

**Bradshaw, Eric Arthur**  
**Flight Sergeant**  
**Wireless Operator/ Air Gunner**  
**Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**  
**620 Squadron Royal Air Force**  
**1577432**



*Dona ferentes adsumus : "We are coming bringing gifts"*



Eric Arthur Bradshaw was born in Shardlow, East Midlands, South Derbyshire District, Derbyshire, England on November 26, 1922. He was Arthur Henry's and Hannah Bradshaw's son from Melbourne, Derbyshire, England.

He joined the Royal Air Force and enlisted voluntarily. Eric was given a training as a Wireless Operator/ Air Gunner, which he successfully completed. On finishing the training, Eric Arthur was stationed with 620 Squadron, at RAF Fairford Base, Gloucestershire on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He flew a Short Stirling Bomber.

The Short Stirling was the first British four-engine heavy bomber that was used during World War II. It was introduced early 1941, but had a relatively short operational career as a bomber. As from the end of 1943, when other four-engine RAF bombers, in particular the Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster, took over its duties carrying out strategic bombings on Germany, it was downgraded to second-line duties.

The Short Stirling was also used for bombing German port areas and it played an important role as a glider and supply aircraft during the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944–1945.

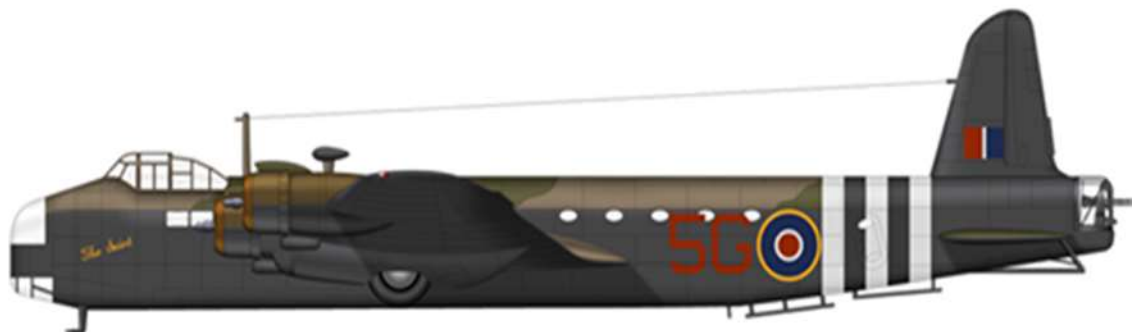
Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery wanted to bypass the northern end of the Siegfried Line, which necessitated capturing the bridges across the Maas and two arms of the Rhine (Waal and Lower Rhine) as well as a few smaller canals and tributaries. By crossing the Lower Rhine at Arnhem, the Allies wanted to encircle the industrial heart of Germany's Ruhr area from the north.

During Operation Market Garden airborne troops were used on a large scale. Their tactical objectives were to safeguard the bridges and to enable British armoured units to rapidly advance towards Northern Germany.

At the start of the operation, several bridges between Eindhoven and Nijmegen were conquered. However, the advance of General Horrocks' ground forces of XXX Army Corps were delayed due to the demolition of a bridge across the Wilhelmina Canal. Added to this, the supply line near the village of Son was extremely overstretched and troops did not succeed in conquering the road bridge across the Waal before September 20.

Near Arnhem the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division encountered much more resistance than anticipated. In the ensuing battle only a small army unit succeeded in holding the far end of the Arnhem road bridge. And, when they could not be relieved by the ground troops, they were overrun on September 21.

At 14.45 hours on Wednesday September 20, 1944 Pilot Officer Maurice McHugh in his 620 Squadron bomber, a Short Stirling IV, LK-548 (code QS-Y), left with a crew of another seven British Air Force soldiers from their base in Fairford, England in order to supply the paratroopers who were stationed in Oosterbeek on the ground. Wireless Operator/ Air Gunner Eric Arthur Bradshaw was on board too.



The Short Stirling bomber was the first heavy bomber of the RAF Bomber Command that was put into service.

