

# Baz

THE BIOGRAPHY OF S/L IAN BAZALGETTE VC



*Dave Birrell*

***“His courage  
and devotion to duty  
were beyond praise”***

**Bomber Command Museum of Canada  
“Canada’s Bomber Command Memorial”  
Nanton, Alberta, Canada**



# Baz

*The biography of  
Squadron Leader  
Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC*

*Dave Birrell*

**For Baz,  
W/C D. Stewart Robertson DFC,  
and all the others who served with  
Bomber Command  
during the Second World War.**

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Front cover: "Beyond Praise" by Len Krenzler

(S/L Bazalgette is buried in the chruyard, just beyond the yellow flowers)

Back cover: Portrait of S/L Ian Bazalgette VC DFC by Patrick McNorgan

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The Nanton Lancaster Society is a non-profit, volunteer-driven society which is registered with Revenue Canada as a charitable organization. Formed in 1986, the Society has the goals of honouring all those associated with Bomber Command and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

The Society established and operates the Bomber Command Museum of Canada in Nanton, Alberta which is located 75 kilometres south of Calgary. For further information please contact the:

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# Foreword

by T.G. ‘Hamish’ Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC

*I have long been a supporter of the Nanton Lancaster Society and feel privileged that I am to have the honour of contributing a Foreword to a book that the Society has prepared on the life and times of the Canadian-born Pathfinder VC.*

*On completing my own Pathfinder tour I flew a desk at Don Bennett’s Pathfinder (PFF) Headquarters with the grand title of Group Training Inspector which was translated by many aircrew in Bomber Command as “Bennett’s Horse Thief” and was in all probability a much cleverer work-a-day title.*

*In the case of Ian Bazalgette he volunteered to undertake Pathfinder training and fortunately his Commanding Officer agreed with his posting. By this time I was commanding RAF Warboys and had the pleasure of receiving Ian to start PFF training. Ian had very good reports from the various sections at Warboys and once he joined 635 Squadron he progressed with some speed through the various stages of the Bennett tactics and was soon assessed as a potential Master Bomber.*

*Whilst I may be accused of bias, I had been actively associated with Baz over a prolonged period and I found that he showed all the signs of emulating some of Arthur Harris’s (Commanding Officer of the Royal Air Force’s Bomber Command) old lags such as Leonard Cheshire, Willie Tait, John Searby, and a host of Pathfinders with whom he had immediate contact at Downham Market. I was much impressed by two particularly good operational types, Arte Ashworth and “Turkey” Rainsford, his c/o at 115 Squadron. Both were seasoned*

*operators in the style of Arthur Harris's old lags and Bazalgette showed every indication of being the kind of leader whose assessment was reviewed against this background of PFF ability, in other words, someone who was outstanding in the field of ability and in more simple words, the best of the very best.*

*Don Bennett has proclaimed and indeed written on several occasions that I selected and trained some 20,000 aircrew for the Pathfinder Force. I also mourned a quarter of that total killed in action.*

*Somehow the passing of Bazalgette hurt the most because of the dire circumstances prevailing at the time. Please-to-remember there was a change of aircraft at the last minute and indeed Ian volunteered to do that sortie when he should have been starting his leave quota.*

*Measured against the highest PFF standard, Baz and crew set a high water mark in operational ability and leadership. His zest for flying was infectious throughout the squadron and his natural boyish personality made his passing very hard to bear, more especially in the period just before victory was achieved.*

*The lasting tribute on display at Nanton immortalizes an outstanding figure of the Sir Arthur Harris Bomber Offensive and is a tribute to all Canadians who bore arms during World War II in the air, on land, and on the sea.*

*Thus, the heroic endeavours of Squadron Leader Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC RAF VR will serve as a benchmark to the youth of Canada to serve their country with the same verve and dedication as Baz - A GENTLEMAN AT ARMS.*

T.G. "Hamish" Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC joined the Royal Air Force in 1928, serving in Egypt and Iraq during the 1930's. Returning to the U.K. in 1937 as an experienced pilot, he found himself in an air force preparing for the inevitable outbreak of war. Hamish flew two tours of operations with Bomber Command, the first in the twin-engined Whitley and the second in the huge four-engined Stirling.

He went on to become a founding member of Air Vice Marshall Don Bennett's staff at Pathfinder Force Headquarters where he was appointed Group Training Inspector, responsible for the supply of crews for the Pathfinders. Following his retirement from the RAF in 1958, he became an aviation consultant. In 1989 his autobiography "Hamish, The story of a Pathfinder" was published.

The Nanton Lancaster Society was honoured by his presence at the dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster in 1990.





[courtesy Royal Canadian Military Institute Museum]

# *Prologue*

At a Dedication Ceremony on July 27 1990, Avro Lancaster FM-159 became the “Ian Bazalgette\* Memorial Lancaster.” The Nanton Lancaster Society brought together relatives, crewmembers, a fellow pilot, a senior officer, and friends to remember the respected Royal Air Force officer they all knew well. Members of the Society, guests, and through the media, tens of thousands of others were introduced to an Alberta-born hero who had been virtually forgotten.

In 1991, the year following the Dedication, Ian’s Lanc was rolled into the newly constructed museum building. During the years since, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, have come to know of Alberta’s World War II Victoria Cross recipient during visits to the museum and its website, and through museum publications and promotional work.

As was mentioned several times by speakers and guests at the Dedication Ceremony, there were many thousands of other airmen who performed similar valiant acts through the six long years that Bomber Command waged war against the Nazis. We continue to hear of many of these at the Bomber Command Museum of Canada. But many other stories remain untold. Undoubtedly there were thousands of other examples of gallantry in the skies aboard aircraft which did not return to base and whose crews were all killed.

The honouring of Squadron Leader Bazalgette VC DFC, both in his being awarded the Victoria Cross and his being honoured by the Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, must be viewed as a tribute to all who served.

\* [pronounced “Baz-el-jet”]



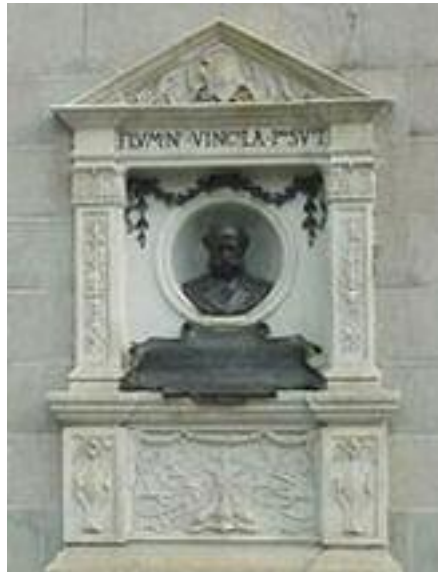
# The Pre-war Years

In the 1850's, the River Thames in London was a major health hazard, little more than an open sewer devoid of any fish or other wildlife. Over ten thousand Londoners died of cholera during the epidemic of 1853 -1854.

Ian's great-grandfather, Sir Joseph Bazalgette, was chief engineer for the London Metropolitan Board of Works and his solution was to construct 2230 kilometres of sewage lines to carry the raw sewage which up until then flowed freely through the streets and thoroughfares of London.

Joseph Bazalgette also built the Thames Embankment System that carried the major "intercepting" sewer lines through the city, diverting the outflow downstream where it entered the River Thames. The Embankments also carried the first London underground railway and replaced the tidal mud of the Thames shore with reclaimed ground for riverside roads and gardens behind their curved river walls. Joseph was knighted for his work.

Bazalgette's foresight may be seen in the diameter of the sewers. His calculations were based on the most densely populated



**Memorial to Sir Joseph Bazalgette on the Thames Embankment in London**

area and assigned every person a generous allowance of sewage production to determine the diameter of pipe needed. He then said, “Well, we’re only going to do this once and there’s always the unforeseen” and doubled the diameter to be used. Every Londoner should be grateful for this foresight. If Sir Joseph had used his original, smaller pipe diameter the sewers would have overflowed in the 1960’s. As it is, they are still in use to this day.

Sir Joseph’s eldest son was Charles Norman Bazalgette who became a successful barrister and Queen’s Counsel, writing a large volume on municipal law as well as, in a sense, carrying on his father’s work by becoming an authority on the treatment of sewage and water purification. Norman died suddenly just three weeks after the birth of his son Charles.

Charles Ian Bazalgette (who referred to himself as “Ian,”) emigrated to the Hardisty area (175 kilometres southeast of Edmonton, Alberta) in 1910 where he farmed on the east bank of the Battle River, about ten kilometres south of Hardisty.

In the same year, James Bunn moved from Ireland with his family and began farming on the west bank of the river, within sight of the Bazalgette farm. Ian met and married James’ daughter, Marion Edith Bunn and their two elder children, Deryck and his sister Ethel, were born while the family was on the farm.

When war was declared, Ian enlisted with the 51st Edmonton Battalion and trained at Sarcee near Calgary. Later he served with the 44th Winnipeg Infantry Battalion overseas where he was injured and exposed to poison gas while at the front. He then developed trench-mouth and became ill with encephalomyelitis due to an improperly administered vaccine. After spending several months



**Charles Ian Bazalgette**



**James Bunn**



**Marion (Bunn) Bazalgette c.1910**



**The Bazalgette Farm on the Battle River near Hardisty**

recuperating with family in England, he returned to Hardisty, the army having declared him, “medically unfit for further service.”

Even prior to the war, Ian and Marion, as well as Marion’s father, had become disillusioned with farming and by 1916 had sold their farms. In February 1918, the Bazalgettes moved to Calgary where they lived at 2020 -35th Ave. S.W. which at that time was at the edge of the city.

Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was born in the Calgary General Hospital on October 19, 1918. He was referred to as “Will” to avoid confusion with his father. His sister Ethel recalled, “I was four when Ian was born. I do remember very clearly the joy I felt at having a younger brother and right from the beginning we were such great friends. He was just wonderful with all ages of people. We would go to tea with friends and others and 'Will,' as we called him, would just sit there having a conversation with them, keeping them all entertained. It was the way he was. He always got along extremely well with all people and was always a lot of fun to be around.”



**The Bazalgette’s home in Calgary as it appeared in 2007**



**Will in Calgary**



**(l-r) Ethel, Will, Deryck, and Marion Bazalgette**

Marion's father had been living with the Bazalgette family on the farm. He had moved to Calgary as well, and helped support the family as Ian's health continued to be a concern and the Alberta economy was not good at this time either. It was during these early years of Will's life that a close relationship developed between James Bunn and his grandson.



In 1922 the family moved to Toronto, Ontario where they lived on Neville Park Boulevard and Willoughby attended Balmy Beach School but as Ethel recalled, "We only lived in Toronto for about three years by which time my father's health had really deteriorated and he wanted to get back to England, his homeland, his family, and his mother and so he took all of us to England." The family settled in New Malden, just fourteen kilometres southwest of central London where Will continued his education at Rokeby Preparatory school and then Beverley Boys Secondary School. As well, he received some private tutelage.

When he was thirteen, Will contracted tuberculosis and spent four months at The Royal Seabathing Hospital, Margate. The lengthy recovery at home that must have followed would have been challenging. His successful battling of this disease was an indication of a strength of character which was to show itself amply later.

Throughout his teens, Will maintained a close relationship with his Grandfather Bunn. James visited the family in Malden and travelled to Ireland with them as well. There was even consideration of his moving to England to live with Marion and her family. A beautifully handwritten letter from Will to his grandfather refers to this possibility as well as to the "precious" time the family spent together in Ireland.

Will's hobbies were classical music, books, roses, and photography and, although he played no instrument, he often wrote essays on classical music. The family home was still at New Malden, Surrey when war broke out in 1939.

Will, or Ian as he referred to himself after he joined the



**(l-r) L. Reeve, Will, and R. Chrisel at The Royal Seabathing Hospital**

military, remained very aware of his Canadian roots. His aunt, Mrs. T.A. McFarland of Viking, Alberta, recalled that, "When he grew older he always talked about Canada in his letters, and how he wanted to come back." Ian's father was quoted in the Toronto Star as saying: "You have every right to consider Ian a Canadian. He was born there and my Canadian (wartime) service gives us an extra tie that we will never forget."

Dear Grandad,

just a few lines to wish you a safe calm voy-  
age. I cannot tell you how much I have been hoping  
and praying that somehow things might be managed  
so that you could be with us. I suppose it was just  
not to be, this time, but I know we will have you  
with us sometime again. My memories of the times we  
had together in Ireland are the most precious I have  
and every night I pray God to bless you, to keep you  
strong and well, and to grant that some circumstances  
will change and you will come to us never to part again.  
You are always in my thoughts and I know you will  
like to think that here there is a place where you  
are often thought of and sincerely loved and wanted.  
I say again God bless you, sustain you throughout your  
journey, and grant you will soon come back to us.

As ever,  
Your loving grandson,  
Williamly Bealgrave  
God bless him.  
My dear little Mum

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**Ethel and Will in Ireland in 1938**  
**“We used to go on vacations to Ireland. We had so much fun –Will just loved it over there.” -Ethel Broderick**



**“Ian and I just remained the greatest of friends.”**  
**-Ethel Broderick**

# ***Searchlights and Training in the Royal Air Force***

Following his schooling, Ian served briefly as a volunteer with the New Malden Auxiliary Police Force and later worked with a property company in the west end of London. Perhaps he could not visualize himself being happy as a London businessman or maybe he saw the war clouds looming and felt it his duty to serve as his father had during the First World War.

Whatever his motives, Ian enlisted in the Royal Artillery on July 16, 1939 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant on September 7, 1940. While completing a three month course at Shrivenham related to the operation of searchlights, Ian became close friends with Eric Biggs who recalled that he, “gravitated towards Ian from the outset, he being an interesting character combining a tremendous application to his duties with a bubbling irreverence and sense of fun in his social life.” Following the course and at the height of one of the first “blitzes” by enemy bombers, Eric and Ian travelled from London to Scotland to join the 51st (Highland) Searchlight Regiment of Aberdonians stationed in the clubhouse of the Royal and Ancient, St. Andrews Golf Club where they were made honorary members. Eric remembers that this “perk” had little significance as this most



**2nd Lt. Bazalgette**

famous of golf courses was covered with closely-set, stout poles as an anti-invasion measure.

At St. Andrews, Ian was placed in charge of the first radar controlled searchlights positioned to protect the City of Edinburgh, across the Firth of Forth. His friend Eric, who was Ian's second in command, recalls one incident which stood out in his memories of the few months they spent there. "We were in the command post one clear night

when we picked up a target which aroused some excitement until, looking up into the night sky, I could hardly believe my eyes and shouted, 'They are flapping their wings' -we had beamed onto a flight of swans no less. Helpless mirth!"

Mr. Biggs also recalled Remembrance Day 1940, when another aspect of Ian's personality was revealed. The Searchlight Troupe, as it was referred to, was paraded and the youthful commanding officer gave a, "most serious and dedicated address" on the significance of the Day and what those in the British Armed Forces were expected to do in the future.

