

LANCASTER

R5679

LOST

25th September 1942

Grønhøj Denmark



Researched by:
**David Geddes, Anders Straarup,
Michael Brewser**
into the history of **R5679**



Sgt Lewis Wilson Morrison (Pilot)



Sgt. Cedric Nils Coldicott
(Flight Engineer)



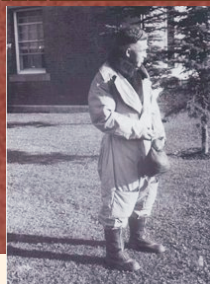
F/Sgt. John Alvin Duffield
(Navigator)



Sgt. Alexander McGee Cormack
(Air Bomber)



Sgt. Edwin Dyson
(Wireless Op)



F/Sgt. William Young Emerslund
(Mid Gunner)



Sgt. Thomas Ralph Bevan
(Rear Gunner)

Lancaster R5679 QR-O



R5679 after 19/8/42 where she sustained flak damage - courtesy of Allan Turner of Colorado

61 Squadron, Syerston Nottinghamshire

Crew: R5679 Lancaster QR-O

Designation	Name	Age:	Service Number:	Date*	Location:
Pilot	Sgt. L.W. Morrison	27	656649 RAFVR	Jan 1939	Transfers from Army
Flight Engineer	Sgt. C. N. Coldicott	22	570285 RAF	Jan 1926	Aircraft Apprentices
Observer/Navigator	F/Sgt. J. A. Duffield (RCAF)	21	R/68670 RCAF		
Air Bomber	Sgt. A. McGee Cormack	34	1290672 RAFVR	May 1940	Uxbridge, Gloucester and Penarth
Wireless Op	Sgt. E. Dyson	20	1059428 RAFVR	Sep 1939	Padgate
Air Gunner (mid)	F/Sgt. W.Y. Emerslund (RCAF)	22	R/92023 RCAF		
Air Gunner (rear)	Sgt. T. R. Bevan	19	1317942 RAFVR	Nov 1940	Oxford

*Batch Number Commencement of induction not actual



Sgt Lewis Wilson Morrison
(pilot) R5679



Sgt Alexander McGee Cormack



Sgt Thomas Ralph Bevan



Ft. Sgt William (Bill) Emerslund



Ft. Sgt John (Jack) Alvin Duffield

R5679 History:

AVRO LANCASTER MARK I

Second production batch of 200 ordered from A.V. Roe & Co. Ltd., as part of Contract No. B69274/40 under Works Order No. 7671, Newton Heath, Manchester. R5482-R5517, R5537-R5576, R5603-R5640, R5658-R5703, and R5724-R5763. Deliveries commenced 2-42; completed, 7-42 (average rate of production ten aircraft per week.) Many aircraft surviving in 1943, had the Merlin XX engines replaced by Merlin XXIIIs.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Bremen, 25/26-6-42; | 13) Karlsruhe, 2/3-9-42; |
| 2) Bremen, 27/28-6-42; | 14) Bremen, 4/5-9-42; |
| 3) Bremen, 29/30-6-42; | 15) Duisburg, 6/7-9-42; |
| 4) Bremen, 2/3-7-42; | 16) Düsseldorf, 10/11-9-42; |
| 5) Wilhelmshaven, 8/9-7-42; | 17) Bremen, 13/14-9-42; |
| 6) Danzig, 11-7-42, Dusk; | 18) Munich, 19/20-9-42; |
| 7) U-boat patrol from St. Eval, 26-7-42; | 19) Gardening, Baltic, 24/25-9-42 (Missing). |
| 8) Saarbrücken, 29/30-7-42; | Crew: |
| 9) Dusseldorf, 1/2-8-42; | Sgt. L.W. Morrison, |
| 10) Atlantic patrol 13-8-42; | Sgt. C. N. Coldicott, |
| 11) Atlantic Patrol, 16-8-42; | F/Sgt. J. E. Duffield, |
| 12) Attacked enemy blockade runner | Sgt. E. Dyson, |
| Corruna off Spanish coast, 19-8-42 | Sgt. A. McGee Cormack, |
| (damaged by flak; aircraft Captain, F/Sgt. N. F. | F/Sgt. W.Y. Emerslund, |
| Turner); | Sgt. T. R. Bevan. |

R5679 after 19/8/42 where she sustained flak damage - courtesy of Allan Turner of Colorado



R5679 History: ORB

AIR 27 / 577

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Page No. FOUR

Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	References to Appendices
924352. F/S. TIMMINS.			Pilot.	A.403803. SGT. ELLIOTT, P.L. PILOT
547180. SGT. READ.			FLT.ENG.	1180073. SGT. RAWES, D.A. " "
4067708. SGT. NEWMAN.			WT/AG.	A.400843. SGT. STOTT, V.H. NAV. } Posted from 1654
1391262. SGT. GOLDWIN.			AIR BR.	A.400759. SGT. MUNRO, J.R. WT/AG.
1100006. SGT. MARTIN.			AIR-GNR.	A.404857. SGT. MCCARTHY, P.E. AIR BR. } Con Unit w.e.f.
1215470. SGT. ATKIN.			" "	R. 97634. SGT. SMITH, G.A. A.G. } 7/9/42.
1167741. SGT. REAGHER.			PILOT.	A.400567. SGT. FERRIGNON, T.P. A.G. }
1178907. SGT. SOUTHALL, E.			A.OBS.	1218956. SGT. HARRIOTT. FLT/ENG
R.92305. SGT. MARSHALL, D.			WT/AG.	1125075. SGT. GOULDING, G.E. NAV. } Posted from 61
1354388. SGT. HAWKER, E.J.			AIR BR.	1331030. SGT. HALL, S.J. A.G.
R.78547. SGT. CUDDINGTON, L.			AIR GR.	1385700. SGT. WEEDEN, J. A.G. } Con. Flt. w.e.f.
1335642. SGT. HARMETT, N.W.			" "	10/9/42.
622613. SGT. BAKER, W.G.			PILOT.	1585069. SGT. BARTHOLOMEW, E. A.G. }
1208560. SGT. LASHLEY, F.A.			FLT.ENG.	1348105. SGT. COURT, R. A.G. } Posted from
N2404561. F/S. GRANT, N.J.			NAV.	1475338. SGT. CRAWSHAW, R. A.G. } 4. Con Flt. wef.
1310565. SGT. BROWN, A.L.			AIR BR.	1397292. SGT. DELEON, G.W. A.G. }
1108949. SGT. HAWDEN, J.			WT/AG.	1600577. SGT. WHITE, E. A.G. } 11/9/42.
1310159. SGT. STEAD, E.			" "	
982667. SGT. RANKIN, H.			A.C.	778906. SGT. BUCKLAND, A.G. A.G. } Posted from 44. Sqdn
912096. F/S. HOBSON, P.			PILOT.	1076033. SGT. CATLIN, E.W. AIR GR. } wef. 11/9/42.
019006. SGT. HILL, A.			FLT.ENG.	1238468. SGT. DAVIES, M.G. PILOT.
A402282. SGT. THOMAS, L.W.			NAV.	1208560. SGT. LASHLEY, F.A. FLT.ENG.
1412526. SGT. PAIRMANIS, P.H.			WT/AG.	R.85445. SGT. BLAIR, J.L. AIR BR. } Posted to No.1 RAF DEPOT UXBRIDGE W.E.F. 11/9/42.
1058416. SGT. BERTON, W.T.			" "	R. 92307. SGT. KIDSON, F.W. WT/AG.
R.70975. SGT. YATES, A.G.			" "	R.64893. SGT. MOHELAN, A.B. A.G. }
R.59555. SGT. WOOLGAR, J.H.			" "	
A.403292. SGT. OWEN, P.R.B.			PILOT.	A.403669. SGT. HOWARTH, A.N. PILOT.
807161. SGT. THOMPSON, T.			FLT.ENG.	571887. SGT. THORPE, S. FLT.ENG. }
A.403276. SGT. MCLEAN, D.T.			WT/AG.	A.404657. SGT. ROBERTSON, I.R. NAV. } Posted from 1654
1181510. SGT. SADE, A.G.			" "	A.401236. SGT. GYLES, N.R. WT/AG. } Con Unit w.e.f.
611268. SGT. PRESTON, J.			A.G.	R. 85806. SGT. MIX, R.D. A. BR. } 12/9/42.
1262786. SGT. GAME, H.E.			PILOT.	1385055. SGT. JUDY, G.E. A.G. }
512849. SGT. SCATTERGOOD, H.			FLT.ENG.	R. 119531. SGT. MOORE, P.G. A.G. }
1381570. SGT. GYMBALIST, N.H.			NAV.	1293412. SGT. EDWARDS, C.G. NAV. }
1187564. SGT. HAMBLETT, L.S.W.			WT/AG.	1382386. SGT. ZELLY, C.W. A.BR. } Posted from
656649. SGT. MORRISON, L.W.			PILOT.	1285295. SGT. MOORE, J.R. WT/AG. } 1654 Con Unit
570285. SGT. COLDICOTT, C.N.			FLT.ENG.	943902. SGT. TURTLE, R. A.G. } wef. 19/9/42.
R.68670 F/S. DUFFIELD, J.A.			NAV.	1315894. SGT. MATTICK, S.R. A.G. }
1059428. SGT. DYSON, E.			WT/AG.	
4465338. SGT. WALKER, P.F.			AIR BR.	
1317942. SGT. BEVAN, T.R.			AIR GR.	
R.92023. SGT. EMERSLUND, W.Y.			" "	

