

# *Until The Dawn Breaks*



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**RAAF Flying Officer  
Hector Scott Keable ROSS**



**This story is dedicated to the memory of a brave and skilled RAAF  
pilot, who was Killed in Action over France, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1944**

## ***Acknowledgements***

Special mention and acknowledgement of thanks goes to all the members of the Association Normande du Souvenir Aérien 39/45. (ANSA -Normandy Association for Air Remembrance).

The ANSA is a French volunteer organization dedicated to memorializing the sacrifices made by Allied aircrew during WW2 and the important role they played in the liberation of France from the yoke of Nazi occupation.

ANSA do this by conducting searches of crash sites, interviewing & recording testimony of witnesses, reconstructing events leading to the crash, promoting the construction of Memorial Steles, and ensuring that very solemn & moving ceremonies take place at the formal dedication of the Stele.

The work done by the ANSA volunteers is truly magnificent, and a tribute to the generosity, compassion and long memory of the French people.

Members of the ANSA to which special thanks is extended for their valued assistance, are: Monsieur Joel Huard (Founder, ANSA), Monsieur Jacques Paris (Chairman, ANSA Orne-Maine Branch), Monsieur Adrien David (Senior Member, ANSA Orne-Maine Branch), Monsieur Jean-Claude Clouet (Senior Member, ANSA Orne-Maine Branch) and Monsieur Roger Cornevin, (ANSA Diarist).

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Thanks is also extended to the following people & organizations, each of whom with their individual knowledge or expertise, contributed to the development of this story.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

During 2017, I was having a casual conversation with a Mr. Rodney Ross regarding the WW2 service of his father, Charlie Ross.

At Rodney's request, I had previously undertaken extensive research and written a comprehensive biography of Charlie Ross's WW2 service, including detailed specifics of the incident in which Charlie was badly wounded while serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> A.I.F. at Tobruk.

In response to a casual comment that I thought Charlie had been very lucky indeed to survive WW2, Rodney responded by saying that he (Charlie) was luckier than his young brother!

This comment came as a huge surprise, because despite having known Rodney for a number of years, this was the very first time that I had ever heard mention of a Ross family member having been killed during WW2.

I immediately asked Rodney what the details were about his uncle, and was further surprised when Rodney stated ***"all I know is that Dad told me that his younger brother Hector, had joined the RAAF just before the end of the war, when they were accepting just about anyone to be a pilot, and was only over there for a few months before he was killed."***

In response to asking where his uncle Hector had been killed, Rodney simply said:- "France".

Commenting that his uncle would have an interesting group of medals, Rodney paused, and then said "well, now that you mention it, I don't recall ever seeing or hearing anything about uncle Hector's medals".

In response I advised Rodney that when Australian service personnel are die during a war, that service person's medals sit in storage in Canberra, until claimed by a family member, and that this might just be the case with Hector's medals.

Rodney asked me to make inquiries on his behalf regarding Hector's medals, and see if I could find out more about Hector's RAAF service, to which I immediately agreed.

Given what Rodney said his father had told him, I initially thought that researching Hector's service would be a fairly brief and uncomplicated project, however as soon as a copy of Hector's service record had been obtained, it was immediately clear that this project was going to be anything but straightforward.

A major frustration was that Hector's RAAF records simply stated that he had initially been reported missing, and later confirmed dead "somewhere in Northern France".

As the RAAF records provided absolutely no clue regarding the precise location or circumstances of Hector's death, I decided to see if it were possible to solve this 74 year old mystery.

The research involved several hundreds of hours of work, submitting requests for official records, studying official records/documents, searching websites, reading reference books, drafting/sending and replying to 600 odd email communications, making/receiving phone calls, and of course, eventually analysing data & writing the story.

Throughout the research I would phone Rodney Ross at regular intervals to report progress, and we both experienced a roller-coaster ride of hope, followed by disappointment, followed by hope, followed by disappointment....and so, on it went.

After months, a breakthrough was finally achieved in locating a document in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) archives, titled 'Concentration Report'.

Concentration reports were made when the remains of Commonwealth service personnel were found buried 'in the field', following which the remains were exhumed, and re-interred in a Commonwealth War graveyard.

Hence the term 'Concentration' refers to the bringing into a central location, the remains of service personnel who had been found buried in various locations in the field, usually close to where the person 'fell' during battle.

If a serviceman's remain were found to have been buried in an established civil graveyard, the remains were left in-place, and generally (there were some rare exceptions) a CWGC headstone being later erected over the grave.

Normally in conjunction with Concentration Reports, is found an Exhumation Report, however in Hector's case this was not so.

This was a huge disappointment, as Exhumation Reports contain exact map grid references as to where the remains had been exhumed from the field, and thus would have provided the location of where Hector had died.

No all was lost though, for the Concentration Report gave indication that Hector's remains had been recovered from an area encompassing a small Normandy village, called La Chapel pres Sees.

A quick on-line search showed that La Chapel pres Sees village area, was just 10 square kilometres, hence the search for the crash site could now be narrowed down from all of Northern France, to just this location.

Concerted research effort was now made to identify all WW2 aircraft crash sites in the La Chappelle pres Sees area, and to either confirm or eliminate such as being Hector's aircraft.

Sadly, no such matches were able to be made, and for some time it was thought possible that Hector's aircraft might have crashed into thick forest, which makes up approximately half of the area encompassed by La Chapel pres Sees boundaries, and thus the crash site was not recorded.

It was at this point that I needed to have 'boots on the ground' in France to check if there might be any record of Hector's crash site, an appropriate French civil records, such as Gendarmerie reports.

Following months of internet searches and many emails, I was extremely fortunate to be put in touch with a Frenchman named Adrien David, who belonged to a volunteer organization

Association Normande du Souvenir Aérien 39/45 (Normandy Association for Air Remembrance 39/45) which specialized in searching for crashed WW2 aircraft in Normandy.

As coincidence would have it, Adrien also lived in La Chappelle pres Sees, which is the small town that I suspected as being the location where Hector Ross crashed!

At the same time I was attempting to make contact with someone like Adrien, I made application to obtain a copy of the RAF casualty record of Hector's navigator, Jack Green.

Without going into unnecessary detail, getting hold of these RAF records whilst living in Australia, was a long (weeks) and complicated process but when such occurred, it was absolute 'gold'.

Jack's casualty record contained information not only confirmed the crash site, but included eye witness statements, and an account of what subsequently happened to Hector & Jack's bodies.

Once again as coincidence would have it, a few days before eventually receiving the RAF records, Adrien David was able to obtain a copy of an old Gendarmerie report which also positively identified the crash site as being on a small farm, a short distance (1.5km) outside of La Chappelle pres Sees.

By mid-August, the combined information obtained from RAF records and the old Gendarmerie report was sufficient to enable in-depth analysis to plot the most probable/likely sequence of events leading up to Hector & Jack's death.

It was at this point that Adrien David, and another senior AMSA member Monsieur Jean-Claude Clouet began making representations to the local council of La Chapelle-pres-Sees, for construction of a memorial stele to Hector & Jack. The council decided in favour of the proposal, construction of the memorial was soon started, and planning for the formal dedication ceremony commenced.

Following being advised that a memorial was being constructed, and a dedication ceremony would be held, members of the Ross family immediately began making plans to travel to France, in-order to attend the ceremony.

The ceremony was a tremendous event, attended by a two members of the French Senate, five members of the French 'House of Representatives', a dozen local mayors, a large contingent of French military organizations/veterans who brought their Regimental Colours" with them, and around 100 local residents.

Also in attendance at the ceremony, were five members of the Ross family, an Australian Federal Government & an RAAF representative, whom together formed the official Australian party. The French assigned each of these important formal functions to perform during the course of the ceremony.

The attention to detail given by the French for the ceremony was outstanding, which involved but not limited to:-

- Use of a parachute to initially cover, and drawn back for the unveiling of the memorial.
- Numerous very (very!) low-level fly pasts by a WW2 twin engine military aircraft, which in tribute to the port engine of Hector & Jack's aircraft having been disabled by anti-aircraft fire, the fly-past aircraft had only its starboard landing-light illuminated.
- The playing of the Australian, British & French National Anthems during each fly-over.

- The playing of French Bugles at significant points of the ceremony, French bugles play with a higher pitch note than that British bugles.

During the ceremony, a speech was made by one of the members of the French Senate explaining that they had all been very touched that light had finally been brought upon the actions of Hector Ross & Jack Green.

Immediately following this speech, attending members of the Ross family, as well as the RAAF Representative Ft Lt. Walduck, were all presented medals by the French Government.

Sadly, despite concerted effort, no family of Jack Green could be located to attend the ceremony and oddly, there were no British Government or RAF representatives in attendance. In the absence of any of Jack's family being present, the ceremony organizers arranged for two British citizens to act in proxy during the wreath laying.

Three years after the dedication ceremony, successful contact was made with one of Jack Green's Great-Nieces, who whilst sad they had missed the actual ceremony, were very pleased to hear about and receive photographs of the memorial & dedication ceremony.

From a personal perspective, the magnificent Stele dedication ceremony was a very satisfying culmination to the many hundred of hours of research and correspondence that had been made into finally discovering where Hector & Jack had met their end, and what had been the cause of such.

In closing, it might be of interest to the reader to learn that the title of Hector's story is a "hat tip salute" to the following:

- The last type of mission flown by Hector was as a Night Intruder. Often crews returning from night operations would land back in England as dawn was breaking.
- The inscription on Hector's headstone at Bayeux, reads: "Until the Break of Dawn, Au Revoir Brave Boy"

**Tony Young**  
**Queensland, 2019**

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# Chapter 2

## The Early Years

### 2:1 Parents, Glen Innes & Bilambil

Hector Scott Keable Ross was born in Oakey (Queensland) on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1921, the youngest child of Charles Simpson Scott ROSS & Beatrice Charlotte ROSS (nee' Keable)



Being the last of six children, by the time Hector was born in 1921, his father was 56, and his mother 34 years old.

**2:2** Hector spent his initial early years growing up on his parents' farm at Kent Park outside of Glen Inness (northern New South Wales) where his parents had established a small orchard, and ran a cartage business.

*Beatrice (standing), and Charles Ross (sitting), c. 1950*

When Hector was about 7yo, his family moved to the Tweed River region of far-north NSW, where his father began his (and later his sons), involvement in Banana farming, in the Bilambil Valley.

### 2:2 Personality

By all accounts, Hector was a very personable young man, with an adventurous spirit. There are family stories that as a boy he liked to impress family & friends with daring deeds, such as riding his push-bike at speed down steep embankments, (of which there is no shortage in around Bilambil) and later as a teenager, similar riding on his older brother Charlie's Indian Scout motorcycle.



*Bilambil Valley*

There are newspaper articles from the late 1930's which indicate Hector was a popular young man with a lively social life, often attending dances (where it is said that he played the piano), tea parties, and a variety of other similar social functions that were popular in 1930's Australia.

### 2:3 Schooling

After his family moved to Bilambil, Hector attended the Tweed Heads Primary School (1930-33), and later the Tweed Heads Post-Primary School. A post-primary school provided secondary-level education that catered for students aged 12 to 18 years. It can be estimated that Hector finished his schooling in 1937, or 1938, this being only a year or two before WW2 began.

This photograph shows a neatly uniformed and well equipped Tweed Heads Public School Band, which indicates the school was not only somewhat sophisticated, but also well funded.

Perhaps this is where Hector learned to play the piano?

## 2:4 Interest in Aviation

As most of those who would have known Hector, or spoken to him during his short lifetime, are now passed, it is impossible to say for certain what fired his imagination & drive to become a pilot.



*Tweed Heads Public School Band, c. 1930*

What is certain is that during Hector's most formative years (1920's-30's), this was a period of great development and excitement with aircraft use in Australia, with Australian pilots such as Sir Charles



*BE 2E aeroplane on the beach at Tweed Heads, c. 1920s*

Kingsford-Smith, Charles Ulm & Bert Hinkler being national heroes to everyone at the time, especially young boys.

Newspaper articles from the period show that aircraft often landed on the beach at Tweed Heads (or in any suitable nearby field) there is a distinct possibility that a young Hector was able to see at close quarters one or more of these extremely exotic machines.

It is also possible that at some point, a young Hector met the then Postmaster of the Tyalgum Post Office, Mr. C.B. Popkins, who was a one-legged returned WW1 AIF digger.

Cedric Popkins is widely credited as being the anti-aircraft gunner, who brought down the famed WW1 German flying-ace, Manfred Von Richthofen, also known as the "Red Baron".

## 2:5 Banana Grower

Between leaving school and enlisting in the Royal Australian Air Force, Hector joined his two elder Brothers on banana farms in the Bilambil Valley. On his RAAF enlistment papers, Hector gave his occupation as a Banana Grower.

*Hector's older brothers Don & Charlie, Bilambil Valley, c. 1937*

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# Chapter 3

## Becoming a Pilot

### Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)

#### 3:1 RAAF Reserve

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1940, Hector was accepted at Lismore (NSW) into the Australian Citizen Air Force, (now known as the RAAF Reserve), and thus provisional acceptance into the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

At the time of joining the Citizen Air Force (RAAF Reserve), Hector was aged 19 years & 6 months. His enlistment papers, record his occupation as a Banana Grower, and his residence was given as Bilambil.

During the years leading up to WWII, RAAF Reserve Squadrons were the mainstay of training within the RAAF. So much so that by the outbreak of war approximately 2/3 of those in uniform were reservists.



*July 1941, last known photo of Hector in civilian clothing.*

*Note the RAAF Reserve badge on his lapel.*

At the outbreak of war the RAAF Reserve members were called up for the duration and most transferred to the Permanent Air Force in order to overcome a then Australian Constitutional Restriction, which prevented reservists from being deployed outside Australian Territory.

As it is known via family oral history that Hector needed to improve his ability in mathematics to maximize his chances of being selected for pilot training.

During his 10 months in the RAAF Reserve, Hector's parents paid for him to receive extra mathematics tuition.

Clearly Hector's time in the RAAF Reserve & the extra tuition paid dividends, for his service records show that once he joined the permanent forces, he performed well during all phases of training, being quickly selected for pilot training, and passing all training stages without difficulty.

#### 3:2 RAAF Permanent Force

Nine months after initially being accepted to the RAAF Reserve, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1941 Hector travelled to Sydney, and enlisted into the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) – Permanent Forces.

At the time of his enlistment, the slightly framed Hector was aged 20 years and 3 months, was 5' 3" (157cm) in height, and weighed just 119 lbs (54Kg).



It would seem that Hectors' travelling to Sydney to enlist in the permanent forces was simply an administrative formality, for on the very same day, he marched into his first permanent forces training unit, and hence commenced his journey to becoming a pilot.

Ironically, just before Hector started his journey to Sydney, his brother Charlie arrived in Bilambil, having returned from service with the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF in the Middle East, notably at the Siege of Tobruk.

This following extract of a news article appeared in the Tweed Daily, on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 1943.

**BILAMBIL HONORS  
TWO BROTHERS**

**One Home from Tobruk;  
One Now in R.A.A.F.**

Bilambil hall was crowded recently when residents gathered to honor Mr. Hector Ross, of the R.A.A.F., and to extend a hearty welcome home to his brother, Private Charles Ross, invalided home after serving with honor with the A.I.F. in Tobruk and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Spontaneous cheers greeted Charlie when he entered the hall escorted by Mr. A. Thomas, and the gathering sang, "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

The function was organised by Bilambil branch of Soldiers' Welfare Association, and visitors were present from many surrounding districts.

Streamers in the unit colors of the boys decorated the hall, and attractive flowers graced the stage.

Dancing to the music of Bill Roll's Orchestra kept the gathering happy until a late hour when the two guests, accompanied by their parents, were escorted to the stage.

Mr. Thomas, in a brief speech, referred to the two local boys they were honoring that night. He had known them for many years. It was pleasing to have Charlie back. It was just 18 months since he had been farewelled, and all his friends were pleased to see him safe home.

Mr. W. Norville wished Hector the best of luck and congratulated Charlie on his good record in the A.I.F.

Mrs. Norville presented the mother of the boys with a choice bouquet of roses and fern.

Mr. J. Smart, secretary of the Terranora branch of the Welfare Association, and Mr. H. Garratt, extended best wishes to Hector in his future service in the defence of his country, and to Charlie, new safe home, though wounded.

Mr. Hector Ross was given a wrist-let watch by Bilambil friends, and this was fastened on by his mother.

The usual certificate of enlistment and a parcel of comforts were also presented.

Mr. Charlie Ross was given a silver cigarette case with the best wishes of the community for his future, and in some slight way a token of appreciation of his services to his country.

Mr. Hector Ross, briefly responded and his brother Charlie, also responding, said he was not finished yet and hoped to do more for the defence of his country. He warmly thanked the Welfare Association for parcels of comforts while he was abroad.

Mr. Ross, snr., father of the boys, thanked those present for the combined function in honor of his sons.

A dainty supper was served.

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### 3:3 Pilot Training – Australia

#### 1. No. 2 Initial Training School

20<sup>th</sup> July, 1941 - 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1941

No. 2 ITS, was located near the Lane Cove River, at Lindfield, Sydney, NSW.

At Initial Training Schools new recruits learned the basics of military life and were taught subjects such as mathematics, navigation and aerodynamics.

Extract from book titled “Road to Bomber Command”, by historian Dr Richard Reid.

*Great Britain and the other Dominions and colonies of the British Empire, provided the RAF with its bomber aircrew requirements between 1940 and the end of the war in Europe in May 1945.*

*Initial training, and allocation to the different aircrew ‘musterings’ (roles), was conducted in Australia at Initial Training Schools (ITS), followed by specialised courses for pilots, navigators, wireless operators and air gunners.*

*A large number of Australians completed their Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) training in Canada, and a few were sent to Rhodesia. By the time an EATS trainee reached England he had either received his officers’ commission, or stripes as a Sergeant or Flight Sergeant.*

*The great fear in training was to be ‘scrubbed’. By mid1941, virtually 18 per cent of the intake failed to get through the exams at the Initial Training School.*



*New RAAF recruits on a Sydney double-decker bus.*

*Based on results at the ITS, recruits were designated for training as pilots, navigators (the description ‘observer’ was also used for a time), bomb aimers, wireless air gunners, or air gunners.*

#### 2. No. 6 Elementary Flying Training School

11<sup>th</sup> December, 1941 - 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1942

No. 6 EFTS base name was RAAF Tamworth, and was located at Tamworth, NSW.

The EFTS provided a twelve-week introductory flying course to personnel who had graduated from one of the RAAF's initial training schools.



*Tiger Moth Training aircraft*

Flying training was undertaken in two stages: the first involved four weeks of instruction (including ten hours of flying) to determine trainees' suitability to become pilots.

Those that passed the grading process then received a further eight weeks of training (including 65 hours of flying) at the EFTS.

Pilots who successfully completed this course were posted to a Service Flying Training School (SFTS) in either Australia or Canada for the next stage of their instruction as military aviators.

While at RAAF Tamworth, on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Hector was promoted to Leading Aircraftman.

Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*29% of would-be pilots, were 'scrubbed' at the Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS), and a further 18% failed at Service Flying Training School (SFTS).*

*The same fear of being 'scrubbed' permeated the ranks of perspective navigators. Don Charlwood remembered the late nights and the intense cramming before what his French Canadian navigation instructor called 'ze scroob tests'.*

*I drifted to sleep murmuring – Variation east magnetic least; Stand with your back to the wind in the northern hemisphere and the low pressure system is on your left; Saturated adiabatic lapse rate is – is what? God, I must check it in the morning!*

*Peter O'Connor dreamed of becoming a pilot. Doing his elementary flying training at Cunderdin, Western Australia, (No. 9 EFTS) he remembered the day the Chief Flying Instructor 'scrubbed' him: 'I still do a little weep over that to think I didn't make the grade'. He went on to fly as a navigator.*

*Bill Forbes began his EATS course on 15 September 1941 at No. 3 Initial Training School in Queensland. Until selected for pilot training, he faced a weekly demanding round of lectures in meteorology, armaments, signaling, navigation and maths.*

*John McCarthy writes of this initial training, and the determination to live up to high expectations: The will to succeed was very strong and, as one former trainee now recalls, the course members themselves determined that all would pass ... This spontaneous manifestation of collective help may be seen not only as an indicator of high morale but also as a contributor to it ... There was little time for relaxation, less for reflection ... Often former trainees cannot recall having any time off at all.*

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### **3. No. 2 Embarkation Depot**

**5<sup>th</sup> March, 1942**

No. 2 ED base name was RAAF Bradfield Park, and was also located at Lindfield, Sydney, NSW.

At the end of their initial training aircrew and ground staff were posted to embarkation depots, where they were appropriately kitted and given a final medical examination before going onto further training overseas, or to operational theatres.

Hector was sent to No. 2 ED, in preparation to him being sent (by ship) to Canada, for more advanced training. Hector's service record states that he embarked from Sydney for overseas service, on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1942, and arrived in Canada 33 days later, on 1<sup>st</sup> May.



Hector's service record states he disembarked in Canada, on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1942, therefore this means that he spent his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday aboard the troop ship.

Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*Now a Pilot Officer, and attached from the RAAF to the RAF, Bill Forbes embarked from Brisbane on the merchant ship Taranaki on 28 July 1942 and reached the United Kingdom more than two months later on 4 October.*

*This long sea journey was a common experience for that great majority of Australian EATS graduates who were sent to serve with the RAF. Some, like Forbes, were ready for their final RAF flight training in Britain, but others completed their courses in Service Flying Training Schools.*

*Leading Aircraftsman Eric Willis was not too impressed with his trans-Pacific trip. In May 1943, Willis left Sydney on an American troopship, the Mount Vernon, and watching Sydney Heads disappear in the mist wondered, like so many must have done, if he would see Australia again.*

*Initially put to work in the bakery for his mess, Willis was rescued from such duties, along with the other EATS trainees, by their accompanying RAAF educational officer, who decided they should have daily lectures instead.*

*The 'tucker' he found 'awful hash', tea was rarely served, and the coffee so 'strong you would need an iron constitution to drink it for long'.*

*Willis' voyage was in sharp contrast to that of Don Charlwood on the passenger liner Monterey in September 1941. Charlwood's group completed their initial training in Australia and then, with other designated navigators, he was En-route to Edmonton in Canada. Luncheon was their first engagement on board: "Even before we reached the heads, the Monterey's routine claimed us with a call for the first sitting for lunch ... Unsophisticated products of the Depression that we were, we considered the menu in silence, privately ruling out dish after dish as too expensive. Then someone exclaimed, 'But the Air Force is paying!'"*

*A few EATS men were in the thick of the war well before they reached England. On 18 February 1941 the British ship Memnon left Port Pirie, South Australia, for England with 7629 tons of general cargo, which included 2697 tons of wheat and 2036 tons of zinc concentrates.*

*Also on board were six RAAF Sergeants, led by Flight Sergeant Maxwell Whitehill. On 11 March, three days out from Freetown on the west African coast, the Memnon was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U-106, under the command of Captain Jürgen Oesten.*

*Escaping in the lifeboats with other survivors, and clad only in shorts and shirts, the Australian airmen drifted in open boats for thirteen days until hitting the coast of French West Africa at Dakar (modern Senegal).*

*At Dakar, the party was interned by the pro-German Vichy French authorities and Whitehill was one of those placed in the hospital. Complaining, after two weeks, of the lack of food, he was told by the hospital commander that as the British were blockading Dakar 'they did not intend to give us any more to eat than would keep us alive'.*

*Three of the Australians escaped, hoping to seize a canoe and paddle down the Niger River to reach British territory, but they were caught and thrown into a dungeon for fourteen days.*

*Eventually, all six South Australian airmen were released and reached England after this unexpected interruption to their training.*

*Only two of them came home alive after the war.*

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### **3:4 Pilot Training – Canada**

#### **4. No. 5 Manning Depot**

**1<sup>st</sup> May, 1942 - 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1942**

Lachine was the location of one of five British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) manning depots, which were basically used as staging posts for personnel coming into Canada, prior to them being allocated to a specific training school.



The name of the establishment there was RCAF Station Lachine, and was located at Dorval, Quebec Province, Canada.



**5. No. 13 Service Flying Training School**

**10<sup>th</sup> May, 1942 - 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1942**

The establishment name was RCAF Station St Hubert and was located at St Hubert, Quebec Province.

Service Flying Training Schools provided more advanced instruction, where because of syllabus revisions, course lengths varied from 10 to 16 weeks, and flying time varied from 75 to 100 hours.

Potential fighter pilots trained on single-engine North American Harvards while pilots selected for bomber, coastal, and transport operations received training on twin-engine Avro Ansons, Cessna Cranes, or Airspeed Oxfords.



**Avro Ansen**



*This photo, dated 28<sup>th</sup> August 1942, shows a very youthful looking Hector receiving his pilot's wings. Immediately after this he was promoted to Sergeant, and soon after, Flight-Sergeant.*



Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*In May 1942, Leading Aircraftman Clifford Lucas came to No. 8 SFTS (in Australia) having passed the course at No. 10 EFTS at Temora, NSW.*

*On 1 June, Lucas, along with Leading Aircraftman Regan, another EATS trainee, went on a training flight in an Avro Anson with their instructor, Flight Sergeant Ronald Davies.*

*For reasons that have never come to light their aircraft crashed into the sea and all were killed. Searches found aircraft wreckage two kilometres offshore, but the bodies were never found.*

*Today, Lucas, Regan and Davies are commemorated on the Sydney Memorial, and on Anzac Day 2007 a plaque was unveiled to their memory at Bargara, Queensland, near the crash site.*

*At the edge of country towns, where flying training schools were set up during World War II, are the sad reminders of those who volunteered to fight for Australia overseas, but never left home.*

**Hank Nelson writes:**

*There are now 29 war graves beyond Wirraway Road (Deniliquin, NSW), the airfield and the western edge of the town cemetery. Nearly all the headstones are for trainees and their instructors, one for each month that 7SFTS operated.*

*Close to one per cent of the 2,200 pilots who trained at Deniliquin were buried there – below red brick pavement, white headstones, flowers and hardy shrubs, and surrounded by the scent of pepper trees and lemon scented gums.*



## 6. No. 1 "Y" Depot

9<sup>th</sup> September, 1942 – 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1942

No. 1 "Y" Depot was located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The name of the establishment was unimaginatively called RCAF "Y" Depot. Similar to the temporary staging role of Manning Depots, No.1 "Y" Depot handled most embarkations from Canada to Great Britain.



RCAF WW2 Badge

Accordingly, sometime after 9<sup>th</sup> September, Hector left for Britain, again aboard a ship that joined one of the hazardous North Sea convoys that had to run the gauntlet of Nazi U-Boat wolf-packs, which at this period of the war, were still taking a huge toll on shipping.

## 3:5 Pilot Training – UK

### 7. RAF Station Bournemouth

5<sup>th</sup> November, 1942 - 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1942

RAF Station Bournemouth was located in Dorset, and was a receiving depot, where aircrew stayed temporarily, and prior to assignment elsewhere. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1942, Hector was granted seven (7) days leave. Whilst it may never be known what Hector did on this leave, there is a high likelihood that he and mates took off to London, to party.

Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*Arriving in Britain in early October 1942, Pilot Officer Bill Forbes was sent straight to the Australian section of No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre (3 PRC) on the south coast of England. The purpose of this centre was to allow Australian airman to rest, fill out necessary paper work, take some refresher training after a lengthy period of travel, and await posting on to relevant RAF training units.*

*Most Australian EATS trainees were posted to Bomber Command, but some also went to Fighter and Coastal Command. From 3 PRC men were also given leave to acclimatize themselves to England and the English. Many had relatives in Britain – as the Australian Census of 1933 showed, 10 per cent of Australia's population had been born in Great Britain or Ireland.*

*Dan Conway's mother was Irish and he dutifully crossed the Irish Sea (in borrowed civilian clothes as the Irish Free State was neutral) and headed for Killarney, County Kerry. There he watched Gaelic football, went to dances and was surrounded by people 'all of whom seemed to be my cousins'.*

*By contrast, Paddy Rowling and Gus Rowcroft availed themselves of the services of 'Lady Frances Ryder and Miss MacDonald of the Isles Dominion Hospitality Scheme'.*

*These two ladies, as their card indicated, were 'at home' between 10 am and 10 pm, at their apartment in Sloane Square, London, where, over tea, they would find suitable English families for Australians to spend their initial leave with.*

*Rowling and Rowcroft went to a double-story manor house in Shropshire set in 1000 acres of land. Here they watched an English 'shoot' where each shooter had a gun loader, and thirty 'beaters' urged the pheasants to their doom.*

*The Australian airmen were not invited to sip port with the shooters, but were offered beer instead with the loaders. Rowling was 'sadly disillusioned' with the English upper classes, but later he became very friendly with an English family near his airfield, who fed him poached eggs for breakfast, and he wrote of the 'many kindnesses he (Len Nettleborough) and his wife have shown me'.*

*However, it would be unfair to judge the 'Hospitality Scheme' by Rowling and Rowcroft's initial experiences. Most, writes Hank Nelson, 'were delighted by the manners and generosity of their often elderly hosts' who welcomed them to Britain, and who undoubtedly had kith and kin of their own facing the dangers of war.*

**8. No. 15 (P) Advanced Flying Unit**

**28<sup>th</sup> December, 1942 - 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1943**

The name of the establishment was RAF Greenham Common and was located at Newbury, Berkshire.

AFU's existed to "acclimatise" newly arrived pilots from "over the seas" to flying conditions in the UK, and thus improve their chances of survival before they even reached the OTU's.



The Airspeed Oxford tended to be the standard aircraft used by this unit.

On 28<sup>th</sup> February 1943, Hector was promoted to the rank of Flight-Sergeant.

*Airspeed Oxford*

Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*From the PRC those destined for Bomber Command went to pre-squadron training.*

*At Advanced Flying Units (AFU) navigators began learning the difference between plotting courses in the open spaces of the Canadian prairies and in the mist, rain and low clouds of Britain; wireless operators, their skills rusty after months of inactivity, had to cope with the huge scale of radio traffic over England; and pilots learned how to land on instruments in fog.*

*Bill Forbes did his refresher flying at No. 11 AFU, RAF Condover, Shropshire, where the non-commissioned ranks were housed in pre-fabricated 'Quonset' huts made of galvanized steel, similar in size and shape to the well-known World War II 'Nissan' hut.*

*Officers, like Forbes, were accommodated in more luxurious and historic surroundings at nearby Condover Hall, a large Elizabethan manor house dating from the 1590s.*

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**9. No. 20 Operational Training Unit**

**2<sup>nd</sup> March, 1943 - 16<sup>th</sup> April, 1943**

The name of the establishment was RAF Lossiemouth, which was located at Lossiemouth in Moray, North-East Scotland.

OTU's were training units that prepared aircrew for operations on a particular type or types of aircraft or roles.

No. 20 OTU trained crews on Vickers Wellingtons'.



*Vickers Wellington*

Extract from book titled "Road to Bomber Command", by historian Dr Richard Reid

*With skills refreshed, airmen now arrived at the most significant, and often dangerous, period of training – the Operational Training Unit (OTU). At an OTU men were tested, for the first time, in bombers, not smaller lighter training aircraft.*

*Before reaching Bruntingthorpe, Bill Forbes's record shows he had flown a Tiger Moth (a two-seater, single-engine biplane), an Avro Anson (twin-engine light reconnaissance aircraft), and an Airspeed AS 10 Oxford, (a similar aircraft to the Anson). Now, like thousands of others, he trained on a Wellington bomber, a plane which was one of the mainstays of Bomber Command in the early years of the war.*

*John McCarthy refers to the Wellington at this time as an 'obsolescent aircraft of doubtful serviceability', and writes of the twelve week OTU course as something of a 'nightmare'.*

*Certainly it was dangerous, and according to McCarthy virtually every page of the Operations Record Book for No. 27 OTU Lichfield contains details of an accident, usually fatal.*

*Australians could find themselves at different OTUs spread throughout Britain, from No. 20 OTU at RAF Lossiemouth on the bleak shores of the North Sea in Scotland, to No. 29 OTU at RAF Bruntingthorpe, in Leicestershire in the midlands of England, where Bill Forbes was sent on 16 December 1942.*

*Perhaps the most isolated OTU in Britain was No. 20 OTU at RAF Lossiemouth in northern Scotland. An area of great natural beauty, this would have been a bleak place in winter, and after take-off for training flights those with an outside view from their Wellington bomber would have seen the snow-covered Cairngorm Mountains and the wastes of the North Sea. In his detailed work on RAAF fatalities in World War II, Alan Storr identifies a number of Australian trainees who flew from Lossiemouth in the bleak mid-winter, never to return.*

*The winter of 1941–1942 was considered one of the worst in years, as snow covered the hillsides and temperatures plummeted. On board Wellington N2825, which went on a night training exercise on 14 February 1942, were early EATS enlistees Sergeant Jack Bishop of Mount Gambier, South Australia, aged 25, and Sergeant John Goldie, from Goornong, Victoria, aged 22, both wireless operators.*

*It was later thought that engine failure brought the aircraft down, 24 kilometres to the south, on a hillside near Rothes. Five of the six men on board, including Goldie and Bishop, were killed.*

*Five days after the loss of Wellington N2825, Wellington R1646 went missing on a night exercise – indeed the aircraft simply disappeared, the only message received from it being a weak signal.*

*A month later, James Wright, a gamekeeper on the Invercauld Estate, deep in the Cairngorms 96 kilometres to the south of Lossiemouth, saw through his telescope something glinting in the snow way up on the mountainside of Glen Clunie.*

*The following day a party led by Wright waded through the waist deep snow, well beyond the Braemar-Blairgowrie road over the mountains, and discovered that the glinting object was the glass of the rear turret of a bomber. Nothing else was seen, but the RAF now sent a recovery team up the mountain. So extreme were the weather conditions that steps and pathways had to be constructed in the ice to reach the wreck, but eventually Wellington R1646 and its crew were found under the snow. Among them were two trainee RAAF wireless air gunners from Queensland: Sergeant Roy Milliken of Mackay, aged 22, and Sergeant Beaumont Dickson of Rockhampton.*

*Their bodies were recovered and buried in Dyce Old Churchyard, near Aberdeen. In August 2003, a memorial was unveiled in Braemar to commemorate the seven victims of the crash and one of the bomber's Pegasus engines was placed on top of it.*

*Some trainees had lucky escapes. Dan Conway piloted a Wellington from Bruntingthorpe on the night of 4–5 September 1943 on one of six night cross-country training flights he was obliged to undertake. On their descent on the last leg, his navigator requested a major change of course and it soon emerged that they were not over central England, but lost.*

*The weather was turbulent and cloudy, which prevented an emergency system known as 'Darky', using the beams of searchlights to guide them, being of any use.*

*After seven hours flying they were at their fuel limit when a beacon was seen, shining vertically below them through a gap in the clouds. This proved to be RAF Jurby on the Isle of Man, in the middle of the Irish Sea, a long way from Leicestershire.*

*A rough approach in gale force winds and rain, a bumpy landing, and Conway put the Wellington down with little fuel to spare. Jurby Flying Control told them they were lucky – two lost Wellingtons on previous nights had attempted to land but crashed.*

*Next day, the return trip to Bruntingthorpe took just one and a half hours, where Conway received a severe dressing down from the Chief Flying Officer (CFO), despite the fact that their problems had been one of navigation rather than pilot error. But, as Conway writes, 'if the crew did a good job the captain got much of the credit; if the reverse he carried the blame'. Conway thought he might be 'scrubbed' but eventually the CFO relented and satisfied himself with noting Conway in his log book as 'a medium bomber pilot – average', and not the best at navigation.*

*Many never made it to an operational squadron. John Herington gives an official figure of 724 Australian deaths in air accidents at OTUs, the great majority of which would have been from among those training for Bomber Command.*

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### **Interesting Observation**

Given the previously quoted statistic that 29% of trainees pilots failed at the EFT and a further 18% failing at SFTS, means that out of every original group of 100 would-be pilots only 58 would make it through to an OTU. It stands to reason that at least a small percentage of trainees would scrub-out at the OTU, resulting say in 50-55 of the original group of 100 making it to an operational squadron.

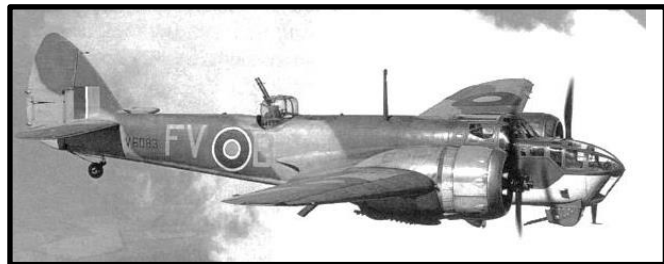
Of this group, the majority would be assigned to Bombers, thus leaving around 10% of the original 100 would-be pilots eventually becoming fighter pilots. As Hector flew a Mosquito Fighter-Bomber, this demonstrates that his skill level would have placed him in this top ten percentile of pilots.

#### **10. No. 13 Operational Training Unit**

**17<sup>th</sup> April 1943 - 27<sup>th</sup> July, 1943**

The name of the establishment was RAF Bicester, located at Bicester, in Oxfordshire.

No. 13 OTU was part of No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command, and trained crews on the Bristol Blenheim light day bomber.



*Bristol Blenheim*

By the time Hector was posted to No. 107 Squadron (his operational unit), the Squadron had ceased using Bristol Blenheims, and had switched over to Douglas A-20 Boston Bombers.

#### **11. No. 307 Ferry Training Unit**

**28<sup>th</sup> July, 1943 - 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1943**

The name of the establishment was RAF Finmere, which was located at Buckingham, Buckinghamshire.

No. 307 FTU, although primarily a unit that ferried aircraft between the UK & Middle East, it allowed pilots on temporary assignment the opportunity to fly back-to-back with their own Blenheims, and, the much heavier tri-cycled undercarriage American Douglas Boston bomber.



The Douglas A-20 Boston Bomber is the type of aircraft that Hector would initially be flying in combat after joining 107 Squadron.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1943, Hector was again granted a period of leave, this time fourteen (14) days. Being even closer to London than he was the pervious November, once again there is a high likelyhood he spend a goodly amount of his leave in London.

*107 Squadron Douglas A-20 Boston Bomber*

# Chapter 4

## Into Battle

### 4:1 No. 107 Squadron Overview

**No. 107 Squadron**

**29<sup>th</sup> August, 1943 - 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1944**



Upon leaving 307 FTU, Hector was posted to 107 Squadron, which was then located at RAF Blackbushe in Hartford Bridge, Blackbushe.

At that time, the Squadron was still flying Douglas A-20 Bostons III's, and thus this was the type of aircraft Hector first flew in combat.

Although the A-20 was designed as a light bomber, the range of the aircraft was too short for it to be used in bombing raids on German targets, and therefore, they were instead used by the RAF in night bomber and intruder roles, mainly over northern France.

Immediately upon joining 107 Squadron, Hector would have found himself right in the thick of things, for 107 Squadron was heavily involved with what was called "Operation Starkey". In essence, Op Starkey was a ruse to try and convince the Germans that the D-Day landings would actually take place on the French coast, in the Pas de Calais region of Northern France, rather than Normandy.

The operation involved the concentrated bombing of marshalling yards, ammunition dumps, airfields and power stations etc., in an area which was amongst the most heavily defended regions of all Nazi occupied France.

The Operation was divided into three distinct phases, these being:

**1. The Preliminary Phase      16<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1943**

Around 680 USAAF and 156 RAF aircraft, bombed airfields, transportation, industrial and other targets.

**2. The Preparatory Phase      25<sup>th</sup> August – 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1943**

The bomber force swelled to 1,754 USAAF and 640 RAF aircraft, with the weight of the high explosives used increasing from an overall 1,454 tons to 2,683 tons. Concurrently, the targets were broadened to include ammunition and fuel dumps concealed among the forests inland from Boulogne.

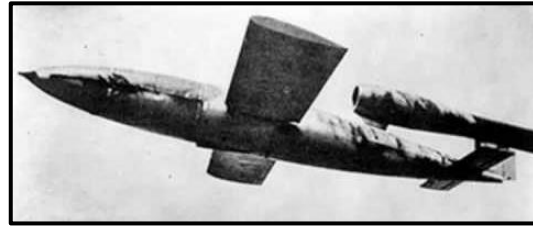
**3. The Culminating Phase      8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1943**

The USAAF and RAF bombers switched their attention to gun-sites, a well understood prerequisite to any seaborne invasion force, as bombing them would surely heighten the enemy's expectations of an imminent landing in the Pas de Calais, which was still the primary purpose of Operation Starkey.



Following completion of Operation Starkey, Hector was granted seven days leave, which once again, he likely spent in London. What a thrill this must have been, for a boy for the quiet rural Bilambil !

In November 1943 107 Squadron turned its attention to V1 Flying Bomb sites, and these targets became 107 Squadron's primary target through the winter. The V-1 flying bomb was the first of the Nazi so-called "Vengeance Weapons" designed for terror bombing of London. They were also known to the Allies as the **buzz bomb**, or **doodlebugs**.



Because of its limited range, the thousands of V-1 missiles launched into England were fired from launch facilities along the French (Pas-de-Calais) and Dutch coasts.

The first V-1 was launched at London on 13 June 1944, one week after (and prompted by) the successful Allied landings in Europe. At peak, more than one hundred V-1's per day were fired at south-east England (9,521 in total), decreasing in number as sites were overrun until October 1944, when the last V-1 site in range of Britain was overrun by Allied forces.



This image of a tattered 1944 British newspaper clipping, which was amongst a number of collection of letters; documents & photos that apparently came from the estate of Mrs Rosa Green (the mother of Hector's navigator Jack Green), was found to have been recently sold on an on-line eBay auction.

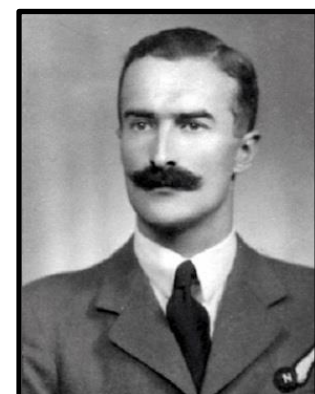
The news clipping mentions Jack & Hector's involvement in V1 site attacks. A transcript of the article reads as follows:

*They are the size of a small country cottage and take a lot of hitting. They are about the most difficult target possible." .....was the comment of Flying Officer Jack Green of Kensington who has been on many Flying-Bomb site attacks, as well as his Pilot Flight-Sergeant H.S Ross of Lismore, New South Wales, an Australian Air Force pilot serving in Wing Commander Pollard's squadron.*

Clearly during this period Hector must have proved himself a skilled and brave pilot for on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1943, he received his commission as an officer, being promoted (provisional) to the rank of Pilot Officer.

Ironically, notification of his Commission as an Officer was not received by the Squadron until the day after Hector was reported missing, presumed dead.

The Wing Commander Pollard (mentioned in the above mentioned news clipping) wrote a heartfelt letter of sympathy to Hector's Father, following Hector & Jack having gone "missing in action", over northern France, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1944.



*F/O Jack Green*

Following is an account by 107 Squadron Flight Officer Norman Fairfax, describing a mission flown on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1943, using Douglas Boston A-20 aircraft, which gives insight into the type of missions Hector & Jack would have participated in, while flying a Boston III Bomber.

