

**Sergeant DONALD BEALE**

1161382, 139 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

who died age 21 on 13 October 1941

Son of William Henry and Mary Beale.

Remembered with honour in BOULOGNE EASTERN CEMETERY

We had, for some reason, to await the *Register* of 13 June 1942 to record the death, over eight months previously, of one of their own:



*Sergeant Donald Beale. R A F.*

*His many friends in Stratford-on-Avon, and the Tewkesbury district, will learn with regret that Sergeant Donald Beale R A F, only son of ex- police Inspector<sup>1</sup> and Mrs Beale, of Ryfield, Longford, Gloucestershire, has been reported previously missing, now presumed killed in action. While waiting to be called up for the Royal Air Force he applied himself enthusiastically to obtaining perfect physical fitness. The confirmation of the death of Donald Beale makes certain the loss of the soundest of the staff of young reporters, who were doing such excellent work for the Journal, when war broke out.*

The *Register* provided more information than usual since he himself had worked in the Tewkesbury area as a reporter with the *Register*. Realising that he would be called up, "he applied himself enthusiastically to attaining perfect physical fitness". After joining Bomber Command, he had survived one incident where, after his plane caught fire, he descended successfully by parachute. 139 Squadron, having been re-equipped after the Nazi *blitzkrieg* onslaught in 1940, began attacks against enemy ports and airfields as part of No 2 Group and continued these until December 1941. We can, therefore, only assume that **Sgt. Beale**, who had been awarded his wings as the photograph shows, was killed during a raid in the Boulogne area or en-route to such a raid.<sup>2</sup> Indeed research on the web located "a 'maximum effort' on the night of 12/13 October 1941, for example, saw 12 Wellingtons sent off to attack Germany, nine to Nuremberg and three to Bremen. Losses were all too frequent and two aircraft (X9822 and Z9926) failed to return that night". Could Sgt. Beale have lost his life during those raids? Why did it take so long to release this news after his death?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Register* of 24/06/1905 (p5/5) recorded that "7 year old lad fell into River Avon and was rescued by lock keeper, Philip Gregory. He was revived by artificial respiration administered by Police Constable Beale."

<sup>2</sup> Website: <http://www.rafweb.org/Sqn136-140.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Website: <http://rafalconbury.4t.com/about.html>