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Bristol Beaufort Mk. I X.8931 L2
No. 5 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit

THE LAST FLIGHT OF:

BEAUFORT X.8916

A narrative of the last flight of Beaufort X.8916, which failed to return to R.A.F. Chivenor following a training flight on the night of 29 May 1941. The pilot, F/Sgt GLYDE was lost, together with the other three air crew.

The Last Flight of Beaufort X.8916

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Introduction

Compared to today, the attitudes of service personnel during the Second World War can seem callous, but that is how it was. In addition, myths continue to circulate that the Operational Training Units were allocated only second-hand, worn out aircraft, and that this contributed to the high loss rate suffered by training units.

The loss of Beaufort X.8916 illustrates the reality of life at an Operational Training Unit in the period of 1941 to 1942. The aircraft involved was about two months old and had never seen operational service. The crew of four young men, two of whom were aged twenty years, the pilot twenty-one, and the eldest was twenty-five, left R.A.F. Chivenor on a routine training flight and simply disappeared. They failed to return, yet on the next day, a Committee of Adjustment commenced dealing with their personal effects, and life at R.A.F. Chivenor moved on. The body of one of the airmen was washed ashore six days later, but of the others, no trace has ever been discovered. This is their story, or about as much as we can ever know about it.

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. 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 Bristol Aeroplane Coy Ltd 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 can be seen 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 in order 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 to 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. & A.E.E.) 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, 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 these had a strengthened airframe and 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. 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, but 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 Royal Australian Air Force. 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 U.K. 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 they entered service in November 1939, with No. 22 Squadron, based at Thorney Island, Sussex. The Beauforts superseded Vickers Vildebeest biplanes, and 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 R.A.F. 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 torpedo carrying aircraft was the Fairy Albacore, a development of the Fairy Swordfish that remained the principal R.N. 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 R.A.F. 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 R.A.F. North Coates in Lincolnshire, to cover the North Sea, as a consequence of the German invasion of Norway. The first operational sortie by No. 22 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 R.A.F. 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 R.A.F. 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 R.A.F. Warmwell, Dorset, at the outbreak of the Second World War. In October 1939, it moved to R.A.F. 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 the Beauforts on 17 October 1940. No. 217 Squadron remained at R.A.F. St. Eval until October 1941, when it moved to R.A.F. Thorney Island, however, the squadron maintained a detachment at R.A.F. 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 R.A.F. Chivenor testing A.S.V. radar, and the use of depth charges.

The fourth, and last, squadron in the U.K. to receive the Beaufort was No. 86 Squadron. This squadron was formed at R.A.F. Gosport, Hampshire, on 6 December 1940. The new squadron was equipped with Bristol Blenheim Mk. IV aircraft. It spent a month at R.A.F. Leuchars in Fife in February 1941, and it moved to R.A.F. Wattisham in Suffolk in March 1941. It moved to R.A.F. 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, R.N.Z.A.F. and No. 415 Squadron, R.C.A.F.. The former was due to receive Beauforts in August 1941 at its base at R.A.F. Leuchars, but it converted to Beaufighters instead. For a short period of time, the latter operated some Beauforts while stationed at R.A.F. 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 they were specialist air crew attacking a standard target suitable for bombers. The opening of hostilities in Norway meant a realignment of the sorties undertaken by the Beauforts. 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 aircraft.

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 R.A.F. 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. No. 22 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. On 6 April 1941, three aircraft from No. 22 Squadron were tasked to attack the German battleship Gneisenau at Brest on 6 April. F/O K. CAMPBELL and his air crew flew in one of these aircraft, and he succeeded in hitting the German warship. The heavy flak brought the aircraft down in the harbour, and all four men died. F/O K. CAMPBELL was awarded, posthumously, the Victoria Cross for his selfless gallantry.

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 at R.A.F. 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 Torpedo Training Unit 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 heavy 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 R.A.F. at 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. In spite of 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.[1]

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 U.K. based squadrons. No torpedo hits were scored by any U.K. 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 areas 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 U.K. 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 the U.K. bound for Ceylon, while No. 217 Squadron left in the same month for Malta. No. 217 Squadron later moved onwards to join the other two squadrons in Ceylon. No. 86 Squadron remained in the U.K., and it served at R.A.F. St. Eval between January and March 1942, and R.A.F. Wick from March until July 1942. In that month, it moved to R.A.F. Thorney Island, and commenced converting 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 R.A.F. 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 its conversion to the Bristol Beaufort.

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

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.

R.A.F. Chivenor was the only Operational Training Unit serving the Beaufort squadrons based in the U.K. and abroad, from its inception as No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit in late 1940, until 16 May 1942. It was redesignated as No. 5 (C) O.T.U. on 1 August 1941. On 3 May, No. 5 (C) O.T.U. began its move to R.A.F. Turnberry, on the west coast of Ayrshire, which was completed on 16 May. This ended one chapter in the history of R.A.F. Chivenor, but it allowed another to commence, as it was to focus on the defeat of the U-boat and play a major role in the Battle of the Atlantic.

R.A.F. Chivenor and No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit

The first building work for the new Royal Air Force station at Chivenor began in May 1940, and on **21 June 1940**, the first sod was removed to inaugurate work on the runways. The initial plans provided for three runways, each one-thousand yards long and fifty yards wide, on the alignment of the present runway layout. The eastern boundary of the airfield was extended in 1941 to take in the North Devon Airport, and between then and 1944 the east-west runway was progressively lengthened to its present two-thousand yards. In 1942, the dispersal pans and taxiways on the present married quarters site were constructed. Post-war, concrete aircraft servicing platforms were built, and the married quarters constructed on the site of the pre-war aerodrome. R.A.F. Chivenor was extensively rebuilt in the 1970's with all but one of the wooden huts replaced.

The first Royal Air Force unit to occupy the Station was No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit, administered by No. 17 Group, Coastal Command. Flight Lieutenant (F/L) E. D. BRADFIELD arrived on Friday, **25 October 1940**, from R.A.F. Mount Batten in Plymouth to take up the position of Senior Equipment Officer, accompanied by Pilot Officer (P/O) A. C. SHARPE, who was posted from R.A.F. Gosport as an Equipment Officer on the same day. These two officers were the first personnel to be posted to the new R.A.F. Chivenor, to establish the new Operational Training Unit there. The next day, Flying Officer (F/O) J. E. CAMPBELL arrived from Headquarters, 15 Group, to assume the appointment of Station Administration Officer, for which he received promotion to the rank of Acting Flight Lieutenant. Wing Commander (W/C) M. V. RIDGEWAY came from Headquarters No. 15 Group to become the first Station Commander on **Monday, 28 October 1940**. At the end of October, the strength of R.A.F. Chivenor was four officers, and twenty other ranks. A plaintive note in the Operations Record Book on **21 November** records that, *'a party of seventy-seven airmen arrived on posting to his unit today without any previous warning'*.

On **27 November**, the unit's first aircraft arrived from No. 1 (C) O.T.U. at R.A.F. Silloth, with their pilots and crew on attachment for flying duties. The Bristol Beaufort Mk I aircraft were L.4498, L.9905, L.9932, L.9949 and L.9952.

On **Thursday, 28 November**, five Avro Anson aircraft arrived from No. 1 (C) O.T.U. flown by officers who were on attachment to R.A.F. Chivenor for flying duties. Three of these pilots were Polish, who had arrived in the U.K. via France and joined the Royal Air Force, although remaining members of the Polish Air Force.

Friday, 29 November 1940, saw further moves in establishing the structure of the new base and operational training unit. F/L G. C. WALKER was appointed Chief Flying Instructor, and F/L A. D. CLEUGH-FAIR appointed Chief Ground Instructor. Squadron Leader (S/L) A. T. NAISH was appointed to command 'A' Flight, with S/L J. W. BUCHANAN commanding 'B' Flight. In addition, S/L R. G. YAXLEY of Coastal Command arrived by air in a Mentor from R.A.F. Northolt to discuss the formation of No. 252 Squadron at R.A.F. Chivenor. Another forty airmen arrived at the base without prior notification.