656649. SGT. MORRISON, L.W. PILOT.
 570285. SGT. COLDICOTT, C.N. FLT.ENG.
 R.68670 F/S. DUFFIELD, J.A. NAV. } Posted from 61 Con Flt w.e.f. 22/9/42.
 1059428. SGT. DYSON, E. WT/AG.
 4465338. SGT. WALKER, P.F. AIR BR.
 1317942. SGT. BEVAN, T.R. AIR GR.
 R.92023. SGT. EMERSLUND, W.Y. " "

656649. SGT. MORRISON, L.W. PILOT.
 570285. SGT. COLDICOTT, C.N. FLT.ENG.
 R.68670 F/S. DUFFIELD, J.A. NAV. } Posted from 61 Con Flt w.e.f. 22/9/42.
 1059428. SGT. DYSON, E. WT/AG.
 4465338. SGT. WALKER, P.F. AIR BR.
 1317942. SGT. BEVAN, T.R. AIR GR.
 R.92023. SGT. EMERSLUND, W.Y. " "

656649 Sgt. MORRISON L. V. PILOT
 570285 Sgt. COLDICOTT C. N. FLT. ENG.
 R.68670 F/Sgt. DUFFIELD J. A. NAV
 1059428 Sgt. DYSON E. WT/AG Posted from 61 con Flt w.e.f. 22/942
 1165338 Sgt. WALKER P. F. AIR BR (posted from 61 conversion flight with effect from 22/9/42)
 1317942 Sgt. BEVAN T. R. AIR GR
 R.92023 Sgt. EMERSLUND W. Y. AIR GR

R5679 Crew posted to 61 squadron on the 22nd of September 1942 interestingly Sgt P. F. Walker was not on the crew for the 25th September mission his place taken by Sgt A. M. Cormack

R5679 History: previous pilot

YEAR 1942		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.				DAY	PILOT	DEAL	PILOT	DEAL
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD							28 31	19 50			79
JULY	19	LANCASTER	5605	SELF	CREW 6	SYERSTON TO ST. EVAL					
JULY	23	LANCASTER	5605	SELF	CREW 6	ATLANTIC ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL (14 x 250 DC)					
JULY	26	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	ATLANTIC ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL (14 x 250 DC)					
JULY	28	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	ST. EVAL TO SYERSTON					
JULY	29	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	OPS - SAARBRÜCKEN (1x4000 : 6x500 : 2x214)					
JULY	31	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	OPS - DÜSSELDORF (1x4000 : 6x500 : 2x214)					
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Summary for JULY 1942 Unit 61. SODN Date 31.8.42 Signature Norman J. Turner </div>							Aircraft Types: 1. LANCASTER 2. 3. 4.				
GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]							28 31	19 50			79
562 Hrs. 55 Mins.							TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD				

YEAR 1942		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.				DAY	PILOT	DEAL	PILOT	DEAL
TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD							28 31	19 50			79
AUG	13	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	CONVOY ESCORT (12x500 DC. 2x500 N/A)					
AUG	16	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL (14 x 500 DC)					
AUG	19	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	SHIPPING STRIKE 10000 AUXMARK CLASS TANKER (7x 500 GUP. (2 N/A))					
AUG	21	LANCASTER	5679	SELF	CREW 6	ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL (14 x 500 DC.)					
AUG	22	LANCASTER		W/C FORSYTHE	SELF	ST. EVAL TO SYERSTON					
AUG	24	LANCASTER	4186	SELF	CREW 6	OPERATIONS - FRANKFURT (1x4000 : 10 x 500)					
AUG	24	LANCASTER	4186	SELF	CREW 6	N.F.T. & BEAM TEST					
AUG	25	LANCASTER	5724	SELF	CREW 6	N.F.T. & BEAM TEST					
AUG	27	LANCASTER	5724	SELF	CREW 6	OPERATIONS - KASSEL (1x4000 : 10 500)					
GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]							28 31	19 50			79 50
609 Hrs. 05 Mins.							TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD				

Sergeant Lewis Wilson Morrison (Pilot R5679)



Sergeant (Pilot) Lewis Wilson Morrison, 27, was the son of Lewis and Jessie Morrison, of Aberdeen. M.A., Hons. United Kingdom. (Source: CWGC) (M A Hons - is a degree from University - " Master of Arts with a Honours level of Achievement" His was a 1st class Honours degree in maths. David Geddes.)



Lewis Wilson Morrison was always known as Wilson within his family. Wilson is a family surname

It is curious that Lewis Wilson Morrison opted to fly in WW2, though initially he volunteered for the Royal Artillery, though it was always his ambition to transfer to pilot training in the RAF. His considerable ability with maths and science may have been behind this choice. His boyhood was spent in Inverurie where his father was a 'gaffer' at the Railway yards, an engineer, who made many of his own tools. I still have some of them. He joined the Boy Scouts and was active with them for many years. Family photos find him at summer camp at both Brig o' Ess near aboyne, and when older near Elgin.

His sporting prowess was playing golf. He had a match set of 'Cochrane's of Edinburgh' clubs which I inherited. His introduction to golf came from both his parents. Jessie and Lewis Morrison both played golf on the Aberdeen Links municipal courses.

He had been the Dux student in two years at Inverurie Academy in 1931 (class IV) and again 1933 (class V) the latter being the final year at school. For both he received inscribed medals, the 1933 medal being solid 9 carat gold. Lewis graduated with First Class Honours in Maths from Aberdeen University in 1937. He held short teaching posts at three Aberdeen schools - Central, Ruthrieston, and Aberdeen Grammar - during the years 1937- 39. He was clearly and ambitiously working his way into the staff list at the top school in Aberdeen. He had a girlfriend at that time, from whom he was parted when he went to war. She is only known to us by her nickname "Dosh".

Lewis was accepted for transfer to the RAF and commenced training to become a pilot. His training postings are revealed from my mother's address books of the time.

2012450 Sapper Morrison LW
656649 AC2 Morrison LW, C Flight No 1 Squadron, No 11 ITW, Cambridge Hotel, Scarborough, Yorkshire.
656649 LAC Morrison LW, A flight No 2 Squadron, 28 Course, SFTS, Lyneham, nr Chippenham, Wiltshire
34 Pilots and Navigators Course. 16 Operational Training Unit (OTU) RAF Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire.
16 OTU Formed at Upper Heyford on 8 April 1940 from the No 4 Group Pool , which comprised No's 7 and 76

Squadrons, within No 6 Group, to train night bomber crews equipped for which it was equipped with Hampdens and Herefords. It was transferred to No 7 Group on 15 July 1940 until 11 May 1942 when No 7 Group was renumbered No 92 Group. It converted to Wellingtons in April 1942 and from March to December its HQ moved to Barford St John whilst runways were laid at Upper Heyford for Lancasters.

