

## P/O James Desmond Aspin DFM 171216 RAFVR



Pilot Officer Aspin was the son of Thomas Beardwood Aspin and Sarah Aspin of Bury, Lancashire. He was born 18 May 1922 at the family home in Bury – the youngest of three siblings. He was known as Desmond, or Des, to his family and friends.

From a letter he wrote in May 1942, we know that he was stationed for flying training at the Air Corps Basic Flying School in Macon, Georgia, USA.

Desmond then joined 625 Squadron – which was based at RAF Kelstern from 10 October 1943 to 4 April 1945. The squadron operated Avro Lancaster heavy bombers – 76 of these were lost and 375 members of aircrew lost their lives – including Pilot Officer Aspin.

The London Gazette (Third Supplement) of 23 November 1943 records the King's approval to Desmond being awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in recognition of gallantry displayed in flying operations against the enemy.

Desmond was reported missing as the result of air operations on the night of 19/20 February 1944 when Lancaster aircraft ME588, in which he was flying as captain and pilot, set out to bomb Leipzig and was not heard from again. It was shot down by night fighters and crashed at Almke, Helmstedt, Germany. Burial of the seven members of the crew took place in the nearby village of Marienthal. Their remains were exhumed post-war and re-interred in a communal group of graves in the British Military Cemetery at Hotton, Belgium.

The crew members who died with Desmond were:

Sgt. G H Eastwood (wireless operator/air gunner)

Sgt. J C Landon (air bomber)

Sgt. W E Riley (navigator)

Sgt. P S Skebo RCAF (air gunner)

Sgt. R S Watson (air gunner)

Sgt. P R Wheeldon (flight engineer)

James can be found on Panel 3