. 10 (Signals) Reception Centre at R.A.F. Blackpool. This unit was based in various hotels and boarding houses in the seaside resort, with meals usually taken at the Tower Ballroom. Ken and the other recruits were provided with their R.A.F. uniforms and equipment, with drill parades and physical training held on the seafront. The recruits were taught basic subjects including R.A.F. procedures and law, aircraft recognition, meteorology and personal hygiene. As this was a unit dedicated to training wireless operators, recruits were given signals training, using Aldis lamps, flags and Morse code. The requirement was to be able to send and receive messages by the end of the course at the speed of twelve words per minute.

Having successfully completed the initial stage of his training, Ken moved on to No. 3 Signals School at R.A.F. Compton Bassett in Wiltshire. He arrived here on 22 August 1941, and trained to an advanced level, including sending and receiving Morse code at eighteen words per minute. LAC FRANCIS appears to have impressed his instructors, as on completion of his course, he was posted to the High Altitude Flight, part of the Aircraft and Armament Experimental Establishment based at R.A.F. Boscombe Down, Wiltshire. He arrived there on 10 December 1941, and remained there for nine months. There are no flights recorded in Ken FRANCIS's log book, so it is assumed that he worked as a radio operator on the ground, acting as the link with the aircraft undergoing testing from the base. In an undated letter, he talks about not having a day or even a half day off due to the workload and shortage of Wireless Operators.

On 2 September 1942, LAC FRANCIS was posted to No. 2 Signal School at R.A.F. Yatesbury in Wiltshire. It was here that he flew for the first time, on 17 September 1942 in a De Havilland Dominie. LAC FRANCIS was posted to No. 1 Air Gunners School at R.A.F. Pembrey in Carmarthenshire with effect from 1 November 1942. He was taught to fire a Browning revolver, and then introduced to the Browning 0.303' machine guns in a turret. The first exercises were conducted on the ground, before his first airborne exercise on 17 November. The exercises progressed as follows:

- Cine footage;
- Air to Ground;
- Beam;
- Beam R. S.;
- Under Tail;
- Quarter;
- Air Tracer Demonstration.

Each of the six live firing exercises comprised two bursts of one-hundred rounds each. He scored 74% in the examination, and the final average number of hits to rounds fired was 2.5%. He passed the course, and the remarks state: *'Quiet and has worked well. Satisfactory results.'* LAC FRANCIS qualified as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner on 12 December 1942, being awarded his WOp/AG Brevet, and being promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant on the same day. His daily rate of pay as a qualified Wireless Operator/Air Gunner was 7s 9d, with an enhancement of 6d a day as War Pay, the same as a Wireless Operator, whereas an Air Gunner was paid 7s 0d daily.

The next posting for Ken FRANCIS was to No. 11 Radio School, at R.A.F. Prestwick, where he attended a Coastal Operator Course between 13 January and 3 February 1943.<sup>11</sup> He flew for a total of five hours and thirty minutes, of which four hours thirty-five minutes were spent operating the radio (special equipment). He passed the course with an air assessment of 61%. On 10 February 1943, Sgt FRANCIS was posted to the Air Crew Reception Centre in London to await a place at an operational training unit.

This opportunity came on 30 March 1943, when he was posted to No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Cranwell in Lincolnshire. It was while at R.A.F. Cranwell that Ken FRANCIS met Sgt Bobby WIDDOWS, and agreed to join his air crew. During their time at R.A.F. Cranwell, each member of air crew had to pass a swimming and dinghy test. They had to swim at least fifty yards, and then remain afloat or treading water for a further two minutes in full Flying Kit. In addition, they had to be able to manoeuvre a rubber dinghy of the type issued to Coastal Command. On 2 June 1943, the six air crew were posted to No. 172 Squadron at R.A.F. Chivenor, but just over two months later, they were dead.

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<sup>11</sup> A stamp in Sgt FRANCIS's Log Book states No. 3 Radio School. It is possible that the unit was continuing to use an old stamp and had not had a new one made to reflect the redesignation of the unit.

Ken was proud to be serving as air crew in the Royal Air Force, and when on leave in Yeovil would go around the town and villages delivering gloves. He had the habit of sending his washing home to his parents, as his mother was better at washing and ironing clothes than the R.A.F.. Ken now lies buried in Row P., Collective Grave 3 – 5 at the Heanton Punchardon churchyard. His parents placed a stone memorial in front of his grave to: Kenneth, Sydney and Eric, the three men who served together, died together, and are buried together.