While training posted at Upper Heyford, he flew in some of the 1000 bomber raids as second pilot in June 1942. These may have been operational on Wellingtons from Barford St John north of Oxford and close to Banbury. The likelihood of the first of these big raids that he would fly on was in a letter to his sister (my mother) dated 25 June 1942, in which he avoided telling his parents about these raids.

656649 Flt Sgt Morrison LW, 61 Squadron, RAF Syerston, Nottinghamshire. He was posted to 61 Sqn in August or early September 1942. It is probably that the Lancaster conversion course was carried out at Syerston.

John (Jack) Duffield and Lewis spent frequent occasions as guests of Mrs Hamilton, 22 Denby Lane, Codnor, Derbyshire, where the attraction for John Duffield was principally Mrs Hamilton's daughter. The proximity of Syerston to Codnor suggests this friendship seems only likely to have been during the short time Lewis and Jack were flying from Syerston. Lewis seems to have been increasingly attached to a girl named Hilda James who was the NAAFI Manageress. Her address is given as NAAFI, 1786R. RAF, Melksham, Wiltshire.



Sergeant **Lewis Wilson Morrison** (Pilot R5679)

Lewis wrote to my mother, leading her to believe that Hilda, -"was the one".

In the same address book is found the address of Jack Duffield's mother, Mrs C E Duffield , 222 South marks Street, Fort William, Ontario, Canada.

Lewis said of Jack when writing to my mother, "That he (Lewis) moved heaven and hell to have Jack fly with him (at 61 Sqn), as he was the only navigator who always delivered him perfectly on target ." This appears to contradict the opinion held by some in Denmark that the last flight of R5679 was likely to have been off course, to have found itself so close to the known German airfield at Karup Grove.

It is clear that both my mother and my grandmother wrote to the addresses of Hilda James, Mrs Duffield and Ms Hamilton. After the war there are photographs taken at the graves in Frederikshavn prior to Portland stone gravestones being placed. These are marked from Ralph Bevan's mother. None of this correspondence has survived.



Sergeant Cedric Nils Coldicott (Flight Engineer)

Sergeant (Flight Engineer) Cedric Nils Coldicott, 22, was the son of Reginald John and Olga Coldicott, of Sparkhill, Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Sgt Cedric Nils Coldicott. Flight Engineer.

Cedric Nils was the son of Reginald John Coldicott and Olga Neuendam. The Coldicotts were Gloucestershire folk and are easily traced back to a long family history at the quaintly named tiny village of Cow Honeybourne, a few miles from Evesham, Gloucestershire. Reginald during his life worked as a railway clerk and dental assistant. He served in the Somerset Light Infantry from December 1915 to May 1918

Other members of the family were settled in the picturesque Bourton on the Water, Chipping Campden and Long Marston. Olga was the daughter of Johannes Niels Peter Neuendam, originally from the Copenhagen district. She died in 1986 in Somerset. So Cedric Nils gives the crew of R5679 a direct link to Denmark and her people.

He was educated at the Moseley School near Birmingham and is commemorated on their web pages. Cedric Nils had a sister Florence Coldicott, who may have lived beyond 2000. Olga had a sister Jella, and Reginald had two sisters, Ida Kathleen who married Sidney Elson and Edith May. Perhaps through the descendents of those relatives we may yet re-establish contact with the Coldicott family.



Flight Sergeant John Alvin Duffield (Navigator)



Flight Sergeant (Navigator) John Alvin Duffield was from Canada.

Sgt John Alvin Duffield. Navigator.

John was always known as Jack. His parents were Charles Emms Duffield and Leticia Priscilla Russell. They lived in what is alternatively described as Thunder Bay, and Fort William, Ontario, Canada. These are in fact one and the same place, now a considerable city, on the north shore of Lake Superior. Jack was one of the youngest of eight children born between about 1900 and 1926.

European settlement in the region began in the late 17th century with a French fur trading outpost on the banks of the Kaministiquia River. It grew into an important transportation hub with its port forming an important link in the shipping of grain and other products from western Canada through the Great Lakes and the Saint Lawrence Seaway to the east coast. Forestry and manufacturing played important roles in the city's economy.

Jack and Lewis Morrison were firm friends throughout their RAF training. They worked together and socialized together. Lewis wrote home about his friendship with Jack. They knew each others girlfriends. There was post war correspondence between the two bereaved families. Lewis stated in letters home that Jack was the only navigator who unerringly delivered them onto an exact target during bombing training and training operations over Germany. Jack called Lewis 'Red' on account of the family hair colour. The name stuck. Lewis moved heaven and earth of have Jack fly with him on QR-O R5679.

Jack's Great-Grandfather William originated in Great Holland in Essex , UK. His grandfather Samuel emigrated to Ontario and married Martha Ann Emms who was born in the USA. The parents of Jack's mother originated in Donegal, Ireland arriving in Canada before 1880.

The unusual forename 'Alvin' came from his older cousin George Alvin Jones. George was one of the children of Jack's Aunt - his mother's sister Ellen Russell, who married Alfred Jackson Jones. George Alvin Jones was killed with the Canadian Forces, just south of Bethune, in the former province of Artois, France on 28 Dec 1917, just before the town was utterly destroyed in the German Ludendorff offensive of Spring 1918. It follows that Jack must have been born shortly after that, making him about 23 when he was killed over Denmark.

'Jack' aka John Alvin Duffield who was RCAF is commemorated on the Canadian War Remembrance web pages.



Sergeant Alexander McGee Cormack (Air Bomber)



Sergeant (Air Bomber) Alexander McGee Cormack, 34, was the son of Robert Cormack and of Margaret Cormack (née McGee), and the husband of Gladys Evelyn Cormack, United Kingdom.



Sgt Alexander McGee Cormack. Bomb Aimer. Alex was born on the 27th April 1908. He was the oldest and most experienced person aboard Lancaster R5679. Alex was born at home 7 Braid Place in Edinburgh. This street which has been renamed Sciennes House Place is situated between The Meadows and Causewayside. The house was a retained rental belonging to the Edinburgh Fire Service where his father Robert served as a Fire Lieutenant. Robert was born at Keiss in the north east of Caithness. His father was a shoemaker and sometime blacksmith. Alex's mother was Margaret nee McGee. Margaret worked as a servant at Orlig House in Caithness before her marriage to Robert in the Melville Hotel, Nicholson Street in Edinburgh.

Orlig House was in part designed by the notable Edinburgh architect David Bryce. It is described as a delightful, idiosyncratic, boldly gabled, steep pitched roofed building with wide overhanging eaves and many decorative features, including a bull's eye window. Built for James Smith Esq, it was inherited by Major Alec Smith, the son of James Smith Esquire, who married the daughter of the Church of Scotland Minister, Isobel Gibson, both of whom were described as 'flighty'. The house was sold to the Keith family of Thurso who owned the house from 1913-1946. They were solicitors and sheriffs. Some of the views that shaped the principles of Robert, Margaret and Alex may have come from those times.

Alex had a sister whom he never knew. Christina was born in Edinburgh in 1900 but died in infancy. Alex did however have a brother George who was born in the Fire Dept premises at Lauriston Place, Edinburgh. George grew to become a teacher of gymnastics in Edinburgh at the time he married Nora Skinner in 1931. He appears to have lived until 1984, and if he had children, it is with them, only, that any connection to events in Grohoj might be someday made.

Alex seems to have been a man of considerable humanity and conscience. It is thought that he may have joined the International Brigade in Scotland to fight the fascists in the Spanish Civil War. Many did, fought and died. His wish appears to have been to train as a Minister of the Church. Hailing from Caithness, it is not a surprise that he was a member of the more severe form of Scottish protestantism – the Free

Church. Alex appears to have changed career direction towards medicine when he met Gladys, who in her war time photo is wearing the single stripe of a Lance Corporal military nurse.

