

Victor Dominic Benefield (Uncle Vic)



Victor Dominic Benefield

Born: 8th May 1914, in Wanganui, New Zealand

Died: 16th September 1942, in Essen, Germany

Buried: Reichswald War Cemetery, Kleve, Germany

Father: Percival Benefield, born 1882 in Wanganui

Mother: Agnes Frances Murphy, born 1882 in Auckland

Aircraft flown with RNZAF in England: Vickers Wellington Mark IC

-/-

Victor Dominic Benefield received his secondary education at Wanganui Technical College where he passed the Public Service Entrance Examination. He subsequently furthered his studies by taking a commercial course with a correspondence college. His sports were tennis, rowing and rugby, in which latter game he was a member of his school first fifteen. His civilian occupation was that of cashier and shipping clerk with J.H.Cock & Co Ltd of Wanganui. In February 1940 he applied for war service in the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

Victor was enlisted for aircrew training on the 18th January 1941 at the Ground Training School, Levin, and was posted on the 1st March to No.2 Elementary Flying Training School, New Plymouth, to commence his flying training. After completing this training he was posted on the 12th April to No.3 Service Flying Training School, Ohakea. While here, on the 20th May he was awarded his flying badge and on the 5th July was commissioned as a Pilot Officer.

It seems most likely most of his training would have been in the de Havilland Tiger Moth.

On the 22nd July 1941 he embarked for the United Kingdom.

He arrived in England on the 2nd September, 1941, and reported to No.3 Personnel Reception Centre, Bournemouth. He was posted on the 16th September 1941 to No.11 Operational Training Unit (OTU) in Bassingbourn, Hertfordshire, to crew-up and complete his training on Wellington Bomber aircraft. While with this unit he commenced operational flying, with targets in Dusseldorf, Bremen and Essen.

He was promoted to Flying Officer on 5th July 1942.

On 16th September 1942, on a night-time mission over Essen, in a Vickers Wellington Mark IC bomber over Essen, the aircraft failed to return to its base, and all crew were classified as missing. After due time, Flying Officer Benefield's death was officially presumed to have occurred on the 16th September, 1942, as the result of air operations.

According to the Auckland Museum online cenotaph:

"Took off at 20:12 on 16 Sept 1942 from Bassingbourne using the call sign 5CUL. Coned by searchlights at 10,000 feet and shot down by Flak to crash near Duisburg."

Notes from a book by ex R.A.F. P.O.W.'s in Germany:

"They were flying a Wellington Bomber Mission to Osnabruck. From a crew of six, two were New Zealanders, and they were the only ones killed near Duisburg.

Victor was the Pilot and kept the craft steady while the rest of the crew bailed out.

On the 9th Sept 1943, F/Lt Victor Benefield was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross."

There was one other New Zealander on board, Sargeant E. J. Outen from Gisborne, who was also killed, and is buried in the same cemetery in Kleve.

Our Dad, Cyril Omundsen, was serving in the NZ army in Egypt at the time. He wrote back to our mother, Rita, every week during his entire 5+ years in North Africa and Italy, and we have these letters. His letter of the 11th October 1942 mentions that he saw a notice in the NZ Expeditionary Force (NZEf) paper they received, saying that Victor was missing in action, and hoping he was safe and well. In another letter of 1st August 1943, he mentioned some of the frightening statistics for airmen during the war, saying that Uncle Vic's training class had 80 participants initially, and that as of writing, there were only 5 still alive.

More family details are available on the Omundsen Genealogy site at www.omundsen.com, together with some of his letters written home.

Thanks to Victor (Omundsen) for the Genealogy site.

Victor's Service Details:

Rank - Flying Officer - Royal New Zealand Air Force

Service No. 41302

Aged 28

Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Germany.

Plot 2 - Row H - Grave No.6

There are 7654 graves in this cemetery, of these 127 are from New Zealand

Thanks to Dave (Omundsen) for the grave photos - he took these when visiting the cemetery in 2009.