### **1382529 Sergeant Sydney Charles HASLER, R.A.F.V.R.**

Sydney Charles HASLER was born on 30 July 1911 at 8, Fairfield Road, Ponders End, Enfield, Middlesex, the youngest son of John and Alice Dorothy HASLER. Sydney, who was always known in the family as 'Sid', had three elder brothers, and four sisters. His brothers were John Henry, Leonard, and William, his two elder sisters were Hilda and Florence Kathleen, and his two younger sisters, Dorothy and Marjory.

Shortly after Sydney was born, the family moved to King Edward Road, Ponders End. Sydney's father died in 1925, when Sydney was aged thirteen years, and his mother died in 1932 when he was aged twenty-one years. It appears that Sydney and some of his siblings went to live with his sister, Florence WIMBLETON, at 62, Alma Road, Enfield. Florence had married George WIMBLETON and by 1939, George and Florence lived at 83, Nags Head Road, Enfield, Middlesex. In 1939, Sydney was still living with his sister, with Alice Dorothy and Marjory also still living there. He was working locally as a carpenter, and had his own tools stamped 'SCH'.

Sid HASLER enlisted in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve at Euston, sometime after April 1940. He probably followed a similar training pathway as his two colleagues, beginning his service at No. 10 (Signals) Reception Centre at R.A.F. Blackpool, before progressing onto a Signals School, followed by an Air Gunners School. He would have attended R.A.F. Prestwick to learn how to use the Special Equipment fitted to Coastal Command aircraft, and may have met Ken FRANCIS and William SAYLE there. They came together at R.A.F. Cranwell, and were posted to R.A.F. Chivenor on 2 June 1943. As with his two colleagues, the remains of Sydney Charles HASLER now lie buried in one coffin, in Row P., Collective Grave 3 – 5 at the Heanton Punchardon churchyard. His Probate records show a total of £169.18s 2d was left to his two sisters in Enfield, Middlesex.

## **Conclusions**

Grief in wartime is no different for the families and next-of-kin to that experienced in peacetime by a sudden or expected death of a loved one. In wartime, death is more likely to be sudden or unexpected, and is often accompanied by a violent act or event. On 13 August 1943, the air crew of Wellington MP.630 were preparing to land after a long and uneventful operational sortie over the Bay of Biscay. Unfortunately for them, the weather around their base was poor, it was dark, points of reference were few because of the blackout, and they were ordered to land on one of the two subsidiary runways at R.A.F. Chivenor.

Four other aircraft from R.A.F. Chivenor, all belonging to No. 407 Squadron, R.C.A.F., were diverted to R.A.F. Beaulieu in Hampshire following the loss of Sgt WIDDOWS and his air crew due to the deteriorating weather conditions. The approach to the runway in use was over high ground to the north of R.A.F. Chivenor, and in making that approach, the aircraft struck the top of a barn at a farm called Luscott Barton. Either this caused the aircraft to crash in a nearby field and the depth charges to explode, or the effect of the collision with the barn triggered one or more of the six depth charges on board to explode. The result was that debris was thrown over a wide area, and the six air crew on board died instantly. The nature of the loss of the aircraft meant a difficult process of recovery for the men involved; one which was probably harrowing and distressing for many of them.

A decision was taken to bury the remains of the three Wireless Operators/Air Gunners in one coffin in a communal grave at Heanton Punchardon; the only such communal grave in the churchyard. This decision caused additional distress to the families, at least one of whom wanted to bury their son locally. Once again, the loss of Wellington MP.630 illustrates the fine dividing line between life and death, and the challenge of flying in wartime Britain. Why the aircraft crashed will never be fully understood, but the men who died that morning are remembered with due respect.

There is an interesting sequel to loss of the six air crew in Wellington MP.630 in August 1943, which relates to Ken's brother Colin. Colin is younger than his brother, and looked up to him with love and pride, as younger siblings often do with their elder brothers or sisters. When Colin reached the age of twenty-one years, and became eligible for his National Service having completed his apprenticeship in the printing trade, he joined the Royal Air Force. Of all the places in the U.K. and abroad that Colin could have been posted to, he was posted to R.A.F. Chivenor. The base had not changed much since the days when his brother was stationed there, so Colin walked along the same paths and roads as his brother did, worked, ate and slept in the same buildings, and probably visited the same locations. Overlooking the base where Colin worked, like a guardian angel, stands the church of St. Augustine's at Heanton Punchardon. This is the last resting place of his brother Ken, who no doubt also looked down on his younger brother with love and pride.

