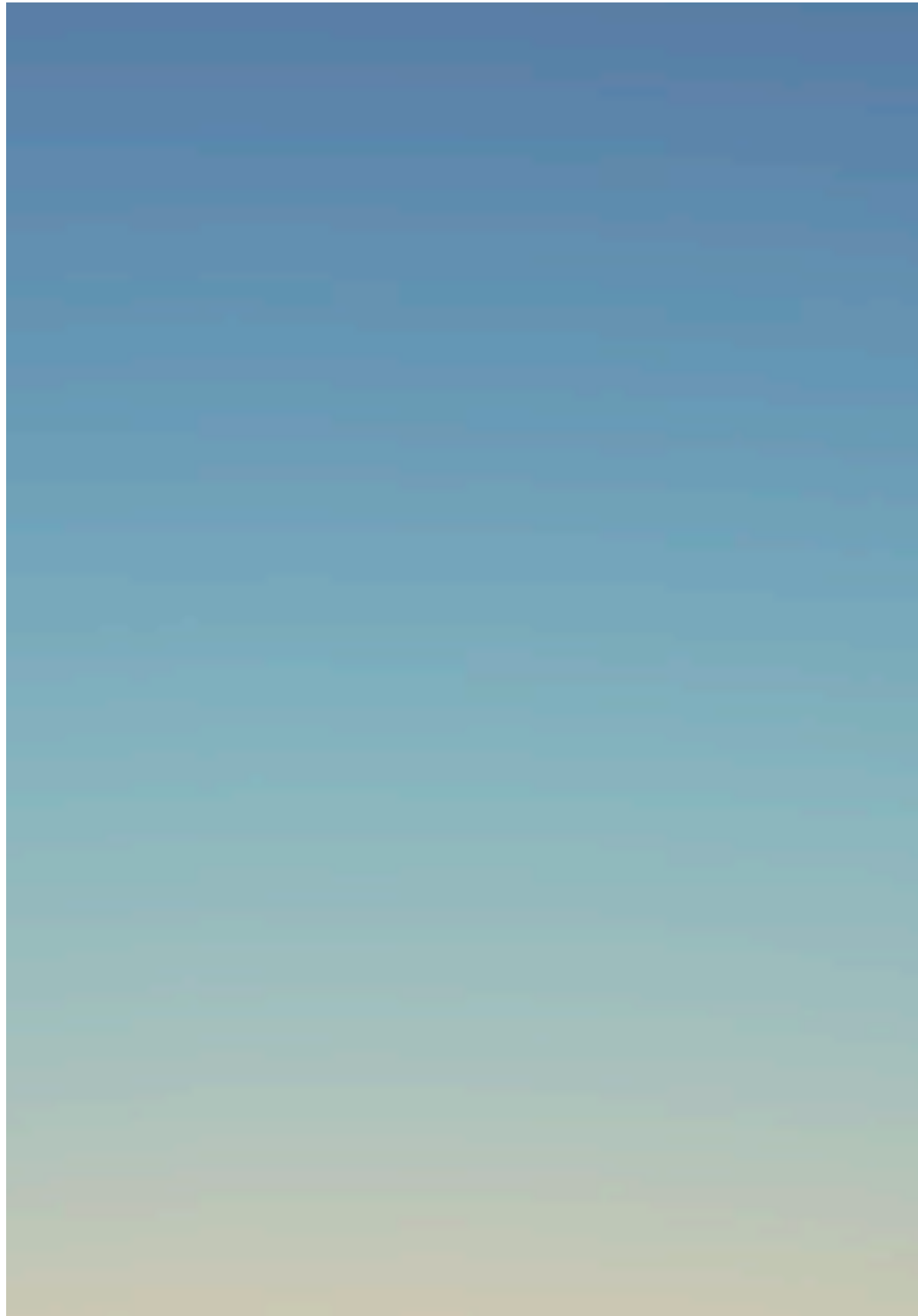


Lest We Forget

Frederick P. Seward



A Family's Story



Frederick Phillip Seward (Service No. 86637)

A Family's Story

Submitted by R.P. Seward (First cousin once removed)

Lest We Forget: Frederick P. Seward

A family's story - 1895 to 1943 to 2024

The appendix notes ^[1 to 7] below provide a fuller picture of the events surrounding the life and death of my first cousin once removed, the twenty three years old Frederick Phillip Seward (Freddie), a pilot with the RAF who along with his crew of six died in the early hours of 29th June 1943 when the Lancaster bomber he was piloting was shot down over Belgium during the Second World War.

