

# WW2 REMEMBERED

## FLIGHT LIEUTENANT EDMUND HENRY JEFFREYS DFC

Born in first quarter 1922 in Lewisham, London he was the younger son of Captain Robin Edmund Jeffreys RN and Marjorie Ellenwood (nee Hobbs). His father had a distinguished naval record during WW1 and was promoted during the inter-war years serving in Portsmouth and later with the Royal Navy, New Zealand Station. As a consequence the family moved around both in Britain and lived for some time in New Zealand. In 1931 the family returned to England with Edmund first attending a preparatory school in Uckfield, Sussex and then in 1935 Radley College as a boarder. Radley College archives show that Edmund had a passion for mountaineering (he left his collection of books to the School Library). On leaving school Edmund first made an unsuccessful attempt to join the Royal Navy as an officer and then worked for the British Power Boats Company in Hythe, Hampshire where they made Motor Torpedo Boats for the Navy and rescue Cutters for the RAF.



After war was declared Edmund joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and was accepted for pilot training and was eventually selected to fly multi-engine aircraft. He was posted to 236 Squadron, Coastal Command probably in late 1941. On 15 March 1942 the squadron became operational once again after re-equipping with the Bristol Beaufighter bombers. At first the squadron was used for shipping reconnaissance and escort duties, before in July it began operations against enemy shipping off the Dutch coast. At the same time detachments operated over the Bay of Biscay to protect anti-submarine aircraft against German attack.



On 11 January 1943 Edmund took off from Wick, Scotland on a reconnaissance patrol of the Norwegian coast and fjords and the Skagerrak (the sea passage between Norway and Denmark). At the beginning of an eventful patrol they sighted a tanker with escorts, a small coaster and 2 surfaced submarines. Just as they were ending their patrol they sighted the German Battlecruiser Scharnhorst with a heavy escort including covering aircraft heading west towards Norway. Edmund was able to evade and return to base with this important intelligence. He and his navigator were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.



**D F C - LONDON GAZETTE, 16 FEBRUARY, -1943**

Flying Officer Edmund Henry JEFFREYS (116717), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 236 Squadron. Flying Officer Robert Augustine IRVING (119447), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 236 Squadron. In January 1943, Flying Officers Jeffreys and Irving were pilot and navigator respectively of an aircraft engaged on a shipping reconnaissance over enemy waters. In spite of adverse weather, success was achieved and valuable information obtained. Throughout the flight both these officers displayed great skill and determination. On a further 2 sorties later in the month they displayed great fortitude and devotion to duty

The last record we can find of Edmund's time in 236 Squadron is from March 1943 when he participated in an air-sea rescue of a downed Beaufighter. We know over the next year he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant, posted to 248 Squadron operating from Portreath, Cornwall and that he re-trained to fly the De Havilland Mosquito.



De Havilland Mosquito, also known as the 'Wooden Wonder' designed to be constructed from widely available plywood rather than aluminium, which was in short supply. Equipped with two Merlin engines this aircraft one of the fastest and most effective fighter-bombers of WW2



We know that Edmund was flying operational patrols with 248 Squadron from March 1944 and as part of the preparations for D Day on June 6 there were extensive anti-shiping and anti- submarine operations. These proved very effective as the German Navy were unable to disrupt the invasion.

On the morning of June 10 attacks by 248 Squadron (supported by other aircraft) sunk German submarine U821 off the Brittany coast near Ushant and various other German naval vessels were in the area searching for survivors. Later in the day another offensive patrol of 4 Mosquitos from 248 Squadron, including Edmund observed a German launch searching for survivors, but when Edmund flew over the launch the German vessel opened fire and shot him down and he crashed into the sea in flames. The remainder of his patrol then sank the German launch.

The bodies of Edmund and his navigator Albert Burden were never recovered so they are both commemorated at the Runnymede Memorial.



CWGC and later probate records show Edmund's address as Wilton, High Street, Great Chesterford. His mother was shown in the 1939 Register living there with her parents George and Gertrude Hobbs, presumably while Edmund's father was away on active service (as indeed he had been during WW1, when he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross).

In 1953 his parents had a St George's flag, emblazoned with the Canterbury diocese arms and a memorial to their sons dedicated at St John the Baptist Church Doddington, Kent, their family home, in memory of their two sons Edmund and John, who both lost their lives in WW2.

Edmund's maternal grandparents George and Gertrude Hobbs are both buried in All Saint's Churchyard.