

Wg Cdr Thomas Noel Partridge DFC 37574 RAF

Thomas, known as Tim, was born on 17 December 1914 in Finedon, Northamptonshire, the son of Thomas Henry Partridge and Fanny Sarah Partridge nee Ball. In 1939 he married Mary Graham in St Ives, Cambridgeshire. Educated at Wellingborough School, Tim joined the RAF in 1935 and following his pilot training he was Commissioned, joining 40 Sqn in 1936. In 1938 Tim converted to Blenheims and was posted to 90 Sqn. The day after war was declared the squadron was placed on readiness at RAF West Raynham but not called and soon moved to RAF Upwood for training duties.

In March 1941 Tim was posted on to ops with 21 Sqn at RAF Watton, Norfolk just as the anti-shipping campaign began in earnest. By May, Tim was promoted to Sqn Ldr and appointed 'A' Flt Cdr. Detachments to RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland for ops in Norway followed before a return to RAF Watton. On 1 July he was promoted to Wg Cdr and took command of 18 Sqn. For ops on 10 July he was awarded his DFC:



"this officer participated in an attack against enemy shipping at Le Havre. By his skilful leadership, the formation was enabled to carry out an attack from a low level. In spite of accurate antiaircraft opposition the operation was carried through with great determination and resulted in a loss to the enemy of some 18,000 tons of shipping with a further 4,500 tons damaged. Wing Commander Partridge scored direct hits on the largest ship in the outer harbour. By his careful preparation for the flight and his determined and courageous leadership throughout, Wg Cdr Partridge contributed materially to the successes obtained".



On 16 July 1941, 36 Blenheims were allocated to carry out a daring mast high attack on ships in the docks at Rotterdam. At 15:17 Tim and his crew departed RAF Horsham St Faith in Blenheim IV V6267 (WV-M), leading the second wave of the attack. This photo of the aircraft was taken on the run in to attack. (<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205211308>). Post war reports state eye-witnesses had reported seeing Tim's aircraft over Rotterdam with the port engine on fire, trying to land in a park. When it was realised that the park was full of children and many adults, the aircraft was pulled up over the rooftops but

the aircraft's wingtip hit the Courthouse and it plunged into the bank of the Noordsingel Canal, killing all on board.

Bomber Command considered the raid an outstanding success, not only because of the tonnage of shipping claimed as destroyed or damaged, but also because 'only' four Blenheims were lost out of the 36 aircraft that attacked the docks. This, however, was at the cost of 9 lives.

Also Killed: FS John Oscar Noel Smith DFM (WOp/AG); Sgt George Arthur Dvorjetz (Observer)

Tim is buried in Rotterdam (Crooswijk) General Cemetery, Zuid-Holland, Netherlands

Tim is commemorated on Wall Panel 223

Photo Source: www.rafwatton.info