It is a narrative that I could not have dreamed of putting together when younger. Only now towards the middle of my sixteenth lustrum and not too long after the eightieth anniversary of Freddie's death do I feel sufficiently confident in gathering the various sources of information together and setting down this family's story separately from my own as an appendix - it is an attempt to give voice to his family's preceding circumstances and the subsequent pain that must have especially been felt by my uncle Fred and aunt Cis (strictly speaking my great uncle and aunt) both of whom were born in 1895) on receiving news of the death in 1943 of their only son.

It had been a colour tinted photo of Freddie in his smart RAF uniform, that I particularly remember seeing each Wednesday afternoon as a child when visiting aunt Cis with my mother, as well as naturally at other visiting times - usually a Sunday - when visiting aunt's and uncle's house. The black tape edged framed photo of Freddie hung from a picture rail on the left hand side of the chimney breast in the sitting room of his childhood home, 'Edendale' number 23 Courtlands Road, Newbury. It was a photo that once a year near its top corner I noticed aunt would place a poppy.

The following notes that follow, re-trace and summarise uncle Fred's family's life and circumstances and combine re-purposed historical extracts with personal narratives written around my findings. The first note outlines the family history background to the events detailed in subsequent notes. A final contemporaneous note provides a degree of closure to this legacy story of Europe's wars recognising or perhaps re-affirming the need for us each to help maintain democratic engagement in a country's political system.

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_____notes_____

Note App C1.1: *Frederick (Freddie) Phillip Seward (2nd May 1920 to 29th June 1943):* Frederick Phillip Seward (Freddie) was the only son of his birth mother Caroline Emily Seward née Hancock and stepmother Cicely Kate Seward née Bishop and his father Frederick Charles Seward.

From a family history point of view, Freddie was my father's first cousin and therefore my first cousin once removed. It was Freddie's own father, dad's uncle Fred and strictly speaking my great uncle, who I had the privilege of being with near the end of his life when he expressed the open question, 'what's it about?' A phrase that was destined to become this appendix's associated autobiography's title.

It was in 1909, prior to the commencement of the First World War (WW1), that the then young (uncle) Frederick Charles Seward had left Kingsclere, Hampshire along with his mother and father and those siblings still at home, to start a new life in Newbury, Berkshire. His father had gained a position with a local metal turning and machinist company Plenty & Son, through, quite possibly, the recommendation of his father-in-law (uncle's maternal grandfather) who had been one of the first metal machinists to join the Newbury Company.

(Great) uncle Fred was the third son of seven siblings of my paternal great grandparents, George Seward and his wife Sarah Phillips. Uncle had joined the army (Royal Berkshire Regiment) in 1914 at the commencement of WW1 and one year later sustained a shrapnel wound to his hip during combat at Loos leading to him being hospitalised and eventually invalided out the following year in 1916.

On discharge from the army uncle Fred, in turn, also joined his father at Plenty and Son (eventually staying with the company and its separate business Newbury Diesel Company until his retirement). Although I'm not able to verify the actual date or circumstances of their meeting, it was in the immediate years following his discharge from the army that uncle Fred might have met his future wife Caroline Emily Hancock. They married in Newbury in March 1919.

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It being in the early peacetime years following the armistice (notwithstanding its on-going legacy Iraqi war) the exciting news of the prospective birth of uncle Fred's first born child expected the following year in May 1920, would have been greeted with joy by everyone. Very sadly though, the probable rudimentary medical practices and interventions, or not, common to this period, led Caroline to die during childbirth (or immediately thereafter), her new-born son though, named Frederick Phillip Seward, was safely delivered and survived his natural mother. It was in recognition of uncle's mother's maiden name that his son, Freddie, was given the middle name of Phillip (spelt with two l's).

I'm sure that the loss of his wife and likely absence of regularly seeing his first-born son must have lain heavily on uncle as well as his parents in whose house he was staying at the time of the census taken some 13 months later on 19th June 1921.

{There must have been an intense mix of emotions running through uncle's parent's (my paternal great-grandparents) household during this period. It had been less than one month following the death of uncle's wife Caroline that his parents were informed by curt notification that their second to youngest son Albert had died in Basra (and only following further enquiry was it elicited that he had died of dysentery in a makeshift hospital).}

I have no knowledge of any possible wet-nurse arrangements or the use of processed milk feeding that had started to become more common during this time, or as to where uncle Fred's son Freddie might have been nurtured during these early months. Neither do I have any knowledge of the arrangements or circumstances whereby uncle might have decided, or had it suggested, that he should re-marry quickly, with a view to providing the longer term care needed for a new-born babe as well as allowing a stable family life to more naturally evolve.

