

Fewest of the Few Supplement



J36 Entry Graduated December 1937

SURNAME	INITS
DONALD	IDG
ELSDON	TAF
KINGCOME	CBF
O'BRIAN	PGSStG



THE TERM PASSING OUT, DECEMBER, 1937.

Back Row—F./C. J. R. Guthrie. F./C. L. M. Moore. F./C. G. O. L. Bird. F./C. H. G. Malcolm.
 3rd Row—F./C. P. R. Hatfield. F./C. D. G. Stanley. F./C. M. L. Watson. F./C. C. D. Palmer. F./C. P. F. G. Jameson. F./C. T. J. Geach. F./C. R. M. Burns.
 F./C. Cpl. I. D. G. Donald. F./C. J. C. Breese.
 2nd Row—F./C. D. E. Gould. F./C. J. B. Grant. F./C. A. Chalmers. F./C. A. L. H. Barber. F./C. T. A. F. Elsdon. F./C. H. F. G. Ede. F./C. E. T. Powell.
 F./C. Cpl. C. Bowen-Davies. F./C. T. I. Mathewson. F./C. Cpl. T. Preston.
 Seated—F./C. Cpl. D. C. Maybury. F./C. Sergt. J. H. Lapsley. F./C. Sergt. R. Lloyd. F./C. U/O. A. D. Panton. F./C. U/O. P. G. S. St. G. O'Brian. F./C. U/O.
 R. H. De Montmorency. F./C. Sergt. G. H. D. Evans. F./C. Cpl. J. D. Middleton. F./C. Cpl. F. D. Bird. Absent: F./C. V. Rees.

[Photo: Gale & Polden, Ltd.]



VI TERM, SUMMER, 1938.

[C. S. N. Goyal. F./C. R. B. Wright. F./C. A. C. Trippree. F./C.]
 C. D. V. Willis. F./C. D. G. Heaton Nicholls. F./C. E. O. Porter.
 P. C. Lambert. F./C. Cpl. C. B. F. Kingcome. F./C. Cpl. J. H. Ire
 Cpl. M. J. Miley. F./C. W. Pitt-Brown.
 F./C. Sgt. G. W. Petre. F./C. Sgt. R. C. Rotherham. F./C. U/O. J.
 Pirie. F./C. Cpl. D. R. S. Bevan-John. F./C. Cpl. M. Savage.

Though a member of J36 intake, CBF Kingcome did not graduate till July 1938, not December 1937.



**Donald, Ian David Grahame
(J36 Entry, A Squadron)**



Donald was born on 3rd September 1917; his father was Air Marshal Sir DG Donald. He was at Dulwich College from 1931 to 1935 and entered RAF College Cranwell in January 1936 as an Honorary King's Cadet.

After graduation, Donald joined 64 Squadron at Church Fenton on 18th December 1937. During the 1938 Air Exercises, he was pilot of one of a formation of 64 Squadron Hawker Demons that were caught in a dense fog, which had descended suddenly over a wide area of England on 7th August. They were routed over Digby and then all pilots and air gunners were ordered to bale out.

Donald joined 141 Squadron when it was reformed at Turnhouse, with Defiants, on 4 October 1939. On 29 November, he was promoted to Acting Flight Lieutenant and appointed a Flight Commander.

On 12 July 1940, the squadron moved south to West Malling. Donald was flying one of nine Defiants attacked by Me 109's of III/JG51 off Dover on the 19th. He was killed in the aircraft while his gunner, Pilot Officer AC Hamilton, baled out but was drowned in the sea. Their aircraft, L7009, crashed at Elmsvale Road, Dover.

Donald is buried in All Saints' churchyard, Tilford, Surrey.



Elsdon, Thomas Arthur Francis (J36)



Elsdon was born at Broughty Ferry, Dundee on 22 January 1917. He attended Linthunk College, Norwich and entered RAF College Cranwell in January 1936 as a Flight Cadet. After graduating he joined 72 Squadron at Church Fenton on 8th December 1937.