5/2/3996 SOPR

16th Sept. '49.

Mr. P. Benefield,
29 Kelvin Street,
Aramoho,
WANGANUI.

Dear Mr Benefield,

Further to my previous correspondence concerning your son, Flying Officer Victor Dominic Benefield, information now received from Air Ministry states that the graves of your son and Sergeant E.J. Outen, R.N.Z.A.F. have been located by the Missing Research and Enquiry Service in the Krefeld-Bochum Cemetery, where they had been buried by the Germans.

It has not been possible to obtain any other details of your son's last flight other than an extract from German records which stated that your son's aircraft, a Wellington Bomber No. SV612, crashed at 2.20 a.m. on the 17th September, in the Neuss area near Duisberg.

Your son's remains have now been re-interred in the Reichswald Forest British Military Cemetery, Plot 2, Row H, Grave No. 6, Sergeant Outen being re-interred in Grave No. 7. A permanent headstone will be erected immediately labour and materials are available, and I am to assure you Mr Benefield that your son's grave will be carefully tended at all times.

Yours faithfully,

*base altered
to PRs.*

[Signature]
AIR SECRETARY.



FILE.
19/9/49 *296* Initials

Vickers Wellington Bomber Mark 1C

Serial Number DV612, Markings OP-L

Squadron 11 OTU - Call Sign 5CUL - Crew on night mission of 16th Sep 1942:

- Flying Officer Victor Dominic Benefield (Pilot - Wanganui, NZ - died)
- Sargeant Ernest Joseph Outen (Gunner - Gisborne, NZ - died)
- Sargeant Frederick Thomas Hooper (survived, POW Stalag 344 Lamsdorf)
- Warrant Officer N F James (survived, POW, Marlag Ind Nord Westertimke - Tarnstedt)
- Sargeant John Longden (survived, POW Stalag 344 Lamsdorf)

The **Vickers Wellington** was a British twin-engined, long-range medium bomber. It was designed during the mid-1930s at Brooklands in Weybridge, Surrey. Led by Vickers-Armstrongs' chief designer Rex Pierson, a key feature of the aircraft is its geodetic airframe fuselage structure, which was principally designed by Barnes Wallis (the lad who invented the bouncing bomb used in the "Dambusters" raids). The framework was covered in fabric and doped! Development had been started in response to Air Ministry Specification B.9/32, issued in the middle of 1932, for a bomber for the Royal Air Force.

This specification called for a twin-engined day bomber capable of delivering higher performance than any previous design. Other aircraft developed to the same specification include the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley and the Handley Page Hampden. During the development process, performance requirements such as for the tare weight changed substantially, and the engine used was not the one originally intended.

The Wellington was used as a night bomber in the early years of the Second World War, performing as one of the principal bombers used by Bomber Command. During 1943, it started to be superseded as a bomber by the larger four-engined "heavies" such as the **Avro Lancaster**. The Wellington continued to serve throughout the war in other duties, particularly as an anti-submarine aircraft.

It holds the distinction of having been the only British bomber that was produced for the duration of the war, and of having been produced in a greater quantity than any other British-built bomber. The Wellington remained as first-line equipment when the war ended, although it had been increasingly relegated to secondary roles. The Wellington was one of two bombers named after Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, the other being the Vickers Wellesley.

A larger heavy bomber aircraft designed to Specification B.1/35, the Vickers Warwick, was developed in parallel with the Wellington; the two aircraft shared around 85% of their structural components. Many elements of the Wellington were also re-used in a civil derivative, the Vickers VC.1 Viking.

A total of 11,461 Wellingtons were built, in many variants.

