

Glen Allen (Happy) Holland Memorial (1919 – 1944)

Happy Holland was Lucy Turner's first husband. They married on July 18, 1942 after a whirlwind romance while both were serving with the RCAF, happy as a flying instructor at Rockcliffe air base and Lucy as a nursing sister. Happy would later be posted to a Mosquito night intruder course in Greenwood, NS before going overseas in late 1943. He died as a result of a mid-air collision with a German night fighter plane in April 1944 in northeastern Germany. This biographical sketch is based mainly on Happy's war service record which is in the possession of the author and supplemented by the memories of a fellow Squadron member and Mosquito pilot, John Rhodes, with whom the author corresponded in 2007 and 2012.

Glen Allen Holland, Jr. was born on August 1, 1919 in Chicago. He was the eldest child of Glen Sr., an industrial designer, and Dorothy Raven. His siblings were Bonny Jean, Jo Ann, Dorothy Jane and John Charles. Glen attended elementary schools and one year of high school in Chicago. In 1934 the family relocated to Miami, where they spent one year before moving to Bronxville, an affluent suburb of New York City. Glen completed his high school there in 1939, after which he enrolled at Cornell University in mechanical engineering. He also spent one year in the New York National Guard and was in ROTC at Cornell.

In early January 1941 he visited the RCAF recruiting centre in Hamilton. On January 21st he officially enlisted in Ottawa and was posted to No. 1 Manning Depot in Toronto as a Leading Aircraftman 2nd class on his way to becoming a pilot in the RCAF.

At 6' 1/2" and 185 lbs. Glen was athletic in build, interest and capability. In high school he excelled in football and swimming. He had interest in all sports, motor mechanics, motorcycles and flying. He had an outgoing and happy



Glen Holland c1942

disposition, hence his long-held nickname "Happy". By the time he enlisted, Happy had more than five years and 220 flying hours experience as a pilot of light, pleasure aircraft. Indeed, he was part owner of a plane with his friend Doug van Buskirk and, with the U.S. not in the war, most likely sought out the RCAF following Doug who had joined the RCAF as a pilot in early 1940. Ironically, Doug was killed in combat in November 1941 flying with RAF 7 Squadron and is buried in the same cemetery as Happy.

No. 1 Manning Centre was located at Toronto's Exhibition Grounds and Happy was initiated into the military with a full medical, inoculations, issuance of uniform and kit, basic drill techniques, how to march and how to salute, etc. On March 6 1941 he was posted to No. 14 Service Flying Training School at Aylmer, Ontario where he flew Harvards. After two months he was assigned to No.1 Initial Training School which was located in the old Eglinton Hunt Club grounds in Toronto. This is where RCAF recruits, identified at the Manning Depot as potential pilots, observers and wireless

operators, went for aircrew selection and the first stages of ground school. There was a Link trainer simulator there. Happy did well passing 29th out of 177 in the class. “He will make a fine leader” commented his commanding officer.

From there, it was off to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and the No. 6 Elementary Flying School for 6 weeks of basic aviation instruction in a Tiger Moth. He passed with 85% and received this assessment: “with more experience should develop into a valuable pilot”. There was a slight stain on his record however, as he “was found guilty of low flying and flying out of the solo area, for which he received punishment” of 15 days’ loss of pay. This did not deter him from moving ahead on the training path. At the end of July, he was transferred to No. 4 Service Flying Training School in Saskatoon for another two months of schooling on Avro Ansons. Here he passed 9th out of 38, was promoted to Pilot Officer and received his “wings”. He was deemed to have leadership qualities, yet someone labeled him “excessively talkative”.

By this time, the powers that be decided that Happy was instructor material, and he was

shipped off to Central Flying School in Trenton for four months of instructor’s training. He passed this course as well. However, one of his commentators said “This man is very irresponsible and displays no leadership. He should be watched very closely.” He obviously rubbed some people the wrong way, as the pattern of comments throughout his training and operational period was often at opposite poles. He was also considered by some to be somewhat reckless. In December 1941, he suffered a fractured shoulder when, near midnight in suburban Trenton, “the car I was driving turned over on a sharp curve”. Nevertheless, Happy graduated as an instructor and was assigned to Conversion Training Squadron at Rockcliffe.

