

R.A.F. (V.R.) 150006

**SHELTON Michael Howard**

Parents :

Robert Howard SHELTON D.S.O. et Gladys Marguerite SHELTON,  
de Gable Cottage, 86 Purley Downs Road, Purley,  
également Shirley, Croydon, London.

Michael Howard SHELTON est né à \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, le 15 août 1922. Son éducation s'effectue à la Cranleigh School, Cranleigh, Surrey, de 1936 à 1939, où son frère Robert Anthony est également scolarisé. "Micky" fait partie de la chorale de l'école, et a reçu la médaille de bronze de la société royale des sauveteurs. Il obtient son "certificat A". L'école étant un pensionnat, il vivait dans la maison "2 North". Il pratique le \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ et \_\_\_\_\_. Il s'engage dans la Royal Air Force le \_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_, et débute son entraînement au pilotage le \_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_, à la \_\_\_\_\_. Cet entraînement au pilotage se poursuit à \_\_\_\_\_.

Le 11 septembre 1943, le Lieutenant Robert A. SHELTON, du Border Regiment (anciennement le 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. The Duke of Wellington's Regt.), attaché au 5<sup>th</sup> Bn. Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby Regt.) est tué par un tueur d'élite (sniper) à Salerno, en Italie. Il avait 22 ans. Il est inhumé dans le cimetière militaire de Salerno.

Michael H. SHELTON arrive à la No 1 Command Training School de \_\_\_\_\_ le - \_\_\_\_\_. Il est muté le 14 octobre 1943 au 609 (WR) Sqn, alors basé à Lympne et commandé par le S/L THORNTON-BROWN. Cette unité équipée de chasseurs-bombardiers Hawker Typhoon.

Le 29 février 1944, les 3, 198 et 609 Sqn de la R.A.F. décollent à 12h20 de Manston pour effectuer une série de "balayages" en rapport avec la mission "Ramrod 603". 9 pilotes du 609 Sqn ont reçu comme consigne de patrouiller la route Domburg-Florennes-Le Culot-Cambrai : Ce sont :

Le S/L WELLS, commandant de l'escadron	Typhoon	PR-__
le F/L SMITH, commandant le flight " _ "	Typhoon	PR-__
le F/L LEGRAND, commandant le flight " _ "	Typhoon	PR-__
le F/O JASPIS,	Typhoon	PR-U
le F/O GEERTS	Typhoon	PR-__
le F/O SHELTON	Typhoon MN211	PR-__
le F/O DEMOULIN	Typhoon	PR-__
le W/O MARTIN	Typhoon	PR-__
le W/O BUCHANAN	Typhoon	PR-__

Une section de 2 avions, commandée par le F/O Manu GEERTS, accompagné du F/O Mike SHELTON est séparée du reste de la formation. Ils poursuivent néanmoins la mission. GEERTS incendie le toit d'un hangar, dans une aire de dispersion de l'aérodrome de Le Culot, remarque beaucoup d'activité et de la FLAK légère à Florennes, puis il aperçoit SHELTON en train d'attaquer des péniches, de belle manière, au sud de Douai. Il le voit amorcer une autre attaque, puis ensuite ne voit plus qu'une traînée de fumée jaune, ce qui lui fait croire que SHELTON a été touché par la FLAK.

Les autres pilotes, après avoir touché une ou deux péniches et un ou deux remorqueurs à l'ouest de Namur, rencontrent 2 Junkers Ju-188 volant à 1000 pieds (300 mètres) d'altitude au sud-ouest de Cambrai [en fait Bohain-en-Vermandois]. Tous les pilotes passent à l'attaque, et les 2 Ju-188 s'écrasent moteurs en feu. L'avion du F/O DEMOULIN est d'ailleurs touché par des débris.