On 13 August 2018, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the crash, Colin FRANCIS travelled down from Yeovil to Branton to be met by local historians, Julian AVERY, Stephen HEAL and Graham MOORE. Together, they visited the scene of the crash at Luscott Barton with the kind permission of the landowner. A small piece of the aircraft was found by Julian AVERY during a search of the crash site, which is now held by Colin FRANCIS as a tangible link with his brother.

## In Memoriam

13 August 1943 – Vickers Wellington Mk. XII – MP.630

No.	Surname	Forenames(s)	Age	Date of Death	Rank	Role	Service	Service Number	Place of Burial	Grave
1.	WIDDOWS <sup>12</sup>	Edgar Robert Howard	23	13/08/43	Sergeant	Pilot & Captain	R.A.F.V.R.	1121303	Walshaw Churchyard	Grave 384.
2.	LOCKWOOD	Jack Saul	23	13/08/43	Sergeant	Second Pilot	R.A.F.V.R.	658536	Scampton Churchyard	Panel 155.
3.	SALTER <sup>13</sup>	Russell George	28	13/08/43	Flight Sergeant	Navigator (B)	R.A.A.F.	A/414601	Heanton Punchardon	Row P. Grave 6.
4.	SAYLE	William Frederick Oliver		13/08/43	Sergeant	WOp/AG	R.A.F.V.R.	1123419	Heanton Punchardon	Row P. Coll Grave 3 – 5
5.	FRANCIS <sup>14</sup>	Kenneth Harry	21	13/08/43	Sergeant	WOp/AG	R.A.F.V.R.	1314970	Heanton Punchardon	Row P. Coll Grave 3 – 5
6.	HASLER <sup>15</sup>	Sydney Charles	32	13/08/43	Sergeant	WOp/AG	R.A.F.V.R.	1382529	Heanton Punchardon	Row P. Coll Grave 3 – 5

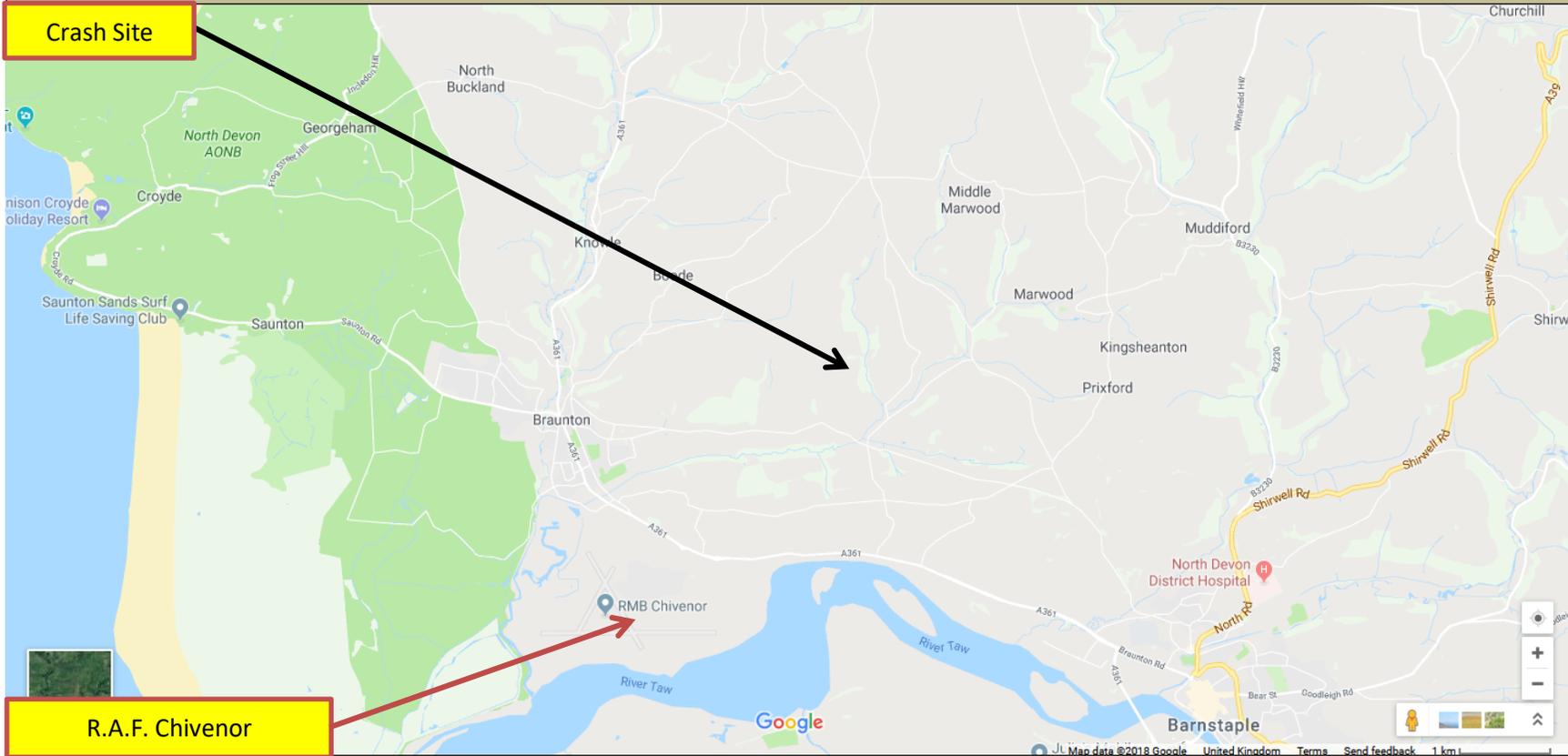
<sup>12</sup> Son of Henry Charles and Florence WIDDOWS, of Netheredge, Sheffield, Yorkshire. INSCRIPTION: *FATHER, INTO THY HANDS ST. LUKE XXIII 46*

