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THE LAST FLIGHT OF:

BEAUFORT N.1016

A narrative of the last flight of Beaufort N.1016, which flown by F/O Kenneth CAMPBELL, attacked the German battlecruiser Gneisenau in Brest Harbour on 6 April 1941. CAMPBELL and his crew successfully torpedoed the Gneisenau, causing major damage, but they were shot down by intense anti-aircraft artillery and all four were killed. Based on the evidence of French witnesses, CAMPBELL was awarded the Victoria Cross.

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The Last Flight of Beaufort N.1016

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Contents

Chapter	Pages
Introduction	3 – 4
The Bristol Beaufort	4 – 7
Operational Deployment	7 – 11
No. 22 Squadron and F/O CAMPBELL	11 – 17
Circumstances of the Crash	17 – 19
Court of Inquiry	20
The Air Crew	
72446 F/O K. CAMPBELL, RAFVR	20 – 21
R/63912 Sgt J. P. SCOTT, RCAF	22 – 23
746872 Sgt W. C. MULLISS, RAFVR	23
643257 Sgt R. W. HILLMAN, RAF	24
Conclusions	24
In Memoriam	25
Maps of Brest Harbour	26 – 28
Photographs	29 – 33
Bibliography and Sources	34

Introduction

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest award for gallantry that any member of the British armed forces can receive, and it is given for acts of *'most conspicuous bravery, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.'* Usually, a VC is awarded for a single act of gallantry, although it can be recommended based on more than one act over a continuous period (Group Captain Leonard CHESHIRE being a rare example of this). The event must be witnessed by more than one person, with individual statements required to support any recommendation.

During the Second World War, the VC was awarded on one-hundred and eighty-two occasions to one-hundred and eighty-one recipients, as the New Zealand Army officer, Charles UPHAM, was granted the award twice during the war. Eighty-five were awarded posthumously (47%). Possibly due to the criteria for recommending the award, only twenty-two were awarded to members of the Royal Air Force (excluding Commonwealth recipients), and only four were awarded to personnel of Coastal Command. Of these, John CRUICKSHANK, was granted the award for his successful attack on a U-boat, during which he was seriously injured, and his bravery in guiding and flying his Catalina back to base safely. As of April 2022, he is the last living RAF recipient of the Victoria Cross. His recommendation was based on the testimony of his crew who witnessed his conduct. The Canadian, David HORNELL, was also the pilot of a Catalina that successfully attacked a U-boat, and although he ditched the aircraft safely, he died before being rescued. Once again, the surviving crew members were able to provide eye-witness testimony.

The other two Coastal Command recipients were granted their awards through interesting sources. The New Zealander, Flying Officer (F/O) Lloyd TRIGG, was the captain of a Liberator aircraft that attacked a U-boat off the coast of West Africa. The Liberator was shot down, but U-468 was sunk by TRIGG's aircraft, and after the cessation of hostilities, the commanding officer of U-468 gave evidence of the nature of the attack that resulted in the award of the VC. This remains the only award basely solely on the evidence of enemy personnel.¹

The fourth award came about through eye-witness testimony from sources in occupied France communicated back to British authorities, following the attack by a single Beaufort aircraft from No. 22 Squadron, on the German battle cruiser Gneisenau, in Brest Harbour. At the time of the incident, on 6 April 1941, all that was known by the Squadron was that the aircraft concerned had failed to return from its sortie to Brest. The true circumstances only became known over time, and so on 13 March 1942, i.e., eleven months later, the award of the VC was gazetted to 72446 F/O Kenneth CAMPBELL, RAFVR, from No. 22 Squadron.

¹ Lieutenant Commander Gerard ROOPE, commanding officer of H.M.S. Glowworm, was recommended for an award by the captain of his opponent, the Admiral Hipper, but it was supported by Allied witnesses.

This was destined to be the only award of the VC to any member of Coastal Command who flew in the maritime strike role, and as such, it stands as a tribute to ALL the personnel: pilots, observers, and wireless operators/air gunners, who flew in this role throughout the Second World War.

This role was particularly demanding and challenging in the early years of the war, when the Beaufort was the main strike aircraft of Coastal Command, in the period when the Germans enjoyed air superiority over France, and the Low Countries. The most dangerous aspect of the use of the Beaufort was as a torpedo bomber. To obtain a hit, the pilot had to fly in the face of intense light flak from the ship, or escorts, with a high degree of determination, discipline, courage, and hope. In the light of these facts, it is not surprising that a study undertaken in November 1942 revealed that flying a torpedo-bomber was the most dangerous role in the RAF at that time. A tour was intended to last for three-hundred hours operational flying, but only 17.5% of pilots survived one tour. If a pilot was fortunate to survive one tour, and commenced another tour, he had only a 3% chance of surviving both. In comparison, a day fighter pilot had a 43% chance of surviving one tour, and an 18.5% chance of surviving two, and for a night bomber pilot, the figures were 44% and 19.5%. The highest chance of survival came from flying Catalina flying boats, giving a pilot a 77% chance of surviving one tour, and a 60% chance of surviving two. Despite this, the number of cases of men refusing to fly, and being labelled as 'Lack of Moral Fibre', was no worse than for other types and categories of flying duties.²

As No. 22 Squadron was the first unit to be equipped with the Beaufort, and it was on the front-line from early 1940, through until early 1942, it is not surprising that it suffered significant losses. In 1940, the Squadron lost nineteen Beauforts on operations, and ten on training flights (plus one Glenn Martin Maryland lost on 29 August 1940 on a training sortie)³. The greatest losses in 1940 were suffered by No. 235 Squadron flying Blenheim Mk. IV aircraft, with twenty-seven lost on operations. In addition, Nos. 53 and 59 Squadrons flying Blenheim Mk. IV aircraft, and No. 206 and No. 224 Squadrons flying Hudson Mk. I aircraft suffered significant losses. In 1941, It was No. 22 Squadron that suffered the greatest losses in the Command with thirty-one Beauforts lost on operations and five lost on non-operational sorties. It is, therefore, fitting that the one VC awarded to a Coastal Command strike squadron went to a member of No. 22 Squadron. Although the focus is on the pilot, F/O CAMPBELL, to whom the award was made, the story includes the other three members of the air crew who died with CAMPBELL. This is the story of the loss of Beaufort N.1016.

The Bristol Beaufort

The Bristol Beaufort was the standard torpedo-bomber and maritime strike aircraft of the Royal Air Force Coastal Command from 1940 until 1943. It replaced the Vickers Vildebeest biplanes, which were obsolete by the outbreak of the Second World War.

² HADAWAY, Stuart *The British Airman of the Second World War* (Oxford, Shire Publications, 2013) p.33

³ The Maryland was being trialled for possible use by the Squadron, having been ordered by the French government before the fall of France. Maryland AR.704 crashed at R.A.F. Aldergrove on 29 August 1940, killing Sgt I. F. METHERELL (Pilot), Sgt D. SANDERS (Obs) and Sgt W. J. DAVIES (WOp) AIR 81/2878.

The Bristol Aeroplane Company Limited, based at Filton, on the northern outskirts of the Gloucestershire city that it was named after, developed the Beaufort in response to two specifications issued by the Air Ministry. Specification M.15/35 was for a three seat, twin-engine, monoplane for use as a torpedo-bomber, and G.24/35 for a four seat, general reconnaissance bomber. The company saw an advantage in combining both roles into a single design, and the proposed aircraft was known as the Type 152.

Blackburn Aircraft Limited had developed their design, which was known as the B-26 (later known as the Botha) in response to the same two specifications, and because Blackburn had less work than Bristol (who were building the Blenheim light bombers), the B-26 was chosen to become the principal R.A.F. torpedo-bomber. Because there was little to choose between the two designs on paper, orders were placed for both aircraft. The Air Ministry decided to use the Botha to replace the Avro Anson and Vickers Vildebeest at home, while the Beaufort would replace the Vildebeest overseas. The priority given to the Blackburn design is shown in that by the time that orders for the Botha had reached one-thousand, two-hundred and fifty-six aircraft, those for the Beaufort were only four-hundred and twenty-six aircraft.

The prototype Beaufort (L.4441) first flew on 15 October 1938, and the Air Ministry issued a contract to build seventy-eight aircraft to the Specification 10/36. The production aircraft differed from the prototype in several details, but in essence, they were still the same design. The aircraft was a torpedo-bomber, with a crew of four: pilot, observer/navigator, wireless operator, and air gunner. It had an all-metal, stressed skin construction, and weighed 13,107 lbs (5.85 tons) when empty, and 21,228 lbs (9.5 tons) when fully loaded. The aircraft was powered by two, 1,010 horsepower (hp), Bristol Taurus Mk. II air-cooled, radial engines.

The Beaufort had a wingspan of 57' 10", a length of 44' 7", a height of 12' 5", and a wing area of 503 square feet. The maximum speed of the Beaufort was 265 mph at 6,000 feet, with a cruising speed of 200 mph. Its range was 1,035 miles in normal operation, with a maximum range of 1,600 miles. The endurance of the aircraft was six hours, and it had a ceiling of 16,500 feet, although this was used rarely. The Beaufort was originally armed with one 0.303 machine gun in the port wing, and a single Vickers K-type gas fed 0.303 machine gun in the B.IV Mk I turret. The aircraft was designed to carry four 250 lb bombs in the bomb bay, and one more on each wing. In theory, the Beaufort could carry six 500 lb bombs, or one 1,605 lb, eighteen-inch torpedo semi-enclosed in the bomb bay. In practice, the restrictions on range and performance imposed by a full bomb load, meant that Coastal Command restricted the aircraft to carrying up to 2,200 lbs of bombs or mines.

Both the Blackburn Botha, and the Bristol Beaufort, were planned to be powered by two, single-row, sleeve-valve, air-cooled, Bristol Perseus engines. It was predicted that this would leave both aircraft underpowered, and to get the Beaufort into service as quickly as possible, and because a proven low-altitude engine of higher power was not available, the Air Ministry agreed that the new and compact, twin-row, Bristol Taurus engine would be substituted.

This turned out to be a flawed design, which had been rushed into production before full testing and development had been completed. Availability of this new engine was limited, and Bristol gave priority to their own design of aircraft, leaving the Botha to continue with the Perseus engine. This effectively condemned the Blackburn Botha to failure as an operational torpedo bomber.

Problems persisted with the Bristol Taurus Mk II engines fitted to the first production Beaufort aircraft. Frequent failures with a bolt led to the connecting rods slipping from the crankshaft and thereby wrecking the engine. This would result in the loss of an engine, often accompanied by fire, with catastrophic results at low altitude. The view of the Bristol company was to use high revolutions and maximum continuous speed, but although this may have reduced the incidence of failures, it reduced the range of the aircraft significantly, and simply wore the engines out early. The de Havilland propellers were variable speed, but they could not be fully feathered, meaning that a failed engine caused a lot of drag to the aircraft. As late as March 1940, the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment (A & AEE) refused to give full and final clearance for the aircraft to enter operational service because of its poor performance on a single engine.