On **Saturday, 30 November**, another twenty-one airmen arrived, making the strength of No. 3 (C) O.T.U. forty officers, one W.A.A.F. officer, forty-four senior non-commissioned officers, and five-hundred and fifty airmen. Of these, four-hundred and fifty-two airmen were living on camp, with all the officers and the remainder of the airmen living in billets in the Braunton and Barnstaple districts. The accommodation for the officers and senior non-commissioned officers had not been built by this date, and the development of the station was still very much work in progress. Yet, it was on this date that conversion instruction of pilots to Beauforts and Ansons commenced at R.A.F. Chivenor, the first military use of the new airfield. There were five Flights within No. 3 (C) O.T.U., allowing two courses to run concurrently for each aircraft type, and they were:

'A' Flt.	Bristol Beaufort
'B' Flt.	Bristol Beaufort
'C' Flt.	Avro Anson and Bristol Blenheim
'D' Flt.	Avro Anson and Bristol Blenheim
'F' Flt	Fairey Battle (later Westland Lysander) – for target towing

Most pilots were regarded as a 'cut above' above the other members of the crew. At this stage of the war, the officers were either pre-war members of the R.A.F. or were university educated. The formation of the crews was a lottery. Although the crews would fly, fight and sometimes die together, they lived separately at R.A.F. Chivenor and other bases. The officers lived in the Officers' Mess, and the sergeants, flight sergeants and warrant officers lived in the Sergeants' Mess. No matter how close an officer was to his crew, all officers were to be addressed as 'Sir' or 'Pilot' if appropriate. Not all officers adhered strictly to this, but it appears that for most crews, some degree of formality remained in place.[2]

[2] MAYNE, Maurice with RYAN Mark *Down but not out – The incredible Story of Second World War Airman Maurice 'Moggy' MAYNE* (Stroud, The History Press, 2014)

Most of the WOp/AGs had been together through training at Blackpool and Yatesbury, and so tended to know each other well. They were generally working class men, often qualified in a trade, from across the U.K.. Wireless Operators/Air Gunners generally had lower educational attainment than the pilots or observers, or they were older and over the age limit for becoming a pilot (25 years). They would often stick together at the O.T.U., and sometimes chose their captains rather than the other way around. They wanted a steady driver, one most likely to ensure their survival. They chose the men that they could care to live with, and possibly die with.[3]

By the time that they reached R.A.F. Chivenor, the four men who formed an air crew had endured several stages of selection and assessment. This began with the initial interview and medical examination, the onwards through other training units with more exercises, tests, and examinations.

Generally, the pilots streamed for Bomber and Coastal Command were seen as:

- Being cool, steady, and tenacious,
- To have stamina,
- To have initiative,
- Having powers of leadership.[4]

In terms of flying skills, they had to be reliable on the use of instruments and have a flying accuracy required to ensure efficient coordination between the pilot and navigator (observer). At no point was it explained to the other air crew how very dangerous their operational role was going to be. This was war, so everything was dangerous, and all the air crew were volunteers. All they wanted to do was to get on with it. There was no question in the minds of the young men training at Chivenor of transferring away from this role, and they had no chance to take a different direction; from the moment you joined up, you did as you were told. There was no choice. R.A.F. Chivenor took an official photograph of the students early in the course, as soon as they had crewed-up. Of those in photograph of Course 7A, twenty died, one became a prisoner-of-war, four were injured and two were branded 'Lack of Moral Fibre' and taken off flying duties. Only Sergeant (Sgt) Bill CARROLL was destined to survive the war unscathed.[5]

The pilots were told that the Beaufort was challenging to fly, but it was seen as a tough little plane and it could take some punishment. Its twin Taurus engines were underpowered, and it was therefore difficult to fly if one engine failed. After every fifty hours of use, each engine would be inspected, and after every one-hundred hours, a more rigorous inspection would be carried out. Every two to three-hundred hours, each aircraft went for a major inspection and was stripped down, checked, and reassembled.[6]

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[3] Ibid
[4] THORNING, Arthur G *The Dambuster who cracked the Dam – The story of Melvin 'Dinghy' YOUNG* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword Aviation, 2008)
[5] ALDRIDGE, Arthur with RYAN, Mark *The Last Torpedo Flyers – The True Story of Arthur ALDRIDGE, Hero of the Skies* (London, Simon & Schuster Ltd., 2013)
[6] Ibid

The pilot had to undertake a visual check around the aircraft, including checking to see that the cover had been removed from the pitot head, just under the nose. This supplied the air speed indicator which calibrated the pilot's instruments. Each pilot had to sign the Form 700 before they could take an aircraft up. It was also signed by the rigger and fitter, the rigger was in charge of the wings and the tail, the fitter in charge of the engines. How well they did their job could be a matter of life or death for the air crew. The aircraft were being treated badly almost every day by pilots who had no choice or did not know better.[7]

Pilots entered the aircraft by climbing on the wing and dropping through the top hatch straight into the pilot's seat. They completed the cockpit check – testing flaps, throttles, fine pitch and that the hydraulic system was working. The joystick was in front of the pilot with two handles, and the pilot would use it to move the ailerons on the wings and elevators on the tail plane, and then work the rudder by means of the foot pedals. The ground crew had a starting battery, and they primed the induction system while they were underneath the engines. They used the electronic starter to rotate each propeller twice and switch on the starting magnetos. They then cleared the propellers, and the pilot shouted 'contact', and pressed the port starter button followed by the starboard one. The brakes were held on while the pilot tested each engine to full throttle in fine pitch, then the chocks were removed by arm signals.

The pilot would manoeuvre the aircraft by use of the engines, port to go right and starboard to go left, and make his way to the end of the runway to line up in order to take-off into the wind. Flaps 30 was selected and both throttles opened up together, the pilot would keep his right hand on the throttles and use his left hand on the control column. The rudder would be used to keep the aircraft straight as the torque of the engines would pull it to one side. The take-off speed was 80 knots, and it would take about 700 yards to reach that speed. The pilot would ease back on the control column and would feel that special, subtle, sensation of being airborne.[8]

Once airborne, the pilot would keep their right hand on the throttles and use the left hand to raise the undercarriage. At about 700 feet, the flaps would be raised and shortly afterwards the aircraft would reach its cruising speed of 140 knots. When landing, the Beaufort would be eased into the final approach, full flaps down, undercarriage down, so at about 80 knots a decent three-point landing could be achieved safely.[9]

The syllabus at No. 3 (C) O.T.U. is not known, but a general indication of the nature of the course was that it comprised three stages. These were:

- Weeks 1 and 2
    - Ground Instruction/Crewing Up/Familiarisation/Circuits and Landings,
- Weeks 3 to 6
    - Ground Instruction/Basic Air Training Day & Night/Bombing/Air Firing/Cine Gun,

[7] Ibid
[8] Ibid
[9] Ibid

- Week 7 & onwards
    - Ground Instruction/Applied Air Training/Cross Country/Advanced Navigation/Fighter Affiliation.

Elements of the training syllabus included:

- Synthetic training:
    - Link Trainer,
    - Bombing Teacher,
    - Clay Pigeon Shooting,
    - Turret Training,
- Gunnery:
    - Combat Manoeuvres,
    - Air-to-Sea Firing,
    - Air-to-Air Firing,
    - Fighter Affiliation,
- Bombing:
    - Bombing Target Practice,
    - Mine Laying,
- Navigation:
    - Dead Reckoning Navigation,
    - Cross-Country Navigation Exercises,
    - Cross-Sea Navigation Exercises,
- Drills:
    - Ditching and Dinghy,
    - Parachute,
    - Fire,
    - Crash,
- Operational Procedures:
    - Formation Flying,
    - Attack Profiles.

Throughout the course there were daily classroom lectures, navigational exercises, morse practice in the air and on the ground. The first element of the training programme at No. 3 (C) O.T.U. was for the pilots to be assessed by an instructor (also known as a Screened Pilot) and passed for solo flying. The instructors taught the pupil pilots to: *'Always trust your instruments'*, and not to rely on their instincts. Any conflict between a pilot's instincts and his instruments could result in spatial disorientation, particularly in cloud, and no doubt led to many aircraft stalling and crashing. Many pilots avoided flying in cloud, unless taking evasive action, for this reason.[10]

[10] Ibid

Once a pilot was passed as competent for flying solo, they would team up with an Observer (Navigator), and two Wireless Operators/Air Gunners (WOp/AG). It was the practice of Coastal Command to train aircrew as wireless operators and air gunners to allow flexibility in their duties, so they could interchange roles on long sorties to avoid becoming stale.[11] The process for forming up crews was informal, with the pilots, observers and WOp/AGs all meeting up in a room and choosing their crews by discussions and then an instinctive decision.

The next stage for the crews was for the pilots to qualify for night flying. Many did their first sorties at dusk, before being passed for solo flying. It should be remembered that the aircraft of this period lacked many of the sophisticated flying aids fitted to modern aircraft. Most pilots relied on their experience, judgement, and luck. Each pilot went solo at night to do an initial circuit and bumps. In the dark, a pilot would take off and then turn to port to keep the flare path in sight while flying downwind. It was often pitch black for the pilots, with the blackout in force on the ground.

The O.T.U. course included navigation, bombing and air-combat exercises, with one of the last elements being formation flying. This was because the anti-shipping aircraft would usually fly and attack in 'vics' of three aircraft, so this skill had to be learnt. It was a perilous climax to the course. One pilot's misjudgement or lapse in concentration could result in a collision with one or both aircraft crashing. Once the training programme was completed, the course would be concluded, and the crews posted. Most crews were posted as formed crews, although some would be split up according to operational requirements. Some crews were posted direct to either No. 22, 42, 86, or 217 Squadrons, the four Beaufort equipped squadrons in Coastal Command at this time. Other crews were posted to the T.T.U. at R.A.F. Abbotsinch, near Glasgow, and some were posted to prepare for deployment overseas to the Mediterranean.

The first operational squadron at Chivenor was No. 252 Squadron, equipped with Beaufighters, and initially some Blenheims. On **4 December 1940**, S/L R. G. YAXLEY reported from Headquarters Coastal Command with instructions to form this squadron at Chivenor.[12] This squadron was designated to be the first unit in Coastal Command to be equipped with the Beaufighter, in anticipation of service overseas. The first Beaufighters arrived in December, but the embryonic squadron used Blenheims until April when it became fully operational. The first fifteen Beaufighters flew out to Gibraltar on 1 May 1941, with the rest of the squadron joining them on 15 June. The squadron was to spend the rest of the war in the Mediterranean.

