

Best, Herbert Henry
Sergeant
Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
50 Squadron
Royal Air Force
626342



"From Defence to Attack"

Herbert Henry Best was born in Hackney, London, England on August 16, 1918. He was the son of Walter Frederick and Rosetta Jones-Best from Hackney, a quarter in the Great-London region. The family consisted of three other children, the two sons Walter Frederick and Laurance Edward, and daughter Rosetta.



Very soon England got involved in the Second World War due to the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. Two days later, France and England declared the war to Germany.

On May 10, 1940, the day when Winston Churchill became Prime Minister, Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

Although England came to the rescue, it was too late. The British army had to be evacuated via Dunkirk between May 27 and June 4, 1940. After this operation the British were able to reorganise their army. France surrendered after six weeks of battle on June 22, 1940. Britain, however, did not give in.

Peace negotiations were conducted with Germany, but Churchill and his government rejected the German proposal. Adolf Hitler took the decision to attack England on July 16, 1940.

He issued *Weisung Nr. 16 über die Vorbereitung einer Landungsoperation gegen England*, which meant the order to prepare a cross-Channel invasion of Britain. This operation was codenamed Seelöwe {Sea Lion}. The German Army Command first of all wanted to destroy the British air force. German fighter jets started by attacking convoys and aircraft over the Channel.

In August German bombers carried out 485 flights over England. Ports were attacked and later on airports. The Battle of Britain had started. On August 24 the Germans accidentally bombed London, and the Royal Air Force took revenge with attacks on the German industry. Herbert Henry Best had been serving with the English air force since 1939 and was a Wireless Operation/Air Gunner with 50th Squadron, Royal Air Force.



At 20:57 hours on Friday August 30, 1940 the Handley Page Hampden Mk I L4079 (VN-N) took off from Royal Air Force base Stradishall, Newmarket, Suffolk. They did this together with five other aircraft in order to attack an oil refinery north-east of Gladbeck, in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The town is situated on the northern edge of the Ruhr area.

Its crew consisted of:

Pilot/Officer Kenneth Richard Killey Smettem, 41877, Royal Air Force from Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, England.

Observer, Sergeant Alan Albert Horsfall, 580957, Royal Air Force from Hove, Sussex, England.

W/Op AG, Sergeant Herbert Henry Best, 626342, Royal Air Force from Hackney, England.

Air Gunner, Sergeant Eric William Joseph Skinner, 743057, Royal Air Force Volunteer from Brighton, Sussex, England.

Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Herbert Henry Best mainly carried out wireless operation duties, but he was also responsible for operating air guns, the rear-firing cannon amidships.

In total, 46 aircraft attacked the target, which consisted of oil industry and transport targets. Fifty tons of explosives were dropped together with two tons of incendiary bombs.



Source : Wikipedia -Handley Page Hampden Mk I

After the mission had been completed, the fleet of bombers turned around and started their return flight to England. The fleet was noticed by the Germans, who started chasing them. Oberleutnant Werner Streib of 2./NJG1 { Nachtjagdgeschwader 1 } had taken off from Deelen airfield in his Messerschmitt Bf 110 and caught sight of the Handley Page Hampden Mk I L4079 (VN-N). Pilot/Officer Kenneth Richard Killey Smettem's aircraft was attacked and hit and crashed in Angerlo-Giesbeek, less than 9 miles east of Arnhem, at 00:32 hours on Saturday August 31, 1940.

All four crew members died and were buried at the Roman-Catholic Cemetery in 856791 Angerlo (Giesbeek).

Later they were reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, collective grave reference XII. H. 9-11.

Pilot/Officer Kenneth Richard Killey Smettem, 41877, Royal Air Force, from Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, England, 24 years old, grave reference XII. H. 12.

Air Gunner, Sergeant Eric William Joseph Skinner, 743057, Royal Air Force Volunteer, from Brighton, Sussex, England, 21 years old, collective grave reference XII. H. 9-11.

Observer, Sergeant Alan Albert Horsfall, 580957, Royal Air Force, from Hove, Sussex, England, 19 years old, collective grave reference XII. H. 9-11.

