

This story has developed as an extension to a simple family genealogy project started last year, on my wife's Clearwater family. When I discovered that Lynn had a distant cousin that had been a Lancaster pilot and was killed in 1944, I was intrigued, for most of my immediate family had been army or navy types and had survived the war. Ray Clearwater's story was not too unusual from thousands of other Canadian aircrew downed in service with Bomber Command until I started to sense that there might be some inconsistencies with the official story of the Ray's "plane being shot down" and the lack of conclusive evidence to what may have happened to Lancaster NF928 and its crew members. After I added a page to my military books web site on Ray's RCAF service and story, I received a few inquiries. However, it wasn't until being contact by the great nephew of one of Ray's crew members, the mid upper gunner, Sgt. Richard Wolsey, that I realized that we should be taking a closer look at the man and his service in the Royal Air Force during World War II.

THE FARMER THAT WANTED TO FLY And The Story of Lancaster NF928

RAY LLOYD CLEARWATER #J/16865, Royal Canadian Air Force

Ray Clearwater's story was not much different from the thousands of flyers that came from Canada's Western Prairie provinces during World War II except that he may have been a few years older than most. Prairie towns and communities like Rocanville, Carlyle, Big Valley, Selkirk, MacGregor, Holland, Consort and Roland all contributed to the growth of the Royal Canadian Air Force, after the start of World War II in 1939. Ray had taken over his father's farm in Welwyn, Saskatchewan in October 1935 after John Wesley Clearwater had died in a farm accident on October 11. The closest town from their south-west rural community was in nearby Moosomin, Saskatchewan and Ray now worked the farm as sole supporter to his mother, Catharine. According to the Air Force Estate form Catharine completed on October 23, 1945, Ray after being born in McAuley, Manitoba spent his first 7 years living in the area. Thereafter, apparently the family moved to nearby Welwyn for 12 years where Ray attended high school before returning to the family farm. The land in this area is flat, the crops are mostly wheat and other grains with some cattle. It is cold in the winter and dry in the summer. His five married sisters and older brother all lived in the area. At some point Ray had flown as a passenger and had about four hours flying time. This may have helped to convince him that he could best serve his country by joining the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1941.



*F/L (Pilot) Ray Lloyd Clearwater,
RCAF*



Old garage in McAuley, Manitoba

On enlisting in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Ray told the enlisting officer that he “wanted to be a commercial pilot” when the conflict was over and didn’t intend to return to farming.

Ray lived to fulfill his dream of flying however in order to complete his goal, he

lost his life over Germany with his 6 crew members, trying to defeat Hitler and the dreaded Third Reich. Questions lie with the fateful day of October 14, 1944 and the Royal Air Force’s No.12 Squadron powerful presence in Operation Hurricane. This was Bomber Command’s determined bid to annihilate the centuries-old commercial and industrial city of Duisburg in “Happy Valley”, as the Ruhr Valley was infamously called. Was Ray Clearwater fully qualified to command the powerful four-engine, bomb-laded bomber and its crew of seven into battle? Did the bomber receive a direct hit anti-aircraft flak or did it fly into another close-by Lancaster on its path to the burning city by navigational or pilot error? Did another bomber drop its explosive load on Ray’s aircraft? Was Bomber Command justified in the mass destruction of an historic German city and thousands of civilians when it was obvious only the Allies, could win the war? We will try to explore some of these questions.

Ray Lloyd Clearwater had been the grandson of Ontario pioneer, Edger Clearwater and nephew of Floyd Wellington Clearwater, former publisher of the *Huntsville Forester* newspaper, town councilor and Postmaster. Born in 1912, Ray was also the younger brother of both Robert Clinton (Bert or Clint) Clearwater, late of the 10th Canadian Mounted Rifles, who died in 1921 from complications of gassing in World War One and of Wesley Calvin Clearwater #3347566 who was classified as C-2, probably because he was considered a farm worker and served only in Canada during the war. Ray had a total of 7 siblings, he being the youngest son and was also the first cousin, twice removed, of my wife Lynn. John Wesley Clearwater moved his family in the spring of 1910 from Scotia Junction, Ontario (near Huntsville, in the picturesque Muskoka Lakes district of Ontario), to Manitoba presumably to take up farming on the fertile prairies. At the same time, his two brothers received Western land grants in north-east Saskatchewan and moved to develop new farms in Carlea in the Prince Albert area. After the death of Edgar Clearwater in 1912, wife Mary traveled west to live with her sons James Edgar and Jacob Stewart Clearwater. The bustling railway village of Scotia Junction is now the mostly abandoned community of Scotia with a few houses and little evidence of the thriving town, now long gone.

