

## Sqn. Ldr. Philip Robert Coldwell DSO DFM 137578 RAFVR



Philip was the son of John G. and Minnie Coldwell; he was the husband of Betty Coldwell, of Wingate, County Durham. They married in June of 1943.

He was a Navigator in No. 7 Squadron and had been awarded the DSO and DFM. He had completed 85 missions and was on his third tour of duty (30 missions were a normal tour). The DFM citation of February 1943 states "His ability and devotion to duty have played an important role in ensuring the success of many of the operational sorties in which he has taken part." The DSO was announced in the London Gazette of 24 September 1943 and included within the citation "He is a navigator of exceptional ability and his work, carefully planned and brilliantly executed, has been reflected in the repeated successes obtained". He had previously had several lucky escapes sustaining only minor injuries.

Lancaster ND845 MG-C took off from Oakington at 2222 hours on 19 May 1944 on a night mission to attack the railway yards at Le Mans, France, as one of 112 Lancasters plus 4 Mosquitoes. SOE intelligence had reported the positioning of many V1 flying bombs on the railway rolling stock en route to sites around France. After an initially uneventful flight, and as Master Bomber, Sqn. Ldr. Baker was heard giving directions to the oncoming bomber stream when all communication suddenly ceased. Initially thought to be hit by flak, it now appears the aircraft may have tragically collided with Lancaster JB653 MG-R, the deputy Master Bomber, as at the same instant they also stopped communicating. Although the loss to 7 Squadron was heavy, the mission was deemed successful with much damage being caused to the yards.

Philip is buried at Le Mans West Cemetery, Sarthe, France. Plot 38. 1939-1945 Row C. Grave 12. The inscription reads "... that is for ever England." He was 24 years old. His name is inscribed on the Thorpe Hesley war memorial in Rotherham and listed on the Durham University Roll of Honour.

Sqn. Ldr. Philip Robert Coldwell DSO DFM - Navigator (killed)  
Sqn. Ldr. John Baker DSO DFC - 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot (killed)  
Flt. Sgt. Derek William Wood – Flight Engineer (killed)  
P/O Albert Price – Bomb Aimer (killed)  
F/O Jack William Walters DFC RNZAF – Wireless Operator/Air Gunner (killed)  
F/O Robert Lorne Weatherall DFM RCAF – Air Gunner (killed)  
WO Joseph Lamonby – Air Gunner (killed)  
Wg. Cdr. James Fraser Barron DSO & Bar DFC DFM RNZAF - Pilot (killed)

He is commemorated on Panel 146

Photo courtesy of [aircrewmembers.com](http://aircrewmembers.com)