

Letter from Mr J.L. Withy - 6th November 1991

malcolmravenhill.co.uk

Nov 6th 1991

Dear Mr Ravenhill,

It is a wonder that I had not seen your request for information in AIR MAIL as I would have replied immediately.

I remember your third cousin of 229 Squadron. He was with us in France at Vitry near Dovia on the French Belgian border and was shot up and forced landed the second day we were there. He got back to England just after us in a Gloucester Gladiator. He was at Digby (Lincs) before I arrived in early 1940 and represented the AOC and the Squadron at the funeral of Sgt. Dent who crashed in the North Sea. The funeral was on 13th April 1940 (he had known Sgt. Dent for several years). Mr Ravenhill was a Bristol Blenheim pilot then, before changing over to Hurricanes. As far as I am aware, F/O Ravenhill was killed in action while 229 Squadron was serving at Northolt (Middlesex) during the Battle of Britain. I remember him well. He was not very tall and rather dark featured.

I note from my records, however, that he was posted on June 8th 1940 to No. 17 Squadron, Kenley (Surrey). I know he left us at Northolt. For further information you may like to contact G/Cpt. R.B. Johns (DFC, DSO, AFC) and W/Cmd. R. Mitchell (DFC, MBE): << *Addresses supplied* >>

Both these officers were Sgt. Pilots with F/O Ravenhill in France and at Northolt, and of course at Digby with him. Sgt. Johns was also shot down in France and was flying with Mr Ravenhill at the time. RAF Records Gloucester and also the Air Ministry could also give you further assistance. I cannot give you the address of Air Chief Marshal Sir F.R. Rosier who was his F/Lt. Commander at Digby and his C.O. in France. I have no photographs at hand.

Mr Ravenhill claimed 2 German Henschel Aircraft shot down in France. He also flew with 229 Squadron from Biggin Hill over Dunkirk. I was the only man stationed at RAF Digby to go abroad to the Middle East and return with it to the UK for the second front. I did get posted away from the Squadron for just over a year and got posted back to the Squadron in Malta, going on to Sicily and then home from Naples.

We were the second highest scoring squadron on Malta just below 249 Squadron, the two flew more or less together.

We have never had a Squadron reunion. A Sgt. O'Neill tried to organise one some 3 years ago, but he fell ill and did not have many interested parties. I would love to have a reunion. It would be a one-off I think. We are all getting on in years. I am 71 and "fit as a fiddle" and don't look 71. I was just turned 20 when I joined 229 at RAF Digby. I am a member of the RAF Association and the British Legion and always look closely at the Air Mail Help etc. I would be pleased to supply any further information.

I will be writing to Vic Hand before Xmas and let him know I have replied to your letter.

You may be interested to know that on the left hand side of the RAF Church St. Clements Danes in the Strand are a number of Remembrance Boards in alphabetical order of all RAF aircrew killed in action.

Thank you for your enquiry and I hope the information is useful.

Yours faithfully,

J.L. Withy (551199)

Ex. Cpl. Fitter II A. (always known as "Old Sam")

P.S. Please let me know if you come across any old 229 Personnel.