Elsdon destroyed an He 115 on 21 October 1939, shared two He 111's on 7 December and, over Dunkirk, probably destroyed a Ju 87 on 2 June 1940.

He claimed an Me 110 on 15 August, two Me 110's on 1 September and another two Me 110's on the 4th. On the 4th, Elsdon baled out when his Spitfire, X4262, was attacked and set on fire on the way back to Croydon, possibly by a lone Me 109.

On 7 September Elsdon was back leading the squadron. They intercepted a formation of Do 17's, escorted by Me 109's. With not enough height to engage the enemy fighters, 72 Squadron went for the bombers, contrary to the usual practice for Spitfires. Leading the attack, Elsdon's aircraft was hit and he was severely wounded in the left knee and right shoulder. He decided not to bale out and headed for Biggin Hill. His undercarriage would not lower and he made a crash-landing. He possibly shot down an Me 109 in this action.

Awarded the DFC (gazetted 8 October 1940), Elsdon was out of action until 15 July 1941.

He joined 257 Squadron at Coltishall and claimed an Me 109 destroyed on 24 July; he was again wounded, but not seriously.

On 25 August 1941, Elsdon was posted to Kirton-in-Lindsey to form and command 136 Squadron. It became operational in September and in November left the UK for India. 'A' Flight was detached to Singapore and Elsdon and a dozen or so pilots picked up Hurricanes in Cairo and flew them out to Rangoon to fight the Japanese on the retreat through Burma. The rest of the squadron went to Colombo. The squadron came together again in Calcutta in April 1942. It later saw action in Akyab, Calcutta, Chittagong, Imphal and Arakan before disbanding in the Cocos Islands.

On 21 August, he damaged a Japanese aircraft in the Bay of Bengal.

Elsdon was made Wing Leader of 165 Wing, Dum Dum on 8th September 1942. He moved to Alipore on 10 October to lead 293 Wing, took command of 169 Wing, Agartala on 10 February 1943, was posted to 185 Wing, Feni on 8 October and returned to command 165 Wing, then at Arakan, on 22 November 1943. Elsdon was posted to HQ Eastern Air Command, Calcutta on 12th July 1944. He returned to the UK in September.



Kingcome, Charles Brian Fabris (S36 Entry, B Squadron)



Kingcome entered the RAF Royal Air Force College Cranwell, Cranwell in September 1936 and graduated six months after his cohort on 29 July 1938.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Kingcome was based at Hornchurch serving with 65 Squadron. He took part in the battle of France and the battle of Dunkirk; scoring no victories. He was then posted to No. 92 Squadron, RAF Tangmere in May 1940, where he assumed temporary command over 92 Squadron after the loss of their Squadron leader Roger Bushell (the mastermind of the “Great Escape” from Stalag Luft III) over the skies of Calais on 23 May 1940.

During his time at No. 92 Squadron, Kingcome became acquainted with Geoffrey Wellum, who flew as his wingman whilst Kingcome was acting CO - the Squadron lost 2 new COs within days of their arrival and Brian Kingcome led the Squadron temporarily in the absence of a squadron commander. Wellum later recorded his experiences in the book *First Light*.

“Kingcome was acting CO of 92 Squadron until Sqn Ldr Johnny Kent a Canadian, arrived. In early 1941, after Kent was transferred, Kingcome received full command. During this time, he and his pilots achieved the highest success rate of any squadron in the entire Battle of Britain. “

After serving with 92 Squadron, Kingcome was briefly posted as flight commander at No 61 Operational Training Unit in late 1941.

In February 1942, he returned to operations as OC 72 Squadron. Almost immediately he was ordered to provide escort cover for the ill-fated Fleet Air Arm Swordfish attack on the German capital ship Gneisenau, the cruiser ship Prinz Eugen and the capital ship Scharnhorst as they sailed through the Channel in an attempt to reach Kiel, Germany during operation Channel Dash.

