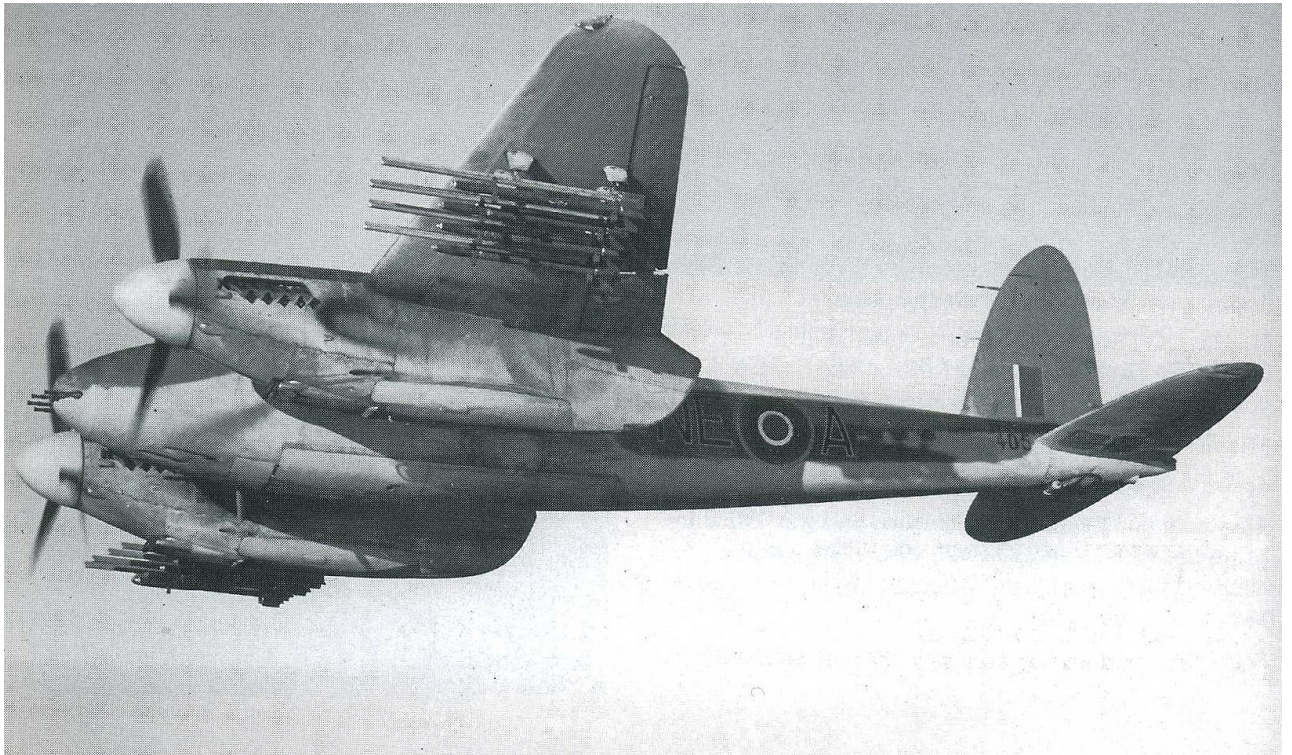


R.A.F. BANFF

Researched by Findlay Pirie



A Mosquito of 143 Squadron RAF Banff

R.A.F. BANFF

1943

April. - Airfield at Boyndie opened by 17 Group, Coastal Command (Coastal Command Training) at Boyndie and named **Banff Airfield**.

Transferred to 21 Group, Flying Training Command on 5th. April 1943.

May 1943 - No. 14 (P) Advanced Flying Unit Take over Banff Airfield.

No. 14 Flying Training School was originally formed on 1st. April 1939 at Kinloss under Group Capt. A.H. Peck. The unit moved to Cranfield in April 1940, then to Ossington, then in May 1943 the unit (by this time known as 14 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit moved to Banff. The move was completed by 25th. May 1943.

Aug 25 Two Oxfords of 14 (P) AFU, Banff, collided mid-air near Lochagan Farm Banff. Sgt. V.J. Surbey killed and buried in Banff Cemetery.

Aug 29 Oxford of 14(P) AFU Banff crashed near Dyce. F/Sgt G. Braddock and Sgt A.F. Smith killed.

1944.