The 135-mile Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway was built by Canadian lumber baron J.R. Booth of Ottawa, being started in 1892 and completed in 1898. It operated as a “feeder” railway to the Canada Atlantic Railway which connected Ottawa with the U.S. east coast, supplying Ontario white pine lumber to the world’s export markets. The

O.A. & P.S. connected Canada's capital Ottawa across the wilderness of Algonquin Park to Depot Harbour, on the shores of Georgian Bay. It crossed and connected with the Grand Trunk Railway's main line at Scotia Junction, that connected Toronto with the transcontinental line to the west at North Bay, Ontario. It is believed that Edgar Clearwater and several of his sons may have worked on the O.A. & P.S. When the line was completed, the sons were encouraged to move west to explore farming opportunities, aided by Canada Land grants. Most of the tracks were torn up in 1975 and today, Scotia Junction is nothing more than a siding on CN's Toronto-North Bay mainline.



Scotia Junction, Ontario approx. 1900

TRAINING AND POSTINGS

Ray Lloyd Clearwater applied to join the Royal Canadian Air Force on January 16, 1941 at the Recruiting Centre in Regina, SK and was accepted May 17, 1941. He had finished Grade 11 (junior matriculation) at Welwyn High School and was admitted into flying school. Some notables as stated on his attestation papers are as follows:

- The family farm was located actually in Manitoba “just over the border from Welwyn”.
- Ray worked on the family farm “tractor farming” for a number of years after high school in 1929 and then from 1936-1937 worked in Red Lake, ON as a machinist's helper. He returned to the family farm in 1937 until he enlisted.
- He smoked 15 cigarettes per day by his own admission.
- His applicable was marked “sole support of mother-possible source of mental conflict”.
- The medical officer claimed that Ray's blood pressure was high due to nervousness and that he had a slow, rather hesitant manner.
- Ray's height was listed as 6' 1 ½” with an athletic build –ideal for a bomber pilot that has to due a great deal of reaching.
- One of the references given by Ray was Mr. A.J. Proctor, Moosomin, SK, the Saskatchewan Minister of Highways.
- Ray officially changed his name on May 17, 1941 from Ray Lloyd Bovier Clearwater to Ray Lloyd Clearwater – this was registered with the RCAF.

After attending the Manning Depot in Brandon, MB, he was posted to Carberry, MB for a short period initialization into the RCAF. Ray was then sent to No. 4 Initial Training School in Edmonton, AB from 03/07/1941 until 05/08/1941. He passed with a position of 83 out of 107 in the class, with a 76% average. All marks were good except mathematics, in which he received 53%.



From here, Ray was posted to No. 5 Elementary Flight Training School in High River, AB from 08/08/1941 until 25/09/1941. Here he successfully trained on Tiger Moth bi-planes and passed with a 72% average, and a ranking of 20 in a class of 66. Comments included “good, average pupil, clean cut type, reliable, dependable. Conduct very good”.

Anson MkII No. 7 FTS Fort MacLeod

From High River, the next posting was to No. 7 Special Flight Training School (Multi-engine) in MacLeod, AB from 25/09/1941 until 19/12/1941. Here he flew the twin-engine Avro Anson. Sgt. Ray L. Clearwater was ranked 25th with a ranking number of 1641 marks out of a total of 2250 marks, and a 73% average. He was recommended for a commission, which he was not to see until February 26, 1943, after his transfer to the Royal Air Force. Comments were that “he has developed slowly into an average flyer, is keen, mature, orderly and does work willingly. Lacking in self confidence. Should develop into good officer material with further experience”.

Interestingly, the top rated pilot was Sgt. Gerald B. Latimer, #R97566 of Vancouver, who graduated with a top score of 1809 marks out of 2250. Later to become Squadron Leader G.B.Latimer #J/9350 of 408 Squadron, he lost his life 29/07/1944 over Heide, Germany flying Halifax NP 716 and is buried in the Kiel War Cemetery. In fact of out of the top 5 graduates 4 were lost in the war and in fact, the majority, about 85% of the entire 58 were to be lost by August, 1945 according to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission web site [here](#).



Sgt. (Pilot) Ray Clearwater's graduating class from No. 7 SFTS Fort McLeod, August 1941. Ray is left, back row.

From MacLeod, and after a short leave, Ray was assigned to 1Y-Departure Depot in Halifax, NS on 20/12/41 awaiting departure on a ship to the United Kingdom. He embarked on 08/01/1942 and disembarked England on 20/01/1942. He was immediately sent on arrival in England to No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre in Bourmouth and on 20/02/1942 was posted to No. 1 Flight Instruction School at RAF Church Lawford, near Rugby, Warwickshire. After passing the short instructor's course, it was decided to assign Ray to No. 14 (P) Advanced Flying Unit as an instructor on Oxford twin-engine aircraft rather being sent on an assignment to an active squadron in Bomber Command. No. 14 (P) AFU was stationed at RAF Ossington, near Newark, Nottinghamshire (now abandoned) from January, 1942 until May, 1943. On May 16, 1942, he crashed his Oxford at 02:00 practicing night flying with the accident grounding him for several months with a broken jaw, facial lacerations, impaired vision and a concussion. He was operated on at East Grinstead's Queen Victoria Military Hospital and spent several months recuperating. This hospital was famous during World War Two for the treatment of Canadian RCAF burn victims by Canadian surgeon, Dr. Ross Tilley.