Early in his time in Ottawa, he met Lucy Turner, who was probably stationed at the Rockcliffe base hospital. They married on July 18, 1942.

Happy stayed with CTS for 12 months, training student pilots as they transitioned from trainers to combat aircraft. He trained on Harvards and Bolingbrokes, and for a time he was lent to No. 2 B&G School in Mossbank Sas-



Mosquito flyers with their navigators behind; 36 OTU Greenwood NS
Happy Holland front left and John Rhodes front right;
Roger Wilkinson (assumed) back left and John Little back right

katchewan to help train pilots on Boling-brokes. He was promoted to Acting Flying Officer status in September 1942. In his instructing career, he was involved in several accidents due to trainee pilot error, but escaped injury in all.

In March 1943, he was transferred to the No. 1 Refresher Squadron, also at Rockcliffe. With this group he retrained pilots who had lost their nerve while in service, and pilot trainees who had previously failed at Service Flying Training Schools. This group had Harvards, Ansons, Cranes and an Oxford.

By July 1943 Happy had earned his right to fly in combat and was selected to join the first group of pilots for training in the Mosquito night fighter/bomber at 36 Operational Training Unit in Greenwood, Nova Scotia. The recruits were all experienced pilots, a mix of Canadians, Americans and Brits with a lot of night flying hours. Also, they met their navigators who would remain with them when they became operational. Happy received glowing comments from his chief instructor and C.O.: "very keen; sense of humour; good leader; above average pilot; should do well under a good flight commander or C.O."

On October 8th, he and his mates shipped out of New York for overseas, arriving Bournemouth on the 16th. After some leave and orientation, he was assigned to RAF No. 60 OTU at RAF High Erroll in Shrewsbury, Shropshire for further Mosquito intruder training.

605 Squadron

At the end of December, Happy went operational with 605 Squadron based in Bradwell Bay, Essex on the south eastern coast of England. The squadron moved south to Manston on the Kent coast in early April 1944. 605 Squadron was one of three RAF intruder operations using Mosquito fighter/bombers.

Happy was full of fun, the happy-go-lucky guy and life of the Squadron. He was well liked. He spent time in the mess, had a motorcycle and an MG, which he damaged beyond repair

in an accident. His commanding officer, W/C Norman Starr, in a letter to Lucy dated May 5, 1944, said that he ".....was without doubt the most enthusiastic pilot we had in the Squadron. His great offensive spirit combined with his grand personality and happy outlook on things made him one of the most popular pilots, and with his navigator, who was of similar temperament, one of the best crews we had. His loss is very greatly felt in the Squadron".

In 2007 I communicated online with John Rhodes, an RAF Mosquito pilot and retired veterinarian living in Northampton. John had been a friend of Happy's and fellow flyer both at 36 OTU Greenwood and 605 Squadron Bradwell Bay. After leaving 605 John was posted to night fighting with Tempests, chasing flying bombs dropped from German planes over the North Sea. When war in Europe ended he was sent to Canada to ferry Mosquitos to the UK to be refitted for the war with Japan.

John Rhodes and I communicated again in 2012. He has provided background on Happy, Squadron life and the role of the night intruder. Here follows a story of John's which shows Happy's memorable disposition.

"On April 3rd 1944 Happy Holland asked me to fly him to Nottingham to see a friend for a weekend leave. We always had to do an aircraft serviceability flying test during the day before any night operations and, whilst I could wander home to Sussex to see the family without question, it was always normal procedure to be given permission to combine a flying check with ferrying someone somewhere, provided that it did not take too long within a reasonable distance. This was a two hour flight each way.

We took off with Johnny as my navigator and Happy sitting on the floor at Johnny's feet. No seat and no safety straps! The weather began to deteriorate and by the time we got to Nottingham I was flying at 500 ft to avoid flying in low cloud and so that Johnny could keep his landmarks. Suddenly I smelled smoke.