The most common were:

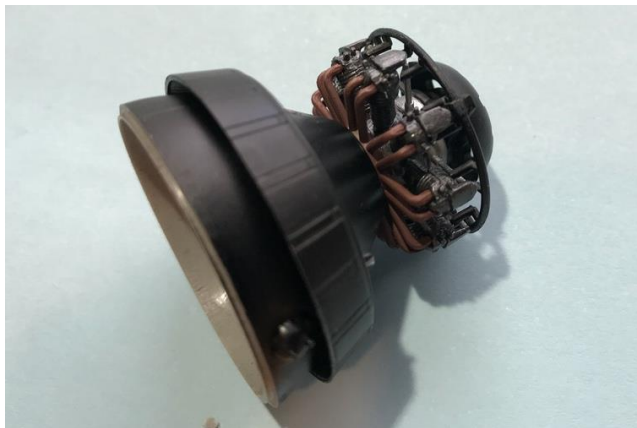
Type 416 Wellington Mark IC - 2,685 built. Crew of 5 or 6, depending on the use of the waist gunner. This was the first major variant used in the war, and was the type flown by Uncle Vic. Two 1,000hp Bristol Pegasus XVIII radial engines. This is the model pictured here.

Type 417 Wellington B Mark III - 1,519 built. Two 1,425hp Bristol Hercules XI engines.

Type 440 Wellington B Mark X - 3,803 built. Two Bristol Hercules XVIII 1,675hp engines.

The following are pictures of the model of the Wellington Mark 1C configuration, produced by Trumpeter (China).

Later pictures show the size comparison with the Avro Lancaster, the heavy 4 engined bomber that took over from the Wellington in 1943 as Bomber Command's main strike weapon. Both models are 1:48 scale. There are more photos of both models on Gary's server.



The Pegasus Radial Engine



The retractable ventral turret - it was rather important to retract this upon landing, as otherwise it would be ripped off - along with any occupant!



The fuselage layout - ventral turret is retracted





The Avro Lancaster alongside the Vickers Wellington - both 1:48 scale, as is the airman in front

Comparison:

	Wellington Mark 1C	Avro Lancaster Mark 1
Engines	2 x 1,000 hp Bristol Pegasus Radial	4 x 1,280 hp Rolls Royce Merlin V12
Range	1,805 miles	2,530 miles
Bomb Load	4,500 lb	18,000 lb
Max Speed	234 mph	287 mph
Service Ceiling	18,000 ft	22,000 ft
Armament	2 x .303 machine guns nose 2 x .303 machine guns tail 2 x .303 machine guns belly	2 x .303 machine guns nose 4 x .303 machine guns tail 2 x .303 machine guns dorsal
Number Built (all variants)	11,461	7,378

Footnote: There is an interesting entry in the global Aviation Safety Network concerning a Messerschmitt Bf110 (German twin-engined night fighter) that collided with a Wellington with the same serial number (DV612) on 13th March, 1942. The Wellington made it back to England OK. Not sure if it is the same aircraft that Uncle Vic flew, but interesting to think it might have been.

Date: 13-MAR-1942

Time: 22:15

Type: [Messerschmitt Bf 110 E-1](#)

Owner/operator: 3./NJG 1 Luftwaffe

Registration: 4310

C/n / msn: G9+DL

Fatalities: Fatalities: 1 / Occupants: 2

Aircraft damage: Written off (damaged beyond repair)

Location: Herpt, Heusden, Noord-Brabant - [Netherlands](#)

Phase: Combat

Nature: Military

Departure airport: Venlo airfield

Destination airport:

Narrative:

Feindflug - operational sortie. On the night of 13-14 March, RAF Bomber Command raided Köln in Germany.

The Messerschmitt collided with 103 Squadron Wellington DV612, while trying to intercept it. The Bf 110 hit the tail of the Wellington, sheering off half of its vertical stabiliser, and was seen to catch fire.

The Luftwaffe crew bailed out, the RAF bomber limping back to RAF Elsham Wolds in England. Oberleutnant L. Schmitz probably struck the tail unit while bailing out and was killed. Bordfunker (radio operator) Obergefreiter W. Vonjahr landed injured.



Me110