Robert George (Bob) LANCELOTT (1922 – 1943)



Air Gunner, 305535

Robert George

LANCELOTT

RAF

620 Squadron

2nd July 1943

Age 20

"BOB"

WHO LIVED KINDLY,

SERVED WITH QUIET

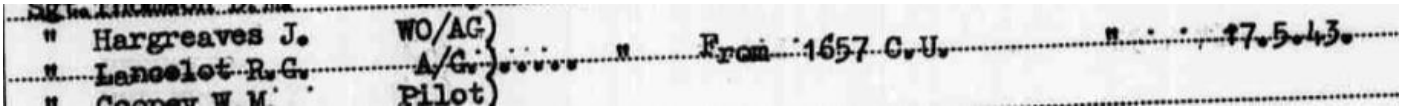
RESOLUTION

AND DIED BRAVELY

No photo

Robert George Lancelott, known as Bob, was the son of George E. Lancelott and Florence M. Lancelott, formerly Eaves, of Birmingham. His father was a jeweller's toolmaker from the Handsworth area of Birmingham. Robert's birth was registered in West Bromwich in 1922. His brother, Roy's, birth was also registered in West Bromwich in 1926.

It is not known when Bob enlisted but on 17th May 1943 he completed some training with the 1657 Heavy Conversion Unit based at RAF Stradishall.


" Hargreaves J. WO/AG
" Lancelot R.G. A/G. " From 1657 C.U. " 17.5.43.
" Cooney W.M. Pilot

With the introduction of the new heavy bombers, the 4-engined Short Stirling, Avro Lancaster and Handley Page Halifax, into service, the Royal Air Force introduced Heavy Conversion Units. The role of the Heavy Conversion Units was to qualify crews trained on medium bombers to

operate the heavy bombers prior to assignment to an Operational Training Unit where they would gain further experience before final posting to the operational squadrons. This HCU training was generally a three – four week course. He was in the thick of things before the week was out.

On 21/22nd May 1943 Bob was with 214 Squadron taking part in an operation known as Nectarines. This was a 'gardening' operation when aircraft dropped mines.

Stirling	Sgt. Coopey W.	Gardening	2140	0210	This A/C planted 2 x B200, 2 x D400 and 2 x B200 (in that order). in the allotted area(53 44N 06 00E) at 8 secs intervals on a heading of 360°M., commencing at 2332hrs. Course 120. Ground speed 170 m.p.h. Height 800ft. The moon was on the wane, there was some low stratus cloud and moderate sea haze. The area was identified by a Gee fix. Route as ordered.
BK717	" Thompson D.M.	"Nectarines"			
	" Hewitt R.				
	" Hargreaves J.				
	" Richards T.F.				
	" Atkinson R.				
	" Lancelot R.G.				

The following night he was involved in a raid on Dortmund. The operations record book tells us that the aircraft was damaged by flak.

Bk717	Sgt. Coopey W.	" "	2330	0350	This A/C attacked DORTMUND at 0130hrs. with 1 x 1000GP. + 1 x 1000LD 845.37 Mark IV A,+ 1275 x 4lb. + 75 x 4lb 'X' incends., from 12500ft. on a heading of 195°M. It was a dark night with no cloud and visibility was fairly good. The target was identified from atimed run from yellow markers No red markers were then visible so a concentration of green markers where a red had fallen previously, was bombed. This A/C was hit by flak, the port aileron being holed and a damage being caused to port outerb engine . No 3 petrol tank was also hit. One photo attempted. Route as ordered.
	" Thompson D.M.				
	" Hargreaves J.				
	" Richards R.H.				
	" Atkinson R.				
	" Lancelot R.G.				
	" Hewitt R.				

The crew of Stirling NBK717 were next in the air 4 days later on 28/29th May, gardening once again in an operation codenamed Deodars.

Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time Up	Time Down	Details of Sortie or Flight	Refs
28/29th.May	Stirling BK717	Sgt. Coopey W.	Gardening	2220	0450	This A/C planted 2 x P.616(3) and 2 x G.708 atk 45 42 30N. 01 21 30 W. at 10 secs intervals from 800ft. at 0122hrs. on a heading of 328°M. It was a dark night with no cloud and good visibility. Target was identified from A Gee Homing run. Route as ordered.	
		" Thompson D.M.	"Deodars"				
		" Hewitt R.					
		" Hargreaves J.					
		" Richards R.H.					
		" Atkinson R.					
		" Lancelot R.G.					

It was obviously a quick turn round as they were back in the air in a different aircraft the following night, taking part in a raid on Wuppertal.

For the Month of May 19 43.

Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time Up	Time Down	Details of Sortie or Flight	Refs
29/30th.May	Stirling BK724	Sgt. Coopey W.	Attack on	2325	0400	This A/C attacked Wuppertal at 0115hrs. with 1 x 1000GP., + 1 x 1000LD 845.37 Mk. IV R. + 70 x 4lb. 'X' + 1190 x 4lb. Incends and 2 packages of G.27 Nickels, from 12000ft., on a heading of 060°M. It was adark night with some cloud and poor visibility. Yellow Markers were seen on the way to the target. Red markers had gone out when A/C was ready to bomb target, so bombs were aimed at the centre of a concentration of green markers. One 1000lb.bomb was seen to burst. One photo attempted. Route as ordered.	
		" Thompson D.M.	Wuppertal "B"				
		" Hargreaves J.					
		" Richards R.H.					
		" Atkinson R.					
		" Lancelot R.G.					
		" Hewitt R.					

