

## *Sgt. Pilot G.T. Barker*



**Name:** George Thomas Barker  
**Rank and Regiment:** Flight Sergeant. Pilot 150 Squadron. Royal Air Force  
**Service No:** 563835  
**Born:** 1912  
**Died:** 14<sup>th</sup> May 1940 (age 27)  
**Buried:** Choloy War Cemetery France.  
Joint grave IA, A 14-15



George Thomas Barker (k.a. Tom) was born in Helmsley at the end of 1912. The eldest of 5 children of George Robert Barker and Clara (nee Holliday). In the 1911 census Tom's father was working on the family farm, Hall Farm in Riseborough Pickering. Later they moved to Skewsby Manor. By the outbreak of war, the family were at FlatTop Farm Terrington.

The entry in a local paper below, recording George's death, reveals his interesting career in the RAF. He joined aged 17 in 1929 and eventually trained to be pilot. He served in India and Afghanistan and on one occasion met Amy Johnson and Jim Mollison.

Tom married Vi Biddiscombe in Andover, Hampshire in early 1940, only a few months before his death. He told his family when he was on leave that he did not expect to be coming home.



### *Terrington Man*

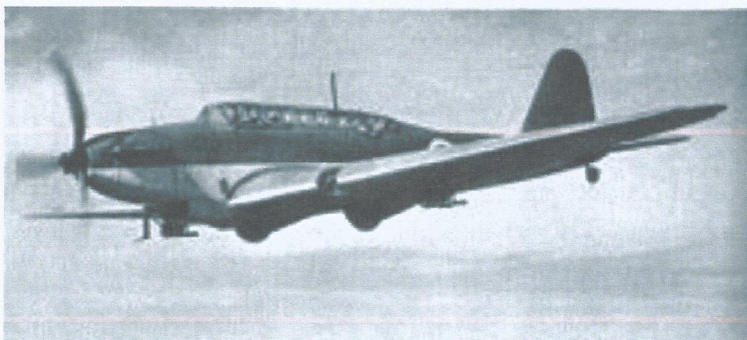
*Flight-Sergeant George Thomas Barker, son of Mr G.R. Barker and the late Mrs Barker, of Flat Top, Terrington, York, whose name appeared in the official list of those reported missing, believed killed on Saturday, had an interesting career in the R.A.F.*

*Twenty-seven years of age, he had been in the Service for ten years, entering as a boy of 17.*

*After training in Hampshire he saw active service in India and on the Afghan Frontier. On one occasion he had a narrow escape from death when an earthquake occurred a short time after he had left his station. For service in Afghanistan he was awarded a medal. When Amy Johnson and Jim Mollison arrived in India on a long-distance flight, he was one of those sent to do some repairs to their machine as he had had special experience as a metal rigger. Flight-Sergeant Barker had only been married six months. His wife, who came from Wales, is at present at Andover.*

### **The 150 Squadron, Royal Air Force**

Tom was a flight sergeant in the 150<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the Royal Air Force whose motto is "Always Ahead". This Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, was formed at Salonika, Macedonia, on 1st April 1918, as a fighter squadron and subsequently operated both in Macedonia and Turkey. Although it was disbanded in 1919, it was re-formed in England as a bomber squadron in 1938.



Before the Second World War, the United Kingdom and France agreed that the light bomber force of the Royal Air Force would be moved to airfields within France so that it would be better able

to operate against targets in Germany. The RAF Advanced Air Striking Force (AASF) was formed on 24 August 1939 and its ten squadrons were dispatched to airfields in the Rheims area on 2 September 1939.

They were originally equipped with the Fairey Battle, a British single-engine light bomber built by the Fairey Aviation Company in the late 1930s. However, these craft proved to be totally unsuitable for the battle conditions which resulted in heavy losses, especially in May of 1940. The Squadron was evacuated back to the UK in 20<sup>th</sup> May and then in October, they were re-equipped with the Vickers Wellington aircraft after this.



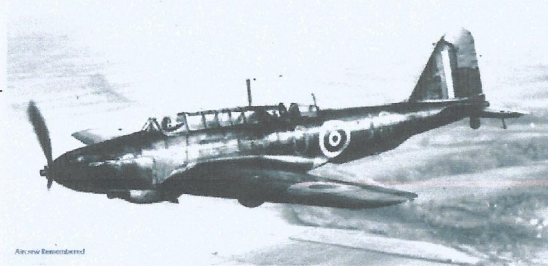
### Theatre of War: Battle details

**The Battle of France**, also known as the **Fall of France** was begun on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1940 and was the German invasion of France, Belgium and The Netherlands. It consisted of two main operations, namely, *Fall Gelb* (Case Yellow) and *Fall Rot* (Case Red). In the first operation, German armoured units in Ardennes pushed to cut off and surround the Allied units that had advanced into Belgium. The No. 150 Squadron served with the AASF in France and in May 1940 was involved in the attack on the Meuse bridges at Sedan. Sedan was situated on the east bank of the Meuse River. Its capture would give the Germans a base from which to capture the Meuse bridges and cross the river thereby allowing them to advance across the open and undefended French countryside and on to the English Channel. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May the Germans captured Sedan, allowing them to pour reinforcements and armour across the river.