As well, on March 17, 1943, Ray Clearwater was offered a probationary commission as a Pilot Officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force. On March 31, 1943, Ray was required to take a refresher Flying Instructors Course at RAF Brize Norton. Completing the course on April 21, 1943, Ray failed with the comments "below average capabilities". Late May, 1943 the No. 14 (P) AFU moved to Banff in north-east Scotland. Ray spent most of the time flying and instructing from the nearby satellite field, RAF Dallachy. July 10, 1943, Ray's commission was confirmed and accepted. It was here he was introduced to friends William and Agnes Ford of Buckie, Scotland. William was the agent for the North of Scotland Bank and ultimately, after Ray's death, disposed of his automobile and many of his personal belongings.

After repeated requests by Ray, he was finally assigned "active flying" status and on February 29, 1944, was assigned to No. 83 Operational Training Unit, where he was matched up with his future crew and given instruction on Wellington bombers and operational procedures and training. Finally, on June 6, 1944, Ray and his crew were assigned to No. 11 Base, 1 Group, RAF Lindholme for Heavy Conversion Training, which they received at the satellite station RAF Sandtoft with No. 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit and Halifax bombers. By August 9, 1944, Ray and his crew of six, were considered ready for operational service and assigned to No. 12 Squadron at RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire which by this time were flying Lancaster MK I heavy bombers. At the same time, Ray was promoted to Acting Flight Lieutenant.



From left to right: F/S Jack Kenworthy, RAF, pow 12/12/44; F/L Bert E.W. Hall, RCAF, kia 12/12/44; F/O Reg Veitch, RNZAF, kia 12/12/44; F/O Harry C. Parry, RAF, pow 12/12/44; back-F/L Ray Clearwater, RCAF, kia 14/10/44 - photo taken RAF Wickenby, 1944



NO. 12 SQUADRON

July, 1944 Ray had requested and was granted, a transfer to an “in service” squadron. By mid-1943 and lasting almost until the war’s end, Bomber Command had lost many of its most experienced pilots. The need for good pilots, despite the British Commonwealth Training Plan, became so urgent that below average pilots might be given the benefit of a doubt, often with tragic results. Training time and solo hours were reduced so that the mass of incoming new heavy bombers could be flown. Ray ended up in one of the Royal Air Force’s most historic and noble squadrons, No. 12 Squadron, located at RAF Wickenby, in Lincolnshire. No. 12 Squadron had been formed from a cadre from the RAF’s original No. 1 Squadron on February 4, 1915 at Netheravon, Wiltshire. It proceeded to France in that year equipped with BE2c’s bi-plane observation aircraft and fought on the continental until the end of World War One and continued in Germany until July, 1922, when it was temporarily disbanded. The Squadron was equipped with Fairey Battles and was stationed at RAF Bicester when World War II was declared. By 1941, the Squadron was equipped with Wellington bombers and in 1942 moved to RAF Wickenby. Shortly after No. 12 converted to Lancasters and thereafter continued to play a prominent role in No.1 Group’s part in Bomber command’s offensive until April 25, 1945. The Squadron’s aircraft were coded “PH” – a few had “GZ”. The Squadron’s motto is “Leads the Field” and its badge features a fox’s mask, after the Fox aircraft it briefly flew in the 1930s and to signify the potential of fast daylight bombing. No. 626 Squadron was formed at RAF Wickenby, from “C” Flight of No. 12 Squadron, also equipped with Mk 1 Lancasters, and shared the airfield until the war’s end. Their aircraft code was “UM”. No. 12 Squadron still exist and are presently stationed at RAF Lossiemouth, in the north of Scotland, flying Tornado GR4 bombers and soon will be flying the new state-of-the-art F-35 Lightning IIs. They presently take regular tours of operation supporting coalition forces and OPERATION TELIC flying out of Qatar over Iraqi airspace.

