

Family History Indexes

from sources at the Public Record Office

by Stuart Tamblin

The Dambusters, 1943

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PRO: AIR 27/2128
Operations Record Book (RAF Form 540)
617 Squadron
 (extracts)

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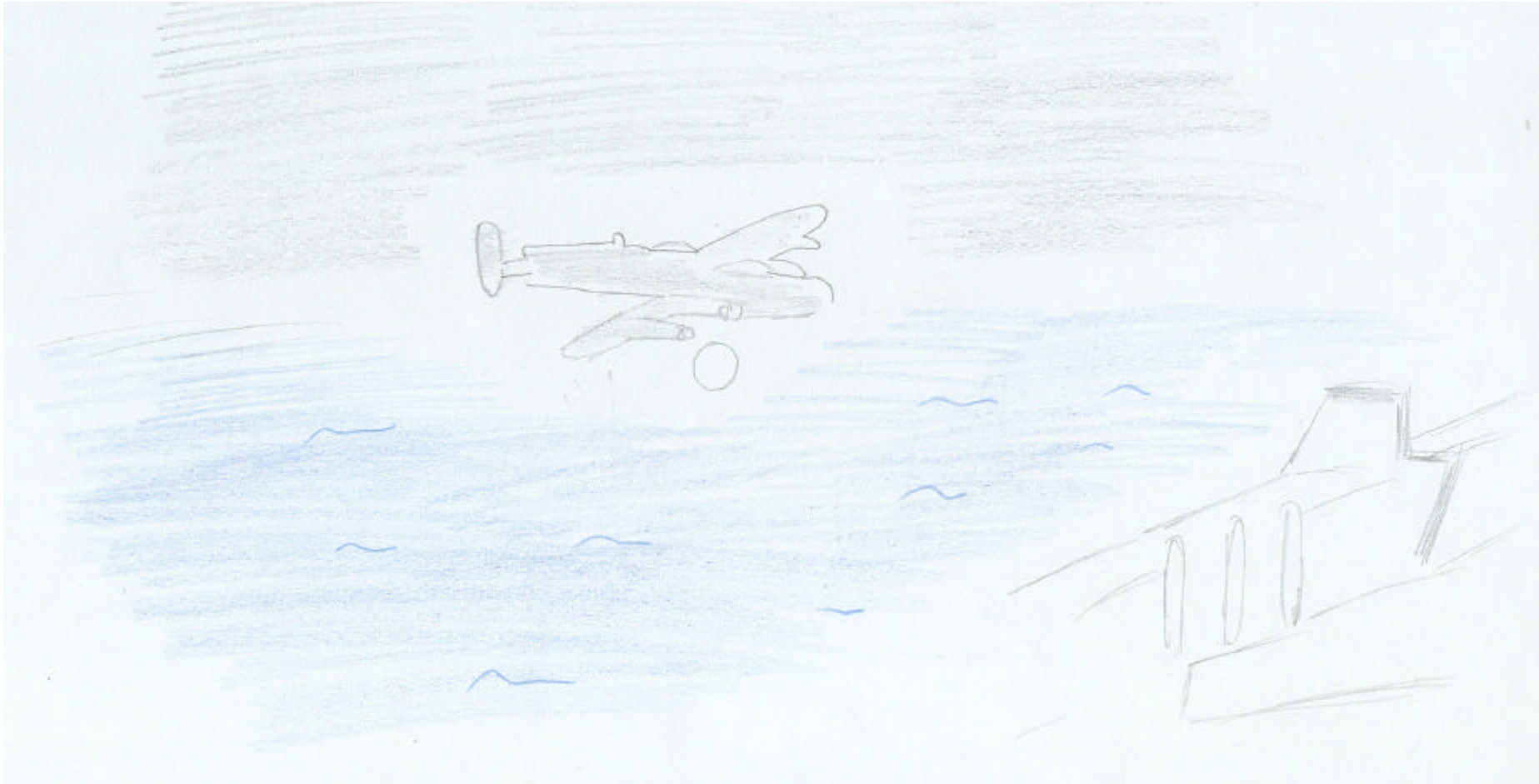
Sample page

16/17 May 1943

A special operation for which this Squadron had been training so hard was carried out. The target was the three great German Dams, the Eder, the Möhne and the Sorpe. 19 aircraft took off to attack the target, and of these, 8 failed to return. The attack was an outstanding success in spite of these losses, and the Eder and the Mohne Dams were definitely breached, and the Sorpe damaged.

