



Name: **GARLAND, PATRICK JAMES**

Reg.nr: 49602

Growing up, Patrick and his brothers were generally adventurous and exuberant boys: they enjoyed building model airplanes, sailing toy boats, chasing crabs in rock crevices, and swimming at secluded beaches. Patrick and his three other brothers also had a mischievous, even wild, streak: on one occasion they greeted a new governess by stripping naked and running into the bushes as she walked up their driveway. On another escapade, they collected chemicals in a test tube to make a homemade bomb, but the device exploded, blackening their faces and singeing their hair. The Garlands are believed to be the only family to have sent four sons to serve in the RAF during World War II (all as officers) and not have seen any of them return. And despite a 10-year age gap, they were by all accounts a "band of brothers"—inseparable, daring, and fiercely loyal. They also shared a common passion: a love of aircraft. In a way, it was no surprise to family and friends that, during the global conflict of 1939-45, the brothers became probably the bravest family of RAF servicemen ever, sacrificing their lives, one by one, for the King, country and freedom in general.

Patrick was of Irish descent, born in Dublin and later lived in Ballinacor, Co Wicklow, where the family had a country house. Their father was Dr Patrick Garland, a Roman Catholic general practitioner, who had travelled to the West African Gold Coast as a young man and served as a medical officer in the Anglo-Ashanti Wars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

There he had gained respect by sucking the chest wound of a soldier who had been hit by a poisoned arrow during the siege of Coomassie. Much

later he was awarded the Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) for his tireless medical work. Patrick's mother was Winifred Irene Garland (known as Irene), an elegant English girl who had converted to Islam at the age of 19.

In April 1902, she converted from her original Anglican faith to Catholicism so that she could marry the wealthy and handsome Irishman, who was 14 years her senior.

Over the next 16 years, the couple had four sons: Patrick James, born in 1908; John Cuthbert (always known as "Jack"), born in 1910; Desmond William, born in 1915; and Donald Edward, born in 1918.

They also had a daughter, Sheila Olivia, born in 1912.

Patrick grew up in Ireland and attended various schools, including a Jesuit school in Dublin. But this was a time of increasing violence between Catholics and Protestants. Patrick and Irene Garland decided it would be safer to move the family to London and settled in Bayswater around 1922. At one point, the two younger boys, Desmond and Donald, attended Cardinal Vaughan, a Catholic school in west London, while Patrick worked in a car dealership and John studied medicine. Dr. Patrick, die geplaagd werd door een slechte gezondheid als gevolg van malaria in West-Afrika, stierf in 1929, waardoor zijn weduwe alleen achterbleef om vier jongens en een meisje groot te brengen. Enige tijd na zijn dood verhuisde Irene van Bayswater naar het nabijgelegen East Finchley, in Noord-Londen.

Despite being the youngest brother, Donald was the first to join the RAF, in 1937.

At this time he was asked what he would do after the war. "I don't expect to survive," he replied, "but if I do, I would like to be a doctor. It seems a better life to try to cure people than to kill them."

On the morning of the raid, 12 May, one of the bombers was unfit for service and only five crews of three men took part. Flying Officer Donald Garland, the commander of the mission, was the pilot of the lead aircraft and had chosen in advance to approach the Veldwezelt Bridge at a low altitude - to within 50 feet - rather than dive-bombing from higher altitudes. As his aircraft approached the bridge it was greeted by heavy machine gun and anti-aircraft fire, while enemy Messerschmitt fighters also took off to protect the bridge. At least one bomb from Donald's plane hit the bridge, but his bomber was hit by the tremendous enemy fire. It flew out of control into the ground, exploded, and killed all three crew members.

Donald's mother and his siblings were devastated when they heard the tragic news.

However, one by one, the three surviving brothers promised to honour their brother's death by honouring all who served in the RAF during the war, unless death took precedence.

The brothers soon followed in Donald's footsteps, except Patrick, who at 6'3" was considered too tall to fly. He initially served in the Irish Guards, unaware that there would be an opportunity to serve in the RAF.

His mother Irene, accompanied by her son Patrick, went to an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 12 June 1941. Shortly afterwards she wrote to King George VI asking him to approve Patrick's transfer from the army to the RAF. He was transferred shortly afterwards. On New Year's Day 1945, Flight Lieutenant Patrick Garland, the eldest son, was serving with 2 Squadron, a reconnaissance unit, in France. That day, Patrick, a veteran of many missions, was flying a Spitfire on reconnaissance missions over enemy lines. Initially, it seemed that he had returned safely, but engine failure caused his aircraft to crash on his way back to base.

His height may have contributed to his death, as he suffered severe head injuries.

Patrick, who had married only months earlier, left a widow, Mary, when he died at the age of 36. He was the fourth and last of Irene's sons to die in the war.