Records show that on New Year's Eve 1921, uncle Fred married for the second time. This time to Cicely Kate Bishop (aunt Cis). Uncle's second wife Cicely was six months older than Caroline and

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both had gone to the same 'Council' junior school, St Nicolas (the same school as I attended some 50 years later).

Despite Cicely being only 6 months older than Caroline, their birthdays meant that Caroline would likely have been in the academic year immediately below Cicely at school. Nonetheless, it is quite conceivable that both the young girls knew each other or at least knew of each other through their shared schooling.

And so marked the next phase in uncle's and aunt's lives and cousin Freddie's young life (he would have been likely fully weaned long before reaching 12 months old and when his father and step-mother married, he was 17 months old, likely walking and starting to form his first words). To cut a long story short (a favourite expression of dear aunt Cis) Freddie prospered at home, among other things joining Newbury's St. Nicolas parish church choir and not too long afterwards winning a scholarship to Christ's Hospital Boarding School.

On leaving boarding school and returning home, Freddie joined the Borough Accountant's department in Newbury's Town Council. It was a time (circa 1936/8) when talk of a possible Second World War (WW2) began to gather credibility becoming oh so real in 1939.

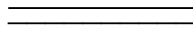
It was around this time also that Freddie met and courted a young lady named Kay who became well loved and close to uncle's and aunt's family unit. The call to arms though and the need to fight for one's country became too strong for many including Freddie to resist, and in 1941 he travelled to the RAF recruiting office in the relatively near to Newbury larger town of Reading, volunteered and was accepted as a Pilot Officer (Service No. 86637).

Freddie's history thereafter, if not already, was set to become an integral part of British history. He finished his training and with postings remote from Newbury he left closer family ties including those with Kay, who maybe became reliant on aunt and uncle for news of his training, postings, emotions and wartime sorties. To the disquiet of his parents; shock maybe, Freddie announced that he had met someone else.

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In a scenario doubtless played out across many families, the newly promoted Flight Lieutenant (Flt Lt) Freddie's posting to the Royal Air Force's Group 8 (Pathfinders), Straights Settlements No. 97 Squadron and its base for Avro Lancasters and other bombers at Bourn in Cambridgeshire, found him meeting and falling in love with Edith Kathleen Mary Curtis an Assistant Section Officer (ASO) serving at Bourn (Service No. 428222) with the Women's Auxiliary Aircraft Force (WAAF).

Edith heralded originally from the Walton on Thames, Surrey area and not too long after their meeting, the young couple travelled to Edith's family then staying at Clevedon, Somerset where, on 5th September 1942 in front of Edith's sister, brother and a mutual friend all bearing witness, they were married.



Note App C1.2: *Lest We Forget: Monday/Tuesday 28/29th June 1943:* On Monday evening the 28th June 1943 at approximately 2245hrs the seven-man crew of Lancaster bomber number LM323 OF-U finished chatting to some of the 40 or so ground 'aircraftsmen' (erks as they were affectionately known, derived from the word's cockney pronunciation) who felt personally responsible for the air worthiness and the bomb loading of the plane and only ever 'lent their Lanc' to the crew for the duration of an operation.

The aircraft's pilot, Flt Lt Frederick Phillip Seward having likely said goodbye to his wife Edith (née Curtis), a serving member of the RAF, at Bourn Airfield, Cambridgeshire, would have signed the 'accept' form for the aircraft from the ground crew and along with his six friends, prepared to climb aboard the Lancaster.

Each air crew member, pre-raid briefed on that night's Cologne operation sometime earlier that day, would be wearing their flight suits and carrying their oxygen tanks as they climbed the few steps up and in at the starboard door of the plane, located towards the rear of the Lancaster's draughty metal fuselage. On their left as they entered was an Elsan toilet, located in the middle of the tapering fuselage. On entering the fuselage each crew member would have

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made his way to a now familiar seat in readiness for duties to come. Tail-end Charlie though would use the Elsan's lid as a step to access the rear gun turret at the rear.

