



PILOT OFFICER O H LAUNDERS 41715

Oliver Harry Launders was born in about 1914, the son of Oliver James Launders. At the end of 1939 he married Margaret L Launders (they shared the same surname) in the Wandsworth area of London. Margaret had been born there in 1912 and was therefore about two years older than her husband.

An announcement in the London Gazette on 24 March 1939 indicated that Launders had been granted a short service commission as an Acting Pilot Officer in the Royal Air Force (service number: 41715).

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 24 MARCH, 1939

2009

INFANTRY.

4th Bn. R. Sussex R.—Lt.-Col. & Bt. Col.
J. R. Warren, O.B.E., M.C., T.D., resigns
his commn. and retains his rank, with per-
mission to wear the prescribed uniform. 25th

The undermentioned are granted short
service commissions as Acting Pilot Officers
on probation on the dates stated:—

4th Mar. 1939.

2010

THE LONDON GAZETTE, 24 MARCH, 1939

Ian Ronald KROHN.
Oliver Harry LAUNDERS.
John Leeming LEEDS.
Anthony Stuart LINNEY.
Clifford Molyneux LOCHHEAD.
Irving Francis McDERMOTT.
Hugh Ernest Deney MARRYAT.
Percy Walter MASON.

The undermentioned Acting Pilot Officers
on probation are graded as Pilot Officers on
probation. 7th Mar. 1939:—

Charles Raymond HATTERSLEY.
John Cameron MACKINTOSH.
Sir Roderic Alan MACROBERT, Bt.
Robert STEVENSON.

Neville Chamberlain's broadcast to the nation took place on 3 September 1939, stating that Britain had declared war shortly after Germany failed to agree to withdraw its troops from Poland.

Some weeks later, on 31 October 1939, there was a further announcement in the London Gazette that Launders had been graded as a Pilot Officer on probation with effect from 30 September 1939 (less than a month after war was declared).

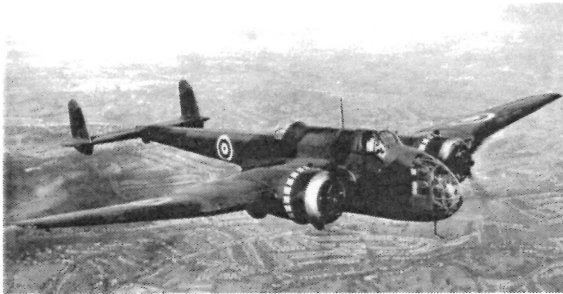
He served as a navigator with 5 Group 49 Squadron based at RAF Scampton.