Both Eric and Ian appear to have been tiring of the rather mundane duties with the Searchlight Regiment which offered little hope of active fighting. Eric recalled, "It was in March 1941 that we both went to an Edinburgh Board for possible transfer to the RAF where Ian was accepted and I was rejected for poor eyesight. We had a highly liquid lunch at a Princes Street pub and duly honoured the Scottish custom of throwing pennies into the Forth for good luck as our train crossed the Forth Bridge." Ian had been granted a commission in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. After waiting a



**Radar controlled searchlight -1940**



few months, he was initiated into the RAF and posted to No. 22 Elementary Flying Training School at Cambridge for pilot training.

During mid-1941, the Royal Air Force was badly in need of pilots. The Battle of Britain had been won the previous year and there was no longer an immediate threat of invasion as much of Hitler's efforts were being directed towards the East and Russia. However the entire European continent was under Nazi control and the enemy's submarine fleet was having a serious effect on Britain's supply lines. The Americans had not entered the war and there was no indication that they would. Britain and her Commonwealth were alone and the outcome of the war very much in doubt.

At Cambridge, Second Lieutenant Bazalgette's training was intense. Following ground school, his first flight was on July 24 in a de Havilland Tiger Moth D.H. 82 under the instruction of Pilot Officer (P/O) Reece who permitted the fledgling pilot to solo ten days later on August 3. Flying almost every day, Bazalgette's flying log documents his progress as he was exposed to low flying, spins, aerobatics, precautionary landings, and the other skills which all beginning pilots must master.

The de Havilland Tiger Moth was designed as a training aircraft, first flying in 1931. A single-engined, two seat, open cockpit bi-plane, it was used extensively for initial pilot training throughout the 1930's and for much of World War II as well. The aircraft had excellent flying characteristics and a rugged strength which inspired confidence in novice pilots.

1747 Tiger Moths were built in Canada and these aircraft equipped many Elementary Flying Training Schools throughout the country as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP).



**Canadian-built de Havilland Tiger Moth**

August 28 saw Wing Commander (W/C) May in the aircraft with Ian for what was recorded in the logbook as the "C.O.'s Test." This must have gone satisfactorily because Second Lieutenant Bazalgette was assessed as "Above average" as a pilot when the course ended on September 3. At this point a decision was made that Ian would continue his career as a pilot of multi-engined aircraft and he was assigned to "Flying Training School" at Cranwell where the Airspeed Oxford awaited him.

The Oxford was a twin-engined monoplane that was designed in the late 1930's as an advanced trainer. It was used at Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) throughout the BCATP and also in other roles such as light transport. The "Ox-box," as it came to be known, was a fairly demanding aircraft for a trainer and had a considerably higher accident rate than the Avro Anson and Cessna Crane which were used on most SFTS's in Canada.

With Flight Lieutenant (F/L) Laud as his instructor, Ian began his instruction on September 15, soloing on the aircraft only five days later. After accumulating 87 hours flying time he was assessed as "Average" on January 23, 1942 and awarded the coveted RAF Pilot's Wings.



**Airspeed Oxford**



Following a well deserved break from his training, Ian resumed flying Oxfords at RAF Scampton, taking a course at No. 18 Beam Approach School where he was assessed as “Above average.” After further Beam Approach training Ian, now Pilot Officer Bazalgette, was assigned to No. 25 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Finningley in south Yorkshire where he formed a crew and began training on an operational bomber.

The manner in which a bomber crew came together was quite informal. Murray Peden was a Canadian pilot who served with an RAF squadron. Following the war he wrote the highly acclaimed book, “A Thousand Shall Fall” about his experiences.

Of his “crewing-up” at the OTU he was posted to, Murray wrote, “The instructors and Admin officers, who wasted no time getting hold of us, organized the group into classes and laid out our syllabus. They dropped the word that within about ten days we would be teamed up in crews of five, each consisting of a pilot, bomb aimer, navigator, wireless operator, and air gunner. Equal numbers of each of these trades had been brought together to form our course, and we were told that if any five could agree amongst themselves that they wanted to form a crew and fly together, the Air Force would oblige and crew them up officially. But at the end of the ten-day period all those who had not made their own arrangements would be crewed up arbitrarily by the staff and probably, we guessed, by purely random selection.”

By this process somehow, Ian’s crew was formed. It included P/O Bill Bowen, navigator, P/O George Ross, bomb aimer, George Roberts, wireless operator, and Trevor “Tom” Molloy, rear gunner.

On June 30th, Ian flew a Wellington Bomber for the first time. The Vickers-Armstrong Wellington, known affectionately as the “Wimpy”, was Bomber Command’s leading twin-engined medium bomber from the outbreak of the war until it was superseded by the Stirling, Halifax, and Lancaster in 1942 and 1943. However it went on



**Vickers Wellington**



# **No. 115 Squadron**

## **[Baz's First Tour]**

P/O Bazalgette had been assigned to a well established squadron, No. 115 having been flying Wellington Bombers operationally since April, 1939 based at Marham in Norfolk.

Pilots were generally ordered to fly on an operational raid as "Second Dickie" before taking their own aircraft and crew to a target. This involved having the rookie pilot go along with an experienced crew as a passenger to observe them in action. Bazalgette flew with Sergeant Pate on September 19, 1942 on a raid to Saarbrucken. It must have been an exciting exposure to Bomber Command operations as Ian's logbook noted that they were "Intercepted off Le Treport" by two Focke-Wulf 190 fighters. J.J.E. Cote, the rear gunner, shot one of them down but by the time they had evaded the other fighter the aircraft had lost so much altitude that they had to return to base.

On September 21, Bazalgette went along on another "Second Dickie" trip, this time with Squadron Leader (S/L) Parsons. This was a



## **BOMBER COMMAND**

The bomber offensive mounted by the Royal Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the air forces of Australia and New Zealand during the Second World War has been described as the most continuous and gruelling operation of war ever carried out. It lasted for some 2000 days and for four long years, while the world waited for the tide to slowly turn, Bomber Command offered the only weapon capable of waging war against Hitler's European fortress.

For the British and for the occupied peoples alike, the bombers droning across the night skies were a symbol of hope as well as of growing might. Although primarily directed against the industrial capacity of Nazi Germany, Bomber Command successes also included the mining of enemy waters, the destruction of many of the huge barges Hitler expected would bring his invading armies to Britain, the "Dambusters" raid, the sinking of warships such as the battleship Tirpitz, pin-point attacks on Gestapo headquarters, and operations in preparation for the D-Day invasion.

The successes of Bomber Command were purchased at a terrible cost. Of those aircrew who were flying at the beginning of the war, fewer than ten percent survived. Of all the volunteers who flew, almost sixty percent (over 55,000) were killed. Even those who became operational after D-Day, June 6 1944, suffered almost fifty percent casualties. Canadian pilot and author Murray Peden DFC recalled, "The crews faced formidable odds, odds seldom appreciated outside the Command. At times in the great offensives of 1943 and 1944 the short-term statistics foretold that fewer than 25 out of each 100 crews would survive their first tour of thirty operations. On a single night Bomber Command lost more aircrew than Fighter Command lost during the Battle of Britain. Yet the crews buckled on their chutes and set out with unshakeable resolution night after night. They fell prey to the hazards of icing, lightning, storm, and structural failure, and they perished amidst the bursting shells of the flak batteries. But by far the greater number died in desperately unequal combat under the overwhelming fire-power of the tenacious German night fighter defenders."

Ten thousand Canadians died serving in Bomber Command, a sacrifice which should never be forgotten.

“gardening” or mine laying operation and the aircraft returned to base without incident. The placing of mines in enemy shipping lanes was a lesser known aspect of Bomber Command’s role. Over 18,000 “gardening” flights were made and some 47,000 mines placed in enemy-used waters.

Baz, as Ian became known in the RAF, and his crew had little time to get used to life at Marham as the squadron was reassigned. The crew flew a Wellington marked “KO-T” to No. 115’s new base at Mildenhall in Suffolk on September 24.

The rookie crew flew its first operation, a gardening trip, on September 30 and from this date on found themselves on the “Battle Order” regularly, completing twelve raids by the end of November. Baz’s logbook records trips to various targets in Germany and two in Italy. Often the logbooks kept by pilots and other aircrew were a succinct and terse listing of the required dates, names, times, etc. in the specified columns but at this point Ian’s logbook begins to contain some comments which allow us to gain some feeling for what he was experiencing. In these first dozen raids, entries such as “Starboard prop flak damaged,”



**Anti-shiping mine being dropped from a Bomber Command aircraft**



“Lightening and rough,” “Defences swamped,” “Good defence, night fighters active,” and “Flak hole in starboard wing” indicate that Bazalgette and crew were getting a pretty complete exposure to the perils of flying with Bomber Command.

Another entry, “Worst opposition yet, held in searchlights,” was made following an operation to Osnabruck on October 6th. Being “coned” was terrifying. In his book, “Boys, Bombs, and Brussels Sprouts,” Nanton Lancaster Society member Doug Harvey wrote, “I had just closed the bomb doors when I went blind. Absolutely blind. Terrified, I realized we had been coned. The world was a dazzling white, as though a giant flashlight was aimed directly into my eyes. I couldn’t see my hands on the control column, couldn’t see the instrument panel, couldn’t see outside the cockpit. I was naked, totally exposed, helpless. We were a very bright and shiny target in the apex of fifty or more beams that were radar directed. They weren’t going to let go easily.” After seven minutes of evasive action, including diving at speeds reaching 350 miles per hour, Doug was able to out-distance the lights and escaped.

Baz’s experience was similar to Doug’s. His Wellington was caught in the apex of several searchlights which made it the target for numerous anti-aircraft batteries. Baz put the aircraft into a steep dive, losing thousands of feet of altitude and then made a steep climb. Both engines cut out due to fuel starvation but started again and Baz and his crew escaped.

During a raid on Milan, their first to an Italian target, the crew enjoyed “Good visibility over the Alps and a feeble defence” but a trip to Turin presented a little more difficulty on November 28. This was a low-level raid on the Fiat Works factories and P/O Bazalgette noted in his logbook, “Defences stiffer, three runs over the target, and flak damage.”

Baz and his crew, together with the others in No. 115 Squadron, were on the move again during these first twelve



**No. 115 Squadron Wellington**  
The “KO” identifier was placed on all No. 115 Squadron aircraft.



### **Short Stirling**

operations, transferring their base from Mildenhall to East Wretham in Norfolk on November 8th. The plan was for the squadron to slowly phase out the Wellingtons and convert to the Short\* Stirling.

Following leave, Ian made two flights aboard the four-engine Stirling at Oakington on December 21. Ian noted in his log, "Solo on type" which he had not done following his first flights in the other aircraft he had flown. This may be an indication that he was particularly pleased with having flown the giant Stirling alone after only two hours of doing circuits and landings with Squadron Leader Crompton

The Stirling, Halifax, and Lancaster were the Royal Air Force's trio of four-engined heavy bombers during World War II. In May 1939, the Stirling became the first of the three to take to the air. Following a successful maiden flight, the undercarriage collapsed upon landing. Although the aircraft flew on thousands of bombing raids from 1940 through 1943, it continued to suffer from weak undercarriage and the fact that its design specifications had limited the wing-span to less than one hundred feet (so that it would fit into the "standard" RAF hangars of the day). This in turn limited its operational ceiling and Stirling crews, as well as being an easier

\*Note that "Short" refers to the company that built the aircraft and not the length of the Stirling. Eustace and Oswald Short began experimenting with balloons in 1897 and went on to establish Britain's first aircraft factory.

target for enemy anti-aircraft crews, were often struck by bombs dropped by the higher flying Lancasters and Halifaxes. Beginning in 1943, the Stirlings were phased out of bombing operations although they continued to serve as transports and glider tugs.

Murray Peden referred to the Stirling as, "Second to none as a sturdy and dependable battler. She served us loyally, not least in providing, when she first took to the air and fought in squadron service, a morale building symbol of Britain's growing aerial offensive power." Peden and many of his fellow Stirling pilots remember the aircraft with fondness and admiration.

F/O Bazalgette did not fly again until January 25. Posted to No. 1567 Conversion Unit at Stradishall, he accumulated another sixteen hours on Stirlings, gaining the necessary experience to handle the four-engined heavy bombers on operational flights. However he was not given the opportunity as it was decided that No. 115 should convert to the Avro Lancaster.

On February 19th, Baz was back at East Wretham where he made his first solo flight in a Lancaster after an introduction of only 35 minutes of circuits and landings. Following four weeks of training, Baz and crew began flying Lancaster Mk II's operationally on March 22, 1943. Although the vast majority of Lancasters were powered by the successful and proven Rolls Royce Merlin V-12 engines, the three hundred Mark II's that were built utilized the Bristol-Hercules VI radial engine.

The Lancaster had a crew of seven. Baz's original crew of navigator, Bill Bowen; bomb aimer, George Ross; wireless operator,



**No. 115 Squadron Lancaster Mk. II (note the radial engines)**



## **AVRO LANCASTER**

During World War II the Lancaster was the most successful bomber used by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force. The Lanc had speed, ceiling, and lifting power that no other aircraft could match. Generally flying under the cover of darkness, the Lancaster had virtually no defensive armour and carried only eight .303 calibre machine guns for defence against enemy aircraft. Air gunners manned the rear and mid-upper gun turrets. A pilot, flight engineer, navigator, wireless operator, and bomb aimer/front gunner completed the crew of seven.

The Lancaster evolved from Britain's concerns regarding the deteriorating international situation during the late 1930's. The Handley-Page Halifax, Short Stirling, and Avro Manchester were all in the planning stages as the war began in 1939. The prototype twin-engined Manchester flew in 1940 but was plagued by instability and insufficient power. Its designer, Roy Chadwick, modified the Manchester by adding two more engines and the result was the Lancaster which made its maiden flight in January 1941. By war's end, 7374 Lancasters had been built including 430 in Canada. A total of 3932 were lost in action.

The Lancaster eventually proved to be the workhorse of Bomber Command, completing more than twice the raids of any other type and carrying 64% of the explosives to enemy targets. It was also the only aircraft capable of carrying out specialized operations such as the "Dambusters" raid and the sinking of the battleship Tirpitz with the 12,000 pound Tallboy bomb.

Approximately one hundred of the Canadian-built Lancasters went on to serve with the post-war Royal Canadian Air Force, the majority in maritime reconnaissance/patrol roles during the early years of the Cold War. They were also engaged in search and rescue flights, ice reconnaissance, and the aerial mapping of much of the Canadian Arctic.

