

Squadron 101 were based at RAF Holme on Spalding Moor and Lancaster Bomber ED807 are, hopefully, to be honoured at a ceremony in 2022

On the 13th April 2022 it will be 79 years in 1943 a Lancaster Bomber (ED807) crew from 101 squadron, [who were then based at **RAF Holme on Spalding Moor Airfield**], crash landed into a field at Hasholme Carr Farm, on the south of the airfield. Sadly all the crew perished in the crash.

Families of those that perished in the crash contacted the **HOSM Parish Council** in 2021 asking if anyone could pinpoint the site of the crash.

Village resident Mr Bob Hubbard who, at the time of the crash, was a young man working on a farm in close proximity to the Airfield. Bob also lived close to the airfield and knew of various mishaps and crashes. Bob suggested we try a field now being farmed by Mr Mark Morton as he recalled a Lancaster crashing in close proximity to Hasholme Carr Farm. Mark was extremely helpful and explained when he worked one his fields how he would occasionally plough up debris: wire; metal fragments and spent ammunition shells the calibre of the ammunition were found to be the same as the ammunition carried by ED807. The families have asked for permission to place a memorial to those who died, in the Memorial garden by the gate at the Airfield. The new memorial will stand alongside the memorials to the RAF Bomber Command 76 Squadron and the RAAF 458 Squadron RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] who was stationed at Holme during the Second World War.

We shall be circulating the details of the Commemoration of this Memorial as soon as we receive the details from the families. Everyone is welcome to attend this Historical Open Service to Honour the Lancaster Crew of ED807 details will be on the Parish Council web site; in the Grapevine online and on the Parish Notice Boards. Please join the families who will be travelling from Australia and the UK to commemorate the loss of the young men who fought for their country and sadly never made it safely home, they were all willing to serve their country and paid the ultimate price. We will remember them.

The following information gives an insight into Squadron 101 which was supplied by a number of people. Please respect the wishes of the contributor's listed at the end of this article.

There are also details of the various graves at the airfield entrance and of 72 Squadron who were also based at Holme on Spalding Moor.



101 Squadron had only arrived at Holme on Spalding Moor on the 29th September 1942 with training being a priority on newly delivered Lancaster Mk 1's and later Mk 3's, over areas like the Lake District. They suffered their first loss on 16th November 1942 in one such training exercise over Wales, when a photo flash flare exploded with the loss of all 7 crew. Up until 13th April 1943 the Squadron had lost a total of 18 aircraft and the lives of 110 aircrew on raids and in accidents. **The night of 13th April 1943 was to be no different.**

On that night a record 19 Lancaster's were despatched by 101 Squadron at Holme on Spalding Moor to make up a force of 208 Lancaster's and 3 Halifax's for a night-time raid on the dockyards at Spezia in Northern Italy. The raid had originally been ordered for the night before (12th/13th) but was cancelled due to weather conditions.

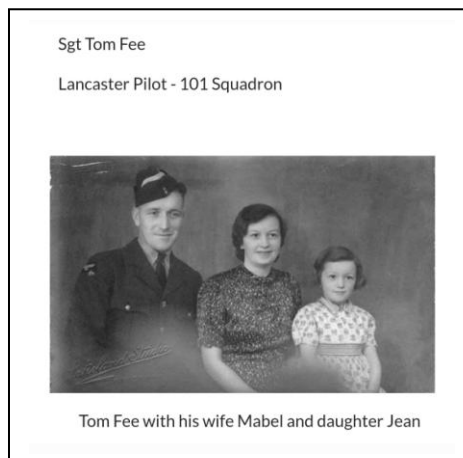
As a Group (101 Sqn was part of 1 Group) there had been 75 Lancaster's despatched, 6 of which returned early due to technical issues and of these 1 ditched with the crew being recovered, and 2 were logged as "missing" with the loss of all crew.

'C' Flight, including Pilot Sgt Thomas Fee's aircraft, despatched 6 of the 19 aircraft from Holme on Spalding Moor, with 6 aircraft from 'A' Flight and 7 from 'B' Flight each carrying 5 x 1000lb bombs, 180 x 4lb Magnesium incendiaries and 16 x 30lb Phosphorus incendiaries.