*The operation was to attack a power station at Gosney in France. Six aircraft crews of 107 Squadron Boston bombers were briefed that it had to be put out of action at all costs as it produced electricity for a huge area. The aircraft had fighter cover on the way out to the target but none was to be available for the return journey.*

*Two Bostons flew in at 50 feet to deliver 8x50lb bombs which were fitted with 11 second delayed fuses to permit the aircraft enough time to avoid the effects of the explosions. The remaining four aircraft then commenced their run into the target but it was to prove a disaster. One of the aircraft turned too sharply and missed the intended target completely, while a second having scored a direct hit on the target collided with another in the formation and both crashed to the ground where they were seen to be on fire. A further aircraft BZ226 (O) was hit by flak and crashed into the Channel killing the crew of four on board.*

*The fourth aircraft was flown by F/O Jim Allison with F/Sgt Rod Macleod as navigator and F/O Norman Fairfax as wireless operator/air gunner. They had with them "Skeets" Kelly of the RAF Photographic Unit, who had joined them to record details of the raid. It was the crew's thirteenth operation and things soon started to go wrong for them too. They were suddenly set upon by a German FW190 fighter which attacked them from the rear.*

*F/O Fairfax recalled the incident very clearly. "It was a fine August evening when we left Hartford Bridge and we only met light flak on the way over, where we crossed the enemy coast. This was in contrast to the target zone where it was extremely heavy and I vividly recall seeing two of our squadron aircraft going down in flames. However, we continued, only to receive a hit in one of the engines and found ourselves falling behind what was left of the other aircraft in the formation.*

*We were soon set upon by an enemy FW190 fighter, which surprised us from the rear. Returning fire, I advised Jim Allison, our pilot, to corkscrew in an effort to lose the fighter but this proved difficult as by now the damaged engine was out of action. I recall seeing holes appear in the fuselage as the fighter pressed home its attack. I received a terse message from the pilot, who was having major control problems by this time, to prepare for a crash landing. "Skeets" quickly scrambled up to sit on my knees, which was the correct laid-down procedure.*

*"Meanwhile Rod Macleod in the nose of the aircraft was in a very dangerous position as it would be the nose that would be expected to take the brunt of any collision with ground obstructions. Jim Allison, however, made a marvellous belly-landing in a ploughed field, which due to his skills caused no injury to any of us.*

*We were very pleased to be on the ground and in one piece. We all scrambled out in very quick time and set light to the aircraft to deny the enemy its secrets, as we rapidly made for the nearest cover.*

*"There had been so much going on while we were in the air that I didn't have time to consider my feelings but once on the ground and in the relative safety of our hiding place I realised just how calm it now was after the turmoil of the crash landing. "Skeets" was bemoaning the loss of his camera which he had to leave in the aircraft wreckage, as he thought that he had captured some of the best shots ever of aerial combat. As I quietly gathered my thoughts I began to think of the horror of seeing our fellow flight crews plummeting to the ground and there was, I recall, some discussion between us with speculation on which of our friends had been lost.*

*As we lay there trying to relax with a cigarette we reviewed our situation and I recall thinking with regret that I wouldn't be able to keep the date that I had arranged with a WAAF that evening back at the base. No doubt the others would have been thinking of their wives back home, especially Rod, as his wife was pregnant.*

*It was soon time to make a move so we split into two groups of two and drew lots to decide who would go with whom. Jim and "Skeets" went off first and we followed a little later. Jim and "Skeets" eventually split up to make their own ways home but unfortunately "Skeets" was eventually caught and spent the rest of the war as a POW.*

*Jim eventually made his way home via Spain and Gibraltar. Rod and I eventually got back in mid November and after a period of rest, recuperation and re-training all three of us returned to Hartford Bridge, but this time to serve with 88 Squadron."*



In February 1944, 107 Squadron was re-equipped with, and converted to Mosquito Mk.VI fighter-bombers, and moved closer to London to RAF Lasham, at Bassingstoke, in Hampshire.

*De Havilland Mosquito Fighter Bomber*

Using the Mosquito, 107 Squadron then began conducting “Night Intruder” missions over occupied France. It is considered that the Mosquito was perhaps the finest aircraft of the war.

Supporting the D-Day landings was the priority for 107 Squadron, by means of precision bombing of coastal batteries, enemy airfields, and troop formations, usually led by a Basil Embry, who would later become: Air Chief Marshal Sir Basil Edward Embry, GCB, KBE, DSO (with 3x Bars), DFC, AFC. Soon after the planning for D-Day began, it was decided that RAF Fighter Command had best be re-organised, which saw large numbers of fighter and fight-bomber squadrons being moved across to join the light bomber squadrons of the existing No 2 Group, to form the Second Tactical Air Force (2TAC), and the ‘rump’ of Fighter Command, including many of its Mosquito night-fighter units.

Despite the fact that the Luftwaffe had suffered massive attrition, 2TAC put up standing patrols of Mosquito night-fighters, often controlled by GCI units installed on converted Landing Ship Tank hulls (and referred to as Fighter Direction Tenders), to ensure that any attempt to bomb the mass of shipping off Gold, Sword, Juno, Utah and Omaha Beaches was countered as soon as possible.

It is well-known that the US 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force fighter-bombers, and the mass of Royal Air Force Typhoon and Spitfire squadrons, dominated the day-time skies over Normandy. Precision strikes by rocket-firing Typhoons had seriously damaged or destroyed many German radar stations along the coast – except in the Pas-de-Calais where they were left alone, as they were needed to report a “fake invasion force” generated in part by ‘windowing’ Lancasters.

What is less well known is that, as the Germans stopped trying to move Panzer Divisions and other units towards the invasion coast in daylight, and switched to night moves where they thought that the ‘Jabos’ couldn’t reach them, that was where the Mosquito came into its own.

Many Mosquito FB.VI’s were given patrol sectors over Normandy, where they would attack trains, enemy transport, gun positions and Luftwaffe airfields at night, with “Night Intruder” being the name given to this type of mission.

The Mosquito was ideally suited to this role, being heavily armed and able to fly extremely fast both at high altitudes and at low-level, accordingly the de Havilland Mosquito was probably the most versatile aircraft of the Second World War.

Powered by two Rolls Royce Merlin engines, the Mosquito's extraordinary performance stemmed partly from its wooden airframe, which made it much lighter and more agile than other twin-engine aircraft operating as fighters in the European theatre. Yet the Mosquito could also carry a 4000-pound bomb, which added to its devastating effectiveness as an attacking force.

Mosquitos were used as night fighters, stealth bombers, and marauders over enemy territory, pathfinding to mark targets for heavy bombers, 'spoof' (decoy) tactics to draw the defence away from intended targets, jamming German radio and radar to sow further confusion among the enemy.



*Mosquito being loaded with 500lb (220kg) bombs*



It is little wonder the Luftwaffe held it in such awe. In six months leading up to the D-Day invasion of Normandy, Mosquitoes destroyed seven German night fighters for each aircraft of their own shot down.

After D-Day, No. 107 Squadron was tasked to exclusively fly night intruder missions over Northern France, going after trains, transports and other targets of opportunity.

Following is an account Eric Smith, DFC, a Canadian pilot who flew with No. 107 Squadron:-

*"It took a particular pilot to fly Mosquitos," says Smith. "We only operated at night and it was all low level stuff, just above the tree tops.".....Smith recalls the 107 as being one of the most cosmopolitan squadrons in the RAF.*

*"We had three Americans, a Norwegian, three Aussies, three New Zealanders and a guy from Southern Rhodesian. It was a great group of guys. We had a tremendous esprit de corps," says Smith.*

*Unlike Spitfire squadrons which flew in formation, Mosquito pilots operated independently. They were given a predetermined area of operation with orders to shoot up anything that moved.*

*During the remainder of the war, the 107 Squadron lost an average of one or two pilots per week. While many were downed by enemy ground fire, many others perished as a result of having to operate so low in varying degrees of visibility.*

*"A lot of fellas flew into the ground," says Smith recalling a close call of his own. "One time the weather was pretty bad so we were diverted to Manston. We were flying along in the clouds and it started to get a little brighter so I asked my navigator where we were. The next thing I know we drop out of the clouds and we were right in the middle of a balloon field. Well those things are designed to make it impossible to fly in. All I could do was fly straight, hope for the best and make myself feel as small as possible. The old drops were dripping off the armpits I'll tell ya'."*

Another account demonstrating the perils of low-level Mosquito bombing is told by Tommy Broom, who was pilot with No. 105 Squadron:

*"We took off from Horsham St Faith at 7.30 p.m. and went in formation to the Dutch Island at the mouth of the Scheldt where we split up and proceeded individually. Not long after crossing the coast and the islands, we were very low and brushed the tops of the trees.*

*A few minutes later after crossing another small wood, an electricity pylon suddenly loomed in front of us. We pulled up but the starboard engine struck the pylon at its top. Immediately the engine and the propeller stopped. The action of hitting the pylon jammed the controls.*

*We were eighty feet up and there was nothing we could do. We were doing about 250 mph and just had to wait until we hit the ground. I said to Costello-Bowen, 'Well this is it'. It's a funny thing, but neither of us was worried and we were very calm, although death stared us in the face.*

*We lost height steadily and crossed a couple of fields. Then the pinewoods loomed up in front. We were bound to crash into them – this was about half a minute after hitting the pylon.*

*Just before we hit I instinctively released my safety harness; why I don't know. Then we hit and everything went black; no physical pain, just darkness and I felt myself rolling over and over like a ball. I must have been unconscious for a time.*

*When I awoke I was covered in branches and bits of aeroplane and there was a strong smell of petrol. I was amazed I had no injuries; not even a scratch. I must have been flung out of the top of the cockpit as I was right in the front with the nose of the aircraft. It was amazing that the aircraft did not catch fire or the bombs explode. The nose of the aircraft must have passed between two trees. How lucky can you be?*

*My next thought was for my navigator, Costello-Bowen Although it was nearly dark, I found him in some wreckage about twenty yards away. He was unconscious and looked in poor shape. The rudder pedals had torn off both his shoes. After talking and patting his face for a few moments, he finally awoke. I lifted him up and half carried him about 400 yards away, where we both sat down. He gradually recovered and we were soon talking. We both felt very despondent at the thought of being made prisoners of war."*

Yet another interesting Mosquito Pilot account of Night Intruder operations, that was recorded many years after the war, is by Reg Everson. This is part of what he had to say:

*"We would take off singly and fly at 4,000 ft to an area behind enemy lines.....During the patrol we would search out signs of any movements on the ground. Once we spotted something we would go down lower and investigate. If the movement proved to be a train, lorries, tanks, barges we would then attack from low level with 500lb bombs, .303 machine guns or cannons.*

*This could sometimes be a bit 'scary' there was always a danger of going too low. Most of our losses were due to hitting the ground or obstructions such as trees or power lines and, sometimes the object being attacked. If my navigator thought we were too low he would shout "Up!" I never argued but immediately pulled back the stick to gain height as quickly as possible."*

It was not only on operational missions that it could be dangerous flying a mosquito at low level, as demonstrated by this further account by Reg Everson:-

*".....an army co-operation exercise against army tanks was held. We were detailed to fly No2 to S/Ldr Tennant. The exercise involved attacking tanks at low level with .303 machine guns. Unfortunately S/Ldr Tennant flew so low that his aircraft hit a tank, burst into flames and he and his navigator were killed instantly."*

Here is an account of a night intruder operation flown by an Australian mosquito pilot Flying Officer John Walton, that took place just three weeks after Hector was killed, and in the same area of Northern France. Walton took-off on the night of 25/26th July 1944 in one of 12 aircraft from the Squadron detailed to bomb and strafe road & bridges, railway line/junctions, sidings and airfields in support of the troops in France:-



*In a later statement F/O Walton reported: "The aircraft took off on an offensive patrol near Orleans France. The aircraft was hit in the bomb bay at 02:15 hrs. Flares in the bomb bay ignited and the cockpit filled with smoke. A few moments later the 20mm ammo began exploding. I gave the order to bale out and F/O Harper baled out at 02:15 hrs. I followed. I saw the aircraft explode as it hit the ground. I landed in an orchard near St Pere. I sprained an ankle and lost one shoe. Hid chute, harness and mae west in bushes and crawled 2kms west. Hid in hay field until 18:00 when I hailed a Frenchman. He agreed to help and went away and returned later with food. I then removed my battle dress blouse and black tie and rolled up my shirt sleeves. The Frenchman gave me a pitch fork and we walked to his home about half a mile. The remainder of my journey was arranged for me."*

*Mosquito crew (Pilot & navigator) wearing iconic "Mae-West" vests.*

As previously mentioned, Hector and his navigator Jack Green were killed on the night of 4/5<sup>th</sup> July 1944, flying an “Intruder” mission over Norther France.

Hector’s last mission is described in detail, later in this chapter, in the section titled: **WW2 Combat Missions flown by Hector Scott Keable Ross, as recorded in the Official Operations Book, of RAF 107 Squadron**

In summary however, Hector & Jack’s last mission involved flying an offensive night “Road Patrol”, meaning they had a designated certain roads they were to fly above, and attack any enemy positions or movements they could find, on or near the road.

As will be later read in a transcript of the letter written to Hector’s parents by the Commanding Officer of No. 107 Squadron, it is believed Hector & Jack were probably brought down by flak, as there was considerable opposition from German defences (flak) that night.

What has recently been found is that several months after Allied Forces liberated Nazi occupied France, Hector & Jack’s bodies were discovered buried in the church graveyard small French village called:

***La Chapelle-près-Sées.***

This village is approx. 4km south of a significantly larger town called **Sées**, which was one of Hector and Jack’s most important way-points on their road patrol.

Shortly after the discovery of their original graves, Hector & Jack’s remains were exhumed, and reburied at the British War Cemetery, in Bayeux, Normandy, France.

***Photograph of the actual de Havilland DH98 Mk VI Mosquito Fighter-Bomber, (Serial No. NS886) that Hector and Jack were flying when they were shot-down, on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1944. It is believed this photograph came from the estate of Jack Green’s mother.***



All that was originally known about the circumstances surrounding Hector & Jack's deaths, was that which was written in a letter of condolence by Hector's Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Pollard to Hector's father, with a similar letter also being sent to Jack Green's Mother. A transcript of the letter (dated 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1944) reads as follows:-

*Dear Mr. Ross,*

*It is with deep regret that I have to confirm that your son Pilot Officer HECTOR SCOTT KEABLE ROSS, is missing as a result of air operations against the enemy on the night of 4/5 July.*

*Hector took off with his navigator, FO. J.R. Green, at 23.15 hours on July 4<sup>th</sup> to attack enemy movements south of the battle area in Northern France. The aircraft failed to return.*

*Nothing was heard from them although I, and other pilots of the squadron, were in the same area on similar missions. It is to be presumed they were shot down, probably by flak, as there was considerable opposition from German defences that night.*

*It is possible they may have bailed out or survived the crash. We can only hope they did and wait patiently for news.*

*I am very sorry Mr. Ross that I can tell you nothing more definite than that. I am afraid we know no more. The moment any details reach us from enemy or other sources we shall advise you instantly.*

*I cannot say how sorry I am to have to write this letter.*

*I had the pleasure of having Hector under my command for some time, and during that time I had come to regard him with affection and admiration. He displayed a fine fighting spirit, ever keen to operate, always cool & courageous in action. I think we all loved him and I speak for the whole squadron when I say we shall miss him more and more as we come to realise he is no longer with us.*

*I would like you to know that on the 6<sup>th</sup> July this unit was informed that Hector had been appointed to a commission in the Royal Australian Air Force with effect from 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1943, and that I believe he had the makings of a fine officer and would have been a great asset to the squadron.*

*We have packed Hector's kit and have forwarded it to the R.A.F Central Depository, Colnbrook, Slough, Bucks, who will send it onto you in due course.*

*On behalf of the squadron, I offer you our deepest sympathy.*

*We understand how terrible this time is for you, the grief, the uncertainty, the worry. We are one with you in hoping and praying that all will be well and Hector will be returned to you.*

*If there is any way I can be of assistance to you do not hesitate to call upon me.*

*Regretfully I am,  
Yours sincerely,*

*M. E. Pollard  
Wing Commander, Commanding  
No. 107 Squadron, R.A.F.*

## WW2 Combat Missions flown by Hector Scott Keable Ross, as recorded in the Official Operations Book, of RAF 107 Squadron

### 4:2 Operational Missions - Douglas Boston 111A

#### **Mission No. 01**

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)

**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 387

**Call-sign:** "L - London"

#### **Operation Details: Audinghen Village - Todt Organization HQ**

12x Boston IIIA aircraft of No. 88 Squadron, and 12x Boston IIIA aircraft from No. 107 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Carlisle, were dispatched to attack the village of AUDINGHEN which is the Headquarters of the TODT ORGANIZATION in Western Europe, with Fighter Escort.

24x aircraft attacked the primary target from 11, 400 - 12,000 feet at 15:37 hours, dropping 92x 500lb N.C. Mk. II tail instantaneous bombs.

Moderate/heavy flak accurate for height but not direction was encountered in the target area. One aircraft sustained minor damage. No enemy aircraft were sighted.

---

**Just prior to this mission, Hector was granted 7 days leave, from 30<sup>th</sup> October to 5<sup>th</sup> November.**



*Artist's impression of an RAF Douglas Boston IIIA Bomber*



## **Mission No. 02**

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 308  
**Call-sign:** "T - Tommy"

### **Operation Details: Audinghen Village**

12x Boston IIIA aircraft of No. 88 Squadron, and 13x Bostons from No. 107 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Carlisle, were dispatched to attack the village.

21x aircraft attacked the primary at 15:16 - 15:18 hours from 9,800 - 11,110 feet with 81x 500 lb MC 0.025 second delay bombs (3x bombs of a/c "P" hung-up).

Aircraft "O" of 107 Squadron did not bomb owing to being pushed out of position owing to evasive action.

Moderate light & heavy flak was experienced over the target - the former well below the formation. Tracer fire also observed.

Three aircraft of 107 Squadron ("H", "T" and "J") abandoned task.

---

## **Mission No. 03**

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 213  
**Call-sign:** "C - Charlie"

### **Operation Details: Target - Audinghen Village**

12x Boston IIIA aircraft of No. 107 Squadron, and 12x Bostons from No. 88 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Maher attacked Audinghen Village from 9,700 - 10,700 feet at 09:36 - 09:39 hours dropping 92x 500lb M.C. bombs with 0.025 delay.

Intense heavy accurate flak and light tracer experienced over target and light flak was encountered when crossing the enemy coast on return journey. 14x aircraft received minor damage.

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*Boston IIIs of No.88 Squadron. This squadron often flew missions together with 107 squadron*

## **Mission No. 04**

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 350  
**Call-sign:** "O - Orange"

### **Operation Details: Audinghen Village**

6x Boston aircraft of No. 342 Squadron, with 6x aircraft of No. 88 Squadron, and 6x aircraft from No. 107 Squadron led by Squadron Leader Jorry detailed to attack the village.

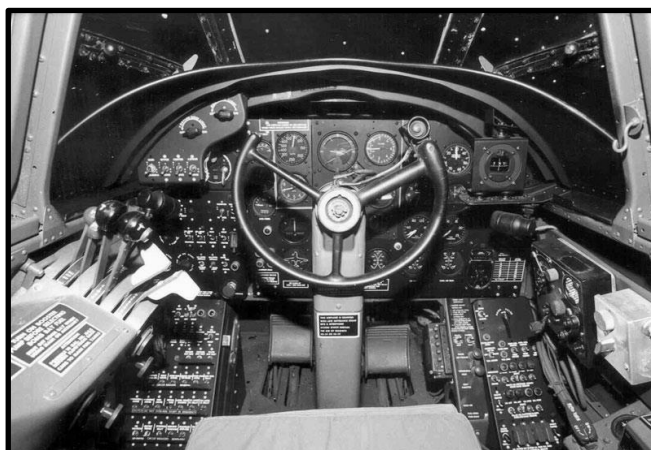
18x aircraft attacked the primary target from 12,000 - 13,100 feet at 15:33 - 15:36 dropping 72x 500lb MC 0.025 second delay bombs.

Moderate accurate heavy flak between target area and enemy coast on return. 5x aircraft suffered minimum damage.

Aircraft "P" abandoned task owing to excessive vibration and smoke from starboard engine.

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*Cockpit layout of a Boston Bomber*



## **Mission No. 05**

**Date:** 01<sup>st</sup> December, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 350  
**Call-sign:** "O - Orange"

### **Operation Details: Martinvas - Cherbourg Peninsular**

In the morning the Squadron carried out an attack on the construction work at MARTINVAS in the CHERBOURG PENINSULA.

The formation met the escort at PORTLAND HILL at 11,000 feet, and set course for the CASQUETS. The target was attacked on an easterly heading and good results were later found to have been obtained.

A considerable amount of heavy flak was experienced over the target.

The formation led by Squadron Leader Maher returned safely to Base, though many of the aircraft sustained damage from flak.

No enemy aircraft were encountered.

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## **Mission No. 06**

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> December, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt Naisbit (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA  
**Call-sign:** "M - Mother"

### **Operation Details: St Omer - Emplacement**

The Squadron was detailed, in conjunction with Nos. 88 and 342 Squadron, to carry out an attack on an emplacement near ST. OMER. The formation made rendezvous over HASTINGS. The enemy coast was crossed near HARDELOT at 12,000 feet.

The target was unfortunately obscured by cloud at the crucial moment with the result that some of the aircraft did not bomb. In the target area a fair amount of heavy flak was encountered and some of the aircraft were hit.

No enemy aircraft were encountered. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

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## **Mission No. 07**

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA  
**Call-sign:** "U - Uncle"

### **Operation Details: La Glacrie**

6x Boston IIIA of 342 Squadron, 6 Boston IIA of 88 Squadron, 6 Boston IIIA of 107 Squadron led by Flight Leader Langer were despatched with fighter escort to attack Construction Works at La Glacrie.

7x aircraft (6 of 88 and 1 of 107 Squadron) attacked the target from 13,000 feet at 12.59 hours, dropping 27x 500lb MC 0.025 sec bombs.

Results mainly unobserved owing to cloud, but some bombs believed to have fallen in or near the target area.

11 aircraft were unable to locate the target owing to cloud and returned to Base with bombs.

A fair amount of accurate heavy flak and some light flak was encountered from the target area.

No enemy aircraft were seen.

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## Mission No. 08

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> December, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA  
**Call-sign:** "T - Tommy"

### **Operation Details: Le Mesnil Allard - Ski Site (V1 Rocket Launch Site)**

Once again Le Mesnil Allard was the objective, in an attack which was carried out at low level. Wing Commander De Rancourt of 342 Squadron, led the Wing on this occasion. Of the 36 aircraft detailed for this operation, 2x were instructed to attack from Low Level, the remaining 34 were briefed to attack from 1,500 feet with 500lb MC bombs, fused tail instantaneous.

