

# **Durrington**

## **Roll of Honour**



*Lest we Forget*

### **World War II**



**1339156 LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN**

**A. C. CHANNON**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE VOLUNTEER RESERVE**

**8TH JULY, 1943**

## **Alfred Charles CHANNON**

Alfred Charles Channon was born on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1922 to parents William Charles & Emily Channon (nee Mitchell). Alfred's birth was registered in the district of Amesbury, Wiltshire in the September quarter of 1922. Alfred's parents had married at Aston, Warwickshire in the September quarter, 1920.

Alfred Charles Channon enlisted with Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. He was given the service number of 1339156. Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon was attached to the R.A.F.'s No. 32 Service Flying Training School (S.F.T.S.) which undertook training at the Royal Canadian Air Force Station at Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon was killed in a plane accident, near Moose Jaw, Canada, when 2 planes collided on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1943, aged 21 years.

The GRO War Deaths R. A. F. All Ranks (1939-1948) records Channon, Alfred C., LAC., 1339156, 32 SFTS, 1943 (Volume 3, page 111).

The Canada War Graves Registers provide extra information - Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon's religion was Church of England; his father's address – W. C. Channon of 545 Netheravon Rd, Durrington; circumstances of casualty – “flying as pupil in aircraft which collided with another mid-air and crashed immediately”. A photograph of the grave was supplied to the next of kin.

Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon was buried in Moose Jaw (Rosedale) Cemetery, Saskatchewan, Canada – Grave reference – Lot 8. Block 10. Grave 197. His death is acknowledged by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The CWGC lists Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon, 1339156, of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as the son of William Charles and Emily Channon of Durrington, Wiltshire, England.

### **The Accident:**

Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon (Pilot) along with Leading Aircraftman Svatopluk Malý (Pilot)(born 6 Dec, 1914 at Křelov, Olomouc, Czech Republic), both of R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve 32 S.F.T.S., were both killed in a training flight accident when their Airspeed Oxford Mk I AS229 collided with AS625 possibly due to both pilots being blinded by the sun on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1943. The aircraft collided at 1,200 ft and disintegrated near Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. Two crew members only were on board the AS229. Both crew members of AS625 were also killed - F/O(118740) Benedikt Blatný DFM(Pilot)R.A.F. V.R. & P/O(134153) George Moffat Urwin (Pilot).R.A.F. V.R. (buried next to Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon in Lot 8. Block 10. Grave 196).



An Airspeed Oxford MK.I



Headstone of Leading Aircraftman Svatopluk Malý (left) & Flight Lieut. Benedikt Blatný at Rosedale Cemetery, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada (Grave Ref. Lot 8. Block 10. Grave 237 & 236)

*(Photo from Free Czechoslovak Air Force)*

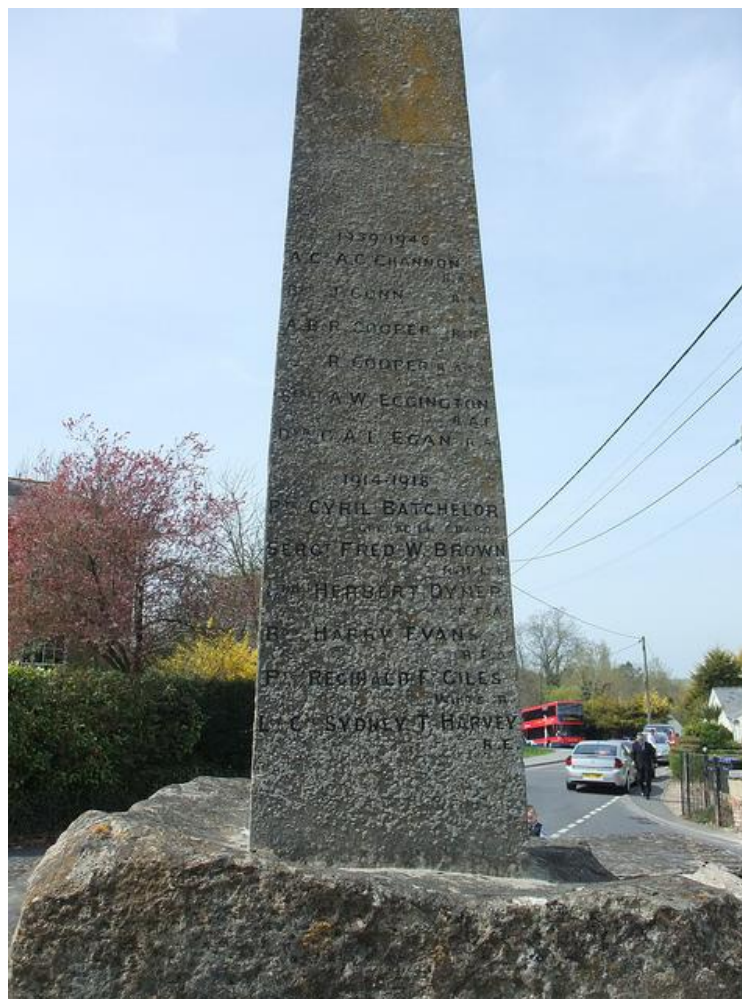
## **Moose Jaw (Rosedale) Cemetery, Saskatchewan, Canada**