There were also problems with the tailwheel and tailplane, but it was engine overheating that was the main issue delaying the Beaufort's operational debut. In October 1938, the Beaufort was grounded for modifications to the cowlings and cooling gills. This still caused problems with running the engines on the ground, but in the air, matters were improved. It was decided on 16 March 1939 that of the first seventy-eight aircraft ordered, five would act as prototypes, two would be used for trials, and twenty-one would re-equip No. 100 Squadron in Singapore. The other fifty would be supplied to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), with No. 36 Squadron to be equipped with aircraft from the next batch. Matters changed with the increasingly disappointing performance of the Blackburn Botha, and so the Air Ministry agreed to divert all Beauforts to home based squadrons. On 1 July 1939, an order for fifty aircraft was placed with the Australian government to supply squadrons in the Far East.

Beam guns were added to some aircraft from May 1940 onwards, and from W.6538 onwards, a Browning machine gun was fitted in the starboard wing. Then problems with the supply of the Daimler built B.IV series turrets arose. The Blenheim type turret was modified for use in the Beaufort as the B.I Mk. V turret, and this mounted twin Browning 0.303 machine guns. The first aircraft so fitted was AW.335, and this had a strengthened airframe. These aircraft were designated as Mark IA Beauforts. On 27 May 1941, the Air Staff decided that Beauforts allocated to torpedo bomber squadrons should have a single Vickers K machine gun installed in the nose, but these were fitted only in aircraft used by No. 22 Squadron.

Problems with the Bristol Taurus Mk II engine nearly led to the end of the Beaufort as an operational aircraft, but there was nothing else available. On 28 August 1940, due to the persistent problems with the engines, the Beaufort was withdrawn from front-line service to allow two-hundred and fifty-four aircraft to be returned to Filton for the improved Mark VI engine to be fitted.

Operations resumed with No. 22 Squadron on 31 August, with No. 42 following on 28 September. The Mark IA version was fitted with the Taurus Mk. XII engine, and these were retro-fitted to surviving Mark I aircraft.

The search for a better engine led to consideration of fitting the Rolls-Royce Merlin, but this was discounted for reasons of range and performance, however, the Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp S3C4 engine was found to be suitable. Beaufort N.1110 was used as a prototype, and this led to the production of the Mark II version of the aircraft. The prototype flew for the first time in November 1940, with the first aircraft, AW.244 flying on 17 August 1941. The Twin Wasp engines developed 1,200 hp, but other than a few improvements made through operational experience, the basic aircraft was the same. The Beaufort squadrons found that the Taurus equipped aircraft performed better in temperate climates, but the Twin Wasps were better in hotter and more humid climates. Four-hundred and fifteen Beaufort Mk. II and Mk IIA aircraft (the Mark IIA having the strengthened airframe and new turret) were built before production ceased in 1944. The Taurus equipped Beaufort was declared obsolete in 1944, and the Twin-Wasp version a year later.

One-thousand and thirteen Beaufort Mk. I aircraft were built by the Bristol Aeroplane Co. Ltd. at their main works at Filton, and at a shadow factory at Banwell, Somerset. The Australian government built additional Beauforts in Australia for use by the RAAF. Total production was two-thousand, one-hundred and twenty-nine Beaufort aircraft, including seven-hundred built in Australia. Thirteen Beauforts were supplied to the Turkish Air Force, and these were flown until 1950. The last Beaufort was flown in the UK in 1946, and a consideration of its status is that it was never awarded a Civil certificate of airworthiness by the U.K. authorities. No flying examples remain today, and only two as static exhibits. Beaufort Mk. VIII (the Australian version of the Mark IIA) A9-557 can be seen at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. There is a Beaufort on display at the R.A.F. Museum, which is displayed as Mark IIA, DD.931. It is in fact built from parts from several Australian Mk. VIII aircraft, the main airframe coming from A9-559.

Operational Deployment

The Bristol Beaufort was approved to be allocated to R.A.F. squadrons in September 1939, and it entered service in November 1939, with No. 22 Squadron, based at Thorney Island, Sussex. The Beauforts superseded Vickers Vildebeest biplanes, and they were a marked improvement in capability for the squadron. The conversion to the new aircraft continued until the last Vildebeest left in February 1940. A problem arose as it was realised that although the RAF had a new torpedo bomber, it had no torpedo capable of being dropped from the Beaufort. The simple issue was that the design of British air-launched torpedoes had fallen behind the improvement in aircraft design.

The torpedo in use at the time was the Mk. XII, which had been designed during the First World War to be fired from Motor Torpedo Boats. The most modern Royal Navy (RN) torpedo carrying aircraft was the Fairy Albacore, a development of the Fairy Swordfish that remained the principal RN torpedo bomber.

These were biplanes, with a top speed of about 160 mph, and different from the Beaufort. Trials at the Torpedo Development Unit at RAF Gosport showed serious problems with torpedoes dropped from high-speed aircraft. To remedy this, a larger and detachable air tail was fitted, which resulted in the torpedo being carried in a nose-up attitude, as opposed to the preferred nose-down manner. These issues were overcome, and the Beaufort had several successes as a torpedo-bomber, particularly in the Mediterranean.

On 8 April 1940, No. 22 Squadron moved to RAF North Coates in Lincolnshire, to cover the North Sea, as a consequence of the German invasion of Norway. The first operational sortie by the Squadron using their Beauforts was on the night of 15/16 April 1940, with a mine-laying operation in the mouth of the River Jade. The squadron dropped their first bomb on 7 May 1940.

The second squadron to receive the Beaufort was No. 42 Squadron. This unit had been formed in August 1939, from a flight of No. 22 Squadron. It was equipped with the Vickers Vildebeest biplane torpedo bomber, but it received its first Beaufort (L.4489) in April 1940. This coincided with a move to RAF Thorney Island to replace No. 22 Squadron, which had moved to North Coates. The move was to allow the conversion of No. 42 Squadron to the Beaufort. In June 1940, with the conversion completed, the squadron moved to RAF Wick, in Caithness, to fly operational sorties over the North Sea to Norway.

The third squadron to be equipped with the Beaufort was No. 217 Squadron. This pre-war squadron had been based at RAF Warmwell, Dorset, at the outbreak of the Second World War. In October 1939, it moved to RAF St Eval in Cornwall, to cover the Western Approaches. It received its first Beaufort in May 1940, just after No. 42 Squadron started to receive its Beauforts. Due to the shortage of aircraft and trained pilots, with effect from 19 October 1940, other Beauforts were transferred from No. 48 Squadron, which had flown only one sortie with that aircraft on 17 October 1940. No. 217 Squadron remained at RAF St Eval until October 1941, when it moved to RAF Thorney Island, however, the squadron maintained a detachment at RAF St Eval. No. 217 Squadron remained a bomb (and mine) only squadron well into 1941, before torpedo training was undertaken, however, the squadron had a trials detachment at RAF Chivenor testing Air-to-Surface Vessel (ASV) radar, and the use of depth charges.

The fourth, and last, squadron in the UK to receive the Beaufort was No. 86 Squadron. This squadron was formed at RAF Gosport, Hampshire, on 6 December 1940. The new squadron was equipped with Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV aircraft. It spent a month at RAF Leuchars in Fife in February 1941 and then moved to RAF Wattisham in Suffolk in March 1941. Subsequently, it moved to RAF North Coates in May 1941, where it began to receive Beaufort aircraft in June of that year. The first Beaufort sortie was flown on 11 June 1940, but in practice, it acted as a holding and dispatch unit for No. 39 Squadron in Egypt. The Beaufort Mk. II was issued to No. 217 Squadron beginning in November 1941, and to No. 86 Squadron with effect from January 1942.

The only other Home-based squadrons using the Bristol Beaufort were No. 489 Squadron, RNZAF and No. 415 Squadron, RCAF. The former was due to receive Beauforts in August 1941 at its base at RAF Leuchars, but it converted to fly Beaufighters instead. For a short period, the latter operated some Beauforts while stationed at RAF Thorney Island from September 1941 until January 1942.

The early sorties were against targets in Germany, mainly the naval bases on the north coast, and the area of Heligoland. The aircraft were armed with bombs, meaning that specialist torpedo trained air crew were attacking a standard target suitable for bombers. The opening of hostilities in Norway meant a realignment of the sorties undertaken by the Beaufort. On 21 June, No. 42 Squadron conducted a strike against the battlecruiser Scharnhorst off Norway. There were no hits on the German warship, but the weakness of the defensive armament of the Beaufort was exposed, especially when attacked by the German Me 109 aircraft now based in Norway.

To counter this, Beaufort sorties were provided with escorts, with Beaufighters becoming common in this role. Due to the limitations of engine power, additional armour could not be fitted to the Beaufort. Shortly after the Scharnhorst incident, persistent trouble with the engines led to all the Beauforts being grounded, and for a time, it was a possibility that the aircraft would be declared unsuitable for operational duties. On 28 August, the Bristol Aeroplane Co. Ltd. agreed to fit an improved version of the Taurus, the Mk. VI, and this allowed No. 22 Squadron to resume operations on 31 August 1940. No. 217 Squadron resumed operations on 25 September, followed by No.42 Squadron three days later.

With the fall of France, the German Navy took over French ports in Brittany, and on the Bay of Biscay. This led to another change in the tasking of the Beaufort squadrons, with attacks against French ports, in particular Brest, becoming frequent. No. 22 Squadron undertook its first sortie with torpedoes on 11 September, and then a new form of sortie commenced four days later, when the first 'Rover' patrols were flown. Prior to this, the RAF relied on aircraft carrying out reconnaissance sorties, and then if they found something of interest, they would radio back to base for a strike force to be dispatched. This introduced delays, so that most strike sorties failed to locate any meaningful targets. The Rover patrols were an attempt to overcome this, by dispatching aircraft, often armed with a mix of torpedoes and bombs, so that any target of opportunity could be attacked. The first success with a torpedo came on 17 September, at Cherbourg, when the small merchant vessel Johann Blumenthal was sunk by either L.4508 or L.9790.

No. 42 Squadron gained its first success on 26 October, with two ships being torpedoed off the coast of Norway by L.9813, and N.1159, but both aircraft were shot down. New bombs were introduced late in 1940, being modified sea mines, but these could only be carried by Beauforts and Hampdens. Bremerhaven was attacked with these bombs on 25 October by five aircraft from No. 22 Squadron. This squadron gained further success on 18 September with the sinking of a naval tanker, the sinking of Sperrbrecher 17 on 27 December, and the cargo-line Mar Del Plata on 26 March 1941.