He then became Wing Leader at Kenley in June 1942, and late in the year posted to the Fighter Leader's School at RAF Charny Down.

In May 1943, he was posted to North Africa to command No. 244 Wing RAF and, in September, he was promoted to Group Captain at the age of 25. With 244 Wing, Kingcome found himself leading five Spitfire squadrons: 92 Squadron, 145 Squadron, 601 Squadron, 417 (RCAF) Squadron and 1 (SAAF) Squadron during the Italian Campaign.

In October, he attended the RAF Staff College at Haifa. On completion, Kingcome was appointed Senior Air Staff Officer in No. 205 Group, which comprised all of the RAF heavy bomber squadrons in the theatre. In spite of his staff position, Kingcome flew several missions as a waist-gunner in a B-24 Liberator over northern Yugoslavia.

He remained in Italy after the war as OC 324 Wing, again on fighters.

In mid-1946, he returned to the UK and the Staff College for two years.

Kingcome flew Spitfires in combat continually until the end of 1944, his tally finishing at 8 and 3 shared destroyed, plus a score of probables and damaged. One of the prewar Cranwell elite, Kingcome was to become one of the Second World War's great fighter leaders, alongside Douglas Bader, Robert Stanford Tuck and Johnnie Johnson.

He, with other Cranwellians, featured as himself in the film *First of the Few*, a public tribute to 'The Few'.



**O'Brian, Peter Geoffrey St George
(J36 Entry, A Squadron)**



152



247



O'Brian was born in Toronto on 16 September 1917, the son of Air Commodore Geoffrey O'Brian, an RFC pilot and founder member of the RCAF. He was educated at Trinity College, Ontario and Ontario University.

He entered the RAF College in January 1936 as a Flight Cadet, was awarded the Sword of Honour in December 1937 when he graduated with permanent commission.

O'Brian joined the 26 Squadron at Catterick in January 1938. He was severely injured in a motor accident at Catterick on 28 September 1939 and was posted from Squadron to Station staff on 12 November to assume Ops Room duties. He was appointed Acting Squadron Leader on the 16th.

He relinquished his rank when he volunteered for Fighter Command and posted to 5 OTU, Aston Down, on 4 August 1940. After converting to Spitfires, he joined 152 Squadron at Warmwell on the 19th. On the 25th, he was temporary 'B' Flight Commander when Flight Lieutenant FM Thomas became non-effective sick. On the 27th, he shared the destruction of an He 111 and, on the 17 September, shared the destruction of a Ju 88.

On 24 September, he took command of the newly formed 247 Squadron at Rosborough. He was awarded the DFC (gazetted on 2 December 1941) and led the squadron till May 1942.

In June 1942, O'Brian was posted to HQ 10 Groups, as Wing Commander Training. In September, he returned to Portreath Wing, leading Spitfires on escorts and sweeps over the Brest Peninsula and carrying out attacks on shipping.

On 16 April, he led 412 (RCAF) Squadron to attack German shipping off the Brest Peninsula. In combat with FW 190s, O'Brian's Spitfire was damaged and he baled out into the Channel. After 8 hours afloat, he was picked up by a French MTB and taken to Dartmouth, escorted for the last few miles by a flight of 142 Squadron Spitfires. He was awarded a Bar to the DFC (gazetted 6 August 1943).

O'Brian was rested in July 1943 and returned to his former post at HQ 10 Group. From December 1943 till April 1944, he was a student at RAF Staff College.

In May 1944, O'Brian joined the Strategic Section of the Joint Planning Staff in London. He stayed on in the RAF, was made an OBE (gazetted 1 January 1954), served as ADC to HM The Queen in 1958 and retired on 18 July 1959 as a Group Captain.

O'Brian returned to Canada and became vice-president of a publishing company before retiring in 1982. He died on 15 April 2007.