During the evening of **23 December**, R.A.F. Chivenor and No. 3 (C) O.T.U. suffered its first fatal air crash. Sergeant (Sgt) James BLATCHFORD, R.A.F.V.R. had arrived at R.A.F. Chivenor from R.A.F. Silloth on 27 November, with his crew of three, flying Beaufort L.9932.

[11] See Footnote on Page 3.

[12] Some sources give the official date of formation of No. 252 Squadron as 21 November 1940, but these dates are taken from the R.A.F. Chivenor Operational Record Book AIR 27/152

That Thursday evening, Sgt BLATCHFORD took off in Beaufort L.9943, together with Leading Aircraftman (LAC) GREENWOOD, for a night flying training sortie. The aircraft crashed soon after take-off, killing Sgt BLATCHFORD, and seriously injuring LAC GREENWOOD. The aircraft was destroyed.[13]

Despite the rigours of food-rationing and wartime shortages, on the station's first **Christmas Day**, six-hundred and ten airmen, and thirty-four of the 10th Bn. The Royal Berkshire Regt. (attached for airfield defence duties) were served with a Christmas dinner of turkey and Christmas pudding by the officers and senior non-commissioned officers (N.C.Os.). Until the end of 1940, the domestic arrangements were complicated by the fact that neither the Officers' nor the Sergeants' messes had been completed, and all the officers and senior N.C.O.s had to be billeted out. On 26 December, the Officers' Mess was opened for luncheons, a sign that progress was being made.

A major event in the history of R.A.F. Chivenor occurred on **30 December 1940**, when twenty pilots of No. 42 Squadron arrived to undertake a conversion course on Bristol Beauforts. The actual course commenced the next day. The end of the year saw the strength of R.A.F. Chivenor, including the operational training unit, as seventy-nine officers, three W.A.A.F. officers, one-hundred senior non-commissioned officers, and seven-hundred and forty-six airmen. Of these, seven-hundred and thirteen non-commissioned officers and airmen lived on the base, all the others were living in billets in the Braunton and Barnstaple districts.

The construction programme for R.A.F. Chivenor was reaching its conclusion at the turn of 1941, marked by the opening of the Officers' Mess on **3 January**, and the Sergeants' Mess the next day. These were wooden huts, as were most of the buildings (other than the hangers) at R.A.F. Chivenor. W/C RIDGEWAY and thirty-one officers moved into the Officers' Mess, and eighty-nine senior non-commissioned officers into the Sergeants' Mess from billets around the locality. During the Second World War, the R.A.F. maintained a distinction between commissioned and non-commissioned aircrew, so men who flew together, fought together, and sometimes died together, could be living in separate messes at their base.

On Monday, 13 January 1941, No. 1 Course of Instruction – Beauforts, commenced, but the number of students on this course is not recorded. It was to conclude on Sunday, 2 March 1941. These were the first students to undertake the two-month operational training course. A flight (or course) comprised twenty-eight men, forming seven crews. On **16 January**, a revised Establishment was issued for R.A.F. Chivenor and No. 3 (C) O.T.U. from Headquarters, Coastal Command. This showed a considerable increased in personnel to be stationed at R.A.F. Chivenor. With the increase in the Establishment, the status of the Commanding Officer was raised with the posting of Group Captain (G/C) J. H. SADLER from No. 9 Air Crew Selection Board to command R.A.F. Chivenor.

[13] Form 540 ORB November 1940 AIR

The change in command took place on Thursday, 23 January, when G/C J. H. SADLER took over command of the station from W/C M. V. RIDGEWAY. W/C RIDGEWAY signed off the Operations Record Book for the last time as Commanding Officer, and assumed his new appointment as Chief Instructor at No. 3 (C) O.T.U.. S/L G. C. WALKER became the Chief Ground Instructor at the O.T.U..

The month of February began with some inclement weather. On **Sunday, 2 February**, heavy snow required the activation of the Snow Plan to clear the runways for use. On **Wednesday, 5 February**, the first notable V.I.P. landed at Chivenor on the B.O.A.C. service, namely Mr. Wendell WILKIE, the U.S.A. envoy. He was received by G/C J. H. SADLER, and they were photographed walking through the snow at R.A.F. Chivenor. After a short stay on the unit, Mr. WILKIE left by air the same day for the United States, via Lisbon, taking off during a heavy snowstorm.

No. 3 (C) O.T.U. suffered its second fatality in the evening of **Tuesday, 18 February 1941**. That evening, at about 21.40 hours, Sgt A. H. S. EVANS took off from R.A.F. Chivenor on a solo night flying training flight in Beaufort Mk. I L.9829. The aircraft was seen to climb too steeply, it turned through 180 degrees, and then flew into a hill about one mile north of Chivenor, near Heanton Punchardon church.[14] The aircraft burst into flames on impact, but Sgt EVANS, the only occupant, was rescued alive, albeit seriously injured. An ambulance took him to the North Devon Infirmary in Barnstaple, where he died from his injuries the next day at 16.45 hours.[15]

Monday, 24 February 1941, was to bring further tragedy to R.A.F. Chivenor with the third fatal aircraft crash since the opening of the base. This was just six days after the crash that ultimately claimed the life of Sgt A. H. S. EVANS. At 20.20 hours, P/O H. MUNDY crashed while night flying, with the aircraft bursting into flames, killing the pilot and sole occupant. His was flying Beaufort L.9858, which was one of those delivered from R.A.F. Abbotsinch in January. The aircraft dived into the ground at Braunton Great Field, close to the airfield, for an unknown reason. Herbert MUNDY, who was known as Bob, was a South African from Durban.

With a total strength of almost one-thousand, eight-hundred personnel now based at R.A.F. Chivenor, concern was raised about the possible of the unit suffering heavy casualties in the event of such an enemy air attack developing, and so one-hundred and fifty airmen, and soldiers, from the station were provided with dispersed sleeping quarters off the station. Wrafton Rectory, Chivenor Cottage, St. Brannock's Hall, and the Masonic Hall, Braunton were all requisitioned by the Air Ministry to provide this dispersed accommodation.

No. 1 Beaufort Course finished on **2 March**, although the next destination of the aircrew concerned is not recorded. The funeral service for P/O MUNDY was held on **1 March**, at St. Augustine's Church, at Heanton Punchardon, overlooking the airfield.

[14] The Operations Record Book (AIR 28/152), describes the location of the crash as *'near Chivenor Church'*. There is not church at Chivenor, so it is assumed to mean the Parish Church at Heanton Punchardon, just above R.A.F. Chivenor. The O.R.B. records his name as Sgt H. S. EVANS,

[15] See: https://www.awm.gov.au/people/rolls/R2094483/ and AIR 28/152

W/O LOVELL, was senior non-commissioned officer and Station Warrant Officer at R.A.F. Chivenor, and so he paraded the funeral party at 14.30 hours at the Station Headquarters, from where the cortege left, with the coffin on a lorry, and an honour guard either side of the lorry. At the church, other aircrew acted as bearers to take the coffin into the church, after which MUNDY was buried with full military honours in the churchyard.

There was another tragedy on **13 March**, when F/O GRISENTWAITE crashed when flying Blenheim V.6098 en-route to R.A.F. Chivenor. The aircraft was destroyed, killing F/O A. GRISENTHWAITE, F/O HITCH and Sgt T. DYKES. All three had been posted to join the embryonic No. 252 Squadron, then forming at R.A.F. Chivenor with Bristol Beaufighters.

On **26 March**, a fatal air crash occurred that claimed the lives of Sgt D. O. DRAPER, and Sgt J. A. SIMPSON. They were flying Anson N.9676 over Barnstaple Bay, when their aircraft entered a steep turn at a height of 800' and plunged into the sea. Another pilot from R.A.F. Chivenor witnessed this incident and reported it to base. No trace of the two aircrew was found, so they were reported 'Missing, believed dead'. All was quiet on 27 March, but on **28 March**, the O.T.U. suffered its greatest loss of life in a single incident, when Anson L.9150 crashed into a hillside on Halsinger Down and was burnt out. The pilot was Sgt K. KLYSZCZ, a Polish airman who had escaped from his country when it was invaded. Also killed were four wireless operators under training who were on board.

In addition, on **28 March**, Bristol Beaufort Mk. I L.4498 took off from R.A.F. Chivenor on a solo night flight, as part of his training programme. The aircraft crashed into the sea off North Devon and was lost. The body of the pilot, Sgt F. W. CORDER was never recovered.[16] Although a member of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Sgt CORDER came from South Africa. On **30 March**, No. 2 Beaufort Course and No. 2 Anson Course both finished on this date. No. 4 Beaufort Course and No. 4 Anson Course both commenced on **31 March 1941**.