With the air crew all onboard and flight checks complete, the 2 in-board engines would have been started first followed by the 2 out-board Rolls Royce Merlin engines. Freddie would then have signalled to one of the ground crew 'erks' for 'chocks away' allowing the plane to taxi along in convoy with other airfield planes before turning on to one of the airfield's three main runways.

The plane and its crew took-off at approximately 2251hrs to join comrades in an air formation for an anticipated 7 1/2 hour round trip mission to Cologne, a city located to the south of the (more familiar to air crew) Ruhr industrial area of Germany (referred to by the airmen as 'Happy Valley').

The complete formation that night for the mission was made up of 608 aircraft in total:- 367 Lancasters, 169 Halifaxes, 85 Wellingtons, 75 Stirlings and 12 Mosquitos. The planes forming Group 8 would have all flown together and met with other planes from the formation as they passed over the familiar East Anglian countryside between Norwich and Ipswich before heading out over the North Sea and towards the southern tip of Holland and the Belgium countryside, continuing towards Verviers close to the Belgium / German border. A change of heading once across the border would then have taken them north-easterly towards their target, the City of Cologne.

Tragically though, the night was not to be theirs. Nearing the border region, the formation was met with dreaded German night fighters and it was here that the young crew's mission and their lives were so precipitously to end.

Their Avro Lancaster III bomber came under fire from a Messerschmitt fighter plane that had taken to the skies from an airfield in nearby Sint-Truiden. The Messerschmitt likely attacked Freddie's Lancaster bomber from below igniting both its still fairly full fuel tanks and its bomb cargo resulting in an explosion that

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would most probably have instantly killed everyone on board. The scattered wreckage of the Lanc and its crew fell among a wooded area at about 0125hrs at Solwaster, Liège on the western side of the Hautes Fagnes, 12km south-east of Verviers.

{The above details have been collated from desktop internet research through the RAF Pathfinders Archive, Pathfinder Craig, Imperial War Museum, RAF No. 9 Squadron Association and Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer websites supplemented by my own observations from visits made to both the 'Lancaster' archives at the International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln and the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre (and its Lancaster restoration project).}

Note App C1.3: *The Village of Sart, Solwaster, Belgium: June 1954:* {I am indebted to Sandy Sanderson the son of the navigator Eric Sanderson for much of the research, details and transcript of the memorial service subsequently held in 1954 during which a monument to the whole crew of the Avro Lancaster LM323 OF-U was unveiled.}

'In 1954, eleven years following the crash and very close to its anniversary, a most beautiful memorial was unveiled to the lost crew.' The main speech made at the dedication ceremony held at Solwaster Woods, Belgium, was made by a local Belgium dignitary who all too vividly remembered the horrors of the war and included the following very moving passages:

"At 20 past one in the starlit early hours of Tuesday, 29th June, 1943, in this place, impressive in its wildness, a Lancaster bomber crashed, carrying with it to their deaths the entire crew:-

Pilot: Frederick Phillip Seward

Flight Engineer: Brynley Edmond Lewis

Navigator: Eric Sanderson

Bomb Aimer: Ernest Edward Lawton

Lest We Forget: Frederick P. Seward

Wireless Operator: Kenneth Ivor Smith

Mid-Upper Gunner: Albert Monaghan

Rear Gunner: Malcolm David Horner

It is not necessary for me to give you the whole story as told by those villagers of Sart who discovered the wreckage. I must, however, tell you that Flt Lt Seward's wife, who was serving in the RAF, said good-bye to her husband only 2 hours and 30 minutes before the crash.

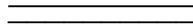
You (airmen) took off from your not far-distant island, together with hundreds more of your comrades, to come and destroy the offensive might of a powerful and cruel foe, who, for three long years, had held in subjection Belgium, and the whole of Western Europe. But, also on that fateful night, 29th June 1943, your fine aircraft was forced out of that cloud of bombers sweeping towards their appointed targets, by a frightful explosion; its scattered wreckage fell in this place where we are now gathered together.

All the inhabitants of the commune will remember that tragic night. Long before it was over, the crash of your aircraft was revenged by one of those mighty bombardments which time and time again turned the industrial Ruhr into a veritable inferno. We stood, as we had stood before, at our windows, scanning the blazing horizon, tasting to the full the joy of seeing the enemy paying a hundredfold for the sufferings he had inflicted on our beloved country. And soon the steady roar of engines was heard again, as the aircraft, relieved of their loads, returned at speed to their bases.