In the above photograph taken at RAF Wickenby in 1944, the aircrew standing with F/L Ray Clearwater, all are from the one crew piloted by New Zealander F/O Reg Veitch. This crew were flying with Lancaster ND342, No. 12 Squadron on the night of December 12, 1944 when it was shot down on a raid to Essen. Interestingly, according to Alan W. on the RAF Commands web site forum who claims to have a War Crimes file, “three of the survivors, one being a Sergeant from this

Date	Target	Plane	Call-sign	Pilot	FE	Nav.	BA	WOP	MUG	Rear Gunner
440825	Russelsheim	ME788	PH-Q	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry J. A.	F/O Watts H. J.	Sgt. Clarke R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton S. F.
440826	Kiel	ME788	PH-Q	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF						
440829	Stettin	ME645	PH-V	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF						
440903	Eindhoven	PD270	PH-X	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF						
440910	Le Havre	NF925	PH-P	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF M.	Sgt. Berry W.	F/O Watts H. J.	Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton S. F.
440912	Frankfurt	NF925	PH-P	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF M.	Sgt. Berry W.	F/Sgt. Watts H. J.	Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton S. F.
440916	Hopsten	NF925	PH-P	F/O Clearwater R. L. RCAF M.	Sgt. Berry W.	F/Sgt. Watts H. J.	Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton S. F.

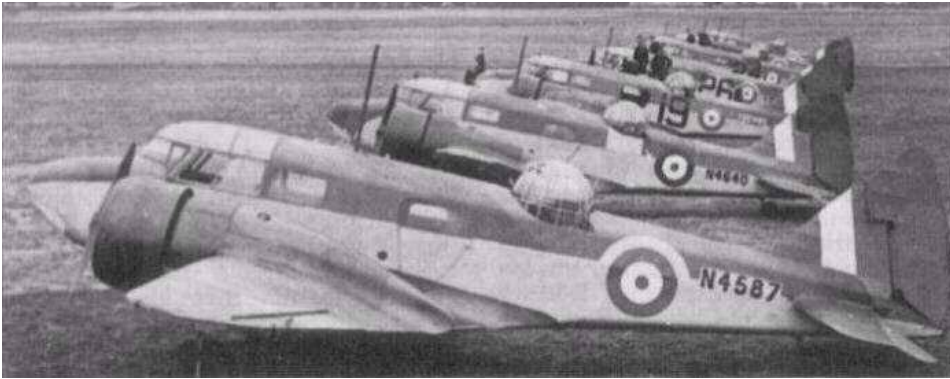
441003	West Kapelle	NF925	PH-P	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry W. H.	Sgt. Clarke R.	F/O Watts H. J.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton S. F.	
441005	Saarbruchen	NF925	PH-P	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry W. A.	F/O Watts H. J.	F/Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton G. F.	
441007	Emmerich	ME786	PH-R	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry W. A.	F/O Watts H. J.	F/Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton G. F.	
441011	Ft Fredrik Hendrik	NF925	PH-P	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry W. A.	F/O Watts H. J.	F/Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton G. F.	
441014	Duisburg (1st)	NF928	PH-S	F/L Clearwater R. L. RCAF	Sgt. Berry W. A.	F/O Watts H. J.	F/Sgt. Clark R.	F/Sgt. Price A. S.	Sgt. Wolsey R.	Sgt. Walton G. F.	Crashed in the general area of the target. All killed.

LANCASTER NF928

This aircraft was one of a batch of 400 Lancaster Mk 1 ordered from Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft (Baginton) and delivered from July 1944 to February 1945. It was powered with Merlin 24 engines from Baginton and Bitteswell. NF 928 was delivered to No. 12 Squadron on September 3, 1944. When lost, the aircraft had a total of 48 hours. NF928 was one of three No. 12 Squadron Lancasters lost on the operation – others were LL909 and ME788. It's major sortie up until the day it was lost was in the key operation against the German city of Neuss on September 23/24. Over 7,300 Lancaster bombers were built and used during World War II. Almost one half of them were delivered from January 1, 1944 onwards.



Revell Europe new plastic Lancaster MK I model as used in No. 12 Squadron October, 1944.



Airspeed Oxford trainer No.12 ATU Ossington

Operation Hurricane launched 3 separate raids on the Ruhr industrial city of Duisburg in the space of 18 hours. Duisburg was an important transportation hub as well as a producer of chemicals, steel and iron.

BOMBER COMMAND'S CAMPAIGN DIARY – October, 1944

14 October 1944

These raids were part of a special operation which has received little mention in the history books. On October 13, Sir Arthur Harris received the directive for Operation Hurricane: “in order to demonstrate to the enemy in Germany generally the overwhelming superiority of the Allied Air Forces in this theatre...the intention is to apply within the shortest practical period the maximum effort of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command and the Eighth United States Bomber Command against objectives in the densely populated Ruhr”. Bomber command had probably been forewarned of the directive because it was able to mount the first part of the operation soon after first light on October 14, 1944. No heavy bombers had flown operations for 48 hours and 1,013 aircraft – 519 Lancasters, 474 Halifaxes and 20 Mosquitos – were dispatched to Duisburg with RAF fighters providing an escort. 957 bombers dropped 3,574 tons of high explosives and 820 tons of incendiaries on Duisburg. 14 aircraft were lost – 13 Lancasters and 1 Halifax; it is probable that the Lancasters provided the early waves of the raid and drew the attention of the German flak before the flak positions were overwhelmed by the bombing.