On **30 March**, an Air Raid Message Red was in force between 11.55 and 12.20 hours on 30 March, and another Message Red was declared at 20.22 hours on 31 March. This time it was for real, in fact, the Red warning was not received until five minutes after the attack. The two aircraft involved appeared at low altitude over Braunton and attacked the airfield from the south. A He 111 dropped a mixed load of High Explosives and Incendiaries on the airfield and railway line and was followed by a Ju 88 which dropped a similar load of bombs and also opened up on the buildings with machine gun fire. Forty bombs were dropped, of which eleven failed to explode. The only damage to the unit was caused by a bomb which exploded inside a building under construction by the side of the railway line. Three men who were sheltering behind one wall of the building were hit by falling masonry and slightly injured. Because of the low altitude from which they were dropped, most of the unexploded bombs failed to penetrate the surface and were lying on the ground. It was these which caused the greatest hold-up to the activities of the station.

[16] HAYWARD Op. Cit. p35.

Tuesday, 15 April 1941, was a normal day for this period. There was an Air Raid Warning Red alert issued between 02.55 and 04.28 hours. Six Bristol Blenheim aircraft from No. 18 Squadron at R.A.F. Wattisham called at R.A.F. Chivenor before leaving at 13.45 hours on an operational mine laying sortie over France. This was the first operational sortie carried out from R.A.F. Chivenor, albeit with visiting aircraft. Five of them landed on their return from their sortie, refuelled, and then departed for their home base. One Blenheim failed to return, R.3841, which was lost without trace. The pilot was the Commanding Officer of the squadron, W/C C. G. HILL, R.A.F., and the other air crew were F/Sgt J. FRODSHAM, R.A.F.V.R. and F/Sgt C. D. McPHEE, R.A.F., all of whom are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey.

R.A.F. Chivenor was attacked again on **16 April** commencing at 03.00 hours. All three runways were rendered unserviceable, and the Gas Clothing Store suffered serious fire damage. The airfield was unserviceable for only a short time after this attack, two runways becoming serviceable again late on 17 April. The main East to West runway was declared serviceable again on 21 April.

On **25 April 1941**, a fatal crash occurred involving an aircraft from R.A.F. Chivenor, which for some reason, is not recorded in the Operations Record Book. Beaufort L.4458 arrived at R.A.F. Chivenor on 15 January 1941, to be allocated to No. 3 (C) O.T.U.. It was being flown by Sgt C. C. N. BAILEY, with his crew of three, plus a Staff WOp/AG. The aircraft suffered an engine failure and crash-landed at Ash Barton, north of Braunton, North Devon.[17] The crew of five survived, but one of the Wireless Operators/Air Gunners, Douglas PROUDMAN, was critically injured. He died on 27 April 1941, at the North Devon Infirmary in Barnstaple. F/Sgt PROUDMAN had served previously with No. 248 Squadron, and was an instructor at No. 3 (C) O.T.U.. His body was taken to his hometown of Devizes in Wiltshire, where he is buried in Section N.C., Grave 94 of the town's cemetery.

27 April 1941 was an important day for several pilots and aircrew, as No. 3 Beaufort and No. 3 Anson course both finished. No. 5 Beaufort, and No. 5 Anson/Blenheim courses, commenced on the same day. On **28 April**, the date was marked by the loss of another pilot from No. 4 Beaufort course. Sgt E. MORRISON took off from R.A.F. Chivenor for a night flying training sortie in Beaufort L.9933. His aircraft crashed near Ash Barton, north of R.A.F. Chivenor, killing Sgt MORRISON, the sole occupant of the aircraft, instantly.

On **3 May**, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. MENZIES, and party landed at R.A.F. Chivenor at 10.00 hours, in a civilian Douglas aircraft flown by Commander PARMENTIER. The Chief Flying Instructor met the party and welcomed them to R.A.F. Chivenor. They were given light refreshments, and a tour of the camp, before they left for Lisbon at 10.50 hours.

[17] See: http://www.rafcommands.com/archive/00271.php WATKINS Op. Cit. p.160 gives the location of the crash landing as 15 miles north of Ashburton, in south Devon, which is incorrect.

R.A.F. Chivenor was attacked for the third occasion at 01.25 hours on **6 May** and lasted about twelve minutes. It was a fine, fairly bright, moonlit night with cloud cover above 5,000 feet. One unidentified aircraft, approached R.A.F. Chivenor from the East, circled the airfield at about 2,000 feet, then dived and released a stick of small bombs from approximately south to north in the centre of the airfield. One aircraft was set alight. Further enemy aircraft then approached from the West, straddling the aerodrome and two hangers with a stick of bombs from west to east.

Another aircraft flew over the airfield from north to south and released three large bombs which fell just outside the station on the south side. The height of the enemy aircraft when they released their bombs were between 1,000 and 2,000 feet. There were no casualties. The Air Raid Warning Red was issued at 23.25 hours, and the All Clear given at 02.08 hours. The following aircraft were damaged in the attack: Ansons N.4954, N.5355, N.5371, N.9606, N.9641 and N.9917, together with Blenheim V.5721. None of the Ansons were damaged beyond repair.

The station was attacked for the fourth time by enemy aircraft at 01.54 hours on **12 May**. The attack was mounted by only one aircraft, which approached from the North-North-East, at about 3,000 feet, crossed the aerodrome, turned towards the East, circled, and then dived towards the base dropping a stick of twelve bombs, some of which fell into the River Taw. There were no casualties, and only very slight damage. The All Clear was sounded at 05.04 hours.

There was another fatal accident on **15 May**, with the crash of Anson N.9817 at Barnstaple. The two pilots, Sgt D. W. ROSE, and Sgt J. C. McGUFFIE, died when their Anson crashed at Pilton at 15.00 hours. In addition, a Mr Sidney PRATT, who was a civilian mending the road was fatally injured. **17 May** was an important day for R.A.F. Chivenor, as Sir Archibald SINCLAIR, the Secretary-of-State for Air, accompanied by his Parliamentary Private Secretary and his Personal Air Secretary visited the Station. Air Commodore BOYLE, and the Station Commander, G/C SADLER, met the party for a tour and inspection of the base. The Secretary-of-State and his party left later that day by air. On **18 May**, there was an Air Raid Red message at 04.12 hours, with the All Clear given at 05.33 hours. On this date, No. 272 Squadron lost a pilot and aircraft when Sergeant Reginald Frederick TATNELL, R.A.F.V.R., crashed in Beaufighter Mk. I.C, T.3302. Twenty-five-year-old Sgt TATNELL had served with No. 272 Squadron during the Battle of Britain and was an experienced Blenheim pilot. He took off from R.A.F. Chivenor on a night-time, solo training sortie, but shortly afterwards the aircraft dived into the ground near Saunton Lighthouse, killing the pilot.

On Sunday, **25 May**, there was an Air Raid Red warning at 14.23 hours, with the All Clear given at 14.37 hours. It was on this date that W/C P. D. CRACROFT, A.F.C., assumed command of R.A.F. Chivenor, vice G/C J. A. SADLER. Although the O.R.B. does not state this, W/C CRACROFT was promoted to the Acting rank of Group Captain with effect from this date. No. 4 Course Beaufort, and No. 4 Course Anson/Blenheim finished on this date. On Monday **26 May**, No. 6 Course Beaufort and No. 6 Course Anson/Blenheim commenced on this date.

Circumstances of the Crash

On Thursday, **29 May 1941**, Bristol Beaufort Mk. I X.8916 took off from R.A.F. Chivenor at 07.10 hours, for a navigational exercise over the sea. The air crew were members of Beaufort Course No. 5 at No. 3 (C) O.T.U., which commenced on 27 April 1941. They were:

745132	F/Sgt E. D. GLYDE, R.A.F.V.R.	Pilot & Captain
R/68073	Sgt S. J. TYSON, R.C.A.F.	Observer
1153647	Sgt C. R. BATEMAN, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG
989700	Sgt J. CHRISTIE, R.A.F.V.R.	WOp/AG

The aircraft made a wireless transmission at 07.30 hours, but it failed to return to base, and it was reported as overdue. Three other aircraft from R.A.F. Chivenor returned to base on account of bad weather, as the base of the cloud was down to 200', instead of the reported 1,600'. After the limit of endurance had been exceeded, the aircraft and air crew were designated as 'Missing'.

A Committee of Adjustment was assembled on 30 May, i.e., the day after the aircraft went missing, to deal with the effects of the four airmen. The President of the Committee was S/L Reverend BUSFIELD, with the Station Warrant Officer, W/O LOVELL, as the sole member of the Committee. They determined the effects of the four deceased, listed them and despatched them to the relatives or to a central R.A.F. repository. On or about 4 June 1941, the body of Sgt BATEMAN was washed ashore near Bideford (probably at Westward Ho!) as his death was registered at Bideford. At the request of his family, his body was repatriated to Kingswood, where he is buried in the local Methodist churchyard, although he is commemorated in Bristol (Greenbank) Cemetery.

Bristol Beaufort, registration serial X.8916 was the first in a batch of twenty-four Mk. I aircraft delivered to the Royal Air Force between March and April 1941 by the Bristol Aeroplane Company Limited of Filton to contract 780809/38. It was allocated to No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit at R.A.F. Chivenor in North Devon, so was only about two months old when lost.[18] This dispels the myth that all aircraft used by Operational Training Units were second-hand, worn out aircraft, prone to failures.