<sup>13</sup> Son of George and Lucy SALTER; husband of Eunice Agnes SALTER, of Jondaryon, Queensland, Australia. INSCRIPTION: *IN LOVING MEMORY OF A BELOVED HUSBAND R.I.P.*

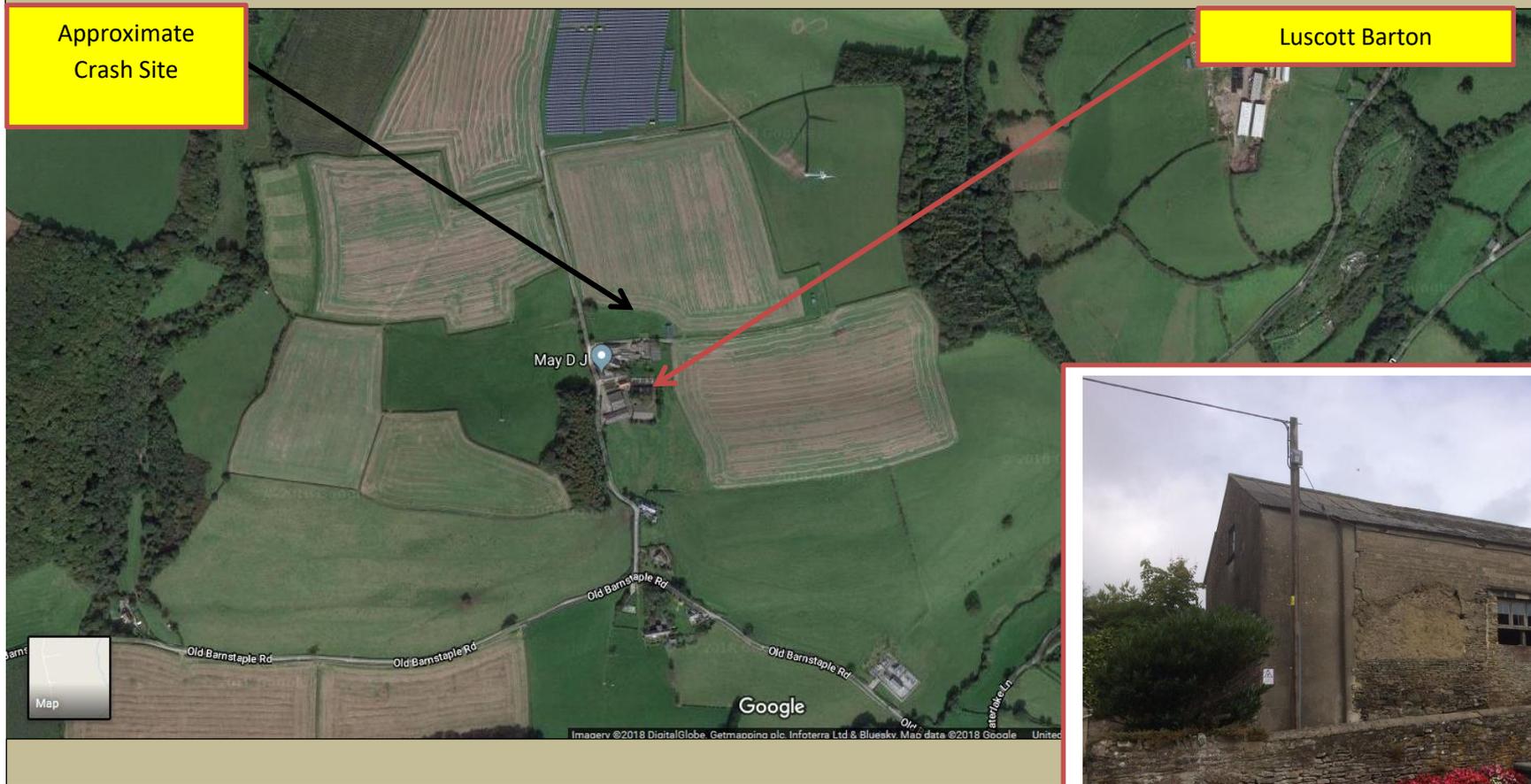
<sup>14</sup> Son of Arthur Harry and Lily Beatrice FRANCIS, of Yeovil, Somerset. INSCRIPTION: *IN HEAVEN WE MEET AGAIN TO SEE YOUR SMILING FACE. 'EVER REMEMBERED'*