Setting course from ODIHAM at 0902 hours to formation headed for HASTINGS. En-route aircraft "U" ran into a flock of birds and damaged the nose. W/O Glynn and crew therefore returned to base, their place taken Flight Sgt Turner and crew.

Landfall made on the enemy coast near BIVILLE. Once over the coast the formation unfortunately became somewhat mixed up and what with violent weaving and steering wrong & erratic courses the aircraft in the main failed to locate the target.

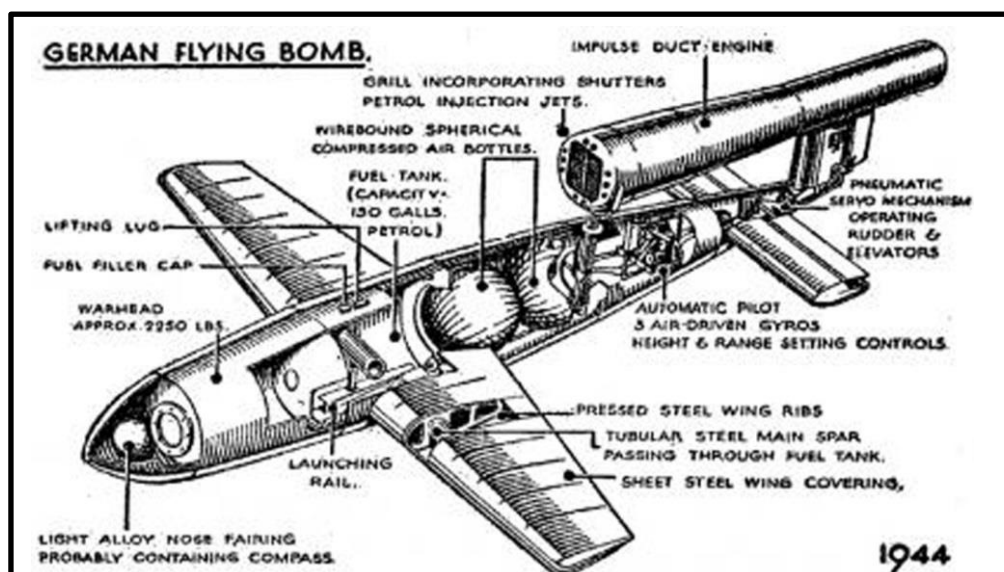
Three minutes after E.T.A a rail junction near SERQUEUX was bombed from 1,500 feet. This target received the main weight of the attack. The aircraft then headed for the coast.

One must record at this juncture, that Wing Commander DE RANCOURT, making several separate runs from the coast finally located and bombed the primary target.

With this exception the raid on LE MESNIL ALLARD was completely abortive.

Flight officer Turner and crew of 107 Squadron, not having bombed SERQUEUX, chanced upon a SKI SITE near PUCHERVIN. After circling it at 2,000 feet for identification purposes a successful bombing attack was carried out at 2,000 feet, no flak being encountered. Good result was obtained.

The majority of aircraft crossed the enemy coast outward near LE TREPORT. All our aircraft returned safely to Base, though light flak, in plenty, was encountered from FLAK TRAINS at SERQUEUX and Flak positions at LE TREPORT. No enemy aircraft were sighted.



## Mission No. 09

**Date:** 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1943  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 350  
**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

### **Operation Details: Forêt d'Hesdin - Ski Site (V1 Rocket Launch Site)**

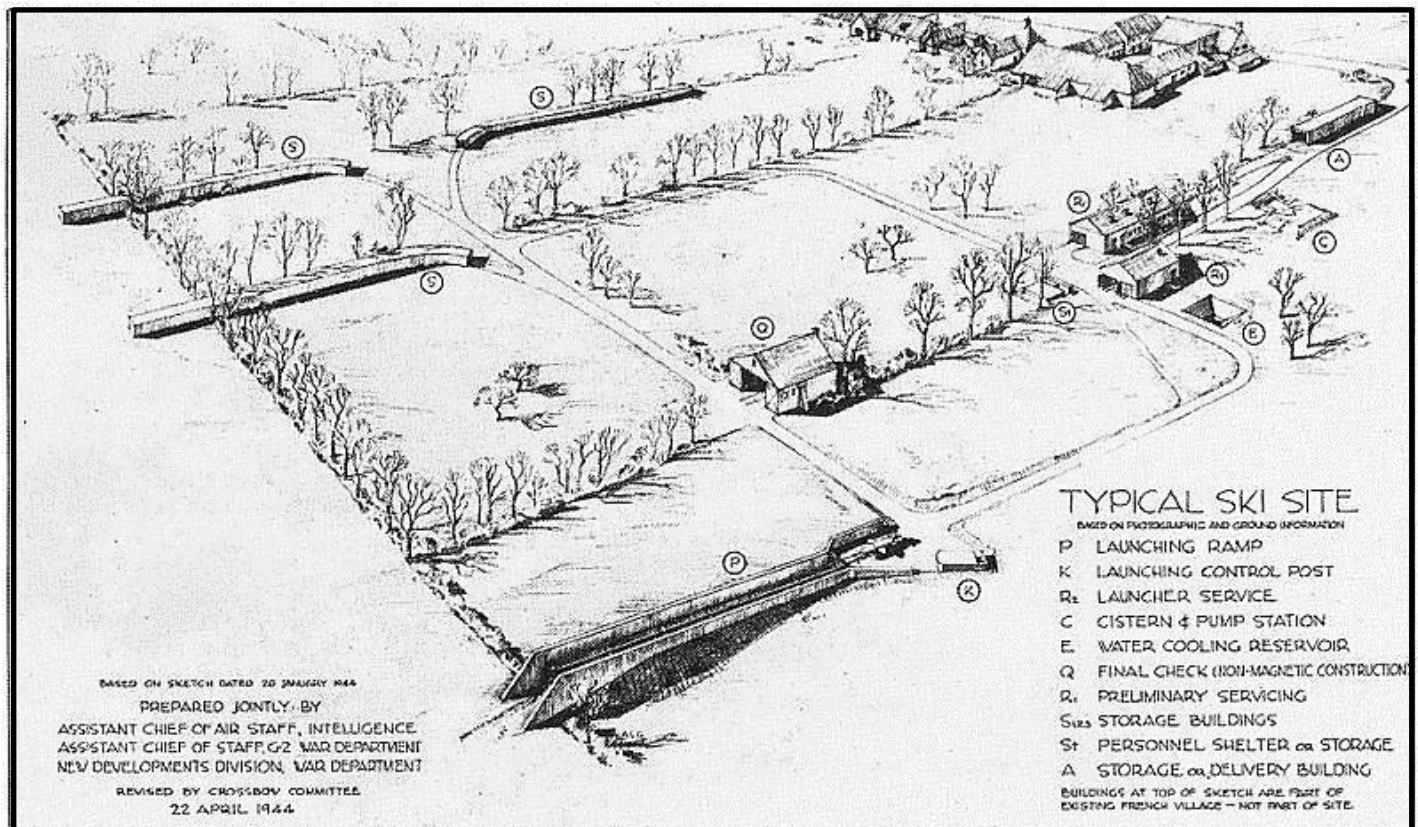
The Squadron carried out an attack on a SKI SITE in the FORET D'HESDIN. Airborne at 13:15 hours in company with 88 Squadron and 342 Squadron, the Squadron set course at 13:29 hours for DUNGENESS. Rendezvous was made at 13:50 hours in good conditions.

As the formation headed out across the Channel more and more cloud was encountered. Landfall was made near LE TOUQUET at 13:59 hours. The weather improved as the aircraft went inland.

At 14:03 hours the target was bombed from 10,000 feet. At 14:12 hours the enemy coast was recrossed, and at 14:40 hours the formation reached Base without further incident.

Photographic reports show a considerable number of bombs landed in the target area and good results were obtained.

Little flak was encountered on the trip - none over the target - and no enemy aircraft were seen.



## **Mission No. 10**

**Date:** 05<sup>th</sup> January, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 350  
**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

### **Operation Details: Marguenneville**

9x Boston IIIA aircraft of 88 Squadron, 7 Boston IIIA aircraft of 342 Squadron, and 6 Boston IIIA aircraft of 107 Squadron, led by Wing Commander Spencer were despatched with fighter cover to attack Constructional Works at Marguenneville.

4x aircraft of 88 Squadron 5x of 342 Squadron, and 6x of 107 Squadron bombed what was believed to be the primary target from 9,000/9,800 Feet, at 12:02 hours, dropping 60x 500 lb MC 0.025 seconds delay bombs, but great difficulty was experienced in identifying the target. 7x aircraft (4 of 88, 2 of 342 and 1 of 107 Squadron) did not attack for this reason, and bombs were brought back. A very little inaccurate heavy and some light flak was encountered.

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## **Mission No. 11**

**Date:** 07<sup>th</sup> January, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA BZ. 350  
**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

### **Operation Details: La Glacarie**

6x Boston IIIA of 342 Squadron, 6 Boston IIA of 88 Squadron, 6 Boston IIIA of 107 Squadron led by Flight Leader LANGER were despatched with fighter escort to attack Construction Works at La Glacarie.

7x aircraft (6 of 88 and 1 of 107 Squadrons) attacked the target from 1,300 feet at 12:59 hours, dropping 27x 500lb MC 0.025 seconds delay bombs. Results mainly unobserved owing to cloud, but some bombs believed to have fallen in or near the target area.

11x aircraft were unable to locate the target owing to cloud and returned to Base with bombs. A fair amount of accurate heavy flak and some light flak was encountered from the target area. No enemy aircraft were seen.

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## **Mission No. 12**

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 394  
**Call-sign:** "S - Sugar"

### **Operation Details: Bois D'Enfer**

6x Boston IIIA of No. 107 Squadron, 6x Boston IIIA of No. 342 Squadron, 6x Boston IIIA of 88 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader MAHER were despatched with fighter escort to attack Construction Works at BOIS D'ENFER in the PAS DE CALAIS.

6x aircraft of 107, 6x of 342 Squadron and 4x of 88 Squadron attacked the primary target from 9,900/10,600 feet, at 12:50 – 12:52 hours, dropping 46x 500lb MC 0.025 time-delay bombs, 8x 500lb MC 6 Hour time-delay bombs, 8x 500lb MC 12 hour time-delay bombs. Moderate to heavy flak encountered over the target area, mostly from the north and east.

Moderate light flak was experienced on crossing the enemy coast on the return journey.

5x aircraft of 88 Squadron received minor damage.

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## **Mission No. 13**

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
Sgt S. W. Law (WO/ Air Gunner)  
Sgt G. L. P. Saville (Air Gunner)  
**Aircraft:** Boston IIIA - BZ. 333  
**Call-sign:** "U - Uncle"

### **Operation Details: Foret Nationale De Tourneheim**

5x Boston IIIA of 342 Squadron, 5x Boston IIIA of 107 Squadron and 2x Boston IIIA of 88 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader GORRI were despatched with fighter escort to attack Constructional Works in Foret Nationale De Tourneheim.

11x aircraft abandoned the task at position 50°50'N 01°10'E at 15:53 hours at 11,200 feet, owing to absence of fighter escort. Formation made R.V. at given time, called up fighter escort on V.H.F. without obtaining a reply and continued 1/3 of a way across Channel without seeing escort.

Before returning aircraft "M" of 107 Sqn jettisoned 2x 500 lb MC 6 Hour time-delay and 2x 500lb MC 12 hour time-delay bombs in the sea.

Remaining aircraft brought bombs back.

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**In February Hector, along with other pilots from No. 107 squadron, was sent on a Mosquito conversion course. This must have taken place during the last two weeks of February, because Hector was granted 9 days leave from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> February.**

## 4:3 Operational Missions - de Havilland Mosquito

### **Mission No. 14**

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> March, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - HX. 901  
**Call-sign:** "E - Edward"

**Operation Details: Noball Target - St Laurent**

On this day a new page in the history of 107 Squadron was written, for conversion to Mosquito aircraft having been completed, at 13:15 hours a formation of 6x Mosquito FB Mk VI aircraft, led by Wing Commander Pollard took off, and set course for LITTLEHAMPTON.

Over this country the formation consisted of three loose pairs at intervals of 1,000 feet. Crossing the coast at 13:31 hours, the formation maintained the same spacing, headed out to sea at 30 feet to pick up appropriate GEE-Lattice line.

On reaching the desired position, the formation proceeded to "home along the lattice line" to the French coast.

When about 20 miles from the coast the formation began to climb to 5,000 feet.

At 14:01 hours the coast was crossed at SOTTEVILLE, the desired point, north of ST. VALERY EN GAUX. From this point onwards evasive action was in progress.

Some light flak was encountered near the coast.

The intervals between the pairs gradually increased to 2,500 ft.

At 14:07 hrs ST. LAURENT was reached and the target NOBALL 42 was sighted.

At 14:08 hrs the first pair carried out a dive attack from 3,000 ft.

Cannon strikes were observed and the second pair, before beginning their attack, saw two sets of bomb explosions in the target area.

At 14:09 hr. the second pair attacked in a similar fashion.

On leaving the target B-Ber, piloted by F/Lt Campbell was rocked by an explosion. Damage was seen to have been done to the starboard outer fuel tank.

At 14:10 hrs the third pair attacked, and as they passed over the target, noticed that damage had been done to some of the buildings on the site.

The pairs, after bombing, regained height and crossing the coast at 5,000 feet at SOTTEVILLE returned home independently.

Some light flak was encountered.

All aircraft returned to Base safely, though B-Ber which had been damaged over the target, was found to be completely without hydraulic power. The pilot F/Lt Campbell, after flying around for nearly an hour in a fruitless endeavour to get the undercarriage down, made a successful crash landing on the airfield. Both he and his navigator escaped unhurt.

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## **Mission No. 15**

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI NS 816

**Call-sign:** "T - Tommy"

**Operation Details:** **Noball Target - Preuseville**

Airborne at 08:35 hours, the formation "homed" along the GEE-Lattice line to TOCQUEVILLE. The enemy coast was crossed at 5,000 feet, fairly violent evasive action being carried out. There was no evidence of flak at the enemy coast.

On reaching the target area, it was found low cloud ceiling (1,200-1,500 feet) almost completely obscured the target area. The formation, led by Flight Lt Turner, twice circled the area, trying to identify the target through cloud gaps. While circling, the formation was subjected to fairly intense and accurate light flak. No aircraft was hit.

The leader identified the target and with his No. 2 (F/Sgt H.S.K. Ross) in close attendance, he dived through the cloud and bombed the target. After waiting the appropriate time for the bombs to explode, the leader of the second pair dived and bombed. No. 2 of the second pair failed to identify the target and brought his bombs back.

No. 6 circling the target three times, identified and bombed a secondary Noball target about 1.5 miles south-east of the primary. One of the wing-bombs of No. 6 Aircraft hung-up and was brought back.

The bombing results were considered good by the second (F/Sgt H.S.K Ross & P/O J. Green) pair, and third pair.

Owing to the very unfortunate weather, peculiar to the target area alone, the formation was forced to break-up over the target area, and after bombing, proceed to the enemy coast independently.

The first pair (F/L Turner & F/Sgt Ross) remained in the target area, trying to observe the bomb bursts.

The cloud completely obscured the target, but the leader, diving through the low cloud saw some bursts in the target area in the vicinity of the "Q" sites and some overshoots.

Considerable light flak was encountered by several of the returning aircraft, but no damage was sustained.

No's 3 & 4 crossed the English coast at Bexhill and the remaining aircraft at Hastings.

All aircraft returned safely to Base at 10:40 hours.

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## **Mission No. 16**

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)  
**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - MM. 419  
**Call-sign:** "L- London"  
**Operation Details:** **Noball Target - Freval**

6x Mosquito aircraft from 107 Sqd set course for the target following the route - BASE - LITTLE-HAMPTON - 50.15N 0005E - SOTTEVILLE - 2.5 miles NNE AUFFRAY - TARGET - MARIGNY - ASSIGNY - TOCQUEVILLE - HASTINGS - BASE.

The first pair set course at 15.26 hours, followed by the other two pairs at five minute intervals. The aircraft followed the GEE-Lattice line to the French coast.

The target was dive-bombed at 16:01, 16:05 and 16:10 respectively. Visibility in France was excellent. No. 2 of the second pair bombed an alternate Noball target 2.5 miles south of the primary owing to a misunderstanding. The third pair (F/Sgt H.S.K Ross & P/O J. Green leading) bombed the primary.

Some light flak was experienced by all the aircraft in the neighbourhood of the target area and a little on the return to Base.

The leader (of the first pair) saw his No. 2 (T-Tommy) deliver his bombing attack but did not see him thereafter. There was no sign of the aircraft when the leader re-crossed the French coast and there was no reply over the inter-comm to the leader's calls.

On the way home, across the Channel, the second pair (F/Sgt H.S.K Ross & P/O J. Green) observed an object in the water. On closer investigation, the object proved to be two K. type dinghies tied together and occupied by two people. The aircraft circled the dinghy, got GEE fixes and informed the Air Sea Rescue Authorities. The occupants of the dinghy were very much excited and waved almost continually during the 40 minutes aircraft were circling. In due course, the aircraft (F/Sgt Ross) was relieved by a Spitfire sent by Air-Sea Rescue.

Further on the way home a second large dinghy was sighted by F/O Shepherd and his observer F/Sgt Collins. This was upside-down. However, a fix was obtained and a message was sent to Air-Sea Rescue. It has now been established that the two occupants of the first dinghy (two members of the U.S.A.A.C. who had ditched four days ago) were both rescued.

All 107 Squadron aircraft, with the exception of "T-Tommy" returned safely to base. It has now been established that "T-Tommy" was unfortunately shot down in a position South of Dieppe by one of four U.S.A.A.C. Mustangs on patrol in Northern France, in mistake for an enemy aircraft.

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**Hector was granted 7 days leave, from 30<sup>th</sup> March to 5<sup>th</sup> April.**

## **Mission No. 17**

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS 831

**Call-sign:** "O - Orange"

**Operation Details:** **Hirson Marshalling Yards - Locomotives**

8x Mosquito aircraft from 107 Squadron led by Wing Commander Pollard, set course in pairs at 12.48 hrs and orbited LITTLEHAMPTON at 12.55 hrs where another Squadron of Mosquitos and the Typhoon Fighter escort were met.

At 13.02 all aircraft set course for the French coast. The aircraft followed the flight plan in all its details until the target was sighted at 13.57 by the two leading aircraft.

The weather over France was excellent and the formation experienced no opposition whatever.

The two leading aircraft dived from 3,600 to 400 feet onto the target, peppering the whole roof area of the target with hundreds of cannon shells. The bombs (8x 500lb with 11 sec time delay) from the first two a/c hit the first four buildings.

The following three pairs of aircraft similarly dealt with the target. (F/Sgt H.S.K Ross was leader of the forth pair).

There can be little doubt that the whole target was completely obliterated.

After bombing, all the aircraft flew low for 3 minutes and No's 1 and 2 started a leisurely climb to enable the formation to form-up again.

The leader of the 2nd pair was hit in the fuselage by an explosive shell or bullet in the target area and although the aircraft was substantially damaged, it's performance was unimpaired. As soon as all aircraft had formed-up into a loose formation, course was set for home.

Base was reached, without further incident by all aircraft at 15.10 hrs.

Apart from the incident at the target, the enemy offered no opposition whatever.

There is little doubt that this was one of the most successful operations ever carried out by 107 Squadron.



*Artist's impression of a Mosquito crossing the English Channel at night, to France*



## **Mission No. 18**

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1944 (**Anzac Day**)  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS820

**Call-sign:** "P - Peter"

**Operation Details:** **Noball Target – Hendiere (near le Torps Nesril)**

The following route to and from target was taken, with heights as indicated. BASE- LITTLEHAMPTON (500 feet) - 5014N, 0006W (low Level) - 5001N 0010E (low level) - ETELOT (climb to 4,000 feet) HERICOURT-IN-WOOD 090 ENFREVILLE 2 (Descending to 3,000 feet) - TARGET (Dive Bombing to 400 feet) - ST AUBIN-LE-CALE (Climb to 4,000 feet) - ASSIGNY - TOCQUEVILLE - PEVENSEY BAY (Descend to 500 feet) - BASE 1,500 Feet).

Take off was considerably speeded up on this operation and the aircraft were in formation at least 5 minutes before they were due to set course. The Leader set course at 18:27 hours and the enemy coast was crossed at 18:56 hours. Owing to the failure of GEE-Lattice, landfall was made ten miles East of track, at St. Valery.

Due to considerable haze the Leader of the third pair lost the leading four (aircraft), and not recognizing the coastal pin-point turned on the flight plan. Aircrafts 7, 8, 9, & 10 made the same mistake (Hector Ross was piloting the 9th aircraft in-line).

Number "6" (leader of the 3rd pair) however recognized St. Valery and altered course straight to the target. The leading pair bombed at 19:01 hours and were followed closely by the second pair, and No's 6, 7, 8, 9 & 5 discovered they had overshot the target, and turned back to find the target with comparative ease in that order.

7 & 8 bombed at 19:07 hours, in time for No. 5, who was just turning onto the target, to see Flight Officer Hadley (No. 8) diving very low, catch his leader's slip-stream and crash in flames. At the enormous speed with which he hit, there is no possibility of the survival of either of the crew. No. 5 then bombed at 19:08 hours.

Bombing results were rather poor, and the most important part of the site was virtually undamaged. No flak was experienced on the target but the latter half of the formation reported intense light flak from St. Valery and the last aircraft to leave the French coast reported a little inaccurate light flak from a position several miles East of Dieppe.

All aircraft, with the exception of "L-London" returned safely to Base and landed by 19:58 hours.

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## **Mission No. 19**

**Date:** 01<sup>st</sup> May, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS831

**Call-sign:** "O - Orange"

**Operation Details:** **Operation Flower - Florrennes Airfield**

Target area patrolled without target being seen. Bombs jettisoned into sea on return.

First aircraft was airborne at 22:00 hours, and last returned at 01:45 hours.

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## **Mission No. 20**

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - LR2571

**Call-sign:** "F - Freddy"

**Operation Details:** **Operation Flower – Montdidier Airfield**

Of the 4x aircraft destined for COMLOMMIER, Pilot Officer Glynn landed immediately after take-off due to complete electrical failure.