The war intervened and Alex appears to have trained in the USA as a navigator, though it seems he retrained as a Bomb aimer. If we are left with a lasting impression of Alex, whom none of us knew, it is of a highly principled man who was even at the age of 34, as yet undecided on his eventual career path. He was drafted onto the crew of R5679 for the night of 24/25 Sept 1942.

Sergeant **Alexander McGee Cormack** (Air Bomber)

Email article written by Kev35 from key aviation forum. In September of 1942, Sergeant Alexander McGee Cormack failed to return from a gardening Operation. A few years ago I met his widow and had many conversations with her. Alex was her only love, she never remarried and she pioneered District Midwifery in Scotland, where Alex was born.

A quiet, studious and introspective man, Gladys told me he had been initially drawn to the Cloth and to that end went to Theological College. He was never ordained as a Priest. Gladys intimated, but never confirmed, that he had been in Spain at some point during the Spanish Civil War.

What is known is that Alex transferred his energies to Medicine and it is at this juncture that they met, Gladys being a Student Nurse. They fell in love and must have been a striking couple. Alex had film star looks and Gladys was a tall elegant woman, even into her eighties.

The War intervened and Alex, from a background in Theology and Medicine joined the RAF. Not in a medical capacity, he wanted to fly. I know he spent some time in Florida as part of his training and that he sailed back from Miami. He was qualified as a Navigator but at OTU he cross trained as a Bomb Aimer, and it was in this aircrew category that he was finally posted to 61 Squadron at Syerston in July or August of 1942. Sometime after he returned from America, Gladys and Alex were married.

Sadly, with Gladys working in London and Alex at OTU in Scotland their only home was the Hotels of London for 48 or 72 hours at a time. Alex was offered a Commission but refused it on the grounds that the expense of living in the Mess and the uniform would have seriously damaged his ability to visit his wife. I don't know how many Operations he was on but suspect it to be little more than a handful. Shortly before his death he applied for a Commission. Gladys told me that it was because he believed that if he was killed Gladys would receive a higher pension as an Officer's wife. I suspect this to be the case.

Less than a week before his death, Alex wrote letters, to Gladys, some friends in the Army, a friend from back home in Scotland and then his Parish Priest. You hear stories of many airmen having premonitions but Alex seems to have been very meticulous in putting his affairs in order. The premonition must have been a strong one. I saw these entries in a battered Letts diary for 1942. This, along with all of his belongings was disposed of after Gladys died.

In the early morning of September 25th, 1942, Alex's Lancaster was attacked by a Night Fighter and crashed in flames near Gronhoj in Denmark. All of the crew were interred in Denmark and their graves are tended by the Danish People.

Just seven deaths among the 55,000 men of Bomber Command who gave their lives, and yet Alexander McGee Cormack fascinates me. What were the motives that set a Theologian on the course to becoming a Doctor of Medicine? Did he really go to Spain and was it something he experienced there that made him want to be a Doctor? And what then turned a man who was dedicated to the saving of life at its most human level to being a Bomb Aimer in a Lancaster over Denmark?

I know I shall never know the answers to these questions, or the questions you could ask about any of his 55,000 colleagues. I do know that the world is a better place for the sacrifice he and his colleagues made and that my world is poorer for not having had the opportunity to meet him.



Flight Sergeant **Edwin Dyson** (Wireless Operator)

Flight Sergeant (Wireless Operator / Air Gunner) Edwin Dyson, 20, was the son of Arthur and Lily Dyson, of Hillsborough, Sheffield, United Kingdom.

Sgt Edwin Dyson. Wireless Operator/ Air Gunner.

Edwin Dyson is known to be the son of Arthur Dyson and Lily Williams of Hillsbrough, Sheffield England, both born in 1874. He had an elder sister Amy, born in 1908.

The Dyson family have not left many clues as to their history. It is confusing that there are two Arthur Dysons born in 1874 in Northamptonshire, England, both chronicled in various family trees.

Arthur and Lily may have emigrated to the USA in the early 1920s. For his parents to have an address in Sheffield during the war suggests, if so, that they returned. The Arthur and Lily Dyson that emigrated were living in Bordentown, Burlington, New Jersey between 1920 and 1940, but not beyond.

Lily appears to land in the USA in 1897. There is a son Thomas B Dyson who does not show in English records. Edwin was the wireless operator. R 5679 did not have a mid belly gun position, this was built into some MkII and beyond Lancasters.



Sergeant **William Young Emerslund** (Mid Gunner)



Flight Sergeant (Air Gunner) William Young Emerslund, 22, was the son of Hjalmer August and Edna Young Emerslund, of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Sgt William Young Emerslund. Air Gunner.

Bill Emerslund was a first generation Canadian. His father, Hjalmar August Emerslund, born in 1893, emigrated from Lillehammer, Norway. He married Edna Young Elliot and they had two possibly three children. Bill's sister may have died in infancy. Edna, the youngest, came from a family of 6 daughters and one son, originating in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba, some 50 miles west of Winnipeg. Portage La Prairie is where 6 railway lines meet. It was essential to the development of western Canada.

The area was inhabited by native Americans before European settlers began to arrive prior to 1850. In September of 1738, after the Fur Trade had extended into the West. Edna's great grand-parents Francis and Martha Graham came from Enniskillen in Northern Ireland in the early 1800s. Graham is a Scottish Borders name. The Graham clan was transplanted from Scotland to Ireland on account of its lawlessness and strong protestant beliefs!

Both Hjalmar and Edna lived out their days in Ganges, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, Canada. This is a small community west of Vancouver. It is easy to believe that Hjalmar arrived most likely a fisherman (though perhaps a woodsman), from Norway, and continued those skills in Canada all his life. Hjalmar lived until 1975 and Edna until 1959.

When WW2 was over, there was a move by the Canadian government to name landscape features after the Canadian war casualties. Bill Emerslund is remembered in the naming of two lonely lakes to the north west of the Butler Ridge Provincial Park and south of the Rocky Mountain Provincial Park, in British Columbia.

It is to be hoped that some of the descendants of the Elliot siblings will eventually recognise this story as of 'one of their own'..



Sergeant Thomas Ralph Bevan (Rear Gunner)



Sergeant (Air Gunner) Thomas Ralph Bevan, 19, was the son of John and Annie Bevan, of Pontarddulais, Glamorgan, United Kingdom.



Thomas Ralph Bevan was known to family and friends as Ralph

Ralph's parents meet during the 1914-18 war Jack was with the Medical Corp after the war they settled in Pontarddulais where Jack came from. Annie was originally from Devizes in Wiltshire where there is a large community of relatives to this day.

Jack and Annie Bevan had 2 children Wynn and Ralph, Wynn being the oldest. Ralph was a dare devil once when he worked in the steel mill working with metal sheets through a guillotine he was bet by a fellow worker that he couldn't jump through the guillotine in between the blade going up and down – he took that bet

Ralph was also a very talented musician all he had to do was to hear a piece of music once and he could play it back on the piano.



Ralph on right with unidentified friend whilst in training

Jack would come back absolutely black with dirt from work they had a large metal bath in the front room and when my mother (Marjorie Underwood) came to stay at Ralph's had to shut her eyes when passing through. Annie had a very sharp sense of humour and asked my mother to shut her eyes for a treat then placed a very salty object on her tongue. Although she did give Marjorie a sweet treat afterwards.