Jan 17 Anson of 14 (P) AFU, crashed in field between Blairshinnoch level crossing and Ladysbridge Station whilst in the circuit to land at Banff Airfield. F/Lt O.J.C. Mason, F/O Pennington and P.O. Francis killed. Mason and Pennington buried at Banff Cemetery.

Feb 23 Oxford of 14 (P) AFU, crashed on cliff face north of Banff Airfield at 0230 hours. Solo pilot, Sgt. A. Younger, killed.

Aug 21 Two Oxfords of 14(P) AFU, Banff, collided in mid-air at Moss side of Grange, Banffshire. Pilots, F/O Haynes and F/O James Law, killed. F/O Haynes buried in Banff Cemetery.

Sep 01 Banff Airfield transferred to 18 Group, Coastal Command,

Banff Strike Wing takes over Banff Airfield Group Captain Max Aitken given command.

Oct 02 Two Beaufighters of 404 Sqn, Banff, collided three and a half miles SW of Banff Airfield and both crashed near the farm of Wellheads, Tillynaught. All four crew members killed. F/O L. Robinson, F/O F.M. Stickel and F/O E.R. Davey buried in Banff Cemetery. The other crew member who died was F/O G.A. Lang (Pilot).

1945

Jan 09 Mosquito, 235 Sqn, Banff lost control while doing an air-test over Banff Airfield and crashed into the croft of Hopetown just outside the south perimeter. Croft set on fire, but occupants escaped injury. Two crew killed. F/Lt. Douglas (Pilot) buried in Banff Cemetery.

Jan 25 Two Mosquitoes of 248 Sqn, Banff, collided in mid-air on return from operations. One crashed in Roughhilly Wood, 2 miles SW of Airfield, killing the two crew. The other landed safely at base. F/Lt. Crimp, one of the dead, buried in Banff Cemetery.

Feb 04 Mosquito of 248 Sqn, Banff, with port engine feathered, made forced landing at Cairnton Farm, near Fordyce. Hit invasion pole at Birkenbog Farm on the way down. Crew uninjured, and seen walking towards Fordyce.

Feb 22 Mosquito of B Flight, 333 Sqn, Banff, on low level photographic run, hit masthead of fishing boat. Force landed in field on Hill of Maud, Buckie. Two crew injured.

Feb 24 Mosquito of 248 Sqn, Banff, crashed into a bunker at Tarlair Golf Course around midday. Two crew killed. F/Lt Lewis Bacon, DFC, one of the dead, buried in Banff Cemetery.

Mar 22 Mosquito of B Flight, 333 Sqn, Banff, crashed on forced landing near Ordens farm Banff at 1638 hours. Two crew injured.

May 08 **War with Germany Ends.**

Banffshire Journal, Tuesday, August 7, 1945

A GALLANT SQUADRON

Disbandment at Banff R.A.F. Station.

At Banff R.A.F. Station there has just taken place, naturally to the great regret of its members, the disbandment of Squadron 235, which won well deserved fame in the service as a Coastal Command fighter squadron for the last five and a half years.

A brief history of the squadron is given in the last issue of its own little magazine, "Chocks Away" which has been edited while at Banff by Flt/Lt. G.R. Mayhew, D.F.C., assisted by Cpl. L. Dollimore. The squadron had its beginning at Manston, in October 1939, with only two Miles Magister training aircraft. Its subsequent types of operational aircraft were Fairey Battles, Blenheims, Beaufighters, and latterly Mosquitoes.

The Squadron was stationed successively at North Coates and Sumburgh in 1940, Dyce in 1941, Docking in 1942, Leuchers in 1943, Portreath in 1944 and Banff from September 1944. From the squadron's first "Ops." trip in May 1940 from North Coates, few days passed without a fight with the enemy, and many thrilling and gallant episodes are recalled – not, of course, without grievous losses.

F/O Peacock shot down the squadron's first enemy aircraft on 11th. May 1940 out of a superior force of Me 109s over the Hague. At Dunkirk-time a patrol of the squadron "jumped" by three times its own number was not regarded as unusual. Flt/Lt. Goddard wounded in an attack, pressed on and damaged the enemy aircraft, and after landing his Blenheim collapsed – the King pinned the D.F.C. on him in hospital. P/O Davison and Sgt Brazier, both wounded, rescued their gunner from their blazing Blenheim.