The entry of the Bismarck into the North Atlantic led to all three Beaufort squadrons being placed on readiness to attack the warship, when located. In addition, aircraft from the Torpedo Training Unit (TTU) at RAF Abbotsinch were placed on stand-by. No. 217 Squadron stood by at St Eval, armed with bombs as they were not ready to fly with torpedoes until 8 July 1941. From mid-1941 onwards, the number of successful operations by the four-homebased squadrons declined. This was due to a combination of factors, including the shortage of torpedoes, and the lack of experienced pilots and air crew. The pilot aimed and dropped the bombs or torpedoes. The torpedoes had to be dropped at low speed, about 160 mph, at a height of about seventy feet, and at a range of about 750 yards from the target, to achieve the likelihood of a hit against any target moving at speed.

The course at the TTU in Scotland taught pilots to drop torpedoes at small and slow (often stationary) targets, from a range of 1,500 yards; a situation not rectified until the Spring of 1942. To obtain a hit, the pilot had to fly in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire from the ship, or escorts, with a high degree of determination, discipline, courage, and hope. In the light of these facts, it is not surprising that a study undertaken in November 1942 revealed that flying a torpedo-bomber was the most dangerous role in the RAF in that period. A tour was intended to last for three-hundred hours operational flying, but only 17.5% of pilots survived one tour. If a pilot was fortunate to survive one tour and commenced another tour, they had only a 3% chance of surviving both. In comparison, a day fighter pilot had a 43% chance of surviving one tour, and an 18.5% chance of surviving two, and for a night bomber pilot, the figures were 44% and 19.5%. The highest chance of survival came from flying Catalina flying boats, giving a pilot a 77% chance of surviving one tour, and a 60% chance of surviving two. Despite this, the number of cases of men refusing to fly, and being labelled as 'Lack of Moral Fibre', was no worse than for other types and categories of flying duties.⁴

During 1942, the level of operations in the Mediterranean increased, and those in Home Waters declined. This was because of the change of priorities, and the lack of targets for UK based squadrons. No torpedo hits were scored by any UK based Beaufort in 1942, and R.A.F. strike aircraft bombed no vessel larger than 400 tons. Attacks by No. 22 Squadron against the Scharnhorst in July 1941 were adjudged to have failed, as were another attack in May 1942 against the Prinz Eugen, with No. 86 Squadron even failing to find the German battle cruiser.

After the entry of Italy into the Second World War in June 1940, the Mediterranean became the main area of operations for the British Armed Forces. Requests were made from late-1940 onwards for Beauforts to be deployed to the Mediterranean, but the Air Ministry blocked these due to the problems with engine cooling persisting. The strategic considerations led to the move east of the Beaufort Squadrons, leaving the Hampdens to cover Home Waters pending the development of the Beaufighter as a torpedo-bomber. Three of the four UK Beaufort squadrons were sent overseas in 1942. The first to leave was No. 22 Squadron, which left for Ceylon in February 1942. In June 1942, No. 42 Squadron left bound for Ceylon, while No. 217 Squadron left in the same month for Malta.

⁴ HADAWAY, Stuart *The British Airman of the Second World War* (Oxford, Shire Publications, 2013) p.33

No. 217 Squadron later moved onwards to join the other two squadrons in Ceylon. No. 86 Squadron remained in the UK, and it served at RAF St Eval between January and March 1942, and RAF Wick from March until July 1942. In that month, it moved to RAF Thorney Island, and it began conversion to fly Liberators on anti-submarine duties.

In the Mediterranean, No. 39 and 47 Squadrons operated Beauforts from August 1941 onwards flying from Egypt and Malta, but by June 1943, both had converted to other types of aircraft. No. 39 Squadron had moved to Singapore from India at the outbreak of war, as a day bomber squadron. In April 1940, it moved to Aden to support the British operations in Eritrea and Ethiopia. In January 1941, the squadron was tasked with maritime reconnaissance, and commenced equipping with Blenheim and Maryland aircraft. In August 1941, the squadron began to receive Beaufort torpedo bombers, acquiring aircraft and air crews from No. 86 Squadron. The first operation mounted by the Squadron using Beauforts took place on 28 January 1942 with an attack on an Italian convoy.

A detachment of No. 217 Squadron arrived at RAF Luqa on the island of Malta in June 1942, and they launched a successful attack on the Italian fleet on 15 June. By July 1942, Beauforts of No. 86 Squadron had also arrived on Malta, and these were absorbed into a reconstituted No. 39 Squadron, which had suffered heavy casualties. This allowed No. 217 Squadron to move onwards to Ceylon. No. 47 Squadron had started the war based in the Sudan. It moved to Egypt in December 1941, and in July 1942, it began conversion to the Bristol Beaufort. The Squadron's first operation using the Beaufort took place on 8 October 1942, in an attack on the Axis supply convoys prior to the major battle of El Alamein. With the end of the campaign in Tunisia in May 1943, the Squadron moved there and re-equipped with the Bristol Beaufighter.

RAF Chivenor was the only Operational Training Unit serving the Beaufort squadrons based in the UK and abroad, from its inception as No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) in late 1940, until 16 May 1942. It was redesignated as No. 5 (C) OTU on 1 August 1941. On 3 May, No. 5 (C) OTU began its move to RAF Turnberry, on the west coast of Ayrshire, which was completed on 16 May. This ended one chapter in the history of RAF Chivenor, but it allowed another to commence.

No. 22 Squadron and F/O CAMPBELL

As related above, No. 22 Squadron was the first unit in Coastal Command to use operationally the Bristol Beaufort torpedo bomber. The pace of operations and the nature of the Second World War changed significantly on 9 April 1940 with a seaborne and airborne invasion of Norway and Denmark by the German armed forces. This challenged the British control of the North Sea, and it constituted a strategic threat to the UK. For this reason, No. 22 Squadron was posted to RAF North Coates in Lincolnshire with effect from 8 April 1940.

Following the invasion of Norway and Denmark, on 10 May 1940, the German armed forces launched their attack on France and the Low Countries. At this time, No. 22 Squadron was still the only operational squadron using the Beaufort, although No. 42 and No. 217 Squadrons were now being issued with these aircraft. The focus now switched to the coastal shipping routes along the coast of the Netherlands and Belgium to northern France, where preparations were being made for a possible cross-channel invasion of the UK.

On 1 October 1940, F/O CAMPBELL returned to RAF North Coates from the School of General Reconnaissance at RAF Squires Gate in Lancashire having completed his course on advanced navigation over the sea to qualify as a captain of a Beaufort. He was then posted to RAF Silloth in Cumberland, the home of No. 1 (Coastal) OTU, which was in this period the only O.T.U. operational within Coastal Command. Here he formed a crew including an observer, Sgt FAIRLAM, and two wireless operators/air gunners, Sgt MORTON, and Sgt N. KEMP. Having completed his operational training at RAF Silloth, F/O CAMPBELL and his new crew arrived at RAF North Coates on 10 November 1940, together with a F/O HICKS and his crew.

The first operation that F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were detailed for was on 15 November, i.e., five days after arriving back with No. 22 Squadron. This was intended to be a raid by several aircraft on the airfield in Abbeville, France, which was not being used by the Germans. Most of the aircraft did not take off on the raid due to a deterioration in the weather conditions, including F/O CAMPBELL and his crew in T/22.

Less than twenty-four hours later, at 16.29 hours, on 16 November, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were airborne in Beaufort T/22 on a sortie codenamed 'Cold Water', the purpose of which was to attack more German occupied aerodromes in France. The other aircraft involved in this raid were N/22 flown by F/L BEUMAN, V/22 flown by P/O HYDE, and X/22 flown by Sgt HEARNE-PHILLIPS.

T/22 made landfall east of Dunkerque, but they failed to locate the target. They saw a beacon fifteen miles north-west of Cambrai and dive bombed a flare path from 2,000 feet to 1,000 feet, with incendiaries. There were no fires, but the lights were extinguished. After five minutes, the flare path was lit up again, and it was bombed again with no result. T/22 returned to Dunkerque and dived from 4,000 feet to 2,000 feet to drop three bombs aimed at the lock gates giving access to the outer harbour. No results were observed, owing to enemy searchlights. T/22 was subjected to intense light flak, which was fairly accurate. F/O CAMPBELL and his crew made it safely back to base where they landed at 20.10 hours.

The next day, 17 November, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were briefed to undertake a torpedo 'Rover' sortie at dusk along the Dutch coast, together with a Blenheim escort. They took off at 16.45 hours in Beaufort T/22, together with Sgt HEARNE-PHILLIPS in X/22, and F/L GIBBS in I/22. The target was seen, but all three aircraft were recalled as the Blenheim escort had not been contacted. T/22 landed safely at 19.45 hours.

On 4 December, F/O CAMPBELL flew in the role of observer for P/O MOORE on an operation to Terschelling. They took off at 10.45 hours and landed safely at 14.40 hours, having seen nothing of note except for some targets considered too small to attack.

Their next sortie was not until 19 December, as poor weather limited the number of operational sorties that the Squadron was able to conduct. They took off from their base on a coastal 'Rover' mission, armed with a torpedo, in Beaufort H/22. They made landfall at Ameland at 12.20 hours, and at 12.40 hours, they saw two motor vessels, one of 4,000 tons and the other of 1,500 tons. The smaller ship was believed to be a flak ship. F/O CAMPBELL dropped the torpedo at 80 feet, 600 yards from the target. The torpedo porpoised three times in the heavy sea, and no result of their attack was seen. The target vessel took evasive action by turning in the direction of the attacking aircraft and torpedo, thus presenting a smaller target. The crew of H/22 observed shipping in Terschelling harbour, including four motor vessels of about 1,500 tons. No times were recorded on the Form 541 for the 'Time Up' or 'Time Down' for H/22.

For the next sortie on 27 December, Sgt MITCHELL replaced Sgt KEMP as the second WOp/AG. F/O CAMPBELL flew Beaufort T/22, and they took off at 11.30 hours. The sortie was uneventful and they landed safely back at base at 14.20 hours.

Into the New Year, the first operational sortie undertaken by F/O CAMPBELL and his crew was on 4 January 1941. Sgt N. KEMP returned to the crew on this sortie. Flying X/22, F/O CAMPBELL was airborne at 16.00 hours from RAF North Coates with four other Beauforts, all loaded with 'cucumbers', otherwise known as mines. The mines were dropped at 18.43 hours at Yems, at a height of 1,000 feet. There was some heavy and light flak put up by the Germans, but it was inaccurate, and X/22 returned safely to base.

The next sortie for F/O CAMPBELL was also a mine-laying operation, with his usual crew using Beaufort T/22. Other aircraft from the Squadron participated in this operation, all taking off around 16.00 – 16.20 hours. T/22 dropped its mines without incident and returned safely to base.

It was back to bombing on 13 January 1941 for the next sortie flown by F/O CAMPBELL. He was with his usual crew flying J/22, and they took off at 13.00 hours accompanied by three other Beauforts. It appears that F/O CAMPBELL flew independently to the Dutch coast, and made landfall near Terschelling, where he met up with G/22 (F/O SHAW) and P/22 (F/L FISHWICK). At 15.23 hours, J/22 dropped six 250 lb bombs from 300 feet on a 3,000-ton motor vessel. The crew of J/22 only saw splashes, and no explosions. F/O CAMPBELL also fired 4/500 rounds from the front gun at the bridge of the vessel. All four aircraft made it safely back to base, with J/22 landing at 16.57 hours.