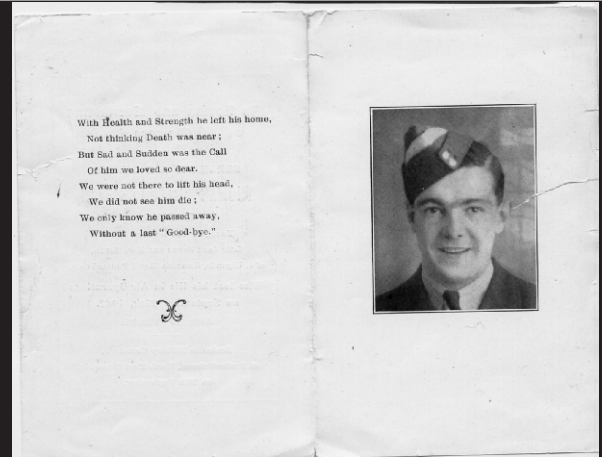
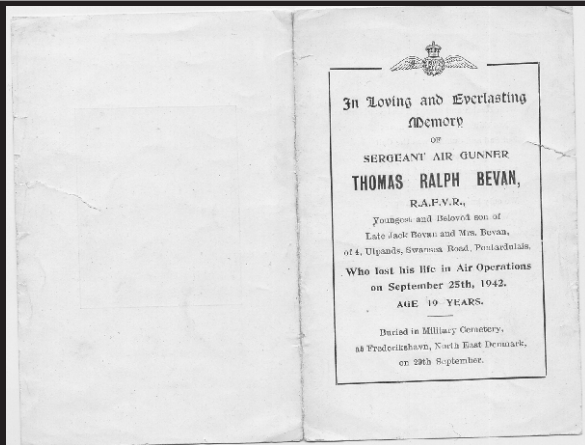
Ralph was engaged to his girlfriend who unfortunately is unidentified. Two years after Ralph's death she contacted Annie to ask permission to see another boy.

Ralph's father was killed during the war rewiring the local village hall. Apparently some one switched on the lights whilst he was working. Having lost her husband Annie needed to have an income so she converted part of their house 4 Uplands, Swansea Road, Pontarddulais into a sweet shop.



Annie Bevan (right) in her sweet shop Pontarddulais

Sergeant Thomas Ralph Bevan (Rear Gunner)



After the crash a picture of was sent to the family of Ralph in his coffin he was stripped and his uniform was laid on top of him.

The loss of R5679 was the only allied aircraft lost that night, Lord Haw Haw broadcasting propaganda for the Nazis mentioned the names of the crew.

Location:

I visited the place back in the spring of 1993 and found quite a bit of corroded structural parts from the aircraft as well as five holes in the ground.

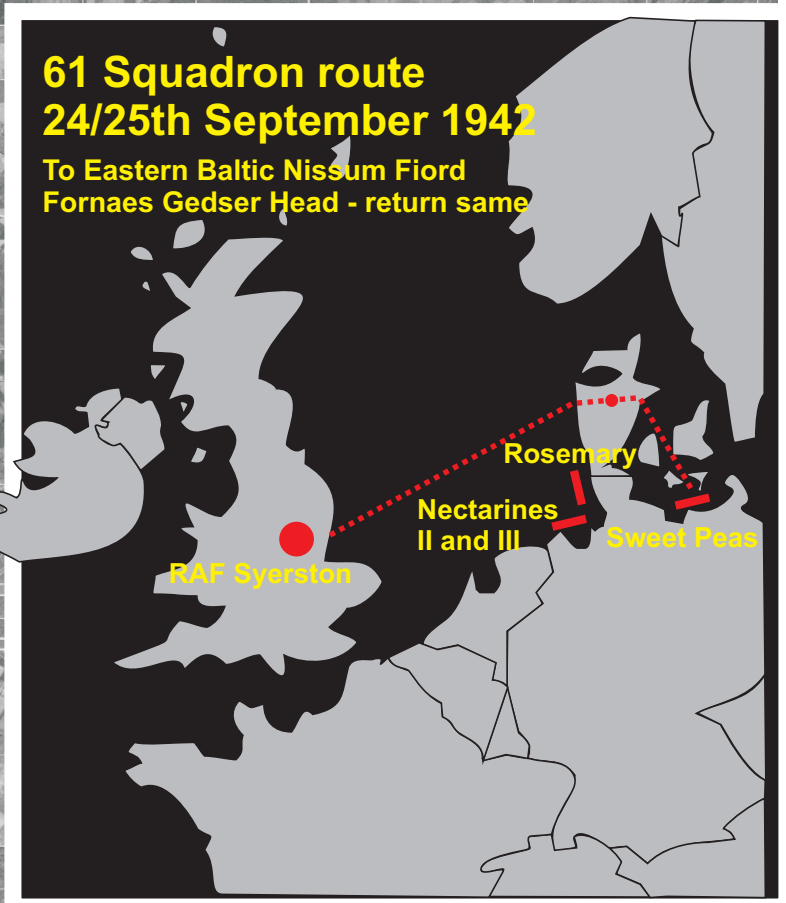
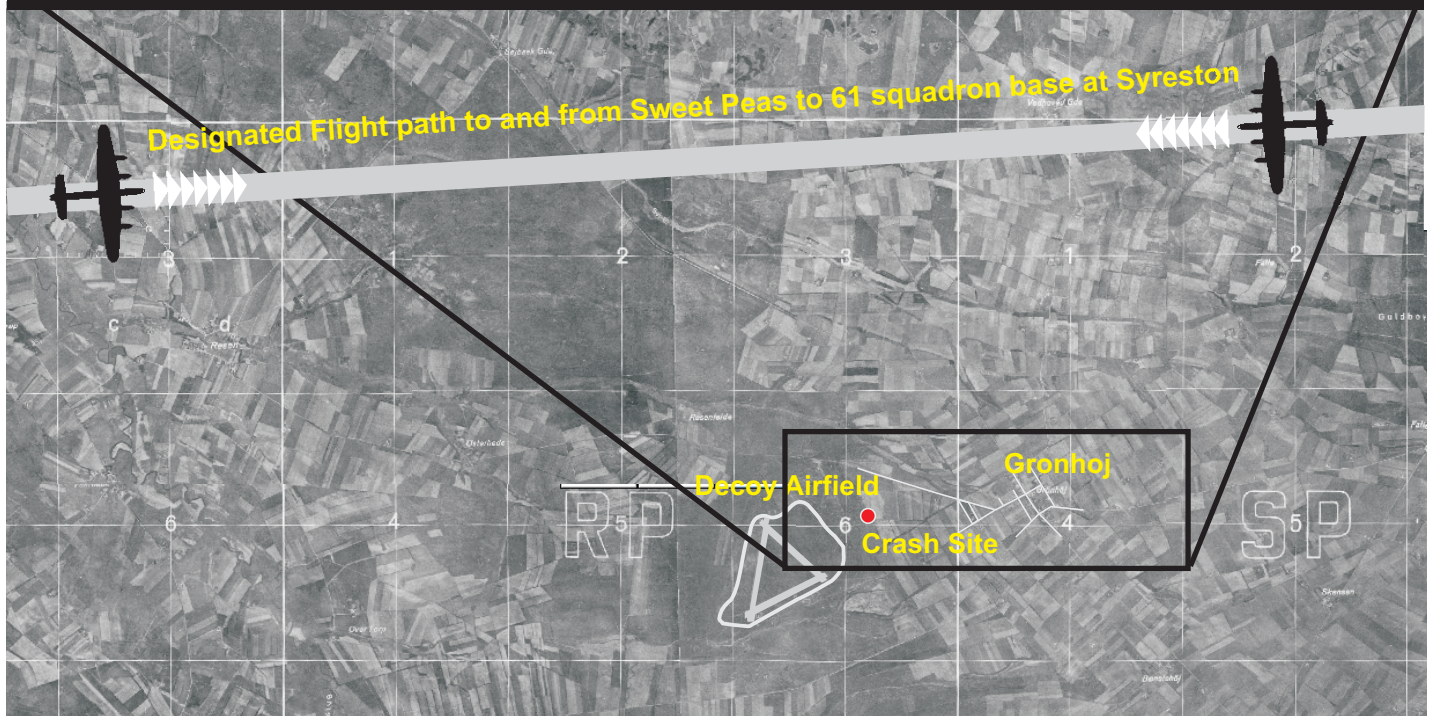
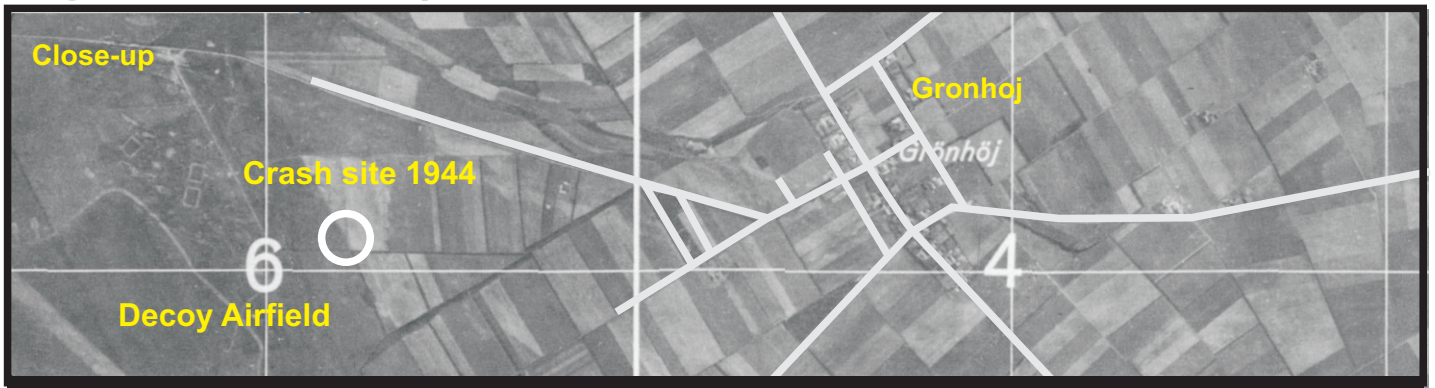
It was then in a plantation.