Un Ju-188 est partagé entre le S/L WELLS, le F/L SMITH, le F/O DEMOULIN, le W/O MARTIN et le W/O BUCHANAN, l'autre est partagé entre le S/L WELLS, le F/L SMITH, le F/O JASPIS, le F/L LEGRAND, le W/O MARTIN et le W/O BUCHANAN

Les 2 bombardiers allemands appartenaient au I./KG 6 basé à Chièvres. Ce jour, craignant une attaque de l'aérodrome de Chièvres par les bombardiers de la R.A.F., il avait été décidé de transférer les Ju-188 vers l'aérodrome d'Evreux, d'où ils devaient opérer sur l'Angleterre la nuit suivante. Aux commandes de l'un d'eux, se trouvait le Major Helmut FUHRHOP, le commandant du I./KG 6, un aviateur âgé de 31 ans, vétéran de la Guerre d'Espagne, récipiendaire la Croix de Chevalier, ancien commandant du 1<sup>er</sup> Gruppe du KG 51 "Edelweiss". Il était à la tête du I./KG 6 depuis l'été 1943. Les deux avions avaient décollé à 13h00 de Chièvres.

L'avion du Major FUHRHOP, codé 3E +AB, de l'escadrille de commandement (Stab) du I./KG 6 s'écrase à Seboncourt, 18 km au nord-est de St Quentin. Il n'y a aucun survivant parmi l'équipage et les passagers : navigateur : Oberfeldwebel Albert SCHUBERT, radio Oberfeldwebel Alfons EICHSCHMIDT, mécanicien navigant Stabsfeldwebel Walter REHFELD, mitrailleur Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm SCHACHTSCHNABEL et mécanicien Feldwebel Arnold BÜTTNER. Les deux chiens du Major se trouvaient également à bord : les boxer Chica et Ciro.

L'autre Ju-188, codé 3 E + KH, s'écrase en face de la ferme PIGEON, route de Wassigny à Bohain-en-Vermandois. Il était apparemment piloté par le Major Werner BANHOF, avec à son bord l'Oberleutnant Rolf HEILBRONNER, le Feldwebel Heinz GENERLICH, le Feldwebel Karl PRIEGLER, l'Unteroffizier Wilhelm MEYER, l'Unteroffizier Eberhard BRAEUTIGAM, l'Unteroffizier Rudolf ZIMMER et le Gefreiter Erich MANKRATZ. Il n'y a aucun survivant non plus de ce second équipage. En outre l'Oberleutnant HEILBRONNER était le responsable technique du Gruppe.

La mauvaise météo (plafond bas et pluie) avait fait croire que la R.A.F. n'effectuerait aucune opération ce jour. Certaines montres, retrouvées sur le corps, s'étaient arrêtées à 13h15.

Les 7 pilotes victorieux se posent à Manston entre 14h00 et 14h10 (heure anglaise).

La perte du F/O SHELTON est durement ressentie par ses camarades de combat. Seule perte du mois de février 1944, le journal de marche du 609 5WR) Sqn dit de lui, en guise d'épithète : "Il était un de ces jeunes anglais charmants, qui se font de plus en plus rare à mesure que la guerre continue. Il effectuait toujours allègrement et avec compétence tout ce qui lui était demandé. Comme pilote, il serait allé loin."

Outre la perte d'un des leurs, le dernier jour du mois de février 1944 apporte au 609 Sqn un important changement d'organisation : Avec le 198 Sqn, il sera intégré dans le No 123 Airfield, 84 Group le 1<sup>er</sup> mars, en vue du Débarquement en Normandie. Les personnels au sol qui le servaient depuis longtemps sont mutés et remplacés par un nouveau dispositif.

A une date indéterminée, mais à cette même époque, un avion allié s'écrase sur le territoire de la commune de Paillencourt, entre Douai et Cambrai. L'avion mitraillait une péniche chargée de munitions qui naviguait justement sur le canal. Il s'abat près du Canal, dans le Bois Bigot.

L'aviateur, grièvement blessé, est extrait de l'épave de l'avion, et est transporté sur une civière tout près de là, dans un atelier de menuiserie, au N° 19 de la rue de Lannoy. Il meurt quelques minutes plus tard. Lorsque les allemands arrivent sur place, ils sont furieux car les papiers et les effets personnels du pilote (dont sa montre) ont disparu.