Amongst them was a newly delivered Lancaster 3 ED807, coded SR-X (SR being the Squadron code for 101 Squadron) which only had 15 minutes flying time on its airframe for its delivery flight from Woodford, just South of Stockport to Holme on Spalding Moor. Produced by A.V. Roe and Co Ltd at Chadderton, Manchester and delivered to the Squadron just 2 weeks before on 31st March 1943. This was the FIRST operational flight on this aircraft for this promising crew led by Sgt Thomas Fee, but soon after take off (approx 20.15) the aircraft suffered an engine loss with the port outer engine being the one to fail. The reasons for this are unknown but it is known that an aircraft that took off at 20.00 turned around about 30 miles South of Worthing on the South coast after both outer engines failed due to oil pressure failure.

The operational flight for ED807 was aborted and the crew made their way to a position over the North Sea off Flamborough Head to safely jettison their load of 1000lb bombs. A return course was set for Holme on Spalding Moor, which was reached, but at 1 mile from the airfields Southern boundary, the aircraft was seen approaching but suddenly dived and crashed into a field at **Hasholme Carr Farm at 22.20**. The resulting fire, which was probably not helped by the 196 incendiaries still on board and substantial fuel load, resulted in the aircraft being burnt out and the loss of all 7 crew members. This new aircraft had amassed a grand total of just 2 hours 15 minutes flying time from new and was struck off charge on 26th April.

“The promising crew”, as they had already been described on the Squadron Summary of Events, was led by **32 year old** Sgt Thomas Fee (1527088) of Whitehaven in Cumbria. He was married to Mabel, with 2 daughters aged 8 and 1 year old, and had trained in the U.S after enlisting into the RAFVR in August 1941 before later joining 101 Squadron. He was a builder by trade and had a very successful business in the Whitehaven area. Thomas’ elder daughter Jean is now living in Australia. Thomas is buried in Whitehaven Cemetery with his younger daughter Dorothy.



Flight Engineer Sgt Vernon Roderick Ager RAFVR (576419) **aged 19** of Greenford, Middlesex, son of Ernest Albert and Elizabeth Sophia Ager was born in Dursley, Gloucestershire and is the only member of the crew not repatriated for burial to his home town. He is laid to rest locally at All Saints Church, Holme on Spalding Moor with thanks to Darren Walker for tending his grave.



Vernon had attended a Naval School (Royal Hospital School, Holbrook) and the photograph shows him in his school's No 1's at about 15 years old. At 18, after volunteering for the RAF, he had become an Aircraftman 2nd Class and went on to become Aircraftman 1st Class as well as attending Gunnery School at Stormy Down, South Wales and RAF Lindholm.

Air Gunner, Sgt George William John Davison RAFVR (1606469) **aged 19** of Stockwell, which is now in the South West Borough of Lambeth in London. He is buried at Streatham Cemetery with an entry on Streatham Cemetery Wall. Currently that is all that is known about George unfortunately.

Air Gunner, Sgt Jack Beatson RAFVR (1456992) **aged 21** was from Grimesthorpe, Sheffield. Son of Bradley F T and Naomi Beatson he married circa October 1941 to Ada Ann Squires of Hackenthorpe, Sheffield and they had a son Jack who was born circa June 1942, just 10 months before the crash. Jack is buried at Shiregreen Cemetery in Sheffield where his stone bears the inscription "He Fought the Good Fight and Won the Eternal Crown." As Jack's death was registered in York at the Military Hospital (instead of Howden as were all the other crew members) it can only be assumed that he died the day after on the 14th April, at this hospital, from his injuries. These are unknown as to how and what, as in cases like this the cause of death on the certificate is stated purely as "Due to War Operations". There are no known photographs of Jack.

Navigator, Flying Officer Victor Cook RAFVR (129353) **aged 21** was from Chesham in Buckinghamshire where he is now buried. Born in Peterborough 13th July 1921 to Percy and Rose he was one of 6 children and a carpenter by trade. He did his basic training in Canada and wanted to go back there after the war. As a Flying Officer he was the most senior of the crew but in all cases the pilot is in charge when the crew are on the aircraft. Victor received his commission on 14th August 1942 to the rank of P/O on probation (emergency) and rose to F/O on probation (War subs) on 14th February 1943.