Official reports have shown that, while flying low and at a slow speed in the dropping zone, the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft guns, incendiary bombs and bullets, as a result of which the wing on starboard side caught fire. Nevertheless, the crew bravely continued carrying out their mission. After successfully dropping their supplies and while turning to fly back to England, the aircraft was hit again, this time by a large artillery shell, which penetrated the big fuel tank on the starboard wing. Fortunately, it did not explode. However, this was soon followed by a high octane fuel fountain, which resulted in a roaring jet of fire on the wing and on the inside of the fuselage.

While Pilot Maurice McHugh was struggling to keep altitude, he subsequently ordered his crew to leave the aircraft as soon as it had dropped to an altitude of approx. 273 yards. Three crew members managed to leave the aircraft by means of their parachutes. While jumping, they did, however, sustain injuries and two of them lost consciousness. Later on, Navigator-Flight Sergeant Hume reported that Maurice refused to accept a parachute that he was being offered. He continued flying the aircraft in order to allow the other crew members to escape from the aircraft.



Pilot Maurice McHugh continued flying the burning aircraft in the direction of its home base until he crashed in Vorstenbosch at around 17.00 hours.

Five crew members died during this crash:

1. Pilot Officer Maurice McHugh, 21 years old, Australia.
2. Wireless Operator /Air Gunner- Flight Sergeant Eric Arthur Bradshaw, 21 years old, England.
3. Rear Gunner- Sergeant Thomas Vickers, England.
4. Air Despatcher – Driver Ernest Victor Heckford. (May 11, 1924, Lytchett Minster, Purbeck District, Dorset, England, 20 years old)
5. Air Despatcher - Lance Corporal John Waring, England, died at the age of 35.

The crew were temporarily buried at Nistelrode cemetery and later reburied in a common grave at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, grave reference **XII. C. 9 - 12.**

On Flight Sergeant Eric Arthur Bradshaw's headstone the following words are inscribed:

GREATER LOVE  
HATH NO MAN THAN THIS,  
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN  
HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS

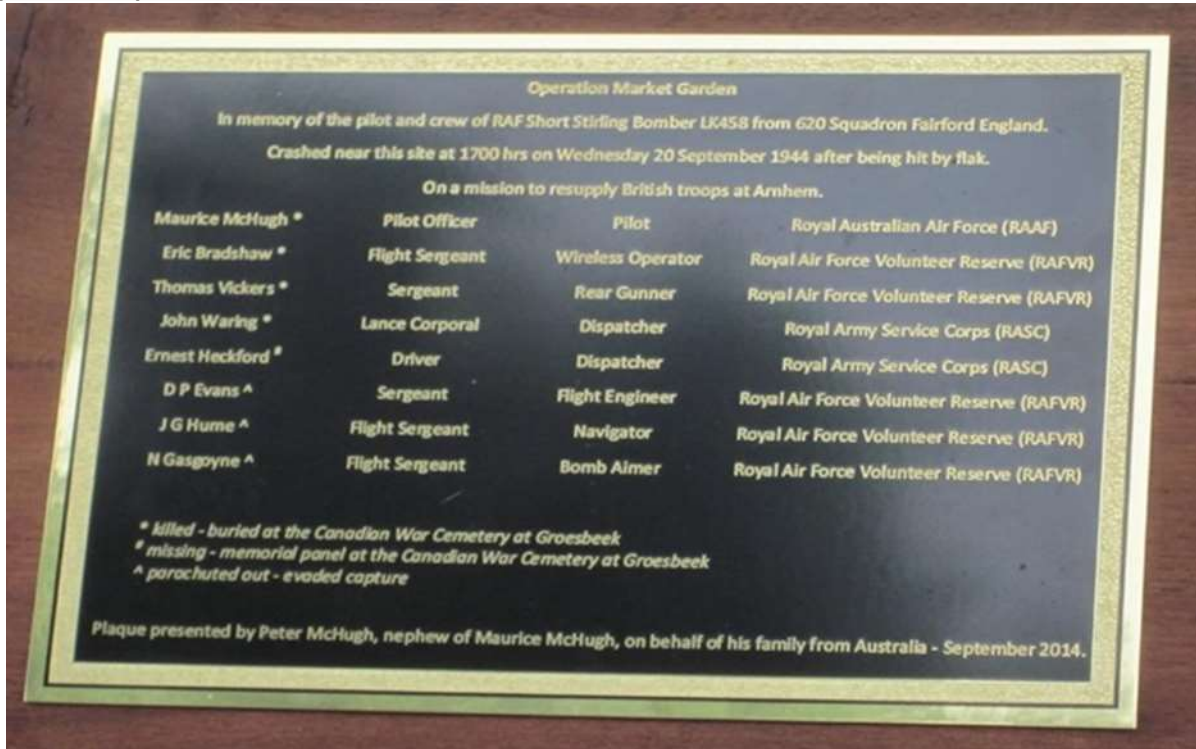


*Photo : Faces To Groesbeek mei 2021*

Three men managed to get to safety by means of their parachutes and to escape from German capture:

1. Navigator - Flight Sergeant John (Jock) Hume, England.
2. Flight Engineer – Sergeant David Evans, England.
3. Bomb Aimer - Flight Sergeant Nicholas Gasgoyne, England.

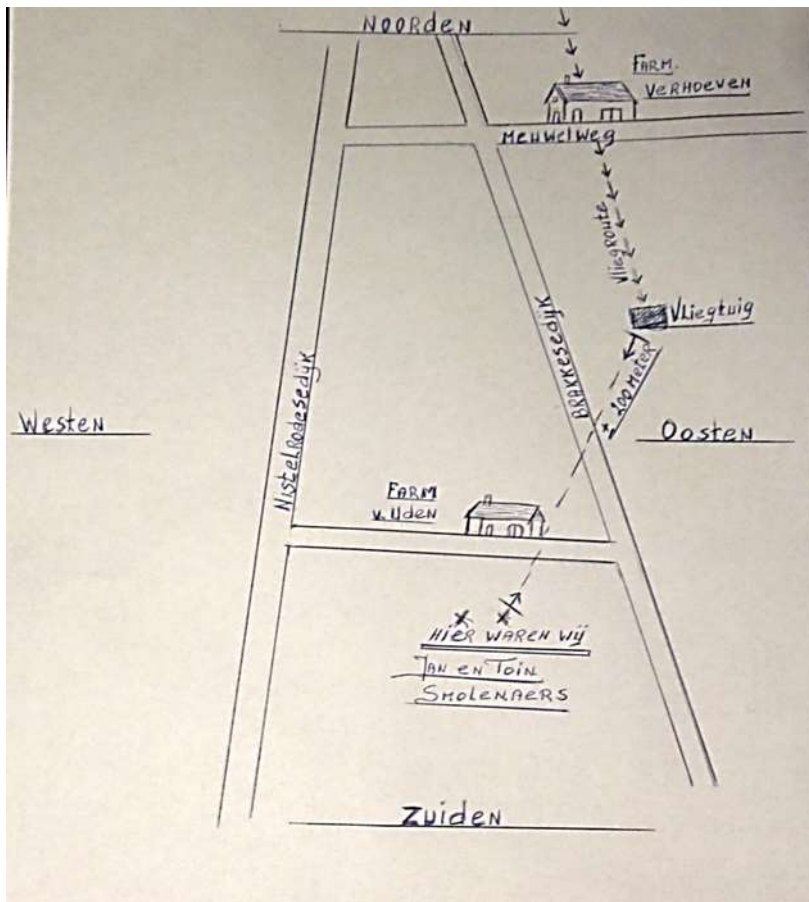
A copper plaque showing the names of the crew members together with the names of other aviators who died during Operation Market Garden was put up in the pub area of Hotel Hartenstein in Oosterbeek, where the Airborne Museum is located. During the battle, this hotel was the British paratroopers' Head Quarters.



Another plaque was put up in Vorstenbosch near the crash site at Meuwelweg to commemorate the crew who lost their lives there.

Peter McHugh, Maurice McHugh's nephew, revealed this plaque on September 20, 2015.

The Verhoeven family, who lived near the crash site in Vorstenbosch,



together with the Smolenaers brothers, were witnesses of the crash and their account was that they had seen that Pilot Maurice had deliberately pulled up the aircraft one more time in order not to crash into the farmhouse.