For their part in Operation Hurricane, the American Eighth Air Force dispatched 1,251 heavy bombers escorted by 749 fighters. More than 1,000 of the American heavies bombed targets in the Cologne area. American casualties were 5 heavy bombers and 1 fighter. No Luftwaffe aircraft were seen.

2 Bomber Command RCM sorties and 2 Resistance operations were also flown this day.

14/15 October 1944

Bomber Command continued Operation Hurricane by dispatching 1,005 aircraft – 498 Lancasters, 468 Halifaxes, 39 Mosquitos – to attack Duisburg again in 2 forces 2 hours apart. 941 aircraft dropped 4,040 tons of high explosive and 500 tons of incendiaries during the night. 5 Lancasters and 2 Halifaxes were lost.

Nearly 9,000 tons of bombs had thus fallen on Duisburg in less than 48 hours. Local reports are difficult to obtain. The Duisburg Stadtarchiv does not have the important Endbericht – the final report. Small comments are available: “Heavy casualties must be expected.” “Very serious property damage. A large number of people buried.” “Thyssen Mines III and IV: About 8 days loss of production.” “Duisburg-Hamborn: All mines and coke ovens lay silent.”

Not only could Bomber command dispatch more than 2,000 sorties to Duisburg in less than 24 hours, but there was still effort to spare for No.5 Group to attack Brunswick and 233 Lancasters and 7 Mosquitos, successfully destroying the city.

As well 141 training aircraft were sent on a diversionary sweep to Heligoland, 20 Mosquitos to Hamburg, 16 to Berlin, 8 to Mannheim and 2 to Dusseldorf, 132 aircraft of 100 Group on RCM, Serrate and Intruder flights (no sub-totals are available), 8 aircraft on Resistance operations. 1 Halifax was lost on the diversionary sweep and 1 Mosquito lost on the Berlin raid.

Total Effort for the night: 1,572 sorties, 10 aircraft (0.6%) lost

Total Effort for the 24 Hours: 2,589 sorties, 24 aircraft (0.9%) lost.

Total tonnage of bombs dropped in 24 hours: approximately 10,050 tons.

THESE RECORDS TOTALS WOULD NOT BE EXCEEDED AGAIN IN WORLD WAR II.

Although Ray Clearwater was a F/L Pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, he was drafted to and flew with the Royal Air Force’s historic No. 12 Squadron flying out of RAF Wickenby in Lincolnshire. The bomber squadrons of the Royal Canadian Air Force were mostly in No. 6 Group, all stationed in Yorkshire (north area of England) and they contained many of Ray’s friends.

Their account in Operation Hurricane follows:

“One week later (Oct 14, 1944) No. 6 Group enjoyed a history making day in two huge raids on Duisburg (Operation Hurricane 1 and 2) at the junction of the Ruhr and the

Rhine rivers. In two attacks, 2,000 aircraft of Bomber Command drenched the sprawling city with 9,200 tons of bombs, 500 more than fell from bomb-bays during the destruction of Hamburg in 1943, and only slightly less than the volume the enemy poured down on London during the whole course of the war. The Canadian Group's contribution to the saturation of Duisburg was a total of 501 Lancaster and Halifaxes over the sixteen-hour period of the two attacks. In the first run, made in daylight by 1,013 aircraft, the RCAF provided 258 participating bombers. In the night attack which followed, 243 of the 1,008 aircraft over the German city came from No. 6 Group. The result was chaos in Duisberg. Late that night the burning city could be seen from a distance of 180 miles as the victors flew home to Yorkshire. Losses were infinitesimal, only five aircraft in more than five hundred. Of these, four were lost in the daylight attack". **Roberts, Leslie *There Shall Be Wings*, page 192**

Here are the official RAF reports;

"October 14, 1944"

The highest number of sorties by Bomber Command aircraft in a single day, 1,576 are flown as part of Operation Hurricane, a maximum effort attack on Germany. In two attacks on Duisberg, 9,000 tons of bombs are dropped and 14 aircraft are lost."

Submitted graciously by Dave Stapleton creator of the 625 Squadron web site
www.626squadron.org ;

***"14 October 1944
RAF Wickenby, Lincolnshire***

On 14 October 1944 operations were ordered for a raid on the Thyssen Steel Works at Duisberg located in the Ruhr area of Germany. RAF Wickenby provided 36 Lancaster from 12 and 626 Squadrons, 12 Squadron provided 19 aircraft. They were part of a main force consisting of 519 Lancaster heavy four-engined bombers, 474 Halifaxes and 20 Mosquitos.

Flight Lieutenant Ray Lloyd Clearwater and his crew took off from RAF Wickenby at 06:37 hours, they were flying in Lancaster NF928 PH-S of 12 Squadron, "A" flight.



