

remembrance ni

Donaghadee DFC downed 18 enemy planes



Students of Campbell College stand in remembrance. A former pupil Desmond Hughes was a foremost WW2 air ace.



Desmond Hughes (above) was born in Donaghadee on 6th June 1919. The son of the director of a linen firm, he was educated at

Campbell College, Belfast and Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he read Law.

During the war he downed 19 enemy aircraft. Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Flying Medal (London Gazette – 18 April 1941), a Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross (Gazetted – 13 April 1943), a second Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross (Gazetted – 28 September 1943), and the Distinguished Service Order (Gazetted – 23 March 1945).

Desmond Hughes remained in the RAF after the war. Amongst his appointments he was Commandant of RAF College Cranwell. He was awarded the AFC (gazetted 1st January 1954), made a CBE (gazetted 1st January 1962), a CB (1972) and retired on 6th June 1974 as an Air Vice-Marshal.

He learned to fly with the Cambridge University Air Squadron and he was granted a Direct-Entry Commission in the RAF on 3rd October 1939. He went to No. 1 ITW Cambridge in November 1939. On 1st January 1940 Hughes was posted to RAF College FTS Cranwell on No. 2 war course.

He was detached for a few days in May to 5 FTS Sealand to convert to Masters. He then returned

to Cranwell, where the course ended on 1st June. Hughes was sent immediately to No. 1 School of Army Co-operation at Old Sarum for No. 8 Course. On 10th June Hughes was one of 20 officers from the course who were posted to 5 OTU Aston Down. After converting to Defiants he was posted to 264 Squadron at Duxford on the 19th.

Flying with Sgt. F Gash as his gunner, Hughes claimed two Do17's destroyed on 26th August, a He111 destroyed during the night of 15th/16th October, a He111 damaged on 23rd/24th November, a He111 destroyed on 12th/13th March 1941, a He111 probably destroyed on 8th/9th April and a He111 shot down on 10th/11th April.

Hughes was awarded the DFC (Gazetted 18th April 1941) and Gash the DFM.

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Citation for the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross and Distinguished Flying Medal.

“Flying Officer Frederick Desmond HUGHES (74706), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 264 Squadron.

967911 Sergeant Fred GASH, No.264 Squadron.

Flying Officer Hughes and Sergeant Gash as pilot and air gunner respectively have participated in numerous engagements against the enemy, both by day and night. During these flights four enemy aircraft have been destroyed, of which two were shot down at night.”

(London Gazette – 18 April 1941)

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In January 1942 Hughes was posted to 125 Squadron at Colerne as a Flight Commander. He shared in the squadron's first victory, a Ju88 on 27th June.

Later that year he also became the first (or one of the first) to take his pet dog on a sortie. His mongrel *Scruffy*, dressed in flying overalls for warmth, survived the sortie, only to be killed by a WAAF truck driver shortly afterwards.

Later in the year he teamed up with P/O L Dixon and they shared in the destruction of a Ju88 on 4th November.

Hughes joined 600 Squadron in North Africa on 19th January 1943 as a Flight Commander.

Dixon went with him and during the night of 23rd/24th January they claimed two Ju88's destroyed and on 12th/13th February a Cant Z1007.

Hughes was awarded a Bar to the DFC (Gazetted 13th April 1943).

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Citation for the award of the Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"Acting Squadron Leader Frederick Desmond HUGHES, D.F.C. (74706), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 600 (City of London) Squadron.

Distinguished Flying Cross.

Flying Officer Lawrence DIXON (116698), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 600 Squadron.

As pilot and observer respectively, Squadron Leader Hughes and Flying Officer Dixon have flown together on many night sorties in operations in North Africa. During these flights they have destroyed 3 enemy aircraft. Squadron Leader Hughes and Flying Officer Dixon have displayed great skill and keenness, setting a praiseworthy example."

(London Gazette – 13 April 1943)

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On 25th/26th April they claimed a Ju88 destroyed, on 12th/13th July a He111, on the 20/21st a Ju88, on 11th/12th August three Ju88's and on the 17th/18th a Ju87.

