



F/Lt. Jack Hesmondhalgh

1921-2010



Born on the 10th July 1921 in Garston, Liverpool he was the youngest of five (four sisters). He enjoyed boxing, swimming, rugby and cross country running. He used to swim across the mouth of the Mersey!

When war broke out he went to Lime Street in Liverpool to sign up. Three weeks later he was ordered to Warrington and after a month of square bashing was posted to West Raynham where he excelled himself in stripping and assembling the Vickers K Gas Gun (VGO).

So much so that he won a competition which promoted him to Aircrew and became a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner with 101 Squadron RAF, which had been originally formed on the 12th July 1917 and is still an operational unit stationed at RAF Brize Norton.



Jack was just 19 years of age at the start of the Battle of Britain. One of his training flights in a Fairey Battle light bomber ended up with the engine cutting out over the north sea. The pilot made for land and they crashed in a field and were ceremoniously served tea and cakes on the wing by local people. On arrival back at base late at night he raided the cookhouse and took a feast back to the hut which he shared with his mates.

On the 24th July 1941 Jack aged 20 set out in a Wellington Bomber R 1702 SR-E to bomb German Battleships in Brest Harbour. Given that these ships were heavily defended by some 1350 anti-aircraft guns, they were soon in trouble and with the aircraft disabled Jack bailed out and woke up on a German flak ship. He thoroughly enjoyed a glass of Cognac and was then a Prisoner of War. Whilst a guest at various POW camps he made 5 attempts to escape only to be re-captured each time. Jack and Sgt. Fred Smith the Rear Gunner did survive, 4 of the crew lost their lives and should be remembered here as well.. They are: -



F/Lt Frederick Craig
Sgt. Albert Sainsbury
Sgt. Donald Love
Sgt. William Price

Pilot
Co-pilot
Navigator/Observer
Front Gunner

All were Missing In Action



Cartoon depicting Jack by artist Peter Manders of Jack's landing in the sea after his Wellington Bomber had been shot down over Brest Harbour.