***Lancaster bomber over
Duisburg, Oct. 15,
1944 dropping 4,000
lb "cookie" and
incendiaries***



Lancaster bomber being shot down

The crew were:

Flight Lieutenant Ray L. Clearwater
 Flying Officer Henry James Watts
 Flight Sergeant Allan Selwyn Price
 Flight Sergeant Robert Clark
 Sergeant William Arthur Berry
 Sergeant Richard Wolsey
 Sergeant George Fearnley Walton

J16865 RCAF – Pilot
 153578 RAFVR – Navigator
 1273886 RAFVR – Wireless Operator
 1564949 RAFVR – Bomb Aimer
 1868459 RAFVR – Flight Engineer
 1402906 RAFVR – Mid Upper Gunner
 1448762 RAFVR – Rear Gunner



The crew of NF928 including F/L Ray Clearwater, back row. The others are unidentified at this time.



Reichswald Forest Military Cemetery, Kleve, Germany

RAF Wickenby logbook records the following:

The weather on route to the target was 10/10ths cloud with layers up to 15,000 feet. A large gap in the clouds before the target enable crews to map read the last few miles up the Rhine. The bomb load

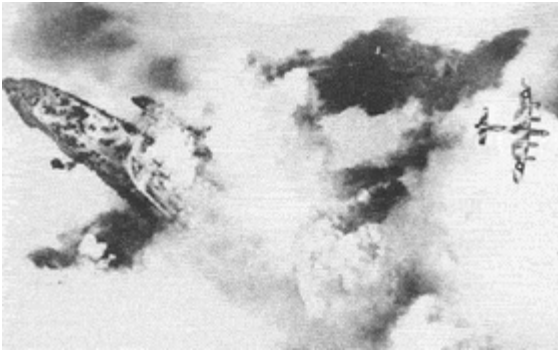
was 11,920 lbs made up of 1 x 4,000 HC (cookie), 1 x 1,170 lbs and 150 x 30 lbs incendiaries. There was intense heavy predicted flak on the run up to the target and for some distance on the northern leg out of the Ruhr. No enemy fighters were seen. It is believed that no Pathfinder aircraft were used on the morning mission to Duisburg so because of the thick cloud cover, pilots, navigators and bomber aimers, would have easily lost their formations and separation.

Fighter Cover:

10 squadrons of Spitfires rendezvoused with the main force for the flight to the target.
10 squadrons of Mustangs supplied target and withdrawal cover.

Assessment of Attack:

Cloud cover during the attack led the Master Bomber to give the crews to give the crews a free hand and bombing was therefore scattered. Damage to the target included Thyssen Hutte A.G. blast furnaces, rolling mills, other industries, warehouses and dock side and rail side buildings. One unidentified Lancaster crashed into the Thyssen complex, presumably the victim of AA flak. Three Lancasters were lost from 12 Squadron and one from 626 Squadron with a total of 18 crew lost, three taken Prisoner of War and seven surviving a crash into the sea off the coast of Lincolnshire. The crew of Lancaster NF928 PH-S of 12 Squadron are all buried together in the Reichswald Forest Military Cemetery near Kleve, Germany. The crash site of Lancaster NF928 PH-S of 12 Squadron is not known, however it is most likely that it felt victim to the heavy flak on the run up to the target. Is it possible that either of NF928 or NE163 lost control in the other's slipstream in light of the absence of closed formation? Collisions among 4-engined aircraft seemed to be a common occurrence according to No. 429's Squadron Leader **H.V. Peterson in *The Dangerous Sky*** "while on a mission to Berlin 31 March, 1945, due to navigational and timing error the group of 100 Halifax's spread out on the bombing run, and attempted to close up to combine their firepower for defense. Unfortunately, several got into each other's slipstreams, lost control and collided. Peterson pulled up over two colliding aircraft and witnessed two other similar incidents".



Lancaster bomber over Duisberg

The following Lancasters from RAF Wickenby were recorded as missing on the operation:

Lancaster NF928 PH-S of 12 Squadron	7 crew members were killed
Lancaster LL909 PH-Y of 12 Squadron	4 crew members killed, 3 taken POW
Lancaster NE163 UM-T2 of 626 Squadron	7 crew members killed
Lancaster ME788 PH-Q of 12 Squadron	7 crew survived, rescued from the North Sea

17 flyers were eventually found in the graves located outside the gate of Dinslaken Town Cemetery.

What happened to NF928 ?

While there is little we know the circumstances concerning the loss of Ray Clearwater, his crew and Lancaster NF 928, we do know what easily might have happened. Official German accounts could not be located after the war and were probably destroyed. There were eyewitness accounts however, of one large explosion and falling debris. Seventeen bodies were recovered in the immediate area and buried outside the Dinslaken village cemetery. Although a Lancaster bomber had only a crew of 7, later investigation revealed that 3 of the recovered bodies were probably from separate air incidents at different times and locations.