But you, our gallant friends, were unhappily not permitted on that night to savour the joys of a triumphant return home, your dangerous job well done. You had fallen on friendly soil. From sunrise on that first day and for many days thereafter this sad spot was thronged with sorrowing people who had come to pay their tribute to you, our friends and our defenders.

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The dark shadow of these woods, where death had stalked, served but to inflame anew our hatred of the enemy, who, before such a show of sympathy with you, fliers of an ally, was rendered powerless. We all know that many people from the commune of Sart have jealously preserved, as keepsakes, small pieces of your Lancaster, lasting evidence of that struggle which was pursued so relentlessly and which was bound to lead to eventual total victory.”



Note App C1.4: *Sart: un monument aux morts - Anglais des Rhos:* I had been half-expecting that while visiting the Hautes Fagnes area in 2022 as part of their extended vacation trip around Europe, my younger son Joe and his partner Charlee would find no trace of the monument to Freddie and the crew of the Lancaster bomber that had been raised in commemoration nearly 70 years ago in 1954. I was happily so wrong.

My great uncle Fred (b.1895), Lancaster pilot Freddie’s father, had a number of black and white photos of the monument’s inauguration ceremony, taken during the speech making and the flag and wreath laying also showing a large number of the local community who had gathered to bear witness to the event.

Uncle had lost his only son 23 years after losing that same young Freddie’s mother at childbirth, uncle Fred’s first wife. I can only try to imagine the grief upon grief that he had borne; and stoically lived with for most of his life.

His second wife, my great aunt Cicely had (according to Freddie’s first cousin, my father) apparently and very understandably doted on her stepson. That the news of Freddie’s death must have been a bitter thing for them both to receive, is to say the least, an understatement.

The scattered remains of uncle’s son Freddie and the crew had been brought together from around the surrounding woods to lie close to the spot where the monument now stands, before being taken at first to Sint-Truiden (where arguably life’s fates had previously gathered

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for the crew a little after midnight on 29th June 1943) in the adjacent commune of Limbourg. It was from there that the airmen were finally taken to lie alongside each other in the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery at Heverlee in July 1946.

To this day they lie here at rest and in peace alongside a further 970 other comrades who fell in Belgium during the Second World War, as well as with others from earlier conflicts.

It was only after the death of Freddie's father in 1984 (aunt Cis had died some years earlier) that the photos passed to my own mother and father and following their deaths to me. They are photos that I know must have given some solace to my great uncle and aunt, memories and thoughts, however small individually, are such powerful companions when shared.

I cannot thank the individual villages that together make-up the Jalhay commune enough, for preserving their own and my own family's memories (along with so many others not mentioned here). My grateful thanks go specifically to the lady manager on duty that day on 28th December 2022 when my son and partner pushed open the door to the Office du Tourisme in Sart at 1300hrs where they were made to immediately feel most welcome.

The subsequent information given to them both from the office database print-out and the 'Ma Commune Jalhay' magazine featuring a photo of the Anglais des Rhus monument has meant so much to me and doubtless will equally be appreciated by many others; especially so when this family history moment and photos have been shared with International Bomber Command Centre's own database housed in the memorial centre building in Lincoln, England, UK.

It is 80 years since my first cousin once removed died along with his crew for the freedom of both countries. To be able to share colour photos from December 2022 showing the flags of both Belgium and Britain proudly standing either side of a well maintained and preserved monument (Coord - Lat: 50.5144444 Long: 5.9975) to these seven 'aviateurs' is sublime and will be remembered, through

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my own family and other families I feel sure, for at least another 80 years.

I have written (e mail) to the Office du Tourisme Sart with the further family history that I have uncovered and felt moved to include the following closing message:-

{On behalf of myself and family who have a direct connection to the pilot Flt Lt Frederick P. Seward and on behalf of the whole crew who I have come to know through research, who all lost their lives on that tragic night, I would like to express my sincere and grateful thanks to all Sartois and Jalhaytois who maintain this monument to those seven young men, thereby keeping them all alive in our collective memories.

Your monument to them, I have learned, is one of several 'monuments aux morts' erected by the people of the wider Jalhay commune in memory to and in memory of those who lost their lives over the Hautes Fagnes area defending freedom for us all, in two wars.

*Mon âme est aussi là, avec tous qui regardent ces monuments.
Ronald P Seward 29th June 2023.}*

Note App C1.5: *The crew of Avro Lancaster III bomber LM323 OF-U:*

The seven-man crew of the Avro Lancaster III bomber (part of the Royal Air Force's Straights Settlements No. 97 Squadron) all perished in the early hours of the 29th June 1943.