It is impossible to imagine the trauma and suffering she endured.

But, typical of her generation, Irene put on a brave face and said: "I can only feel that it is a glorious thing to have brought up and trained four sons who never gave me any trouble and who have now, so willingly, given their lives for their country." She added: "The future seems terrifyingly empty, but I try not to think about it. If I gave in to my feelings, I would let the boys down."

The brothers' sister, Sheila, who had by then married a leading Royal Navy officer, could not hide her grief, however.

"My mother was absolutely devastated when she heard the news of Patrick's death," says of her fourth and final brother. "I remember her just crying and crying."

Today, the graves and memorials of the four brothers are in three countries in Western Europe, including three cemeteries maintained in whole or in part by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They are modest reminders of one family's supreme sacrifice to the British war effort.

The extended story. Also that of his brothers can be read below.

Growing up, Patrick and his brothers were generally adventurous and exuberant boys: they enjoyed building model airplanes, sailing toy boats, chasing crabs in rock crevices, and swimming at secluded beaches. Patrick and his three other brothers also had a mischievous, even wild, streak: on one occasion they greeted a new governess by stripping naked and running into the bushes as she walked up their driveway. On another escapade, they collected chemicals in a test tube to make a homemade bomb, but the device exploded, blackening their faces and singeing their hair. The Garlands are believed to be the only family to have sent four sons to serve in the RAF during World War II (all as officers) and not have seen any of them return. And despite a 10-year age gap, they were by all accounts a "band of brothers"—inseparable, daring, and fiercely loyal. They also shared a common passion: a love of aircraft. In a way, it was no surprise to family and friends that, during the global conflict of 1939-45, the brothers became probably the bravest family of RAF servicemen ever, sacrificing their lives, one by one, for the King, country and freedom in general.

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Catholics and Protestants. Patrick and Irene Garland decided it would be safer to move the family to London and settled in Bayswater around 1922. At one point, the two younger boys, Desmond and Donald, attended Cardinal Vaughan, a Catholic school in west London, while Patrick worked in a car dealership and John studied medicine.

Dr Patrick, who had been plagued by ill health following malaria in West Africa, died in 1929, leaving his widow to raise four boys and a girl. Some time after his death, Irene moved from Bayswater to nearby East Finchley, in north London.

Despite being the youngest brother, Donald was the first to join the RAF, in 1937. Shortly after the outbreak of war two years later, he was posted to his unit - 12 Squadron - in northern France, where he flew the Fairey Battle light bomber, a solid, reliable but slow and outdated aircraft. During this period he was asked what he would do after the war. "I don't expect to survive," he replied, "but if I do, I would like to be a doctor. It seems a better life to try to cure people than to kill them."

In February 1940 Donald, who had taken part in the squadron's very first operational flights the previous September, was promoted to flying officer. He was then only 21 years old.

The "phoney war" ended with the German invasion of the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg in early May 1940. As the Allies were forced to withdraw, German troops were rapidly pouring into the Low Countries and it was necessary to stem the flow by bombing the Veldwezelt and Vroenhoven bridges on the Albert Canal, near Maastricht. Night attacks on the bridges failed and the RAF was ordered to destroy them "at all costs" with a daring daytime attack.

Donald wrote to his mother: "Things are beginning to brighten up a bit... I want to thank you for all the loving care you have given

12 Squadron was chosen for the difficult task of attacking the two bridges - a suicide mission for some as they were so heavily defended. The chance of anyone surviving was considered so small that, in a rare move, only volunteers were considered. Typical of their courage and dedication to duty, everyone in 12 Squadron volunteered and lots were drawn for the six crews needed for the mission.

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Donald Garland had died a month before his 22nd birthday, along with his navigator and tail gunner. Only one pilot, the pilot of a badly damaged bomber, returned. Of the 14 other men who had taken off that morning, nine had been killed and by morning nine had been killed, and five others had bailed out of their wrecked plane and been taken as prisoners of war.

The two bridges were badly damaged.

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Yet, one by one, the three surviving brothers promised to honor their brother's death by honoring everyone who served in the RAF during the war, unless death took precedence.

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Eventually, on 11 June 1940, both Pilot Officer Donald Garland and his observer, Sergeant Thomas "Dolly" Gray, 25, were awarded the RAF's first two Victoria Crosses (VCs) of the war.

Their joint citations in The London Gazette concluded: "Much of the success of this vital operation must be attributed to the leader of the formation, Flying Officer Garland, and to the coolness and resourcefulness of Sergeant Gray, who so piloted Flying Officer Garland's aircraft under the most difficult conditions that the whole formation was able to attack the objective successfully, despite the consequent heavy losses. Flying Officer Garland and Sergeant Gray unfortunately did not return from the mission." Donald's mother, in a modest tribute to her youngest son, said: "Everything Donald did was done right." A year and a day after the two VCs were formally announced, Irene, now remarried, accompanied by her son Patrick, attended an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 12 June 1941. Shortly afterwards, she wrote to King George VI asking him to approve Patrick's transfer from the army to the RAF. He was transferred shortly afterwards.