Mid-Air Collisions in Bomber Command

The incident of mid-air collisions, in one form or another, is well documented. Any time a large number, sometimes well over 1000 aircraft, occupy common airspace with a common objective, and with close to maximum cloud cover, there are bound to be mishaps and midair accidents, often due to lack of adequate separation. Often, Pathfinder aircraft are not used or their flare markings cannot be seen, if visibility closes in. The bomber aimer of the individual crews are then given full responsibility for finding the target and dropping the bombs. As well, bombs can easily be dropped onto another unseen aircraft. Visibility below from a heavy bomber is virtually none existent, even without adverse weather conditions! As well, there is archival black and white film

footage taken by the National Film Board here in Canada, of both a heavy bomber dropping bombs on another below it and also of two heavy bombers colliding without adequate separation on their flight path. Glimpses of this footage can be seen on the CBC DVD *The Thirteenth Mission*.

Air Crew Shortages in 1944

Although Canadians hopeful of flying during the war far exceeded the number of enlistees accepted by the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1939 and early 1940, many were either accepted or put on waiting lists, sometimes not hearing from the enlistment boards for many months. Such was the case with Ray Clearwater. Many after being temporarily declined by the RCAF, decided to enlist immediately into the Canadian Army or Navy. However, later in the war and after huge losses faced by Bomber Command in 1942 and 1943, as well as increased delivery numbers of new model Lancaster and Halifax heavy bombers, the continued supply of fully qualified and trained air crew was being stretched to the maximum. Ground crew, who had expressed an interest in flying, were offered the opportunity to attend flight training schools. Flight training was reduced by several weeks, and marginal pilots that had been positioned elsewhere such as Coastal Command and as flight instructors, were drafted into active service with Bomber Command squadrons.



Operation Hurricane, October 14, 1944

Other operations flown in October included sorties for Lucero (testing Oct 3), Texel (mining operation Oct 4), Emmerich (bombing Oct 7), Lucero (testing Oct 9), Lucero (testing Oct 10) and Fredrik Hendrik (bombing Oct 11).



RAF Wickenby, Lincolnshire circa 1944

Saturday, October 14, 1944 was notable in Europe for another reason; it was the day that famed German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel committed suicide rather than be executed for his alleged involvement in the Hitler assassination attempt on July 20. On this day as well, the 2nd Canadian Corps, Canadian Army was attacking the Breskens pocket in its attempt to free the Scheldt area and the Port of Antwerp for Allied use. October had already seen the first capture of a German city (Aachen), a revolution against the occupying Germans and freeing of Jews in Warsaw, and the meeting of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin in Moscow, to set the stage for the division of Europe, when Germany had collapsed (not when!) The stage had been set for the end of World War II.

His aircraft Lancaster MK I NF928 "S-Sugar" was lost approximately 1 kilometer south of Dinslaken on approach to Duisberg. Interestingly, a German eyewitness watched as "a large, 4 engine airplane exploded in mid-air at 08:47." 17 bodies were collected and buried in a mass grave at outside the Dinslaken churchyard. The aircraft, because of the thick cloud cover, were given "free rein" for the approach to Duisberg. An official document from the British Air Ministry claims that it was possible and probable that another Lancaster, Mk III NE 163, from 626 Squadron (RAF), RAF Wickenby may have collided or crashed into NF 928 at the same time thus accounting for only one explosion and the majority of the 17 bodies found buried in the area. There is also evidence that no German anti-aircraft batteries were in the immediate vicinity of the crash around Dinslaken, which leads further credence to the possibility of two loaded bombers crashing together on the approach to Duisberg, causing one immense explosion by the two bomb laden bombers.

"Meerbeek and Rhein-Preussen lay before us. I waited for Mac's instructions. Already, smoke as black as carbon was billowing up from the first fires. Then, shockingly, the sky ahead was filled with smoke also. Two bombers had blown up together. One must have

received a direct hit in the bomb-bay. The other had gone up with it. Debris showered out from the mushrooms. The larger remnants twirled gently down, trailing flames. There would be no survivors from 24,000 lb of exploding bombs and two thousand gallons of petrol. A few vestigial things – shoes, identity tags, some pathetic evidence of dissection – might be picked up by those scouring the ground below. Little else would remain from the fourteen lives, probably not enough to accord each an unmarked grave and the sacraments of burial spoken in a hated, foreign tongue”. **Yates, Harry Luck and Lancaster**, page 184



Robert Clinton Clearwater on McAuley, MB War Memorial – Where is Ray Floyd Clearwater?

NOTES

Normally, a “tour of duty” in Bomber Command consisted of 30 sorties (operational missions.) F/L Ray L. Clearwater and his crew had completed only 11 before they were lost.