Lancaster III	W/Cdr	G P	Gibson*	Capt	2139	0415	MOHNE DAM 1 Mine, 60ft, 0028 hrs
ED932	Sgt	J	Pulford*	F/Eng			Identified the target and carried out first attack
"G"	P/O	H T	Taerum*	Nav			on the Mohne Dam. Came under light flak from guns around the
	F/Lt	R E G	Hutchison*	W/Optr			target, but dropped his mine accurately and then directed the
	P/O	F M	Spafford*	A/B			remainder of the attack by R/T. He also flew alongside one a/c
	F/Sgt	G A	Deering*	F/Gunner			as it attacked, machine gunning the defences to allow it to
	F/Lt	R D	Trevor Roper*	R/Gunner			attack undisturbed. He then carried on to the Eder Dam and
							indicated the target to searching a/c and stayed to assess the results.

.....The most important consequence of this operation is that the Ruhr industries will be deprived of a great deal of their industrial water for the coming summer. The immediate {effect} of the floods from the two Dams breached was to cause devastation and disruption throughout the valley of the Ruhr as far as Duisberg, and serious flooding below the Eder Dam at Kassel, and other places down the Weser Valley.



Bibliography

Further information may be found in:

A Bevan (Ed), *Tracing Your Ancestors in the Public Record Office* (PRO, Richmond, 5th Edition, 1999)

J Cox, *New to Kew?* (PRO, Richmond, 1997)

W Spencer, *Air Force Records for Family Historians* (PRO, Richmond, 2000)

Further Research

Individual careers may be traced by means of the many Operations Record Books in PRO Series such as AIR 27 and AIR 28. Background and summary information for Bomber Command can be found in AIR 14 and AIR 24. The Times and London Gazette give details of officers and awards. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (www.cwgc.org) has details of war dead.

Aircraft movement cards and loss cards are available from the RAF Museum (www.rafmuseum.org.uk).

Disclaimer

Although every effort has been made in the production and checking of this publication, no warranty as to its accuracy can be made. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracy or incompleteness whatsoever.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Rosie Bailey for the sketch of the Lancaster.

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(i)

My main project for the past seven years has been to index entries in the **Criminal Registers** in Class HO 27 at the PRO. My interest in and knowledge of the Public Records started following the discovery of a great great great grandmother, Hannah Mayes from Leicestershire, who was sentenced to transportation in 1825. She had stolen a sovereign and five shillings' worth of half-pence. Having found an entry for her in the Criminal Registers in Class HO 27, I started to transcribe these and have so far published on microfiche, floppy disk and CD-ROM over fifty volumes of indexes, starting in 1805 and covering the whole of the country. I have a database currently growing beyond 75,000 entries.

(ii)

"**PRONames 1**", "**PRONames 2**" and "**PRONames 3**" are indexes to miscellaneous personal names occurring in documents at the Public Record Office. Each collection is available on microfiche and disk and contains over **10,000 records** from a variety of sources. Entries are sorted alphabetically by surname and several personal details are given for each record as well as the full PRO document reference number. You should be lucky enough to find somebody in here whose name can be found on your tree!