HX328 one of 605 Squadron's Mosquitos flown by Happy Holland

My god, I thought, bad weather, 500ft and we're on fire. That's all I need, looking at each engine in turn which appeared to be running smoothly. The smoke I could then see was coming from the floor. God! An electrical fire in the bomb bay and 500 gallons of aviation fuel down there in the spare tank.

Then I saw the problem. Under Happy's smiling face and walrus moustache was an enormous American cigar burning furiously. I nearly had kittens. "Happy" I shouted. "Put that bloody cigar OUT!!!" "I don't know what is wrong with you Limeys" grumbled Happy. "We always smoke in American planes!!!" He stubbed out the cigar very reluctantly and we landed safely a few minutes later at Hucknall near Nottingham."

In letters to Lucy, Happy complained of money issues – i.e. lack of it. He spent most of his funds in his spare time. It forced him to apply once again for a transfer to the USAAF. While in Ottawa in 1942, he had applied for a transfer and had been accepted. He changed his mind, probably due to his forthcoming marriage to Lucy, as a transfer would have meant a move away from Ottawa and from her. In the UK, the USAAF was offering promotions to Captain and higher pay. It appears Happy's application had been accepted; however in March there was some snafu with the process, and Happy withdrew his application. It may have been that he was enjoying his role as a night intruder, and his recent success in enemy victories.

Night Intruder¹

John Rhodes explains what he and Happy did as night intruders:

"There were many types of Mosquitos: fighter versions, bomber versions, high altitude stripped down versions for photographic reconnaissance, and so on; our version was the Mosquito Mk 2 with Rolls Royce Merlin 21 engines for low altitude operations. We could either carry 500 extra gallons of fuel in the bomb bay and two 250 gallon drop tanks on the wings, which gave us about 8 hours flying, or we could carry no extra fuel, but two 500 lb. bombs in the bomb bay and two 250 lb. bombs on the wings, which gave us about 4 ½ hrs flying. A short distance with bombs and guns, or a long distance with cannons and machine guns, and so on.

It was really a "Let's go and annoy the Germans" effort, which was in fact a German idea they had used early in the war. They were totally unaware how successful it had been and had no idea what chaos they caused, especially to our

¹ The photo above is from *American Nightfighter Aces of World War 2*, by Andrew Thomas & Warren Thompson, Osprey Publishing Limited, Oxford 2008, page 35. This Mosquito was flown occasionally by Happy Holland. On the night of March 15/16, he shot up five trains near Ansbach in this aircraft. It was lost on an intruder mission to Holland on 23 March 1944.



605 Squadron: 2nd row Happy Holland 5th from the left, John Rhodes 4th from the right
 This may be Happy's last photo

pupil pilot training programme; they were directly instrumental in our closing pupil training in this country and moving the flying schools out to Canada, the US and South Africa.

So, building on the German successes, three night intruder Mosquito squadrons were formed, and we had three functions.

The first was night standby; when the Luftwaffe was bombing Britain, the radio monitoring intelligence services listened in to their bomber instructions and found where they were told to land after the raid. We then took off and tried to get there first and patrolled that airfield to wait for their return. We learned later that it had an effect on their crew morale to return to base after a long tiring trip only to be told that they couldn't land because there was an intruder on their circuit; be redirected elsewhere only to find another intruder patrolling that circuit. If they were told to land anyway then the

airfield landing lights had to be lit up and we might be able to have a shot at one either in the air or on the ground landing or taxiing; and if neither, we could drop a 250 or 500 lb bomb onto the airfield.

Our second job was in support of our own Bomber Command when they were going somewhere. We used to be briefed as to how many bombers were going; where they were going; the route they were taking and the return route; where the German night fighter squadron airfields were; when they were likely to scramble; when and where they might run out of ammo and fuel and as a result, where they were likely to land to refill. Our job was to patrol these airfields and cause as much nuisance as we could. It was no use for us to accompany the Bombers at night because we had no airborne radar. This was forbidden in case we were shot down and so give the radar secrets to the Germans.

During all these sorties we used to see activities at other airfields which were not classed in our lists as either bomber or fighter airfields, and Johnny, my navigator, used to make a note of anything interesting; which brings us to the third category.