Ray had five married sisters: Mrs.Mary Isabel Bevans, Carlea SK; Mrs.Lela Myrtle Brisbin, Garrick, SK; Mrs.Jessie Mildred Eger, Kipling, SK; Mrs.Elsie Irene Walton, McAuley, MB and Mrs.Vera L.Victoria Barkley, McAuley, MB.

The last known address I have found for older brother Wesley Calvin Clearwater was: 343-8th St., Brandon, MB (just down the street from the current Brandon Legion).

The last mailing address for mother, Catherine Jane Clearwater was: P.O. Box 33, McAuley, MB.

The John Wesley Clearwater family first rented and later purchased the family farm located East ½ 29-15-29 W1 in the Regional Municipality of Archie, near the settlement of McAuley, Manitoba.

In the 1990's, the province of Saskatchewan elected to name over 3900 geographic features within the province, after the 3922 Saskatchewan residents lost during World War II. In this regard, Flight/Lieutenant Ray Lloyd Clearwater has a bay on the northern shore of Lake Athabaska named after him, Clearwater Bay. Located 59 degrees 41' N, 108 degrees 38' W near Uranium City.

Saskatchewan's World War II Honour Roll lists Ray Lloyd Clearwater as coming from Weyburn, SK.

Ray Lloyd Clearwater has a listing in the Remembrance book ***They Shall Not Grow Old.*** Again, it notes him coming from Weyburn Sk.

Ray Clearwater is listed on both the Veterans Affairs Canada and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission data base and web site as "**Roy**" Clearwater.

The Dinslaken area of the Ruhr Valley was noteworthy later in World War II when the American Ninth Army crossed the Rhine River on a floating bridge at Rhineberg on March 9, 1945, as part of "Operation Plunder". Several headquarters were maintained in the Dinslaken area.

Dinslaken was the site of violent anti-Semitic riots at the Dinslaken Jewish Orphanage School on ***Crystal Night*** November 9, 1938 that has been well documented. On that night, all Jewish men in the town under the age of 60 years were sent to Dachau Concentration Camp, all Jewish houses were burnt down and the Synagogue was destroyed.

The Dinslaken Labour Camp, filled with female Hungarian Jews, was liberated on March 23, 1945 by the 29th U.S. Infantry Division.



The Grave of F/L Ray L. Clearwater

References:

Ray Lloyd Clearwater #J16865/R02287 RCAF Library & Archives Canada
 Terry Barkley, Airdrie, AB (niece) tbarkley@telus.net
 Shirley Black (nee Walton), Edmonton, AB (niece) blackian@interbaun.com
 Don Guinn, Saskatoon, SK (12th Squadron) dguinn@saskenergy.com
No. 626 Squadron, RAF www.626squadron.org web site by Dave Stapleton
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Where Do We Go From Here?

When we visit our daughter and son-in-law again this spring in Belgium, we fully intend to both visit Reichswald Forest Military Cemetery as well as to visit the location believed to be the site where the remains of NF928 were found, south of Dinslaken, Germany. Greg, my son-in-law, is stationed at NATO's SHAPE with the Royal Air Force and he has a particular interest in this project as well. Unfortunately, it may never be possible to find out what actually happened to NF928 however, if nothing else, at least we now know more about Lynn's cousin, Ray Lloyd Clearwater, and the sacrifices he made to his country and family.

LATEST NEWS – May, 2008

Through Marc Hall and his German friend Sascha sascha@saschaweltgen.de fragments of a Lancaster bomber, believing to be NF928, have been found:

A message received from Sascha;

"I received official permission from a forest ranger called Hirschkamp, east of Hiesfeld, where the ranger has found some debris before. (Peter has identified one debris as part of a Lancaster). We found another five debris (lying above ground) within a huge area and it is possible that they also belong to an Avro Lancaster. If it is so-maybe maybe they could descent to the Lancasters of 14.10.1944. I have not checked the area with my detector till today but I will do so in the next few weeks."

The fragments are thought to be large lumps of aircraft fuselege and wing plus a fuel guage. Marc, Sascha and hopefully myself, hope to return to the area in on June 22. 2008 with metal detectors, voice recorder, camcorder and GPS. Will also look for one or more visual witnesses.

MORE LATEST NEWS – June 24, 2009

Message received from Marc Hall that he has located a Canadian eye-witness

MORE LATEST NEWS - NOVEMBER 11, 2009

Marc Hall has returned from a trip to Duisberg - "he met many eyewitnesses and found metal parts of KB 800 with a metal detector". He visited Stadt archive to view documents at Dinslaken. More to come.



Cockpit Fragment Piece

Bob Richardson
93 Juniper Crescent,
Brampton, ON L6S 1J9
Canada

Tel: (905) 791-1412
E-mail: bob_richardson77@sympatico.ca