The bodies of Flight Lieutenant Seward and his six crew friends were firstly taken to Sint-Truiden, before being committed (and lying next to each other) in their final resting places in Heverlee War Cemetery, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium. Each grave's headstone has either been left blank or inscribed with each airman's own family's poignant epitaph as follows:-

Lest We Forget: Frederick P. Seward



Pilot: (F.P. Seward - Service No. 86637 / Heverlee Plot 3.A.7)
“GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN THAN THIS”
ALWAYS IN OUR THOUGHTS, MOTHER, FATHER AND KAY



Flight engineer: (B.E. Lewis - Service No. 969331 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.8)
GONE TO REST THROUGH THE PATHWAY OF DUTY



Navigator: (E. Sanderson - Service No. 102108 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.9)
(A headstone with no inscription. Blank other than the incised
cross)
{my words:- to remember the SON OF PERCY AND EDITH
MARY SANDERSON; and HUSBAND OF FRANCES LOUISA
SANDERSON}



Bomb aimer: (E.E. Lawton - Service No. 133097 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.10)
IN LOVING MEMORY OF TED,
TO LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WE LOVE IS NOT TO
DIE



Wireless oper'r: (K.I. Smith - Service No. 932945 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.11)
DEEPLY MOURNED

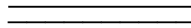
Lest We Forget: Frederick P. Seward



Mid gun'r: (A. Monaghan - Service No. 1043869 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.12)
SOME DAY, DEAR SON
WE'LL UNDERSTAND AND WALK WITH YOU IN A BETTER
LAND



Rear gun'r: (M.D. Horner - (Service No. 988537 / Heverlee Plot
3.A.13)
I KISS THE CROSS
AND WAKE TO KNOW A WORLD MORE BRIGHT



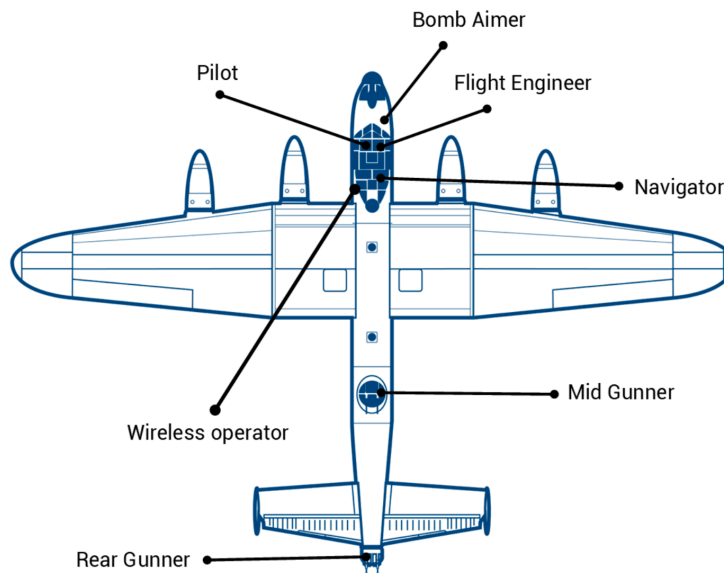
Note App C1.6: *Avro Lancaster III bomber aircrew makeup:*
The prototype Lancaster (at the time called the Manchester III) was designed by Roy Chadwick and first flew on 9th January 1941. This requirement led to a rapid project of fine tuning the prototype and the Air Ministry ordered 620 Lancaster bombers from A.V. Roe & Company (Avro).

A production quality version of the Lancaster was ready by October 1941 and the first operational mission commenced on 3rd March, 1942.

The Lancaster bomber became the mainstay of the RAF's heavy bombers following its introduction. Between 1942 and 1945 Lancasters flew over 156,000 sorties, dropping over 600,000 tonnes of bombs. For every 100 tons of bombs dropped, nine aircrew would perish.

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Below: Seating plan of Avro Lancaster



Pilot (known as the skipper) - had to show and instil confidence in the six other men of his crew and fly the aircraft. He was automatically captain (regardless of the rank held by him or the other members of his crew). He had to show leadership but also take advice from those on board. Through example he led his men undertaking dangerous missions and worked on returning them and his aircraft home safely. The skipper was located in the cockpit with good visibility all around him so he would know what he was flying his men and machine into.