Flight Officer's Sanderson & Whittle turned back over the Channel as they were unable to "home" to the enemy coast on GEE.

Capt. Hunt carried out the operation, and after being shot-up by flak over the target, was unable to jettison his bombs and belly landed unhurt at MANSTON with them (the bombs) still on-board.

Of the four aircraft on CREIL, three carried out the operation, W/O Hanna and Squadron Leader Brittain turned back due to GEE trouble over the Channel.

F/Sgt Ross and F/Lt Bulford also turned back because of GEE.

Squadron Leader Wallington and F/Sgt Ross (F/Sgt McBride?) completed their respective operations.

First aircraft was airborne at 22:20 hours, and last returned at 01:55 hours.

*Night-time test firing (zeroing-in) of a Mosquitos' Machineguns & Cannons*



## **Mission No. 21**

**Date:** 05<sup>th</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operations - Invasion Support**

17x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron were tasked to conduct night-intruder operations throughout the period of darkness, in support of the airborne invasion and sea-borne troops, in the Le-Havre and Cherbourg Peninsular areas, with the main objective of locating attacking and delaying enemy convoys approaching the invasion areas.

Only one road convoy was seen during the period of patrol and it was attacked with artillery (aircraft cannons) and bombs by Flying Officer Barley.

All the other aircraft (with the exception of D - Donald which failed to bomb because of electrical failure in the bomb switch) bombed and machine-gunned and cannoned subsidiary targets in the area, namely defiles, road junctions, railway junctions and main road areas.

No enemy aircraft were seen but light flak opposition was very intense and accurate. However, only one aircraft received some slight superficial damage, namely R-Robert. All the aircraft (with the exception of L-London which landed away at STRATARD-ON-AVON) landed safely at Base.

## **Mission No. 22**

**Date:** 06<sup>th</sup> June, 1944 (**D-Day Invasion of Europe**)

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Supporting D-Day Landings**

All aircraft (16x 107 Squadron Mosquitos) patrolled the areas allotted to them, being the main roads and railways between VEERE-CAEN, VEERE-FOUGERE. DOMFRONT-CAEN and AIGULAIN-CAEN.

Very little ammunition was brought back and most of the roads in the patrol areas were thoroughly sprayed with cannon and machine guns.

Alternative targets, railway and road junctions, bridges and transport terminus were bombed with 4x 500lb instantaneous fused bombs.

All the aircraft returned safely to Base and it is safely assumed that during the period of darkness little or no movement of enemy transport, vehicles or troops was possible in the areas patrolled by the Squadron.

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## **Mission No. 23**

**Date:** 07<sup>th</sup> June, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Support Normandy Invasion**

13x aircraft of 107 Squadron were tasked to patrol the following areas: occupied by enemy forces: GOUVILLE, ST. HILAIRE, MORTAIN, VIRE, LITTRY, ST. LO, VILLEDE.

Targets were located and bombed and trains and moving trucks were cannoned and machine-gunned. The Squadron again sterilized the area during the period of darkness and prevented all movements of troops and equipment into the front areas.

Additional 107 Squadron aircraft (which did not include F/Sgt Hector Ross) were tasked to carry out bombing attack on the railway marshalling yard at MEZIDON.

All the aircraft involved in this attack dive bombed the target, but there was some dispute between crews on return as to whether or not there was a large fire in the target area.

The aircraft "D" failed to return, the pilot Flight Officer Long broadcast, some 40 minutes after take-off over the V.H.F. that he was abandoning the aircraft. No further information had yet come to hand of the missing crew.

Twenty-three sorties were carried out by the Squadron, the first aircraft taking-off at dusk and the last landing at dawn. All aircraft, with the exception of "B", landed safely at Base.

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## **Mission No. 24**

**Date:** 09<sup>th</sup> June, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Supporting Normandy Invasion**

13x 107 Squadron Mosquitos tasked to carry-out offensive patrols behind enemy lines during the hours of darkness.

Other operations which had been laid-on, namely high-level bombing on G.H. (German HQ ?) could not be carried out because Group could not deliver the necessary information in time, although the crews waited until after 0300 hours for the information. Military objectives were again shot-up and bombs were dropped on woods and communications centres.

All aircraft returned safely to base.

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## **Mission No. 25**

**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Marshalling Yards at La Haye Du Puits**

Whilst most of 107 Squadron aircraft continued aggressive patrolling operations of allotted areas, Hector Ross, his navigator Jack Green and the crew of another 107 Squadron Mosquito were tasked with dropping target indicators (flares) onto the railway marshalling yards at La Haye Du Puits, to guide allied bombers onto the target.

Visibility in all of the target areas allotted to 107 Squadron was very poor, but all aircraft carried out their patrols, bombed and cannoned subsidiary targets (and other tasks) in the areas allotted to them.

In total, twenty-two (22) sorties were carried out by the Squadron during the night and all aircraft returned to Base.

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## **Mission No. 26**

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1944

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Chatelleraunt**

6x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron was tasked to carry out low level attacks on 7x Petrol and Oil trains in the marshalling yards at CHATELLERAUNT.

When the aircraft reached the target area it was already dark, but the target was well alight as a result of the good work of another Mosquito attack delivered earlier.

All the aircraft bombed and the fires were considerably increased.

When the last of the six aircraft left, the Wing Commander (Pollard) delivered a cannon attack along the whole length of the Marshalling Yards.

Immense oil fires were left burning.

All the aircraft returned safely to Base by 00:30 hours, having been airborne for 3 hours and 20 minutes.

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**Hector was granted 7 days leave from 15<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> of June, but given date of his next mission (Mission No. 27) it seems that this leave was cut at least one day short.**



*Artist's impression of a Mosquito attack on a railway marshalling yard*

## **Mission No. 27**

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Paris Area Train Targets**

As low cloud was expected at Base, 107 aircraft moved to Thorney Island (South Coast of England, near Portsmouth).

From there 18x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron took off to carry out patrols in the PARIS AREA, looking mainly for rail targets and there were reports of considerable rail movement in this area.

Most of the area was obscured by low cloud but it was clear for a short time in the Southern part of the area.

Flight Lt Whittle found a train and attacked with Bombs, Cannon and Machine guns. He then called in the airborne reserve, Flight Lt Turner, who reported that some railway coaches were on fire.

He (F/Lt Turner) attacked with Bombs and Cannon but was hampered by increasing low cloud.

One crew, Pilot Officer Green attacked the DREUX MARSHALLING YARDS with bombs and cannon and machine-guns.

All other aircraft dropped their bombs (using) GEE on railway targets in the area.

W/O Martin and Flight Lt Rippon turned back due to instrument trouble, and Lt Commander Skavhaugen was unable to take-off due to V.H.S. failure.

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## **Mission No. 28**

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Road patrols**

17x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron were tasked to carry out Road Patrols in along two separate routes, these being

1:- ST. LO - VIRE - FOLLIGNY - ST LO

2:- 18' LESSAY 4 - ST LO - 14' FOLLIGNY - GRANVILLE - LESSAY.

A new tactic was tried during this mission - each aircraft carried two bundles of flares and two bombs and illuminated their own targets. This was a success and the crews approved the idea.

Two suspected major targets were given, but there was no activity in these places. Squadron Leader Brittain attacked a vehicle with cannon causing it the swerve off the road and douse its lights, but it was not on fire.

No convoys were seen and the aircraft dropped their bombs on road and rail targets illuminated by the flares.

Pilot Officer Martin landed at Exceter with instrument trouble.

Flying Officer Slayden returned due to the generator not working.

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## **Mission No. 29**

**Date:** 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operation - Road patrols**

16x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron were tasked to carry out Road Patrols along two separate routes, these being:

- 1: LAVAL -LA FLECHE - ANGERS - LAVAL
- 2: LA FLECHE - LE MANS - TOURS - LA FLECHE

As the weather was good the Squadron had a little more success.

Flight Lt Whittle attacked four single vehicles at various points of area No. 1.

Flight Lt Turner attacked two single vehicles with cannon and machine gun.

Flight Officer Barley attacked the marshalling yards at LE MANS with cannon and machine gun and left two fires burning.

All the other aircraft attacked woods and railway and road targets with bombs and cannon.

Captain Hunt was unable to take-off due to V.H.F. failures.

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## **Mission No. 30**

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS883

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Air-Sea Rescue Search - Wing Commander Braham**

6x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron took part in an Air-Sea Rescue Search for Wing Commander Braham who was missing from a Ranger Operation. The English Coast was crossed at CROMER and the aircraft carried out a parallel search, following GEE Lines, until they reached 60'E longitude, then they returned on a reciprocal track.

Nothing was seen, and 11x 107 Squadron aircraft safely returned to Base.

*NOTE: John Randall Daniel "Bob" Braham, DSO & Two Bars, DFC & Two Bars, AFC, CD was the most highly decorated airman in RAF Fighter Command.*

*In February 1944 he was posted to No. 2 Group RAF as 'Wing Commander Night Operations' attached to the 2nd Light Bomber Group (of which 107 Squadron was part) 2nd Tactical Air Force.*

*Although a staff officer at HQ, Braham was able, with persistence, to persuade his commanding officer, Air Vice Marshal Basil Embry to allow him to 'free-lance' intruder operations using a De Havilland Mosquito loaned from one of the various squadrons in the group on the proviso he asked his permission beforehand.*

*On 24<sup>th</sup> June WC Braham was shot down over France in a dogfight with 2x German Fw 190 fighter aircraft.*

*Braham and his Australian navigator Don Walsh survived a high-speed (150mph) crash landing onto a beach, but were captured by the Germans, and remained prisoners for the remainder of the War.*

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## **Mission No. 31**

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NT226

**Call-sign:** "G - George"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operations - Close Support Work**

15x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron took part in "close support work" during the night in the area SOUTH of CAEN.

Flight Lt. Turner attacked two vehicles with unobservable results, some aircraft attacked the marshalling yards at MENIDON and the others attacked woods with cannon and machine gun fire. The weather at Base was bad on their return, but all aircraft landed back at Base safely.

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*Cockpit layout of a de Havilland Mosquito, photo taken from navigators seat*

## **Mission No. 32**

**Date:** 03<sup>rd</sup> July, 1944  
**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS886

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operations - Patrolling**

Patrols were carried out by 18x Mosquitos of 107 Sqd, in the following areas behind the battle zone.

- 1: MONTFORTE – FLERS - AVAL
- 2: MONTFORTES – CHATEAU – CONTRE – ANGERS - POITIERS

Flares were dropped and bombs were released in the target area and moving convoys were located and strafed. Each aircraft carried 2x 500lb 11-second delay bombs.

All aircraft returned safely to Base, except F & K which diverted to HARTFORD BRIDGE.

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## **Mission No. 33**

**Date:** 04<sup>th</sup> July, 1944 (**Hector's final mission**)

**Crew:** Flight Sgt H.S.K Ross (Pilot)  
Pilot Officer J.R. Green (Navigator)

**Aircraft:** Mosquito FB Mk. VI - NS886

**Call-sign:** "Q - Queen"

**Operation Details:** **Night Intruder Operations - Long Road Patrol**

19x Mosquitos of 107 Squadron were detailed to carry out two long road patrols behind the battle area. The routes assigned were:

Route 1: FALAISE - SEES - LE MANS - TOURS

Route 2: ????? - SEES - NOGENT LE ROTROU - CHATEAUDUN - ORLEANS

One aircraft carried out a long patrol in the area ARGENTEN - L'AIGLE - CHARTRES - ORLEANS

All the aircraft crossed the enemy coast on the Eastern route.

All aircraft carried 4x 500lb instantaneous bombs, and road, rail and communications centres were bombed, machine gunned and cannoned.

Visibility was extremely good, but no moving or stationary convoys were seen.

There was very considerable light and heavy flak in the whole of the patrol area and at strategic point on-route and several aircraft were hit.

"Q" (patrolling Route-1) and "X" (patrolling Route-2) did not return to Base.

Hector Ross was the pilot of aircraft "Q"

"U" was very badly damaged (patrolling Route-1).

"O" and "S" were slightly damaged (both patrolling Route-2).

The pilot of "X" (Flight Officer Patrick Green) reported over the inter-comm that his starboard engine was on fire and that he was bailing-out over enemy territory.

It is feared that Flight Sgt Ross and his navigation (also a Flying Officer Jack Green) have been lost, although everyone on the Squadron sincerely hopes that they were able to make some sort of landing over enemy territory.



*Artist's impression of a Mosquito night attack on enemy ground concentrations*

# Chapter 5

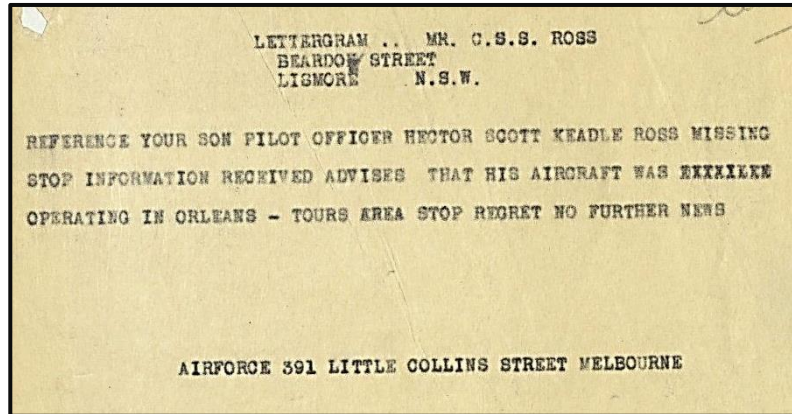
## Reported Missing

### 5:1 Reported Missing - 07<sup>th</sup> July, 1944

At 6:00pm a telegram from the RAAF was delivered to Hector's parents, Charles & Beatrice Ross, advising Hector was "missing", having failed to return from a mission in the Orleans-Tours region of France, on the night of 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> July.

One can imagine the terrible effect this news would have had

on Hector's parents, especially that at the time, his elderly Father was nearly 80 years of age.



### 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1944

On this date Hector's Commanding Officer wrote to Hector's parents explaining what was known of the circumstances of Hector and his navigator Jack Green, having failed to return from the 4-5<sup>th</sup> July mission.

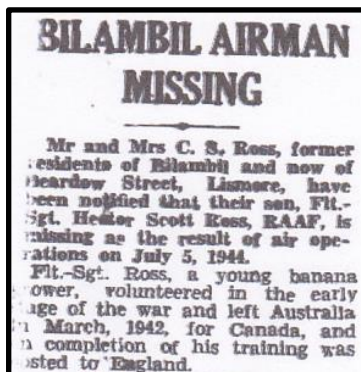
In this letter (see following page) Wing Commander M.E. Pollard advised that none of the other crews who were on the same mission that night, saw nor heard anything, and that presumably they had been shot-down by Flak. He also stated it was possible that Hector & Jack had been able to bail-out, or managed to otherwise survive the crash.

No doubt Hector's parents would have clung to the hope that they would soon hear that their son was safe, even if as a prisoner of the Germans.

But sadly as weeks turned into months, without any further news, the realization the Hector really was "forever lost" would have begun to slowly be accepted.

### 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1944

On this date, this notice was published in the Thursday edition of the Tweed Daily.



#### **BILAMBIL AIRMAN MISSING**

*Mr and Mrs C. S. Ross, former residents- of Bilambil and now of Beardow Street, Lismore, have been notified that their son, Flt.-Sgt. Hector Scott Ross, RAAF, is missing, the result of air operations on July 5, 1944.*

*Flt.-Sgt. Ross, a young banana grower, volunteered in the early stage of the war and left Australia in March, 1942, for Canada, and on completion of his training was posted to England.*



COPY.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

*9/21/84*  
No. 107 Squadron,  
Royal Air Force,  
LASHAM,  
Nr. ALTON, Hants.

10th July, 1944.

Dear Mr. Ross,

It is with deep regret that I have to confirm that your son, Pilot Officer HECTOR SCOTT KEABLE ROSS, is missing as a result of air operations against the enemy on the night of July 4th/5th.

Hector took off with his navigator, F/O. J.R. Green, at 23.15 hours on July 4th, to attack enemy movements south of the battle area in Northern France. The aircraft failed to return.

Nothing was heard from them although I, and other pilots of the squadron, were in the same area on similar missions. It is to be presumed they were shot down, probably by flak, as there was considerable opposition from German defences that night.

It is possible that they may have baled out or survived the crash. We can only hope they did and wait patiently for news.

I am very sorry Mr. Ross that I can tell you nothing more definite than that. I am afraid we know no more. The moment any details reach us from enemy or other sources we shall advise you instantly.

I cannot say how sorry I am to have to write this letter. I had the pleasure of having Hector under my command for some time, and during that time I had come to regard him with affection and admiration. He displayed a fine fighting spirit, ever keen to operate, always cool and courageous in action. I think we all loved him and I speak for the whole squadron when I say we shall miss him more and more as we come to realise he is no longer with us.

I would like you to know that on the 6th July this unit was informed that Hector had been appointed to a Commission in the Royal Australian Air Force with effect from 8th December, 1943, and that I believe he had the makings of a fine Officer and would have been a great asset to the Squadron.

We have packed Hector's kit and have forwarded it to the R.A.F. Central Depository, Colnbrook, Slough, Bucks, who will send it on to you in due course.

On behalf of the Squadron, I offer you our deepest sympathy. We understand how terrible this time is for you, the grief, the uncertainty, the worry. We are one with you in hoping and praying that all will be well and Hector will be returned you.

If there is any way that I can be of assistance to you do not hesitate to call upon me.

Regretfully I am,  
Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) M. E. POLLARD,

Wing Commander, Commanding,  
No. 107 Squadron, R. A.F.

*Letter despatched 11/8/44.*

Mr. C.S. Ross,  
Beardon Street,  
LISMORE,  
New South Wales,  
AUSTRALIA.

## 5:2 Presumed Dead - 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1945

Casualty Section,  
391 Lt. Collins St.  
RAAF.166/30/299(19A) 199119 AUG -4 1945

Dear Sir,

It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that the death of your son, Flying Officer Hector Scott Keable Ross, has now been presumed for official purposes to have occurred on the 5th July, 1944.

It is now advised that your late son was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer with retrospective effect from 8/6/44.

The Minister for Air and members of the Air Board desire me to extend to you their profound sympathy. It is hoped that the accompanying enclosures will be of assistance to you.

Yours faithfully,  
*(Signature)*  
N. G. LEWIS  
N. G. LEWIS  
CHIEF, CASUALTY SECTION

Mr. C. S. Ross,  
Private Mail Bag,  
Ballina Road,  
Lismore, N.S.W.

*E. Selver 90*  
3. 8. 45.

In early August, Hector's parents receive a letter from the RAAF Casualty Section advising that Hector had now been officially presumed killed.

The letter reads:

*Dear Sir,*

*It is with deep regret that I have to inform you that the death of your son, Flying Officer Hector Scott Keable Ross, has now been presumed for official purposes to have occurred on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1944.*

*It is now advised that your late son was promoted to the rank of Flying officer with retrospective effect from 8/6/44.*

*The Minister for Air and members of the Air Board desire me to extend to you their profound sympathy. It is hoped that the accompanying enclosures will be of some assistance to you.*

## 08<sup>th</sup> September, 1944

On this date, this notice was published in the Friday edition of the Tweed Daily.



### MISSING OVER FRANCE

*Pilot-Officer Hector Ross, RAAF, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Ross, Beardow Street, Lismore, formerly of Bilambil, who was reported missing over France on July 5.*

*News of his commission, which dated back to December of last year, was received by his squadron the day after he was reported missing.*

*Pilot-Officer Ross did his initial Air Force training in Australia and left for Canada a few days before his 21st birthday in April, 1942.*

*A farewell social in his honour at Bilambil served the dual purpose of a welcome home to his brother, Mr. Charles Ross, who was wounded while at Tobruk with the AIF.*

*Pilot-Officer Ross, who was a fighter pilot, arrived in England about the end of 1942.*

## 5:3 Confirmed Dead - 02<sup>nd</sup> October 1945

MESSAGE FORM

TO: P/O H S K ROSS  
FROM: RAAF HQ LONDON  
SUBJECT: PRESUMED DEAD (P/O H S K ROSS)  
GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT STATING MEMBER BURIED PLOT 12, ROW (E) GRAVE NUMBER 20 BAYEUX BRITISH CEMETERY BAYEUX FRANCE

AL512 CAS507 1 OCT UNCLASSIFIED ( ) P/O H S K ROSS  
AUS412832 PRESUMED DEAD ( ) AIR MIN ADVISES RECEIPT  
GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT STATING MEMBER BURIED PLOT  
12, ROW (E) GRAVE NUMBER 20 BAYEUX BRITISH CEMETERY  
BAYEUX FRANCE

TYPE: [Handwritten]

DATE: 02/10/45

On this date the RAAF received a **Graves Registration Report**, confirming that Hector's body had been found, and he was now buried in the British War Cemetery at Bayeux, in France.

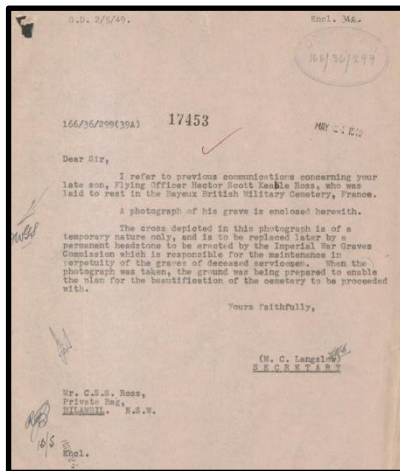
The message reads:

*P/O H S K Ross AUS412832 Presumed Dead. Air Min advises receipt Graves Registration Report stating member buried Plot 12, Row (E) Grave Number 20 Bayeux British Cemetery, Bayeux, France.*



**24<sup>th</sup> May 1949 - Photograph of Grave**

On this date, a letter from the Secretary of the department of Air was sent to his father, the text of which reads:



*"Dear Sir, I refer to previous communications concerning your late son, Flying Officer Hector Scott Keable Ross, who was laid to rest in the Bayeux British Military Cemetery, France.*

*A photograph of his grave is enclosed herewith.*

*The cross depicted in this photograph is of a temporary nature only, and is to be replaced later by a permanent headstone to be erected by the Imperial War Graves Commission which is responsible for the maintenance in perpetuity of the graves of deceased servicemen. When the photograph was taken, the ground was being prepared to enable the plan for the beautification of the cemetery to be proceeded with.*

*Yours faithfully, M.C. Langslow, Secretary (sic: Department of Air)*

*The photograph enclose with the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1949 letter.*



During research for this story, a copy of the photograph to the left was located, which given the misspelt Surname, and incorrect RAF designation, clearly preceded, and was later replaced by, the 1949 grave marker.