On 17th June 1943, 149 and 214 Squadrons amalgamated and became 620 Squadron. Bob was posted to 620 Squadron as an Air Gunner. It was based at nearby RAF Chedburgh and was comprised of 10 Stirlings from each of 149 and 214 Squadrons.

Two days later on 19/20th June, as a part of No. 3 Group of RAF Bomber Command, it began operations with an attack by eight Stirlings on the Schneider armament works at Le Creusot in France.

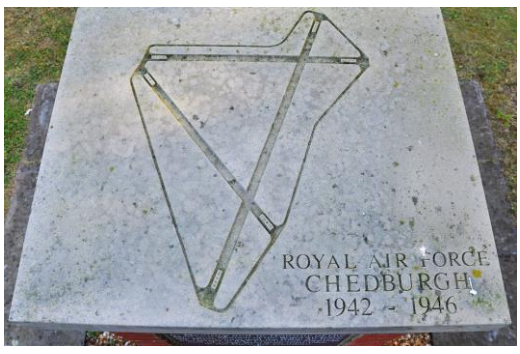
They lost their first aircraft with the loss of all crew. On 2nd July 1943 two Stirling aircraft, EF394 (V) and BK724 (Y), collided over the airfield whist flying in formation during an air affiliation exercise. One came down near to the local pub The Marquis Cornwallis and the other in Stansfield. Only the rear gunner of the Stansfield crash survived and he suffered horrific burns. The two crews included five ground staff who were along for experience. Bob, aged 20 years, was one of the men who lost his life.

Bob was buried at Haverhill cemetery, Suffolk, England, grave 249, section U. Others who perished in the same accident are also buried in Haverhill Cemetery. They are Sgt D M Thomson, RAF, from Watford Sgt R C Young, RAF, from Enfield and Leading Aircraftman C S Forster, RAF, from Cleethorpes and Sgt Robert Elmer Atkinson of the RCAF.

The memorial to those who lost their lives at RAF Chedburgh.



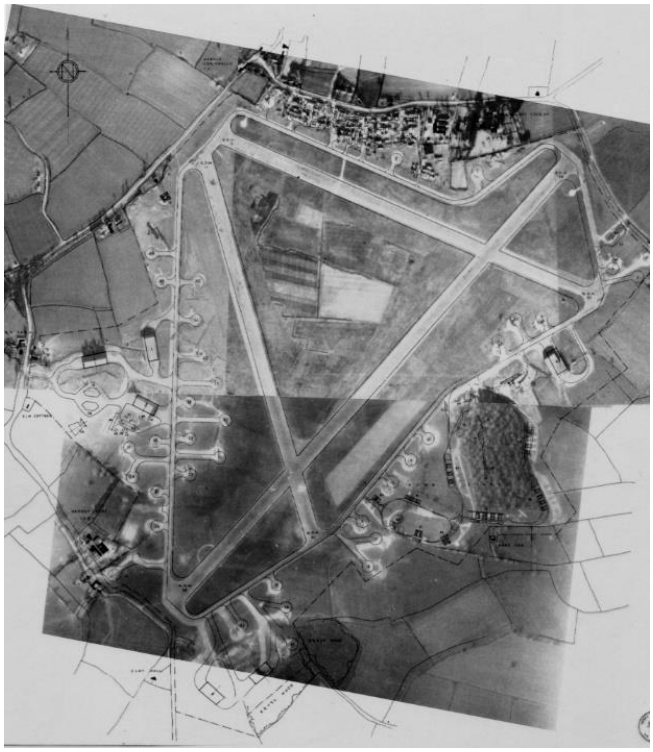




Chedburgh was one of the earliest operational wartime airfields in Suffolk. Built by John Laing and Co. it was a satellite bomber station for nearby RAF Stradishall.







Others who lost their lives were

Sgt Thomas Corless *who was buried in Burnley Cemetery,*

AC 1St Class Arthur Haight *who was buried in Sand Hutton,*

L/A James Alexander Macdonald *who was buried in Urray Churchyard,*

Sgt William Shearer *who was buried in Inverurie Cemetery,*

Sgt Leslie Gordon Turville *who was buried in Hoddesdon Cemetery,*

Sgt Wilfred Coopey *who was buried in Barnwood (St. Lawrence) Churchyard,*

Sgt Richard Hewitt *who was buried in Plymouth (Ford Park) Cemetery,*

A/C1 Thomas Mcloughlin *who was buried in Dean's Grange Cemetery, Ireland,*

Sgt Roderick Richard*s who was buried in Portsmouth (Kingston) Cemetery*

LAC Hugh Rooney *who was buried in Dundee Eastern Necropolis.*