



St George's College

PERTH · WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## GUYDON WHITFIELD WARD

28 AUGUST 1921 TO 11 AUGUST 1943



Guy Ward was the only son of Dr Harold Whitfield Ward, a general practitioner in York, and his wife Helen Yetna Ward. He was educated at Hale School from 1935 to 1939 where he was a prefect, captain of the boarding house and a leading sportsman, being a member of the first cricket, football and swimming teams. He is remembered annually at Hale through the Guy Ward Citizenship Prize, awarded to the boarder who has shown the most outstanding leadership qualities during the year.

He decided to follow his father into medicine, and entered St George's in 1940, enrolling in science (medicine) at The University of Western Australia. After just one year of his course, he enlisted with the Royal

Australian Air Force on 28 April 1941, as a trainee in No. 9 course at Cunderdin. He won his wings on twin-engine aircraft at Geraldton, and travelled to England where he was eventually posted to 102 Squadron RAF.

This Bomber Command squadron had been re-equipped with Halifaxes in 1942, and it took part in each of the three historic “1,000 bomber” raids in May and June that year. On August 7 the squadron moved to Pocklington, a classic English market town at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds about 24km from the City of York, which was to be its home for the rest of the war. While the raid on Nuremberg was not as big as the psychologically-important 1,000 bomber raids, 653 aircraft took off on the night of 10 August for the flight to Germany.

This was no small force. It effectively comprised Britain’s entire force of front-line bombers. The 1,000 bomber raids had used the front line, the reserve and the training squadrons in order to find enough aircraft, but once “Bomber” Harris had proved his point – the 30 May raid on Cologne had wreaked more damage than the previous 70 bombing raids to Germany combined – it became standard for Bomber Command to commit all its front-line resources to each major raid.

The newly-formed path finders had attempted to ground-mark the city and, although their markers were mostly obscured by cloud, the central and southern parts of the city were successfully bombed. During the aerial battle, Bomber Command lost six of its 318 Lancasters, seven of its 216 Halifaxes and three of the 119 Stirlings. The loss rate of just under 2.5 percent was about half the normal mission loss, indicating the use of “window” to reduce the effectiveness of the German radar-guided searchlights.

Guy was in a Halifax bomber on his 11<sup>th</sup> operational flight over Germany when the aircraft was shot down over Nuremberg, some time after midnight. He was last seen by members of his crew, still in his machine, before they abandoned it. Flight Sergeant J.A. McLearn and Sergeant P. Bostle both saw Guy in the aircraft when they baled out at 3,000 feet, and as prisoners of war at Dalag they were told by the interrogation officer that Guy had been killed. It was normal for surviving pilots to continue flying for as long as possible while the rest of the crew baled out, but many lost their lives as a result. Typically, a German night fighter would attack a bomber from behind and below, first taking out the tail gunner, and then aiming for one of the two wing tanks. If successful,

the wing tank would catch fire and the bomber would fall in a spiral, making abandonment particularly difficult.

The RAAF had already decided to promote Guy from Sergeant to Warrant Officer, but the news had not got through to his RAF squadron. When it was finally determined that Guy had been lost, the promotion was made retrospective to 11 June 1943.

A memorial service for Guy was held at the College Chapel on 20 October, 1944. A copy of the service was sent to his father and mother in York, for which they expressed great gratitude.

Mrs Helen Ward wrote to Josh Reynolds: “My husband and I went across to the church here that day...and took roses from our own garden, and placed them at the foot of the altar, for the unknown grave so far away.

“He went freely, gladly and then gloriously. After all, at least nothing can harm him now.”

--oOo--

“He had about him as an undergraduate a certain cool courage, command of the situation and command of himself. He was gifted in his ability to view things in a detached way, and to supply the reasonable and sound solution. He had an easy charm of personality, an engaging smile and a spark of fun, all of which won him many friends. He was the man who was ready to do a job which had to be done, without thought of the cost.”

**The Dragon, 1944 (attributed to Josh Reynolds)**