*The Commonwealth War Cemetery at Bayeux, after beautification and showing graves with their permanent headstones.*

# Chapter 6

## Original Burial Site

### 6:1 Graves Concentration Report

Although aware that Hector & Jack had headstones that lay side-by-side in the Bayeux War Cemetery, nothing in Hector’s official service documentation gave any indication of where their aircraft had crashed, other than presumably somewhere in northern France.

For a time it was wondered if Hector & Jack’s headstones sat atop empty graves, that is until it was found there is a completely separate section in the Bayeux War Cemetery dedicated to the commemoration of those whose bodies had never been found. While this clearly indicated Hector and Jack’s bodies were indeed buried at Bayeux, location of the crash site remained a mystery.

Given that at the time Hector & Jack crashed, Bayeux was then held by Allied forces, and as all official reports list them simply as “missing”, it was safe to assume that they did not crash in or near Bayeux.



The crash site and thus original location of where their bodies had been buried, presumably lay somewhere else in northern France, in territory which in July 1944, was still held by the Germans.

Following a number of months further research, on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018, the below Commonwealth War Graves Commission document, called a **Graves Concentration Report Form**, was located.

This document positively identified that in early 1945 Hector & Jack’s bodies had been located, near a small village named **La Chapelle-près-Sées**, and had been reburied in the Bayeux War Cemetery

GRAVES CONCENTRATION REPORT FORM												
The following have been concentrated here -											Report No. 22E-266	
(Name of Cemetery) - Bayeux British Cemetery											Rationality: BRITISH	
(Full Map Reference) Sheet 32.6 B. Scale 1/250,000 T. 779.795.												
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	Previous location of grave		
Serial No.	Regt. or Corps	Army No.	Name & Initials	Rank	Date of Death	K/A, D/W or Died	Plat	How	Cause	Date of Reburial	Place & Map Ref.	Report Number
1	R.A.F.	✓ 321578	Hollingsworth D.A.	P/O	3.6.44	E/A	XII	F	S	24.3.45	Maisonville la Goussonne, 20.304.	RMP/234
2	R.A.F. 10 Sqn	AB 44932	Ross H.S.K.	P/O	5.7.44	MIA	XII	E	20	4.4.45	La Chapelle-près-Sées.	
3	R.A.F. (VR) 10 Sqn	157159	Green J.A.	P/O	5.7.44	MIA	XII	E	19	4.4.45	"	
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												

Date: 22nd June 1956

(Signed) J. H. Hill

Rank & Appointment: Lt. Col. J. H. Hill

PSO 2279 28 14 4/45

As the total area that lay within the administrative boundary of **La Chapelle-près-Sées** is just 9.95 km<sup>2</sup> (roughly 2.5 x 4.0 km), this meant that the search for the crash & original burial sites could be now be focused onto this very small area.

However, given that in 1944 **La Chapelle-près-Sées** had a total population (inclusive of



outer-laying farms) of just 200 people, this meant that the chances of locating a living witness to an event that occurred 74 years previously, was very slim.

At this point it is worth explaining that the purpose of a Concentration Report was to record the re-burial of the remains of servicemen, whom had usually been located in “field graves”.

The term “field grave” is used to describe the site of where a serviceman had been found buried, outside of an established civil burial ground, normally close to where they had been mortally wounded during battle, and thus on or near the spot where they had died.

One of the tasks of Graves Registration Units, and later the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), was/is that after hostilities had/have ceased in a certain area, to search for and identify the locations of service personnel (irrespective of nationality) who had been buried in “field graves”, and then to exhume those remains, for the purpose of re-burial (concentrating) them in War Cemeteries.

Servicemen whose bodies were located buried in established civil burial grounds were normally left undisturbed, and at a later date a CWGC headstone would be erected over the grave.

### 6:2 Patrick Green & Basil Lambert

An example of this being another Mosquito crew from No. 107 Squadron who on the same night that Hector & Jack went missing, also failed to return from their mission. This crew were pilot Patrick Green and navigator Basil Lambert, flying in Mosquito NT151. The last that was heard from Patrick & Basil was a radio message advising that their starboard engine was on fire, and that they were going to bail-out.

In 1945 the graves of Patrick & Basil were located in the Montaroult Communal (civil) Cemetery near Argentan, where they remain to this day. These photos show the somewhat lonely looking graves of Patrick & Basil at the Montgaroult, with CWGC headstones that would have been erected in the mid 1950's.



### 6:3 Frank Carr & Henry Clark

A further example of where the CWGC decided to not exhume the bodies of Allied airmen from an established civil burial ground is that of Frank Carr & Henry Clark, a Mosquito crew from the Royal New Zealand Air Force squadron No. 487.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1944 (a little over three weeks after Hector & Jack) Frank Carr & Henry Clarke were also shot-down, and crashed near the small village of Bursard, which is just 5km south of La Chapelle-pres-Sees. Bursard is worth noting, for it will be mentioned a number of times in the next chapter.

Below is an extract from a diary written by a then young French teenager named Roger Cornevin, who with his family was staying at Bursard when Frank & Henry crashed, which describes the crash scene, and their burial by the Germans.

*“At dawn, around 6 in the morning, a German gunner we knew pounded on our door and made us understand that a plane had crashed near the road. My curiosity prompted me to follow him and he did not object.*

*A thicket covering one half hectare was blackened by flames and scattered metal pieces of the plane were still smoldering.*

*In front of us, the bodies of the two occupants, the pilot and the navigator, rested in the middle of a mass of branches.*

*With a single word, the German made me understand that the aircraft was a Mosquito night fighter from the RAF, shot down by the local DCA. (sic: DCA = German Flak Unit)*

*He drew an identity card from the tunic of the one of the victims and held onto it... could he intend to give it to the Red Cross?*

*Needless to say, this drama saddened us, since we knew that the Allies were making progress on all fronts. The problem was to know how our area will be freed and with what results for all of us.*

*The Germans were not long in appearing.....after collecting the bodies of the victims, they organized a hasty burial at the edge of our garden, within a few meters of us. (sic: in the corner of the Bursard Churchyard which directly adjoins the Town Hall grounds, where the Cornevin family were then living)*

*In spite of our insistence, they refused to let us be present. A platoon of soldiers was already there at the burial site.*

*A fusillade disturbed the silence of our countryside. The emotion was overwhelming. This hasty ceremony proceeded before our eyes, as we stood in silence.”*



clearly demonstrates the deep appreciation that French citizens held for the sacrifices made by young allied airmen, in liberating them from the yoke of Nazi occupation.

As shown by this photograph, unlike the graves of Patrick Green & Basil Lambert, the headstone of Frank Carr & Henry Clark’s joint grave is not the standard CWGC headstone.

Presumably such was erected by the citizens of Bursard, after the Germans withdrew from the area in mid-August, 1944, but before arrival of CWGC teams.

Construction of Frank & Henry’s elegant grave, and later a memorial cross at the crash-site, La Garenne wood) would not have been a simple matter for the citizen’s of Bursard, and such



This deep appreciation by French citizens is still evident today, as can be demonstrated by the fact that in many places throughout France ceremonies are conducted each year to honour the sacrifices made by Allied service personnel.



This photograph taken in 1994, shows the citizens of Bursard commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Frank Carr & Henry Clark's death.

Roger Cornevin's comment about a *"fusillade disturbing the silence of the countryside"* refers to the military tradition of firing rifles as a formal farewell salute, and shows that the Germans afforded Frank & Henry "full military honours" at their burial.

It was not uncommon for Allied airmen to receive a "military honours" burial by Luftwaffe troops (German Air Force), sadly however, this was not always the case.

The degree of respect paid by the Germans to the bodies of dead Allied airmen was often quite variable, and depended upon a range of circumstances, such as which unit the soldiers came from, if they had recently suffered casualties from an air attack, if operational demands did not allow sufficient time for a proper burial, and the attitude of the German Commander.

This photograph shows of the burial of RAF airmen by Luftwaffe personnel, who in 1943 were occupying the Channel Islands, and clearly shows the Germans affording the RAF personnel full military honours at their funeral.



There are examples of the bodies of servicemen found in established civil cemeteries being exhumed for re-burial (concentration) into War Cemeteries.

However, this was usually only done when the remains were found in unmarked graves, or their grave was intruding upon a pre-existing civil grave, or upon special request of civil authorities.

As it is known for certain that Hector & Jack's remains had been exhumed and reburied at Bayeux, it was initially assumed their bodies had been found in field graves, but this turned out not to be the case. As will be shortly explained, they were originally buried in the church graveyard of the village of La Chapelle-près-Sées.



Herein follows a description of how it was possible, with the very kind & absolutely invaluable assistance provided by a number of French citizens, that Hector & Jack's original burial site was able to be positively identified.

After a number of unproductive attempts to locate someone in France who might be able to assist with research, eventually in June 2018 contact was made with an amateur historian who lives in La Chapelle-près-Sées, this person being a Monsieur Adrien David.

#### **6:4 Association Normande du Souvenir Aérien**

Significantly, in addition to being a local historian, Monsieur David is also closely connected with a volunteer group of amateur WW2 archaeologists, called the **Association Normande du Souvenir Aérien 39-45 (ANSA)**.

The aims of the ANSA group are to locate sites of WW2 air crashes, record testimony from surviving witnesses, to excavate the crash site for the purpose of recovering (where possible) artefacts from the aircraft, and to arrange for the erection of Stele's to memorialize the crew.



#### **6:5 L'église Saint-Pierre Funeral**

Upon receipt of inquiry into Hector & Jack, Adrien was quickly able to advise that immediately after the crash, Hector & Jack's bodies were placed temporarily in a farm Apple Cider Press building near where the crash occurred, before being taken for burial in La Chapelle-près-Sées, in the graveyard attached to the L'église Saint-Pierre.

As is mentioned in further detail in the chapter titled "The Crash Site", later information obtained from RAF "Casualty File" sources further advised that the then Abbe (French Priest) of *L'église Saint-Pierre*, and a German Military Padre from Sées, conducted the formal funeral service for Hector & Jack, with the service being well attended by local villagers who covered the grave with flowers.

*L'église Saint-Pierre Church, at La Chapelle-près-Sées*

Given that in July 1944 the French resistance was at its peak of activity in the Normandy area, it is unlikely the German Commandant of Sées would have allowed one of his Padres to go unescorted, to officiate at a funeral service outside the town limits of Sées. It therefore seems probable that the Padre would have been gone to the *L'église Saint-Pierre* with a detachment of German soldiers.

It would seem reasonable to suppose that as the German Commandant was respectful enough to assign a Padre & troop detachment for the funeral, that the German escort may have performed the dual role of escort to the Padre and "Honour Guard" at the funeral service, thus reasonable possibility that the Germans afforded Hector & Jack "military honours", similar to what is known to have taken place nearby at Bursard, at the funeral of Frank Carr & Henry Clark.



Given it was not normal for the British to exhume bodies buried in established civil graveyards (eg: Patrick Green & Basil Lambert, at nearby Montgaroult), this raised the question of why such occurred with Hector & Jack at La Chapelle-près-Sées.

## **6:6 RAF MREU Reports**

An RAF "Casualty File" held the answer to this, for the file contained records of interviews conducted in December 1945 by officers from the RAF's *Missing Research Enquiry Unit*, with both the then current Abbe of L'église Saint-Pierre, and the previous Abbe who almost 18 months earlier had officiated at Hector & Jack's funeral.

It is unknown what first directed the attention of MREU officers to La Chapelle-près-Sées, but given the function of the MREU was to research & make inquiry into RAF personnel who had been listed as "Missing", perhaps they were simply following-up on a chance report of an as yet unidentified RAF aircraft having crashed near La Chapelle-près-Sées, during the Battle for Normandy.

The MREU officers were informed that Hector & Jack's remains had been exhumed by unknown Allied soldiers, and taken to Saint-Lô. At the time, Saint-Lô was virtually an exclusively American area of responsibility, so it is extremely likely that the unknown Allied soldiers were indeed American.

To add further credence that these unknown Allied soldiers were American is that, unlike the British, it was the practice of the Americans to exhume bodies of their servicemen from wherever they were found in Normandy (even existing civil cemeteries) and re-bury them in American War Cemeteries.

Given that at the time it was common practice by both the Americans & British to use German Prisoners of War to perform the physical labour involved with exhumations, this could explain why (even if ID tags had been removed by the Germans) it was not immediately recognized (via uniforms) that Hector & Jack's remains were not those of American, but in fact British servicemen.

It seems likely that once properly examined by American Graves Unit personnel at Saint-Lô (as would have occurred before reburial), Hector & Jack were quickly identified as being British servicemen, and their remains were passed onto the British for their 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945 re-burial at Bayeux.

The MREU report clearly demonstrates that as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 1945, the MREU were unaware that almost nine months earlier, Hector & Jack had been located & re-buried at Bayeux.

The most logical & simple explanation for this being a breakdown in communication between those responsible for re-burials at Bayeux, and the RAF MREU.

Had this communication breakdown not occurred, the MREU may not have gone & made inquiries at La Chapelle-près-Sées, and thus the details of Hector & Jack's tender & moving L'église Saint-Pierre funeral service would probably have never become known to the Ross family.

Another saving grace to the initial mistaken-identity exhumation by the Americans, is that Hector & Jack now rest in peace in the often visited beautifully landscaped & well cared for grounds of the Bayeux Commonwealth War Cemetery, surrounded by their fellow comrades-in-arms.

-ooOoo-

# Chapter 7

## The Crash Site

### 7:1 Menilgault Farm

Shortly after location of the CWGC concentration report, an interesting sequence of events started which resulted in the re-discovery of the exact site of Hector & Jack's crash. A detailed description of these events, are as follows.

After numerous attempts to contact someone in France who might be able to assist with local inquiries, email communication was established with a Madame Sally Sorel who lives near a small town called Belfonds, which is just 30 km from La Chapelle-près-Sées.

Madame Sally Sorel is heavily involved in the annual commemoration of an American B-17 bomber crew, who in July 1943 crashed near Belfonds, and thus was very sympathetic to what was trying to be achieved, and quickly offered to provide whatever assistance she could.

After several weeks of inquiry by Madame Sorel, she was able to provide contact details for Monsieur Adrien David, who lives at La Chapelle-près-Sées, and who's valuable assistance was mentioned in the preceding chapter titled "Original Burial Site".

Additional to advice concerning the location of Hector & Jack's original burial site, on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018 Monsieur Adrien David was also able to quickly identify the site of where Hector & Jack's aircraft crashed, which was a small field located approximately 1.5km due south of La Chapelle-pres-Sees, on a farm called Menilgault, which in July 1944 was being run by Monsieur Pierre Manoury and his wife.

Adrien was provided this information by the ANSA founder, Monsieur Joel Huard, who is a retired police officer and thus able to gain access to the Gendarmerie archives in Paris.

Some years previously Monsieur Huard visited the archives and made hand-written notes of any record he could find concerning WW2 aircraft crash sites in Normandy.



*Menilgault Farm, star shows the crash site, and circle the farm buildings*

The information Monsieur Joel Huard obtained from the Gendarmerie report, was:

*"The Gendarmerie Archives of the Sées Brigade noted that a twin-engine British plane was shot down at a place called Menilgault, La Chapelle-pres-Sees. The two airmen were killed. The Occupation Troops buried them. They were Jack Roland GREEN (RAF), and Hector Scott Keable ROSS (RAAF)."*

## 7:2 Crash Witness - Michael Manoury

In addition to this invaluable Gendarmerie Archive information, later in July Monsieur Adrien David was able to locate and interview a Monsieur Michael Manoury, who on the night of the crash, was a 4 year-old boy vacationing with his Grandparents at Menilgault Farm.

Despite being so very young at the time, Monsieur Manoury still has recollection of what he saw, and the stories that were subsequently told, and re-told many times, by members of his family.

What Monsieur Manoury advised Monsieur David was:-

- *The aircraft crashed into the fields to the North of, and very close to, the farm buildings.*
- *Despite crash debris landing very close to farm building, no one on the ground was injured.*
- *At the time of the crash (1:00am) the aircraft had been travelling from East to West.*
- *It was believed Hector & Jack may have been attacking near a German airfield located approximately 5km S-E of Menilgault Farm.*
- *A portion of the wreck was left straddling the hedge between two of the fields, with at least one engine and other wreckage coming to rest in the triangular shaped field. (refer image on preceding page).*
- *Hector & Jack were killed instantly, with their bodies ejected from the aircraft.*
- *Most of the wreckage that was not consumed by fire, was later removed from the farm.*
- *Under German instruction, Pierre Manoury and other farm workers removed the bodies from the field, and placed them for temporary holding & protection, in the Apple-Cider Press building at Menilgault Farm.*
- *Hector & Jack's bodies were later collected and buried by the Germans at L'église Saint-Pierre Church, in the centre of the village of La Chapelle-près-Sées.*

Shortly before his meeting with Monsieur Michael Manoury, Adrien held discussion with a Monsieur Loubiere, who lived on the farm from 1953 to 1959. Monsieur Loubiere advised that during his time there, an aircraft engine was lying on the ground near the farm buildings, but that it has long since been removed.

## 7:3 ANSA Metal Detector Search

Following these interviews with Monsieur Manoury & Monsieur Loubiere, on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018 Adrien David arranged for the ANSA group to conduct a preliminary metal-detector search of the triangular field where it was reported by Monsieur Manoury that Hector & Jack's aircraft had crashed.



*ANSA Metal Detector Team at Menilgault Farm, the Apple Press is on the far right of the building in the background.*

The result of the metal-detector survey is that a quantity of .303 machine-gun and 20mm cannon ammunition, plus some as yet unidentified metal parts (possibly engine or landing-gear components) from Hector & Jack's aircraft were able to be located, just 50m from the buildings. This location is consistent with Monsieur Michael Manoury's account of the crash site.



As mentioned in the chapter titled "Original Burial Site", valuable information was obtained from the RAF Historical Branch, who opened and supplied a transcript of Jack Green's "Casualty File".

#### **7:4 RAF MREU Reports – Crash Site**

In addition to burial information, also provided was the following transcript of interviews conducted by RAF "Missing Research Enquiry Unit" (MREU) officers, in late December 1945:

- *The municipalit  of the Community at La Chapelle-pr s-S es was visited on 28.12.45 and accompanied the search officer to the scene of the crash in the farm of Madame Manoury, about 2 kilometres from the village of La Chapelle-pr s-S es.*
- *Madame Manoury accompanied search officers to the wreckage of the Mosquito and stated that the aircraft was hit and exploded by flak at 0100 hours on 7.7.44 (sic: 5.7.1944) and consequently the wreckage was spread over a large area.*
- *Amongst the wreckage were 2 x 500lb bombs unexploded, and made safe by having their pistols removed.*

- *A list of numbers taken from engine parts and other parts taken for verification is enclosed.*
- *Madame Manoury informed us that the Germans were at the scene of the crash immediately after the disaster and removed all means of identification from J.R. Green and H.S. Ross, which were removed to a barn (sic: Cider Press) on the farm. She herself was ordered back to the farm.*
- *At a later date a search on the wreckage produced 21/2d in British coinage and a utility cigarette lighter.*
- *Two parachute harnesses were produced by Madame Manoury, one of which was an observer type and had the number H.1193 stamped on it. The other had no number on the pilot type harness.*
- *The search officers returned with the Maire (sic: Mayor) to the churchyard of La Chapelle-près-Sées, where J.R. Green and H.S. Ross were originally buried by the Abbe (sic: Priest) and a German Padre.*
- *The Abbe has since moved to Sees. The present Abbe informed us of his whereabouts and he was visited later.*
- *The present Abbe stated the two bodies were exhumed by unknown Allied soldiers & taken to St. Lo.*
- *The original Abbe who officiated at the funeral states he saw the two bodies prior to their burial, in the barn at Madame Manoury's farm.*
- *He also told the search officers that the funeral was well attended by local villagers who covered the grave with flowers.*
- *The mother of J.R. Green (sic; Mrs Rosa Green) has visited the cemetery since their removal by the unknown Allied soldiers (believed American) and was re-directed to St. Lo.*
- *This information will be passed on to another section of the No 1 MREU where further investigation as to the present whereabouts of the graves will be made.*
- *Serial & reference numbers take from the wreckage of Mosquito on the farm of Madame Manoury at La Chapelle-pres-Sees:*

*Number on the engines (on the side of cylinders)*

*D17425D.....1*

*D17425G.....2*

*Other numbers on the engines*

*1: N 13 B  
AH 947*

*2: N 2 A  
AH 39  
D 18174*

Presumably, the above serial & reference numbers were later checked against RAF records, and confirmed to have belonged to Hector & Jack's Mosquito.

It is unknown how Mrs Rosa Green learned of her son having been buried at La Chapelle-pres-Sees, perhaps a letter with her address was found on Jack's body, and someone from the village wrote and informed her Jack had been buried in the village. It is known via RAF Casualty file records that in June 1947, Mrs Green did get to visit the grave of her son at the Commonwealth War Cemetery, Bayeux.





*Michael Manoury showing the where the cockpit section of Hector & Jack's Mosquito came to rest*



*A very young  
Michael Manoury*



*Pierre & Madame Manoury,*



*In 1944 this Apple Cider Press building on Menilgault Farm was in use and in good repair, but is now derelict. Immediately after the crash Pierre & Madame Manoury laid-out Hector & Jack's bodies in this building, before they were taken to La Chapelle pres-Sees for burial in the L'église Saint-Pierre graveyard.*



## 7:5 Fact & Conjecture

While it is unlikely the precise circumstances and sequence of events concerning Hector & Jack's crash is unlikely to ever be known, it is believed that the following account, which has been compiled through a combination of official record facts, recorded witness statements, research facts, and a degree of logical conjecture, presents a logical explanation of what may have occurred.

**FACT:** In the description of Hector & Jack's 32<sup>nd</sup> (and last) mission, at 23.25 hours on 04<sup>th</sup> July 1944, they took-off from RAF Lasham to fly an offensive "road patrol", the route they were tasked to fly was:- Base - Falaise - Sées - Le Mans - Tours - Le Mans - Sées - Falaise - Base (refer below map).



**FACT:** As stated in the preceding chapter, it is now known that Hector & Jack were originally buried in the small village of La Chapelle-près-Sées, which is approximately 4km south of the substantially larger town of Sées. The town of Sées represented an important waypoint on the patrol route, as denotes where Hector & Jack needed to do a major change in direction for the next leg of the patrol.

**FACT:** Again importantly, the weather that night was clear, with extremely good visibility, a full moon, and thin stratus cloud varying between 1000/3000 feet.

**FACT:** The reason this is important it that whilst these conditions would have greatly aided Hector & Jack with navigation and target identification, such would have equally assisted German flak crews in not only spotting Allied aircraft, but also accurately estimating their altitude & heading.

**FACT:** It is therefore not surprising that all the No. 107 squadron crews who safely returned from this mission reported the flak that night had been very considerable.

**FACT:** The Operations Book of 107 Squadron records that of the eighteen (18) Mosquitos that flew “road patrol” that night, two of these aircraft & crew (which included Hector & Jack) failed to return safely to base and thus were listed as missing (presumed crashed), one (1) aircraft was severely damaged by flak, and a further two (2) suffered minor flak damage.

**FACT:** As mentioned earlier, it is now known Hector & Jack crashed at 01:00 hours.

**FACT:** The 107 Squadron Operations book records all the take-off and return-to-base times of squadron aircraft, and so, given that the route and thus distances flown during this patrol can be accurately measured, it is possible to identify the average speed flown by the No. 107 squadron Mosquitos that night, was 210mph - 338kph.

**FACT:** Working on the basis that after taking-off at 23:25hrs, Hector & Jack flew at the same average speed as the other No. 107 Squadron Mosquitos, the timings and distance they would have travelled during such, match precisely with a 01:00hrs crash at Menilgault Farm.

**FACT:** The timings, distances & average speed calculation prove that just before they crashed, Hector & Jack were flying the north-bound leg of their patrol, on the return from Tours.

**WITNESS STATEMENT:** When Hector & Jack’s aircraft crashed, it is said to have come from the east.

**WITNESS STATEMENT:** It was stated by Madame Manoury that Hector & Jack had been attacking a Luftwaffe airfield located to the South-East of Menilgault, when hit by Flak.

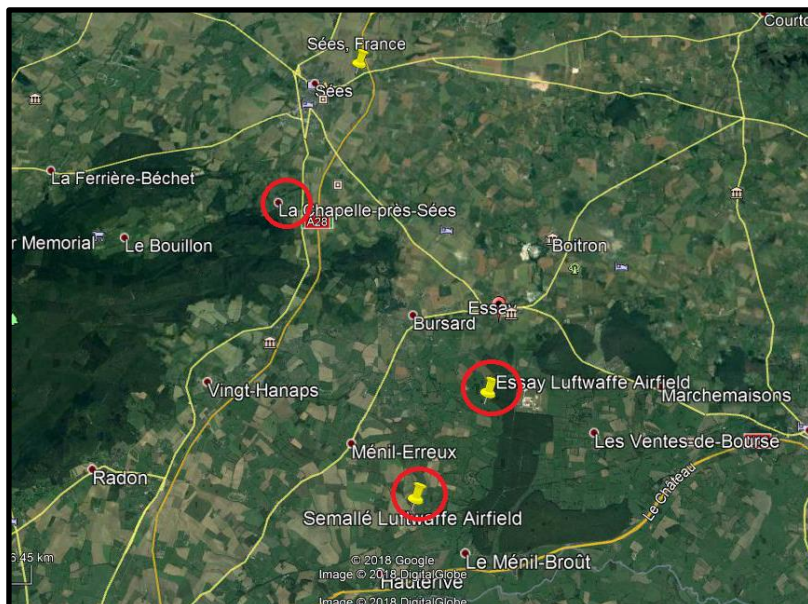
**FACT:** It is now known that on July 4/5<sup>th</sup> there were two Luftwaffe airfields close to Menilgault, one approx. 6km south-east of Menilgault near a village named Essay, and the other approx. 3km south-west of Essay, near a village named Semallé.

**FACT:** Between June and August of 1944, the Luftwaffe unit **G II / JG 1** was stationed at these two airfields. JG stands for **Jagdgeschwader**, which in English means “Hunter-Wing”, thus the G II/JG 1 was a Luftwaffe fighter unit. At that time they were flying the deadly Focke-Wulf 190’s.

**FACT:** The G II/JG 1 was not a night-fighter unit. The Nachtjagdgeschwaders (night-fighters) were generally stationed further to the north, with the focus of their efforts being on Allied heavy-bomber formations.

**FACT:** The German airfields were considered prime targets by the Allies, and they were attacked many times during the Battle for Normandy, the effectiveness of these attacks being demonstrated

by the fact that during the ten weeks the **G II / JG 1** spent in Normandy, they lost a total of 106 aircraft, many having been destroyed on the ground during attacks on their airfields.



**FACT:** The image to the left shows the approx. location of the two Luftwaffe airfields near Essay & Semallé, and their proximity to La Chapelle-pres-Sees, and thus Menilgault.

**FACT:** On 15<sup>th</sup> June, the Essay airfield was effectively bombed during the day by American B-24 Liberator heavy bombers, making the airfield unsuitable for use, thus necessitating the **G II / JG 1** to move operations to the Semallé airfield.

**FACT:** Because of the critical role fighter aircraft played in the German defences of Normandy, the German's often ensured their airfields had strong anti-aircraft defences.

**FACT:** Of significant note is the proximity of both airfields to that of the village of Bursard and in turn, Menilgault Farm. As is described in the following further extract from Roger Cornevin's diary, the German flak crews were in the vicinity of Bursard on the night of 4/5<sup>th</sup> July.

#### **WITNESS STATEMENT:**

**June 11<sup>th</sup>**

*Heavy trucks pulling guns, undoubtedly for the DCA (sic: German Flak Units), surprised us as we were eating our lunch.*

*The feldwebel had reason to be here; it preceded the encampment of a group of gunners under the lime trees near the town hall.*

*This intrusion into our quiet countryside filled us with concern. Ten trucks, towing guns covered with camouflage netting, lined up in the shade of the tree-lined alley.*

**June 12<sup>th</sup>**

*Without warning, the trucks disappeared from the village dragging in their wake their threatening guns. But they set up only a few hundred meters away, in the green meadows of the stud farm at Bois Roussel, at the spot called "Les Fontaines."*

*Scarcely visible beneath the branches, it was very difficult to make them out from our house, in spite of the fact that the meadows in the south of Bursard were very open, practically without obstruction.*



*This photograph, showing a German crew & their 88mm Flak gun, were stationed at Bursard, June-August 1944. The photo was amongst a collection of abandoned belongings found by Roger Cornevin, after the Germans' hurried departure from the area in mid-August.*



**August 12<sup>th</sup>**

*Absolute joy... The liberation of our sector proceeded without too many problems.*

*On the other hand, the Germans, in their hasty departure, spiked all the DCA batteries that surrounded our town hall, abandoning an impressive quantity of material.*

*This photo was taken by Roger Cornevin, shows one of the 'spiked' 88mm Flak guns, that the Germans abandoned, in mid-August 1944.*



**CONJECTURE:** 107 Squadron records show this mission was the first time that 107 crews had flown the Falaise-Tours patrol route, so it is possible 107 Squadron crews were not aware of the existence or extent of German flak in the area of Bursard.

**FACT:** As proven by Roger Cornevin's photograph collection, the German flak units around Bursard were equipped with 88mm anti-aircraft guns, which were a highly effective & versatile weapon, which had a devastating effect when they achieved a direct, or even near direct, hit upon an aircraft.

**FACT:** Like most multi-crewed aircraft, the pilot's seat in a Mosquito was situated on the left side of the cockpit. In Mosquitos, the navigator sat to the right and slightly further back than the pilot.

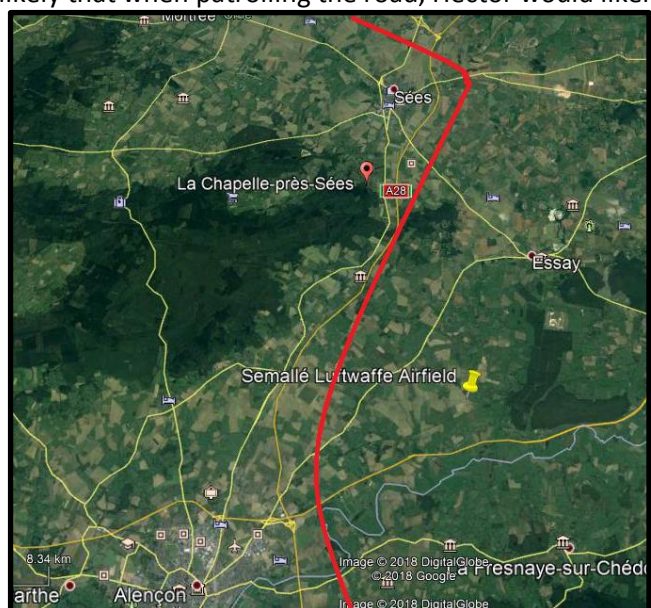
**FACT:** In Mosquitos, it is the pilot who both manoeuvres the aircraft and operates the weapons systems, and therefore it is the pilot who needs the best view of potential targets. Since Mosquito fuselage had rounded sides, when flying it is not possible to see anything directly underneath the aircraft.

**CONJECTURE:** Because of these factors it is likely that when patrolling the road, Hector would likely have flown his aircraft approx. 1km off to the right hand side of the road.

**FACT:** After reaching Tours and turning around for the return leg of the patrol, Hector & Jack would have been flying in a predominantly northerly direction, following the road connecting Tours to Sees.

**FACT:** Upon reaching Sees, Hector & Jack would have had to then change direction to head north-west towards Falaise.

*North-Bound route to Sees, and then West to Falaise*



**CONJECTURE:** It seems logical to believe that if on the South-bound leg of the patrol, Hector & Jack had not spotted a target of sufficient value to attack using any or all of their four bombs upon , they would have kept a sharp look-out on the return leg of the patrol for such.

**FACT:** 107 Squadron records show that for this mission, Hector & Jack's aircraft was armed with 4x 500lb bombs. Inspection of the crash site found only 2x unexploded 500lb bombs. This therefore indicates that at some point prior to their crash, they attacked a target, and used 2x of their bombs.

**FACT:** A review of current airfields in this region shows that almost all of them lay on a SW-NE bearing, presumably because of the direction of prevailing winds.

**CONJECTURE:** It stands to reason that because of prevailing winds, the Germans would have built their airfields on the same bearing as current-day airfields in the area.

**FACT:** Near Alençon, the road makes a bend and heads in a North-Easterly direction.

**CONJECTURE::** Soon after passing Alençon, Hector & Jack would have been heading in a direction which afforded them (off to the right side) an unimpeded view towards the Semallé airfield, which would have been approximately just 3km away from their flight path.

**CONJECTURE:** It is possible Hector & Jack already knew of the existence of the Semallé airfield, or perhaps something drew Hector & Jack's attention to the area, possibly the headlights of motor vehicle/s moving nearby or some incautious light leakage or movement at the airfield?, and thus for whatever reason, Hector & Jack decided to attack this airfield.

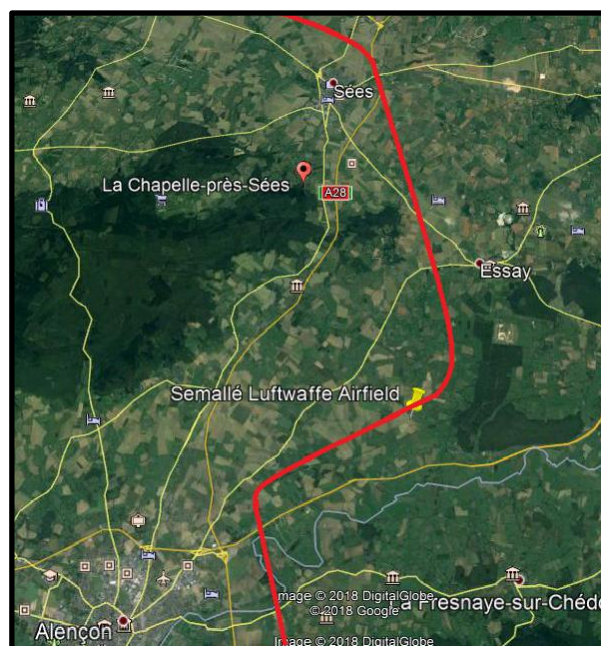
**WITNESS STATEMENT:** As demonstrated by the following extracts from Roger Cornevin's diary, during June & July, the Germans were frequently using the roads in the area of the Essay & Semallé airfield's, which definitely did attract the attention of Allied aircraft:-

**10<sup>th</sup> June**

*The convoy of German convoys is growing on the road leading from Alençon to Essay.....Since practically the date of the landing we observe them (sic: Allied aircraft) every day on the lookout and ready to intervene for any abnormal movement on the ground, ....convoys, isolated vehicles, take-offs of German fighters.*

**29<sup>th</sup> June**

*I sprint like a possessed on the road from Bursard to Essay. A German convoy appears, a murderous burst nails several trucks on the side of the road while several hunters pass at low-level. FW Brunner of the 6 Staffel was taken as a target by enemy fighters as he drove along the road connecting Essay to Alençon.*



**FACT:** If the assumption of the SW-NE orientation of Semallé airfield is correct, and if just after passing Alençon Hector & Jack's attention was drawn to the airfield, they would have been perfectly positioned for a SW-NE attack-run along the length of the runway.....refer above image.

**CONJECTURE:** If Hector & Jack did commence an attack on this airfield from the South-West, it is likely that immediately after the attack they would have quickly changed direction to the N-W, and flown towards Sees, so as to re-commence their patrol of the road heading towards Falaise.....  
.....refer image on preceding page.

**CONJECTURE:** Again, if they had conducted an attack on the Semallé airfield, and if immediately afterwards they headed NW towards Sees (which make logical sense) this route would have taken them very close indeed to Bursard, where of course it is now known, there was a large battery of German flak armed with the deadly 88mm guns...see below image.



**FACT:** The Bursard flak batteries had a proven record of being able to shoot-down fast and low flying Mosquito aircraft at night.....eg: Frank Carr & Henry Clark.

**FACT:** When doing a bombing & strafing run on a target, Mosquito crews from No. 107 squadron did so by swooping down from approx. 1000m, at speed of at least 400kph, and then levelling-out & pressing home their attack from a height of just 150m .....refer Hector's Mission No 17.

**FACT:** Immediately after such an attack, No. 107 pilots would usually do a sharp turn and continue at low altitude for a few minutes, before gradually regaining altitude...refer Hector's mission No 17.

**CONJECTURE:** While still at low altitude and high speed, Hector & Jack would have unknowingly been heading right towards the Bursard flak batteries.

*North-Bound route to Sees, showing a detour to attack Semallé airfield with a continuation onto Sees, this route taking them almost over the top of Bursard.*

**CONJECTURE:** flying low for a few minutes after an attack on the Semallé airfield would have initially have worked in Hector & Jack's favour, because for a period of time their aircraft would have likely blended in with the dark surrounding hills. However due to the full-moon, or perhaps



suddenly becoming silhouetted against the underside of clouds, as they flew over and/or close to the Bursard area flak batteries, Hector & Jack's aircraft would have become visible to the flak crews.

**CONJECTURE:** If the above is accepted, it is distinctly possible that Hector & Jack could have passed over or close-by the Bursard flak batteries, before the flak crews were able to bring them under effective fire.

**CONJECTURE:** After passing over and/or near the Bursard flak crews, the Germans certainly would have then known the altitude & heading of Hector & Jack's aircraft. It is also possible that while flying away from the flak crews, the flare from the Mosquito's exhaust pipes may have been visible.

**CONJECTURE:** If this were the case then it makes sense that the best chance the Bursard flak crews had of hitting Hector & Jack's aircraft would have been after they had passed Bursard.

**CONJECTURE:** If Hector & Jack's aircraft was hit after passing Bursard, and the damage caused by such resulted in the aircraft slewing to the left, then this would result in them coming into Menilgault from almost due.....refer image to right with first "X" indicating when possibly hit by Bursard area flak, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> "X" showing the actual crash site.

**FACT:** The only flak units known to have been to the S-E of Menilgault on the night of 4/5<sup>th</sup> July were the Bursard area batteries.

**FACT:** If Hector & Jack did not attack a target to the S-E of Menilgault, they would have been simply been flying at patrol at 1000m, north towards Sees.

**FACT:** Even if just flying patrol along the road, it was still well within the range capability of the Bursard flak guns to hit Hector & Jack's aircraft.



**WITNESS STATEMENT:** Madame Manoury's statement to MREU officers was that "the aircraft was hit and exploded by flak at 1:00am". Michael Manoury advised that Hector & Jack had been attacking an airfield to the S-E when they were hit by flak, and crashed coming in from the east.

**FACT:** The Madame Manoury would have had to have been awake at 1:00am to have been able to provide this information about Hector & Jack's crash. Michael Manoury probably heard about the believed airfield attack, and the aircraft coming in from the east information, from his grandparents.

**FACT:** The chances of Hector & Jack having been shot down by a German night-fighter is slim, for during the battle for Normandy, German night-fighters only accounted for a mere 17% of all Allied aircraft that were shot-down, and German night-fighters were stationed much further north.

## 7:6 Conclusions

Given the following, the highest probability of what occurred is that immediately before they crashed, Hector & Jack did attack an airfield, and that they were hit by Bursard area flak.

*a.* It seems highly unlikely that the elderly Manoury grandparents would have normally be awake at 1:00am. It therefore seems probable they were awoken by battel noise. For the Manoury grandparents to believe that Hector & Jack had been attacking a nearby German airfield, it seems likely they were awoken by the noise coming from the direction of the airfield.

*b.* From the time Hector & Jack would have commenced an attack on the Semallé airfield to when they crashed at Menilgault Farm, approx. 3 minutes would have elapsed. This represents a reasonable amount of time for the Manoury grandparents to be awoken from sleep, realize something unusual was occurring, get out of bed, put on dressing gowns, and go to a window or doorway so as to observe what was happening.

*c.* If Hector & Jack's aircraft had been hit by flak while simply patrolling the road, the very short distance from the road to the crash site indicates that their aircraft would have had to have suffered catastrophic damage, and thus they would have crashed very quickly after being hit. At the speed at which they would have been flying, they would have crashed within about 30 seconds of being hit. This would likely be insufficient time for the Manourys' to have observed what occurred.

*d.* With regards to Madame Manoury's report that Hector & Jack's aircraft exploded, if such had occurred at height, the debris would have been spread over a far greater area than it was.

*e.* The forward section of the fuselage (nose/cockpit) came to rest in a tree line. A recent metal detector search found .303 & 20mm ammunition approx. 50m east of this tree. This ammunition was stored in the Mosquito nose & under where the pilot sat. This indicates the nose must have hit the ground at a shallow angle, and as it slid along the ground, the underside of the fuselage tore open, resulting in the ammunition spilling-out.

*f.* 2x 500lb unexploded bombs were found at the crash site. This indicate an explosion did not occur in the forward fuselage area of the aircraft.

*g.* Most probable is that after hitting the ground, the aircraft broke-up, and the fuel which was stored in the wings exploded.

*h.* Further evidence that the aircraft struck the ground at a shallow angle, causing debris to be flung to the west is a tree (near where the nose came to rest) that was snapped-off approx. 1.5 metres from ground level. This is a photograph of that tree, on which the old impact scar is still clearly visible.



# Chapter 8

## Memorial Stele & Dedication Ceremony

### 8:1 Overview

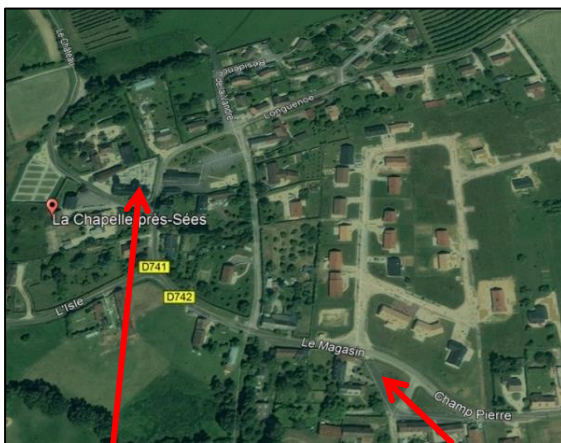
On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018, the La Chapelle-près-Sées local council voted unanimously to approve construction of a memorial Stele, in commemoration of the sacrifice made by Hector & Jack in liberating France from Nazi occupation. A formal stele dedication ceremony was held on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2019.

### 8:2 Stele Location & Description

The Stele is a magnificent, rectangular, upright granite block similar to a large headstone. The brass plaque had the image of a Mosquito followed by the personal details of Hector Ross and Jack Green and a message of gratitude that they died fighting for the liberation of France.

The site selected for Hector & Jack's stele is a small grass verge approximately 500 metres from L'église Saint-Pierre (their original burial site), on the southern edge of the village.

This is also at the start of the Champ Pierre, this being the road that leads directly from the village to Menilgault Farm, approx. 1.3 km to the south, which is where Hector & Jack's aircraft crashed, and thus where they were killed.



*L'église Saint-Pierre (Church)      The Stele Site*



*Hector & Jack's Memorial Stele*





### **8:3 Dedication Ceremony**

The Ross family arrived 30 minutes before the official 10:30am start time, so as to meet Australian Embassy representative - Caroline Bartlett (Director of the Sir John Monash Centre), the uniformed RAAF representative - Flight Lieutenant James Walduck and his wife Mia, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of La Chapelle-pres-Sees, and as well as other dignitaries.

