

Pilot Sgt Lewis Wilson Morrison

David Wilson Geddes



🇬🇧 The Dux medals from Inverurie Academy for best student in 1931, 1932, 1933 shown against the Red Morrison tartan. The solid gold medal is awarded from the John E Sutherland bequest.

Pilot Sgt Lewis Wilson Morrison (20 May 1915 – 25 Sept 1942)

Lewis was the only son of Jessie and Lewis Morrison of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland. His only sister, Margaret Innes Morrison was born in 1919, growing up devoted to her brother.



🇬🇧 Lewis Morrison driving with his sister Margaret Morrison in white beside him in the front seat. On holiday at the farm at Dinnet, Aberdeenshire, where they spent their summers. Lewis and Margaret were devoted to each other.

The name 'Wilson' by which he was known, came from his grandfather Archibald Wilson, a rope and sail maker in Aberdeen. Eight generations of Morrison men, from 1700 to now, were sailors and Ships Captains. Lewis' grandmother lost her father, brother and husband to the sea, the latter being sunk on the SS Norwood by Ob Lt sur Zee Ernst Rosenow in the UC29 in 1917.

Generations of Morrisons have all been known for great gentleness, considerable engineering and mathematical prowess, and athletic stamina. Lewis' death caused his parents and sister to have breakdowns; they never entirely recovered. From wartime letters,

"Mum is being terribly brave, but Dad had no other interest in life but the family, its affecting him very badly, so quiet that it breaks my heart to see him stare silently into space. . . . we are all crying ourselves to sleep, I am in a terrible blackness."



🇬🇧 Lewis excelled at Inverurie Academy (back left). In his last three years (1931-1933) he won the annual 'Dux' medal for the best pupil. The Dux medal is solid 9ct Gold, awarded from the John E Sutherland Bequest. Outside school his interests were Scouting, Golf, and Football. He played golf with a match set of 'Cochrane of Edinburgh' clubs. Lewis was awarded a gilt copy of the 'Poetic Works' of Robert Burns when Captain of the Academy Football Team.

Lewis Morrison senior was a marine, railway, and mechanical engineer, serving on ships between the UK, Australia, and the Kiribati Pacific Islands until he married Jessie Robertson in 1914. Young Lewis never yearned for the sea, but instead to fly. Lewis passed his driving test as early as possible, and drove his father's 'little Fordie'. His girlfriends were 'Dosh' in Aberdeen, and Hilda James, the NAAFI Manageress at RAF Melksham, Wiltshire whose grief was also overwhelming.



🇬🇧 Lewis attended Aberdeen University gaining an MA 1st Class Honours in Mathematics in 1937. He worked as a Maths teacher at three Aberdeen schools - Central, Ruthrieston, and Aberdeen Grammar - during the years 1937- 39. His sister Margaret was due to go to university but during in mid 1942 Lewis advised her not to attend university during the war or enlist in the Armed Forces, but to stay at home to support their parents. She followed this advice, and never did attend university.

Soon Lewis was at 34 Pilots and Navigators Course, 16 Operational Training Unit (OTU), RAF Upper Heyford. Here he picked up the nickname, "Red," on account of his wavy very red hair, a proud family trait. 16 OTU trained night bomber crews in Hampdens and Herefords. It converted to Wellingtons in April 1942 and from March to December its HQ moved to RAF Barford St John whilst runways were laid at RAF Upper Heyford for Lancasters. Lewis completed high and low altitude bomb training on 11 June 1942, flying some of the 1000 bomber raids as second pilot in June 1942. He wrote to Margaret Morrison dated 25 June 1942, instructing her not to tell their parents about these raids.

"... We are all crying ourselves to sleep, I am in a terrible blackness."



🇬🇧 Lewis volunteered for the Royal Artillery, but requested a transfer to RAF Pilot training. He attended the RAF Induction training as 656649 AC2 Morrison LW, C Flight No 1 Squadron, No 11 Initial Training Wing (ITW), Cambridge Hotel, Scarborough, Yorkshire. His initial pilot training took place as LAC Morrison LW, at A flight No 2 Squadron, 28 Course, SFTS, Lyneham, Wiltshire.

Some training flights were interesting. Near RAF Lyneham he and his navigator became disorientated and needed somewhere to land. The plane was landed without damage in a field at night. His head and face were scratched and bandaged after climbing through a thorn hedge to find a phone. The Commanding Officer was not visibly impressed with the safe landing. Subsequently his Lancaster's brakes failed on touchdown after an operational flight over Germany as second pilot. It was, "a rough landing".



🇬🇧 Lewis was posted to 61 Sqn in August 1942. He had by now qualified on Herefords, Wellingtons, Manchester's, Hampdens and then completed the Lancaster conversion course at Syerston, Nottinghamshire. There, he "Moved heaven and earth," to select his close friend John (Jack) Duffield (RCAF) as his navigator on the 61 Squadron Lancasters. " - John was the only navigator who always delivered Lewis' plane exactly onto target." By 16 September 1942 he had completed 55 hours on Lancasters and was a fully qualified First Pilot.

The fateful flight of Lancaster QR-O R5679 took place overnight 24/25 Sept 1942. It was a full moon night, clear over the Baltic, and cloud cover to 2000m over Denmark and the Heligoland Bight where one Allied plane was struck by lightning that night. The 8 hour mission took off from RAF Syerston mid evening to drop magnetic mines in the sea lanes of the 'Sweet Peas' drop zone south of Falster. They were instructed to cross the Denmark coast at Nissum Fiord, Fornaes, and Gedser Odde and return by the same route. Allied intelligence knew of the German radar installations at Randers and the large NJG3 night-fighter field at Karup Grove. R5679 was engaged by Lt Karl Heinz Brandes at 1900m at 0115 hours. He was directed by the Randers radar installations. A protracted air battle followed in which canon and machine gun rounds hit a number farm buildings. Eyewitnesses observed the bomber with fuel tanks burning come to earth in a shallow trajectory, engines roaring furiously. It was said that the pilot tried to avoid the village of Gronhoj. The crash site is in alignment with one of the 'runways' of the German decoy airfield some few hundred metres further west. Lt Brandes did not survive WW2.

Just why the families were told that the deaths of this crew was a war atrocity, will remain a mystery. They died in earnest combat and not by being machine gunned in their parachute harnesses. They flew a Lancaster and not a Wellington. Lewis' parents and sister died before the true story was revealed some 70 years later. It was his first operational mission in command of his own plane with his own crew.



🇬🇧 Lewis and his sister Margaret in Aberdeen in 1938. Margaret was David Geddes' mother.



🇬🇧 A contemporary recreation of the 61 Sqn RAF Sweetheart brooch to the left, and the WW2 pattern pin, to the right. The Latin " Per Purum Tonates" translates as "Thundering through the clear air."

We grew up with the portrait of my Uncle Lewis Wilson Morrison ever present in our family home. He was "Never Forgotten". We wonder just what might have been . . . ?

David Wilson Geddes, Maj rtd, RADC, RAMC. 2013. Nephew