Afin d'inciter "l'emprunteur" à restituer les papiers et biens personnels de l'aviateur, les allemands prennent un voisin en otage. N'obtenant pas de résultat, ils emmènent alors le Maire du village, M. JACQUEMART et un deuxième otage. Ils seront ultérieurement libérés quand une nuit, la montre est déposée sur le perron de la Mairie. Une délibération du Conseil Municipal, datée du 9 mars 1944, montre que M. le Maire est interné par les allemands à cette date, ce qui correspond à la date à laquelle le F/O SHELTON a trouvé la mort.

D'autre part, l'aviateur a été inhumé, par les allemands, dans la parcelle britannique du cimetière communal de CAMBRAI (route de Solesmes), où il repose toujours de nos jours, Parcelle n° 1. Rangée A. Tombe n° 16.

Une photographie découverte par M. BÉTRANCOURT montre l'empennage vertical de l'avion. Il s'agit sans conteste d'un avion de la R.A.F., comme l'atteste le "fin flash" ou drapeau de dérive. La forme de l'empennage, quant à elle, correspond à celle d'un Hawker Typhoon. Malheureusement, aucune marque ne permet d'identifier l'avion avec certitude.

sources :

- registres de la Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
- O.R.B. du 609 (WR) Sqn, via James EARNSHAW
- La Guerre aérienne et la Libération de l'Aisne, par Jean HALLADE (pages 189 à 192)
- Newsletter de la 609 (WR) Sqn association
- renseignements de MM BÉTRANCOURT, CHATELAIN, TRIoux, M. PAYNE (principal de Cranleigh School)
- Carnet de vol de George JASPIS.

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Michael Howard SHELTON was born in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, on August 15 1922. He went to Cranleigh School, Cranleigh, Surrey, from 1936 to 1939, with his elder brother Robert Anthony. "Micky" is a member of the school choir, and received the bronze medal of the life saving Royal Society. He got his certificate "A". He was living in "2 North" house at school. He then joined the R.A.F. (date unknown to me so far).

On September 11 1943, Lieutenant Robert A. SHELTON, Border Regiment (previously 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. The Duke of Wellington's Regt.), attached 5<sup>th</sup> Bn. Sherwood Foresters (Notts & Derby Regt.) is shot by a sniper in Salerno, Italy. He was 22. He's buried in Salerno military cemetery.

Michael H. SHELTON arrives to No 1 Command Training School in \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_. On October 14 1943, he's posted to 609 (WR) Sqn, then based in Lympne, with S/L THORNTON-BROWN as C.O.. This unit is flying Hawker Typhoon fighter-bombers.

On February 29 1944, No 3, 198 and 609 R.A.F. Sqn took off at 12.20 from Manston to carry out a series of "sweeps" connected with mission "Ramrod 603". 9 pilots of 609 Sqn were ordered to patrol the road Domburg-Florennes-Le Culot-Cambrai : They are :

S/L WELLS, Squadron C.O.	Typhoon	PR-__
F/L SMITH, flight commander	Typhoon	PR-__
F/L LEGRAND, flight commander	Typhoon	PR-__
F/O JASPIS,	Typhoon	PR-U
F/O GEERTS	Typhoon	PR-__
F/O SHELTON	Typhoon MN211	PR-__
F/O DEMOULIN	Typhoon	PR-__
W/O MARTIN	Typhoon	PR-__
W/O BUCHANAN	Typhoon	PR-__

A section of 2 planes, led by F/O Manu GEERTS, with F/O Mike SHELTON is separated from the rest of the formation. They followed their mission anyway. GEERTS sets in fire a hangar roof, in a dispersal area in Le Culot airfield, notices bags of activities and light FLAK in Florennes, then watches SHELTON attacking barges "nicely" according to the Squadron Operations Record Book. He then sees him start another pass, then can only see a yellow smoke trail, which makes him SHELTON was hit by FLAK.