Two days later, it was back to mine-laying for F/O CAMPBELL and his crew. They used Beaufort X/22 and they were airborne at 18.10 hours. They dropped their mines in the correct location at 20.13 hours, and then returned to base.

They were diverted to RAF Langham in Norfolk due to the presence of enemy aircraft in the vicinity of RAF North Coates, and they landed at 22.43 hours. On this operation, F/L FISHWICK and his crew were lost, apparently shot down over the Netherlands.

On 17 January 1941, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew used Beaufort N/22 for a four aircraft operation against a convoy off the Dutch islands. All four took off between 10.55 and 10.59 hours, N/22 being the last airborne. The four Beauforts were all armed with 250 lb bombs. F/O BOYCOTT in J/22 led the formation across the North Sea. They located the convoy at 13.25 hours, and all made an attack on the convoy. N/22 attacked with a large motor vessel with two sticks of bombs, but no bursts were observed. The aircraft was hit behind the bomb doors. N/22 returned to the convoy five minutes later and took some photographs, but they found that all the ships were undamaged. All four Beauforts returned safely to base, N/22 landing at 15.05 hours.

The month of February 1941 began with no flying, partly due to the weather and partly the availability of aircraft and their crews. Five crews and aircraft were recalled from RAF Chivenor where they had been training to bolster the numbers available. The first operational sortie flown by the Squadron was on 9 February, although F/O CAMPBELL did not fly again operationally until 15 February. Armed with a torpedo and using Beaufort M/22, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew took off at 16.50 hours in company with F/O HYDE in P/22. As they flew towards the Dutch coast, the visibility was virtually nil with 10/10 cloud at 200 feet. As it was nearly dark, the two pilots decided to return to base without dropping their torpedoes. No enemy shipping was seen. M/22 landed back at RAF North Coates at 20.45, followed five minutes later by P/22.

On 15 February 1941, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were one of four aircraft and crews attached to RAF Bircham Newton in Norfolk for a short period, under the command of W/C BRAITHWAITE. Their stay was short, and the four returned to RAF North Coates. For their next operational sortie on 25 February, Sgt BROWN replaced Sgt N. KEMP as the second WOp/AG in the crew. F/O CAMPBELL was allocated Beaufort X/22, and their mission was to drop mines near the Frisians Islands. X/22 was one of four aircraft from the Squadron dispatched that evening. X/22 took off at 17.38 hours, flew over the North Sea, turned south, and reached the Frisians, but they were unable to recognise their position. They continued along the coast until they reached Den Helder, which they recognised and so were able to plot their location. F/O CAMPBELL flew directly to the dropping zone and released the mine at 400 feet. The visibility was extremely poor with 8/10 to 10/10 cloud down to sea level. They made it back safely and landed at 21.05 hours.

The next day, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew, including Sgt BROWN, were allocated Beaufort J/22 armed with bombs for a Rover patrol with four other aircraft from the Squadron. They were joined for this sortie only by P/O O'BRIAN who was flying as a passenger. They took off at 15.15 hours and over the target area, they sighted two drifters of about 1,000 tons, stationary. These boats fired off six white star recognition signals, and then opened fire with light flak at the Beauforts. This was inaccurate, and so J/22 came in and dropped two 250 lb bombs from 500 feet.

One bomb fell fifteen yards astern, the other ten yards abaft the port beam. The bombs exploded but no effect was seen. The front gun was fired at a swastika painted on the forward hatch cover, but no damage was observed. The Beauforts later saw two fishing vessels wearing the Danish flag which were not attacked. J/22 was the first to return at 19.17 hours, the other two landing soon afterwards. Shortly after landing, at 19.35 hours, J/22 was airborne again to undertake a search for a missing Blenheim aircraft from 812 Squadron which had ditched at sea. This was a Fleet Air Arm Squadron seconded to Coastal Command to assist in the mining and bombing campaign off the French, Belgian, and Dutch coasts. J/22 set a course for the last known position of the Blenheim and then circled the location using a landing light, but they saw no sign of the crew. The visibility was very poor, and F/O CAMPBELL decided to return to base, where he landed at 20.30 hours.

On 5 March 1941, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew took off at 13.00 hours in V/22 on a Rover patrol to the Dutch islands. He flew with Sgt SCOTT, RCAF as his observer, and Sgts MORTON and BLOOMFIELD as the two WOp/AGs, Sgt MORTON being his regular wireless operator, while Sgt BLOOMFIELD replaced Sgt BROWN who had flown with him on 26 February. V/22 was loaded with bombs, and it was part of a formation of three aircraft, led by F/O HYDE in R/22, and accompanied by L/22 flown by Sgt MENARY. Both R/22 and L/22 were armed with a torpedo. R/22 led the other two aircraft through a fog bank and low cloud to the Dutch islands, where they located a sunken 4,000 ton vessel. L/22 left the formation to attack the sunken vessel, but they failed and then returned to base. R/22 and V/22 continued together, and they sighted a tug towing a loaded barge fitted with derricks. R/22 attacked with its torpedo, from 1,000 yards, but after 500 yards, the torpedo dived. R/22 then machine gunned the deck of the tug and barge, forcing the crew to take to their lifeboats. R/22 then returned to base. V/22 attacked the motor vessel with bombs. The first two missed, owing to a faulty distributor, but the second pair of bombs only missed the target narrowly. As stated above, the crew abandoned the tug and barge, and V/22 made its way back to its base, where it landed safely at 18.00 hours.

On 7 March 1941, F/O CAMPBELL took off with his crew in Beaufort U/22 on a Rover patrol off the Dutch coast. He was carrying Sgt FRIEND as a passenger. U/22 was armed with bombs. On the outward leg of the sortie, U/22 experienced radio failure, so F/O CAMPBELL decided to return to base. He landed heavily with the starboard undercarriage leg collapsing as a result, but no-one was injured, and the aircraft was repaired within four days.

On 13 March 1941, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were in one of five Beauforts detailed for a Rover patrol off Terschelling and Vlieland. One aircraft was armed with bombs, the other four (including F/O CAMPBELL's) with torpedoes. They were airborne at 20.17 hours in U/22, and they made landfall at Den Helder and patrolled north to Borkum. They saw five motor vessels of between 2,000 and 3,000 tons and they attacked the largest motor vessel with their torpedo. A direct hit was scored on the starboard quarter, which resulted in an explosion with a large cloud of smoke. The ship listed to starboard and sank by the stern. The surviving crew took to their lifeboats. U/22 returned safely to base and landed at 01.26 hours.

N/22, flown by Sgt PITMAN, also sighted a convoy off Texel, which he attacked with his bombs. Only one released, which caused no damage to any vessel. N/22 crash landed on his return to base, with one WOp/AG being slightly injured.

The next day, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were detailed for an offensive patrol off the Dutch coast. They were the last of three aircraft airborne, and they flew in Beaufort A/22. F/O HYDE and his crew took off at 20.14 hours in R/22, with F/O BOYCOTT and his crew taking off at 20.45 hours in F/22. All three aircraft were armed with one torpedo. They all encountered low cloud and sea fog, and in nil visibility, they discontinued their patrols and returned to base. All three landed at RAF Langham in Norfolk at about 23.30 hours with nothing to report.

On 20 March 1941, CAMPBELL flew in M/22, which was armed with a torpedo. He took off at 11.30 hours and set course for Texel. At 13.23 hours, M/22 sighted two E-boats, which were attacked with gunfire. They scored hits on the two boats, but no visible results were seen. At 13.28 hours, M/22 made landfall at Vlieland and set a course for the islands. They sighted a 500-ton drifter and dropped one 250 lb bomb, scoring a near miss on the starboard beam. The crew took to a life raft, and patches of oil were seen. At 13.58 hours, M/22 machine gunned some anti-aircraft emplacements at Ameland, after which it returned to the shipping routes around the Dutch islands. At 14.00 hours, M/22 was attacked by two Me 110 German fighters. The Beaufort sustained hits in the fuselage, turret, and wings. F/O CAMPBELL was grazed, and the wireless operator was wounded slightly in the thigh. The hydraulics of M/22 were damaged, so F/O CAMPBELL made a heavy crash landing back at base. No crew member was injured as a consequence of the crash landing, and the aircraft was repairable at a Maintenance Unit.

Two other Beauforts undertook similar missions that day. R/22 flown by F/O HYDE ran into thick sea fog, and it returned to base. U/22 flown by F/O BOYCOTT, with P/O TAYLOR as observer, and Sgts ANTHONY and NESBITT as WOp/AGs, took off at 11.40 hours, but failed to return to base.

On 26 March 1941, F/O CAMPBELL was airborne with his crew in Beaufort R/22, armed with a torpedo, together with E/22 flown by W/C BRAITHWAITE, the commanding officer of the Squadron, and V/22 flown by F/O McCAW and his crew. For this sortie, because of the injuries sustained by Sgt MORTON six days earlier, F/O CAMPBELL flew with two new WOp/AGs, Sgt MULLISS and Sgt HILLMAN. Neither were new to the Squadron, the latter had flown previously with Sgt HEARNE-PHILLIPS, who had now left the Squadron having been posted to RAF Chivenor.

V/22 was the first to take off at 10.50 hours, followed by R/22 at 10.53 hours. E/22 did not follow until 13.20 hours. R/22 patrolled the Den Helder area south to Texel. At 13.48 hours, the crew sighted a 6,000-ton motor vessel off IJmuiden harbour, and they successfully dropped their torpedo aimed at this vessel, which was hit on the port beam, resulting in a tremendous explosion. This ship was the largest of a convoy of six merchant vessels, guarded by three flak ships. The rear gunner machine-gunned the other vessels.

R/22 returned to base safely, where it landed at 15.00 hours. V/22 failed to locate any targets, but E/22 sighted a large convoy of thirteen vessels, and it attacked the largest ship with a torpedo without any obvious result.

On 29 March 1941, eight aircraft from No. 22 Squadron were dispatched to R.A.F. St Eval in Cornwall for a special duty. This was in connection with the presence of the German battle cruisers Gneisenau and Scharnhorst in Brest harbour, thereby posing a major threat to the British convoys crossing the Atlantic to North America or to the Mediterranean. The eight aircraft were joined by four more on 3 April 1941, which together with the commanding officer's aircraft, now made thirteen now based in Cornwall.

Circumstances of the Crash

On 6 April 1941, after two days without operations, the detachment of No. 22 Squadron based at RAF St Eval in Cornwall was tasked with mounting operations against the French port of Brest, in which the German battlecruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were then present. The first wave of operations was to be an early morning attack on Brest harbour with the target being the two German warships. The first aircraft airborne that morning was C/22, flown by Sgt MENAY, which took off at 04.30 hours. This aircraft was armed with a torpedo and 'TIM' (Target Indicating Markers). Owing to navigational errors, the aircraft did not locate Brest, but it dropped the markers close to a ship in a convoy near the Ile de Batz. C/22 returned to base, and it landed safely at RAF St Eval at 09.30 hours.