OFFICERS SERVING ON THE ACTIVE LIST OF THE R.A.F.					
General Duties Branch—Acting Pilot Officers					
1939		1939		1939	
Symons, Charles Michael	P. 14Jan.	Brodie, Peter	4Mar.	Harrison-Broadley, John	4Mar.
Brooke	P. 14Jan.	Gascayne	P. 4Mar.	Hart, John Stewart	P. 4Mar.
Townsend, Peter	P. 14Jan.	Carter, John	P. 4Mar.	Harvey, Alfred Richard	P. 4Mar.
Muller	P. 14Jan.	Nemours	P. 4Mar.	Gough	P. 4Mar.
Troughton-Smith, Stephen Hugh	P. 14Jan.	Clayton, Arthur	P. 4Mar.	Harvey, Derek Leslie	P. 4Mar.
Turner, Percival	P. 14Jan.	Chamberlain Pitt	P. 4Mar.	Hawes, Gerald	P. 4Mar.
Stanley	P. 14Jan.	Cole, James Gordon	P. 4Mar.	Benjamin	P. 4Mar.
Vartan, Phillip Knox	P. 14Jan.	Corbett, Alexander	P. 4Mar.	Heron, Hugh Michael	P. 4Mar.
Walker, John Hatell	P. 14Jan.	Boyd	P. 4Mar.	Turrell	P. 4Mar.
Walmsley, Ivor	P. 14Jan.	Coots, Desmond	P. 4Mar.	Hitchings, Bryan	P. 4Mar.
William Reginald	P. 14Jan.	Christian Frederick	P. 4Mar.	Albert Harold	P. 4Mar.
Wartburton, Adrian	P. 14Jan.	Cox, Graham James	P. 4Mar.	Hogg, Richard John	P. 4Mar.
Ward, John Chisholm	P. 14Jan.	Cox, Grahame Laurence	P. 4Mar.	Kitchener	P. 4Mar.
Watson, Peter Vincent	P. 14Jan.	Cox, Robert Ernest	P. 4Mar.	Holbrook, Dennis Frederick	P. 4Mar.
Watterson, Arnold	P. 14Jan.	Coysh, David	P. 4Mar.	Stanford	P. 4Mar.
Irwin	P. 14Jan.	Whittier	P. 4Mar.	Holford, William	P. 4Mar.
Weiburn, Frank	P. 14Jan.	Craig-Adams, Michael	P. 4Mar.	Howley, Richard	P. 4Mar.
White, John Mortimer	P. 14Jan.	Alexander	P. 4Mar.	Alexander	P. 4Mar.
White, William Arthur	P. 14Jan.	Crawford, George	P. 4Mar.	Hughes, Joseph	P. 4Mar.
Lough	P. 14Jan.	Gordon	P. 4Mar.	Grantley	P. 4Mar.
Wilding, Arthur	P. 14Jan.	Cryderman, Lawrence	P. 4Mar.	Hynes, Terence	P. 4Mar.
Wright, Arthur Hugh	P. 14Jan.	Elwood	P. 4Mar.	Gerard	P. 4Mar.
Moncrief	P. 14Jan.	Davidson, Henry	P. 4Mar.	Illingworth, Kenneth	P. 4Mar.
Yapp, Gwynn Alderton	P. 14Jan.	Day, John Harold	P. 4Mar.	Jacobs, Kenneth	P. 4Mar.
Adams, Lloyd	P. 4Mar.	Deardon, Clifford	P. 4Mar.	Charles Harvey	P. 4Mar.
Stanley	P. 4Mar.	Herbert	P. 4Mar.	Jones, Humphrey	P. 4Mar.
Addie, Peter Aubrey	P. 4Mar.	de Mestre, Peter	P. 4Mar.	Owen	P. 4Mar.
Furresier	P. 4Mar.	Morrice	P. 4Mar.	Koebke, Eric James	P. 4Mar.
Anderson, John	P. 4Mar.	de Souza, Kenneth	P. 4Mar.	King, William John	P. 4Mar.
Rose	P. 4Mar.	Mitchell Alves	P. 4Mar.	Kingsbury, Leicester	P. 4Mar.
Andrews, John Frederick	P. 4Mar.	Dexter, Peter	P. 4Mar.	Cotnam	P. 4Mar.
Edward	P. 4Mar.	Grenfell	P. 4Mar.	Krohn, Ian Ronald	P. 4Mar.
Arnold, Walter	P. 4Mar.	Dickins, Douglas	P. 4Mar.	Landers, Oliver	P. 4Mar.
Henry	P. 4Mar.	Stewart	P. 4Mar.	Harry	P. 4Mar.
Astin, John	P. 4Mar.	Dixon, John Antony	P. 4Mar.	Leeds, John	P. 4Mar.
Kenneth	P. 4Mar.	Doughty, Neville	P. 4Mar.	Leeming	P. 4Mar.
Baker, Eric Neil	P. 4Mar.	Anthony Richard	P. 4Mar.	Linney, Anthony	P. 4Mar.
Beal, Samuel	P. 4Mar.	Dunn, Andrew	P. 4Mar.	Stuart	P. 4Mar.
Thomas	P. 4Mar.	Woodrow	P. 4Mar.	Lochhead, Clifford	P. 4Mar.
Bell, Bewsher Eric	P. 4Mar.	Egerton, Richard	P. 4Mar.	Molyneux	P. 4Mar.
Bellerby, John	P. 4Mar.	Gerard	P. 4Mar.		



The photograph above is of 83 and 49 Squadrons parading in the summer of 1940 between No and 3 hangars at RAF Scampton. The occasion was for the presentation of awards by HM King George VI. PO Lochhead may well be one of the airmen shown in the picture.

During the immediate period before World War Two, the RAF modified its command structure to rationalise for rapid expansion. Bomber Command was divided into six operational groups, each flying the same type of aircraft. In 1939 5 Group was flying the Handley Page Hampden, a fast, modern aircraft that carried a large payload. However, during the early daylight raids into enemy occupied Europe it suffered great losses due to its defensive armament leaving too many blind spots. The Group now turned to night bombing and mine-laying operations. It was not until the Avro Lancaster began arriving in strength that the Group began its proud history of successful and often highly dangerous raids into the Reich, the most famous of which was No 617 Squadron's attack on the Mohne, Eder and Sorpe dams. Between 1939 and 1945 the Group flew 70,351 sorties with the loss of 1,888 aircraft.