W/Op AG, Sergeant Herbert Henry Best, 626342, Royal Air Force, from Hackney, England, 22 years old. He was reburied at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery, collective grave reference **XII. H. 9-11.**



Foto Hennie Koster



FACES TO GRAVES

Stichting Faces to Canadian
War Graves Groesbeek

Life story: Gijs Krist - Research Team Faces To Graves

Sources:

Commonwealth War Graves

John Heideman

<https://aviation-safety.net>

Wikipedia

* If you have a photo of this soldier or additional information please contact info@facestograves.nl

(Cross) 1940-0

Contract No:- **RIGGS & SON LTD** SCHEDULE "A" Form H/2 Page No: 1
Name & Address of firm:- **5 SPITAL SQUARE** Name of Burial Place:-
NORTON FOLGATE E. 1 **GROESBEEK CON. WAR CEMETERY. NO. 26**
~~ANGHELLO (GROESBEEK) R.O. GRV. No. 1~~

1192/1/T/9 626342 Sergeant H.H. Best Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Royal Air Force 30th August 1940 Age 22 (Cross)	Coll.gr. 1-3 XII.H.9-11	1	1192/1/T/9 743057 Sergeant E.W.J. Skinner Air Gunner Royal Air Force 30th August 1940 Age 21 (Cross) At the going down Of the sun And in the morning We will remember him	Coll.gr. 1-3 XII.H.9-11	3
1192/1/T/9 580957 Sergeant A.A. Horsfall Observer Royal Air Force 30th August 1940 Age 19 (Cross) His brother David age 24 Sergeant R.A.F. Killed 17th May 1943 Is buried at Bergen	Coll.gr. 1-3 XII.H.9-11	2	1192/1/T/9 Pilot Officer K.R.K. Smettem Pilot Royal Air Force 30th August 1940 (Cross) That there's some corner Of a foreign field That is for ever England	XII.H.12	4

MM.

Graves Registration Report Form.

ORIGINAL

COUNTRY: HOLLAND

REPORT No.:

SCHEDULE No.: 148.

PLACE OF BURIAL: GROESBEEK CANADIAN WAR CEMETERY, NIJMEGEN.

Land belongs to

Certified complete and correct.

The following are buried here:—

Signature

Date 2 - MAY 1955

P.R.G.	No. and Rank	Initials, Name & Honours	Unit	Date of Death	For works use
<u>Gr.No.</u>		<u>PLOT XII. ROW H. (CONTD.)</u>			
7	149395 Major	G.H. HALL	5/S. Staffs. Regt.	30.11.44	C.H.
8	34921 Lt. Col.	R.C. STOCKLEY	R. Northumberland Fus. Gdg. 3/Mon. Rgt. (S.W.B.)	30.11.44	C.H.
<u>Coll. Gr.</u> 9 to 11	626342 Sgt. (W. Op/AG)	H.H. BEST	50 Sqn. R.A.F.	30. 8.40	C.H.
	580957 Sgt. (A/Obs.)	A.A. HORSPALL	50 Sqn. R.A.F.	30. 8.40	C.H.
	743057 Sgt. (A/G)	E.W.J. SKINNER	50 Sqn. R.A.F. (V.R.)	30. 8.40	C.H.
12	41877 P/O. (Pilot)	K.R.K. SMETTEM	50 Sqn. R.A.F.	30. 8.40	C.H.
13	3714931 Tpr.	A.H. EASTON	49/Recce Regt. Recce Corps. R.A.C.	13. 4.45	C.H.
14, 15 and 16.		VACANT.			
		<u>PLOTXIV. ROW A.</u>			
1	B.16982 Pte.	S.M. WHITEHEAD	The Essex Scot: Regt. C.I.C.	19. 2.45	C.H.
2	F.5491 Pte.	C. DOREY	The Essex Scot: Regt. C.I.C.	19. 2.45	C.H.
3	A.107365 Pte.	F.W. GEHL	The Essex Scot: Regt. C.I.C.	20. 2.45	C.H.