<sup>15</sup> Son of John and Alice HASLER. INSCRIPTION: *FONDEST THOUGHTS, SYDNEY, ALWAYS LINGER ROUND THIS SPOT WHERE YOU REST'*

Map of the area to the north of R.A.F. Chivenor



Map of Luscott Barton and a photograph of the barn.





Above – The Memorial Board at Bury Grammar School commemorating the dead of the two World Wars containing the name of Sgt WIDDOWS (bottom right-hand corner)

Courtesy of Bury Grammar School

Left – A newspaper article about the death of Sgt Bobby WIDDOWS.

Courtesy of: Graham MOORE



Above – Sgt Jack Saul LOCKWOOD, R.A.F.V.R.  
Right – A montage showing a postcard of a Wellington, the course photograph at Charlottesville in Canada, Jack in his Army uniform and in flying suit, and a certificate from the U.S. Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Florida.

Courtesy of: The LOCKWOOD Family



Above – The medals awarded posthumously to Sgt LOCKWOOD.

Courtesy of the LOCKWOOD Family

Right – Official photograph of Sgt R. G. SALTER, R.A.A.F.

Courtesy of the NAA website



*Above Left – AC2 Ken FRANCIS shortly after his enlistment.*

*Above Right – Sgt Ken FRANCIS as a qualified Wireless Operator/Air Gunner.*

*Courtesy of: Colin FRANCIS*



*Above Left – Ken FRANCIS in his flying suit.*

*Above Centre – A photograph of Ken FRANCIS in his uniform as an AC2, relaxed, happy, and smiling, as he is remembered by his family*

*Above Right – Sgt Sydney HASLER.*

*Courtesy of Colin FRANCIS*



Above – Four photographs of the funeral held at Heanton Punchardon church for Sgt SALTER, Sgt SAYLE, Sgt FRANCIS and Sgt HASLER.

Courtesy of Colin FRANCIS



Left – The grave of Sgt Jack LOCKWOOD at Scampton, Lincolnshire.

Courtesy of the LOCKWOOD family

Above – The communal grave of Sgt SAYLE, Sgt FRANCIS and Sgt HASLER at St. Augustine's churchyard, Heanton Punchardon. Standing behind the grave are Ken's parents, who provided the stone memorial in front of Ken's grave.

Courtesy of Colin FRANCIS

Right – The grave of Sgt SALTER at Heanton Punchardon.