Sitting next to the skipper on a fold-up seat, in their own cramped concentrated world forward of a blackout curtain behind them both, was the flight engineer.

Flight engineer - Introduced in 1942, the flight engineer was expected to know his aircraft inside and out and be able to cope with any emergency through either mechanical faults or enemy action. A flight engineer was practically minded and able to make split second

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decisions. A delay could result in the crash of the aircraft and injury or death for the crew.

The flight engineer had to monitor full-time the four-engines via some twenty gauges, propeller and throttle controls as well as the fuel and electrical systems. He also assisted the pilot when necessary which could include flying the aircraft if the pilot was killed or wounded.

Bomb aimer - In front of both the flight engineer and the pilot, below the raised cockpit deck, crouched in his position at the very front of the Lancaster was the bomb aimer. With the introduction of the four-engine bomber and the growing complexity of the observer role, it was decided in 1942 to separate it out between the bomb aimer and navigator.

The bomb aimer had a dual role. He did not just release bombs at the correct time and over the allotted target, he was also responsible for ensuring the safety of the aircraft by acting as a look-out for enemy aircraft and manning the Browning machine guns located in the front gun turret positioned directly above him (although this was not necessary on most operations).

Training consisted of high level and low-level bombing runs and gunnery skills. Night familiarisation flying over blacked out wartime Britain was also key. A bomb aimer had to have excellent map tracking and navigational skills and would work closely with the navigator pre-flight. He checked the bombs to ensure the correct type had been loaded pre-flight before signing for them. He also programmed the bombing mechanical computer to ensure the correct settings for the bomb load and weather conditions.

Navigator - Sitting behind the front cockpit on the starboard side in his curtained off compartment, facing across to the port side and lit by one simple angle-poise lamp was the navigator. Next to the pilot he was the busiest man in the Lancaster. He would be constantly working, plotting the course of the aircraft, and adjusting this if poor weather or enemy action called for a change of plan.

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A navigator had to be adaptable and the pilot relied on them to find the target and bring the aircraft and men safely home. His radio communications to the pilot would be restricted to simple directions. His tools were not bombs or machine guns but a chart, protractor, dividers, ruler and pencil and as the war went on radar equipment. *Wireless operator* - The wireless operator sat opposite the navigator and facing forward on the port side and his job was also a multi-purpose one. He was responsible for monitoring the wireless and communications. Part of this role would involve him activating the Identification Friend or Foe signal and giving false signals to the enemy to help suppress searchlights and the constant terror of flak.

He had a small window which was level with the leading edge of the wing, but at night kept a curtain drawn across it. He also had to check the bomb bay to ensure it was operating correctly and act as look-out through the observation dome directing the pilot and gunners in the event of enemy aircraft attack. When a bombing run was in progress, he would spend most of his time there. He also had to have a working knowledge of the navigator's role so he could take over if necessary and was expected to give first aid to members of the crew.

The mid-gunner - was located in the last third of the aircraft. His world was not the blacked-out interior of the Lancaster but the small Perspex mid-upper turret – vulnerable to night fighters and flak. This bubble contained two Browning 0.303in machine guns each with 1000 rounds of ammunition. When strapped into the hammock-type seat the air mid-gunner could rotate this through 360 degrees to enable a wide field of fire to defend the Lancaster. Experienced air gunners would often remove a section of the Perspex for a better view and to combat the misting that could occur. The air gunner was recognised as a specialist in his field.

Rear Gunner - At the rear of the Lancaster in the most lonely, isolated and exposed of any Lancaster crewman's position of all was the rear-gunner nicknamed 'Tail-End Charlie.' Like his fellow air gunners he had undergone training in areas of air gunnery, bullet trajectory, deflection and aircraft recognition.

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His location was in a small Perspex bubble in the rear gun turret armed with four Browning machine guns. Maintaining night vision was vital in his position. Other experienced gunners would have shared with him the advice not to stare at fires or bright lights; to never fire unless seen and to always look for aircraft making odd movements as these could be enemy fighters. Of all the positions on the Lancaster 'Tail-End Charlie' was the least likely to survive not least in part to being physically separate from his parachute.

The Gun Turret of a Bomber Command Aircraft during a Night Operation was also the coldest place in the sky. Rear Gunners often removed a section of the Perspex to improve their view, so with temperatures at a typical cruising altitude of 15,000ft reaching -40°F. frostbite was a regular occurrence.