Moose Jaw is a large industrial city 72 kilometres west of Regina. It has a large military airport, where No. 32 Solo Flying Training School was based during the 1939-1945 War. Rosedale Cemetery, which belongs to the City of Moose Jaw, contains 61 Commonwealth war graves, of which 48 are those of airmen, most of whom lost their lives on training flights at the Air School. The majority of the war graves are in Lot 8 Block 10, of which 35 are those of airmen of the Royal Air Force and 13 airmen of the Royal Canadian Air Force while the remainder are those of Canadian soldiers.



**Moose Jaw (Rosedale) Cemetery** (*Information & Photo from CWGC*)

Leading Aircraftman Alfred Charles Channon is remembered on the Durrington War Memorial, Wiltshire.



**Durrington War Memorial** (*Photo courtesy of Ian King 2010*)

## **The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**

In 1936, the R.A.F. had been organised into separate Commands by role, a structure which remained throughout the war. These were Bomber, Fighter, Control and Training Commands. Additional wartime Commands were Army Co-operation, to develop air operations in support of ground forces, Balloon, Maintenance and Transport. Each Command was made up of a number of groups, which was itself divided into squadrons.

When war broke out in 1939 the Air Ministry employed the R.A.F. V.R. as the principal means for aircrew entry to serve with the R.A.F. A civilian volunteer on being accepted for aircrew training took an oath of allegiance ('attestation') and was then inducted into the R.A.F. V.R. Normally he returned to his civilian job for several months until he was called up for aircrew training. During this waiting period he could wear a silver R.A.F. V.R. lapel badge to indicate his status.

By the end of 1941 more than half of Bomber Command aircrew were members of the R.A.F. V.R. Most of the pre-war pilot and observer N.C.O. aircrew had been commissioned and the surviving regular officers and members of the R.A.F.O. filled the posts of flight and squadron commanders. Eventually of the "R.A.F." aircrew in the Command probably more than 95% were serving members of the R.A.F. V.R.

During 1943, the decision was taken by the Air Ministry to raise an order for members of the R.A.F. V.R. to remove the brass and cloth 'V.R.'s worn on the collars and shoulders of officers and other ranks (respectively), as these were viewed as being divisive. No similar order was raised for members of the Auxiliary Air Force, who retained their 'A's on uniforms at that time.

*(BBC & Wikipedia)*

## **Canadian Forces Base Moose Jaw:**

CFB Moose Jaw, is a Canadian Forces Base located 4 nautical miles (7.4 km; 4.6 mi) south of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

The declaration of World War II saw the Moose Jaw Flying Club initially contracted to provide pilot training for the Royal Canadian Air Force, however this was soon replaced by the far larger British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) which saw the Government of Canada acquire the aerodrome and completely reconstruct it into RCAF Station Moose Jaw in 1940 with the new aerodrome opening in 1941.

Initially the Royal Air Force trained exclusively at the base under the RAF's No. 32 Service Flying Training School (S.F.T.S.) (ca. 1942) using Harvards, and later, Oxfords. No. 32 S.F.T.S. eventually broadened its intake to train 1,200 pilots for the air forces of Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, New Zealand, Poland, France, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, the United States and the Netherlands.

In 1946 RCAF Station Moose Jaw was decommissioned and the aerodrome was returned to civilian service after the war.

*(Wikipedia)*