

Pilot Officer (77689) John Prescott Lees d 21 June 1940



BURIED ELSEWHERE
IN THIS CHURCHYARD

PILOT OFFICER
J. P. LEES
ROYAL AIR FORCE
21 JUNE 1940



The *Barrow News* 29 June 1940 carried the picture (above right) and the article below:

**PILOT OFFICER'S FUNERAL AT ALDINGHAM
WELL KNOWN IN BARROW**

Pilot Officer John P. Lees, who was killed in air operations last week, was buried at Aldingham Church on Tuesday. Lees, though not a Barrovian, was well known in the town, where he spent a good deal of time. He was described by his commanding officer as keen and energetic.

The Bishop of Barrow conducted the services in Aldingham Church, and at the graveside. Members of the King's Own Royal Regiment under Major Summervell, acted as bearers and there was a firing party. The "Last Post" was also sounded.

Chief mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. James Swarbrick, Mr. Rogerson (Manchester), Sister Gibson (Davy Hulme Hospital), Mr. and Mrs. G. Fielding, Mr. and Mrs. E. Fielding, James Fielding, Mr. J. Turner, "Milly" and Mr. T. Fallowfield.

Amongst the flowers sent were wreaths from 26th Squadron, R.A.F., Mr. and Mrs. J. Swarbrick, Mr. Rogerson (Manchester) and Sister E. Gibson.

The funeral arrangements were by Messrs. J. Swarbrick, 81, Buccleuch-street, Barrow.

Assuming that P.O. Lees flew with 26 Squadron:

No.26 Squadron began the Second World War as an army co-operation squadron equipped with the Westland Lysander. At the start of the war it took its Lysanders to France, where most of the Lysander squadrons suffered very heavy losses. No.26 Squadron would appear to have returned from France relatively intact, which would explain why while most Lysander squadrons were dispersed around Britain No.26 Squadron remained on active duty on the south coast. While the fighting continued in France the squadron was used for a mix of reconnaissance, bombing and

supply missions. After the fall of France the squadron flew coastal patrols, especially over the potential German invasion ports. http://www.historyofwar.org/air/units/RAF/26_wwII.html

In May, 1940 it was used extensively on contact and Tac/R patrols and became easy targets for the German fighters. On moving from France it was based at Lypne and heavily involved in supporting the British forces in Calais until its capture. It was also using Rouen for an Advanced Landing Ground until mid-June.

On 18 June activities over France ceased and the Squadron began dawn and dusk anti-invasion patrols around the English coastline (Sheerness to Newhaven was No. 26's 'beat'). These tailed off at the end of the year and the Squadron flew no operations, working up for army co-operation once more and also undertaking AA calibration flying. <http://holum.net/snhweb/gen/squadron26.htm>

20/06/1940: ?, UK

Type: Westland Lysander

Serial number: N1292, RM-?

Operation: ?

Lost: 20/06/1940

Flight Lieutenant (Pilot) Denis D. Rawlins, RAF 37420, 26 Sqdn., age 30, 20/06/1940, Stratford-sub-Castle (St Lawrence) Churchyard, UK

Pilot Officer John P. Lees, RAFVR 77689, 26 Sqdn., age unknown, 20/06/1940, Aldingham Churchyard, Cumbria. The CWGC lists him as 'missing', which is not the case.

Plane crashed near Odiham, Hampshire. http://www.epibreren.com/ww2/raf/26_squadron.html#2006

The latter extract hints at something of a mystery. The CWGC headstone was only erected in 2011, the omission having been identified in October 2011. Originally he was commemorated on Panel 289 on the Runnymede Memorial. It is puzzling how his burial place wasn't recorded at the time.

From *Ancestry* it appears that John Prescott Lees was born in the Bournville area of Birmingham in 1910. In the **1911 Census** he is under 9 months, living at 75 Linden Rd, Bournville with father William John Lees (37), bedstead manufacturer, born Birmingham, Warwickshire; mother Jessie Lees (28), born Stoke, Cheshire (?); and General Domestic Servant Nellie Newman (15), born King's Norton, Worcestershire.

He had been baptised on 8 September 1910 at St. Nicolas', King's Norton, having been born on 21 July? 1910.

A John Prescott Lees is living at 3-14 Northwood Hall, Hornsey Lane N6 with Thelma Marrion (sic) Lees in the **1936 and 1937 Electoral Registers** for London. This is probably the right J.P. Lees, since in the **1932 Electoral Register** for London he is living with his parents at 30 Marsh Road, Pinner Village, Hendon. I have not been successful in following up Thelma Lees, who was presumably his wife.