On Norwegian Coast.

From Dyce, in 1941, they made acquaintance with the Norwegian coast for the first time. From there they escorted a Norwegian vessel escaping from its homeland, its crew and passengers fighting a dangerous fire. To Dyce returned an aircraft in which the wireless operator, in his brief spells of consciousness, tapped out that his friends, the pilot and the navigator had been wounded - Sgt. Harwood later received the D.F.M.

In May 1942, the squadron went to Docking with W/Cdr. Hutchinson. He had broken his back in an air crash in 1941, but returned to do a splendid job with the squadron, and earn the D.F.C. From Leuchers, in January 1943, the unit carried out escorts to Hampdens. Once a cover force, lured by two Me109s was jumped by five Fw190's and outnumbered. They stuck it out to let the torpedo boys get away. F/Sgt. Gorski, shot up, limped home 50 miles to plop down safely on top of a haystack.

W/Cdr. McConnell, D.F.C. became C.O. in April 1943 and later took the squadron to Portreath. The French coast was a brisk theatre of activity for them at that time.

W/Cdr. Yonge brought Squadron 235 to Banff in September last, for “some winking out in the fjords. W/Cdr. Atkinson, D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar, led us on his last strike, and W/Cdr. Simmonds, D.F.C. later took us father afield. . . . Another phase, as it had been many times, before for the squadron, of odds being overcome or of superiority bitterly contested. There was always a good crowd of fellows to do it, too.”

A Proud Record.

Only two men out of the original group that formed the squadron in October 1939 were still on the establishment at its disbandment at Banff the other day – Sgt. Tommy Ellison and L.A.C. Freddie (Widgin) Medhurst. “The squadron has changed both its aircrew and ground-staff many times,” said Sgt. Ellison, “but it always has been the same squadron in spirit. In five and a half years you might expect it to change, but luckily the fellows have always been happy-go-lucky, and the work has always been done without any bother.” These two of the “old brigade” serviced Magisters, Battles, Blenheims, Beaufighters and Mosquitoes, the aircraft with which the squadron has been equipped. Both men have been mentioned in despatches for their good work with the squadron.

The squadron after its five and a half years of gallant war service leaves behind it a proud record indeed. As an anti-shipping and anti-aircraft squadron on operations throughout that time without intermission, its crews had taken part in a great number of shipping attacks.

In the last period, since September, from Banff, attacks resulted in the sinking or damaging of a quarter of a million tons of German shipping. The squadron also destroyed 70 enemy aircraft.

“The squadron,” it is added, “also had its own losses – many good men.”

For the squadron’s work, members have received over 50 decorations. In the last six months at Banff, twelve D.F.C.s, three Bars to the D.F.C., and one D.F.M. have been awarded to squadron members. The ground-crew have been recognised by frequent awards of B.E.M.s, and Mentioned in Despatches. The last two men to receive decorations were F/Lt. A.L. Williams and F/Lt. P Kilmister, who both received the D.F.C. for their work in recent operations. Since V.E. Day a number of the squadrons have been active in “other theatres.”

(Note: - During the period that the Strike Wing was operating from this area the number that lost their lives were: - RAF Banff: - 87: RAF Dallachy 80 - F. Pirie)

“EMMAVILLE TO ASKVOLL”

“The Life story of W/Cdr. Richard Ashley Atkinson. BEng. DSO, DFC & Bar”

By Bill Atkinson.

W/Cdr. Dick Atkinson was the Commanding Officer of 235 Squadron stationed at RAF Banff and was killed on 13th. December 1944 whilst leading an attack on enemy shipping in Norwegian waters whilst piloting a Mosquito fighter-bomber. Sadly his navigator F/O Upton also lost his life and the bodies of the two men were never recovered.

In the above mentioned book, written by his son, the following is extracted: -

“Joan (*Dick Atkinson's wife*) writes “ Arrangements had been made for lodgings at ‘Distillery Cottage’ near the Mosquito base. The cooper and his wife who lived there were both Gaelic and hence their language was unintelligible. However over the next couple of months we established some form of communication.

I heard the planes return that evening and did not hear the usual low flying over the house and had an overwhelming feeling that he was not there. So I was waiting in dread for the knock on the door which came about an hour later.”