During bright moonlight nights neither our Bomber Command nor the Luftwaffe used to operate, and in these conditions, we were allowed a free rein to go, with permission, to look at these places to see what, if anything was going on, and that of course was most interesting.

Later, of course, we had a fourth job, that of chasing the V1 flying bombs at night whilst patrolling off and over the French coast.”

Happy's Victory Missions

Happy's usual navigator/observer was F/O Roger “Wilkie” Wilkinson. They had been a partnership for some months. Happy had 4 ½ attributed kills, just shy of the 5 kills needed to be an ‘ace’. Together, they had many other successes of shooting up trains, truck convoys and storage depots. Their victories were:

24/25 Feb 1944	one unidentified	damaged
25/26 Feb 1944	one Me110	destroyed
19 March 1944	one Ju88	destroyed
23/24 Mr 1944	one FW190	destroyed
	one unidentified	destroyed

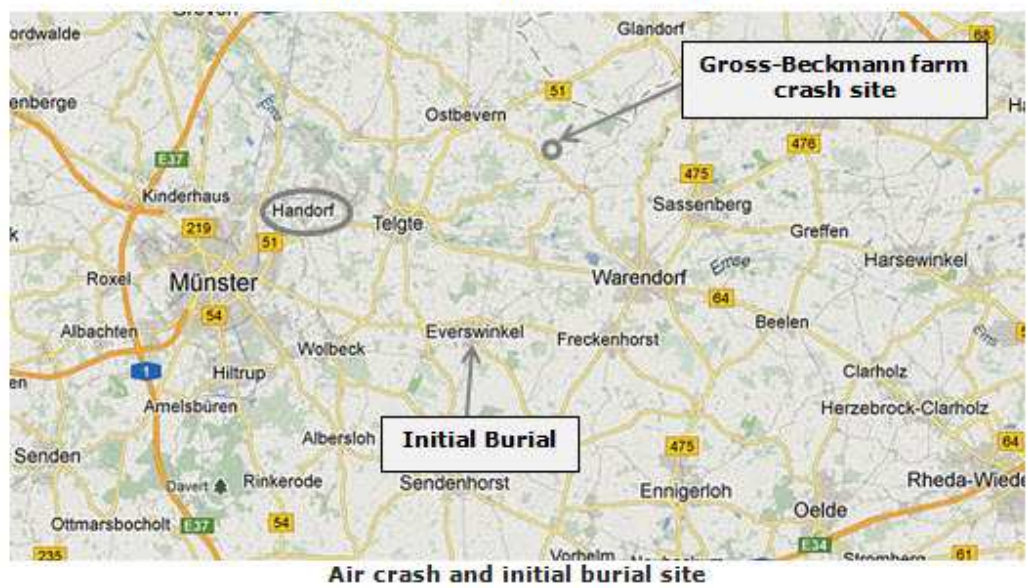
On February 24/25, 1944, “in clear, starry weather, Flt. Lt. Glen Holland flew an intruder sortie to the Brussels area where he damaged an unidentified aircraft. It was the first of the 25 year-old's five claims with 605 Sqn. The next night he was over Germany, where he caught a Me110 nightfighter near Ansbach. Holland subsequently reported: ‘We had passed the runway when we saw an enemy aircraft's landing lights approaching to land. They were flicked on and off several times. We turned back to try and get into position to attack the enemy aircraft on the

runway, but were unable to manoeuvre whilst its lights were on. We turned and attacked from the southwest, opening fire at a height of about 100 ft and a range of approximately 200 yrd. Strikes were seen to the rear of the cockpit, crossing through to the port engine and into the hangar. The enemy aircraft was recognized as a ME 110 in the lights of the hangar. We broke away to port to avoid the hangar and other obstructions.”

On March 19th he flew to Rheine where he spotted a Ju88; “a 2-3 second burst was fired and a good concentration of strikes was seen. We passed over it, turned to the right and saw flames and a small explosion. We turned downwind on the north side of the aerodrome and the Ju88 was seen to be still burning.”