## **AVRO LANCASTER SPECIFICATIONS**

Engines:

-Mks. I, III, and X: four Rolls Royce Merlin V-12's

-Mk. II: four Bristol-Hercules VI Radials

Wing Span: 102 feet

Length: 69 feet 6 inches

Maximum speed: 275 miles per hour

Cruising speed: 185 to 225 miles per hour

Service ceiling: 20,000 feet (maximum weight)

Maximum weight: 61,500 pounds

Empty Weight: 36,500 pounds

Fuel Capacity: 2154 Imperial gallons

Range: 2530 miles with 7000 pound bomb load

1730 miles with 12,000 pound bomb load

1550 miles with 22,000 pound bomb load

Armament: Front gun turret (two .303 calibre)

Mid-upper gun turret (two .303 calibre)

Rear gun turret (four .303 calibre)



**No. 424 Sqd. RCAF Lancaster Mk. X "Picadilly Princess"**

G. Roberts; and rear gunner, "Tom" Molloy converted to the Lancaster with Baz and two more crew were added, flight engineer Pete Skinner and mid-upper gunner Arthur Milton.

As Baz and his crew completed their tour of thirty operations with No. 115 Squadron, the pilot's logbook again gives us some indication of their experiences. The raid on Duisburg on March 26 must have been particularly harrowing as the following entry indicates, "10/10ths cloud - large fires - crash landing." On this raid the undercarriage mechanism was damaged by flak and Bazalgette was forced to make a belly landing. Although the aircraft struck a tree, there were no injuries.

Baz participated in raids to Berlin twice in this period. Known to Bomber Command crews as "The Big City," Berlin was one of the most feared targets because of the long flight involved and the heavy defences.

Arthur Godfrey, an Australian pilot with No. 626 Squadron, described his vivid memories of being over Berlin which in many ways was similar to other heavily defended Bomber Command targets writing, "Berlin was an angry, glaring, writhing enormity of a target. We rarely caught a glimpse of the city beneath the unbroken cloud cover, but there seemed to be thousands of searchlights. They did not move, they pointed upwards and illuminated the clouds. It was like flying across a vast, bubbling cauldron into which was poured the sky-markers and above which burst the 'scarecrow' flares\*. We have since discovered that there were no 'scarecrow' flares, only exploding and burning aircraft. It was a target so bright that the spread of the bomber stream could be seen above, below, and around you. One was part of a vast armada of aircraft moving relentlessly across the target. Bomb doors could be seen opening. The black crosses on the fighters were clearly visible as they dived into the bomber stream, oblivious to the bursting flak, whose muffled crump could be heard above the roar of our engines."

It appears that Baz's two operations over Berlin provided quite different experiences. After the first on March 27 the logbook records, "Cloud broke over the city, pathfinding A-1, opposition weak," but following the second, just two days later, the comments were, "Fiercer opposition, many searchlights." Other comments reported in this period were, "Fierce and accurate flak," "Baltic full of light flak," "Usual Ruhr display, good trip," "Forced to jettison and return, heavy icing," "Many searchlights, accurate flak, port flap holed," "Most  
\*Many Bomber Command aircrews believed that scarecrow flares were being used by the Germans to deceive them into believing they were bombers in flames. In fact they were bombers in flames.



**Baz gave this photo of a No. 115 Squadron Lancaster to his parents. It is not known if Baz was flying the Lancaster in the photo or perhaps the photo was taken from his aircraft.**

concentrated effort yet, good Ruhr defence,” “Masses of aircraft but not very concentrated, very easy,” “Flak feeble, fighters very active,” “Fighters even more active,” and “Lots of fighters, otherwise easy.”

Bazalgette and crew participated in a very successful raid on the industrial area of Hamburg on July 24th and afterwards Ian recorded in his logbook, “Defence baffled by new technique.” This was the raid in which “Window” was used for the first time and this tactical innovation allowed the 791 attacking aircraft to pass through the enemy defences in greater safety, at least on that night.

“Window” was strips of coarse, black paper exactly 27 cm long and 2 cm wide with thin aluminum foil stuck to one of the sides which, when dropped in great numbers, swamped the enemy’s radar



**In this photo, a bundle of “Window” has just been released from a higher-flying aircraft**

with false echoes and rendered it virtually useless. Trials in England had convinced the British that this technique would be successful against the “Wurzburg” ground based radar sets which controlled the German night-fighter interceptions and the radar directed flak guns. As well it was felt that it would be effective against the smaller airborne “Lichtenstein” radar sets which the night-fighter crews used when closing in on a British bomber. Window had been ready since April, 1942 but had not been used for fear that the German Air Force would copy it and use it to counter British radar systems while making their own bombing raids.

Interestingly, the enemy had already developed a similar technique and had named it “Duppel.” Hermann Goering, the commander of the Luftwaffe, fearing that if the British were made aware of it that it might be used against his own defences, ordered that no one was to speak of Duppel and that there was to be no further development of the technique.

During the six major raids over a ten day period which comprised the Battle of Hamburg, it is estimated that Window saved as many as 130 aircraft and their crews which would otherwise have been lost. The technique continued to be used following this initial spectacular success, however the Germans recovered quickly and developed methods which to some extent counteracted the new technique.

On July 1 1943, now Acting Squadron Leader Bazalgette was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Founded by King George V



**Distinguished Flying Cross**

upon the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918, the Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for, "an act or acts of valour, courage, or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy." A citation describing the event or events for which the medal was presented accompanies each award.

Ian Bazalgette's DFC citation reads, "This officer has at all times displayed the greatest keenness for operational flying. He has taken part in many sorties and attacked heavily defended targets such as Duisberg, Berlin, Essen, and Turin. His gallantry and devotion to duty have at all times been exceptional and his record commands the respect of all in his squadron." Although the citation does not mention any particular raid, it has been written that it was the low-level attack on Turin that led to the award.

In general, a "tour" of operations with Bomber Command was thirty operational flights against the enemy and following this, aircrew were often posted to training units. The last trip of Baz's crew's tour was a raid to Milan, Italy on August 12. Following the trip, Baz wrote, "Enjoyable over London and the Alps, otherwise a bind" in his log. His comments continued to become more and more informal as his career progressed. This one leaves the reader imagining Ian enjoying a beautiful night looking down on Mount Blanc which must have provided relief from what he probably felt was a long and tedious flight.

On August 16 1943, W/C F.F. Rainsford, commanding officer of No. 115 Squadron, assessed Bazalgette's abilities as a heavy bomber pilot as "Above the average." It must have been with some emotion that Bazalgette and his crew, who had gone through so much together, were posted to different locations.

Wireless operator George Roberts remembered, "It was a good tour, no crew member was lost or wounded." Regarding his skipper Baz, Roberts wrote, "He was a very good pilot and a good friend."

At this point Ian received word that he had been assigned to an OTU at Lossiemouth, Scotland as a Flight Commander. This position included the responsibility of overseeing the final training and preparation of numerous bomber crews about to begin flying over Nazi Germany. However Baz seemed to long for the excitement of operations and the contribution he could make flying against the enemy. In particular, he wanted to fly with the Pathfinder Force (PFF) -the "elite" Bomber Command airmen who marked the targets for the main force aircraft.

Baz had once attended a lecture given by Group Captain (G/C) Hamish Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC at which he was introduced

SUMMARY of FLYING and ASSESSMENTS FOR ~~1944~~ COMMENCING on 15th SEPT 1943

( \* For Officers, insert "JUNE" ; For Airman Pilot, insert "AUGUST" )

	S.E. AIRCRAFT		N.E. AIRCRAFT		TOTAL for year 1943	GRAND TOTAL All Service Flying
	Day	Night	Day	Night		
DUAL			5-50	7-55	13-05	127-02
PILOT			71-02	186-02	257-04	471-57
PASSENGER						60-15

ASSESSMENT of ABILITY (To be entered as—Exceptional, Above the Average, Average, or Below the Average)

(i) AS A H.B. PILOT Above the Average

(ii) AS PILOT-NAVIGATOR/NAVIGATOR \_\_\_\_\_

(iii) IN BOMBING \_\_\_\_\_

(iv) IN AIR GUNNERY \_\_\_\_\_

(Insert "P.", "L.B.", "C.R.", "P.S.", etc.)

ANY POINTS IN FLYING OR AIRMANSHIP WHICH SHOULD BE WATCHED

NIL

Date 16th August 1943 Signature F. J. Rainsford  
 Officer Commanding 115(B) Squadron

Assessment of Baz's first tour signed by No. 115 Squadron's commanding officer, W/C Fred Rainsford to the methods utilized by the Pathfinder Force which was designated as No. 8 Group of Bomber Command. The challenges of becoming a Pathfinder Force pilot were irresistible to Baz and he appealed directly to G/C Mahaddie who was in charge of recruiting crews for the Pathfinder Force. In his autobiography, "Hamish -The Story of a Pathfinder," Bazalgette is referred to as, "one of many tour-expired bomber pilots that seemed to rot in our OTU's." Hamish recalled that



G/C Hamish Mahaddie at his office at RAF Warboys

Bazalgette, "plagued me weekly with letters and telephone calls." In a letter to the Nanton Lancaster Society, Hamish referred to, "begging letters I got from Ian beseeching me to take him back on operations and which I have always regretted because sadly he was killed on the occasion when he won his VC."

Clearly Baz wanted to continue flying on Bomber Command operations and felt he could make a contribution with the Pathfinders. It is also clear that he saw, even in August of 1943, that the end of the war was in sight and that he wanted to make this contribution before the war was over.

16 Sycamore Grove  
New Malden  
Surrey  
24 August, 1943

*Sir: I understand from my telephone conversation yesterday with Flt. Lt. Rogers that Air Cdre. Kirkpatrick of No. 3 Group requested that the PFF should not claim me, as there was a 'special job' for which I was required.*

*No. 115 Squadron have informed me by letter that I am posted to Lossiemouth on a routine exchange for a Flight Commander from that station, with effect from the 1st September.*

*The actual position, as I see it (and writing very unofficially), is that No. 3 Group cannot obtain the particular replacement for me they require without offering me in exchange. The upshot is that my application for the PFF is quietly squashed whilst I am on leave on the grounds of a 'special job.' The only work that I have heard of is either an OTU or a Stirling Conversion Unit.*

*The real point is where can I be of the greatest value, and I am convinced that a PFF tour does more good than a Flight Commander's job at an OTU.*

*My personal angle is that anyone missing ops this autumn and winter has "had it." I entreat you to rescue me before the 1st September if I can be of use to PFF.*

*Again, I must apologise for bothering you with my personal affairs, but the incentive is very strong.*

*I am, sir, yours faithfully*

*Ian W. Bazalgette*



**F/L Bazalgette DFC**  
**(Note the DFC ribbon below the pilot's wings)**



**Memorial at former site of RAF Warboys**  
[courtesy Sean Edwards]

# *Lossiemouth and Warboys*

Located next to the North Sea some fifty-five kilometres east of Inverness, RAF Lossiemouth was far from the “action” that Baz seemed to have enjoyed during his first tour. Now with the rank of Squadron Leader, Baz reported to his posting as a Flight Commander at No. 20 OTU, beginning his duties on September 3, 1943.

One of the instructors who served under him in the Flight was F/L R. “Bob” Palmer DFC who, like Baz, was destined to be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross while flying with the Pathfinder Force. S/L Palmer had made over 100 operational flights when he was marking a target for a daylight raid on Cologne on December 23, 1944. Fighter attacks and flak set two engines on fire but he proceeded to bomb the marshalling yards accurately before falling in flames.

It was during his time at Lossiemouth that Ian, now 25 years of age, met F/O Douglas Cameron DFM, an experienced air gunner who was the Gunnery Leader at the OTU. Cameron had, by coincidence, also been very much involved in the raid to Turin that Baz had participated in on the 28th of November, 1942. This was a low level attack on the Fiat Works factories during



**F/O Douglas Cameron DFM**

which Baz made three runs over the target, returning to base with flak damage.

Douglas Cameron was rear gunner on a Stirling bomber flown by Flight Sergeant (F/S) R.H. Middleton of the Royal Australian Air Force and had two and three quarters tours of operations on twin-engined Whitley bombers in his log when he took part in the Turin raid.

The aircraft was hit by flak and severely damaged while returning from the target. Both pilots were injured, Middleton losing an eye and having half his jaw shot away. The co-pilot was completely incapacitated. Middleton flew the aircraft back to the Kent coast where four of the crew, including Cameron, bailed out before the Stirling crashed into the sea killing the pilot and two other members of the crew. F/S Middleton was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously.

Douglas Cameron would go on to fly an amazing total of 122 sorties during four tours of operations. He would conclude his career by bailing out of another severely damaged bomber, the pilot of which would also be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

According to Doug Cameron, "Although Baz didn't relish idling his time on a training unit, he immediately applied himself to his new task with all the energy he possessed and the knowledge he had acquired, with such a degree of professionalism that all ranks became aware that a presence had arrived." But Hamish had told Baz, "You just stay there (at Lossiemouth) and I will get you out."

"This wasn't just an idle promise," Hamish insisted, "because there was the type of fellow we wanted; it was as simple as that. He was the type of fellow that I wanted to be a Squadron Commander eventually. I told Jerry Rogers (who was mentioned in Baz's letter to Hamish) on my staff that I wanted Bazalgette and he never stopped looking for ways to get Bazalgette."

So according to Hamish, "He quietly did his job like a good little lad." But during this time, Baz was carefully and methodically preparing for his return to the role he wished to have, that of an operational pilot with the Pathfinder Force.

Doug Cameron recalled, "One day Baz came into my office and asked if I was quite happy at the OTU. I told Baz that I would like to go back on ops but that the air force had told me that I had done enough and to let some others operate against the Germans. Baz told me not to worry about that and that he had friends in high places and if I would like to come he would like to have an experienced crew. I know now that G/C Mahaddie had a hand in getting Baz back on



**F/S R.H. Middleton**

operations.”

With the exception of the flight engineer and mid-upper gunner, the other members of his soon to be operational crew were recruited at No. 20 OTU in a similar manner. Baz carefully studied all of the senior instructors and determined in his own mind the ones which he felt would make the best crew. F/L Ivan Hibbert DFC, bomb-aimer; F/L Geoff Goddard, navigator; and F/L C.R. “Chuck” Godfrey, wireless operator were approached and agreed to join the crew. Each was an experienced veteran of at least one tour of operations. As the aircraft operating at Lossiemouth were twin-engined Wellingtons, flight engineers and mid-upper gunners were not a part of the crews being trained there.

Other letters were exchanged between Baz and G/C Mahaddie including the following:

*3rd February, 1944*

*Dear Wing Commander Mahaddie:*

*A pathetic appeal from the frozen north -my six months O.T.U. tour expires at the end of this month and I must get to 8 Group at once. I feel that if I cannot break away now, I have “had” my second tour. It is my dearest wish to have another personal affair with Germany, before we deal with the yellow jobs. This all reads like a line, but believe me, I am very sincere. The main essential, as far as I can see it, is to have it organized as an exchange posting, and to insist on the six month ruling being adhered to. If there is any question of it being to my advantage to stay here (you will remember the 3 group story) please disregard it.*

*A few keen types scattered around the group are anxious to get back with me. In case there is any hope, I enclose a separate list of their names and categories. There is one point, sir, on which we urgently need your advice -shall we all put in official applications though our various units, or keep quiet and leave it all to you?*

*Yours sincerely,  
Ian W. Bazalgette S/Ldr.*

Royal Air Force,  
Castle Hill House,  
HUNTERTON.