Taken by the Author (2018)





*Left – Centre and Right – The communal grave of Sgts FRANCIS, HASLER and SAYLE with the three C.W.G.C. headstones at Heanton Punchardon Cemetery, the local church to R.A.F. Chivenor.  
Taken by the Author (2018)*



## Appendix 'A' – Flying Log Book of Sgt K. H. FRANCIS

## No. 2 Signals School – R.A.F. Yatesbury

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
17/09/42	09.00	Dominie 9545	W/O DENNIS	RX Gunnery Reception	1.35	
17/09/42	11.00	Dominie 9545	S/L OGILVIE	D/F Loop	1.15	
22/09/42	09.05	Dominie 9546	F/L DUMPHY	Verification & G Message	1.20	
22/09/42	11.05	Dominie 9546	F/L DUMPHY	Air Experience	1.05	
30/09/42	10.50	Dominie 9548	Mr. NICHOLSON	BK Tuning	1.30	
09/10/42	14.05	Dominie 9545	W/O DENNIS	Air Experience	0.25	
15/10/42	15.10	Proctor R.7493	Sgt POWER	RX Tuning	1.00	
16/10/42	10.10	Z.7201	Sgt MANTINOVIC	BK Tuning	0.20	
16/10/42	10.30	Z.7201	Sgt MANTINOVIC	BK Tuning	0.40	
18/10/42	10.55	Z.7197	Sgt CROUCH	Air Experience	0.10	
18/10/42	11.05	Z.7197	Sgt CROUCH	DF Tuning	0.55	
19/10/42	15.10	P.6185	W/O GOBLETT	DF Bearing	1.05	
20/10/42	15.45	Z.7203	Sgt ALLSOPP	Air Experience	0.15	
21/10/42	13.55	Z.7196	F/L WHITEHEAD	DF Bearing	1.05	
21/10/42	16.15	Z.7193	?? THOMAS	Homing and Approach	1.10	
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13.50</b>	

**No. 1 Air Gunners School – R.A.F. Pembrey**

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
17/11/42	09.35	Blenheim 6345	F/Sgt PIPER	R-G-1	1.00	
21/11/42	12.55	Blenheim 6258	F/Sgt McKENZIE	Air Tracer Dem 200 rds	1.10	
29/11/42	16.20	Blenheim 6544	W/O McDANIEL	FR – Beam 100 rds x 2	1.10	
30/11/42	16.20	Blenheim 6514	F/Sgt HART	FR – Rel – Beam 100 rds x 2	1.00	
01/12/42	09.55	Blenheim 6961	F/Sgt HEAD	FR – UT 100 rds x 2	0.40	
01/12/42	12.50	Blenheim 5722	F/Sgt HART	FR – GG 100 rds x 2	1.10	
04/12/42	10.15	Blenheim 5467	P/O M. ALLEN	FR Q X Over 100 rds x 2	1.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>7.10</b>	

**No. 11 (No. 3) Radio School- R.A.F. Prestwick**

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
17/01/43	15.50	Botha	F/Sgt MILES	SI Instruction DCO	1.10	
23/01/43	11.20	Botha W.5129	Sgt RICHARD	SI Instruction DCO	1.10	
26/01/43	16.30	Botha L.6476	Sgt MELCOMBE	SI Instruction DCO	0.40	
28/01/43	13.45	Botha L.6168	F/Sgt SHEPHERD	SI Instruction DCO	1.30	
28/01/43	15.40	Botha L.6168	F/Sgt SHEPHERD	SI Instruction DCO	1.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>5.30</b>	

No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit – R.A.F. Cranwell

April 1943

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
06/04/43	10.40	Anson W.1882	Sgt WILSON	W/T Exercise	1.55	
08/04/43	10.50	Anson W.1882	Sgt WILSON	W/T Exercise	2.05	
09/04/43	14.05	AX.621	P/O YARWOOD	W/T Exercise	3.10	
14/04/43	14.00	EG.440	P/O YARWOOD	W/T Exercise	1.10	
14/04/43	16.10	EG.440	P/O YARWOOD	W/T Exercise	0.15	
16/04/43	10.50	AX.636	Sgt HAINE	W/T Exercise	1.45	
19/04/43	09.45	AX.621	F/O PENDRAY	W/T Exercise	2.10	
24/04/43	15.15	??	F/Sgt BOYLE	W/T Exercises	2.55	
24/04/43	21.55	Wellington HX.784	F/O STOREY	WOp W/T Exercises	-	1.40
26/04/43	14.10	Anson N.5100	F/O PISTORIUS	W/T Exercises	2.15	
27/04/43	09.45	LS.999	Sgt WILSON	W/t Exercises	2.05	
29/04/43	14.30	Wellington HX.782	Sgt WIDDOWS	W/T Exercises	2.00	