Four nights after his second victory, Glen Holland took off for an intruder mission to the nightfighter training base at Schleissheim. Nothing was seen until he and his navigator reached Neuberg, midway between Nuremberg and Munich. The airfield was found to be fully lit. After investigating several possibilities, they spotted an FW190 in the circuit, which they promptly shot down. This was closely followed by the destruction of another enemy aircraft which the pair was unable to identify. Glen Holland wrote immediately afterward:

‘I closed to approximately 150 yrd, recognizing him as a FW190, and I gave him a two-second burst. Strikes were seen and he erupted in flames. I did a quick turn to starboard to avoid hitting him and he did a slow spiral dive into the ground, exploding and burning on impact. I returned to Neuberg at 23:03 hrs. It was still lit, and I saw an aircraft approaching to land with its navigation lights on. It landed to the left of the main runway. I closed to 100 yrd at about 50 ft height, recognising the enemy aircraft as being single-engined. I gave him a 1-second burst, and he exploded immediately and burst into flames. I turned back and took a cine shot of the wreckage, then set course for base. The good navigation and quick observations of my navigator were largely responsible for this



sortie turning out so successfully.”¹ Happy’s combat report of this evening’s sortie is included at the end of this appendix.

Last Sortie

At 00:11 on April 21 1944, Happy and Wilkie left Manston in Mosquito VI NS 928 for an intruder operation to Rhein/Handorf airbase in northeast Germany, a distance of about 450 km. At about 2:00am they and a German night fighter (probably a Ju 188 fighter/bomber) collided in mid-air. The latter, based at Handorf, crashed near Everswinkel, about 10 km. south-east of Munster in northeast Germany. The German crew bailed out successfully. Happy’s

plane crashed into the Gross-Beckman farm house of Herr Spitterhover, located about 20 km. north of Everswinkel. Both Happy and Wilkie were killed. The farmer and his wife also died. His son and mother survived. Happy and Wilkie were buried the next day in an unmarked grave at the Catholic cemetery at Everswinkel. In April 1946, an RAF investigator visited the grave with the local priest and town clerk, and met with Herr Spitterhover’s son. The investigator had a white cross installed and inscribed “Some corner of a foreign field which is forever England”, a quotation from Rupert Brooke.

The son described the crash and a subsequent meeting with the German pilots. They thought the Mosquito had rammed them and further,

¹ *Ibid*, pages 18, 22-23

that they thought the Mosquito was the only enemy aircraft in the area that night and had been responsible for bringing down four aircraft including theirs. The investigator requested that “further investigation be made in this case with a view in consideration of a gallantry award”. The awards office later declined any award on the basis that the evidence was hearsay and from an enemy source.

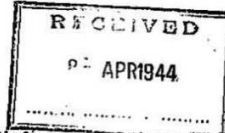
At a minimum, if the definition of an ace includes his unfortunate mid-air crash, then Glen Holland would be classified an ace. And had Happy lived, his combat report of the evening’s sortie would have made fascinating reading.

Herr Spitterhover at the time was rebuilding his farm house and requested permission to include a plaque on the wall, to read “On the 21st of April 44 an English Mosquito aircraft crashed into this house and in the flames died Herr Josef Spitterhover and Frau Anna Spitterhover with two English airmen named F/L G.A. Holland and F/O R.H. Wilkinson”. Presumably it is still there.

In 1947, Happy and Wilkinson’s remains were exhumed and reburied in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery at Kleve, Germany.