Court of Inquiry

At 10.00 hours, on 5 June 1941, a Court of Inquiry was convened into the loss of Beaufort X.8916. S/L G. C. WALKER from R.A.F. Squires Gate was the President, with F/L I. U. M. GALLAWAY and F/O D. C. SHARMAN from R.A.F. Chivenor as the members. A record of this Court does not appear to have survived, and its conclusions are unknown.

[18] HAYWARD, Roger *The Beaufort File* (Tonbridge, Air Britain (Historians) Ltd, 1990) p.36.

Accidents Investigation Branch

The Accidents Investigation Branch of the Air Ministry may have investigated this accident, but it appears that any accident report has not survived.

The Air Crew

745132 Flight Sergeant Ernest David GLYDE, R.A.F.V.R.

The pilot was Flight Sergeant Ernest David GLYDE, the youngest son of Thomas Alfred and Elizabeth Mary GLYDE, of Lee Chapel, Essex. Thomas Alfred GLYDE had married Elizabeth Mary HOBBS on 25 December 1905, i.e., Christmas Day, in London. Their first son was Thomas James GLYDE, who was born in 1909 in Essex, followed by Robert Alfred GLYDE born on 15 June 1913, also in Essex. Josephine Elise GLYDE was their one daughter, and she was born in October 1915. Ernest was the youngest, being born on 11 November 1919, in the West Ham district of Essex.

Ernest gained employment as a commercial artist and enlisted on a five-year engagement in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve on 20 February 1939 in London and was given the rank of Aircraftman Second Class. One day later, he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. He was 5' 8" tall, with red hair, blue eyes, and a fresh complexion. He was mobilised on 1 September 1939 and was posted to No. 3 Initial Training Wing on 2 October 1939, which had been established at St. Leonards-on-Sea, Hastings, Sussex. He graduated onto No. 10 Flying Training School at R.A.F. Ternhill, in Shropshire, where he gained his Flying Badge ('Wings') on 11 May 1940. Sergeant GLYDE was posted to R.A.F. Abbotsinch, near Glasgow, Renfrewshire, with effect from 13 May 1940.

There were a miscellany of units stationed here at that time, including No. 2 Coastal Patrol Flight, an interim measure where Tiger Moths were used to patrol the coastal areas of the U.K. to search for U-boats, the Torpedo Training Unit (which at that time was using the biplane Blackburn Sharks for training), and a Test Flight that flew new Blackburn Botha aircraft that had been manufactured across the River Clyde at Dumbarton, and then brought to Abbotsinch for assembly and test flying. It is not known to which unit Sgt GLYDE was attached.

On 18 June 1940, Sgt GYLDE was admitted to a military hospital, although the reason is not recorded. It is assumed that he either became ill or was involved in a serious accident.[19] He was in hospital for three months, and then moved to the Convalescent Depot at Dunblane, Stirlingshire on 12 September 1940. Sgt GLYDE was not discharged until 19 November 1940.

[19] There is no record of GLYDE being involved in an aircraft accident in this period.

It appears that Ernest GLYDE spent some further time recuperating from his injuries, as it was not until 2 May 1941 that he was posted to his next unit, No. 3 (Coastal) Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.) at R.A.F. Chivenor, North Devon.[20] He joined Course No. 5 at the O.T.U., which had commenced on 27 April 1941. Sgt GLYDE had flown a total of one-hundred and fourteen hours on all types of aircraft, and only twelve-hours, forty minutes on Beauforts.

At the time of his death, GLYDE was living at 65, Hilda Road, Canning Town, and he left an estate of £230 8s 5d to his mother. His father, who was his next-of-kin, was residing at 'The Oakes', Rathmore Avenue, Laindon, Essex.

R/68073 Sergeant Stanley John TYSON, R.C.A.F.

Stanley John TYSON was born on 3 January 1921 in Hamilton, Ontario. He attended the Rectory Street School from 1933 until 1935, then H. B. Beal High School from 1935 until 1939, gaining his matriculation and technical certificates. He went to the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph in 1939, having been working in farming since 1937. He played basketball extensively, and hockey, rugby, and baseball occasionally. TYSON was a member of the Cadet Officer Training Unit and completed a course for first lieutenant's qualifications in the infantry. Stanley worked for three different farmers from 1937 until he enlisted in the R.C.A.F., the last one being a Mr McLEOD. On 22 September 1938, he joined the First Hussars of Non-Permanent Active Militia of Canada, at London, Ontario, the Canadian equivalent of the British Territorial Army. He was discharged on 19 July 1939, with the rank of Trooper.

His father, Thomas Stanley TYSON, (who was a salesman) joined the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, and at the time of his son's death, was serving as a Lance Corporal with No. 1 Army Field Workshop, at Aldershot, in Hampshire. His mother worked at the Hotel London, in Dundas Street, London, Ontario. The family had lived at 378 Central Avenue, London, Ontario, but by 1945, his mother, Edith Flora TYSON, was living at 451, Princess Avenue, London, Ontario.

Stanley TYSON enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force, on 20 June 1940, at the age of nineteen years, one-hundred and sixty-nine days, and was given the service number R/68073. He was 5' 8" tall, and weighed 143 lbs, with a fair complexion and hazel eyes. At his interview, he was graded as submissive, immature and pleasant, being described as: *'Applicant is a clean cut young farmer boy. Most anxious to serve. Not of officer calibre'* and was recommended to serve as an air gunner. TYSON spent four days at the Recruiting Centre in London, before moving to No.1 Manning Depot at Toronto. For his initial training, he was posted to No. 1 Initial Training School (I.T.S.), also at Toronto. TYSON attended No. 1 I.T.S. between 22 July and 17 August 1940, but he spent two days in hospital on 25 and 26 July, leaving on 27 July. He came forty-second out of a class of one-hundred and twenty-six and was rated as *'good observer material'*.

[20] His personnel record gives two dates, 31 April and 2 May 1941. It is assumed that the first one is an error, either that or it was an exceptional year.

He progressed onto Course No. 7 at No. 3 Air Observers School, at R.C.A.F. Regina, which was held between 16 September and 9 December 1940. TYSON received promotion to the rank of Leading Aircraftman (LAC) on 16 September 1940, as he commenced his course. During this course, he flew for a total of forty-four hours, fifteen minutes in an Avro Anson, twenty-four hours of which was as first navigator, and two-hours fifty-five minutes at night. He was assessed as a: *'dependable navigator'*. In terms of his ground training, he was assessed as a: *'fast worker and quite capable'* and came twenty-fifth out of a class of forty-four. As a navigator, he was assessed as 'Above Average', but was not considered suitable for a commission. The general remarks give an interesting perspective, as they state: *'Showed rather a careless attitude both in class and out from point of view of discipline. At times, insubordinate toward his N.C.O.'s. Should make a good observer'*. During his time at R.C.A.F. Regina, he faced disciplinary action on 28 September 1940, for absenting himself without leave whilst on Duty Watch.

He was awarded seven day confined to barracks as punishment. The next stage of his training took place at No. 2 Bombing & Gunnery School, at R.C.A.F. Mossbank. He was a member of Course No. 3, which ran from 9 December 1940 until 20 January 1941. His air gunnery tests showed that he achieved hits with only 15% of rounds fired. He finished twelfth out of a class of thirty-eight, but he was assessed as only an average bomb aimer and air gunner. He flew seventeen hours in a Fairey Battle aircraft, eleven on bombing and four on gunnery practice. Something had changed, because the general remarks from this element of his training stated: *'Very smart man – reliable, very smart person. Should make a good officer'*.

Matters went backwards at No. 1 Air Navigation School, where TYSON was a member of Course No. 7, held from 21 January until 15 February 1941. He was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant (Paid) on 19 January 1941, which appears in some records as an alternative starting date for his navigation training. Again, he flew in Ansons, adding another thirty-five hours to his total of flying hours. He was assessed as: *'A below average air navigator, lackadaisical'*. In respect of ground training, he was assessed as: *'Slow and not very enthusiastic at Astro Navigation'*, and he came joint twenty-sixth out of thirty-nine students. He was not assessed as suitable to become an instructor, or receive a commission, but he would probably make a satisfactory air observer; hardly a glowing testimonial. He embarked for the U.K. on 5 April 1941, and arrived on 20 April, moving to No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, then based at R.A.F. Uxbridge. He was posted to No. 3 (C) O.T.U. with effect from 26 April 1941 and joined No. 5 Beaufort Course at R.A.F. Chivenor.

Having been reported as 'Missing', Sgt TYSON was on paper posted to No. 1 Personnel Dispatch Centre (Non-Effective) with effect from 11 June 1941. Mrs TYSON wrote to the Air Ministry at Ottawa on 4 November 1941, stating that she had not heard anything further about his loss, other than a body had been recovered from the sea six days later, some twenty miles off the coast. She had continued to pay the premiums on his insurance policies, and now requested a definitive statement on his case.

The Air Ministry replied to Mrs. TYSON on 10 November, stating that normally if an airman is missing for a period of six months, and after due enquiry, they are presumed to have died on the date that they were originally reported missing. In the case of Sgt TYSON, this meant that a Certificate of Presumption of Death would be issued shortly.

