

Fewest of the Few Supplement



A39 Entry Graduated March 1940

SURNAME	INITS
CHOMLEY	JAG
DAVIS	CT
HERRICK	MJ
HOWARD-WILLIAMS	PI
LECKY	JG
MARRS	ES
ROTHWELL	JH

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

R.A.F. Form 540

of (Unit or Formation).....Station Headquarters.....CRANWELL.....

No. of pages used for day.....

Place.	Date.	Time.	Summary of Events.	References to Appendices.
CRANWELL.	1.9.39.		Lieutenant T.A. Tindle assumes the duties of Station Defence Officer. Education Officers - members of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve - recalled for duty. Aerodrome Council School closed owing to evacuation.	D.R.O. 170. D.R.O. 168.
	2.9.39.		Lighting restrictions introduced, and guards posted at entrances to the Station.	
	3.9.39.		Receipt of message stating that War has been declared on Germany by the Allied Powers. Group Captain Strugnell, MC., posted to Command (A/Cadre Post). <u>Royal Air Force College becomes a Flying Training School, and is self-controlled.</u>	A.M.P.L. 319.



Chomley, John Allison George (A39 Entry)



Chomley, who was born on 6 June 1920 in Southern Rhodesia, entered the RAF College on 27 April 1939, as a Flight Cadet. As he had not completed his course by the time war broke out, he was enlisted in the RAFVR on 7 September 1939, as an Airman u/t pilot (581693). RAF College records show he passed out as a Sergeant pilot on 6 March 1940 and was not offered a permanent commission, but after further flying training, he was commissioned in the RAFVR on 8 June.

On 8 June, he arrived at 6 OTU, Sutton Bridge and, after converting to Hurricanes, he joined 257 Squadron at Northolt on 7 July. He crashed on landing at Hendon on the 23rd, in Hurricane P3641, but was unhurt.

Chomley was reported 'Missing' after a combat with enemy aircraft off Portsmouth on 12 August 1940. His Hurricane is believed to have crashed into the sea.

He was 20 and his name is on the Runnymede Memorial, panel 7.



Davis, Charles Trevor (A39 Entry, B Squadron)



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Davis was born in Cardiff and educated at Whitby County School (although the CWGC has his parents being of Grindleford, Derbyshire and his name is on the war memorial there).

He entered the RAF College on 27 April 1939 as a Flight Cadet. The advent of war caused the course to be shortened, but he was selected to complete his flying training with Course 6 of the newly formed SFTS at Cranwell and, on its completion in May 1940, Davis was granted a permanent commission.

He joined 238 Squadron in June 1940.

On 13 July, Davis shared in the destruction of two Me 110's and a Do 17, on the 20th he shared an Me 109, on the 21st shared an Me 110 and a Do 17 and on the 27th destroyed a Ju 87. He claimed an Me 110 destroyed on 8 August, two Me 110's on the 13th, damaged a Ju 88 on 12 September, probably destroyed an He 111 on the 15th and damaged a Ju 88 on the 21st.

He was awarded the DFC (gazetted 25th October 1940).

Davis was killed on 26 March 1941 when he flew into a hill coming down through cloud near Winchester. He was 20 years old.

He was cremated at St John's Crematorium, Woking, Surrey.



Herrick, Michael James (A39 Entry)



Herrick was born in Hastings, New Zealand on 5 May 1921 and educated at Wanganui Collegiate School. While there, he obtained his 'A' Flying Licence at the Hawke's Bay and East Coast Aero Club at Hastings. In late 1938, Herrick successfully applied for a cadetship at Cranwell. He sailed for the UK on the RMS Rangitiki on 9 March 1939.

He began the course on 27 April, but with the outbreak of war a normally two year course was condensed to 10 months, and he was granted a permanent commission on 7 March 1940. Ten days later he joined 25 Squadron at North Weald.

Early on 5 September, Herrick, flying with Sergeant JS Pugh as his gunner, destroyed two He 111's, the second breaking up after a burst at less than thirty yards. Early on the 14th, Herrick destroyed another and he was awarded the DFC (gazetted 24th September 1940).

He may have destroyed another enemy aircraft in December 1940. He damaged a Ju 88 at night on 9 May 1941 and destroyed another on 22nd June.

Herrick was posted from 25 Squadron in October 1941 and arrived back in New Zealand on 23 December, on attachment to the RNZAF. On 10 January 1942, he went to 2 FTS Woodbourne as an instructor, moved to 3 FTS Ohakea in March and on 25 June was posted to 15 Squadron at Whenuapai as a Flight Commander. It had no aircraft, its promised Kittyhawks having been diverted to the Middle East.

In early October, the squadron was posted to Tonga and took over P-40s and equipment of the 68th Pursuit Squadron, USAAF at Fuamotu. The squadron moved to Santo in February 1943 and then to Fiji on 20 March. Five days later the CO was killed and Herrick took command.

He destroyed a Rufe on 6 May. On 26 May, 15 Squadron flew to Guadalcanal and began operations. Herrick destroyed a Zero fighter on 7 June, shared a Val dive bomber, damaged another on 1 October and shared a Zeke fighter on 27 October.

His attachment finished, Herrick sailed from Auckland on 14 January 1944, in charge of 300 aircrew trainees bound for Canada. He left them at Edmonton and continued to the UK. He was awarded a Bar to the DFC (gazetted 10th February 1944).