DY/DNA

8th February, 1944.

Dear -

Many thanks for your letter and I most heartily endorse all you say. Please take no action officially until my own home dealing methods have been completed. I will, however, tell you when to make the official application.

Well, the sands of time are slowly running out for you, so keep your powder dry!

Many thanks for the enclosed list. I will do my best to get these lads for you, I don't think there is going to be much difficulty. Once I get the Skipper, the others follow quite easily.

Well, cheerio Bazal, and say I wish you in the near future good Path finding.

Yours

S/L I. F. Bazalgette,  
Officers' Mess,  
R.A.F., Milltown,  
Glou. Wiltshire.

It took some time, but the letters and telephone calls to Hamish Mahaddie were successful and on April 27th, 1944 S/L Bazalgette and his new crew began the Pathfinder Force conversion course at the RAF station known as Warboys. F/L Bob Hurnall was chosen to be the mid-upper gunner as training for the Pathfinders began. But being posted to Warboys did not guarantee that the crew would be accepted into the Pathfinders. Only about 50% of the selected crews were passed and considered good enough to join a PFF squadron. The course included flying four "mock ops" operations before they were accepted as a PFF crew.

But Baz and crew were not found wanting. They successfully completed the PFF course and were immediately assigned to No. 635, an operational Pathfinder squadron.

## **THE PATHFINDER FORCE (No. 8 Group)**

The idea of using an elite corp of crews with high navigational ability evolved from the somewhat limited accuracy of bomber crews during the early years of the war together with the development of more sophisticated and difficult to use electronic navigational aids. Although originally opposed by Marshall of the Royal Air Force Arthur Harris, the officer in charge of Bomber Command, hand-picked crews from operational bomber squadrons began to be transferred to form the Pathfinder Force (PFF) in August of 1942.

The PFF was commanded by veteran Australian bomber pilot, D.C.T. Bennett, who retained command throughout the war. It began operations within a few hours of its formation and continued its work of leading the main force against the enemy until the bomber offensive ceased shortly before V.E. Day.

A variety of techniques for marking targets with green, red, and yellow flares were utilized depending on cloud conditions. Generally an initial marking of the target was improved upon or altered as the raid progressed. Circling over the target, a Master Bomber would radio instructions to other Pathfinders as well as to the main force aircraft.

The gallantry of the Pathfinder Force is legendary and its contribution to the war effort immense as it significantly improved the accuracy of the main force's bombing. Probably the greatest of its many successes was its part in the sustained Battle of the Ruhr, the industrial heartland of Nazi Germany.

The PFF flew a total of 50,490 individual sorties against some 3440 targets. The cost in human lives was grievous as 3727 members were killed on operations.

No. 405 (City of Vancouver) Squadron was the only Royal Canadian Air Force squadron to serve with No. 8 Group. It began operations with the PFF in April, 1943 and served until the end of the war. As its last operation before V.E. Day, the squadron marked the aiming point for other Bomber Command aircraft detailed to drop food supplies to the starving Dutch civilians at Rotterdam.



**No. 8 Group (The Pathfinder Force) crest in stained glass  
at Ely Cathedral, near Downham Market**

# **635 Squadron Operations**

## **[Downham Market]**

Downham Market is a small town located on rising ground overlooking “The Fens” in Norfolk. The Great Ouse River, together with a large relief channel that parallels it, passes just to the west of the town near the railway station, taking water removed from this reclaimed area to the sea at “The Wash.”



**The Downham Market railway station**

Built in 1942, the Downham Market air station owed its existence to the war and there were precious few home comforts. It was located just 1.5 kilometres east of the town and adjacent to the tiny village of Bexwell. Baz’s wireless operator, Chuck Godfrey, remembered, “The camp really took over the village.”

The massive Stirling Bombers were the first to fly from RAF Downham Market, beginning with No. 218 Squadron in July 1942, and later No. 623 and No. 214 Squadron. The Stirlings left at the end of 1943 and the Lancasters of No. 635 Squadron PFF arrived in March 1944.

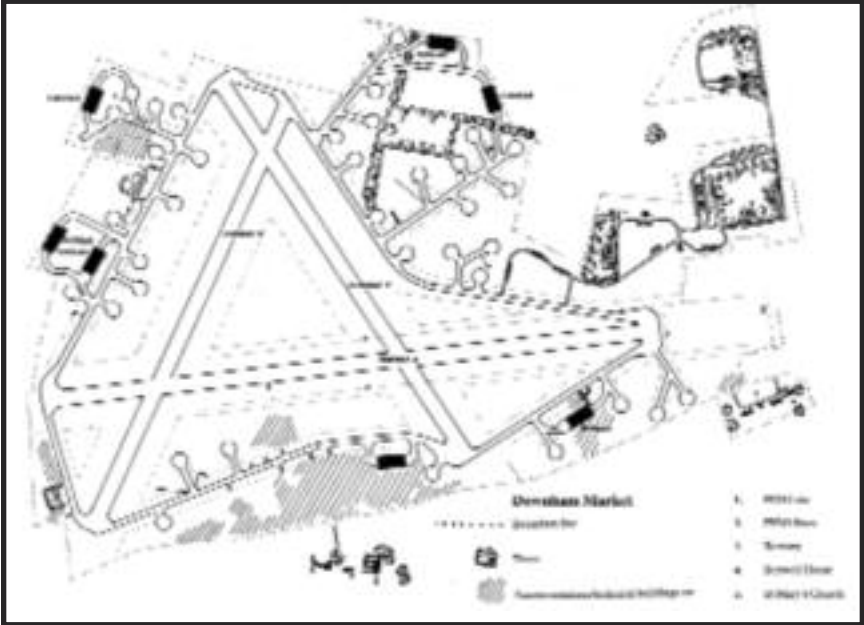
No. 635 had a brief but intense existence during the last year and a half of the war. Experienced aircrew from two other squadrons, “B” Flight of No. 35 Squadron and “C” Flight of No. 97 Squadron formed its nucleus. No. 635 operated



**This impressive clock tower has been a focal point of Downham Market since 1878**

until the end of the war and was disbanded in September, 1945.

In August 1944, the squadron began sharing the station with another Pathfinder Force unit, the No. 608 Squadron Mosquitoes of the Light Night Striking Force. The two squadrons often operated jointly as markers on the same targets and according to Don Currie, a No. 635 Squadron navigator, "There was always a friendly feeling of



**RAF Downham Market**  
[from Lancaster at War IV by Alex Thorne]



**Baz's Crew: (l-r) Baz, Geoff Goddard, Ivan Hibbert, Chuck Godfrey**

competitiveness between them. When going to the same target, No. 608, in their much faster Mosquitoes, would take off long after No. 635 had disappeared and would be over the target finishing their marking as the No. 635 primary markers were arriving. This confirmed to the Germans the night's target, and they were ready for us and the main force. No. 608 missed most of the anti-aircraft fire and the German fighter aircraft we had both going and coming. They were also first at the bar when they got back!"

A bomber squadron was made up of about eighteen operational aircraft and during No. 635's thirteen months of wartime operations, a total of thirty-six Lancasters were lost to enemy action. The loss rate was high and although many experienced crews joined the squadron, few completed their



**de Havilland Mosquito**



**Bexwell Church's rectory was the Officers Mess at RAF Downham Market. Dormitories for the officers were built behind the rectory.**

[courtesy Elizabeth Howard]



**Bob Hurnall, Doug Cameron, George Turner**

tour of operations.

S/L Bazalgette and his crew began flying from RAF Downham Market in May 1944. Upon their arrival, they were joined by George Turner who became crew's flight engineer. George had just completed his training at No. 1658 Heavy Conversion Unit. Unlike most of the aircrew on the station, he was inexperienced in combat, having only completed one operation prior to being posted to the Pathfinders.

The role of Bomber Command had changed considerably by this time. Instead of focusing on the destruction of enemy industrial sites, many of the operations were in support of the anticipated invasion of

German-occupied France. S/L Bazalgette and crew flew twenty-five operations between May 6 and August 3. His logbook refers to raids on railway marshalling yards, airfields, synthetic oil factories, V-1 Rocket storage depots, coastal batteries on D-Day, and tanks and troops the day after the invasion. The operation on June 6, 1944 was well remembered by all the crew and Baz's logbook comments were, "Channel full of shipping -sky black with Lancs." He seems to have become even more informal during this period as he recorded comments such as, "Tired and tight after party," "What a stooge - dropped a mean Wanganui (target marker)," "Medium flak at target, otherwise dull," and "Stuttgart again -What weariness."

But the dangers of flak and fighters were always present as



**The pub in the Crown Hotel was a favourite of the airmen based at Downham Market**



**No. 635 Squadron Lancasters carried the squadron identifier "F2"**



### **Pathfinder Force Lancasters on a daylight raid**

the log reveals in comments such as, “One combat,” “Full moon - much fighter activity,” “Many fighters,” “Jumped by Me 110 (German twin-engined fighter) 20 miles off coast,” “Port wing holed,” and “Moderate, heavy flak.”

George Turner clearly remembered their night raid on Hamburg on July 28 as, “a hot one.” The fighters appeared on the homeward flight and had a field day destroying a total of 22 of the 187 Halifaxes and 106 Lancasters which attacked the city. No. 431 Squadron, part of No. 6 (RCAF) Group, lost 5 of its 17 aircraft. George recalled, “We were lit up all the way back by aircraft going down in flames and the fighters were having a hay-day.” Baz flew the violent, corkscrew evasive manouever all the way back to avoid the fighters. This, of course, made for a wild ride for the rear gunner, who that night was not Doug Cameron. Upon landing he remarked, “I’ve never had a trip like that. I don’t know how I stood it.”

Typical of the way Baz exercised his duties was during a raid on July 7 against enemy tank concentrations which had the Allied Army pinned down near Caen. He defied orders and bombed from an altitude of only 800 feet with such accuracy that he earned a commendation from the army but a scolding from senior officers of the RAF. After the raid he marked his triumphant return to Downham Market by buzzing the airfield with, as Cameron remembered, “All the enthusiasm of a ‘sprog’ pilot.”

As they gained experience with the Pathfinder Force, additional responsibilities were placed on Baz and his crew. They were designated as “Deputy Master Bomber” on a raid to the Cambrai Marshalling Yard on June 12 and again against the Lens Marshalling yard on June 15. The Master Bombers were responsible for placing the initial target markers on the target. They then orbited the target, ordering whatever adjustments were necessary to other members of the force as the raid progressed.

A raid on Chapple Notre Dame on August 1, just three days before the Victoria Cross action, is clearly remembered by George Turner as a “close call.” “We were on the way back from the target and had just about reached the French coast. We always considered

that sort of a safe point on the return journey.

Suddenly Doug's voice came over the intercom, 'Skipper there's a fighter to port.' Baz said, 'All right, keep your eyes on him.' A few moments later the

mid-upper gunner called and said, 'There's a fighter to starboard.' Baz replied, 'All right, keep your eyes on him.' We were going along, nice and quiet, when all of a sudden there was a shout, 'Skipper! Dive to port! Now!' At that moment Baz stood the aircraft down to port and tracer bullets came up over the starboard wing. They just got the outboard starboard propeller. That was all. The first two were acting as decoys for the one that attacked from underneath. Baz dived the aircraft 8000 feet. I consider Doug Cameron saved all our lives that time." The experience was so harrowing that, although physically uninjured, the mid-upper gunner, F/L Hurnall was hospitalized and did not fly with the crew again.

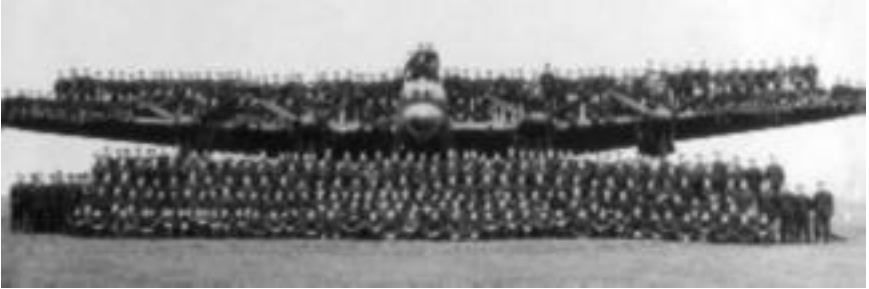
When asked to describe Baz's emotional state following this extremely close call and the 8000 foot dive, George Turner laughed, "We levelled out in some clouds at 4000 feet and Baz asked me to pour him a cup of coffee."

Despite terrifying moments in the skies over enemy territory and the regular loss of friends in the squadron, Baz seems to have appreciated and even enjoyed his particular role in the war. In the last letter he wrote to his good friend Eric Biggs, with whom he served in the Searchlight Troupe in Scotland, Baz wrote, "Barring the occasional sticky effort, I feel that the RAF fights very luxuriously. If ever I prayed sincerely, I did for the Army as we did our stuff on 'D-Day.' I am as happy as a bee with a bum full of honey these days. My crew are a grand bunch, and I am serving with a really grand Squadron."

Squadron Leader Bazalgette's logbook ends, as so many sadly did, with the word "Missing" and the signature of one of the squadron's senior officers.



**Luftwaffe Ju88 fighter with radar equipment mounted on the nose**



**No. 635 Squadron aircrew**  
**This photo was taken on 25 March, 1943 just five days after the squadron was formed at RAF Downham Market.**



**No. 635 Squadron aircrew**  
**This photo was taken in mid-1944 but Baz and his crew were on leave.**



# *The Victoria Cross Flight*

On the eve of August 4, 1944 it is clear that Squadron Leader Bazalgette had already demonstrated his determination, courage, and confidence. He was a talented pilot and an effective leader. Outwardly he presented a casual and easy going personality but was definitely very serious about his duties. George Turner praised him as a natural leader. "He was a disciplinarian and he had complete control at all times," Turner remembered. "I think I can speak for all the crew, that everyone felt comfortable, safe, and in his confidence at all times."

In Doug Cameron's opinion, "Pride, so often the spur to self-confidence, feeds on the ability of and respect for comrades sharing the same hazard." Baz and his crew were, like most crews, a very close and tightly knit unit. Doug was particularly impressed that, "Above all, Baz had the diplomacy to consult individual crew members on any issue concerning their responsibility, and the decision taken always appeared to be that of the particular member, thus promoting the collective confidence of the crew."

As with most crews, Baz's spent much of their leisure time together and in these situations Baz was just another member, neither skipper nor Squadron Leader. Chuck Godfrey remembered that when they went on leave they would always spend the first two days together, "having a bash," before travelling to visit other friends and family.

However once the aircraft was in the air, all the surviving crewmembers have commented on his professionalism, highly disciplined nature, and leadership qualities . There was no joking or chit-chat on the intercom. During an operation, Baz was strictly business.

Baz's sister Ethel recalled that there was a direct connection between the last evening she spent with her brother and the target of the raid that took his life. Baz was on leave and he and Ethel were at their parents' home at New Malden, near London. "The V-1 raids were quite intense. Ian was appalled." So many were coming over on that night that their parents went into their shelter while Baz and Ethel sought protection under a metal covered table with a mattress placed on top.