It has been established that Mrs. Atkinson lodged with Andrew Findlay and his wife Elsie in a cottage in the Inverboyndie Distillery precinct. Andy Findlay, as he was known, was born in Portsoy and was employed as the cooper at the Distillery. His wife, Elsie was from the village of Gardenstown, some 10 miles to the east of Banff. Neither of them were Gaelic, but it is quite understandable that a young girl from Australia hearing the strong north-east dialect spoken in this area would assume that this was the Gaelic language. Gaelic is spoken in the western regions of Scotland, not in this area.

Andy Findlay Jnr., a retired mining engineer, now living in Minsterley, near Shrewsbury, recalls receiving a letter from his mother before returning home on leave, saying that a Wing Commander, his young wife and a few week's old baby were now lodging with them. When he got home, he met the broken hearted widow, and the cooper's house was now in mourning.

The Distillery is no longer in operation and the buildings have been demolished, apart from one solitary building which still stands amongst the wasteland – the cooper's house.

HISTORY OF BANFF AIRFIELD

Opened in 1943 by 17 Group, Coastal Command (Coastal Command Training).
Transferred to 21 Group, Flying Training Command on 5th. April.

No. 14 Flying Training School was originally formed on 1st. April 1939 at Kinloss under Group Capt. A.H. Peck. The unit moved to Cranfield in April 1940, in August 1941 to Lyneham, to Ossington in Feb 1942, then in May 1943 this unit (by this time known as 14 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit) moved to Banff. The move was completed by 25th May 1943.

Banff Airfield.

16 May 1943	No 2 Advance party 14 (P) AFU arrives by special train.
25 May 1943	1512 Beam Approach Training Flight (BAT) moved to Banff.
08 Jly 1943	14 (P) AFU take over command of 1512 BAT Flight
1 Aug 1943	14 (P) AFU take over administration of No8 Air Sea Rescue Unit Buckie and No 9 Air sea Rescue Unit at Fraserburgh.
25 Sep 1943	One flight of aircraft moved to Dallachy.
Sep 1943.	489 Squadron (Hampdens) arrive. Oct -Nov - Convert to Beaufighters.
Apl 1944	489 Squadron depart.
31 Aug 44	14 (P) AFU disbanded.

Dallachy Airfield (Satellite of Banff)

01 Jly 1943	Night Flying Flight formed.
8 Jly 1943	1542 BAT Flight arrive.
15 Jly 1943	Second Day Flying Flight formed
25 Sept 1943	Additional Flight arrives from Banff.

Fraserburgh Airfield (Satellite of Banff)

19 May 1943	Special train carrying 230 Personnel and equipment of 14 (P) AFU arrives
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18 Group Coastal Command take over Banff, Dallachy and Fraserburgh Airfields on 1st. September 1944.

Banff Strike Wing formed. Group Captain Max Aitken in command.

Banff Airfield.

03 Sep 1944	144 Sqn. (Beaufighters X) arrive - Departed to Dallachy on 24 Oct 1944
03 Sep 1944 1944	404 Sqn. RCAF (Beaufighters X) arrive - Departed to Dallachy on 24 Oct 1944
05 Sep 1944	235 Sqn (Mosquitoes VI) arrive - Disbanded 10 Jly 1945
10 Sep 1944	248 Sqn (Mosquitoes VI) arrive - Disbanded 10 Jly 1945
30 Sep 1944	"B" Flight 333 Norwegian Sqn (Mosquitoes VI) arrive - Reformed into 334 Squadron 1 June 1945.
Oct 1944	279 Sqn (Warwick ASR 1) and Det of 281 Sqn (Warwick ASR 1) arrive - Departed to Fraserburgh 26th. December 1944.
07 Nov 1944	143 Sqn (Mosquitoes VI) arrive - Redesignated 14 Squadron 1 June 1945
03 Apl 45 May 1945.	404 Sqn RCAF (Mosquitoes VI) return from Dallachy - Disbanded 25th. May 1945.
01 Jun 1945 1945	14 Sqn (Mosquitoes VI) formed (formerly 143 Sqn) - Disbanded Aug 1945
01 Jun 1945	334 Sqn Norwegian (Mosquitoes VI) formed (from B Flt 333 Sqn) - Depart to Norway June 1945.
09 Jun 1945 August 1945.	Hurricane Flt 279 (Hurricane IIc ASR) arrive from Fraserburgh - Depart August 1945.
Jun 1945 1st.August 1945.	489 RNZAF Sqn (Mosquito VI) arrive from Dallachy - Disbanded 1st.August 1945.
17 Jly 1945	Sea Otter Flt 279 Sqn (Sea Otter ASR 1) arrive - Depart 16 Aug 1945.

