



## **LEWIS JOHNSTONE BURPEE**

**J/17115**

Pilot Officer

### **Family affairs.**

Lewis Johnstone Burpee was born on March 5th 1918 Ottawa, Ontario. He is married on September 14th 1942 in Southampton, England with Lillian Emily Westwood. Their son Lewis Johnstone junior is born on December 24th 1943, so just more than 7 months after his father died. He is the son of Lewis Arthur Burpee and Lilian Agnes Orme, who married in Ottawa on May 8th 1917. He has 1 brother Matthew Orme and 1 sister Alice Rosalind. They all lived in Ottawa, 111 Powell Avenue. His father was manager at the superstore company of Charles Ogilvy.

Lewis left Public School Saint Elgin when he was 12 years old in 1930. Then he studied at the Lisgar Collegiate Institute (Junior en Senior Matric). From 1937-1940 he studied at the Queens University, more specified art, English, history and politics. He didn't had a special hobby, his favourite sports were tennis, badminton, swimming and horse riding. He didn't have a job before going into the army.

### **Military affairs.**

22 years old, on December 17th 1940 he was enlisted at the Royal Canadian Air Force in Ottawa. In 1939-1940 he was a trainee at the Queens COTC University for cadet.

His military education he followed subsequently in Toronto until January 15th 1941, until March 23th in Jarvis, Ontario, until May 5th in Victoriaville, Quebec, until June 20th in Saint Eugene, Quebec, until September 2nd in Summerside, Prins Edward Island and until September 26th 1941 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Then he went to Great Britain.



He died May 17th 1943, because his plane crashed at Gilze-Rijen, between Breda and Tilburg. He is temporarily buried at the Protestant Cemetery Zuylen near Breda, 198 GSGS 2541, Sheet 4, 928354. On October 9th 1946 he is reburied at the British War Cemetery in Bergen op Zoom, plot 23, row B, grave 3.

### **Remarks.**

- On his tombstone is written: Into the mosaic of victory we placed our most precious piece. Wife and Son.
- He received the 1939-45 Star, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal & CLASP, Aircrew Europe Star, General Service Medal, Defence Medal and the Distinguished Flying Medal.
- Total earnings during active service are unknown.
- In the Ancestry hardly any interesting additional information could be found about Lewis Johnstone Burpee. Through Google on the contrary very much, very interesting information is found. Also many pictures are found, about himself, the other crew members, his son, his birthplace etc. etc.
- Lewis was selected to join the top-secret 617 Squadron flying out of RAF Scampton, which had been specially formed on 21 March 1943 for a secret mission under Wing Commander [Guy Gibson](#). They followed rigorous low level night flying exercises while they practiced highly accurate dropping of [Barnes Wallis'](#) novel bouncing bomb flying Lancasters. It was only at the pre-flight briefing that the crews learned they were to attack the Möhne, Eder and Sorpe dams in Germany in an effort to cripple the Ruhr industrial area. There are pictures of all the crews at [Dambuster Heroes](#). They flew in the Third Wave, plane code AJ-S, which took off some 2 and a half hours after the first, intended as back-up. They drifted slightly off course over Holland, flew too close to the night fighter base Gilze-Rijen and a single search light caught them, may be also hit by flag, dazzling Lewis who flew through some trees and into the ground. The aircraft exploded, followed a few seconds later by the bomb. The aircraft struck the airfields MT section and also blew over the operations control building in the resulting explosion. No one survived the crash.



- The 6 other crew members were:
  - Bomb aimer James Lamb Arthur(R/119416). Canadian.  
Plot 24-rij A-coll. grave 5-6-7
  - Flight Engineer Guy Pegler. British(573474).  
Plot 24-rij B- coll. grave 5-6-7
  - Navigator Thomas Jaye. British(1299446).  
Plot 24-rij B- coll. graf 5-6-7
  - Wireless operator Leonard Weller. British(142507).  
Plot 27-rij A- grave 6
  - Air gunner front William Long. British(1600540).  
Plot 24-rij A- coll. Grave 5-6-7
  - Air gunner rear Joseph Brady (R/93554). Canadian.  
Plot 23-rij A- grave 1.
- On invitation of her parents in law Lewis' wife Lillian Emily went after his death to Canada, where she moved into their house. There Lewis Johnstone Junior was born on Christmas Eve 1943.
- Early 1943 he received the Distinguished Flying Medal. Reference:  
He has consistently displayed the greatest determination in the execution of whatever tasks were allotted him. Berlin, Nuremburg, Stuttgart, Genoa and Turin are some of the many objectives he has attacked with satisfactory results and in recent weeks he has taken part in the highly successful raids on Lorient (aiming point photograph), St Nazaire and both of the Essen attacks. He also flew on the daylight attack against Milan in October 1942. Flight Sergeant Burpee has shown coolness and courage throughout his operational tour and has performed his duties conscientiously and efficiently.

There is much more information found about Lewis Johnstone Burpee and the Dambusters Heroes, but that will be too much to write this here in this context.



You can find all in the next links:

<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/canadian-virtual-war-memorial/detail/2033539>

<https://nl.findagrave.com/memorial/12726845/lewis-johnstone-burpee>

<https://dambustersblog.com/category/lewis-burpee/>

<https://dambustersblog.com/2015/05/25/dambuster-of-the-day-no-106-lewis-burpee/>

<http://warbirdsnews.com/warbird-articles/the-hero-around-the-corner-a-dambusters-pilot-remembered.html>

<https://canadianfallen.ca/81314/BURPEE>

<http://aircrewremembered.com/burpee-lewis.html>

<https://dambustersblog.com/2019/09/06/lewis-burpees-childhood-home/>