Shortly afterwards Jeff Burrows (a son of Gladys Burrows, who is a cousin to Bill, Rod & Sal), and Jeff's partner Baharak arrived, and were also introduced to dignitaries.

By 10.30am many other elected officials had arrived, comprising six "federal" politicians & Senators from the French Upper and Lower houses of Parliament, thirteen Mayors from surrounding local villages. There were also several people in military uniform, twenty five colour (unit flag) bearers and over 100 from the village. All told there were more than 150 in attendance.



*The Stele dedication ceremony*

The ceremony started with the Presentation of Colours and Ringing to the Dead, which is a French traditional bugling ceremony, which sounded fantastic, and was performed by three elderly buglers. This was followed by the Mayor's speech.

The Ross family members were then asked to assist the Mayor to remove a parachute which covered the Stele.....one of several very nice touches.

Mick O'Toole then gave a very moving speech on behalf of the Ross family, with Caroline Bartlett jointly delivering a translation in French. Mick's speech addressed the gratitude of the Ross family for all the assistance the family had received from the French people, for their having established the circumstances and location of Hector's death, and for the generosity of the French people in erection of the Stele and the commemoration ceremony.

The last line of Mick's speech struck a particular note with all present, so much so that it was later referred to in a speech by one of the French Senators during their speech at the ceremony. The last line of Mick's speech was: ***"We are pleased that this son of Australia is also a son of France"***.

RAAF Flt Lt James Walduck then gave a speech, focussing on the military perspective, followed by speeches by several of the attending politicians.

Next, wreaths were laid. All Ross family members took a wreath and Sally Ross was asked to assist the Mayor in laying a wreath on behalf of the people of La Chapelle-pre-Sees.

This was a very emotional time for Sal, compounded by the need for her to remain in-situ beside the Stele for the playing of the Australian, English, and French national anthems.

As the anthems were in progress a 1940's vintage plane did three fly-overs at very low altitude. First the pilot flew south to north, did a steep banking turn, then flew north to south, did another steep bank then flew west to east, thereby making the shape of the cross.

A poignant touch to this was that the aircraft's port landing light was not illuminated; this being in recognition that the port engine / wing of Hector's plane had been disabled by flak, resulting in the aircraft crashing. This had been determined by Tony Young who conducted the analysis of the crash.



***Ceremony fly-over, note that only the starboard landing light is illuminated***







Following the fly-over, the retinue of politicians came to the Stele and then preformed the incredible honour of presenting Bill Ross, Rod Ross, Sally O'Toole (nee' Ross), Jeff Burrows, and also the RAAF Representative Ft Lt Walduck, first with medals on behalf of the French Senate, then additional medals on behalf of the French House of Representatives.



***Sal, Rod, Bill & Jeff being presented with medals from the French Government***

At the conclusion of official ceremony formalities Ross family members shook the hand and thanked each & every Colour (flag) bearers and the buglers. The Colours (flags) belonging to each of the military unit associations of the region.

After this, a press photo session of the Ross family flanking the Stele with the Mayor of La Chapelle-pres-Sees.

The Stele and the ceremony with all its pomp were beyond the Ross family's wildest dreams, for they had no idea that the attitude of the French towards those who sacrificed their lives for their liberty was so intense. Several times it was mentioned to the family that "We must not forget".

Another recurring theme was that France was an occupied country and without help, would have continued under German rule, or worse, under Russian control.

During the period of occupation the French were slaves to the Nazi administration and a number of those who attended had lived through that.

It was clear to the Ross family, that the French were very pleased the Ross family finally knew what happened to Hector, that ceremony meant so much to them, and that the French were greatly appreciative of Ross family members having travelled so very far to attend the ceremony.

A "Wine of Honour" ceremony was held at the La Chapelle-près-Sées community hall, where there were over 100 in attendance, both in and around the hall.

The inside of the hall there was an elaborate display of photographs from WW2, and outside the ANSA had placed on display a complete Mosquito engine, all of which attracted a lot of attention.



The pieces of wreckage from Hector & Jack's Mosquito, which had been found at Menilgault Farm on the previous day, were on display on a table inside the hall.

The Ross family members endeavoured to talk with and thank, as many people as possible in the hall, including the pilot who did the fly over.





Immediately following the Wine of Honour, many of the dignitaries had to depart, but for the group that remained, an informal but delicious lunch was served.

At the lunch, Ross Family members were 'required' to sample various local wines & foods concluding with the Mayor's family brew.

This was a form of Calvados, a spirit made from apple and in this case approx. 50% proof, and was absolute firewater.

Finally, the Deputy Mayor Christian Bernou (the person who had made all the local council arrangements for the ceremonies) announced that a presentation of further medals was to take place.

Rod & Sal were each duly presented Medals from the La Chapelle-près-Sées council.

When Rod was presented his medal by the Deputy Mayor's wife and as Rod began to make a speech, she said 'First you must kiss me'. What could he do but embrace both cheeks.



***Rod & Sal with their La Chapelle-près-Sées medals***

By the end of the lunch & medals presentation, Bill, Rod, Sal & Mick, were emotionally drained, and so returned to their accommodation for a much needed rest.

Thus concluded a highly memorable day for the Ross family.

***Mick, Baharak, Jeff & Bill***



Rod then spoke in reply and from the heart, thanking the Council, the ANSA, and all the people of France for all that had been done for the Rod.

During the lunch the Ross family members took the opportunity to get to know Jeff Burrows and his partner Baharak, for prior to the Stele Ceremony, Jeff had not previously met any of the Ross family.

Immediately after the lunch, Jeff & Barak had to depart to commence their return journey back to their home in Germany.

-ooOoo-

# Chapter 09

## 9:1 Medal Group & Badges



RAAF Pilot's Wings



1939-45 Star  
Star

Aircrew Europe Star  
with the France and  
Germany Clasp

Defence  
Medal

War Medal  
1939-45

Australian Service  
Medal 1939-45

Bomber Command  
Commemorative  
Medal



RAAF Flight Sgt  
Cap Badge



RAAF Reservist Badge



RAAF "Other Ranks"  
Cap Badge



RAAF Sweetheart Badge

### Note

These are not Hector's name-impressed medal group, which is believed held by another family member.



## 9:2 Description & Explanation



**1939-1945 Star** - was awarded for specified periods of operational service overseas between 3 September 1939 and either 8 May 1945 in Europe or 2 September 1945 in the Far East theatre. Army personnel had to complete 180 days of service in an operational command, between these dates.

The ribbon has three vertical stripes of dark blue, red and light blue. The dark blue stripe represents the Naval Forces and the Merchant Navy, the red stripe the Armies and the light blue stripe the Air Forces



**The Air Crew Europe Star, with the France & Germany Clasp** - was awarded for operational flying from United Kingdom bases over Europe between 3 September 1939 and 5 June 1944. A person must first be entitled to the 1939-45 Star before qualifying for the Air Crew Europe Star. The France & Germany Clasp was awarded to personnel who flew missions over France & Germany, after "D-Day", 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

The ribbon is light blue (representing the Air Force) with yellow and black outer stripes, representing the continuous service of the Air Forces by night, and by day.



**The Defence Medal** - was awarded for six months service in a prescribed non-operational area subject to enemy air attack or closely threatened, in Australia and overseas, or for 12 months service in non-prescribed non-operational areas.

The ribbon is orange with green outer stripes, each green stripe having a black pin-stripe running down the centre. The green represents the Islands of the United Kingdom, the orange represents enemy attacks, and the black represents the black outs.



**The War Medal 1939-45** - was awarded for 28 days full-time service in the Armed Forces between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945. Operational and non-operational service may be counted, providing that it was of 28 days or more duration.

The ribbon colours of red, white and blue represent the colours of the Union Flag.



**Australia Service Medal 1939-1945** - was instituted in 1949 to recognise the service of members of the Australian Armed Forces and the Australian Mercantile Marine during World War II. The medal was originally awarded to those who served at home or overseas for at least 18 month full-time service, or three years part-time service, between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.

The ribbon has a wide khaki central stripe, flanked by two narrow red stripes, which are in turn flanked by two outer stripes, one of dark blue and the other of light blue. The khaki represents the Australian Army, and the red, dark blue and light blue represent the Merchant Navy, Royal Australian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force respectively.



**Bomber Command Commemorative Medal** - is an unofficial commemorative medal that pays tribute to all air and ground crew veterans whose contribution to Bomber Command was so very essential during World War II.

The ribbon colours of blue grey, midnight blue and flame represent the North Sea, the night sky over enemy territory, the flame of the target and the return trip.



**RAAF Pilot Wings** – were awarded to RAAF personnel who had qualified as pilots. Hector was awarded his pilots wings 28th August, 1942. The wings are made of Cloth, stitched onto felt backing



**RAAF Sweetheart Badge** - Were commonly given as gifts by service personnel to mothers, wives & sweethearts, and worn by the recipient to acknowledge they had someone they cared about serving in the armed forces. The badge is made of Brass, with Blue & Red enamelling



**RAAF Flight Sergeant Cap Badge** - Hector was later commissioned as an officer on 8th December, 1943.



**RAAF Reservist Lapel Badge** - Issued to applicants to the Royal Australian Air force who have been successful in passing all the required tests, but are not required for immediate enlistment



**RAAF Other Ranks Badge** - This is the cap badge Hector would have initially worn.

# Chapter 10

## Aircraft Specification

### 10:1 de Havilland DH.98 Mosquito MK6 Fighter-Bomber

The de Havilland DH.98 Mosquito was a British twin-engine shoulder-winged multi-role combat aircraft. The crew of two, pilot and navigator, sat side by side. It served during and after the Second World War.

It was one of few operational front-line aircraft of the era whose frame was constructed almost entirely of wood and was nicknamed *The Wooden Wonder*. The Mosquito was also known affectionately as the "Mossie" to its crews.

Originally conceived as an unarmed fast bomber, the Mosquito was adapted to roles including low to medium-altitude daytime tactical bomber, high-altitude night bomber, pathfinder, day or night fighter, fighter-bomber, intruder, maritime strike aircraft, and fast photo-reconnaissance aircraft. When Mosquito production began in 1941 it was one of the fastest operational aircraft in the world. Entering service in late 1941, the first Mosquito variant was an unarmed high-speed, high-altitude photo-reconnaissance aircraft.

Subsequent versions continued in this role throughout the war. The first Mk. B.IV bomber entered service with No. 105 Squadron on 15 November 1941.

From mid-1942 to mid-1943, Mosquito bombers flew high-speed, medium or low-altitude daylight missions against factories, railways and other pinpoint targets in Germany and German-occupied Europe.

From June 1943, Mosquito bombers were formed into the Light Night Strike Force and used as pathfinders for RAF Bomber Command heavy-bomber raids. They were also used as "nuisance" bombers, often dropping Blockbuster bombs – 4,000 lb (1,800 kg) "cookies" – in high-altitude, high-speed raids that German night fighters were almost powerless to intercept.

As a night fighter from mid-1942, the Mosquito intercepted *Luftwaffe* raids on Britain, notably those of Operation Steinbock in 1944. Starting in July 1942, Mosquito night-fighter units raided *Luftwaffe* airfields.

As part of 100 Group, it was flown as a night fighter and as an intruder supporting Bomber Command heavy bombers that reduced losses during 1944 and 1945.

The Mosquito fighter-bomber served as a strike aircraft in the Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF) from its inception on 1 Jun 1943. The main objective was to prepare for the invasion of occupied Europe a year later.

In Operation Overlord three Mosquito FBVI Wings flew close air support for the Allied armies in co-operation with other RAF units equipped with North American B-25 Mitchell medium bombers.

In the months between the foundation of 2TAF and its duties from D day onwards, vital training was interspersed with attacks on V-1 flying bomb launch sites.

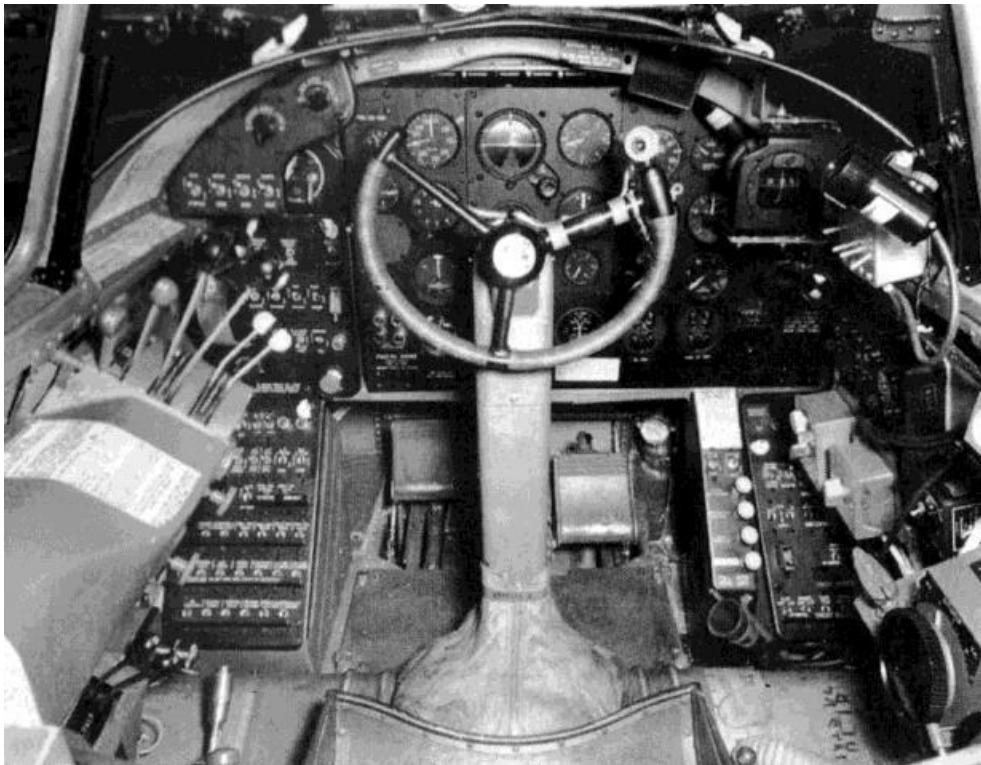
The Mosquito FBVI was often flown in special raids. One of the best-known was Operation Jericho – an attack on Amiens Prison in early 1944. Other 2TAF operations included precision attacks against military intelligence, security and police facilities (such as Gestapo headquarters).

From 1943, Mosquitos with RAF Coastal Command attacked *Kriegsmarine* U-boats and intercepted transport ship concentrations. After Operation Overlord, the U-boat threat in the Western Approaches decreased fairly quickly, but correspondingly the Norwegian and Danish waters posed greater dangers.

Hence the RAF Coastal Command Mosquitos were moved to Scotland to counter this threat. The Strike Wing at Banff stood up in September 1944 and comprised Mosquito aircraft of No's 143, 144, 235 and 248 Squadrons Royal Air Force and No.333 Squadron Royal Norwegian Air Force.

The Mosquito flew with the RAF and other air forces in the European, Mediterranean and Italian theatres. The Mosquito was also operated by the RAF in the South East Asian theatre and by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) based in the Halmaheras and Borneo during the Pacific War.

First flown in 1942, the Mosquito FB Mk.VI fighter-bomber was intended for 'intruder' strike missions, and became the most numerous and widely-used Mosquito variant. Based on the F Mk.II day fighter version without Air Interception radar, it retained the formidable armament of four Browning 0.303 in machine-guns in the nose and four Hispano 20 mm canon in the belly. But it was also given a bomb-bay behind the cannon, which enabled it to carry two 500 lb. bombs internally (with fins cropped to fit) plus another two under the wings.



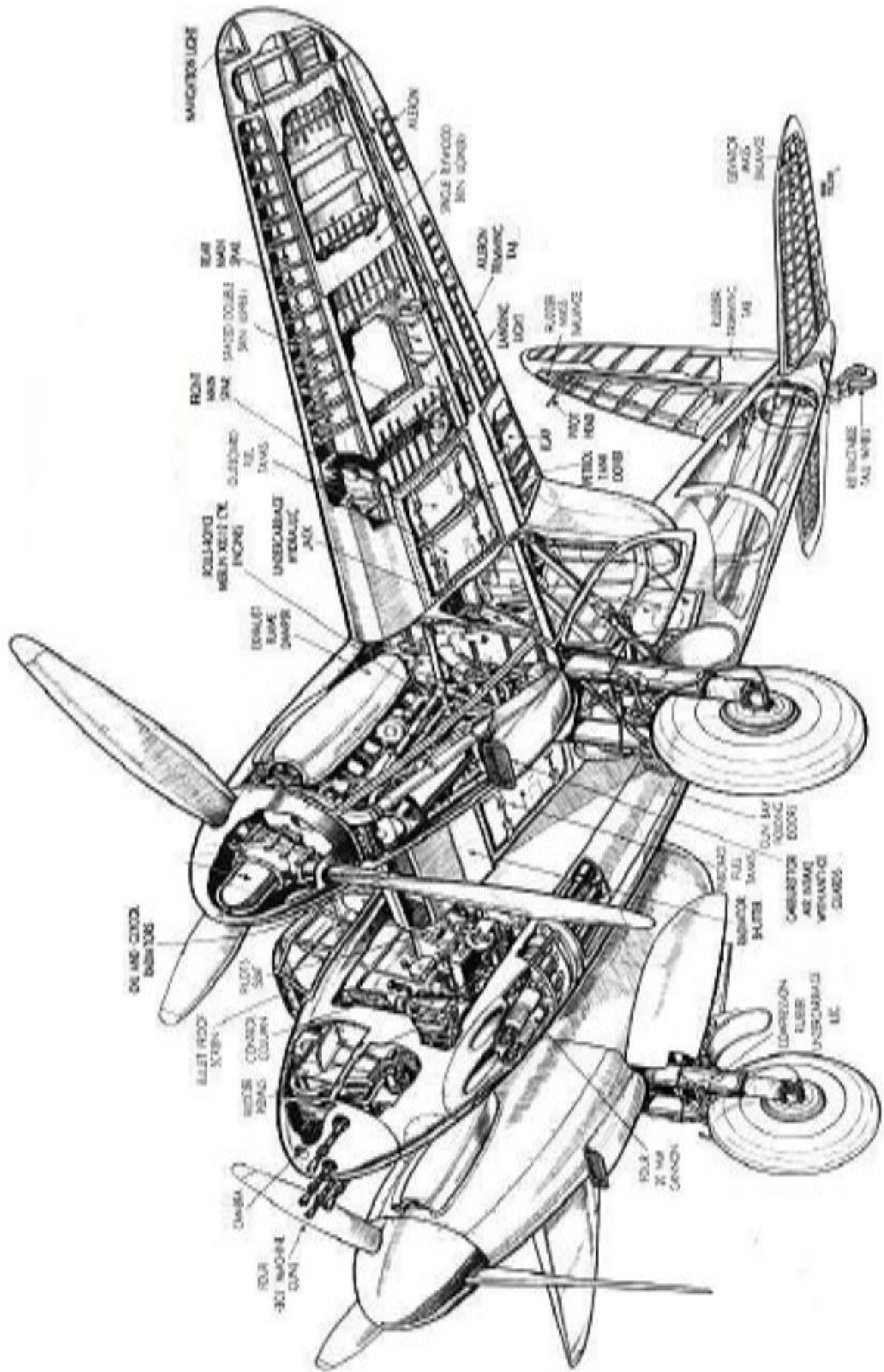
Since it operated primarily at low altitude, the FB.VI was unpressurised, and retained single-stage supercharged Merlin engines.

Targets for 2TAF (Second Tactical Air Force) FB.VI Mosquitos included power stations, communications centres and V-weapon sites, but operations also included one-off special raids e.g. on Amiens jail and several Gestapo HQs. Coastal Command.

During the 1950s, the RAF replaced the Mosquito with the jet-powered English Electric Canberra.

**Aircraft Specifications:**

Power Unit: Two Rolls Royce Merlin 21 engines, 1,460 hp each  
Wing Span: 54 ft 2 in (16.5 m)  
All-up Weight: 22,258 lb (10,096 kg)  
Max Speed: 378 mph (608 kph)  
Ceiling: 33,000 ft (10,058 m)  
Range: 1,855 miles (2,985 km)  
Armament: 4 x 20mm Hispano cannon (fuselage); 4 x .303in Browning machine guns (nose);  
4,000 pounds (1,800 kg) 85 86





## 10.2 Douglas Boston III – Light Bomber

The Douglas A-20 Havoc (company designation **DB-7**) was a United States designed attack, light bomber, intruder, and reconnaissance aircraft.

It served with several Allied air forces, principally the United States Army Air Forces, the Soviet Air Forces, Soviet Naval Aviation, and the Royal Air Force (RAF) of the UK.

It was also used by the air forces of Australia, South Africa, France, and the Netherlands during the war, and by Brazil afterwards.

In British Commonwealth air forces, bomber-attack variants of the DB-7 were usually known by the service name **Boston**, while night fighter and intruder variants were known as Havoc. An exception to this was the Royal Australian Air Force, which referred to all variants of the DB-7 by the name Boston.

### *Cockpit layout*

The Douglas Boston III was the most important version of that aircraft in RAF service, with a total of 768-771 aircraft produced. It was also the first British version to be actually be used as a bomber, and the first version to have come from the original British order for the Douglas DB-7B.

The standard Boston III was used as a day bomber, operating over occupied France from the spring of 1942, as part of the RAF's policy of "Leaning over the Channel".

### **Specifications:**

Power Unit: 2 × Wright R-2600-23 "Twin Cyclone" radial engines, 1,600 hp each  
Wing Span: 61 ft 4 in (18.69 m)  
All-up Weight: 24127 lb (10964 kg)  
Max Speed: 317 mph (510 km/h)  
Ceiling: 23,700 ft (7,225 m)  
Range: 945 mi (1,521 km)  
Armament: 6× fixed forward firing 0.5in machine guns in the nose; 2× 0.5in machine guns in dorsal turret; 1x flexible 0.5in machine gun, mounted behind bomb bay 4,000 lb (1,800 kg) of Bombs 87