Herrick joined 302 Squadron at Lasham as 'B' Flight Commander. A Polish fighter-bomber unit equipped with Mosquitos, the squadron was then carrying out mostly night operations but in May 1944 it began 'Day Rangers', which were operations flown as free-lance intrusions over enemy territory, with the primary aim of wearing out the enemy fighter force.

On 16 June, Herrick took off on his first such operation in Mosquito FB VI NS913. He flew in company with Wing Commander JRD Braham. They separated at the Jutland coast and Herrick went towards Aalborg airfield. He was intercepted and shot down by Lieutenant Spreckels of JG1. Herrick and his navigator, F/O AM Turski, baled out but were too low.

Herrick fell into the sea. His body was washed up on 4 July and buried two days later in the Military Cemetery at Fredrikshavn. Nine days later Spreckels shot down Braham, who was captured.

Herrick was posthumously awarded the US Air Medal in July 1944 and it was presented to his parents in Wellington on 14th June 1945. Herrick was one of five brothers serving with Allied forces, three of whom were killed. Brian Henry Herrick, also a Battle of Britain Clasp holder, was lost on 24 November 1940. Dennis Herrick died on the 30 June 1941 after being brought down into the sea on the 26 June flying a Blenheim on an anti-shipping strike off Brest.



Howard-Williams, Peter Ian (A39 Entry, C Squadron)



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610

Howard-Williams was born in Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, 27 December 1919. He entered Cranwell in April 1939 and graduated from a shortened course on 6 March 1940.

He joined 19 Squadron at Duxford in 1940 where he remained throughout the Battle of Britain.

He was posted to 610 Squadron in early 1941 and later went on to 118 Squadron at Ibsley. He was awarded the DFC in 1941 and appeared briefly as himself in the 1941 film "The First of the Few".

He was made Flight Commander early in 1942 and claimed a BF 109 destroyed on 2 February 1942.

Howard-Williams retired from the RAF in 1958 as a Squadron Leader, retaining the rank of Wing Commander. The photograph reproduced here shows him beside his Spitfire after it had been hit with German Cannon Shell after a 'Dog-Fight' with the Luftwaffe in 1942, in which he lost all controls and was fortunate to land alive.



After the war, he remained in the RAF and retired with the rank of Wing Commander in June 1958.

Howard-Williams died in March 1993 following a long illness.

Howard-Williams, with other Cranwellians, featured as him self in the film First of the Few, a public tribute to 'The Few'.



Lecky, John Gage (A39)



Lecky was born in Yokohama, Japan where his father was Language Officer at the British Embassy. He was educated at Highfield Preparatory School, Liphook and Wrekin College, Shropshire. Lecky entered the College in April 1939 as a Flight Cadet. The normal course was shortened because of the war and he was commissioned in March 1940.

His first posting was to an army co-operation squadron and he then joined 610 Squadron at Biggin Hill in August. Lecky moved to 41 Squadron at Hornchurch on 2 October 1940.

Nine days later on the 11th, he was shot down in combat with Me 109's and, although he baled out, he was killed. His Spitfire, P9447, crashed at Preston Hall, Maidstone.

Lecky was 19. He is buried in All Saints' churchyard, Tilford, Surrey.



MARRS, Eric Simcox (A39B)



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MARRS was born in Dover on 9 July 1921 and educated at Dauntsey's School. He entered the RAF College Cranwell in April 1939. He was awarded a Permanent Commission on 7 March 1940 and joined 152 Squadron ten days later.

On 13 August, MARRS claimed an Me 110 destroyed, on the 16 August a probable He 111, on the 18 August a Ju 87 destroyed, on the 22 August a shared Do 17, and on the 25 August an Me 110. On 17 September, he shared a Ju 88, on 25 September two He 111's and an Me 110 damaged, and on the 27 September a Ju88 destroyed. On 7 October, he destroyed an Me 110 and damaged another.

On 14 November, he shared a Ju 88 and on the 28 November destroyed an Me 109. MARRS shared a Do 17 north of Warmwell on 4 January 1941.

He was awarded the DFC (gazetted 7th January 1941) and became a Flight Commander in April.

He shared an He 111 over the Scilly Isles on 18 July.

The squadron provided close escort for Hampdens detailed to bomb the Scharnhorst and Gneisnau at Brest on 24 July 1941. Heavy flak was encountered over the target and MARRS was shot down in Spitfire IIA P7881 and killed.

He is buried in Kerfautras Cemetery, Brest, France.



**Rothwell, John Hedley
(A39 Entry, A Squadron)**



Rothwell, from Brighton, was educated at Tonbridge School and entered the RAF College in April 1939, as a Flight Cadet. After the outbreak of war, the course was shortened and Rothwell passed out in March 1940 with a Permanent Commission.

On 28 August, he joined 601 Squadron at Debden, but was attached to 6 OTU, Sutton Bridge on 3 September. After converting to Hurricanes, Rothwell was posted to 32 Squadron on the 21st. He moved to 605 Squadron at Croydon on 12 October.

Rothwell was killed on 22nd February 1941 when his Hurricane II Z2347 crashed near Littlehampton, possibly due to oxygen failure. He is buried in Poynings Cemetery, Sussex.