At 04.40 hours, R/22 took off flown by F/O HYDE, D.F.C., with his crew of three. Again, they made errors in their navigation, which meant that they did not locate Brest until 09.00 hours, three hours after the intended surprise attack. F/O HYDE made the decision not to enter the harbour and he returned to base, where he landed at 10.10 hours.

The third aircraft, Beaufort W/22 was airborne at 05.15 hours flown by Sgt CAMP with his crew comprising of Sgt MYLES (observer), Sgt CONLON and Sgt BRIERS (wireless operators/air gunners). They arrived at Brest at 07.00 hours, and entered the harbour, but they encountered three flak ships in the location where they needed to drop the torpedo. Sgt CAMP managed to leave the harbour area unscathed, and he returned to base where he landed at 07.40 hours.

The fourth aircraft of this surprise dawn attack was coded OA-X (X/22), a Bristol Beaufort Mk. I aircraft, serial number N.1016. The four crew were:

72446	F/O K. CAMPBELL, RAFVR	Pilot & Captain
R/63912	Sgt J. P. SCOTT, RCAF	Observer
746872	Sgt W. C. MULLISS, RAFVR	WOp/AG
643257	Sgt R. W. HILLMAN, RAF	WOp/AG

The time that they left RAF St Eval is not recorded, and as far as the Squadron was concerned, they received no signals from X/22, and it failed to return. It was assumed that the aircraft had entered the harbour at Brest and had been shot down while dropping its torpedo. The Operations Record Book is later endorsed '*Crashed in Brest Harbour, no survivors*' and '*Pilot awarded Victoria Cross*'.

It transpired subsequently that X/22 had successfully navigated its way across the English Channel to Brest, and F/O CAMPBELL had decided to attack. The Gneisenau was moored about 500 yards from a mole in Brest harbour, and because of this F/O CAMPBELL would have to drop his torpedo close to the side of the mole. As the Beaufort crossed the harbour at low-level, the Germans responded quickly and opened up with concentrated anti-aircraft fire at this one aircraft.

With great skill, courage and determination, F/O CAMPBELL managed to drop his torpedo successfully, but afterwards, due to the rising ground surrounding the harbour, he had to make a steep banking turn, which exposed the Beaufort to the full fury of the German anti-aircraft guns. The aircraft was hit, and soon afterwards, it crashed into the harbour. There were no survivors, but the Germans recovered the aircraft, and they found the body of the observer, Sgt Jimmy SCOTT, in the pilot's seat. This suggests that F/O CAMPBELL had been hit by anti-aircraft fire, and either killed or seriously injured, and that Sgt SCOTT had pulled him from his seat, and sat in the seat in a vain attempt to save the aircraft. The bodies of all four crew were recovered by the Germans, and they were buried with full military honours in Kerfautras Cemetery in Brest.

Meanwhile, three more Beauforts of No. 22 Squadron took off from RAF St Eval at 11.30 hours to patrol the French coast off the Ile de Batz. They were D/22, flown by F/L GADD and his crew, Sgt MacTAVISH in T/22 with his crew, and V/22 piloted by F/O HICKS with his crew. The three aircraft patrolled the French coast from Ile de Batz on a westerly course when they sighted a convoy at 12.50 hours. The three Beauforts dived to attack a 3,000 tonnes ship in the convoy, and a direct hit was made on the port side of the vessel. Immediately afterwards, the three aircraft were attacked by two German Me 109 fighters.

Aircraft T/22 took violent evasive action, and it managed to shake off the chasing German fighters, and it returned safely back to RAF St Eval. D/22 also made it back to base, but V/22 failed to return, and it and its crew were reported 'Missing'. The crew were:

33542	F/O R. L. HICKS, RAF	Pilot & Captain
746709	Sgt R. E. CREE, RAFVR	Observer
635564	F/Sgt J. A. FAILL, RAF	WOp/AG
900804	F/Sgt W. C. P. MITCHELL, RAFVR	WOp/AG

The body of the twenty-year-old pilot, F/O Robert Leslie HICKS, RAF, was recovered from the sea and he was buried in Grave 2.AA.18., of the Pornic War Cemetery, France, with the inscription on his headstone reading '*TILL WE MEET AGAIN*'. He was the son of Evelyn Drake HICKS, and he had completed his operational training at RAF Silloth at the same time as F/O CAMPBELL.

Sergeant Robert Edward CREE was a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, and the twenty-three-year-old is commemorated on Panel 41 of the Runnymede Memorial. He was the son of Stanley Robert and Ruth CREE of St Leonards-on-Sea, Sussex. Nineteen-year-old John Alfred FAILL was a pre-war member of the Royal Air Force, and he is commemorated on Panel 36 of the Runnymede Memorial. He was the son of James W. and Jane FAILL, of Tweedmouth, Northumberland. Twenty-one-year-old Wilfred Crichton Philp MITCHELL is commemorated on Panel 37 of the Runnymede Memorial. He was the son of Thomas Alan and Mary MITCHELL of Southampton, Hampshire.⁵

There were two more operational sorties undertaken by No. 22 Squadron that day. At 20.40 hours Sgt PITMAN and his crew took off in Beaufort W/22 for a security patrol outside Brest Harbour. There was no sign of the German battlecruisers, but they sighted a minesweeper. They landed safely at 01.15 hours. The second sortie was conducted by Sgt SANDERS and his crew in L/22, who were airborne at 20.45 hours on a similar patrol. They landed safely at 00.30 hours.

It was discovered subsequently, that the Gneisenau had been hit by the torpedo dropped by F/O CAMPBELL, which had struck the German battlecruiser near the rear main turret. The warship flooded and it developed a list of two degrees to starboard. The torpedo also damaged elements of the warship's propulsion system, and two of the three propeller shafts. The concussion from the explosion caused problems with the electronic systems on the ship. A tug was summoned, and the Gneisenau was returned to the dry dock for repairs.

The repairs to the Gneisenau meant that it was unable to participate in the operation by the new German battlecruiser Bismarck into the Atlantic in May 1941, which resulted in the warship being sunk. In January 1942, having been repaired, the Gneisenau participated in the Channel Dash as the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau made their way back to Germany with the intention of attacking British convoys in the North Sea. She struck a mine off Germany, and that was effectively the end of the war for this fine warship, as she was decommissioned with the end of the German surface fleet.

The Gneisenau had only been docked at Brest for routine maintenance after a successful operation in the Atlantic, and previous air attacks on the two German battlecruisers on 30/31 March and 4/5 April 1941 had not caused any damage. These attacks influenced her Captain to move the Gneisenau from the dry dock to alongside, where he thought she was safer. After she was redocked, the warship was hit by four bombs on 9/10 April, which caused some damage and killed several German sailors. This was the only other time that the battlecruiser was hit while at Brest.

Bristol Beaufort, serial N.1016, was one of the two-hundred and twenty-one Mark I aircraft delivered to the RAF by the Bristol Aeroplane Company Limited between March and August 1940. It was delivered new to No. 22 Squadron.

⁵ The ORB for No. 22 Squadron gives the rank of both FAILL and MITCHELL as Sergeants, whereas the C.W.G.C. records them as Flight Sergeants.

Court of Inquiry

As the Beaufort was lost on an operational sortie, there was no Court of Inquiry into the loss of the aircraft or its crew. Notification came through in due course from French sources about the circumstances of the loss of Beaufort N.1016.

The Air Crew

72446 Flying Officer Kenneth CAMPBELL, VC, RAFVR

Kenneth CAMPBELL was born on 21 April 1917 at Saltcoats, Ayrshire, in Scotland. He was the youngest of six children born to James CAMPBELL, and his wife Jane (nee HIGHET), and he was known by the family as Ken. CAMPBELL attended Sedbergh School in Yorkshire, from where he gained entrance to Clare College, Cambridge to read Chemistry. While studying at Cambridge, he joined the University Air Squadron, and he was commissioned in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in the rank of Pilot Officer with effect from 23 August 1938. CAMPBELL graduated from university with a B.A. (Cantab) degree. He was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer with effect from 23 February 1940.

Following the outbreak of the Second World War on 3 September 1939, CAMPBELL was mobilised for active service on 25 September, and commencing on 21 October 1939, he attended the Service Flying Training School at RAF College at Cranwell on Course number 5. On completion of this course, with effect from 20 April 1940, F/O CAMPBELL was posted to RAF Abbotsinch in Renfrewshire, a Coastal Command base on the Firth of Clyde. On 8 June 1940, CAMPBELL was posted to No. 1 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Silloth in Cumberland for conversion to the Bristol Beaufort aircraft and to complete his operational training. With this completed, CAMPBELL was posted to the School of General Reconnaissance at RAF Squires Gate in Lancashire to undertake a course on advanced navigation over the sea and to qualify as a captain of a Beaufort. He was formally posted to No. 22 Squadron on 28 September 1940 to commence his squadron service, but he did not arrive at RAF North Coates until 1 October 1940 from RAF Squires Gate.

F/O CAMPBELL was then sent back to RAF Silloth in Cumberland, the home of No. 1 (C) OTU which, at this time, was the only OTU operational within Coastal Command. Here he formed a crew including an observer, Sgt FAIRLAM, and two wireless operators/air gunners, Sgt MORTON, and Sgt N. KEMP. Having completed their operational training at RAF Silloth, F/O CAMPBELL and his new crew arrived at RAF North Coates on 10 November 1940, together with a F/O HICKS and his crew.

As far as No. 22 Squadron were concerned, F/O CAMPBELL and his crew were missing, presumed dead, following their sortie on 6 April 1941. Steadily, word began to reach the U.K. from French sources about the nature of the attack, which was witnessed by several people.

As the evidence mounted of the gallantry displayed by F/O CAMPBELL and his crew, and news confirmed that the Gneisenau had in fact been struck by the torpedo dropped by CAMPBELL, and that the warship was seriously damaged, it was decided to recommend him for the award of the Victoria Cross. The announcement was published in the London Gazette of 13 March 1942, with the citation stating:

The KING has been graciously pleased to confer the VICTORIA CROSS on the undermentioned officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery:—

Flying Officer Kenneth CAMPBELL (72446), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (deceased), No. 22 Squadron.

This officer was the pilot of a Beaufort aircraft of Coastal Command which was detailed to attack an enemy battle cruiser in Brest Harbour at first light on the morning of 6th April 1941. The aircraft did not return, but it is now known that a torpedo attack was carried out with the utmost daring.

The battle cruiser was secured alongside the wall on the north shore of the harbour, protected by a stone mole bending round it from the west. On rising ground behind the ship stood protective batteries of guns. Other batteries were clustered thickly round the two arms of lands which encircle the outer harbour. In this outer harbour near the mole were moored three heavily armed anti-aircraft ships, guarding the battle cruiser. Even if an aircraft succeeded in penetrating these formidable defences, it would be almost impossible, after delivering a low-level attack, to avoid crashing into the rising ground beyond.