{I would like to acknowledge and thank the Royal Air Force Museum, the Pathfinder Craig and the Lancaster ED559 websites for much of the operational information re-produced above.}

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1a: Top row L to R: Freddie 1922, 1932 & 1941 and relaxing at home in 'Edendale' his mother & father (aunt Cis & uncle Fred) c.1961.



1b: Middle row - On a background of poppies L to R: Newbury's War Memorial with Flt Lt F. P. Seward's name on rear wall of names, followed by a c.1941 photo of Freddie and hung on aunt Cis' and uncle Fred's dining room wall.

1c: Bottom row - Heverlee War Graves Commission, Cemetery, Belgium.

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2: A happy sunny afternoon for Freddie and his new wife Edith at Sandy Cove - following their marriage at Clevedon on Saturday 5th September 1942



{I am indebted to a relative of Eric Sanderson's family for the above lovely photo from their archive and shared by them via a RAF Pathfinder memorial website in January 2024.

Eric was the navigator on board Lancaster Bomber LM323 OF-U who along with Freddie and the rest of the crew died so tragically in the early hours of Tuesday 29th June 1943.}

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3: Memorial 'Aux Aviateurs Anglais' Inauguration Ceremony, Sart, Belgium - 1954. In commemoration of the death of all those in Lancaster Bomber LM323 OF-U who 'Tombés En Fagne Pour Notre Indépendance De 29 Juin 1943'



Pilot: Frederick Phillip Seward
Flight Engineer: Brynley Edmond Lewis
Navigator: Eric Sanderson
Bomb Aimer: Ernest Edward Lawton
Wireless Operator: Kenneth Ivor Smith
Mid-Upper Gunner: Albert Monaghan
Rear Gunner: Malcolm David Horner



4: Monument: Anglais des Rhus, Sart re-remembered by Joe & Charlee - 2023



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5: The Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at East Kirkby.

6: International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) Cannock Avenue, Lincoln.



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Note App C1.7: *In everlasting remembrance - 29th June 2023*

In my secondary school assembly's annual Service of Remembrance (1958 - 1962) I remember everyone up-standing each year to hear a reading of the fourth stanza words of Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen.'

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.'*

On this day eighty years ago, a British RAF Avro Lancaster III bomber with its crew of seven, including pilot F/Lt. Frederick Phillip Seward, was shot down by a German night fighter plane near the Belgium / German border killing all on-board.

It was one of 25 aircraft losses that were sustained that night of operations to Cologne on 29th June 1943 (4.1% of the formation). Aircraft lost were:- 10 Halifaxes, 8 Lancasters, 5 Stirlings and 2 Wellingtons.

Following the end of the war, German Luftwaffe personnel and crew responsible for night fighter operations in particular were taken as prisoners of war for interrogation. They were brought to Eggebek in north Germany where interrogation began in late May 1945 by a team of twelve officers from the UK's Department of Air Intelligence (DAT). A number of interviews with various members of the night fighter force were undertaken including the highest-scoring night fighter ace in the history of aerial warfare Heinz-Wolfgang Schnaufer.

It was established from records found and during these interrogations that in their defence of Cologne, Schnaufer and his radio and radar operator Herr Baro, flying Messerschmitt Bf 110 G-4 / U 8 had taken off that night from their nearby night-time airfield base at Sint-Truiden and were responsible for the shooting down of Frederick Phillip Seward's Lancaster bomber LM323 OF-U along with a further two aircraft from the same formation in the early hours of that fateful night.

Lest We Forget: Frederick P. Seward

Following the end of WW2 Schnauffer (born in 1922), who had initially wanted to continue his career in flying, found himself having to take control of his family's vineyard. It was while driving in the south of France on a wine buying visit in 1950 that he was involved in a collision with another vehicle and died in hospital in Bordeaux some two days later.

{I would like to acknowledge and thank those who have gathered and recorded the above details that I have collated from desktop internet research through the RAF Pathfinders Archive and the Heinz-Wolfgang Schnauffer and Sint-Truiden websites.}

On Friday 31st March 2023 in the ruins of a Hamburg church, towards the end of a State visit to Germany, King Charles III with the German president Frank-Walter Steinmeier and the mayor of Hamburg Peter Tschentscher all standing shoulder to shoulder, stepped forward and touched floral wreaths that had been laid for them in memory of the victims of war, before pausing; in a moment of contemplation.

The King's wreath of poppies features a handwritten card written in English with the same words written below in German - it says:-

"In everlasting remembrance."