In the early summer of 1942, Pilot Officer Desmond Garland, of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), was serving with 50 Squadron, a unit of Bomber Command. Desmond was piloting a Manchester aircraft that had taken off at 22.20 on 5 June to bomb a German target. However, his aircraft was intercepted by enemy fighters and an hour or so later off the coast of Brittany. When his mother was told that he was "missing in action", she clung to the vain hope for days that her son had survived the crash before she and her children finally accepted his fate: Desmond was the second Garland brother to die in RAF service. It eventually transpired that Desmond and five of his crew had been killed when their Manchester crashed into the sea. A seventh crew member had survived and was taken as a prisoner of war. After the war, Pilot Officer RJ Gill, the radio operator/gunner who lived to tell the story, said: "The aircraft was shot down on 6th June and crashed into the sea off the French coast at Lorient. It hit the water and I have no recollection of it until I came up and saw burning petrol on the water. There was no one else to be seen. The Germans told me there was only one survivor."

Desmond, a kind and easygoing man, was 27 when he was killed. Like Donald, he was a bachelor when he died. His commanding officer wrote to his mother: "Your son was the most gallant of pilots and a man of character and charming personality, highly respected by his brother officers and all who knew him."

Flight Lieutenant Jack Garland, also in the RAFVR, had experienced a very different war to his three brothers. He was prone to bouts of ill health and had initially been rejected for service.

However, he was later commissioned into the RAF as a medical officer. Like his father, he was determined to pursue a career as a doctor. Jack was totally dedicated to his work, working day and night to treat and support wounded airmen at RAF Marham, Norfolk. He had also treated air raid casualties at Woolwich, south-east London.

His dedication eventually took a heavy toll. He was transferred to King Edward VII Hospital near Midhurst, Sussex, where he died of tuberculosis on 28 February 1943, aged 32. He too was single at the time of his death.

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Patrick, who had married only months earlier, was survived by a widow, Mary, when he died at the age of 36. He was the fourth and last of Irene's sons to die in the war.

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But in typical fashion for her generation, Irene put on a brave face and said: "I can only feel that it is a glorious thing to have brought up and educated four sons who never gave me any trouble and who have now, so willingly, given their lives for their country." She added: "The future seems terrifyingly empty, but I try not to think about it. If I were to give in to my feelings, I would let the boys down."

However, the brothers' sister, Sheila, who had by then married a leading officer in the Royal Navy, could not hide her grief.

"My mother was utterly devastated when she heard the news of Patrick's death," she says of her fourth and last brother. "I remember her just crying and crying."

Today, the graves and memorials of the four brothers are in three countries in Western Europe, including three cemeteries maintained in whole or in part by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. They are modest reminders of one family's supreme sacrifice to the British war effort.

Flying Officer Donald Garland, the VC recipient, is buried under the shade of a maple tree in the back row of Heverlee War Cemetery, just south of the Belgian town of Leuven. Fittingly, his observer, Sergeant Thomas Gray VC, is buried next to him, and there are almost a thousand other Allied war dead buried in the same cemetery.

The body of Pilot Officer Desmond Garland, the second brother to die, was never recovered, but his name is recorded on Panel 69 of the magnificent Runnymede Memorial near Egham, Surrey. It overlooks the River Thames on Cooper's Hill and commemorates over 20,000 airmen who died in the Second World War and have no known grave.

Flight Lieutenant John "Jack" Garland, the third brother to die, is buried in the centre of Midhurst Cemetery, West Sussex. There are around 3,500 graves in the cemetery, mainly civilians, but some military.

Flight Lieutenant Patrick Garland, the last brother to die, is buried in the front row to the right of the Cross of Sacrifice in Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery in the south of the Netherlands.

The cemetery, situated next to woodland, contains almost 1,200 war graves. The wider family of the four brothers - their cousins Caroline Crompton-Turner, from Southport, Merseyside, and her sister Garland Beech, 72, from Carshalton Beeches, Surrey, remain immensely proud of their late uncles and are in early talks to build a memorial in their honour. The family have donated Donald's VC to the RAF Museum in Hendon, north-west London.

Garland Beech was given the unusual first name by her mother, Sheila, who died in 1988 aged 75, to extend her brothers' surname.

The sisters said that family and friends liked to call the four RAF men "the glorious Garland brothers" after their deaths. As Mrs Crompton-Turner said: "Their courage was simply incredible."