

Malachy James Simonds
Flight Sergeant Royal Australian Air Force, Squadron 463
Born 10th October 1921 in Glenmore House, Donore, Ireland.
Died 19th July 1944, Droupt-Ste-Marie, France



Father: Lt. Col. James Napier Simonds (1883-1948)

Mother: Mary Francis 'Molly' Simonds (née Daly) (1895-1975)

Malachy was the 2nd son of James Napier Simonds of Redlands, Reading, (and the nephew of Charles Francis Simonds). James married Molly Daly of Dunsandle, Loughrea, Co. Galway at The Oratory, Brompton, London in 1917 and after the First World War and subsequent service in India James returned to live near Drogheda in Co. Meath.

Malachy was born there in 1921. Educated at Wellington College, where they must have been very familiar with the name "Simonds", in 1938 he continued his studies at Trinity College, Dublin. He was also a keen oarsmen and rowed for the College. Having completed two years of his studies there and with The Second World War escalating in Europe he left in 1940 to join the RAF hoping to become a pilot. He failed his training in this field but continued in the RAF as an aircraftsman eventually undergoing aircrew training in Canada where he qualified as a Flight Engineer.

Seconded to the RAAF in the Summer of 1944 he joined an Australian Squadron, 463, which flew Lancaster bombers from RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire. Flight Officer James Worthington, the pilot of his plane, was the only Australian in the crew. The crew was new and inexperienced, the plane they were given, Lancaster DV374, had already flown 57 missions, so the odds against them, which were not good in the first place, were stacked against them.

Tasked to bomb the railway hub at Revigny on the night of the 18th/19th July in support of the Normandy Landings, a deception raid put in place to confuse the night fighter defences failed in its purpose and The Luftwaffe came out in force to attack the bomber stream. Out of 110 bombers sent out on the raid 24 failed to return. Two from Malachy's squadron, one of which was his, were shot down by a night fighter over Droupt-Ste-Marie. There is a memorial plaque at the church to honour the crew and they were initially buried there, subsequently the remains were removed to the British War Cemetery at Terlincthun outside Boulogne where they now all lie together. The epitaph on the gravestone at his mother's request says "Let Erin remember" – being another word for Ireland in Gaelic.

Malachy was brought up near the village of Donore in Co.Meath. His mother and father are buried in the Old Graveyard there and a plaque on the wall adjoining their grave commemorates Malachy, his service and death. The graveyard itself has the remains of a medieval church in it and was the site of King James's camp the night before the Battle of the Boyne and his subsequent defeat by William of Orange which had such a major effect on the course of English History. A historic place to be remembered, and to rest, for all concerned.

With acknowledgment to his nephew Michael Simonds.
Raymond Simonds. January 2021. www.simondsfamily.me.uk