*Photo: German troops with French prisoners crossing the Meuse on 15 May 1940 near Sedan*

The French High Command called for a supreme effort at Sedan to prevent German reinforcements from reaching the west bank and a renewed attempt was made with the whole strength of the Allied bombers in France hurled against the Sedan bridgehead in a series of waves. All available Battles and Blenheims were dispatched to the same target and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 71 aircraft from Nos 12, 103, 105, 150 and 218 Squadrons were ordered to destroy enemy pontoon bridges at Sedan and soon after noon the few French aircraft available went into action attacking bridges and columns of troops. The *Luftwaffe* prevented them from doing so and in a number of large air battles, the Allies suffered very high losses which devastated Allied bomber strength as shown below:



**Losses : 14/05/1940: Sedan, F**

- No. 12 Squadron (Battle) - lost four out of five
- No. 88 Squadron (Battle) - lost one out of ten
- No. 103 Squadron (Battle) - lost three out of eight



No. 105 Squadron (Battle) - lost six out of eleven  
No. 114 Squadron (Blenheim) - lost one out of two  
No. 139 Squadron (Blenheim) - lost four out of six  
No. 142 Squadron (Battle) - lost four out of eight  
No. 150 Squadron (Battle) - lost four out of four  
No. 218 Squadron (Battle) - lost ten out of eleven  
No. 226 Squadron (Battle) - lost three out of six

40 out of the 71 bombers which took off did not return, one of the highest rates of loss experienced by the Royal Air Force. The losses suffered were so severe, that their remaining operations for the day were cancelled.

Tom was one of the casualties from this day. He flew into battle from his base at the airfield at Ecury-sur-Cooles in a Fairey Battle Aircraft, Mark I, Serial P5232, Code: JN. He is recorded as being killed in the crash at 15h20, together with his observer, Sergeant (Obs.) James D.F. Williams (RAF 562632). The other crewman, LAC (Leading Aircraftman) A.K. Summerson, evaded capture and managed to escape back to the Allied lines.

Ultimately, the counterattack was a failure and the British and French forces were pushed back to the sea by the Germans where they were evacuated with several French divisions at Dunkirk.

### **Choloy War Cemetery**

Tom is buried at Choloy War Cemetery, Meurthe-et-Moselle, France. This cemetery was created by the Army Graves Service for the reburial of casualties



recovered from isolated sites, communal cemeteries and small churchyards in north-eastern France where permanent maintenance of the graves was not possible. In 1950 the Commonwealth War Graves Commission found it necessary to move more than 100 graves from a number of churchyards and civil cemeteries in the area. Those who lie in Choloy War Cemetery are mostly airmen; but there are also soldiers belonging to the forces of the United Kingdom who died in the Saar region during the first few months of the war (up to May 1940), or as prisoners of war. This photograph shows Tom's possible original grave before it was moved to Choloy Cemetery. He is remembered in the Choloy Cemetery in Joint grave IA, A 14-15. Tom's brother

Bob died in Terrington this year (2014) and Tom is fondly remembered by his sister Marjorie and family who lay a wreath for him at the memorial each year.



In Memory of

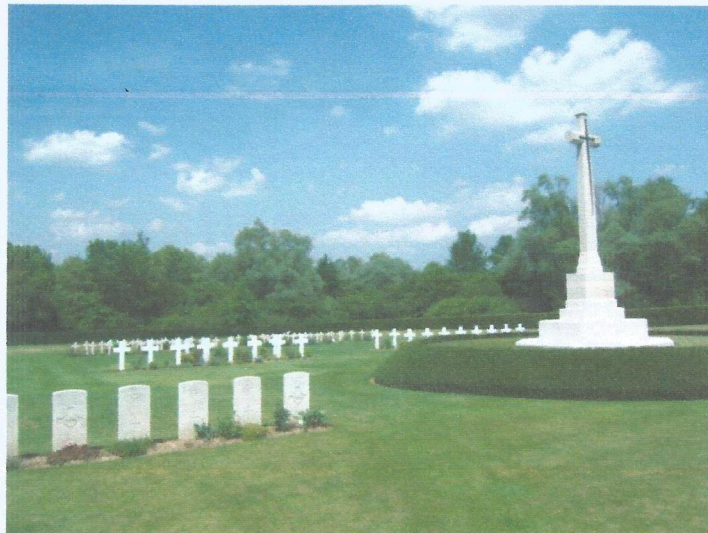
Flight Sergeant Pilot

## George Thomas Barker

563835, 150 Sqdn., Royal Air Force who died on 14 May 1940 Age 27

Son of Mr. and Mrs. George Robert Barker; husband of Vi Barker, of Andover, Hampshire.

Remembered with Honour  
Choloy War Cemetery



Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission