



remembrance nl

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## **Jim Malley - Pathfinder who flew 127 operations and later was Terence O'Neill's wingman**



**One of his first operations was in the Vickers Wellington F for Freddie, which featured in a 1941 film. Jim Malley admitted he always felt afraid on operations.**



**Jim Young Malley's service with the RAF during the Second World War extended to a remarkable 127 operations over enemy territory, including more than 30 raids over Berlin.**

James Young Malley was the son of a farmer and merchant. He was educated at Dungannon Royal School and entered the Civil Service in Belfast as a clerk.

In 1940 he volunteered for the RAF and was commissioned as a navigator-bomb aimer. Remarkably, he was the eldest of three brothers to fly with Bomber Command. All three survived, in a business where the odds against survival were the most unfavourable of any branch of the Services.

One of his first operations was in the Vickers Wellington F for Freddie, which became a national byword after it featured in the wartime film *Target for Tonight* (1941). His last operations were in Mosquitoes of 139 squadron in which he flew 53 missions between September 1944 and April 1945, in one case flying on operations on ten successive nights. His assignments included more than 30 raids over Berlin, which was the most dreaded target because of the nine-hour flight, the fighter screen and the anti-aircraft fire.

Later after leading a daylight raid on shipping in the heavily fortified harbour at Tobruk. He was promoted to squadron leader shortly afterwards, and returned to England to take charge of navigator training.

A bid to return to active operations failed on medical grounds, but on appeal a sympathetic chief medical officer-and fellow Irishman-Air Commodore O'Malley, pronounced that, while he could not pass him, he would not fail him.

Malley then embarked on his Pathfinder exploits with **139 Squadron from Upwood**, Near Peterborough. For this he was awarded the DSO.

When he left the RAF in 1945 he was found to have a damaged lung, but it responded to treatment and he rejoined the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

A notably modest man, he never used his Air Force rank post-war and rarely talked about the operations which brought him a DSO and DFC and bar.



**Terence O'Neill, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland**

When he resumed his career as a civil servant, Malley achieved distinction a second time when he held the pivotal post in the private office of the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland at a moment in the mid-1960s when Terence O'Neill was attempting a rapprochement in difficult circumstances with the Government of the Irish Republic. It fell to Malley to conduct the delicate negotiations which preceded the groundbreaking meeting of the two Prime Ministers, Sean Lemass of the Irish Republic and O'Neill, at Stormont in January 1965.

After the resignation of O'Neill, Malley served as Registrar-General of Northern Ireland for nearly ten years, retiring in 1978. He was also actively concerned with the welfare of ex-servicemen and women.

A tall, gangling figure and modest to a fault, Malley retired from Civil Service in 1979. A dedicated outdoorsman, he was to be seen regularly on the moors of Antrim and Fermanagh, his retriever at his heels, shooting grouse and pheasant.

He once confessed to a friend that he never went on an RAF operation without feeling afraid - and doubted the word of those who claimed they did not.

**Squadron Leader Jim Malley, DSO, DFC and Bar, wartime Pathfinder and civil servant, was born on July 24, 1918. He died on June 5, 2000 aged 81.**

## **Jim 'Zulu' Malley - Promotions and Awards**

### **Promotions:**

December 1st, 1940: Pilot Officer (probation)

December 8th, 1941: Flying Officer (war sub)

December 8th, 1942: Flight Lieutenant (war sub)

? : Acting Squadron Leader

Jim Malley received his DFC in 1941 and a Bar two years later.

## **Distinguished Flying Cross**

### **Pilot Officer**

**149 Squadron, Royal Air Force**

**Awarded on November 21st, 1941**

Recommendation:

"P/O Malley has been employed as an Observer in this Squadron for the last six months. His ability as a navigator cannot be disputed, as he has successfully attacked the primary target on the majority of his raids, and some of the best night photographs taken by this Squadron during the past six months are due to his outstanding ability and the perfection of his training of the crew. On several occasions this Officer and his Captain have spent up to two hours trying to locate the primary target and then being unable to locate the primary target have flown at a very low altitude to find a railway and then followed it until an important junction has been reached when systematic bombing has been carried out. His determination to attack the primary target or, under conditions of adverse weather, a target of major importance, is an example to the other observers in the Squadron. The standard he has set is the perfection peak to be aimed at, and by his example he has assisted considerably our war effort."

## **Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross**

### **Flight Lieutenant**

**178 Squadron, Royal Air Force**

**Awarded on July 23rd, 1943**

Recommendation:

"F/Lt., Malley has now completed 487 hours operational flying in the European and Middle East theatre of war. His work in this Squadron both on the ground as Navigation Officer and in the air has been most praiseworthy. His cool determination in attacking the target in adverse weather conditions and in the face of heavy opposition has made his work outstanding and an excellent example for his fellow squadron members. On the 6th Aug. 42 he was Navigator (B) in the leading aircraft of a formation which attacked shipping in Tobruk harbour in daylight. Despite intense anti-aircraft he achieved excellent results."

## **Distinguished Service Order DSO**

### **Acting Squadron Leader**

**[139 Squadron, Royal Air Force](#)**

**Awarded on October 26th, 1945**

Recommendation:

"Since being awarded a First Bar to the D.F.C. after completing 74 heavy bomber sorties, this Officer has completed a further 53 operational sorties on Mosquito aircraft, making a total of 127. Many sorties carried out on this tour have been against the most heavily defended targets in Germany, including Berlin, which he has attacked on 27 occasions. All his sorties on this tour have been in the important role of primary blind marker.

"Throughout this lengthy period he has had many arduous experiences and many times has his aircraft been hit by flak. Invariably his courage, coolness and accurate navigation under the most difficult circumstances have largely contributed to the successful completion of his task, and safe return to base. In spite of his long operational career, and numerous harrowing experiences he has never tired, and his keenness to operate and his courage and tenacity at all times have been a shining example and a source of confidence and pride to the whole Squadron. I strongly recommend the non-immediate award of the D.S.O."

### **Acknowledgments -**

The Times

Ulster Dictionary of Biography

Victor Patterson

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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](mailto:houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com)

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