During his effort to land, the aircraft lost speed and eventually crashed, which resulted in the aircraft erupting in a large conflagration. Maurice's action to prevent the aircraft from hitting the

Verhoeven family's farmhouse undoubtedly saved the lives of a family of seven, among whom five young children.

Jan Smolenaers recounted how he and his brother Toine ran towards the aircraft, but were forced to lie down in a ditch, as the ammunition in the burning wreckage was exploding. Afterwards, they saw how the local nun, sister Emanuel, recovered the aviators' bodies for later burial in Nistelrode, which was a dangerous and brave thing to do during German occupation.

Local families also explained how the Dutch resistance movement bravely hid the three pilots who had dropped by parachutes in the local church in Vorstenbosch as well as in the van Hinthum family's farm in Nistelrode before they were assisted in their escape to England. The fate of missing crew member Ernest Victor Heckford remains a mystery.

Local people claimed that they saw a fourth man fall from the burning aircraft. His body, however, was never retrieved.



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**ORIGINAL**

**Graves Registration Report Form.**

**CCTRY:** HOLLAND  
**COMMUNE:**  
**REPORT No.:**  
**SCHEDULE No.:** 141.

**PLACE OF BURIAL:** GROESBEEK CANADIAN WAR CEMETERY, NIJMEGEN  
 Land belongs to

The following are buried here:—  
 Certified complete and correct.  
 Signature: *[Signature]* Date: 2 MAY 1955

| P.R.G. Gr. No. | No. and Rank            | Initials, Name & Honours   | Unit                                 | Date of Death | For works use     |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 1              | Col.                    | <i>PILOT XII. ROW G</i><br>* GASTRIDGIOWANIK <i>(see schedule 141A attached)</i> | Italian Army                         | 10. 4. 45     | CROSS ENTRY       |
| 2              | Lt.                     | D. CVORIC  | Yugoslav Army                        | 10. 4. 45     | NO REGISTER ENTRY |
| 3              | Podporucznik            | A. LIS-GAWSKI  | Polish Army                          | 23. 6. 45     | NO REGISTER ENTRY |
| 4              | 4943                    | L. LEWANDOWSKI   | 100. Szt. Komp. A. R.                | 2. 11. 45     | NO REGISTER ENTRY |
| 5              |                         | UNKNOWN BRITISH SOLDIER  |                                      |               | C.H.              |
| 6              | 258375 Capt.            | O. E. GARDNER  | R. A.                                | 5. 1. 46      | C.H.              |
| 7              | 2624120 Gdsmn.          | R. A. CRAVEN   | 1/Gren. Gds.                         | 27. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 8              | 320962 S/Lt.            | R. K. TALBOT   | 1/Gren. Gds.                         | 27. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 9              | Coll. Gt.               | 1577432 P/Sgt. E. A. BRADSHAW  | { 620 Sqn. (R. A. F. (V. R.))        | 20. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 10             | to                      | (W. O. S. / A. S.)   |                                      |               |                   |
| 11             | 410856 P/O.             | M. McHUSE  | R. A. A. F. (V. R.)                  | 20. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 12             | 1890250 Sgt. T. VICKERS | (A/S)  | 620 Sqn. R. A. F. (V. R.)            | 20. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
|                | T/14238064 I/Cpl.       | J. WARING  | 398 Comd Coy. R. A. S. G. (Airborne) | 20. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 13             | 2618871 Gdsmn.          | P. RUCKERFIELD   | 1/Gren. Gds.                         | 27. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 14             | 2624626 Gdsmn.          | S. J. SHORT  | 1/Gren. Gds.                         | 27. 9. 44     | C.H.              |
| 15             | 4615960 Tpr.            | R. CARSON  | 5/R. Tk. Rgt. R. A. C.               | 8. 10. 44     | C.H.              |

\* Exhumed and reburied in the International Cemetery, AMSTERDAM.



## FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian  
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Gijs Krist, Research Team Faces To Graves.

### Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

Peter McHugh - Australia

Jan Smolenaers – Vorstenbosch

\* If you have a photograph of this soldier or any additional information, please contact [info@facestograves.nl](mailto:info@facestograves.nl)