**Baz with his mother at the family home in New Malden**

Ethel recalled, "The Germans were sending a lot of flying bombs over. Will was on leave and he was quite amazed, appalled really. There were so many coming over this last night that I remember him, that my mother and father went into their shelter and



**V-1 Flying Bomb shortly after launch**

Will and I went under a mattress in the hallway. That was the last memory I have of him. The thing that struck me was that this raid (the Victoria Cross Flight) was bombing the flying bomb sites at Trossy St. Maximin and there seemed a connection because the last time I saw him was when these flying bombs were raiding us.”

Baz was about to play a role in reducing the threat of the V-1's to London.

The V-1 was one of two surface-to-surface un-manned weapons developed by the Nazi's during World War II. Launched from a firing tube built onto an inclined 160 foot long ramp, it navigated its way to the target by means of a preset guidance system. Some 35,000 were built, of which 9000 were successfully launched against Britain. They delivered almost two thousand pounds of explosive and had a maximum range of 370 kilometres.

Following the raid on Chapple Notre Dame, Baz and his crew were not scheduled to fly on August 4 and were preparing to go on leave that night. The squadron was to lead an attack against the growing threat to Britain of the V-1 Rockets by bombing the storage caves at Trossy St. Maximin, forty kilometres north of Paris. Chuck Godfrey recalled, “We were due to go on leave on the day after the raid, and we were not on the Battle Order to start with. But one of the other pilots had taken an aircraft to York and hadn't got back because of fog. So we said, ‘We'll get another one in before we go on leave.’ It wasn't going to be a long hop. The target was just north of Paris. It wouldn't take long.” This was to be Baz's 58th operational flight and he was close to completing his second tour of operations. But Baz and his crew had already volunteered for a third.

On their previous sixteen raids, the crew had flown in Lancaster ND-950, which carried the markings “F2-M.” The “F2” designation indicated a No. 635 Squadron aircraft and was placed to the left of the RAF roundel. The “M” was placed to the right and indicated the particular aircraft of the squadron. ND-950 was referred to as “M for Mother” and was itself to be lost on a raid to Kiel three weeks later.

But because of the late decision to place the Bazalgette crew on the Battle Order, “F2-M” was not available and on this day they would be flying Lancaster ND-811, “F2-T,” known as “T for Tommy.” Although the crew had previously flown on two operations to bomb an airfield at Rennes in this aircraft, there was some uneasiness as “Tommy” had a history of incidents, “most of which,” as Doug Cameron recalled, “could be termed a nuisance rather than dangerous.” According to Chuck Godfrey, “T for Tommy” was usually flown by Red Henson who used to, “cook his engines.” “If he went on



**No. 635 Squadron Lancaster "F2-T" taxiing**

by John Rutherford

a raid, "T-Tommy" was always the first one back," Godfrey remembered. Comments were made about, "Drawing the short straw."

There was to be another difference on this flight. F/S Vernon Victor Leeder, a member of the Royal Australian Air Force, would be replacing the regular mid-upper gunner, F/L Bob Hurnall who was recovering from a virus.

In a letter to the Nanton Lancaster Society, Paddy Cronin, who was aboard another Lancaster on the raid recalled, "I was one of the last people to speak to Ian on the ground before take off. That morning, as I was going up the steps to the briefing room, Ian was coming down to get airborne and he said, 'Good morning Paddy.' I replied, 'Good morning Ian,' little thinking at the time that this would be the last time I would see and speak to him."

Bazalgette and his crew in "T for Tommy" took off at 11:15 A.M. Ten No. 635 Squadron Pathfinders were to mark the target for a main force of 61 Lancasters. The V-1 storage facilities had been bombed on each of the two preceding days and the enemy air defences were ready.

"When we arrived, a solid sea of flak filled the width of the bombing run," recalled Doug



**Doug Cameron**

Cameron, the rear gunner. As they headed into the target, the bomb aimer, F/L Hibbert, was lying on his stomach, staring intently through his bombsight while Chuck Godfrey watched through the perspex astrodome above his wireless operator's station. There was no alternative but to fly straight and level in order to mark the target accurately for the main force bombers which were following. This made "T for Tommy" and the other Pathfinders easy targets.

The Master Bomber, W/C C.D. Clark, was put out of action as he made the first approach to the target. Flak raked the length of his Lancaster's fuselage and the starboard elevator was damaged. The Deputy Master Bomber, F/L R. Beveridge, was struck by flak, burst into flames, and dived into the ground.

Following closely behind, "T for Tommy" was rocked by the heavy flak but Bazalgette held his course. They were approaching the target and with the Master Bomber and Deputy Master Bomber out of action, his duty as the "Primary Visual Marker" was clear. It was up to Baz to mark the target. Suddenly the aircraft shook violently. "It went right through our starboard wing," recalled Chuck Godfrey. "It set the petrol tanks on fire, and both engines were knocked out." At roughly the same time, flak struck the fuselage at the front of the bomber. George Turner heard Hibbert, the bomb aimer, call out on the intercom, "I've been hit." Hibbert's right arm had almost been torn off at the shoulder. Turner and Godfrey managed to get him back to the rest bed which was located behind the aircraft's main spar and Chuck administered morphine.

From his position in the rear turret, Doug Cameron could see that, "Both starboard engines were put out of action and the wing was a mass of flames." With flames streaming behind, Baz pressed on with only his port engines operating and dropped his target markers accurately. With the bomb aimer out of action, Baz had to release



**Wireless operator's station with the astrodome above**



**Ivan Hibbert**



**Chuck Godfrey**

the markers and bombs himself from the cockpit. The main force bombers made good use of the markers and the raid was later assessed as a complete success.

Suddenly, perhaps because of the release of the bomb load, the Lancaster went into a spin. After losing considerable altitude wildly twisting and turning, Baz succeeded in regaining control. But the fire on the wing continued to burn. "The starboard wing was one mass of flames, with pieces flying off it," remembered George Turner. "In fact it was looking more like a skeleton." The tanks had been badly damaged and George watched his flight engineer's panel helplessly. He could see the fuel gauge needles for the starboard wing tanks moving as the fuel leaked out and was burned.

According to Chuck Godfrey, "Baz knew we couldn't make the Channel so we headed towards the area where our army was pushing across France." In the rear turret, Doug Cameron heard a tapping on the turret door. He looked back into the aircraft to see the mid upper gunner, F/S Leeder, standing in gasoline, that had filled the rear fuselage to a depth of six inches. Fuel from the damaged fuel tanks in the wings had been draining into the fuselage.

The experienced rear gunner understood the severity of their situation. "Removing my oxygen mask, I shouted to him to get down to the front and await the order from the skipper to bail out. 'This aircraft is going in and it won't be long.' He nodded and moved away. I shut the door and turned the turret to the beam. I could not believe my eyes. The starboard wing was like a herringbone after all the flesh has been eaten off it. I could hardly believe we were still flying. I knew we were a doomed aircraft." At the same time, recalled Turner, "Baz was asking the navigator for a course to take us to the nearest airfield".

F/S Leeder was not seen after he had his conversation with Cameron. It is thought that he was likely overcome by the smoke and fumes which were filling the rear fuselage. Chuck Godfrey has speculated that he may have simply been paralyzed by fear.



**Lancaster flight engineer's panel**



**George Turner**



**Vernon Leeder**

Baz had managed to fly the aircraft for approximately forty-five kilometres (perhaps eleven minutes or so) towards the allied lines when suddenly the port-inner engine stopped running.

“You’ll have to put her down Baz,” flight engineer Turner told his pilot. “I told him that we had no chance, only to get out of the aircraft as quickly as possible. With that he gave the order to put on parachutes and jump. We were just a flying bomb. The rear fuselage was awash with fuel swishing around. It only wanted a spark from the starboard wing to make contact and we would all have been blown to bits.”

Baz knew what he was going to do. Hibbert was badly wounded and, over the intercom, told Baz that he couldn’t jump. Leeder was thought to have been overcome by fumes although Baz was likely uncertain as to his condition or where he was. Leeder had not been connected to the intercom after going to speak with Cameron in the rear turret.

The Lancaster was down to 1000 feet and only one of the four engines was running. The fire in the starboard wing that had erupted over Trossy St. Maximin about eleven minutes earlier continued to rage. But Baz had no intention of bailing out and leaving his two wounded crewmembers. He asked Turner to fix his crash belt tightly around him.

Baz must have known that the odds of his being able to crash-land the flaming Lancaster on one engine without sustaining serious injury or having the aircraft explode were very low. Even if this first step was successful, his chances of being able to drag his two wounded crew members from the burning wreckage to safety were probably even less. Baz’s decision not to escape the burning aircraft with the others was probably instinctive. He could not leave his injured crewmembers.

At this point, Lancaster “F2-T” was losing altitude and at less than one thousand feet. Flying towards the west, it was heading directly towards the small village of Senantes. The time was early afternoon, the weather sunny and clear, and Baz would have seen



**The fire in F2-T’s wing was likely very similar to that burning in the starboard wing of this doomed Halifax Bomber. The photo was taken from an RCAF aircraft and the burning aircraft was likely Canadian as well.**

the spire of the village church directly ahead.

Doug Cameron in the rear turret was the first to abandon the aircraft after Baz gave the order. He opened his turret door and reached for his parachute which was stowed just inside the aircraft. After clipping it on he turned the turret sideways (fortunately for Doug, the rear turret's hydraulic power source was the port outer engine, the only one still operating), opened the access door, and tumbled out backwards. Shortly after leaving the aircraft he was struck by a piece of engine cowling which had flown off of the wing and momentarily knocked unconscious. He came to as he floated earthwards and recalled, "I thought I was dreaming, it was so peaceful."

The Lancaster's emergency escape hatch was located on the floor of the now abandoned bomb aimer's compartment, in front of, and below the cockpit. Turner clipped on his parachute, opened the cover, and jumped though. He was quickly followed by Goddard, and Godfrey, Chuck being the last one out. He had been tending to the injured bomb aimer and, "It wasn't until I saw the navigator beckoning me forward that I realized we were getting out," he remembered. Godfrey clipped on his parachute and leapt through the escape hatch immediately after Goddard. They had almost waited too long.

As Goddard and Godfrey exited the aircraft, it was close to being directly over Senantes and it is said that Baz turned the aircraft to port away from the village. Both Goddard and Godfrey landed immediately to the northwest of the small village.

F/L Hibbert remained incapacitated on the rest bed behind the



**Lancaster rear turret turned sideways, with access door open**



**George Turner, Geoff Goddard, and Chuck Godfrey all exited the Lancaster through the escape hatch on the floor of the bomb aimer's position**



**Geoff Goddard**



### **“Beyond Praise” -Baz over Senantes**

by Len Krenzler

main spar and Leeder was likely overcome by fumes in the rear section of the Lancaster. Baz was now alone in the cockpit, descending, banking to port, and choosing a field in which to land the blazing Lancaster on one engine. Now at a very low altitude, he passed directly over the Desloges' farm, 1.8 kilometres north of Senantes as nine year old Siméon Desloges and his younger brother watched in terror from the yard in front of their house. Sixty-four years later, Siméon clearly recalled the huge amounts of flame trailing behind the aircraft as it passed only a couple of hundred feet overhead. Baz continued his turn to port, and levelled out in a steady approach run to attempt to land in a field just 800 metres south of the farm and about one kilometre from the Village of Senantes.

“I could see it all,” recalled Godfrey. “He did get it down in a field about two fields from where I landed, but it was well ablaze. And with all the petrol on board it just exploded.” The huge fireball killed the three on board instantly and tore a crater in the field.

Paddy Cronin, who had exchanged “Good mornings” with Baz was overhead in his aircraft and watched “F2-T” touch down. In a letter to the Society he wrote, “I saw the whole event, even to the landing of the crippled plane by Ian which blew up. I thought at the time he had made it as he landed. But unfortunately there was a ditch in the way which the plane struck, and this caused the explosion which killed them all. I was very sad as I think I was one of the last people to speak to Ian on the ground before take off.”



The field one kilometre north of Senantes where Baz landed "T for Tommy"

Date	AIRCRAFT		FLIGHT, OR DAY PLAN	TONS FUEL, FUEL OR PROPAGAND	NOTES (Including Remarks and Strength)
	Type	No.			
18	LANC-III	10150	SELF	WITNESSED CREW	MESSAGING SYNTHETIC ON CALVERT - 8 M.I. - GOOD VIEW - VERY EXHAUSTIVE RUNS
20	"	10150	SELF	CREW	CROSSING AREA - D.O. 2 SIGHTING AREA TAMPON - ACCURATE MARK - FRYING WIND
21	"	10150	SELF	CREW	15.2L - VELOCITY AND ANGLES - R.A.S. - 1/18.2 L.A.N.D. - DEGRATE HEAVY PLAN.
24	"	10150	SELF	CREW	STUTTGART - 9.00 - NEAR A SECTOR - STRIPPED A IRON WANGARD
25	"	10150	SELF	CREW	STUTTGART AGAIN - WHAT WEAKNESS - 3.00 - 3.00
28	"	10150	SELF	CREW	VISUALLY IN ROAD GREENS L.A.N.C. FOR TARGET - 2.00 - 2.00
30	"	10150	SELF	CREW	NEAR PRINCE IN MATTLE AREA - MESSAGES HERE - TRACKING AND SIGHTING GRAND
31	"	10150	SELF	CREW	T. RUN.
<u>WARRANT #20</u> <u>UNIT</u> <u>DATE</u> <u>SIGNATURE</u>					JULY 1940 625 SQUADRON D FLIGHT 1/2/40 Ian W. Bazalgette S/Ldr.
NOV 4	"	10150	SELF	CREW	ON - FRONT G. DELINE - 11.00 - 11.00
5	"	10150	SELF	CREW	ON - CHANGE INTO AREA D.O. 2 w/e D.C. 625 SQUADRON

S/L Bazalgette's last logbook page

# ***The Days following the Victoria Cross Flight***

The citizens of Senantes and area had watched the drama overhead and had seen the four parachutes billow open below the flaming Lancaster. Some felt that the pilot had manoeuvred the aircraft to avoid crashing into their village.

Geoff Goddard recalled his thoughts as he left the aircraft, “My main memory is of bailing out and expecting to be taken prisoner.”

Chuck Godfrey suffered a jolt to the ribs when he hit the ground, landing just at the edge of the village. “I landed in a corn field and Geoff was in the next field hanging by his parachute in a tree. I hid my parachute and went and helped Geoff down. Then a lady came running across to us. We didn’t know if she was friend or foe. She beckoned to us to come over and we went into the garden of the schoolmaster’s home and lay down among rows of vegetables and potatoes. Within minutes we were provided with civilian clothes to wear instead of our uniforms.

