

**BICKER**

**LANCASTER MEMORIAL**

**By**

Stanley Naylor

# **Bicker Lancaster Memorial**

Caythorpe Road  
Between Bicker and Donington  
off the B1181 near Donington Eau dyke.

A brief history of the fatal crash of Lancaster Bomber ND820  
at 11.20 hours on Monday 10th. April 1944.

By Stanley Naylor,

The information has been gleaned from various sources including:

David Stubley, Secretary of L.A.R.G.  
Commonwealth War Graves Commission.  
The Internet.

LANCASTER - The Story of a Famous Bomber  
By: Bruce Robertson and his team.  
plus information from my own records.

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## **BICKER LANCASTER MEMORIAL**

**on Caythorpe Road,**

a back road between Bicker and Donington ,  
off the B1 181 and running almost parallel with A52.

This is a brief history of the fated Avro Lancaster Bomber Mk. III, ND820, F2-W, from No. 635 Squadron, Royal Air Force (RAF) Station, Downham Market in Norfolk.

635 Squadron was formed on the 20th. March 1944 with two flights drawn from No's 35 and 97 Squadrons, and was part of No. 8 Group (Pathfinders) in Bomber Command. The Squadron Motto: '*Nos Ducimus Ceteri Secunter*', translated - 'We lead, others follow.' Bombing operations ended in April 1945 and 635 Squadron took on the tasks of transporting food relief and repatriating Prisoner's Of War. The Squadron was finally disbanded at RAF Downham Market on the 1st. September 1945.

At 10.58 hours on Monday 10th. April 1944, Lancaster ND820 F2-W, took off from RAF Downham Market on a routine training flight. The aircraft was only twenty-two minutes into its flight, when it was at about 8,000 it was seen to do a diving turn to port, then finally turning into a vertical dive from which it did not recover, crashing within the vicinity of the Cairn. ND820 was a new aircraft with only six hours flying time recorded.

The names of the seven men on board ND820 who lost their lives are engraved on the Cairn at Bicker, they are:

**Flight Sergeant (Flt. Sgt.) Douglas James Farrant**, Pilot, RAFVR, aged 24.

Service No. 1388878.

Flt. Sgt. Farrant's parents moved from Haverhill in Suffolk to London in 1918, where he was born in 1920. Most of the family appears to have stayed in London except his Mother who returned to Haverhill where she died and is buried in Haverhill Cemetery. Curiously, Flt. Sgt. Farrant's name is engraved on his Mother's gravestone, but is not on the local War Memorial.

Flt. Sgt. Farrant is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial . Panel 217.

*(It is worth noting that Flt. Sgt. Farrant was an experienced Pilot with 254 flying hours to his credit, and had completed thirty bombing missions over enemy territory.)*

**Sergeant (Sgt) Reuben Horace Frederick Malthouse**, RAFVR, aged 23.

Service No. 1386763.

Son of Frederick and Rose Malthouse. Husband to May Florence Malthouse, Walworth, London.

Sgt. Malthouse is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial. Panel 234.

**Warrant Officer (W.O.) Roland Thornton Lord**, RAFVR, aged 25.

Service No. 748357.

Son of Harold and Amy Lord, Oldham, Lancashire.

W.O. Lord is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial . Panel 214.

**Flight Sergeant (Flt. Sgt.) Joseph Bernard Bannan**, RAFVR, aged 24.

Service No. 1007262.

Son of Bernard and Francis Bannan. Husband to Kathleen Bannan, Head's Nook, near Carlisle, Cumberland.

Flt. Sgt. Bannan is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial. Panel 215.

**Flight Sergeant (Flt. Sgt.) Anthony Ivor Gwynne Hunter**, RAFVR, aged 28.

Service No. 1358626.

Son of Phillip Claudius and Agnes Hunter . Husband to Ann Hunter, Leeds, Yorkshire.

Flt. Sgt. Hunter is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial. Panel 219.

**Sergeant (Sgt.) John William Nixon**, RCAF, aged 19.

Service No. R/ 163358.

Son of Reginald T. and Ethel Nixon, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Sgt.

Nixon is commemorated on Runnymede Memorial. Panel 256.

**Flying Officer (F.O.) Thomas Ferguson Wilson**, Bomb Aimer, RCAF, aged 26.

Service No. J / 12709.

Son of James and Euphemia Wilson. Husband to Laurine Wilson, Lucknow, Ontario, Canada.

F.O. Wilson was the only body recovered from the crash and he is buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery.

Flt. Sgt. Farrant is recorded as being the Pilot and F.O. Wilson is recorded as being the Bomb Aimer, the trades of the remaining individual crew members are not known, but they will include:

**Navigator; Flight Engineer; Wireless Operator; Mid-Upper Air Gunner and Tail Gunner.**

Only the body of F.O. Wilson was recovered from the wreckage and is buried in Harrogate (Stonewall) Cemetery. The names of the remaining six, as already stated, are commemorated on the panels of The Royal Air Force Memorial at Runnymede as having no known grave, even though local people are aware they are buried beneath, or very close to the Cairn.

On making enquiries at Lincoln Cathedral, I found the names of the crew of ND820 are not commemorated in the Cathedral Remembrance Book, whereas the names on Sibsey Northlands Lancaster Memorial are recorded in this prestigious Book.

Just sixty years after Lancaster ND820 crashed in this remote area near Bicker, a Cairn was erected by dedicated volunteers of Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group (LARG) under the leadership of David Stubley (Secretary) and Ian Blackmore. Five years later family members of some of the crew paid a visit to the site and were in attendance at the 70th. Commemorative Service at 11.00 am on Saturday 5th. April 2014. Many of them laid a single rose at the Cairn, and the children searching adjoining fields found parts of the aircraft they took home in memory of their family crew member.

LARG have a display section at Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby Airfield, Near Spilsby, Lincolnshire, PE23 4DE, where information can be found regarding the crash of Lancaster ND820.

The actual cause of the crash is not known, but it is understood, according to Bruce Roberts' book on the Lancaster which states: "**The plane dived in flames**". Whatever the cause, it was a tragic loss of the lives of young men who were in their prime, but did not live long enough to enjoy it.

**CAIRN:** A Cairn - or Monument, is a mound of stone erected as a landmark in remembrance of an event. In the case of the Cairn at Bicker, it is an historical record in remembrance of seven young men who gave their lives for freedom. They must never be forgotten. **"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"**.

*(Most of this information was supplied by David Stubbley,  
Secretary of Lincolnshire Aircraft Recovery Group.)*

**The Royal Air Forces Association**  
**'Dedication'**

In friendship and in service one to another, we are pledged to keep alive the memory of all those nations who died in the Royal Air Force and the Air Forces of the Commonwealth. In their name we give ourselves to this noble cause. Proudly and thankfully:

**'We Will Remember Them'.**

\* \* \*

**'The Royal British Legion'**  
**'Ac of Homage'**

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old,  
Age shall not weary them, nor the tears condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,  
**'We Will Remember Them'.**

\* \* \*

**The Kohima Memorial**

When you go home tell them of us and say;  
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.

\* \* \*

**The Soldier's Prayer**

*This Prayer is inscribed on a window at:  
The Royal Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede.*

If I climb up into heaven, thou art there.  
If I go down to hell, thou art there also.  
If I take the windings of the morning  
And remain in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
Even there shall thy hand lead me,  
And thy right hand shall hold me.

\* \* \*