**May 1943**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Aircraft</b>	<b>Pilot</b>	<b>Purpose of Flight</b>	<b>Duration Day</b>	<b>Night</b>
01/05/43	14.36	Wellington LB.222	Sgt WIDDOWS	W/T & Photo Exercises	1.45	
01/05/43	17.05.	Wellington LB.222	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 1 (Cancelled) Recalled	0.45	
03/05/43	14.07	Wellington LB.220	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 1 W/T	4.10	
05/05/43	14.47	Wellington LB.220	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 2 Photo D.T.C.	6.00	
05/05/43	21.02	Wellington LB.220	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 2 Photo D.T.C.	0.35	
06/05/43	10.27	Wellington HX.247	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing Exercise	2.05	
06/05/43	21.58	Wellington LB.140	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 1	-	4.17
07/05/43	13.45	Wellington LB.145	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing	3.00	
08/05/43	15.00	Wellington LB.242	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Exercises	2.00	
11/05/43	14.25	Wellington LB.221	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Firing 1,000 rounds	1.25	
12/05/43	06.24	Wellington LB.195	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 4	7.05	
12/05/43	22.10	Wellington LB.195	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 1		4.18
13/05/43	09.15	Wellington LB.185	Sgt WIDDOWS	Loop & Shadow	2.45	
15/05/43	12.00	Wellington WS.180	F/O STONEY	F/A	1.00	
17/05/43	14.15	Wellington LB.142	Sgt WIDDOWS	F/A	1.00	
17/05/43	22.15	Wellington LB.140	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 3	-	4.10
20/05/43	22.00	Wellington HX.476	Sgt WIDDOWS	OFE 4	-	7.00
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52.00</b>	<b>21.25</b>

No. 172 Squadron – R.A.F. Chivenor

June 1943

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
21/06/43	12.25	Wellington MP.636/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice DCO	1.15	
22/06/43	09.45	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice DCO	1.30	
22/06/43	14.45	Wellington MP.513	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice DCO	1.05	
23/06/43	11.30	Wellington MP.513	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice DNCO	0.30	
24/06/43	09.55	Wellington MP.507/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice DCO	1.55	
24/06/43	14.55	Wellington MP.507/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E Practice QGH DCO	2.10	
25/06/43	14.00	Wellington MP.539	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E DCO	1.25	
26/06/43	09.55	Wellington MP.514	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing DCO	0.40	
28/06/43	12.05	Wellington MP.509/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	S/E DCO	1.50	
29/06/43	00.25	Wellington MP.509	Sgt WIDDOWS	Nav DCO		5.45
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12.40</b>	<b>5.45</b>

July 1943

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
02/07/43	09.40	Wellington HF.113/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing D.C.O.	0.25	
05/07/43	11.25	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing D.C.O.	0.30	
06/07/43	02.30	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	Homing D.N.C.O.		0.55
07/07/43	00.35	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	Homing D.N.C.O.		1.20
07/07/43	14.45	Wellington HF.113/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test D.C.O.	0.40	
07/07/43	22.40	Wellington HF.113/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	A/S Patrol	1.00	7.00
31/07/43	18.55	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test	0.35	
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>9.15</b>

August 1943

Date	Time	Aircraft	Pilot	Purpose of Flight	Duration Day	Night
01/08/43	10.35	Wellington MP.536	Sgt WIDDOWS	Anti-Sub Patrol	7.40	
03/08/43	11.55	Wellington MP.680/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Bombing	0.25	
05/08/43	10.15	Wellington MP.680/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test	0.40	
07/08/43	11.55	Wellington MP.680/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test	0.40	
07/08/43	22.55	Wellington MP.680/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	WOp/AG Anti-Sub Patrol		7.30
09/08/43	13.05	Wellington MP.513	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air to Ground Firing, Q.G.H.	2.05	
11/08/43	10.15	Wellington HF.113/G	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test	0.40	
11/08/43	13.40	Wellington ??	Sgt WIDDOWS	Air Test	0.45	

KILLED ON ACTIVE SERVICE

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