This was well known to Flying Officer Campbell who, despising the heavy odds, went cheerfully and resolutely to the task. He ran the gauntlet of the defences. Coming in at almost sea level, he passed the anti-aircraft ships at less than mast-height in the very mouths of their guns and skimming over the mole launched a torpedo at point-blank range. The battle cruiser was severely damaged below the water-line and was obliged to return to the dock whence she had come only the day before.

By pressing home his attack at close quarters in the face of a withering fire on a course fraught with extreme peril, Flying Officer Campbell displayed valour of the highest order.⁶

There was a small ceremony in F/O CAMPBELL's hometown of Saltcoats in Ayrshire on 6 April 2000, when a plaque and bench were unveiled by his sister-in-law and his now ninety-year-old brother. His brother handed CAMPBELL's Victoria Cross to the commanding officer of No. 22 Squadron. Also, for a period, the RAF had flown a Vickers VC 10 aircraft named after F/O CAMPBELL. There is also a memorial to F/O CAMPBELL at his former school at Sedburgh, and his name also appears on the war memorials at Saltcoats and Stevenston (see Memorials of Valour website).

⁶ Third Supplement to the London Gazette of Tuesday 10 March 1942 – Friday 13 March 1942 – Numb 35486 Page 1163.

R/63912 Sergeant James Philip SCOTT, RCAF

James Philip SCOTT was born on 12 September 1921, a son of Robert Bruce SCOTT and Mary Gertrude SCOTT (nee HERDMAN). His father was a Canadian having been born in Ontario, but his mother came from Nebraska in the United States of America. The family lived at 214, Poplar Plains Road, Toronto, and their religion was Protestant. SCOTT attained his Matriculation at the Northern Vocational School situated in Mount Pleasant Road, Above Eglinton Avenue, Toronto. His principal described him as a *'capable, energetic and dependable young man.'* He played rugby, hockey, and basketball, and he also rowed. It appears that SCOTT spent four months working at a gold mine and then he gained employment with McLeod, Young, Weir & Co. Limited, Investment Securities in Toronto, but he was not there for long as he enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force in April 1940. A character reference written by Mr WEIR, states: *'He is an excellent athlete and is of exemplary habits, has a bright, friendly disposition and in my opinion will perform his duties in a capable, conscientious and efficient manner.'*

SCOTT's medical examination as part of his application process concluded that he was 'Very Fit'. He was 6' 0" tall and he weighed 180 pounds. His complexion was fair, and he had blue eyes and fair hair. SCOTT enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force on 13 April 1940 at No. 1 Manning Depot at RCAF Toronto as Aircrew with the rank of Aircraftman Second Class (AC2). He moved to No. 1 Initial Training Wing, also based at RCAF Toronto, on 29 April 1940, and having completed his initial training, he was posted to No. 1 Air Observer School (AOS) at RCAF Malton on 23 May 1940. On his arrival at Malton, the following day he was promoted to the rank of Leading Aircraftman. His course ran from 27 May until 17 August 1940, during which time he flew in an Avro Anson, with twenty-six and a half hours as First Navigator. He finished twelfth out of the class of thirty-nine in his air work, but only twenty-fourth in his ground examination. This placed him twenty-fifth overall with a mark of 72.5%. He was not considered suitable for a commission, nor as an instructor, but he was described as a big, good natured, youngster, and it was felt he would make a first-class air observer with more experience.

He concluded his training at No. 1 AOS on 18 August 1940, and he was posted to No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School (B & GS) at RCAF Jarvis in Ontario. This was to complete the air gunnery training and he trained on Fairey Battle aircraft, flying just short of twelve hours. The course ran from 19 August until 29 September 1940. In his air gunnery tests, he scored 1%, 12% and 11%, and he had an average error in all bombing exercises of 215 yards. He was graded 'Above Average' for his bombing skills, and 'Average' for his air gunnery. He was tied in twenty-fifth place out of the class of thirty-eight, but he passed the course with a final score of 71.7%.

On completion of his training at No. 1 B & GS, SCOTT was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant, and he qualified as an Air Observer 'B' with effect from 28 September 1940. Sgt SCOTT was posted to RCAF Trenton to undergo his advanced navigation training at No. 1 Air Navigation School (ANS), which was based there.

As throughout his training, he was a student on Course No. 1, which ran from 30 September until 26 October 1940, and he completed an additional ten hours, forty-five minutes in the air in daylight, and five and half hours at night whilst acting as First Navigator. He was assessed as being '*A very good navigator*' in his air training, and '*made a showing on the course*' in his ground training. He finished twenty-fourth out of the class of thirty-eight on this course and the concluding remarks stated: '*This man is young but has a very likeable personality and is a good athlete.*'

After his course at No. 1 ANS, Sgt SCOTT was granted ten days leave, from 28 October until 6 November 1940. He was then posted to No. 3 Manning Depot at Ottawa on 11 November 1940 to await his posting overseas. He left Canada on 14 November, and he arrived in the United Kingdom on 25 November 1940. Such was the demand for air crew in the RAF, and the fact that the training programme was not yet fully established, Sgt SCOTT was posted directly to No. 22 Squadron, then based at RAF North Coates in Lincolnshire, with effect from 30 November 1940. He was one of two Pilot Officers and five Sergeant Observers, all members of the Royal Canadian Air Force, posted to No. 22 Squadron on this date.

Shortly after arriving with his Squadron, Sgt SCOTT was granted six days Privilege Leave between 4 and 9 December 1940. He was also granted twelve days Privilege Leave between 4 and 15 February 1941. SCOTT's conduct throughout his service was good, with no entries on his General Conduct Sheet. At his death, James SCOTT was aged nineteen years, six months, and twenty-four days. As far as the RCAF was concerned, he was reported 'Missing' on 6 April 1941, and his death was then presumed for official purposes with effect from 4 November 1941. His family were awarded a War Gratuity of \$136.31, SCOTT having accrued one-hundred and fifteen days of qualifying overseas service. The Ministerial Card was sent to his mother on 17 November 1941, the Royal Message on 30 November 1941, and the Memorial Crosses

746872 Sergeant William Cecil MULLISS, RAFVR

William Cecil MULLISS was born in Bath, Somerset, in December 1909. His father, Henry Robert MULLISS (1878 – 1945), was a pork butcher who came from Cheltenham in Gloucestershire. His mother, Alice Loseby MULLISS (1877 – ?) worked as a grocer, and she came from Leicester. The family lived at 9, Grove Street, Bath. On 5 October 1933, William married Ethel Mary PICKFORD (1911 – 2005), in Bath, and they set up home at 65, St John's Villas in that city.

William joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and he qualified as a wireless operator and air gunner. He was posted to No. 22 Squadron, and he flew with other pilots until joining F/O CAMPBELL on 26 March 1941 following the injury to his regular wireless operator.

643257 Sergeant Ralph Walter HILLMAN, RAF

Ralph Walter HILLMAN was born in Edmonton, London, in 1918. His father never saw his son, as he was killed on 9 October 1917 when the ship in which he was returning to France struck a mine and sank. He was a soldier in the Gloucestershire Regiment, and his name is recorded on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium. HILLMAN was educated at Latymer Secondary School in Edmonton.

HILLMAN left school in 1935, aged sixteen years, and he went to work in the accounts department of the Kodak company in Kingsway, London. He joined the Royal Air Force in May 1939 as ground crew, but he re-mustered as air crew in September 1939. He trained as a wireless operator and air gunner, and on the successful completion of his training, he was posted to No. 22 Squadron. On 1 August 1940, Sgt HILLMAN was detached to serve with No. 235 Squadron flying Bristol Blenheim aircraft on maritime protection duties between 1 and 31 August 1940. This made him eligible for the Battle of Britain Clasp. He returned to No. 22 Squadron, and it appears that he was a last-minute substitute for a Sgt O'BRIEN, whose name is crossed out in the Operations Record Book (Gorm 541) and replaced by Sgt HILLMAN's name. HILLMAN's mother died of stomach cancer in late 1942.

Conclusions

The circumstances of the award of a Victoria Cross can appear inconsistent, in that many acts of supreme gallantry took place in the Second World War that did not result in an award. This was often because the act involved was not witnessed by people who survived themselves, and who were able to record the events that may have justified an award. The courage and determination shown by F/O CAMPBELL was probably no greater, nor any less, than many other pilots and their crews within No. 22 Squadron, and the other Beaufort equipped strike units of Coastal Command.

What was possibly the key factor with the award of the VC in this case was when it became known to British authorities that his attack had been successful, and the level of damage caused to the Gneisenau. CAMPBELL's actions merit the award, without doubt, but it also stands as a tribute to all the Beaufort crews of Coastal Command.