During July of 1940, night operations were carried out. Overnight on 7 and 8 July 1940, eighteen Hampdens and a dozen each of Wellingtons and Whitleys carried out raids in Germany. The Hampdens attacked Frankfurt, Soest, Duisburg and Dortmund-Ems.

Pilot Officer Launders was flying a Handley Page Hampden Mark 1 serial no L4066 and coded OL. It took off from RAF Scampton as part of Operation Frankfurt. Nine aircraft were to attack that city.

The aircraft flown by PO Launders crashed on the outward transit between Great Holland and Frinton-on-Sea in Essex, some three miles north-east of Clacton.



Three members of the aircrew were killed in the crash (Pilot Officer Launders, Sgt Cyril Richard Hallet, an observer aged twenty-seven from Wiltshire, and Sgt B Kinton) and a fourth (Wireless Operator and Air Gunner Sgt L Howard) survived but died soon afterwards from his injuries. There is a surviving photograph of Sgt C R Hallet (left), with his son Richard, taken shortly before his last sortie on 8 July 1940.

A report of these deaths is held by the National Archives (AIR 81/1041). Their names appear in 5 Group Roll of Honour in the Airman's Chapel at Lincoln Cathedral.



The Chapel is dedicated to St Michael. The Memorials commemorate personnel who lost their lives in the Second World War and the Memorial Books of No. 1 and 5 Groups Bomber Command are kept in the wooden box to the right of the altar. The wrought iron screen has badges of No. 1 and 5 Group Quarters RAF. Above is the badge of the RAF with the motto 'Per Ardua ad Astra'.

Lauder's death was registered in the Colchester Registration District but he was buried on 12 July 1940 at the Church of St John the Baptist, Scampton. He was 26 years of age. His grave is marked by a Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone.

SCAMPTON (ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST) CHURCHYARD U.K. 2044	CROSS, A.C. 2 MICHAEL FRASER, 1216273. R.A.F. (V.R.), 83 Sqn. 21st May, 1941. Age 18. Son of Maj. Charles Ralli Cross, Royal Artillery, and Stella Cross, of Church Stretton, Shropshire. Old Part. Grave 22.	HASKINS, Flt. Sgt. RONALD HENRY, 415789. R.A.A.F. 16th August, 1943. Age 22. Son of Henry and Olive Haskins, of Maylands, Western Australia. New Part. Grave 26.
	CROZIER, Sgt. (Pilot) LLOYD DONALD JAMES, R.102208. R.C.A.F. 23rd March, 1942. Old Part. Grave 33.	HASTIE, Sgt. (W. Op./Air Gr.) BERTRAM VICTOR, 905660. R.A.F. (V.R.), 49 Sqn. 29th September, 1940. Age 21. Son of Thomas Albert Hastie, and of Alice Elizabeth Hastie, of Carvey Island, Essex. Old Part. Grave 11.
	DAKIN, Sgt. (Pilot) THOMAS DUNBAR, R/94887. R.C.A.F. 23rd March, 1942. Age 19. Son of Dr. Warren A. Dakin, M.D., and Arcta Hope Dakin, of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada. Old Part. Grave 32.	HORBERRY, Pte. 1084, 4684738. 6th Bn. The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. 28th September, 1940. Age 36. Son of Tom and Gertrude Horberry. Old Part. Grave 9.
	DAVENPORT-JONES, Sgt. (W. Op. [Air]) CARTON VINCENT, 653259. R.A.F. 49 Sqn. 7th December, 1940. Age 19. Grandson of Mr. and Mrs. G. Bacon, of Deal, Bombay, India. Old Part. Grave 16.	KEATING, Cpl. THOMAS ALEXANDER, 348825. R.A.F. 49 Sqn. 23rd November, 1939. Age 46. Son of Thomas and Nancy Keating; husband of Catherine May Keating, of Winchester. Old Part. Grave 7.
	DAVIS, Pilot Offr. (Pilot) ERNEST RENE, 60122. R.A.F. (V.R.), 83 Sqn. 14th August, 1941. Old Part. Grave 24.	KELLY, I.A.C. WALTER GERALD, 620024. R.A.F. 49 Sqn. 23rd November, 1939. Old Part. Grave 5.
	EVANS, Pilot Offr. (Pilot) LESLIE RICHARD, 42702. R.A.F. 83 Sqn. 4th April, 1941.	LAUNDERS, Pilot Offr. (Pilot) OLIVER HARRY, 41715. R.A.F. 83 Sqn. 8th July, 1940. Old Part. Grave 1.

GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM										Schedule No. : 1	
County: LINCOLNSHIRE										UNITED KINGDOM DISTRICT	
PLACE OF BURIAL: SCAMPTON (ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST) CHURCH										Certified complete and correct.	
Controlling Authority:										SIGNATURE: <i>[Signature]</i> DATE: 27 APR 1955	
The following are buried here:											
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)			
PRG.	No. and Rank	Initials, Name and Honours	Unit	Date of Death	Details of Grave marking including Screen Wall	By whom maintained, if at Commission expense state fee payable	Ownership of Grave	REMARKS			
1	41715 P/O (Pilot)	O.H. LAUNDERS	83 Sqn. R.A.F.	8.7.40	Q/H	All by P.O.C.					
2	926312 A.O.2	R.W. BENNETT	R.A.F. (V.R.)	20.7.40	Q/H	at 5/- per an.					

The undermentioned Acting Pilot Officers on probation are graded as Pilot Officers on probation on the dates stated:—

19th Aug. 1939.

George St. Clair Boyd REID (41465).

24th Aug. 1939.

Frederick Warwick CHADWICK (41522).

29th Aug. 1939.

Douglas Edgar SHORMAN (41327).

3rd Sept. 1939.

Robert Leonard Blyth CARR (41374).

Robert Stephen DANBY (41381).

Kenneth Malcolm LAIRD (41590).

Richard George MANLOVE (41601).

Charles David REGAN (41616).

Gordon McKenzie STEWART (41625).

Percival Stanley TURNER (41631).

30th Sept. 1939.

Peter Aubrey Forrester ADDIE (41646).

John Frederick Edward ANDREWS (41648).

Richard Henry Montague BENNETT (41656).

Arthur Chamberlain Pitt CLAYTON (41664).

James Gordon COLE (41665).

Alexander Boyd CORBETT (41666).

Robert Ernest COX (41670).

Henry DAVISON (41675).

Clifford Herbert DEARDEN (41677).

Peter Grenfell DEXTER (41680).

John Charles HALL (41693).

Bryan Albert Harold HITCHINGS (41701).

Joseph Grantley HUGHES (41706).

Humphrey Owen JONES (41710).

William John KING (41712).

Oliver Harry LAUNDERS (41715).

Pilot Officer Launders became a member of Bomber Command aircrew, flying from Lincolnshire bases, during World War 2. He served with 83 Squadron based at RAF Scampton.

Pilot Officer Oliver Harry Launders (Grave number 38) Known as 'Harry Launders'

Harry Launders father was a chartered accountant and worked for a number of companies in the Far East and South America. Harry was the second of five children; he was born in Para, Brazil in 1914. His father died suddenly while on leave with his family in Jersey in 1921. His widow, May Launders, and the children settled in Tunbridge Wells and Harry was educated at Skinners' School.

He left school in the early thirties and worked for a time as a farmhand to support his mother and younger siblings but eventually joined the Metropolitan Police and after a short time on the beat joined the CID. He left the force in 1936, commenting that he had to tell too many lies to extract the truth! He joined the RAF as an Aircraftman circa 1937. He elected to become aircrew and rose to the rank of Sgt, qualifying initially as a navigator then as a pilot. In 1939 he was granted a commission and married my mother Margaret Launders. (Their fathers were brothers.)

My son in law was kind enough to obtain the 83 Squadron Operations Record Book from No 51 Squadron History Team at RAF Waddington. In their covering letter, they noted that P/O Launders is first mentioned on 21 April 1940 as a member F/Lt Pitcairn-Hill's crew. Harry flew 19 sorties with F/Lt Pitcairn-Hill between 21 April and 30 June 1940 and two more sorties with W/Cmdr Sisson. Harry's first sortie as captain was on 4/5 July (a mass attack on the SCHARNHORST). The entry on 7/8 July reads 'While returning from 'above operation (target A.161) this aircraft crashed near CLACTON. All crew were killed (P/o Launders, Sgt Hallett, Sgt Howard and Sgt Kinton).



Pilot Officer Oliver 'Harry' Launders

With thanks to Nick Launders (P/O Harry Launders son) for providing the information