I can see on Google Earth that the terrain has changed due to a rather bad storm some years ago. The trees has come down and new has been planted.

The position + - three meters is: 56° 21 '55.4 "N 9° 11 '6.61 "W
Regarding the place where Bevan was found: The original report states: Approx 300 meters west of the Gronhoj Inn. It also states: The flyer who carried a parachute was issued with english identity papers. The German Wehrmacht has taken the body away. A total of 7 killed persons from the crashed aircraft has now been found.



Flight Path 61 Squadron Lancaster R5679 and crash site



Extract ORB 61 squadron 24th September 1942

SECRET

W. 3045/104 2004. 101 P.D. L44. 11-111

R.A.F. Form 540 Page No. 100

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

See instructions for use of this form in K.P. and A.C.I. para. 2549 and War Manual, Pt. II, chapter XX, and notes in R.A.F. Pocket Book: No. of pages used for day: _____

of (Unit or Formation) No. 61 SQUADRON

Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	References to Appendices	
Lancaster	24/24th	22.50	R. 5703 Pilot W/O R. L. DEAS	Dropped his bombs and returned to base.	A. 802
			R. 5760 " S/LDR. COOR	returned to base with bomb-load.	A. 803
			R. 5759 " SGT. MEAGHER	Dropped his bombs and returned to base.	A. 804
			R. 4168 " F/Sgt. FERGUSON	detached his bombs and returned to base.	A. 805
			R. 5940 " F/O FROW	Dropped two bombs and returned remainder to base.	A. 806
			R. 5724 " SGT. ELLIOTT	returned to base with bomb-load.	A. 807
			R. 5560 Pilot F/LT. DEAS	Dropped his veg. and returned to base.	A. 808
			R. 5703 " S/LDR. WESTON	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 809
			R. 5910 " F/O FROW	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 810
			R. 4769 " F/O FOSTER	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 811
R. 4762 " W/O LEVER	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 812			
R. 4168 " F/Sgt. STEWART	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 813			
R. 5699 " F/Sgt. FERGUSON	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 814			
R. 4763 " SGT. MEAGHER	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 815			
R. 4192 " SGT. ELLIOTT	" " " " " " " " " " " "	A. 816			
R. 5679 " SGT. MORRISON	Failed to return.	A. 817			
R. 5724 " F/Sgt. CAMPBELL	Dropped his veg. and returned to base.	A. 818			
	26th	23.50	No Operations carried out by the Squadron on this date.		
	27th	23.50	" " " " " " " " " " " "		
	28th	23.50	" " " " " " " " " " " "		
	29th	23.50	" " " " " " " " " " " "		
	30th	23.50	" " " " " " " " " " " "		
MOVEMENT OF PERSONNEL - AIR CREW - NO. 61 SQUADRON - OFFICERS					
19077. S/O. D.S. FOSTER. G.D.	Reported missing after Operational Flight on 2/9/42 and posted to No. 1 RAF DEPOT UNDERIDGE				
113415. F/O. A.L. FOSTER. G.D.	w.o.f. same date.				
C. CHYLOR. NAV.					
116952. F/O. H.O. PEEL. W/AG.					
121571. F/O. A.M. MURRAY. A.O.	Posted from No. 61 Con Flt. w.o.f. 4/9/42.				
100087. F/O. B.G. FROW. G.D.	Posted from No. 61 Con Flt. w.o.f. 10/9/42.				
A.409224. F/O. C.R. WILLIAMS. W/AG.					
J.15707. F/O. H.B. HAY. NAV.	Posted to 10(0) A.F.U. w.o.f. 15/9/42.				
39500. S/L. W.D. COOR. G.D.	Posted from 1654 Con Unit w.o.f. 19/9/42.				
AIRMEN					
924352. F/S. TIMINS. Pilot.					

100
 53

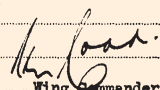
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
 AIR 27/577
 COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Extract ORB September 24/25th 61 Squadron

Date	Time	Place	Rank	Name	Summary of Events	Reference
24/25th	19.25hrs	Lancaster	Pilot	F/Lt Deas	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.808
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	S/Ldr Weston	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.809
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	F/O Frow	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.810
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	P/O Foster	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.811
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	W/O Lever	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.812
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	F/Sgt Stewart	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.813
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	F/Sgt Ferguson	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.814
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	Sgt Meagher	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.815
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	Sgt Elliott	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.816
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	Sgt Morrison	Failed to return	A.817
	"	Lancaster	Pilot	F/Sgt Campbell	Dropped his veg and returned to base	A.818

Accounts of R5724 and R5679 24th September 1942

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK							
DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT							
		By: NO. 61 SQUADRON.		SECRET		PAGE NO. NINE.	
(7472) Wg. 24229/1650. 180m. 8/40. P.I. 51-7751.		FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1942.					
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES.
				Up	Down		
/25th	LANCASTER R. 5679.	SGT. L.W. MORRISON. SGT. C.N. CALDICOTT. F/SGT. J.B. DUFFIELD. SGT. E. DYSON. SGT. A.M. MCCORMACK. SGT. W.Y. EMERSLUND. SGT. T.R. BEVAN.	CAPTAIN. FLT. ENG. NAV. 1ST W.O.P. AIR BR. 1ST A.G. 2ND A.G.	19.50	-	Nothing more was heard of SGT. MORRISON's aircraft after take off.	A.817.
	LANCASTER R. 5724.	F/SGT. P. CAMPBELL. SGT. L. D. GUNNELL. SGT. E.H. CORBETT. SGT. C.H. COAKLEY. SGT. F.C. BUNCLARK. SGT. S. SMITH. SGT. S.J. THOMPSON.	CAPTAIN. 2ND PILOT. NAV. 1ST W.O.P. AIR BR. 1ST A.G. 2ND A.G.	20.20	04.30	F/SGT. CAMPBELL proceeded to the garden and dropped his veg. in the allotted position. On returning over VIBORG he was fired at, and the flak commenced a fire inside the aircraft. At the same time another burst hit the nose of the aircraft blowing in the bombardiers window, and blew all the glass out of the cockpit. Two fighters which had been following then closed in and started to shoot up the aircraft, wounding the rear gunner and the mid-upper gunner. The aircraft stalled and the pilot regained control at 4,000 ft. He dived for cloud and lost the fighters. During the return which was very cold the injured men were attended by the crew, and F/SGT. CAMPBELL and SGT. GUNNELL the two pilots flew the aircraft safely back to base in spite of the fact that all the instruments were U/S, and the cockpit was open. SGT. COAKLEY obtained QDMs and eventually a successful belly landing was made at WITTERING. F/SGT. CAMPBELL received an immediate commission after this trip, and the whole crew received an immediate award of the D.F.M.	A.818


 Wing Commander,
 Commanding,
 No. 61 Squadron.