The other pilots meet 2 Junkers Ju-188 flying at 1000 feet south-west of Cambrai [in fact Bohain-en-Vermandois]. All pilots attack and the 2 Ju-188 crash with engines in fire. One Ju-188 is shared between S/L WELLS, F/L SMITH, F/O DEMOULIN, W/O MARTIN and W/O BUCHANAN, the other between S/L WELLS, F/L SMITH, F/O JASPIS, F/L LEGRAND, W/O MARTIN and W/O BUCHANAN. The 2 German bombers belonged to I/KG 6 based in Chièvres (B). That day, fearing a night attack against Chièvres by R.A.F. bombers, it had been decided to transfer the Ju-188s to Evreux airfield, from where they would operate against England the night after. One of the pilots was Major Helmut FUHRHOP, I/KG 6 C.O., a pilot aged 31, veteran of the Spanish War, awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, previously C.O. of 1<sup>st</sup> Gruppe of KG 51 "Edelweiss". He was leading I/KG 6 since the summer of 1943. The 2 Ju-188s had taken off at 13.00 from Chièvres.

Major FUHRHOP's plane, coded 3E + AB, from Stab I./KG 6 crashed in Seboncourt, 18 km north-east of St Quentin. There was no survivor from the crew and passengers : navigator : Oberfeldwebel Albert SCHUBERT, wireless operator Oberfeldwebel Alfons EICHSCHMIDT, flight engineer Stabsfeldwebel Walter REHFELD, air gunner Oberfeldwebel Wilhelm SCHACHTSCHNABEL and ground technician Feldwebel Arnold BÜTTNER. Boxer dogs Chica et Ciro, Major FUHRHOP's two pets, were also onboard.

The other Ju-188, coded 3 E + KH, crashed in front of the PIGEON farm, route de Wassigny in Bohain-en-Vermandois. It was captained by Oberleutnant Rolf HEILBRONNER, with Feldwebel Heinz GENERLICH, Feldwebel Karl PRIEGLER, Unteroffizier Wilhelm MEYER, Unteroffizier Eberhard BRAEUTIGAM, Unteroffizier Rudolf ZIMMER and Gefreiter Erich MANKRATZ. There was no survivor either from this second crew. Oberleutnant HEILBRONNER was the Gruppe Technical Officer. The bad weather (low ceiling and rain) contributed to make the german pilots to believe the R.A.F. wouldn't fly that day ! Some watches, found at the crash sites, had stopped at 13.15. The 7 victorious pilots land at Manston between 14.00 and 14.10 (local time).

F/O SHELTON was the only pilot lost during the whole month of February 1944. The Squadron O.R.B. says about him : "The Squadron is much grieved at the loss of F/O SHELTON. He was one those charming young Englishmen, getting rarer as the war goes on, and who was always willing, cheerfully and competently to carry out anything that the Squadron asked of him. As a pilot, he would have gone far."

At an unknown date, but at quite the same time, an allied plane crashed on the soil of the village of Paillencourt, between Douai and Cambrai. The plane was strafing an ammunitions barge on the canal, and crashed nearby, in the Bois [wood] Bigot. The pilot, severely wounded, is taken out of the blazing wreck, and brought on a stretcher to a nearby joiner's shop, N° 19 in rue de Lannoy. He died of his wounds a few minutes later. When the Germans arrive, they're very angry because the pilot's papers and belongings (including his watch) are missing.

In order to persuade the people who "secured" the papers and personal belongings to give them back, the Germans take a neighbour in hostage. Getting no result, they take away the Mayor of the village, Mr JACQUEMART and another hostage. They'll be freed a few days or weeks later on, when, one night, the watch is set down on the Town hall stairs. A "Conseil Municipal" minute, dated march 9 1944, shows that the Mayor was still interned by the Germans at this date, which matches with the date of F/O SHELTON's death. This pilot was buried by the Germans in the British plot of CAMBRAI (route de Solesmes) communal cemetery, where he still lays nowadays, Plot n° 1, Row A, Grave n° 16.

A picture found by M. BÉTRANCOURT shows the vertical fin of the plane. The "fin flash" enables us to be sure it was a R.A.F. machine. The shape of the fin also match that of a Hawker Typhoon. Unfortunately, no other marking can be found to totally ascertain the identity of the plane fallen in Paillencourt, hence the name of the unfortunate pilot.