“After dark we went into the schoolmaster’s house. A man came to the door and was given our escape photographs. The next morning he reappeared with forged French identity cards.” The two were then taken in a cart to a farm where they stayed for about ten days. Resistance members came by every day to check on them and Chuck and Geoff earned their room and board by picking apples and helping to make cider. Then they were moved to a camp in a forest where they stayed for another ten days or so until it was liberated by units of the British Army. Within a month Chuck Godfrey was back at Downham Market, flying more operations over enemy territory with No. 635 Squadron. He flew until the end of the war including two flights on “Operation Manna,” the dropping of food to the Dutch

people who were cut off and starving in western Holland. These were the 98th and 99th operations of an outstanding wartime career.

George Turner landed in a corn field as well but suffered a back injury. He had been the first to leave the aircraft through the emergency escape hatch in the floor of the bomb-aimer's compartment and had landed about seven hundred metres east of Senantes.

At this point George must have been feeling very fortunate to have escaped, even though he was in enemy controlled territory. He cut off a piece of his parachute cord and ever since has carried it with him for good luck. A man was walking across the field and George was relieved that he turned out to be a member of the French Underground. After spending the first two or three days behind enemy lines in a hayloft, the French moved him to a house. George recalled that the Nazi soldiers twice visited the house. The first time he concealed himself behind a door but the second time his hosts suggested he hide in the dog kennel. George laughed as he remembered, "They were very smelly dogs and it was a very smelly kennel but I didn't mind."

George felt that his back injury might be serious. A French doctor suggested that he should go to a hospital but that would have meant becoming a Prisoner of War, so George put up with the discomfort. He and his French friends were liberated at about the same time as Chuck and Geoff were freed by the British Army. George's injuries prevented him from returning to active flying.

Douglas Cameron took a little longer to return to England. He had left the aircraft several seconds before George. Upon landing, he escaped into a forest with Nazi soldiers spraying machine gun fire in his direction and tracking dogs baying behind him. Emerging from the trees early the next morning, he avoided the French civilians, finally making contact with the Underground organization) where, "I was given the choice of remaining in hiding at all times or become a saboteur living by the gun." He chose to work with the Underground, blowing up railway lines and causing as much inconvenience as possible to the enemy. Having taken off his RAF battledress, capture by the Nazis would mean certain execution and Doug was given a deadly pill for use if he was captured.

Following his return to England, George Turner visited Baz's mother Marion and described what happened to the remains of the three who died in the aircraft. Marion then wrote to F/S Vernon Leeder's father, "The French people went to the plane and brought Vernon and F/L Hibbert into the little church where they held a service. There they remained until the next day when the Germans



**The citizens of Senantes gathered at the village church.  
They had come to bury Vernon Leeder and Ivan Hibbert  
but the Nazis arrived and took the remains away.**

*(courtesy Siméon Desloges)*

came and took them to Beauvais Military Cemetery where they rest in peace. The French wanted to keep the bodies and bury them at Senantes but the Germans would not permit it.”

In fact, M. Alexandre, a cartwright in the village, had made coffins for the two airmen and the community intended to honour them with funerals prior to burial in their cemetery. The villagers had already gathered together for the funerals, which were cancelled when the Germans arrived. The villagers then walked to the field where the Lancaster had exploded and placed their flowers at the site.

Mrs. Bazalgette’s letter continues, “After the Germans had gone, the French people searched the burned out plane and found all that remained of my darling son and placed them in a little casket.” They hid the casket in a cave and guarded it in order to be able to honour him appropriately at a later date.

The Allies continued their advance towards Senantes, and three weeks later the enemy soldiers left the area. The citizens of Senantes were now able to hold their service.

By a remarkable coincidence Ian’s sister Ethel, who was attached to the U.S. military, had recently been posted to a base in the area of Senantes. In a video-taped interview with the Society she wrote, “I was stationed at Creil, France with the U.S. 9th Air Force Service Command working for the Chief, Intelligence Unit, and we

drove out to Senantes in October and saw the site of the wreckage and visited with the Lalvets. M. Lalvet was a schoolmaster and I think at that time Mayor of Senantes. The French invited us to attend a funeral service for my brother Ian on October 8th. Our Headquarters at Creil were represented on that occasion by Wing Commander Edwardes, who was RAF liaison with our Headquarters. As our cars approached Senantes we passed many, many French people coming on foot to Senantes carrying flowers. It was a really moving sight to see these roads just covered with French people who didn't know Ian or anything, but knew that he had managed to avoid this little village and so on."

The service featured an address directed specifically to Ethel Bazalgette. It was read by the Mayor of Senantes. The language seems somewhat excess, "flowery" perhaps. But the gratitude felt by the French is obvious as is the hatred directed towards the Nazis. When reading the translation it must be kept in mind that the citizens of Senantes had only days before been liberated after well over four long years of occupation by an invading army. Some of these people had risked their lives to hide the surviving crew of "T for Tommy" and had undoubtedly been involved in similar acts throughout the occupation. All had known fellow citizens who had been arrested and executed by the Nazis. As well, although they were now free, the war was not yet over.

The text of the address is as follows:



**The citizens of Senantes at the site where "F2-T" exploded.  
The arrow indicates Ethel Bazalgette.**

*Mademoiselle,*

*The population of Senantes, for whom I am speaking, has assembled in this spot to give your brother, Squadron Leader Bazalgette, the supreme farewell worthy of a noble hero.*

*On Friday, 4 August 1944 about 1:30 p.m. a Lancaster in flames rent the heavens above our countryside. Parachutes opened at a very low level and the plane crashed a short distance from here. Quickly reacting to its first impulse, the population seized the four who had escaped and stealthily hid them from our common foe. Soon, alas, we were to learn that there were victims over whom to grieve. We recovered them on the same day, two comrades of your brother, Aviators Leeder and Hibbert. We wished to keep them, but the enemy, this cruel enemy, would not leave them with us. The next day we succeeded in freeing the pilot from the wreckage, your brother, whom we have fiercely guarded in order to be able to honour him as free and grateful Frenchmen and to return him to his Fatherland.*

*Mademoiselle Bazalgette, English officers and soldiers, we therefore return to you today this hero so beloved by his crew, this brave soldier and magnificent comrade who has preferred to die rather than to abandon his wounded subordinates. We sincerely share the grief which you are experiencing at the loss of a brother, of such a courageous soldier. May his example guide us in the complete accomplishment of our duty, may his bravery excite the hearts of all the soldiers of Liberty, may his kindness and sense of justice be imbued in the soul of our leaders, then, yes then, his noble sacrifice will not have been in vain. Then humanity will know the brotherhood for which are flowing these waves of blood which the barbarous German, with savage resolve, makes gush forth from the wounds of humanity.*

*To you Commandant Bazalgette, soldier of the Liberation of the World, a Norman from across the*

*Channel, who comes to rest at the premature end of your glorious career among your brothers, the Normans of France, we express to you our deep gratitude and we assure you that we shall piously keep you until the day when you return to Great Britain, the day of our common victory.*

*To the family of this hero we all extend our deepest sympathy and condolences. To you, English officers and soldiers who combat for the good cause, we swear in this sacred spot and at this sacred hour that we shall be by your side to avenge our dead until the victory of justice and truth.*

Later, Squadron Leader Bazalgette was laid to rest in the village church yard at Senantes. The Royal Air Force headstone includes the outline of the Victoria Cross beneath which is inscribed, "Greater love have no man than this. That a man lay down his life for his friend."

It is unusual that a Canadian airman is buried in a churchyard in France. Ethel Broderick and her family could have insisted that Baz be buried in a military cemetery, perhaps at Beauvais where F/S Leeder and F/L Hibbert were interred. Royal Air Force and British or Canadian officials could have intervened as well.

But a strong bond had been forged between the citizens of Senantes and S/L Bazalgette. Ethel made it clear to the French that, "He was lying forever in 'our' village graveyard in Senantes."



**Baz's grave (foreground) in the churchyard at Senantes**



**Looking southeast to Senantes**



Looking northwest to the church at Senantes

# ***The Awarding of the Victoria Cross***

The war carried on and the Royal Air Force was very busy, but eventually the story of Squadron Leader Bazalgette's last flight was told. The officer who wrote the citation which accompanied the presentation of the Commonwealth's highest award for bravery in the presence of the enemy was a highly decorated veteran of the Royal Air Force. Originally from New Zealand, Wing Commander Arte Ashworth DSO DFC & Bar AFC & Bar flew both fighters and bombers, an incredible total of seventy-six different types, during his career in the Royal Air Force. His experiences included bringing a Wellington home single-handed after it caught fire over Saabrucken and his crew bailed out. This highly regarded career placed him in a good position from which to judge the significance of Ian Bazalgette's actions.



**W/C Arte Ashworth**

W/C Ashworth became a member of the Nanton Lancaster Society after hearing of the Society's association with Ian Bazalgette. In a letter he wrote, "It may interest you to know that, although I did not know Ian Bazalgette, I am the bloke who wrote the citation which

## THE VICTORIA CROSS

Instituted by Queen Victoria in 1856, the Victoria Cross is the highest award which may be given to a Canadian for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It is awarded in recognition of, "most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy." The medal was first awarded during the Crimean war and among the recipients was a Canadian lieutenant, Alexander Roberts Dunn, who won the V.C. for heroism during the charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaklava. Over the years some 93 Canadians have been awarded the Victoria Cross.

The medal is cast in bronze from the cannons captured at Sevastopol in the Cimean War, measures 1.5 inches across, and hangs below a crimson ribbon.



resulted in his award of the V.C. I did this with information from various sources, including the French and his crew."

The citation written by W/C Ashworth describes the events of August 4, 1944 and concludes, "His heroic sacrifice marked the climax of a long career of operations against the enemy. He always chose the more dangerous and exacting roles. His courage and devotion to duty were beyond praise."

The award was formally announced on August 17, 1945 and Ian's mother and sister Ethel were presented with the Victoria Cross by King George VI at an investiture on December 18, 1945.

Back home in Canada the awarding of the Victoria Cross to S/L Bazalgette made the headlines in Alberta and across the country.

The Globe in Toronto headlined, "Calgarian with RAF Given Posthumous V.C." and the Calgary Herald's front page headline was, "Former City Boy Wins V.C. for Heroic Flying Exploit."

**V.C. Wasn't Scheduled To Fly 'Death Trip'**

*3/8/41 - 1941*

**S/L Bazalgette Was To Have Gone on Leave Day After**

**Squadron Leader Ian Wilmshour Bazalgette, D.F.C.**, Calgary-born winner of the Victoria Cross, was not scheduled to go on the operation which won him the Empire's highest gallantry award, at the same time enabling him to die.

He was told by his father to Frederick Goslin, Toronto Star staff correspondent overseas, who visited the R.R.'s family at New Britain, Surrey.

Quinn states Charles Ian Bazalgette, the father, is a 100 percent disabled veteran of the 1914-18 war, who spent months in Christie Street hospital at Toronto.

"I found out later," his father told Goslin, "that he and his crew had volunteered for a third tour of ops. I can add so very little to what has been told officially although I have met and talked with surviving members of my son's crew. There is just one point which I was told by his flight engineer. Just before Jan 20th he called to his crew to tell them he would be ordered the flight engineer to fix his own crash belt around him. That showed that he had no intention of trying to bail out himself."

**'TERRIBLY FROCK'**

"At the end of his first tour of ops," continues Goslin, "Bazalgette was awarded the D.F.C. On one trip as particular, his father said, he had made the most successful low-level bombing attack made up to that time. First word of the success came for other crews to his family with an air ministry notice. Then a stomach roller brought the message and advised notice.

"Yes," said his father, "we are all terribly proud."

"Mr. Bazalgette told me that he had lived in Canada for 17 years and had very happy memories of the west where he learned for some time at Bentley, Alta.

"The name was originally French, but the Bazalgettes were English."

**HAD VOLUNTEERED**

"I can add little to the official," said Mr. Bazalgette. "The terrible fact is that Ian was to go on leave the day after he was killed winning the Victoria Cross. He should not really have gone on the operation but he and his crew volunteered to take the place of a crew who could not make the trip."

"This was his high opinion and he was within a trip or two of completing his second tour of ops. All of his second tour was in Palestine. The day of his gallant death he was 'master of circumstances,' the deeply sinister having been that day. It was his seat on the top job of infanter bomber that inspired Ian Bazalgette to carry through to the mark—and his death—in a blazing falling aircraft.

"You have every right to consider Ian a Canadian," said Mr. Bazalgette. "He was born there and spent his young boyhood there and my Canadian advice goes to his credit for that we never forget."

"Gerrick, Ian's older brother, was member of a territorial regiment but was found unfit for active service. His sister Ethel is serving as a British civilian volunteer in Germany where she is secretary to the officer commanding the surveillance section of the U.S. 8th Air Force."

Clipping from "The Albertan" (a Calgary newspaper) -August 18, 1945

Baz's aunt, who was living on a farm near Viking, was interviewed by a Toronto Star reporter who quoted her as saying, "When he grew older he (Baz) always talked about Canada in his letters, and how much he wanted to come back. We felt so badly when he was killed a year ago. His grandfather, James Bunn, 95, who lives all alone in Viking, didn't get over it for a long time. He was so proud of the boy and corresponded with him regularly." In a letter to his daughter, James wrote, "Yes Darling, I had dreams, of seeing him in the body, but I am quite satisfied that I will meet him in the Spirit World, by and by."



# **Baz-**

## ***An Exceptional Personality***

“He always chose the more daring and exacting roles. His courage and devotion to duty were beyond praise.” Arte Ashworth’s words which concluded the Victoria Cross Citation clearly sum up Squadron Leader Bazalgette’s military career. Even prior to the events of August 4, 1944 his flying skills, bravery, and sense of obligation had been clearly demonstrated. But we know much more about the character of this man who was the only Albertan to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the Second World War.

F/S Larry Melling DFC joined No. 635 Squadron about a month after Ian. He clearly recalls being impressed by him on his first day at the squadron when he walked into the Flight Office, “He had a tremendous sparkle in his eye is the best way to describe it. He stood out amongst the people who were there. He was an inviting sort of a person, a person that you wouldn’t hesitate to approach. He was always the first to volunteer for a job, no matter what sort of job it might be. Even though he was a Squadron Leader he wasn’t above pushing a car to get it started or pumping up someone’s bicycle tire.”

Douglas Cameron remembered Baz as, “An officer who was equally at home with his peers and other ranks, who earned the respect of all by his pursuance of carrying the offensive to the enemy, who won the affection and gratitude of his subordinates for his care and promotion of their welfare, not less than the approval of his fellow and senior officers.” He also noted that special attention and respect was paid by Baz to his ground crew which was often included in after hours activities.

One thing that is mentioned by several of his contemporaries on No. 115 and No. 635 Squadrons is that Baz enjoyed the night life and that he loved to sing. It must be kept in mind that virtually all of

the people involved in an active role on a wartime bomber squadron were very young and this fact, coupled with their precarious day-to-day existence, quite naturally led to a tendency to enjoy each day to the fullest. Aircrew would have a few drinks and socialize in the Mess or the local pub one night knowing that the next they would likely be facing the terror of searchlights, flak, and night fighters 20,000 feet above a fiery target hundreds of miles away over enemy held territory.