Lancaster R5724 and R5679 were attacked close to the same point over Denmark by Lt. Karl Heinz Brandes 7./NJG 2 Lancaster Location not entered: height 1.900 metres time 02.13hrs Film C. 2035/II Anerk: Folgt

Lancaster R5724 Took off 20.20hrs landed 04.30hrs Crew:
 F/SGT P. Campbell Captain
 SGT L.D. Gunnell 2nd pilot
 SGT E.H. Corbett Navigator
 SGT F.C. Bunclark Air br
 SGT S. Smith 1st A.G.
 Sgt S.J. Thompson 2nd A.G.

F/Sgt. Campbell proceeded to the garden and dropped his veg. A.818 In the allotted position. On returning over Viborg he was fired at, and the flak commenced a fire inside the aircraft. At the same time another burst hit the nose of the aircraft blowing in the bombardiers window, and blew all the glass out of the cockpit. Two fighters which had been

following then closed in and started to shoot up the aircraft, wounding the rear gunner and mid-upper gunner. The aircraft stalled and the pilot regained control at 4,000ft. He dived for cloud and lost the fighters. During the return which was very cold the injured men were attended by the crew, and F/SGT Campbell and SGT Gunnell the two pilots flew the aircraft safely back to base in spite of the fact that all the instruments were U/S, and the cockpit was open. SGT COAKLEY obtained QDMs and eventually a successful belly landing was made at WITTERING, F/SGT. Campbell received an immediate commission after this trip, and the whole crew received an immediate award of the D.F.M.

Lancaster R5679 Took off 19.50hrs -

Nothing more was heard of SGT. Morrison's aircraft after take off. A.817

Interceptions Report

180/4

INTERCEPTIONS/TACTICS REPORT NO. 160/42.

NIGHT 24/25th SEPTEMBER, 1942.

1. MAIN TARGETS.

	Group	Aircraft Despatched	Attached Target	E/A Attached	E/A Enc.	Other Soon	A/C Missing
MINELAYING	1	20	20 (WELL IV)	20	-	-	-
MINELAYING	5	5	(WELL III)	4	-	-	-
	3	3	(STIR)	3	-	-	-
MINELAYING	5	23	(LANC)	17	-	-	1
		31					1

2. ROUTES.

To Eastern Baltic - Nissun Fiord - Fornos - Codser Head - return same.

3. WEATHER.

5-10/10 cu. and cu.-nim. cloud, base 2,000 ft. tops up to 10,000 ft. with 4-6/10 alto-cumulus above in Frisian and Heligoland Bight area. Showers of rain and hail with much lightning and static, cloud base down to 800/1,000 ft. Showers and storm more violent east of Denmark.

Moon. One day short of full.

4. FLAK/SEARCHLIGHTS/OTHER AIDS TO DEFENCE.

None reported from ships than from land defences. Flak from known defended areas such as Langeoog, Heligoland, Sylt and Danzig was generally slight to moderate.

5. WIRELESS INTELLIGENCE.

Identified night fighter units heard operating were:-

2215/2230	III/NFG4	2 A/C	Juvincourt.
2250/2304	I/NFG1	1 A/C	Vonlo.
0103/0208	I/NFG3	2 A/C	Zwischenahn and an unknown station.
0121/0144	III/NFG2	1 A/C	Crovo.

2. Approximately 9 sorties were flown by controlled night fighters between 2150 and 0315 hours.

3. Three attempted interceptions and two indecisive combats were heard from the Frisian area.

4. A British A/C was claimed to be in flames at 0110 hrs. in an area believed over the North Sea.

6. SUMMARY OF HIS/OWN LOSSES.

Enemy claims. "Night fighters shot down one A/C and several B.M. and patrol boats shot down five British A/C."

<u>Bomber Command.</u>	Total sorties	51
	Missing unaccounted for	1
	Downed by flak	3
	Downed by E/A	-
<u>Coastal Command.</u>	Missing	-
<u>Fighter Command.</u>	Missing (Intruder)	-

/Page 2....

7. APPROX. RISK.

Nothing was heard from the missing aircraft and there is insufficient evidence to suggest a crash of loss.

No route map will be issued.

H.C.S.C.
A.I.R. STAFF.
PC/S.27870/Int.3.
Issued at 1830 hrs. 29th September, 1942.

Interceptions tactics report No 160/42 Night 24/25th September 1942

1. Main targets

	Group	Aircraft Despatched	Attached Target	EA Attached	EA Enc	Other Soon	A/C Missing
Minelaying	1	20 Well IV	20	-	-	-	-
Minelaying	5	5 Well III	4	-	-	-	-
	3	3 Stirl	3	-	-	-	-
Minelaying	5	23 Lanc	17	-	-	-	1

2. Routes

To Eastern Baltic - Nissun Fiord - Fornos - Codser Head - return same

3. Weather

5-10/10 cu. and cu. Nim. Cloud, base 2,000ft tops up to 10,000ft with 4-6/10 Alto-cumulus above in Frisian and Heligoland Bight area. Showers of rain and hail and much lightning and static, cloud base down to 800/1,000ft. Showers and storm more violent east of Denmark.

Moon. One day short of full

Interceptions Report

4. Flak/Search light/ other aids to defence

More opposition was reported from ships than from land defences. Flak from known defended areas such as Lang*oog, Heligoland, Sylt and Danzig was generally slight to moderate.

5. Wireless intelligence

Identified night fighter units heard operating were

2216/2230	III /NJG4	2 A/C	Juvincourt,
2250/2304	I /NJG1	1 A/C	Venlo,
0103/0209	I/NJG3	2 A/C	Zwi*chon*hn and an unknown station
0121/0144	III/NJG2	1 A/C	Crovo

2. Approximately 9 sorties were flown by controlled night fighters between 2150 and 0315 hours

3. Three attempted interceptions and two indecisive combats were heard from the Frisian area.

4. A British A/C was claimed to be in flames at 0110 hours in an area believed to be over the North Sea.

6. Enemy Claims own losses

Enemy Claims. Night fighters shot down one A/C and navel AA and patrol boats shot down five British A/C.

Bomber Command.

Total series 51

Missing unaccounted for 1

Damaged by Flak Damaged by E/A –

Coastal Command Missing –

Fighter Command Missing (intruder) –

7. Appreciation.

Nothing was heard from the missing aircraft and this is insufficient evidence to suggest a cause of loss.

No route map will be issued.

H.Q.B.C

AIR STAFF.

BC/S.27870/Int.G.

Issued at 1830hrs. 29th September 1942

Ltn Karl Heinz Brandes (Night Fighter Pilot)

Born 06/06/1920
Died 18/05/1943



A JU88C 6a Night fighter most likely variant to have shot down R5679

It is now a clear that R5679 was shot down by Ltn Karl-Heinz Brandes of 7./NJG 2 that night engaging the bomber at 1900m at 01.22 hrs on Friday 25th September 1942 this was his first attack of the night the second being R5724 which crash landed back in the UK.