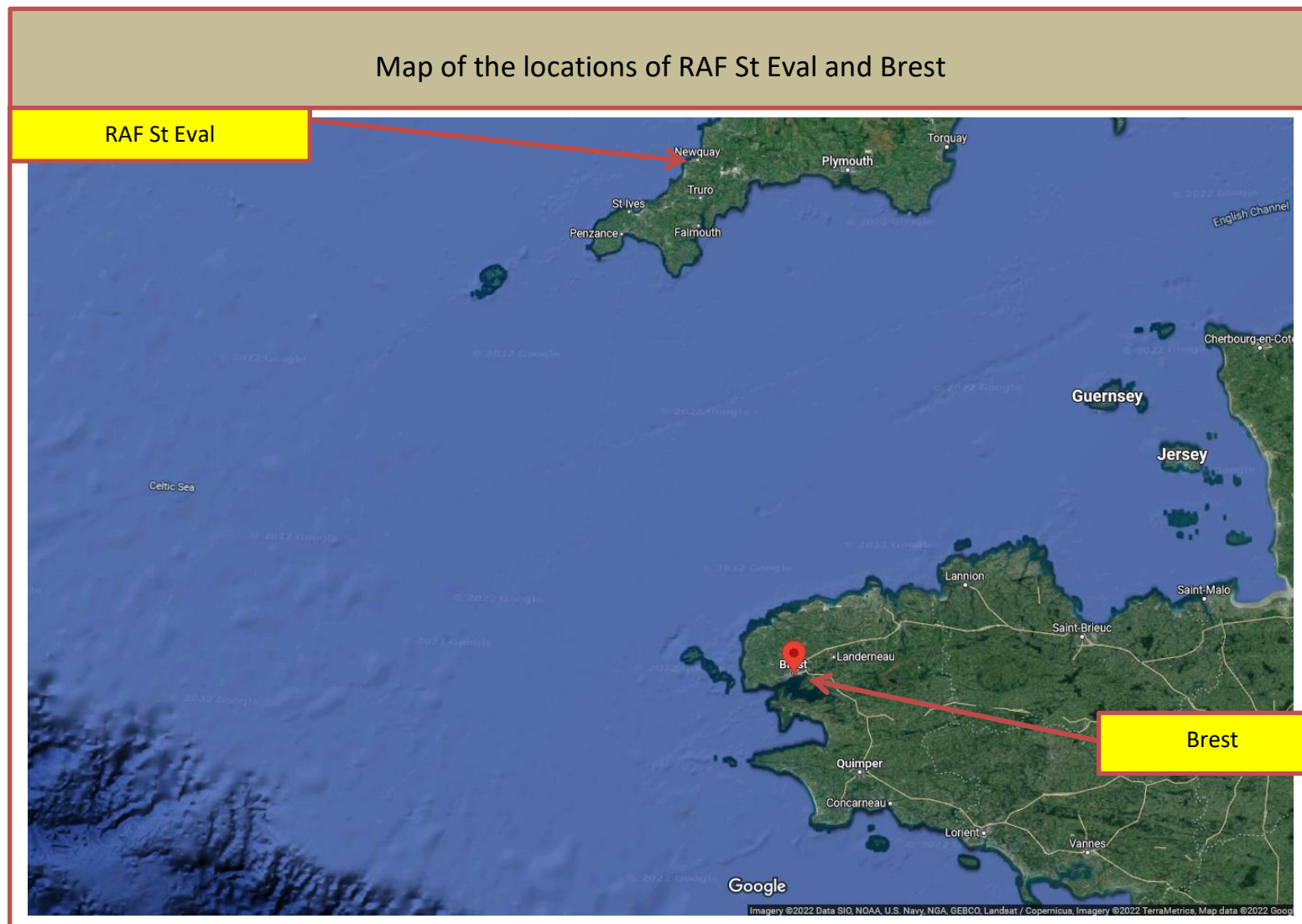
In Memoriam

6 April 1941 – Bristol Beaufort Mk. I – N.1016

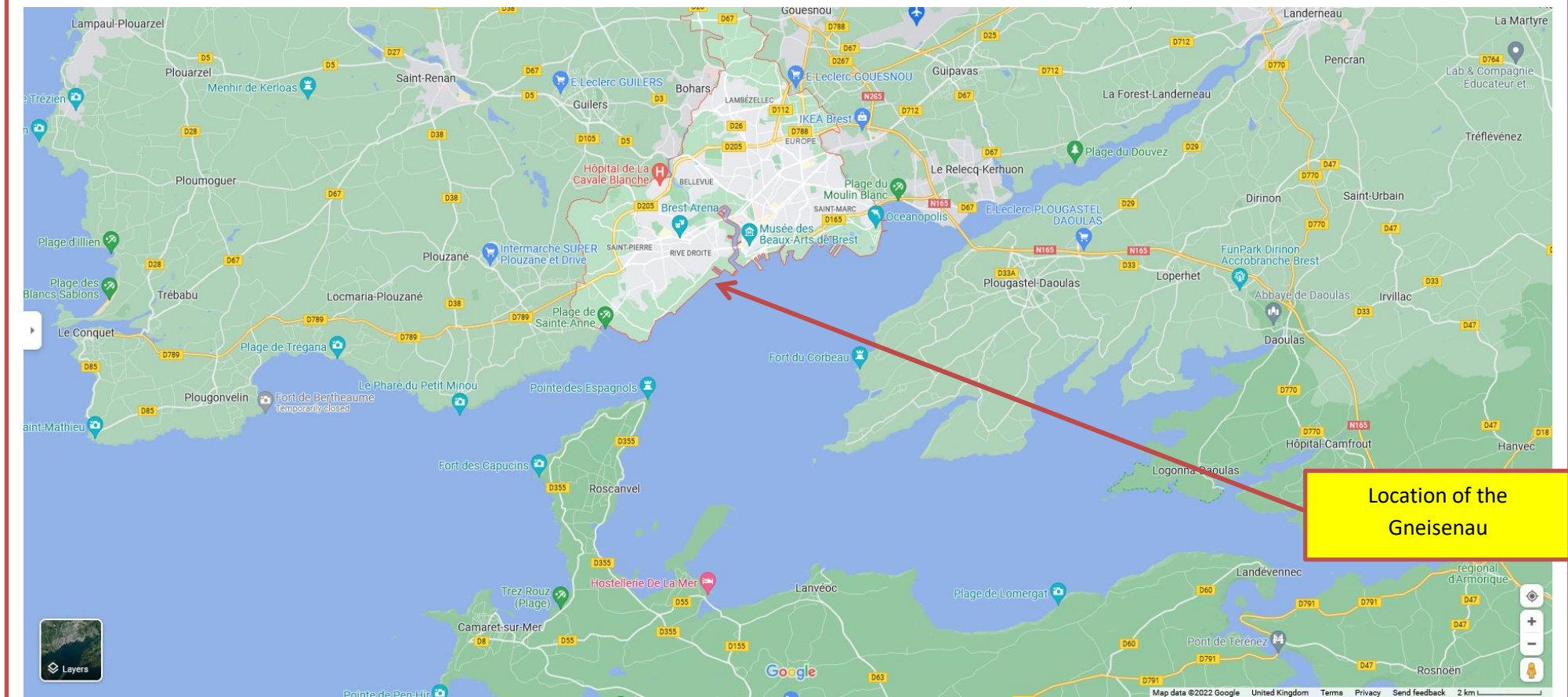
No.	Surname	Forenames(s)	Age	Date of Death	Rank	Role	Service	Service Number	Place of Burial	Grave
1.	CAMPBELL, VC ⁷	Kenneth	23	06/04/41	Flying Officer	Pilot	RAFVR	72446	Brest (Kerfautras) Cemetery	Plot 40, Row 1, Grave 10.
2.	SCOTT	James Philip	19	06/04/41	Sergeant	Observer	RCAF	R/63912	Brest (Kerfautras) Cemetery	Plot 40, Row 4, Grave 6.
3.	MULLISS ⁸	William Cecil	31	06/04/41	Sergeant	WOp/AG	RAFVR	746872	Brest (Kerfautras) Cemetery	Plot 40, Row 5, Grave 12.
4.	HILLMAN	Ralph Walter		06/04/41	Flight Sergeant	WOp/AG	RAF	643257	Brest (Kerfautras) Cemetery	Plot 40, Row 9, Grave 14.

⁷ Son of James and Jane CAMPBELL, of Stevenston, Ayrshire. B.A.(Cantab). Awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously.

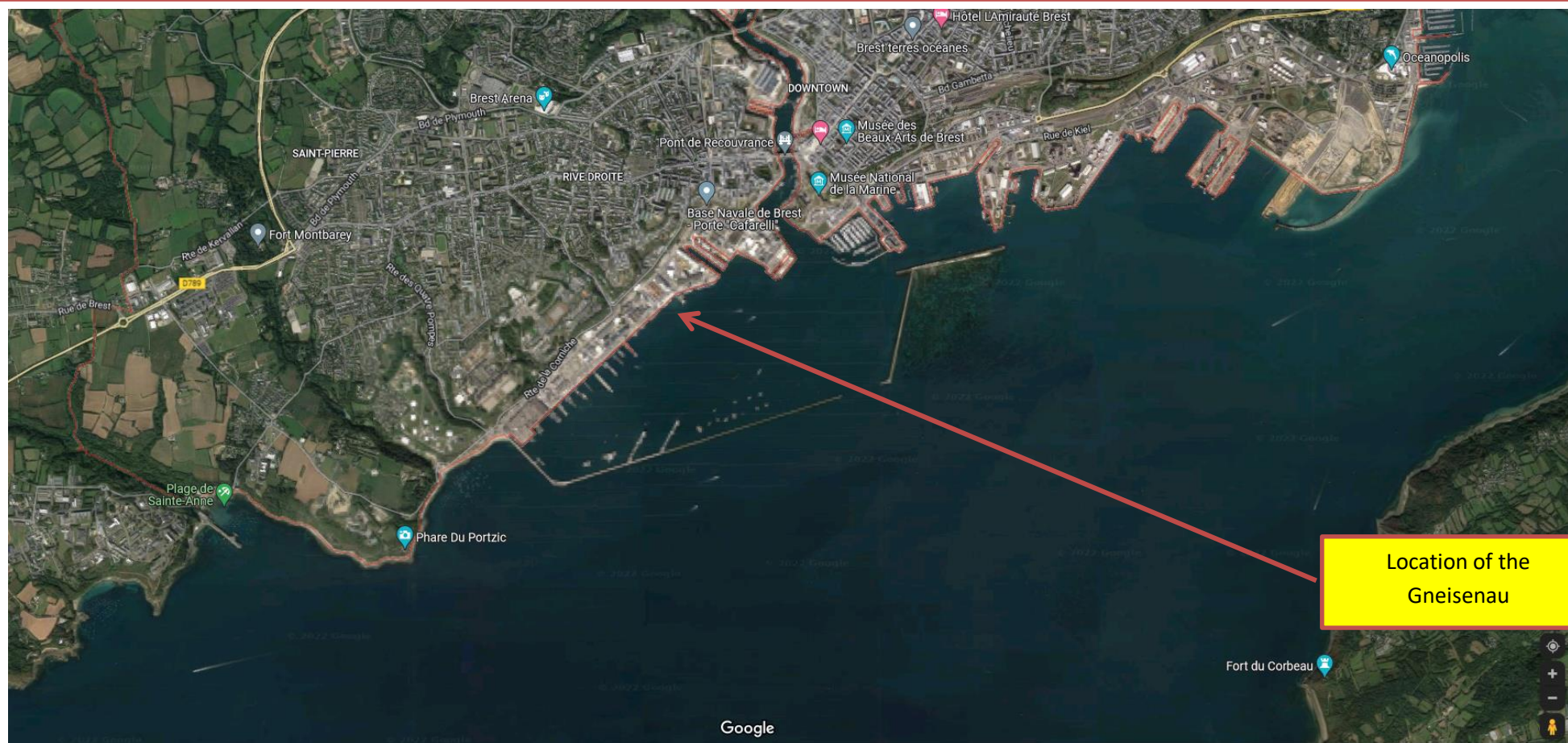
⁸ Son of Henry Robert and Alice Loseby MULLISS; husband of Ethel Mary MULLISS, of Letchworth, Hertfordshire. Inscription: LAY IT AS A FOUNDATION TO BE ALWAYS IN DUTY; NEVER TO QUIT THAT WHATEVER IT BE.