He was, in fact, officially declared dead on 28 April 1942, with the wording: *'CERTIFIED that according to the records of this department Can R/68073 Sergeant Stanley John TYSON, Royal Canadian Air Force, was reported missing and is presumed, for official purposes, to have lost his life on active service on the twenty-ninth day of May, 1941'*.[21] Sgt TYSON served for three-hundred and forty-four days of qualifying service, and in consequence, his family were awarded a gratuity of $102.32 on 26 June 1945. His mother received a Memorial Cross, from the King.

1153647 Sergeant Charles Ronald BATEMAN, R.A.F.V.R.

Charles Ronald BATEMAN was born on 5 October 1920, in Bristol, the son of Mark and Maud Beatrice BATEMAN, of Kingswood, Bristol. His father was born on 12 September 1881, in St. George, Bristol. In 1911, he was living at 46, St. Anne's Road, St. George, Bristol, with his wife Gertrude and one-year-old son, Mark Ellis, who was known as Ellis. His occupation is shown as bootmaker. Mark and Gertrude had married in June 1909 in Bristol, with their son Ellis being born on 31 March 1910 in Kingswood. Gertrude died in September 1914, with Mark BATEMAN remarrying Maud Beatrice DENSLEY on 25 November 1916. Maud had been born on 14 November 1889 in New York, U.S.A., although both her parents came from the St. George area of Bristol. Their first child was Charles, who was born in December 1920 in Keynsham, Somerset, and their second child was Grantley R. BATEMAN who was born in December 1923 in Keynsham. It appears that they had another son and a daughter as well. Mark BATEMAN died in June 1974 in Bristol, and Maud died in December 1976, also in Bristol.

BATEMAN enlisted at R.A.F. Cardington in Bedfordshire at some date after April 1940. At the time of his death, his home address was 56, Forest Road, Kingswood, Gloucestershire, which was also his parent's address. He left an estate of £51 10s 3d. Sgt BATEMAN was buried in the Wesley Methodist Burial Ground in Kingswood, Bristol, on 11 June 1941, but he is commemorated in the Bristol (Greenbank) Cemetery.

989700 Sergeant James CHRISTIE, R.A.F.V.R.

James CHRISTIE was born in Cambuslang, Glasgow on 25 August 1915. His parents were James and Jessie CHRISTIE, and his father was a Master Butcher, initially in Cambuslang and then in Troon in Ayrshire. James was the eldest of six children, three boys and three girls. The family were all very musical. James went to primary school in Troon, and then to secondary school at Marr College, Troon. After leaving school, CHRISTIE joined the Merchant Navy, and he served for three years, before leaving to join the Royal Air Force.

[21] The department referred to is the Directorate of Personal Services, Canadian Air Ministry.

CHRISTIE enlisted at R.A.F. Padgate after the outbreak of war, and he trained as a wireless operator/air gunner. James married Anne Eliza Kaye MUIR, and at the time of his death, they were living at 43, Burnbank Road, Hamilton, Lanarkshire. They had one daughter, Anne, before his death.

Conclusions

These four men were the first complete air crew to be lost while flying from R.A.F. Chivenor since it was opened in October 1940. Five out of the previous six fatal crashes involving Bristol Beaufort aircraft had claimed the lives of the pilot only, with the other resulting in the death of a screened wireless operator/air gunner Instructor on the staff of the O.T.U..

As Beaufort X.8916 failed to return, and no wreckage was found, it is not possible to ascertain the definitive cause of the crash. The nature of the flight, and the fact that one of the crew was recovered from the sea at or near Bideford, provides evidence that the Beaufort came down into sea in Barnstaple Bay.

The reason for the loss of Beaufort X.8916 was, and it will remain unknown. Engine failure must be a possibility due to the reliability issues with the Bristol Taurus Mk. II air-cooled radial engines that this aircraft was fitted. Both engines were Taurus Mk. IIA versions, but they had been updated with Modification VI. The port engine, 126804, was fitted to this aircraft on 2 February 1941, and the starboard engine, 126806, was installed on the same day. 126804 had run for a total of 178 hours, 40 minutes, and 126806 had run for 140 hours, 30 minutes. As stated previously, the aircraft was allocated as new to No. 3 (C) O.T.U., and it had flown for 131 hours, 45 minutes. It was not an old, worn-out aircraft, as is often believed to be the case with those used by O.T.U's.

The other possibly for the loss of the Beaufort is due to the weather conditions. With a cloud base of just 200 feet, it is possible that F/Sgt GLYDE descended to obtain visual observation to confirm their location, and he may have misjudged his height and hit the sea. The truth of the matter is we shall never know.

With many aircraft flying over the sea during the Second World War, it was inevitable that several simply disappeared, never to be heard of again. Only one body of the four airmen from X.8916 was recovered, the other three were consumed by the sea. For those men who have no known grave, the United Kingdom erected a memorial called the Air Forces Memorial, on Cooper's Hill, Runnymede, between Windsor and Egham in Surrey. This memorial (more commonly known as the 'Runnymede Memorial') contains the names of 20,276 men who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe, and who have no known graves. They came from all parts of the Commonwealth, and others from countries in continental Europe which had been overrun but whose airmen continued to fight in the ranks of the Royal Air Force.

Sir Edward MAUFE designed the memorial, which was unveiled by The Queen on 17 October 1953. It is a place of peace and beauty, and is where F/Sgt GLYDE, Sgt TYSON, and Sgt CHRISTIE are commemorated. Remember them when you visit.

In Memoriam

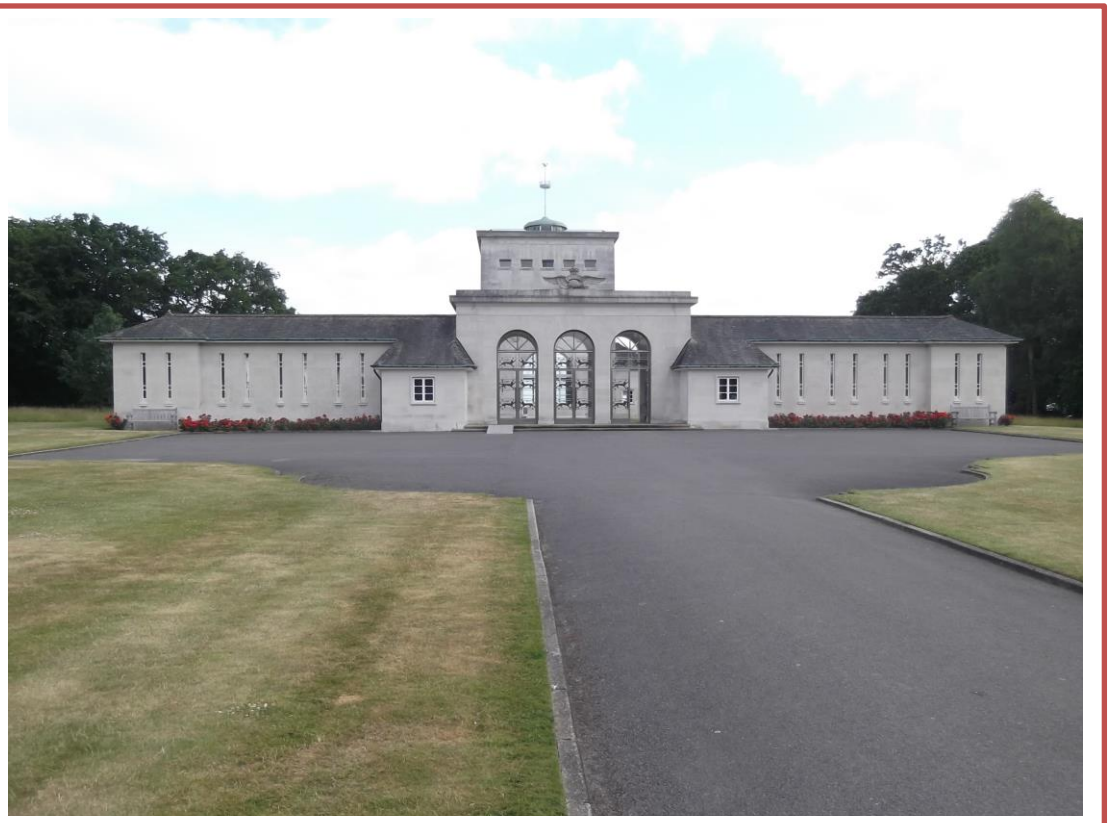
29 May 1941 – Bristol Beaufort Mk. I – X.8916

No.	Surname	Forenames(s)	Age	Date of Death	Rank	Role	Service	Service Number	Place of Burial	Grave
1.	GLYDE[22]	Ernest David	21	29/05/41	Flight Sergeant	Pilot & Captain	R.A.F.V.R.	745132	Runnymede Memorial	Panel 36.
2.	TYSON[23]	Stanley John	20	29/05/41	Sergeant	Observer	R.C.A.F.	R/68073	Runnymede Memorial	Panel 62.
3.	BATEMAN[24]	Charles Ronald	20	29/05/41	Sergeant	WOp/AG	R.A.F.V.R.	1153647	Bristol (Greenbank) Cem	Screen Wall.
4.	CHRISTIE[25]	James	25	29/05/41	Sergeant	WOp/AG	R.A.F.V.R.	989700	Runnymede Memorial	Panel 41.