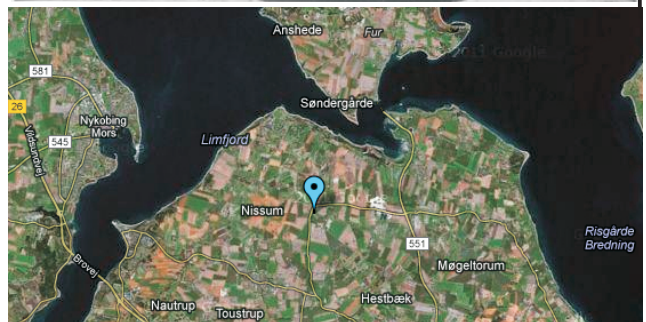
Obit Karl-Heinz Brandes of Nachtjagdstaffel 11./IV./NJG 3 was to lose his life on the night of the 18th May 1943 cause unknown his aircraft crashed near to Nissum 10 kilometres east of Nykøbing Denmark flying a Junkers JU88 C6b

Ju 88C-6 serial number 360301 crashed near Nykøbing 18/5 1943.

The aircraft belonged to 11./NJG 3 and was coded D5+HW.
T/o Grove. Op: Training.

The JU 88 crashed in the afternoon at Nissum Nørre Eng due to pilot error.
The aircraft burst into flames and was a 100% loss.

The crew of Pilot Oberleutnant Karl-Heinz Brandes, Wop Unteroffizier Hugo Corfu and Engineer Leutnant Kurt Klose died and when retrieved from the burned out wreck they were brought to Fliegerhorst Grove. On 22/5 they were all laid to rest in Lemvig cemetery with a German chaplain officiating at the graveside ceremony.



**Reichsverteidigung: R.A.F. Bomber
Command: Mine-laying 25.09.42**

Ltn. Karlheinz Brandes 7./NJG 2
Lancaster Location not entered: 1.900 m. time 02.13
FilmC. 2035/IIAnerk: Folgt

Supplemental Claims from Films & Lists:
25.09.42

Ltn. Karlheinz Brandes 7./NJG 2 Lancaster time 01.22
Film-C. 2031/I XII. Flg.Kps.



Eyewitness Accounts 25th September 1942

Article in Viborg Stifts Folkeblad on 29 July 2009 about LAN R5679 which crashed at Grønhøj, sent from the author to www.airmen.dk and translated by AS.

“The sky lit up when the bomber burned”

A Lancaster bomber was shot down over Grønhøj in 1942. Gudrun Laigaard woke up when the plane was flying over Grønhøj Inn.

By Georg Ask Lunden Jensen

GRØNHØJ: At about 01.22 on 25 September 1942 Gudrun Laigaard, then 22, woke up in her bedroom in Grønhøj Inn. “I woke up because suddenly my bedroom got light. There was a very loud noise,” she states. A few minutes earlier a British Avro Lancaster bomber was on the return flight to England after having dropped mines into the Baltic Sea, but here it ran out of luck. The bomber was attacked by a German night fighter piloted by Lt. Karl Heinz Brandes from Nachtjagdgeschwader 3 and burst into flames near Grønhøj. In the house Gudrun Laigaard could hear the noise from the propeller engines of the big aircraft as it, burning, came roaring at low height over the village. “It passed very close over the house. I nearly thought that it was going to crash here,” relates Gudrun, now 89, while we sit in the old inn looking out of the window to the western outskirts of Grønhøj where the plane fell to the ground.

A big crash

The plane crashed into a field about 250 metres west of Resenfeldevej 17. It exploded on impact and all on board perished. “A big crash rang out when it hit the ground. I went out on the road in front of the inn, and I saw the fire where the plane had crashed,” she says.

But shortly afterwards German cars came rushing through the village, and she hurried back in again. “They might have seen the crash from the airfield,” she says thinking of the German air base Fliegerhorst Grove, today Flyvestation Karup -Karup Air Base.

One of the crew members had bailed out just before the crash, but the plane had come too low, so his parachute did not open up. On the following day his body was found by Marie and Edward Betzer, Mønstedvej 16. He had fallen into a hen run behind what today is Mønstedvej 18, Grønhøj.

It was reported to the Police who informed the Germans. They arrived with a truck and a coffin. The German soldiers threw the dead airman and his parachute on the truck body and clapped their hands.

On the same day Gudrun Laigaard saw that the Germans drove away with the pieces of wreckage. Of course people in the village talked about the crashed plane. A common idea was that the pilot deliberately might have tried to avoid hitting the village. The flat field and moor west of the village must have appeared as a good place for a landing, Gudrun's son Gregers Laigaard thinks. Today he is the innkeeper of Grønhøj Inn.

Gunnar and his brother Thomas Filbert

were the first to get to the site after the plane had crashed. They were also some of the closest neighbours. According to Kirsten the two brothers saw members of the crew in the burning aircraft, but they were unable to do anything. Shortly after German soldiers from Karup came and shooed them away.

Frode Andersen, born at Herningvej 64 where he grew up. I was born in 1935, so I was 7 years old when it happened. I remember that my sisters had gone to bed and I had just gone out to pee before I went to bed. Then the two planes came at a low height shooting like mad at each other and both planes were in flames, Frode Andersen relates. His elder brother Age is still living on the farm.

Close call The war came a little too close that night. A bullet from one of the planes hit our house and made a hole through the seat of a chair that my sister had used earlier in the evening, Frode Andersen relates. Today he lives in Viborg.

Eyewitness Accounts 25th September 1942

Bent Krath witnessed that.

I was 18 years old then and I worked as a farmhand in Fløjgård for Niels Knudsen, Fløjgårde 5. I and the others on the farm were awakened by a tremendous noise, and we ran out to see what was up. It was hard to see anything in the darkness, but I heard the sound of the engines and also rounds of machine gun fire when they shot at each other. A number of bullets hit the gable of a neighbouring farm and one of them went through the window and hit the foot of a bed. Fortunately nobody was hurt, Bent Krath relates. Out of curiosity he went to the wreckage the next day to see where it had crashed.

Here I saw a bird-cage in the cockpit with 4 dead carrier-pigeons with rings, Bent Krath relates. He wonders if they were in the plane to be let out in case of an air crash. In this case it failed.

Only loss

Today maize grow high in the field where the plane crashed and nothing tells about the tragic night during the war.

The British plane numbered R5679 with a crew of 5 British and 2 Canadian airmen was the only aircraft of the Royal Air Force that was lost that night. Altogether 51 aircraft flew on minelaying operations at Texel, the Frisian Islands, Heligoland and the Baltic Sea on the night/morning of 25th September. All members of the crew of 7 were buried in Frederikshavn on 29th September 1942.

Monday 8 October 2012 finding the site

Anders Straarup was assisted by Kirstine Filbert, a neighbour of the site. Kirstine's husband Gunnar Filbert and his brother were the first Danes at the crash site but they had to take themselves off when the German soldiers from Karup arrived. Much has changed since 1952 when Kirstine first had the site pointed out by her husband, so it was difficult to point out the exact site, but during the search Kurt Mikkelsen, the present owner of a neighbouring farm, joined them and he was able to locate the site. "My Dad always said that it was right over there!" Kurt stated pointing at the trees and then metal detectors were used.

When part of the wood had been searched and the party came to a forest road all of a sudden there were deflections, and then there was an abundance of pieces of wreckage of the huge aircraft. There was a small piece of Perspex, a toothed wheel, many small plates and a number of cartridges, both complete and blown up. It was obvious that the plane had been in flames and that the collision with the ground had been so fierce that pieces of wreckage were scattered over a great area.

On the road

It was almost exclusively on the forest road that pieces of wreckage were found due to the fact that the area between the road and the field had been ploughed at one time. Thereby other metal parts had been buried so that it is impossible to find them with ordinary metal detectors. However, enough pieces have been found to establish the crash site area.

So another piece has been placed in the puzzle that started when the nephew of one of the crew members sent an email to Gregers Laigaard to get more information concerning the death of his mother's brother. The Englishman had found an article in which Gudrun Laigaard had told about the air crash in the way she had experienced it from Grønhøj Kro. The nephew had picked up a clue when he had cleared the home of his parents. Both of them had so traumatic reactions to events of the war that they did not want to talk about them, but after their deaths a great number of documents appeared showing when and how his mother's brother had disappeared.