Hughes was awarded a second Bar to the DFC (gazetted 28th September 1943).

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Citation for the award of the Second Bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

“Acting Squadron Leader Frederick Desmond HUGHES, D.F.C. (74706), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No.600 Squadron.

Squadron Leader Hughes is a brilliant night fighter whose determined efforts have met with further successes. Since being awarded a bar to 'the Distinguished Flying Cross he has destroyed 7 enemy aircraft. His total victories number at least 16, of which 13 have been destroyed at night. Squadron Leader Hughes is a highly efficient flight commander and his meritorious, work has been

reflected in the efforts of his flight which has earned notable successes.”

(London Gazette – 28 September 1943)

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At the end of 1943 he was posted back to the UK and went to a staff job at Fighter Command. In February 1944 he was promoted to Acting Wing Commander and posted to 85 Group TAF. Hughes returned to operations on 19th July 1944, taking command of 604 Squadron at Hurn.

In early August the squadron was operating from A-8, an airstrip close to the Arromanches beaches. With Dixon as his navigator, Hughes destroyed a Ju88 on 6th/7th August and they claimed their final victory on 13th/14th January 1945, a Ju188 over Rotterdam.

Hughes was awarded the DSO (gazetted 23rd March 1945).

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Citation for the award of the Distinguished Service Order

"Wing Commander Hughes has displayed the highest standard of devotion to duty throughout a long period of operational flying. His outstanding keenness, great skill and unsurpassed determination have been well reflected in the success of the squadron which, under his brilliant leadership, has been responsible for the destruction of a good number of enemy aircraft. Among his own personal successes, Wing Commander Hughes has destroyed 18 enemy aircraft."

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He served on the directing staff of the RAF Staff College, Bracknell between 1954 and 1956 after which he was personal staff officer to the Chief of the Air Staff, then Air Chief Marshal Sir Dermot Boyle, for two years. Between 1959 and 1961 he was station commander at Geilenkirchen in West Germany. In 1962-64 he was director of air staff plans at the Ministry of Defence and in September 1963 was appointed ADC to the Queen.

As commandant of the RAF College, Cranwell between 1970 and 1972 he supervised the Prince of Wales's flying training and presided over the college's 50th anniversary celebrations.

Hughes was awarded the AFC (gazetted 1st January 1954), made a CBE (Gazetted 1st January 1962), a CB (1972) and retired on 6th - A History of RAF Organisation June 1974 as an Air Vice-Marshal.

He was made a Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire in 1983. He died on 11th January 1992.

Post-WW2-decorations:

January 1st, 1954: Air Force Cross

January 1st, 1962: CBE

June 3th, 1972: CB

Promotions:

October 3th, 1939: Pilot Officer

October 3th, 1940: Flying Officer

October 3th, 1941: Flight Lieutenant (war sub)

July 26th, 1944: Squadron Leader (war sub)

April 2nd, 1946: Flight Lieutenant

December 3th, 1946: Squadron Leader
(temporary)

August 1st, 1947: Squadron Leader

January 1st, 1953: Wing Commander

July 1st, 1958: Group Captain

January 1st, 1963: Air Commodore

September 12th, 1966: Acting Air Vice-Marshal

July 1st, 1967: Air Vice-Marshal

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Battle of Britain London Monument

Air of Authority - A History of RAF Organisation

[SHORES, CH. & WILLIAMS, C., Aces High, Grub Street, London, 1994.](#)

- The London Gazette Issue 35139 published on the 18 April 1941
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- Second Supplement to The London Gazette Issue 35976 published on the 9 April 1943
-
- Third Supplement to The London Gazette Issue 36187 published on the 24 September 1943
-
- Fourth Supplement to The London Gazette Issue 36997 published on the 20 March 1945
-
- Traces of War
-
- [Air of Authority](#)

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The **remembrance ni** programme is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD who served as Chaplain to 102 and 105 Regiments Royal Artillery (TA), as Hon. Chaplain to RNR and as Chaplain to the RBL NI area and the Burma Star Association NI. Dr McKelvey is a Past President of Queen's University Services Club. He may be contacted at houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

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