

## Flt Sgt Stanley Frederick Chadwick

The following report is extracts from the memoirs and research of Ronald S Chadwick, the son of Flt Sgt. Stanley Frederick Chadwick and used with permission. Stanley is remembered on the Good Easter war memorial.

Flt Sgt. Stanley Frederick Chadwick was born on 22nd April 1920 in Bury Lancashire, the eldest of five children. After the family moved to East London in the late 1920s, Stanley was educated at East Ham Grammar School and when war was declared he made an application to join the volunteer reserve of the R.A.F.

A letter Stanley sent to an aunt dated 7th March 1940 read "Only two of us passed the examination out of a possible fifteen and I could not get through as a pilot as there were plenty but got through as an Air Observer which is the next best thing."



After training Stanley was sent to No. 42 Sqn and became a navigator on Beauforts. On 18<sup>th</sup> February 1941 Stanley and June were married at St Andrew's church, Good Easter and the photograph shows them on their wedding day. Stanley's squadron was transferred to Coastal Command Development Unit (CCDU) at Ballykelly, Northern Ireland on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1941. The operations undertaken by the unit included service trials of new equipment and tactical employment, development of ASV Radar and bomb depth charge techniques.

On 30th April 1942 Stanley along with two other crew members took part in a non-operational daytime exercise in a Beaufort Mark II serial number AW271. The task was service trials of a static line for parachuting wounded men.

An eyewitness account was given by Flight Sergeant Charles Hayes, who was a CCDU Beaufort Flight Observer watching the flight from the Limavady Junction railway station. He wrote to Ron Chadwick in 1990. "He was carrying out a 'static line parachute test'. The aim of the test was to enable

crew members to parachute out a wounded member of the crew before they bailed out. Of course, this was for the benefit of Bomber Command, as we in Coastal Command never flew high enough to use a parachute. I was returning from leave at the time of the crash and was standing on the station at Limavady and naturally when I saw a Beaufort flying looked up as there were only two Beaufort crews on the CCDU. I saw the parachute emerge only to wrap around the tail of the aircraft. After that a crash was inevitable. When I got to the aerodrome my worst fears were confirmed. It was a humane experiment intended to save lives, whereas it caused the deaths of the crew. As is always the ultimate in war, your father gave his life to save others."

Flt Sgt Stanley Chadwick RAFVR died at the age of 22, alongside Flight Lieutenant Archibald Duncan Livingstone RAF aged 22 and Flight Lieutenant Richard William Gilbert Holdsworth RAFVR Aged 31.

Ron Chadwick writes, I was born on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 1942, just 28 days after the tragic accident which caused the death of my father. The first time I became aware of the loss was when I was about four years of age, seeing a picture of an aircrew watching the loading of a torpedo under an aircraft, which had a prominent position on the piano in the lounge and also seeing a name like mine on the local St. Andrews Church War Memorial. I can also remember a picture of my father in an R.A.F uniform displayed at my Grandparents home in London on their dresser.

Over a period of 13 years David Livingstone, the nephew of Flight Lieutenant Archibald Duncan Livingstone has

been researching the story behind the death of his uncle, and with the powers of the internet he was able to make contact with both Ron Chadwick and Diane Hervey the daughter of Richard Holdsworth.

Using some readily available flight simulation software, his own knowledge as a former military pilot, and an understanding of the weather of the day and a figurative mission profile, David was able to estimate a likely impact point of AW271 to the East of Ballykelly village, in a field just South East of the airfield and in the grounds of the local Church of Ireland vicarage.

In late April 2020 Ron came into contact with a well-known aviation historian from Northern Ireland, Jonny McNee, who, with Dr Alastair Ruffell from Queen's University Belfast carried out an initial search at the site using ground penetrating radar. Despite some early promise at a position close to the predicted point of impact, nothing was found during this first survey, but an expanded search carried out some weeks later led to the discovery of a pattern of sub-surface anomalies only 50 metres from the original position. The layout of the anomalies exactly matched the pattern of a Beaufort's two engines and tailwheel assembly as would have been left with the aircraft in a near horizontal attitude and with little or no forward trajectory over the ground, that is, the aircraft in the 'spin' referred to in the original accident record card from 1942. The precise location of where Beaufort AW271 fell to Earth and where Duncan, Richard and Stanley had died, had, finally, been found.

In 2020 students from Londonderry's Foyle's College together with aviation archaeologists were commissioned by the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Communities (DfC) Historic Environment Division to explore the site. They unearthed, for the first time, fragments of the Bristol Beaufort aircraft. This was filmed for the BBC archaeology series Digging for Britain and is due to air in December 2021.



On 5<sup>th</sup> September 2021 a memorial stone was unveiled at the crash site in memory of the three men who lost their lives in AW271. Reverend Di Hervey, daughter of Flt Lt Holdsworth, said. "I am delighted that my father and the rest of the crew are now permanently remembered at this location where they so tragically died doing what they loved," Flt Sgt Chadwick's son Ron said he can "hardly express what it means to me to see what these pupils have achieved". "They have fundraised to pay for so much of this and their prayers and the way they have looked after us today has really moved me," he said.

If you are passing the Good Easter war memorial and read the name Stanley Chadwick, you now know his story.