Joss LECLERCQ

sources :

- Commonwealth War Graves Commission registers.
- 609 (WR) Sqn Operations Record Book, via James EARNSHAW
- La Guerre aérienne et la Libération de l'Aisne, by Jean HALLADE (pages 189 à 192)
- Newsletter of 609 (WR) Sqn association
- informations and details from MM BÉTRANCOURT, CHATELAIN, TRIoux, Mr PAYNE (Cranleigh School principal)
- George JASPIS log-book.

Lympne. 15<sup>th</sup> October 1944. ...Afternoon sees some local flying and the arrival of F/O M.H. Shelton from No.1 C.T.S., Tealing. ...

Lympne. December 5<sup>th</sup> 1943. ...Meanwhile F/O's Watts and Shelton, having found a store of timber, worthily spend the afternoon in constructing shelves for the parachutes – only next day to have the timber removed and the shelves dismantled by the station on the plea that they want the wood for mending M.T. ...

Manston. January 6<sup>th</sup> 1944. Today it is the turn of W/O Martin and F/O Shelton to go on a Ranger. They set off at 11.15, choosing the St. Dizier-Laon area. Though they complete the course, low cloud and haze often reduce vis. to 700 yds, no E/A are seen, and probably few are flying. On the way back Martin damages a hangar at Roye airfield. Shelton damages a lorry, leaving this smoking on its side, and coming out at 0ft, damages a flak tower on the coast.

Enemy Casualties: 1 Hangar damaged: W/O Martin.  
“ 1 Lorry and 1 Flak Post damaged: F/O Shelton.  
Our “ Nil.

F/O Shelton is at least pleased to have now fired his guns ‘in anger’.

Manston. January 20<sup>th</sup> 1944. At 05.30 the IO on night duty is roused with the news that te Munsterland has actually left Boulogne, and 609 and 198 are to be ready to take off at first light with all available R.P. Cloud at the French coast has already been reported by an Albacore to be 10.10 at 500 ft. At 08.29 19 Typhoons, including 5 R.P., take off. They find the ship about a mile from the shore just W. of Sangatte. But it is already sunk: the Long range guns have actually scored a hit – and incidentally caused the enemy's guns to retaliate, to the detriment of Dover and Ramsgate. The CO, Davoies and Shelton accordingly enjoy a little target practice at the superstructure which is still showing, and Dave's R.P.s are seen to hit. De Moulin and Soesman practice with cannon. & of course there is some flak from the shore. ...

Manston. January 30<sup>th</sup> 1944. ... Next stop is Roye airfield, where the CO finds a Ju.88 being refuelled. Aided by F/O Shelton, who comes in close behind, he destroys this, and this time even the 16mm camera records the dispersal of the crews. He goes on to damage another a little further on (F/O Shelton declares the first was an Me.110 but is definitely refuted by the film.)...

Enemy Casualties: 1 Ju.88 destroyed on the ground: F/O Detal (Belgian)  
“ 1 Ju.88 “ “ “ : S/L Wells and F/O Shelton.  
“ 2 Ju.88 damaged “ “ “ : W/O2 Buchanan (Canadian)  
“ 1 Fw190 destroyed in the air: P/O Stark  
“ 2 Fw190 “ “ “ : F/O de Moulin (Belgian)  
“ 1 dispersal damaged : “

...

Manston. January 31<sup>st</sup> 1944. ... In the afternoon F/O Ross is walking to his kite to check his equipment when someone shouts, “Go to Boulogne harbour”! Ready to do or die, he leaps into his aircraft and takes off as White 1, leaving Shelton on the ground owing to a burst tyre.

Manston. Months Score sheet: F/O Shelton E/A on ground (Destroyed) ½ Miscellaneous: 1 Lorry damaged, 1 Flak Post damaged.

Manston. February 1944. ... Most of the score of 3 enemy aircraft destroyed, plus 3 tugs and 18 barges, was obtained on two sorties, one of them on Feb 29<sup>th</sup>, a day which saw the sad loss of F/O Shelton.