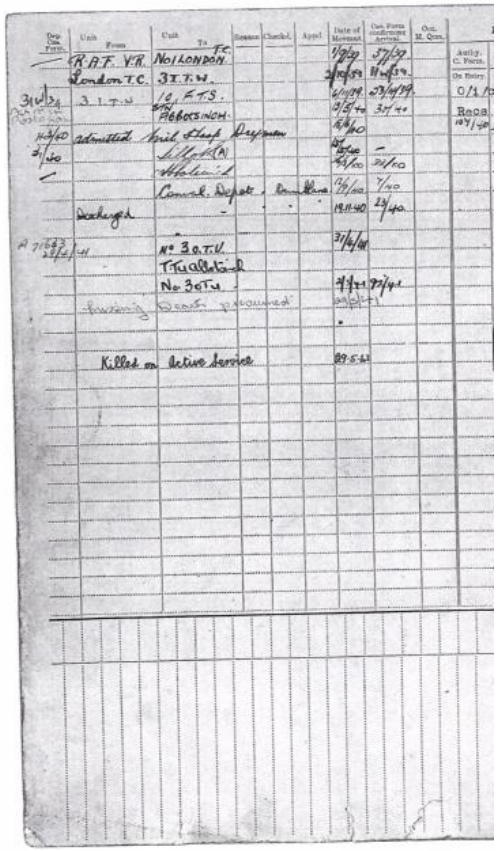
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1798447/GLYDE,%20ERNEST%20DAVID
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1809185/TYSON,%20STANLEY%20JOHN
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/2451372/BATEMAN,%20CHARLES%20RONALD
http://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1084409/CHRISTIE,%20JAMES

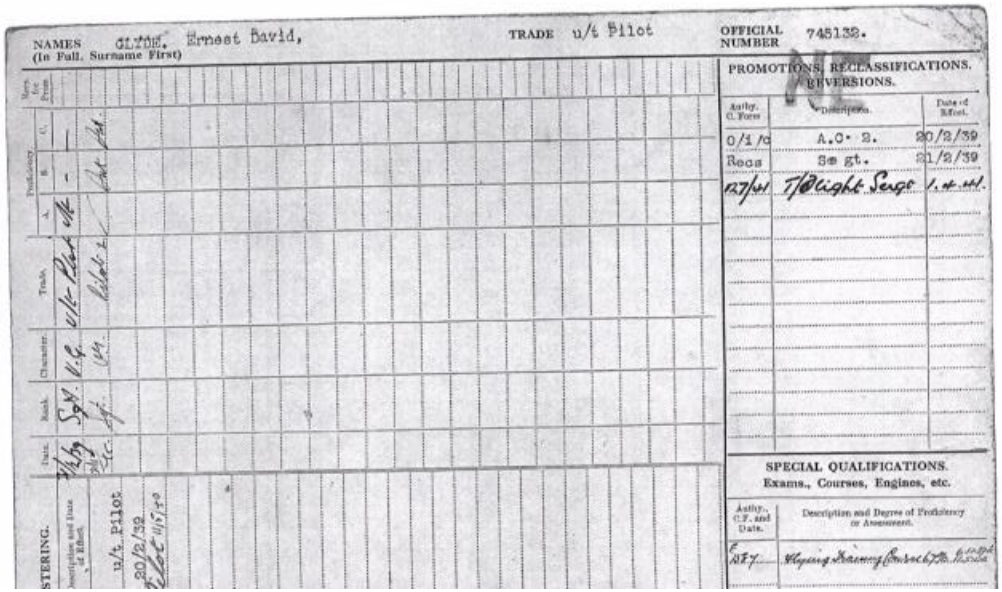
[22] Son of Thomas Alfred and Elizabeth Mary GLYDE, of Lee Chapel, Essex.
[23] Son of Thomas Stanley and Edith Flora TYSON, of Guelph, Ontario, Canada.
[24] Son of Mark and Maud BATEMAN, of Kingswood, Bristol. Alternative Commemoration, buried in Kingswood Wesley Methodist Burial Ground.
[25] Son of James and Janet CHRISTIE (nee PATON); husband of Anne Eliza Kaye CHRISTIE, of Hamilton, Lanarkshire.

Map of Barnstaple (or Bideford) Bay, and R.A.F. Chivenor

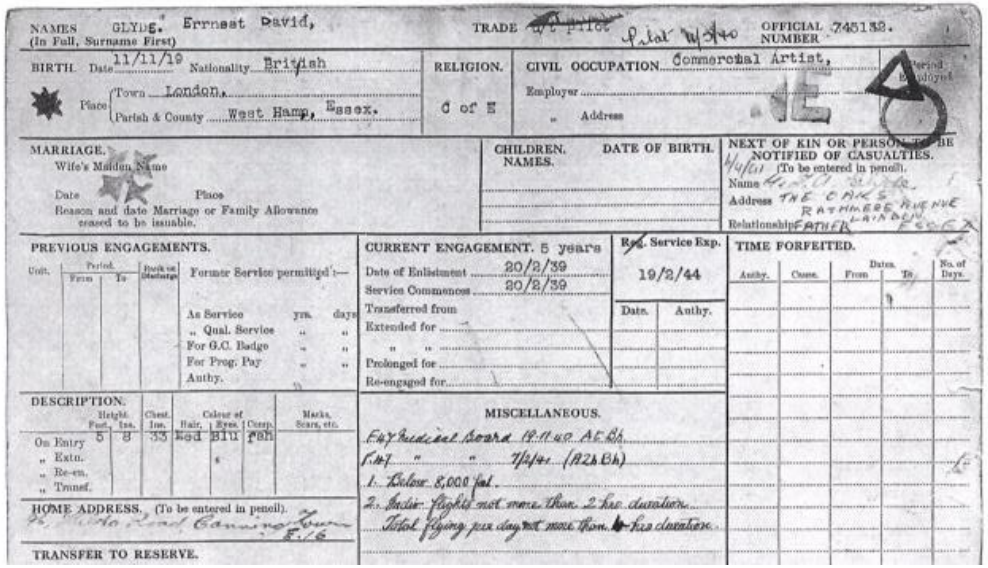


Left – Ernest David GLYDE, probably taken in early 1939 shortly after his promotion to the rank of Sergeant in the R.A.F.V.R., but before he gained his 'Wings'.
Right – The Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede, Surrey.





This page and next – A copy of the Personnel Record for Sgt Ernest David GLYDE.



NAMES (In Full, Surname First) GLYDE. Ernest David,
TRADE ~~W/T pilot~~ Pilot W/3/40
OFFICIAL NUMBER 745132.

BIRTH. Date 11/11/19 Nationality British
Place Town London. Parish & County West Ham, Essex.
RELIGION. C of E
CIVIL OCCUPATION Commercial Artist,
Employer
Address

MARRIAGE.
Wife's Maiden Name
Date Place
Reason and date Marriage or Family Allowance ceased to be issuable.

CHILDREN. NAMES. DATE OF BIRTH.

NEXT OF KIN OR PERSON TO BE NOTIFIED OF CASUALTIES.
4/4/41 (To be entered in pencil).
Name
Address THE OAKS RATHMERE AVENUE LAINDON ESSEX
Relationship FATHER

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS.
Unit. Period. From To Rank on Discharge
Former Service permitted:—
As Service yrs. days
„ Qual. Service
For G.C. Badge
For Prog. Pay
Authy.

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT. 5 years
Date of Enlistment 20/2/39
Service Commences 20/2/39
Transferred from
Extended for
Prolonged for
Re-engaged for

~~Reg.~~ Service Exp. 19/2/44
Date. Authy.

TIME FORFEITED.
Authy. Cause. Dates. From To No. of Days.

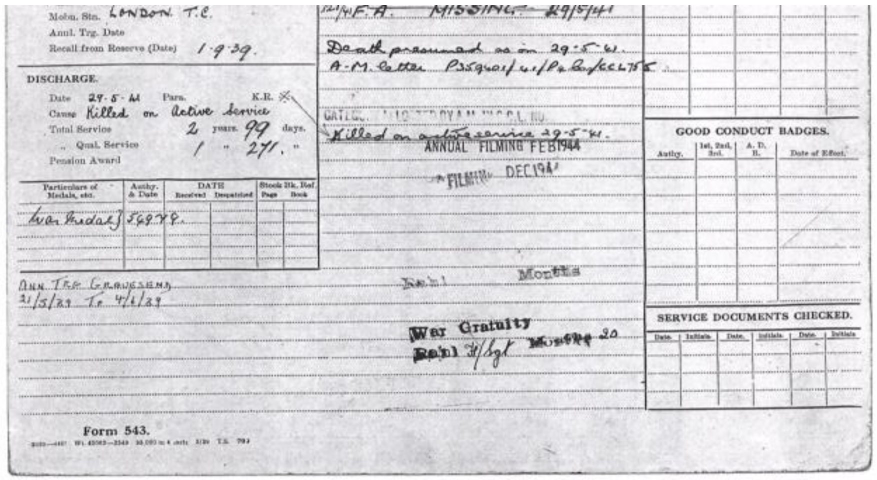
DESCRIPTION.

	Height Feet	Height Ins.	Chest Ins.	Colour of Hair	Colour of Eyes	Colour of Comp.	Marks, Scars, etc.
On Entry	5	8	33	Red	Blu	Fsh	
„ Extn.							
„ Re-en.							
„ Transf.							