Happy Holland's Combat Report for 23-24 March 1944

*Personal
Inv Journey*



(4)

605 SQUADRON.

INTELLIGENCE FORM 'F' &
PERSONAL COMBAT REPORT

SECRET

143

11/11/43

From : R.A.F. Station, BRADWELL-BAY Serial No: 63

To : H.Q. ADGE (2) H.Q. 11 Group (2) R.A.F. W. WEALD, S.I.O. I.O. 605 (10)

DATE	(A) 23-24 March, 1944.
UNIT	(B) 605 (County of Warwick) Squadron.
TYPE AND MARK OF OUR AIRCRAFT	(C) MOSQUITO VI
TIME ATTACK WAS DELIVERED	(D) 2232 and 2303 hours.
PLACE OF ATTACK	(E) NEUBURG A/F very poor vis.
WEATHER	(F) Haze at 2000', Patches cloud 5000'/
OUR CASUALTIES - AIRCRAFT	(G) NIL
" " - PERSONNEL	(H) NIL
ENEMY CASUALTIES - IN AIR COMBAT	(J) 1 Fw.190 destroyed, 1 u/i S/E D/A dest.
" " GROUND OR SEA TARGETS	(K) Many goods trucks damaged, 1 car damaged.

PILOT : F/Lt. G. A. HOLLAND (ROAF) OBSERVER : F/O. R. H. WILKINSON

One Mosquito VI. UP/S. took off from Bradwell Bay at 2009 hours on a Night Ranger patrol against G.A.F. night fighter training at SCHLEITSSHEIM. The enemy coast was entered at COXYDE at 2031 hours, 3000 feet. Nothing was seen until NEUBURG A/F was reached at 2230 hours, this was lit with the west arm only of the V/L (QDM 270°) with 3 crossbars. The first and third cross bars had arrowheads pointing towards the F.P. upwind. An aircraft was seen to take off with navigation lights on but it outclimbed and outdistanced the Mosquito and was finally lost. F/Lt. HOLLAND continues :-

"As I returned from 6000 feet the height to which I had chased the first aircraft we observed a second aircraft taking off with navigation lights, he turned off to port and was flying down wind but before I could close range his lights were doused. I was then south of the airport at 3000 feet when another a/c was seen at 2332 hours taking off. I turned and followed him and as he turned to port I closed to approx. 150 yards recognising it as an Fw.190, and gave a 2-sec burst. Strikes were seen and he burst into flames. I did a quick turn to starboard to avoid hitting him and he did a slow spiral dive into the ground, exploding and burning on impact. I went back to the east end of F.P. to try and get more e/a either taking off or landing before they realised an intruder was about. Nothing was observed however and we returned and took cine film of wreckage burning on the ground. It was thought that there might be some diversions to INGOLSTADT so I set course for there and arrived at 2248 hours but nothing was seen. I investigated a light to the north which turned out to be a large car. On the Autobahn going towards INGOLSTADT I attacked and strikes were observed and the lights went out. INGOLSTADT perimeter lights were turned on as I passed over the A/F but were doused almost immediately. I returned to NEUBURG at 2303 hours which was still lit where I saw an a/c approaching to land with his navigation lights on. He landed to the left of the main runway and an attack was made from the south as he turned off on to the runway. I closed to 100 yards at about 50 feet height, recognised the e/a as being S/E, and gave him a 1-sec burst, he exploded immediately and burst into flames. I turned back and took a cine shot of the wreckage then set course for base, at 2315 hours. The good navigation and quick observations of my navigator were largely responsible for this sortie turning out so successfully".

Near GOPPINGEN A/F 3 white rockets bursting into 3 white stars were seen. The goods yard at LANDAU was seen duly lit at 2350 hours, several locos, were in the yard, an attack was made and strikes were seen all over the rolling stock. A second goods yard was shot up at KASSELANTERN many strikes being seen on the trucks. A large line of S/L's running S.W. from BRUSSELS at an angle of 45° were seen at 0045 hours, approx 1 S/L every 15-20 miles.

/over.....

The line of S/L's appeared to stretch to near the coast.
BELGIUM was left at KNOOKE at 0100 hours, 2500 feet and base reached at 0137 hours.
C.C.G. used 6 feet exposed.

AMMUNITION USED:		S. A. F. I.	H. E. I.	Brownings.	
Cannon	P. C.	84	84		286
	P. I.	84	84		280
	S. O.	84	84		14
	S. I.	84	84		284

for RWS
 FLIGHT LIEUTENANT (PILOT)
 605 L. SQUADRON.
 R. A. F. BRADWELL BAY.

Robert Heath
 FLYING OFFICER,
 INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
 605 SQUADRON.