

## Letter from Mr J.L. Withy – 21<sup>st</sup> November 1991

[malcolmravenhill.co.uk](http://malcolmravenhill.co.uk)

**Wednesday, Nov. 21. 1991**

Dear Justin,

I am in receipt of your letter it arrived this morning, and I am pleased you are having some success with your research.

I may have been the last person to see him alive on the ground as it sticks in my mind that he landed at Northolt and took off more or less straight away after being refuelled etc. and I never saw him again. I can remember the exact spot on the airfield. There is also something else that has occurred to me. At RAF Digby, and for a considerable time afterwards, though not at RAF Northolt, Air Marshal Sir Harold Maguire was Mr Ravenhill's Commanding Officer as a Squadron leader being 229's first C.O. and flew with him over Dunkirk etc. He is a member of the RAF Battle of Britain Association. The RAF club in Piccadilly could be a source of information for addresses etc. Air Chief Marshall Foxley Norris is secretary of the Association.

I got the name "Old Sam" because for some reason or other they thought it was my christian name and I let them carry on. People liked to have nicknames etc. in those days.

I have no further information, but if I get any I will let you know.

It is surprising the many hundreds of men who passed through the Squadron and yet I have met only on since the end of World War 2. I do write, however, to Vic Hand and to Johns and Mitchell.

I will drop Mr Edge a line and would appreciate it if you come across the names and addresses of any ex 229 Personnel you could let me have any addresses.

We were very lucky in France. We flew from Digby to Manston, then to Vitry near Dovia, the next day. We lost half our aircraft in the afternoon and the rest the following morning when the airfield was dive bombed. Mr Ravenhill baled out having been attacked over the airfield. After travelling to another airfield which had been evacuated, we found out we were advancing and not retreating. We had one lorry, 34 men, plus all our gear which took up half the space. We also had a rifle and 50 rounds of ammunition and all communication had broken down so we made our way to the channel as best we could. We just missed being bombed in Abbeville, the Germans set fire to it. We were about 15 miles outside on a deserted farm. We finally got to Boulogne and then to Dover, then to Tidworth for a day and night and then back to Digby all in about 6 days after we left. They thought at Digby we had all been taken prisoner.

Mr Ravenhill flew back from France in a Gloucester Gladiator. Where he got it from I have no idea.

Must close now - wishing you all success in your research.

Yours faithfully,

J.L. Withy

Ex. Cpl. Fitter II A, 229 Squadron.