Fairwood Common. February 7<sup>th</sup> 1944. ... As for sleeping, 609 does this at Kilvroug House, some 2 miles from the camp. There the bath water situation is such that if anyone has a bath at night, no one else can even shave. F/O Shelton accordingly puts up his best of a series of blacks by filling it to the brim. This causes the CO's 'rain of terror' to descend, and the batman is bidden fill the bath with ice water and call both CO and Mr Shelton at 07.30 – at which time the CO has much pleasure in watching the culprit immerse.

February 8<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 1944. ... F/O Shelton nearly gets a score, too, when out shooting with F/Lt Pike and F/O Jaspis – he misses the pheasant, all but hits the gamekeeper, who declares he is too young to use a gun and is only persuaded by F/Lt Pike (who claims the culprit is an exhausted operational hero) from charging Shelton with Trespassing, Poaching, Shooting without a licence, shooting game out of season, and attempted manslaughter. Another day Shelton, riding on a lorry balancing an egg in one hand and an orange in the other, falls off onto his head, and is found in a dazed condition but with his cargo still intact. His final black is to fall through a large pane of glass in the Mess while phoning his popsy....

Manston. Months score sheet: F/O Shelton. 3 Barges Cat. III

### Search for relatives of Second World War pilot from Croydon

By Helen Barnes

An amateur historian inspired to erect a memorial to a Second World War pilot killed in action in France, is appealing for Guardian readers to help trace his family.

Flight Officer Michael Shelton was just 21 when his Hawker Typhoon plane was shot down over the village of Paillencourt in northern France on February 29, 1944.

Amateur historian and aviation enthusiast Jocelyn Leclercq has spent years researching FO Shelton's life and is to unveil a plaque commemorating the 60th anniversary of his death next month.

Now Mr Leclercq is calling for anyone who may know the relatives of the Croydon pilot to get in touch.

FO Shelton's parents are believed to have lived at Gable Cottage in Purley Downs Road, Purley, and at one point may have lived in Shirley.

Their eldest son Robert was also in the RAF and was shot by a sniper in Salerno, Italy.

FO Shelton's Hawker plane was one of nine from the RAF's 609 Squadron, which was based at Manston, Kent, ordered to patrol the road to Cambrai in north France.

His plane became separated from the formation just after take-off, but FO Shelton decided to continue the mission anyway.

His Hawker plane was hit by enemy fire just minutes after he successfully carried out an attack on an ammunition barge on the canal that runs from Cambrai to Douai.

It crashed in the garden of a deserted manor house.

War records uncovered by Mr Leclercq show that a pilot was rescued from the burning wreck of a plane that crashed near the Bigot Wood near Paillencourt and was carried on a stretcher to a nearby joiner's shop.

The pilot died from his injuries and was buried in an unmarked grave in Cambrai cemetery.

Mr Leclercq believes the pilot identified in the records was FO Shelton but he has never managed to trace the young pilot's family.

His searches have brought him to the UK several times and he was made an associate member of the 609 Squadron in 1997 for his historical research.

The squadron's operations book described FO Shelton as a "charming young Englishman, getting rarer as the war goes on, and who was always willing, cheerful and competent to carry out anything that the squadron asked of him".

It added: "As a pilot, he would have gone far."

A plaque honouring FO Shelton is to be unveiled in Paillencourt on February 29. A dedication service will be held to commemorate the 60th anniversary of his life.

If you knew FO Shelton or his family, contact the Guardian on 020 8645 8817 or email [hbarnes@london.newsquest.co.uk](mailto:hbarnes@london.newsquest.co.uk).

**SHELTON.** – Previously reported missing, now officially presumed killed in action in February, 1944, Flyg. Offr. MICHAEL HOWARD SHELTON. Fighter Pilot, aged 21, beloved and only remaining son of Robert H. Shelton, D.S.O., and Gladys Shelton, Shirley Park Hotel, Shirley, nr. Croydon, and brother of Lt. Robert A. Shelton (attd. Sherwood Foresters), killed at Salerno, September 1943. Please, no letters.