Map of Brest Harbour



Close-up of Brest Harbour



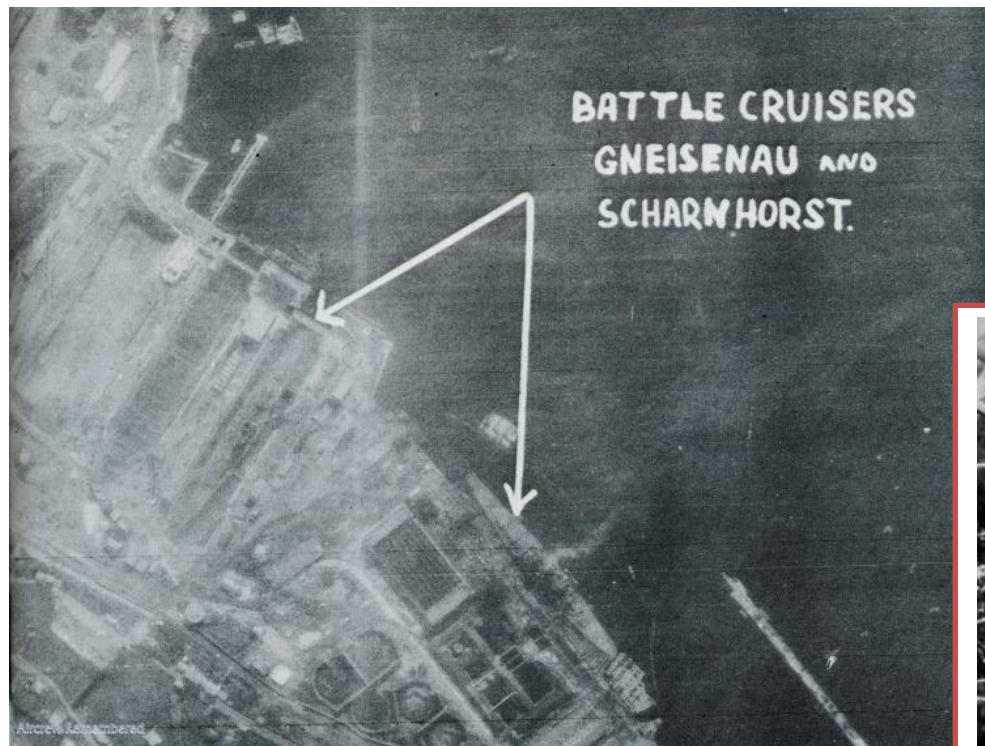


Above – A photograph of the Gneisenau, port side profile.

Right – The starboard side profile of the Gneisenau.

Courtesy of: Wikipedia





Above – An official photograph of the two German battlecruisers in Brest Harbour. The Gneisenau has recently been removed from the second drydock and it is now moored alongside, making it vulnerable to a torpedo attack.

Courtesy of: <https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2019/12/19/attack-on-the-gneisenau/>

Right – Another official wartime photograph of Brest Harbour. This one indicates the difficult line of approach for any attack by torpedo on the German battlecruiser.

Courtesy of: <https://218squadron.wordpress.com/maritime-attacks-against-the-u-boat-menace/>





Above – F/O Kenneth CAMPBELL, V.C.

Above Right – The headstone on F/O CAMPBELL's grave.

Courtesy of: Wikipedia



'JIMMIE' SCOTT MISSING IN R.A.F.

Mother Receives Cable
After His Father Dies

BOMBING SQUADRON

Sergeant-Observer James P. Scott, 19, Toronto boy, who has been on active service with the R.A.F., is reported missing. His mother, Mrs. R. Bruce Scott, 214 Poplar Plains Road, received the news in a brief cable yesterday afternoon as she was closing the home following the recent death of the father, R. Bruce Scott, well-known real estate and insurance man.

Jimmie Scott was prominent in athletic circles. Two years ago he rowed for Argonauts in the junior fours and eights. He attended Brown School, Oakwood and Northern Vocational, playing on the latter's hockey, football and basketball teams. He joined the R.C.A.F. a year ago, among the first to enlist under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. He trained at Eglinton, Malton, Jarvis and Trenton. Going overseas some months ago, he was immediately attached to an R.A.F. bombing squadron and had made several flights over enemy territory.

A brother, Pilot Officer R. H. Scott, is on active service with the R.C.A.F. A married sister lives in the Philippines, and an elder brother, Robert, is a student at S.P.S.



James Scott.

JAS. SCOTT MISSING ON SERVICE IN R.A.F.

19-Year-Old Toronto Youth
Had Made Many Flights
Over Germany

Sergeant-Observer James P. Scott, 19-year-old Toronto youth on active service with the Royal Air Force, is missing, according to a cable received by his mother, Mrs. R. Bruce Scott, Poplar Plains Rd. The news arrived as Mrs. Scott was closing her home after the recent death of her husband, R.



James P. Scott Bruce Scott, realtor and insurance man.

He was a student at Brown school, Oakwood and Northern Vocational, and at the last-named he played on the hockey, football and basketball teams. He joined the R.C.A.F. a year ago, one of the first enlistments under the British Commonwealth air training plan. He received his training at Eglinton, Malton, Jarvis and Trenton, and when he went overseas was attached to an R.A.F. bomber squadron and had made a number of flights over enemy territory.

Pilot Officer R. H. Scott, on active service with the R.C.A.F., is a brother, and another brother, Robert, is a student at S.P.S. A married sister lives in the Philippine Islands.

TORONTO LAD KILLED IN RAID OVER BREST

Missing since April, Sergeant Observer James Phillip Scott of Toronto, has been killed in action over Brest, his mother, Mrs. R. Bruce Scott, of St. Clair Ave., has been advised.

The information was relayed through official German sources via the International Red Cross. The 19-year-old Sergt. Observer Scott, a former sculler with the Argonauts, is buried in a cemetery in Brest.

Scott was in one of the first classes to graduate under the British Empire air training plan and went overseas last November. He was a graduate of Oakwood collegiate and Northern vocational school.

His brother, Pilot Officer Ronald H. Scott, is now in England, and another brother, Robert Bruce Jr., is in the Engineers Corps of the C.O.T.C.



Above – Sgt James Philip SCOTT taken when he was a student on No. 1 Observers' Course in August 1940. By September 1944, out of the thirty-nine students on the course, twenty-two were dead, including SCOTT.

Above Centre, Centre Right and Right – Newspaper articles about the death of Sgt SCOTT.

Courtesy of: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2813862>

TORONTO FLIER DIES IN ACTION

S.O. J. P. Scott Buried in Cemetery at Brest

Mrs. R. Bruce Scott, 245 St. Clair Avenue West, has received word from the Air Ministry that her son, **Sergeant-Observer James Philip Scott**, previously reported missing, has been killed in action and is buried in the cemetery at Brest. The information was sent to England by the International Red Cross and was from reliable German official sources.



S.O. Scott.

Jim Scott enlisted in the first class of the Commonwealth Air Training and left for overseas last November. He had been attached to an R.A.F. squadron since last December. He attended Oakwood Collegiate and Northern Vocational School and was prominent in athletics, having played on the school teams in hockey, football and basketball. He also rowed with the Argonaut junior eights in 1939 and in the Northern Vocational crew the same year.

One brother, Pilot Officer Ronald H. Scott is in England and another brother, Robert Bruce Jr., is in the Engineers' Corps of the C.O.T.C., now in camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Posthumous VC Awarded Pilot; Toronto Flier Died With Him

London, March 13 (Friday) (CP).—Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell, 24, member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, has been awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for his suicide torpedo attack on a battle cruiser, possibly the Scharnhorst, at Brest on April 6, 1941.



Sergeant Scott.

Neither Campbell, nor the crew of his Beaufort, including the navigator, Sergeant James P. Scott of Toronto, returned from the water-skimming flight carried out in the face of point-blank fire from anti-aircraft ships about the cruiser and a heavy concentration of anti-aircraft guns on the hills overlooking the harbor.

Campbell, veteran of many operations against enemy shipping, flew

straight for the battle cruiser which had left its dock the day before and tied up at the harbor wall behind the protective mole. The Beaufort skipped over the flak ships and the mole before flinging the torpedo which heavily damaged the cruiser below the waterline, forcing it to return to the dock for repairs.

The citation said Campbell knew that if he succeeded in penetrating the formidable defenses at a low level it would be almost impossible to avoid crashing into the ground rising from the waterfront. It added: "Campbell displayed conspicuous bravery . . . valor of the highest order."

Nineteen-year-old Scott, one of the first Commonwealth Air Training Plan graduates to go on operations in Britain, had taken part in numerous flights over the North Sea.

He volunteered for the Royal Canadian Air Force while still a pupil at the Northern Vocational School in Toronto. When he arrived in England he was one of a group of Canadian airmen who had tea with the Queen and the Princesses during a visit to Windsor Castle.

Tells How Toronto Flier Died Raiding Gneisenau

How a young Toronto flier met his death in an almost-suicidal effort to send a torpedo into the German battleship Gneisenau, hiding in harbor at Brest, was described yesterday by Hillary A. St. George Saunders, noted British historian and author of many official books for the British Government.

The flier was Sergeant James P. Scott, son of the late R. Bruce and Mrs. Scott, Rosepark Drive, who was navigator of a Beaufort torpedo bomber. Without mentioning the names of the crew of the bomber, Mr. Saunders told the Canadian Club yesterday that six aircraft had been detailed to carry out the dangerous mission. It was known that the German battleship would be heavily guarded by anti-aircraft and other defenses.

Of the six machines to carry out the raid, three bogged down on a soggy airport. Another failed to find the target. The fifth went over the target area, but because of cloud

conditions, did not drop his torpedo but returned with it.

The sixth machine, Mr. Saunders said, "leap-frogged" at 50 feet, "under the fire of 175 anti-aircraft guns. The machine dropped its torpedo from 500 yards and then went on to crash on the deck of the ship. The crew included one graduate of Cambridge, one farmer who came up from Somerset, one former chauffeur to a London physician and one Canadian from Toronto. They hit the Gneisenau and she was damaged for weeks."

Later, Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for his attack. In the citation, it was stated Campbell knew that if he succeeded in penetrating the formidable defenses at a low level it would be almost impossible to avoid crashing into the ground rising from the waterfront."

Scott, when 19 years old, was one of the first Commonwealth Air Training Plan graduates to go on operations in Britain and had taken part in numerous flights over the North Sea. He volunteered for the R.C.A.F. while still a pupil at Northern Vocational Collegiate. When he arrived in England he was one of a group of Canadian airmen who had tea with the Queen and the Princesses during a visit to Windsor Castle. He was known as one of the "most courageous" fliers of his squadron. Scott was buried at Brest, his mother learned.



Sgt. Scott.

This page – Further newspaper articles about the death of Sgt James Philip SCOTT.

Courtesy of: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2813862>



JAMES SCOTT

RONALD SCOTT

Mrs. Bruce Scott, Rose Park Drive, learned today that her youngest son, Jim, who lost his life with the R.C.A.F. in Britain, died in the same machine with Flying Officer Kenneth Campbell, posthumously awarded the V.C. They died bombing the battleship Scharnhorst in Brest last April. Another son, Ronald, has just arrived in Canada on leave from the R.C.A.F. Mrs. Scott's daughter, married to a U.S. mining engineer is interned in Manila, the Philippines, and her daughter's husband, Gerald Worthington, is fighting on Bataan with Gen. MacArthur.

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Published by: The Author.