Baz's exploits behind the wheel of a car were indicative of his irrepressible high spirits while off duty. Doug Cameron remembered, "His escapades, despite his being a good driver, were more consistent with winning a DFC than conduct becoming an officer and a gentleman. It has to be remembered that he was still a comparatively young man, with all the natural instincts of his age. Most of the time I drove the car, to the relief of the crew as I was by nature more abstemious."

There is no question that Baz was very interested in the ladies and according to Eric Biggs, with whom he served in the Searchlight Regiment, "His favourite opening remark when introduced to a new charmer was as best as I can remember, 'Has anyone ever told you that you have eyes like the fishpools of Hesperus?'" Following Eric's engagement, Baz asked in a letter, "What about bequeathing your interest in a certain lady to me?"

Later, while having dinner with Baz and his parents at their home in New Malden, Eric learned that he also had a great interest in classical music, somewhat out of the ordinary for a young, wartime bomber pilot. In a letter to the Society, Eric referred to, "the many-sided qualities of a true friend and great patriot -dedication, appreciation, consideration, love of life, a very human, human being. I have always felt honoured to have had him as a friend and he stays in my memory."

Wing Commander Rainsford, Bazalgette's commanding officer with No. 115 Squadron, recalled some aspects of Ian's off-duty nature and activities in a letter to the Society. "I remember him as a cheerful, friendly officer with a most attractive smile. He loved to gather with others around the piano in East Wretham Hall which we used as an Officers Mess and he led the singing of bawdy songs. But he was not a rowdy type, could hold his beer with any man, and because of his real gift of leadership, his warm personality, and his fine operational record, he was liked by everyone."

Chuck Godfrey remembered Ian's dry sense of humour which made him one of the most popular members of the Mess. He also recalled Baz's expertise in, "Doing the Muffin Man." This feat involves



placing a pint of beer on one's forehead while standing. The next step is to sit down and eventually to lie flat on your back, all the time of course, balancing the pint of beer on your forehead. If you are successful to this point, you simply have to regain the standing position. "Baz was a real expert at that," recalled Chuck after demonstrating the technique, without the pint of beer, in a video-taped interview for the Nanton Lancaster Society.

Lee Boyd DFC who also served with Ian on No. 635 Squadron remembered, "We had some great times. I was especially impressed by the way he and his crew could sing."

"Tom" Molloy, Baz's rear-gunner during his tour with No. 115 Squadron recalled, "Despite joining in at some of these boisterous activities, I always had a feeling that Baz's heart was not really in it,

there was a sense of holding back. I gained the impression that these boyish, frivolous “goings-on” were against his true nature but he took part occasionally because it was expected of him. He certainly never wished to be and never was, to all appearance, an odd man out. Looking at him on more than one occasion when he did not appear to be enthusiastically taking part I guessed that he would have preferred to be in his room listening to music, reading, or dreaming of his roses at home.”

Ian had a bible by his bed at all times during his days in the Royal Air Force and had other interests which were generally not shared by his contemporaries on the squadron. One of these was collecting classical music upon which he had written essays while at school prior to the war. He was a connoisseur, comparing different orchestras and conductors before choosing a recording. He wanted each work in his collection to be performed by the musicians he felt were most suited to the particular piece of music and to the composer.

Ethel Broderick remembered that her brother was very enthusiastic about gardening, in particular flowers, and that he planted all the roses in their mother’s garden and, “was always very keen to see how they were doing when he came home on leave.”

She recalled that when she visited the site where her brother’s Lancaster had exploded, “the plane bits were scattered everywhere but all scattered amongst it were these purple crocuses, I thought they were. I think it was the heat of the explosion that had brought them up. With Will’s interest in flowers it was lovely that they were there. It gave me a wonderful feeling that this had happened for him.”

Ethel also mentioned an example of Ian’s more flamboyant side. “I was with the American Eighth Air Force stationed near Ascot and one morning a bomber came over, very low, buzzing the camp and I just knew it was Will, but out came the General and all the others and they were looking up at this aircraft. That evening Will called me and said, ‘Did you see me?’ It’s a wonder they didn’t take his number or something because it was quite wrong what he did actually. But that was his sense of humour.”

Clearly, Ian Bazalgette was a well rounded individual, an exemplary Royal Air Force officer, a talented pilot, and a gifted leader who exuded confidence. Off duty, he could relate well with and enjoy the company of his fellow airmen and ground crew. Privately, he had his own challenging cultural interests which he pursued and probably sought comfort in, in the midst of terrifying wartime duties.



**S/L Bazalgette VC DFC**  
**This drawing was Baz's sister's favourite**  
**likeness of her brother**



The churchyard at Senantes

# ***Post-war and the Nanton Lancaster Society***

With the end of the war, the people who had been associated with Ian Bazalgette went their separate ways.

George Turner enjoyed a thirty year career in civilian aviation, working as an overseas representative for British Aerospace in India and South America. George's son was named Ian.

Chuck Godfrey returned to his pre-war career, completing forty years of service as a local government administrator in England.

Douglas Cameron settled in his native Scotland to continue his career as a gamekeeper. He named his only daughter Margaret Middleton Bazalgette Cameron as his tribute to the two pilots he had flown with on Victoria Cross flights. Over the years, Chuck and George returned to Senantes on several occasions to honour their skipper and visit with their French friends who helped them evade capture.

Geoff Goddard named his son Ian in memory of his courageous pilot.



**George Turner (left) with Doug Cameron at Doug's home -1989**

Ethel Bazalgette had met John Broderick in France while both were associated with the United States Army Air Force and served with him until the end of the war in Europe. They were married in Pennsylvania and spent the remainder of their lives there. Their son is named Willoughby and a grandson, Ian.

Hamish Mahaddie continued in the Royal Air Force for a time and then became involved as a consultant for aviation films and electronics pertaining to the military. One of his major projects was acquiring and organizing all the aircraft for the epic film, "The Battle of Britain."

Ian's parents presented his Victoria Cross, other medals, and logbook to the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon which placed them on display with those of some of the other airmen who had been awarded the Victoria Cross.

On May 7th, 1983 S/L Bazalgette's Victoria Cross citation was read prior to the unveiling of a Memorial at Bexwell, adjacent to the former site of RAF Downham Market. Located at the entrance to Bexwell Church, the Memorial honours all those who gave their lives flying from the base.

However there are special plaques in memory of



**The Memorial at Bexwell Church with the round tower beyond**



**Bexwell Church**

Baz and F/S Arthur Louis Aaron, a No. 218 Squadron Stirling pilot who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his actions during a flight that originated at Downham Market.

The historic church, a “round-towered” type of Saxon origin, was built prior to 1087 and is surrounded by large trees and a stone wall. Inside are photos of some of RAF Downham Market’s aircrew and to the right of the altar is a Memorial to the airmen. Many of the kneeling cushions in the church feature needlework of RAF crests and aircraft. We know that Baz kept a bible next to his bed while stationed at Downham Market and undoubtedly he and numerous other airmen would have attended services at Bexwell Church.

In 1949, a mountain northeast of Jasper, Alberta was named Mount Bazalgette.

Together with some 44,000 others, the name of “S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC” was inscribed into the Second World War Book of Remembrance that was placed within the Peace Tower’s



Memorial Chamber on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Remembrance Day, 1957. The page with Baz's name may be viewed each year on May 24th.

In 1970, the Calgary Board of Education named a new Junior High School in Ian's honour and in 1974, Ian Bazalgette was inducted into the Canadian Aviation Hall of Fame.

But despite these honours, Baz seemed to be virtually forgotten in Canada. To some extent this was because he, like many Canadians, served in the Royal Air Force and was not attached to the Royal Canadian Air Force. Unfortunately some chronicles of wartime Canadian aviation history do not even mention the name of Ian Bazalgette VC. Even in some listings of Canadians who have been awarded the Victoria Cross, his name is omitted.

During 1986, the year in which the Nanton Lancaster Society was formed, members learned through their association with the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, Ontario of the story of Andrew Mynarski VC. Mynarski was mid-upper gunner with a No. 419 Squadron crew flying with the Royal Canadian Air Force. Canadian Warplane Heritage was restoring a Lancaster to flying condition and it was to carry the marking of Mynarski's Lancaster, "VR-A."

With this in mind, a Society member was browsing through a book of Canadian war heroes at the Nanton Public Library hoping to find one with which the Nanton Lancaster could be associated. A page was turned and there was a photograph of Ian Bazalgette, not only another Canadian VC recipient who flew Lancasters, but one who had been born in Alberta and only 80 kilometres north of Nanton. Obviously, here was the perfect man to associate with the Society's objectives which included building a museum and preserving and restoring the Nanton Lancaster Bomber.

But little information could be found about Ian Bazalgette. The names of his crew were uncovered but their whereabouts, if they were still living, were unknown. There were no Bazalgettes in the Calgary telephone book and the project was put on a "back burner."

Then in 1987 a Nanton resident presented a book to the Society titled, "Memoirs of an Accidental Airman." It was the recently published autobiography of her uncle who lived in England and it had a Lancaster on the cover. She hoped the Society would be interested. While glancing through the introduction it was noticed that the



**Fred Rainsford**

## **ANDREW MYNARSKI VC**

On a raid to Cambrai, France on June 12, 1944, a No. 419 Squadron RCAF Lancaster was attacked by an enemy night fighter. Both port engines were knocked out and the wing set on fire. Ordered to bail out, P/O Mynarski, the mid-upper gunner stayed in a futile attempt to free the rear gunner who was trapped in his turret. During his efforts he was set on fire. The rear gunner eventually convinced Mynarski to jump and try to save himself. Before doing so, P/O Mynarski turned to his doomed crewmember and saluted. Although he parachuted safely from the aircraft he was very badly burned and soon died of his injuries. The rear gunner, still trapped in his turret, was the only one aboard when the flaming Lancaster crashed and amazingly, he survived to tell the story.



name Ian Bazalgette was mentioned as one of three individuals of whom the author had particularly fond recollections after a very extensive career with the Royal Air Force. Here was a hint that this was a special and memorable individual and perhaps a link to his former aircrew and family.

The book, which contained little additional information about Baz, was by Air Commodore F.F. Rainsford who, as it turned out, was the commanding officer of No. 115 Squadron when Baz completed his first tour and had signed his "Summary of Flying and Assessments. An address was obtained through his niece and a letter sent. Mr. Rainsford provided some personal recollections of Ian but could offer no assistance in the Society's efforts to find his surviving crew other than suggesting we attempt to contact a gentleman



named Hamish Mahaddie who, he thought, had also known Baz. His address was c/o RAF Club, Picadilly, London.

A letter was sent to Hamish who seemed most interested in the Society's project and offered to have his "ferrets" look for information but there was no progress and again the search seemed to be at a dead-end.

But luck was with the Society and in the January, 1989 issue of "Airforce," the Canadian magazine carried an article entitled "Our Forgotten V.C. Winner." It had been written by Douglas Cameron DFM with the assistance of Gordon Fraser. Contact was made with Mr. Cameron who, "was interested in doing anything to highlight this brave airman's life."

Doug Cameron was able to provide Chuck Godfrey's address, and again by coincidence, Doug had just had a visit from George Turner two weeks previously. His letter stated, "It was the first time I had seen him in 42 years when I warned him a German patrol was in our area." Letters were sent to S/L Bazalgette's former crewmembers asking for information which they were pleased to provide.

After hearing of the Society's plans to honour Baz, a Society member in Hamilton, Ontario telephoned with the name of a pilot who had served on No. 635 Squadron. In fact, Larry Melling DFC had not only been on the squadron with Baz, but had shared the piloting of Lancaster "F2-M," the aircraft that the Bazalgette crew generally flew and that was not available to them on August 4th, 1944. Larry's crew would fly the aircraft if the pathfinding was to be done "blind" (using instruments), Baz and crew would fly on the operations when the target was to be marked visually.

So the Society had located the three surviving crew members, (navigator Geoff Goddard having passed away), two senior officers who knew Baz well, and a fellow pilot from No. 635 Squadron. A formal decision was made to dedicate the Nanton Lancaster in memory of Squadron Leader Bazalgette VC DFC and plans were made for a special Dedication Day to be held on July 27th, 1990. Only one thing was missing, the Bazalgette family. None of Baz's crew had heard anything about Ian's sister since 1945. All that was known was that she had moved to the United States after the war and had been married.

Plans for the Dedication Day proceeded with commitments by George Turner, Larry Melling, and Hamish Mahaddie to attend as well as representatives from the McFarland family of Wainwright, Alberta who are directly related to the Bazalgettes. At the end of May, a press release was prepared to announce the upcoming Dedication and

associated events. Through another amazing coincidence, the day before the press releases were to be mailed a letter arrived from Chuck Godfrey with the news that he had located Ian's sister and providing her address in Pennsylvania together with a telephone number.

Ethel Broderick was contacted by the Society, advised of its plans, and invited to participate. In speaking to her over the phone it was clear that the past had suddenly been opened up. She had not heard from anyone who had known her brother since the war, had never met his crewmembers, did not know of Hamish Mahaddie who was so involved in Ian's reassignment to operations with the Pathfinder Force, and what was this Society from a small town in southern Alberta? Mrs. Broderick was provided with some additional information, thought things over for a few days, and agreed to attend the Dedication Ceremony together with her daughter, Marion Hildebrand.

The press releases were revised and mailed and the stage was set for what was to be an emotional and very special event in Nanton, Alberta on July 27, 1990.



# ***The Dedication of the Nanton Lancaster***



**Ethel Broderick unveiling the Dedication plaque**  
[courtesy Frank McTighe]

The Dedication of the Nanton Lancaster Bomber to the memory of S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC was a memorable event for all concerned.

The evening prior to the Dedication Ceremonies, a reception was held at the home of George and Dori White. It was George who had the idea of acquiring the Lancaster Bomber for the town in 1960 and he was the founding president of the Nanton Lancaster Society. During the evening several of the people who had played major roles in Baz's life met each other for the first time.



**(l-r) George Turner, Hamish Mahaddie, Milt Magee, Ethel Broderick, and Marion Hildebrand at the reception**

The following morning, museum director Milt Magee recorded extensive videotaped interviews with all of the special guests. Everyone concerned realized that this was a very special gathering that would never be repeated.

The Dedication Ceremony was conducted during the late afternoon, next to the Lancaster which had yet to be placed in a building. Wing Commander Duke Warren DFC, a Nanton born pilot who, together with his identical twin, flew Spitfires during the war, read the Victoria Cross citation. Baz's crewmembers, Chuck Godfrey DFC and George Turner, then unveiled the freshly painted markings, "F2-T," on the sides of what then became the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster. Ethel Broderick unveiled a plaque honouring her brother and commemorating the occasion.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the Canadian Armed Forces' salute included a CF-5 jet fighter which thundered over the



(l-r) George Turner, Ethel Broderick, Marion Hildebrand, Larry Melling, and Chuck Godfrey



Chuck Godfrey (left) and George Turner prepare to unveil "T for Tommy's" markings



CF-5 jet from CFB Cold Lake

site at high speed and low altitude. The fighter was immediately followed by a four-engined No. 407 Squadron Aurora which had flown from Canadian Forces Base Comox on Vancouver Island, British Columbia to be involved in the ceremony. The Society's Lancaster had served with the squadron at Comox during the 1950's in a maritime reconnaissance role. The squadron's commanding officer, Lt. Col. Terry Chester, was in attendance as was an aircraft from No. 408 Tactical Helicopter Squadron based at CFB Edmonton. No. 408 Squadron had flown Lancasters during the war.