(iii)

The Jutland Roll of Honour. Everybody has a relation who served in the First World War and, with 1998's release of Naval ratings' records of service, let us have a look at the members of the senior service. *PRONames 2* incorporates a list of casualties from the Battle of Jutland in 1916 - both killed and wounded. These entries have been expanded from the *PRONames* format and compiled into a separate publication - ***The Jutland Roll of Honour***, which is available on both fiche and disk. It lists all those appearing in the Admiralty Registers of Killed and Wounded but a cross-check has also been performed on lists published during the War. Each man's fate is shown and several supplementary lists are included to record notes and discrepancies. Details and dimensions of each ship at the Battle are included as well as a record of its casualties.

(iv)

Criminal Lunatics is a database of 614 records, indexing the names of all the patients recorded in a document referenced HO 20/13 at the Public Record Office. This is a very interesting book which reads from both ends. At the front is the register of Bethlem Hospital with much more than just the names of the patients. At the other end, is a list of Criminal Lunatics from around the country who were held in County institutions or occasionally who were released into the custody of individuals.

(v)

Cornwall Railway is a database of 457 records, listing and indexing the names of all the men employed by the Cornwall Railway at the time of its take-over by the Great Western Railway Company on 15 June 1889. The basic information from PRONames 2 has been expanded to record the men's names, occupations, places of work and wages or salaries (from the Engineer at £900 per annum to the mason's lad at 4s0d per week); the dates of entering service (for the officers & clerks and the Traffic Department) and dates of birth also for the officers & clerks.

(vi)

Prisoners Pardoned (Class HO 13, from 1782) will help to get you back before the early nineteenth century in a series almost as important as the Criminal Registers themselves. Copies were kept of the Home Secretary's correspondence relating to prisoners and their supporters in the *Criminal Entry Books*. Each original volume, covering approximately a year, contains a contemporary listing, usually alphabetised by surname of those involved, in sections relating to pardons (free and conditional), references, remissions, respites and warrants particular. The indexes are being released in volumes corresponding to the originals. Details given are name, alias, court, notes, type of record and PRO reference. The whole of England & Wales is covered in each volume.

(vii)

Musters of the Militia (Class WO 13, 1781-82). The Militia Act of 1757 provided for men to serve in the militia at home in order to counter any threat arising while the majority of the regular army was stationed abroad. Lists of eligible men in each parish were known as militia ballot lists and from these, the men actually chosen appeared in the *militia lists* which are often to be found in county record offices. At the Public Record Office, however, are the muster and pay lists in series WO 13. These record the men actually serving and the indexes provide details for each man at the three or four musters during the two year period for which records survive. County regiments, although recruited locally, often served away from home and these indexes tell precisely where, under whom and on what dates the men were mustered. There are sixty-five volumes covering the whole of England & Wales.

(viii)

Military Courts, 1879-1994 (Royal Navy, 1911-1965; Royal Air Force, 1941-1994; Army, 1879-1986; Soldiers Executed, 1914-1920) Completely cross-referenced, this new publication lists name, date, offence and type of proceedings, along with other details where available, such as rank, unit and related documents. It includes a number of civilians as well as a wide range of offences.

Everton Necropolis (Liverpool, Low Hill Cemetery - Burials, 1825-1827)

In the mid-nineteenth century, this register was surrendered to the Non-Parochial Registers Commission and is now in the custody of the PRO. The index includes many details from the originals including parents of deceased children, ministers and causes of death.

Stuart Tamblin, 14 October 2001

Useful addresses, telephone numbers and Web sites:

Public Record Office

Ruskin Avenue

Kew

RICHMOND

Surrey

TW9 4DU

Tel 02088-763444 (+44-20 8876 3444) <http://www.pro.gov.uk/>

Family Records Centre

1 Myddelton Street

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EC1R 1UW

Tel 02083-925300 (+44-20 8392 5300)

Federation of Family History Societies

Tel 07041-492032 (+44-70 4149 2032) <http://www.ffhs.org.uk/>

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14 Charterhouse Buildings

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That *Palace by the Thames* - the Public Record Office, Kew.

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