

James Reginald Bryan Meaker

Born: Kinsale in County Cork 19 January 1919

Parents - Son of Edgar Reginald and Lucy Adelaide Meaker of 'The Cottage', West Dean, Chichester.

School admission year: 1930s?

Civilian Occupation – He had a strong bent for journalism and joined the Chichester Observer. Developing decided ability after two years he was given charge of Midhurst District where he made good and built up a wide circle of friends. With war looming he cut short a promising journalistic career to enlist in the Royal Air Force making rapid progress to a commissioned rank,

Armed Forces Record

249 Squadron – Royal Air Force



Service rank: Pilot Officer –

Service Record – 249 Squadron

Scrambled from RAF base Church Fenton

Service Number 42514

Date of death: 27 September 1940



(Above: Meaker is shown (left) with F/O PR Burton)

Chichester Observer – Sat 06 April 1940 Page 1 'Chichester Pilot Bales Out. Parachute Descent Pilot Officer J.R.B. Meaker of 'The Cottage' West Dean, Chichester home on leave had an exciting story to tell. "I was flying along in formation," he told an Observer Reporter, "when I suddenly found that I was flying

without a tail. The plane behind had bumped into me. I immediately baled-out. The parachute I was wearing was not my own and too large for me, I had some trouble in finding the ring.

There were anxious moments. I found myself descending upside down but when I touched my feet with my head I was able to straighten out and land safely." Pilot Officer Meaker of 249 Squadron was formerly on the staff of the Observer and left to join the RAF. He is none the worse for his experience.

Then a few months later during The Battle of Britain Pilot Office Meaker was killed on September 27, 1940 after he had baled-out of his stricken Hurricane (P3834) after being shot-up by a Junkers 88 over Sussex. It appears that on leaving the aircraft he had been struck by the tailplane of his aircraft and this resulted in his death. His aircraft came down at Dallington, East Sussex. He fell to the ground and was found two miles away at Brightling, unopened parachute nearby.

Remembered as a lively young and enthusiastic reporter he was buried with full military honours at West Dean Cemetery. Chichester High School for Boys Headmaster E.W.Bishop attended his funeral and a School wreath was laid.

Commemorated:

Chichester War Memorial

Battle of Britain Memorial - Capel- le- Furne

Citation

Pilot Officer J.R.B. ('Bryan' as he preferred to be called) Meaker was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross DFC on the 18th October 1940. His parents were notified a few days after his death.

The Citation reads:

'Pilot Officer Meaker has shot down at least five enemy aircraft and damaged others. Resolute in attack, with a calm, determined temperament his leadership has been an example to his squadron'

'Bryan' Meaker was twenty-one

Postscript

The 'Battle of Britain' raged on. Seen above with Bryan Meaker is twenty-three-year-old Pilot Officer 'Percy' Burton (Diocesan College, Cape Town), also a 249 Squadron pilot, who lost his life on the same day as Meaker. His sustained frantic forty-mile rooftop chase in his Hurricane across Sussex, following an ME110 fighter-bomber piloted by Gruppe Kommandeur Hauptman Horst Liensberger, ended in a mid-air collision over Hailsham. Out of control, both aircraft crashed, killing the pilots. Burton was laid to rest in St Andrews Churchyard at Tangmere.

The Squadron was disbanded in 1969. In the year 2000, its number was given to an Air Cadet Squadron based in Hailsham, Sussex. This was in recognition that a 249 Squadron pilot was lost over the town in the Battle of Britain.

Investiture

'The gallant service record of the late Pilot Officer Bryan Meaker, R.A.F., a former member of the reporting staff of this paper, received its final recognition at a recent investiture by H.M. the King at Buckingham Palace at which his parents received the D.F.C. awarded to him.

It may be remembered that the announcement of the distinction he had won was made very shortly after he had lost his life in defence of London, but he had known of the award before his death.

At the investiture, Captain and Mrs E.R. Meaker, who needs no introduction in the Chichester District, were among some 200 relatives assembled at the Palace to be presented posthumously with decorations awarded for gallant deeds.

His Majesty performed the ceremony in the uniform of an admiral of the fleet and several VCs won by naval members were among the first honours to be presented'.

Chichester Observer 1940