AIRMEN BURIED IN BANFF CEMETERY.

25th. August 1943. **Sgt. V.J. Surbey, RCAF, (Pilot) Age 23** Two Oxfords of 14 (P) AFU Banff collided near Lochagan Banff

18th. November 1943. **Unknown Airman** Unidentified body washed up by the sea near Portgordon.

17th. January 1944. **F/Lt O.J.C. Mason, RAF, Age 33** and F/O E. Pennington, RCAF, (Pilot) Anson of 14(P) AFU Banff crashed in field between Blairshinnoch level crossing and Ladysbridge Station whilst in circuit to land at Banff Airfield. P/O Francis also died as a result of the accident.

21st. February 1944. **F/Sgt. C. Toft, RAAF, Age 20** and F/Sgt. J.R. Upperton, RAF, (Pilot), Age 25 Oxford from 14(P) AFU Dallachy on night flying exercise crashed on beach near Spey Bay Hotel.

23rd. March 1944. **F/Sgt. D.L. Munro, RAAF, Age 20 and F/Sgt. R.E.E. Ellis, RAAF, Age 21.** Two Oxfords from 14 (P) AFU Fraserburgh collided in mid-air when landing at RAF Fraserburgh. P/O Crouch (Instructor) also killed.

10th. May 1944. **F/Sgt. T.R. Hampton, RAAF, Age 20** Oxford from 14 (P) AFU Fraserburgh crashed.

10th. July 1944. **F/O E.S. Simonson, RCAF, (Pilot), Age 27 and F/O W. Reid, RAF, (Nav), Age 30.** Mosquito from 544 Squadron, Leuchars, crashed just outside Hillhead Wood, 1 1/2 miles S.W. of Mulben.

21st. August 1944. **F/O H.T. Haynes, RNZAF, (Pilot), Age 24** Two Oxfords from 14 (P) AFU Banff collide at Mossie of Grange, Banffshire. F/O James Law (Pilot) also killed.

2nd. October 1944. **F/O L. Robinson, RCAF, (Nav) Age 28 : F/O F.M.Stickel, RCAF. (Nav), Age 23 : F/O E.R.Davey, RCAF, (Pilot), Age 22.** Two Beaufighters of 404 Sqn. Banff collided 3 1/2 miles SW of Banff Airfield and both crashed near the farm of Wellheads, Tillynaught, Banff killing all four crew members. The other crew member who died was F/O G.A. Lang (Pilot)

9th. January 1945. **F/Lt. D.B. Douglas, RCAF, (Pilot), Age 23** Mosquito of 235 Sqn. Banff, lost control whilst doing an airtest over Banff Airfield and crashed into the croft of Hopetown just outside the south perimeter. Two crew killed. Croft set on fire but occupants escaped injury.

25th. January 1945. **F/Lt. D.S.L. Crimp, RAF, (Pilot) Age 32** Two Mosquitoes of 248 Sqn. Banff collided in mid-air on return from operations. One crashed in Roughhilly Wood, 2 miles SW of Banff Airfield, killing the two crew. The other landed safely at base.

24th February 1945 **F/Lt Lewis R. Bacon, DFC, RAF, (Pilot). Age 21** Mosquito of 248 Sqn. Banff, crashed into a bunker on Tarlair Golf Course around midday. Two crew members killed.

UNVEILING OF MEMORIAL

Banffshire Journal, Tuesday, 3rd October 1989 :-

Moist-eyed Veterans look to the Skies and Remember Comrades.

The clock was turned back over 40 years in the Banff area on Thursday as a Mosquito aircraft ruled the skies. And many ex-servicemen had tears in their eyes as the Mosquito swooped low paying its own tribute to the men and women who served with the Banff RAF Strike Wing at Boyndie.

Over 500 people from all corners of the world gathered for the service to unveil the granite memorial which will forever be a tribute to the gallantry of the air and ground crews who made Boyndie drome their base in 1944 and 1945. They came from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway and all parts of Britain to attend the ceremony – a fitting climax to the supreme efforts of the Banff RAF Strike Wing Memorial Trust who worked for over two years to make the memorial dream a reality.