**A No. 407 Squadron Aurora salutes the  
Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster**



**Lt. Col. Terry Chester (left) with Hamish Mahaddie**  
 [courtesy Larry Wright]

Following a banquet, the evening program began with Duke Warren as Master of Ceremonies. George Turner and Chuck Godfrey expressed their appreciation to the Society for honouring their "Skipper." Guest speakers Larry Melling DFC and Hamish Mahaddie DSO DFC AFC held the audience spellbound with their recollections of commitment and sacrifice. During Hamish's speech it was obvious that the loss of Baz and so many others of those which he had personally selected for the Pathfinders was, even forty-five years after the end of the war, still felt very deeply.



**(l-r) Marion Hildebrand, Ethel Broderick, and Duke Warren**

Throughout the day the poise and quiet dignity of Ethel Broderick impressed all who were there. Her character and the

qualities she demonstrated were similar to those that her brother undoubtedly had. Through her presence, all who attended this special day felt close to the man who was being honoured.

In an interview following the Dedication Day Ceremonies, Mrs. Broderick said with a laugh and a smile, "I sometimes get a strange feeling that Will is up there, somehow witnessing all this and getting quite a kick out of it, and finding something funny to say about this tremendous gathering."



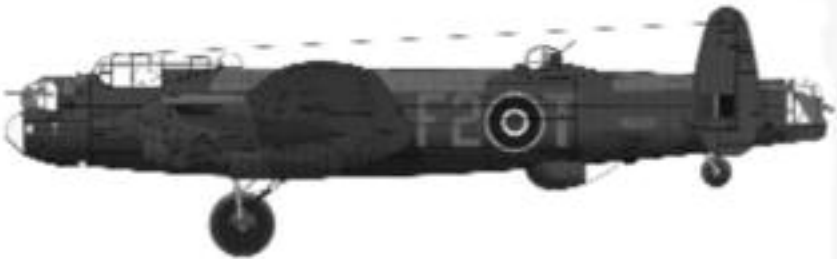
*"You really did start something, something wonderful  
-right there in Nanton" -Ethel Broderick*



(l-r) George Turner, Chuck Godfrey, and Larry Melling



Hamish enjoyed visiting with the ladies



[courtesy Rob Pedersen]

# Epilogue

The completion of the Nanton Lancaster Society Air Museum in 1991 ensured that the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster would be protected from the elements and that restoration to its wartime configuration as a taxi-able aircraft with runnable engines could now begin.

Chuck Godfrey and George Turner returned to Nanton to be present at the “Official Opening” of the museum building in 1992. Following the ceremonies, a banquet was held at which George Turner presented the Museum with his flight engineer wing and a piece of his “lucky” parachute cord that he cut from his parachute on the outskirts of Senantes on August 4, 1944.

During 1994, the Nanton Lancaster Society hosted a “Salute to the Pathfinders” commemoration that focused on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Baz’s V.C. flight. The day also honoured all who served with the Pathfinders and in particular those of No. 405 Squadron, the Canadian Pathfinder squadron. Lt. General Reg Lane DSO DFC & Bar (Ret’d), a wartime commanding officer of No. 405 Squadron, unveiled a painting which the Society had commissioned to honour the Pathfinders.



On August 4 1994, fifty years to the day following the fateful flight of Lancaster F2-T, the mayor Senantes, France hosted a commemoration ceremony during which wreaths were placed on Baz's grave by L.W. "Pil" Pilgrim DFC, the Chairman of the Bomber Command Association, George Turner and Chuck Godfrey, and Margaret Cameron, the daughter of Baz's rear gunner, Douglas Cameron. In the presence of many of the villagers and former members of the French Resistance movement, a Memorial was unveiled on the roadside adjacent to the site where "F2-T" exploded.

Each year on August 4th, the citizens of Senantes place



**The Roadside Memorial to S/L Bazalgette  
F/S Leeder, and F/L Hibbert**



**The citizens of Senantes remembering Baz at the Roadside Memorial (left) and at his grave in their churchyard (2008).**

**Note the presence of the Canadian flag  
(courtesy Siméon Desloges]**

flowers at the roadside Memorial and at Baz’s grave in their churchyard. As well, the Bazalgette family sees that flower are placed at the grave on Will’s birthday.

At Downham Market, the buildings of the old air station are abandoned, overgrown, and continue to deteriorate. There is word that they may soon be torn down to make space for a housing development.



**Derelict building at former RAF Downham Market**

Each year on “Battle of Britain Sunday”, the Royal Air



**Portion of taxi-way at former RAF Downham Market in 2008**

Force Association holds a ceremony at the Bexwell Church Memorial to honour S/L Bazalgette and F/L Aaron.

In the town of Downham Market, the 450 year old pub in the Crown Hotel is still serving beer and good food. The airmen that ate, drank and sang songs around the fireplace have not been forgotten. Now rather old looking, framed No. 635 Squadron photos are on display in the pub, likely left by the departing airmen when the squadron was disbanded.

Since the 1990 Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, the museum has had some important visitors who have a direct connection with Baz including Trevor "Tom" Molloy, a member of Baz's No. 115 Squadron crew.

Doug Cameron's daughter, Margaret Bazalgette Middleton (Cameron) McGready visited the museum in 1996. She was thrilled to be able to climb into and operate the museum's operational rear turret and wrote in our guest book that she was, "proud to have been here and seen the reconstruction of Baz's Lancaster."

During the museums "Salute to the Air Gunners" in 2004, Baz's nephew, Charles Bazalgette, participated in the Dedication of the museum's operational rear gun turret to the memory of his uncle's rear gunner, Doug Cameron DFM.



**Squadron photos and crests at the Crown Pub in 2008**



**Margo (Cameron) McGready at the museum's Lancaster's rear turret**



**Charles Bazalgette (left) with museum president, Dan Fox**

A very special visitor was Ian's older brother Deryck Bazalgette who, together with his wife Ruth, toured the museum in 1998 with his son Charles and Charles' wife, Trish Bazalgette. Those of us who spoke with Deryck were struck, not only by his likeness to the photos of his brother, but by a personality similar to that accorded to Ian. It was a moving experience, to say the least, as Deryck Bazalgette entered the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster. His words of support were most appreciated.

Since the Dedication of the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, the Bomber Command Museum of Canada has clearly become the Canadian museum that takes the lead in honouring the Canadians who served with Bomber Command. The most impressive indication of this is the presence of Canada's Bomber Command Memorial at its entrance. The 10,659 names on the wall include those of all



**Deryck and Ruth Bazalgette**



**The Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster forms a backdrop to Canada's Bomber Command Memorial**



**“T for Tommy” with starboard engines running”**

[courtesy George Shaw]

the Canadians who were killed serving with Bomber Command.

As for the Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster, its restoration continues. During the summer of 2008, both of the aircraft’s starboard engines were runnable. The smoke, vibration, and unforgettable sound of the Merlins brings the aircraft to life and this attracts considerable attention to the museum and to Ian Bazalgette.

As the museum is very focused on the history of Bomber Command, every visitor leaves the facility with knowledge of this important history and a sense of the huge effort and sacrifice that was made. The story of Ian Bazalgette VC is presented as an example of the sacrifices made by the young Canadians involved in this effort.

And just north of Senantes, in a corner of the barn belonging to Siméon Desloges, the nine year old boy who watched in terror as Baz flew over his farm, the only remaining piece of Lancaster F2-T remains a treasured link to the events of August 4, 1944.

The actions of Squadron Leader Ian Willoughby Bazalgette VC DFC will not be forgotten.



**The Ian Bazalgette Memorial Lancaster**



**Siméon Desloges with a piece from the wing of Lancaster ND-811, "F2-T" of No. 635 Squadron.**



# Appendix I

## The Twinning of the Village of Senantes with the Town of Nanton

### Twinning Agreement between the

*Village of Senantes, France*



and the



*Town of Nanton, Canada*

*The Community of Senantes and the Town of Nanton share a bond in the person of Squadron Leader Ian Willoughby Bazalgette in that:*

*S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was killed near the village of Senantes on the 4th of August, 1944 while returning from an operation against the enemy. A memorial has been placed at the site in his honour and he is buried near the entrance of the village church,*

and

*S/L Ian Willoughby Bazalgette was born in Canada near the Town of Nanton and is honoured at the Nanton Lancaster Air Museum by the Dedication of the museum's Lancaster aircraft to his memory.*

*The Councillors of the Village of Senantes and the Councillors of the Town of Nanton acknowledge that a firm bond exists between their two communities. It is our hope that we may work together to ensure that the events related to his sacrifice on 4 August, 1944 will not be forgotten and that a special relationship between the citizens of our communities will continue to develop into the future.*

On behalf of the citizens of the Village of Senantes and the Town of Nanton, we, Christian Gavella, Mayor of the Village of Senantes, and John Blake, Mayor of the Town of Nanton, hereby proclaim the Twinning of our communities and affix our signatures to this document.

Christian Gavella  
Mayor, Village of Senantes

John Blake  
Mayor, Town of Nanton

As part of the museum's celebration of Canada's Centennial of Flight, a special event was held on August 15th, 2009.

"Remembering Baz" commemorated the sixty-fifth anniversary of S/L Ian Bazalgette's Victoria Cross flight and celebrated the official "Twinning" of the Village of Senantes, France with the Town of Nanton.

Our special guests included the Mayor of Senantes, Christian Gavelle and his wife Sylvie and Siméon Desloges and his wife Nelly, all of whom travelled from France to attend.

Mayor Gavelle and John Blake, Nanton's mayor, signed the twinning document that, "acknowledges that a firm bond exists between the two communities," and refers to the hope that S/L Bazalgette VC, "will not be forgotten and that a special relationship between the citizens of the two communities will continue to develop into the future."



**Mayor Gavelle of Senantes (left) and Mayor Blake of Nanton sign the Twinning agreement on 15 August, 2009**

(courtesy Ian Watson)

# **Appendix II**

## **The Citation which accompanied the awarding of the Victoria Cross**

*On August 4, 1944, Squadron Leader Bazalgette was master bomber of a Pathfinder squadron detailed to mark an important target at Trossy St. Maximin for the main bomber force. When nearing the target his Lancaster came under heavy anti-aircraft fire. Both starboard engines were put out of action and serious fires broke out in the fuselage and the starboard main plane. The bomb aimer was badly wounded. As the deputy master bomber had already been shot down the success of the attack depended on Squadron Leader Bazalgette, and this he knew. Despite the appalling conditions in his burning aircraft he pressed on gallantly to the target, marking and bombing it accurately. That the attack was successful was due to his magnificent effort. After the bombs had been dropped the Lancaster dived practically out of control. By expert airmanship and great exertion Squadron Leader Bazalgette regained control, but the port inner engine then failed and the whole of the starboard mainplane became a mass of flames. Squadron Leader Bazalgette fought bravely to bring his aircraft and crew to safety. The mid upper gunner was overcome by fumes. Squadron Leader Bazalgette ordered those of his crew who were able to leave by parachute to do so. He remained at the controls and attempted the almost hopeless task of landing the crippled and blazing aircraft in a last effort to save the wounded bomb aimer and helpless air gunner. With superb skill and taking great care to avoid a small French village nearby, he brought the aircraft down safely. Unfortunately it then exploded and this gallant officer and his two comrades perished. His heroic sacrifice marked the climax of a long career of operations against the enemy. He always chose the more dangerous and exacting roles. His courage and devotion to duty were beyond praise.*

*London Gazette, 17 August, 1945*

The RAF officer who wrote the citation was, as previously mentioned, Wing Commander Arte Ashworth DSO DFC & Bar AFC & Bar who later became a member of the Nanton Lancaster Society. It should be noted that although the critical aspects of S/L Bazalgette's actions on this day are correctly presented in the official citation, there are two significant errors. The first is in stating that Baz was the "Master Bomber." The second is the reference to a fire in the fuselage that, according to the crewmembers on board, did not occur.



**Portrait of S/L Bazalgette VC DFC**  
by Patrick McNorgan

# ***Acknowledgements***

The assistance of Ethel Broderick and Chuck Godfrey, both of whom read the original manuscript, noted errors, and offered their comments and encouragement is most appreciated. Their co-operation ensured that Baz's career and character are accurately portrayed.

Hamish Mahaddie expressed his approval of the manuscript as well and we appreciate his writing the "Foreword."

Museum director, Larry Wright, read the initial manuscript, noted errors, and offered suggestions that were most helpful.

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Douglas Cameron graciously supplied the Society with audiotapes of his recollections and these were incorporated as well.

Trish Bazalgette's book, "Go West, Old Man!" documents the life of Baz's grandfather, James Bunn, and information regarding Baz's family history and early years was obtained from this source. As well, Charles and Trish Bazalgette have been most helpful in providing numerous photos and information, particularly for the chapter that includes their family history and Baz's early years.

The research and assistance of Terry MacDonald, with whom the Society has shared various materials regarding Ian Bazalgette, is gratefully acknowledged.

We are particularly pleased to be able to use Len Krenzler's spectacular image for the front cover. Baz's portrait on the cover was provided by the Bazalgette Family and Brent Armstrong improved some distortions that had affected it over the years. Patrick McNorgan's made his fine portrait of Baz available for the back cover.

Elizabeth Howard hosted my wife Leslie and I during our visit to Downham Market, took us to the Memorial, and guided us through Bexwell Church and what remains of RAF Downham Market. We appreciate her interest in the history and taking the time to assist us.

The efforts of Philippe Uziel and his family who drove us to Senantes and introduced us to Simèon and Nelly Desloges are acknowledged. Simèon and Nelly were most gracious hosts, inviting us into their home and telling of watching Baz fly over their farm.

## ***The Author***

A geophysicist, teacher, and interpretive guide in the Canadian Rockies, Dave was a founding director of the Nanton Lancaster Society. One of hundreds of the museum's volunteers, he has been primarily involved with the development of display material for the museum and with the research and organization associated with its special events.



**Dave Birrell (left) at the museum  
with Deryck Bazalgette**

Dave is also the author of "People and Planes," "FM-159 -The Lucky Lancaster," "Nose Art -The Clarence Simonsen Collection," "Calgary's Mountain Panorama," "50 Roadside Panoramas in the Canadian Rockies," and [www.peakfinder.com](http://www.peakfinder.com).



**S/L Ian Bazalgette was the only Albertan awarded the Victoria Cross during World War II. This biography tells the story of a Canadian hero and his connection with the Village of Senantes and the Bomber Command Museum of Canada.**