Wireless Operator / Air Gunner, Sgt John Smith RAFVR (1028126) **aged 24** was from Chorley in Lancashire. Married to Marjorie Leonora Worrall he had a daughter Jacqueline who he never saw as she was born Dec 1943 after the crash.



Bomber / Navigator, Sgt Robert Brough (1390807) **aged 29** of Dunfermline, is buried at Dunfermline Cemetery, Fife. Son of Thomas Brough and Catherine Bennett Rankine, he had married Margaret Louise Hendon in 1939 in Barnet, West Middlesex with a daughter, Catherine Margaret Ann Brough being born later the same year. Robert was a Police Constable in the Metropolitan Police at the time and lived at 8 Favart Road SW6 before volunteering for aircrew.



The Squadron was at Holme on Spalding Moor for a total of about 9 months and in that time they lost 32 aircraft and 179 crew members with a further 11 crew members being taken Prisoners of War. Various reasons for the losses included being shot down by friendly anti-aircraft gun fire, night fighters and enemy flak.

To quote the end scene from the film 633 Squadron, “You cannot kill a Squadron” and 101 Squadron continues to this day.

On 1st May 1982 it was Vulcan Bomber XM607 of 101 Sqn that put a single crater in the runway at Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands rendering it impossible for the airfield to be used by fast jets and ensuring the Argentines withdrew their Dassault Mirages back to the Argentine mainland.

No.101 Squadron still operates today out of Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, operating the Airbus Voyager in the air-to-air refuelling and transport roles.

Motto: Mens agitat molem (Mind over matter)



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Robert Brough images were supplied by Andrew Bennett.

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Other memorials at the Memorial Garden by the gate at the Airfield

There are two other memorials on the plot one to the late **Group Captain Lord Leonard Cheshire** [1917 -1992] VC [Victoria Cross]. OM [Order of Merit]. DSO [Distinguished Service Order]. DFC [Distinguished Flying Cross]. Lord Cheshire was the Commanding Officer of 76 Squadron 1942 -1943.

Leonard Cheshire flew 101 operations. The first in 1940 took place the day after Dunkirk. After his 100th mission he was awarded the Victoria Cross. His 101st and last mission, was to Nagasaki where he witnessed the dropping of the atomic bomb. Lord Leonard Cheshire was the husband of Lady Ryder of Warsaw, who along with her husband founded the Cheshire Homes and the Sue Ryder Homes including the one at Holme Hall which recently closed in 2020.

The other memorial is to the late Station Commander Flight Officer **Douglas 'Hank' Iveson** [1917 -1986] DSO [Distinguished Service Order] DFC. [Distinguished Flying Cross] and the Bar [2 citations]

Some of you may have recently seen a Commemoration televised on BBC Look North showing a Memorial stone had been erected in the churchyard close to the orchard where the Hampden Bomber from 455 Squadron RAAF, crashed killing all four crew members. This crash took place on 13th February 1942 around 2 am after taking off from RAF Wigsley near Lincoln. The land mines they were carrying did explode on impact but no residents of the village of Eagle were hurt although some of the buildings in the village were damaged.

A little bit about 76 Squadron.

Our children in Holme School are taught about these conflicts and two of the pupils each year attend the Remembrance Service at the Airfield in September 2021 to lay a wreath on the Memorial dedicated to the men of 76 Squadron who died in WW11. Our village school has ties with the 76 Squadron members who regularly visit our school and annually present an Educational Award to two outstanding pupils a boy and a girl who have made outstanding progress in their final year at the Primary School. Your children may remember meeting some of the veterans.

Sadly as the years pass there are fewer veterans. We have three legacies in the village two are in the form of Oak display cabinets, one in the church which houses the Roll of Honour for the 76 Squadron, above which is the Memorial stained glass window dedicated to the squadron. The other display cabinet is in the school and houses the Facsimile of the Doomsday Book. Both these cabinets were built and donated to the village by George Wood from 76 Squadron a perfect gentleman and a very generous and talented cabinet maker; it was an Honour to have known him.

Everyone is most welcome at the Memorial Service and join the families and some of the veterans who are fast approaching their 100th birthdays. We shall be announcing the date and time for this service in the near future around the village, in Grapevine and on Facebook.