At a little over one minute past two on Thursday afternoon the Carin Gray memorial was unveiled by Group Captain Bill Size, the former Commanding Officer of 248 squadron who had travelled from New Zealand for the ceremony. The memorial was dedicated by Rev. George Poustie of Boyndie Parish Church and the Rev. Austen Erskine of St. Mary's Parish Church in Banff before wreaths were laid by the Lord Lieutenant of Banffshire, Mr. James McPherson, Group Captain Gould of RAF Kinloss and Major General Olav Aamoth, Royal Norwegian Air Force, Inspector of Fighters.

There was then a majestic flypast by a Nimrod from RAF Kinloss and two Buccaneers from RAF Lossiemouth. The Nimrod returned moment's later shepherding Europe's only surviving airworthy Mosquito T3, similar to the FB(vi) planes which were based at Boyndie. Mosquito pilot, Squadron leader Tony Craig then had the skies to himself and he brought the plane round on a low-level pass over the memorial at the Keith Junction lay-by on the main Banff to Portsoy road. At the request of the Memorial Trust Committee Tony took the Mosquito on a victory flight over Macduff, Banff, Whitehills and Portsoy as the memories flooded back for the ex-servicemen.

Vice-chairman of the Trust, Mr. David Morgan paid tribute to everyone who had given their support. "Special mention has to be given to Banff and Buchan District Council and the Roads Department of Grampian Regional Council who have been magnificent in their support. "Robertson's Granite" of Aberdeen gave us an extremely good deal and also acquired the special stone from a quarry on the borders of Norway and Scandinavia. The Mosquito was sent north by British Aerospace who waived all charges, while the backing of the Royal Air Force at Kinloss and Lossiemouth has been tremendous. The Committee were delighted at the success of the day and the superb turnout of the public, not only to the unveiling, but also to the display of RAF Banff memorabilia in the evening. It has been a lot of hard work but to see the pleasure the memorial has brought to so many ex-servicemen and women from Boyndie, made everything worthwhile."

There was another poignant and moving ceremony in the afternoon when Group Captain Bill Size and others accompanied district councillor Mr. James Reid to Banff Cemetery to lay wreaths beside the graves of the 17 airmen who lost their lives whilst serving at Boyndie and are buried in Banff. And when they arrived they discovered an ex-servicemen from Norway had been there before them – to lay small Norwegian flags by the side of each grave.

History of Banff Airfield



The RAF Banff Memorial at Boyndie

The Banffshire Journal, Wednesday, September 28, 1994

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Poetic tribute recalls wartime air tragedy.

Sir - October 2nd will mark the 50th. anniversary of the deaths of four Canadian airmen who lie in the war graves at Banff Cemetery.

I watched the take-off from Boyndie at 12.30pm on that day in 1944 when nine Beaufighters left from the main runway. Less than a minute after being airborne the last two collided; number eight spun on and crashed near Wellheads Farm in a huge fireball while the last flew a little southwards before spinning to earth with the same tragic results.

The four crewmen were members of the 404 Squadron Royal Air Force and were Flight Officer Ernest Raymond Davey (pilot) and his navigator Flight Officer Louse Robinson: George Albert Lang (pilot) and his navigator Flight Officer Frederick Stickel.

This poem, I thought, might be of interest to readers of the "Banffshire Journal." It is printed on the last page of Roy Nesbit's book "The Strike Wings" and he has given his permission for its publication. The poem was written by Flight Officer Ernest Raymond Davey, who came from London, Ontario, and its publication, I feel, would be a fitting tribute to the memory of the Canadians on the 50th. anniversary of the tragedy.

**Almighty and all present power,
Short is the prayer I make to Thee.
I do not ask in battle hour,
For any shield to cover me**

**The vast unalterable way,
From which the stars do not depart,
May not be turned aside to stay
The bullet flying to my heart.**

**I ask no help to fight my foe,
I seek no petty victory here.
The enemy I hate I know,
To Thee is dear.**

**But this I pray be at my side,
When death is drawing through the sky,
Almighty God who also died,
Teach me the way that I should die.**

5 Craigend Drive,
Maddiston,
Falkirk

-Yours etc.,
JAMES WILSON