HOME ADDRESS. (To be entered in pencil). Canning Town E.16

TRANSFER TO RESERVE.

MISCELLANEOUS.
F47 Medical Board 19.11.40 A1 Bh
F47 " " 7/2/41 (A2b Bh)
1. Below 8,000 feet.
2. Indiv. flights not more than 2 hrs duration.
Total flying per day not more than 4 hrs duration.



Mobn. Stn. LONDON T.C.
Anul. Trg. Date
Recall from Reserve (Date) 1·9·39.

DISCHARGE.
Date 29·5·41 Para. K.R.
Cause Killed on Active Service
Total Service 2 years 99 days.
„ Qual. Service 1 " 271 "
Pension Award

Particulars of Medals, etc.	Authy. & Date	DATE Received	DATE Despatched	Stock Bk. Ref. Page	Stock Bk. Ref. Book
War Medal	54979.				

ANN. TRG. GRAVESEND 21/5/39 To 4/6/39

F.A. MISSING 29/5/41
Death presumed as on 29·5·41.
A.M. letter P359401/41/P4 Cas/KCL 755.
Killed on active service 29-5-41.
ANNUAL FILMING FEB1944
FILMING DEC1944
Months
War Gratuity
F/Sgt Months 20

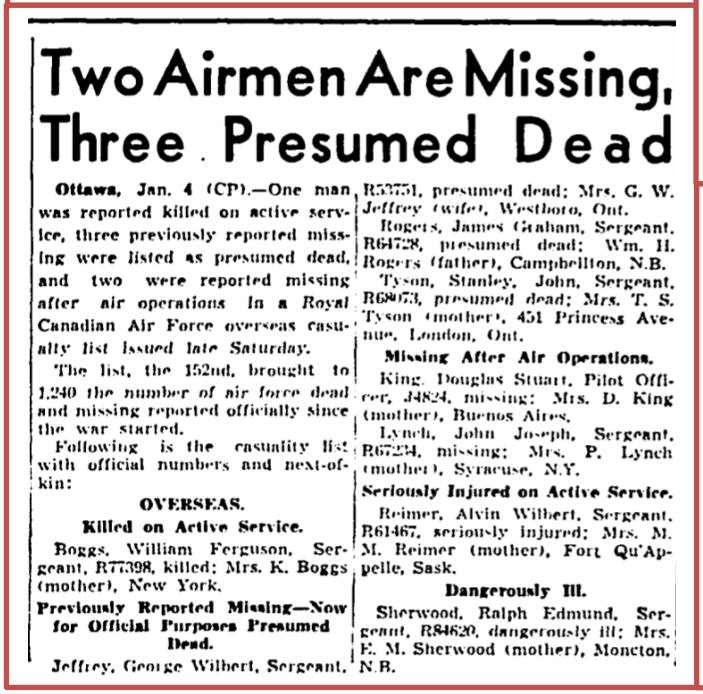
GOOD CONDUCT BADGES.
Authy. 1st, 2nd, 3rd. A. D. B. Date of Effect.

SERVICE DOCUMENTS CHECKED.
Date. Initials. Date. Initials. Date. Initials.

Form 543.

Air Battles Take Further Toll

Sgt. G. W. Jeffrey, Westboro, Ont. (Presumed Dead) | Sgt. S. J. Tyson, London, Ont. (Presumed Dead) | P.O. D. S. King, Buenos Aires. (Missing) | Sgt. J. J. Lynch, Syracuse, N.Y. (Missing)



Two Airmen Are Missing, Three Presumed Dead

Ottawa, Jan. 4 (CP).—One man was reported killed on active service, three previously reported missing were listed as presumed dead, and two were reported missing after air operations in a Royal Canadian Air Force overseas casualty list issued late Saturday.

The list, the 152nd, brought to 1,240 the number of air force dead and missing reported officially since the war started.

Following is the casualty list with official numbers and next-of-kin:

OVERSEAS.

Killed on Active Service.

Boggs, William Ferguson, Sergeant, R77398, killed; Mrs. K. Boggs (mother), New York.

Previously Reported Missing—Now for Official Purposes Presumed Dead.

Jeffrey, George Wilbert, Sergeant, R53751, presumed dead; Mrs. G. W. Jeffrey (wife), Westboro, Ont.

Rogers, James Graham, Sergeant, R64728, presumed dead; Wm. H. Rogers (father), Campbellton, N.B.

Tyson, Stanley, John, Sergeant, R68073, presumed dead; Mrs. T. S. Tyson (mother), 451 Princess Avenue, London, Ont.

Missing After Air Operations.

King, Douglas Stuart, Pilot Officer, J4824, missing; Mrs. D. King (mother), Buenos Aires.

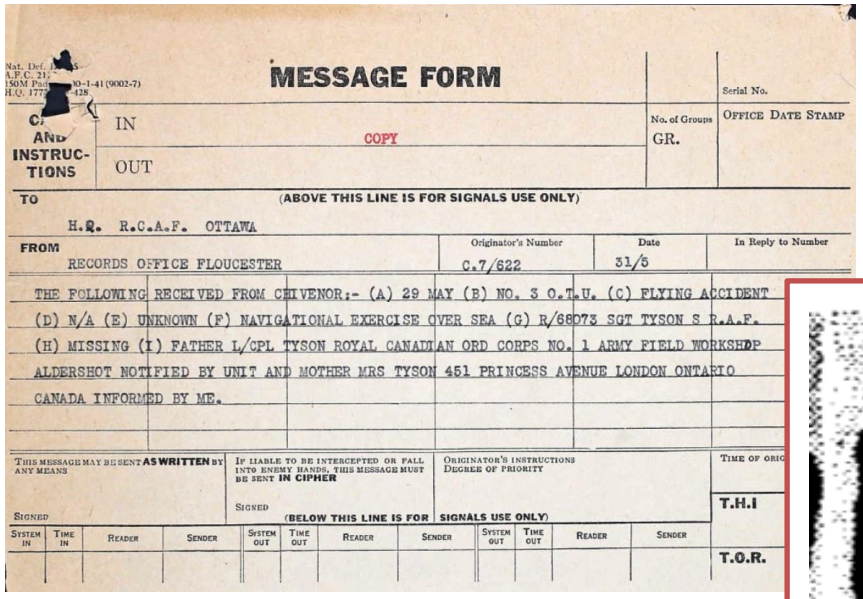
Lynch, John Joseph, Sergeant, R67234, missing; Mrs. P. Lynch (mother), Syracuse, N.Y.

Seriously Injured on Active Service.

Reimer, Alvin Wilbert, Sergeant, R61467, seriously injured; Mrs. M. M. Reimer (mother), Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask.

Dangerously Ill.

Sherwood, Ralph Edmund, Sergeant, R84620, dangerously ill; Mrs. E. M. Sherwood (mother), Moncton, N.B.



MESSAGE FORM

Serial No.

C. AND INSTRUCTIONS — IN / OUT — COPY

No. of Groups GR.

OFFICE DATE STAMP

TO (ABOVE THIS LINE IS FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY)

H.Q. R.C.A.F. OTTAWA

FROM RECORDS OFFICE FLOUCESTER

Originator's Number C.7/622 | Date 31/5 | In Reply to Number

THE FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CHIVENOR:- (A) 29 MAY (B) NO. 3 O.T.U. (C) FLYING ACCIDENT (D) N/A (E) UNKNOWN (F) NAVIGATIONAL EXERCISE OVER SEA (G) R/68073 SGT TYSON S R.A.F. (H) MISSING (I) FATHER L/CPL TYSON ROYAL CANADIAN ORD CORPS NO. 1 ARMY FIELD WORKSHOP ALDERSHOT NOTIFIED BY UNIT AND MOTHER MRS TYSON 451 PRINCESS AVENUE LONDON ONTARIO CANADA INFORMED BY ME.

THIS MESSAGE MAY BE SENT AS WRITTEN BY ANY MEANS

IF LIABLE TO BE INTERCEPTED OR FALL INTO ENEMY HANDS, THIS MESSAGE MUST BE SENT IN CIPHER

ORIGINATOR'S INSTRUCTIONS DEGREE OF PRIORITY

TIME OF ORIG

T.H.I

SIGNED

SIGNED

(BELOW THIS LINE IS FOR SIGNALS USE ONLY)

SYSTEM IN	TIME IN	READER	SENDER	SYSTEM OUT	TIME OUT	READER	SENDER	SYSTEM OUT	TIME OUT	READER	SENDER

T.O.R.

Above Left – Photographs (poor quality sadly) of four Canadian Airmen, including Stanley TYSON, who had lost their lives recently.

Left – A newspaper report of the loss of Sgt. TYSON.

Above – The telex message form sent to R.C.A.F. Headquarters in Ottawa.

Right – Sgt S. J. TYSON, R.C.A.F.

Courtesy of: The Canadian Virtual War Memorial.

Y S. J. TYSON

Above Left – Sgt C. R. BATEMAN.
Above Centre – Sgt BATEMAN, as a newly qualified Sergeant WOp/AG
Above Right – Sgt James CHRISTIE on his wedding day.

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www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

Robert PALMER, M.A.

Published by: The Author.