Donald Michael ROBERTS (19 – 1945)



F/O, Pilot, 186931

Donald Michael Roberts

RAF

186 Squadron

14 April 1945

Age 23

O VALIANT HEART

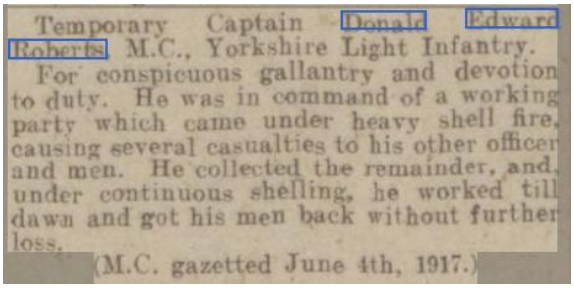
Possibly one of this crew



Donald Michael Roberts (known as Mick) was born in the late summer of 1921 in Farsley, near Pudsey, Yorkshire, the son of Maj. Donald Edward Roberts, M.C., J.P., and his wife Mary Margaret nee Gaunt.

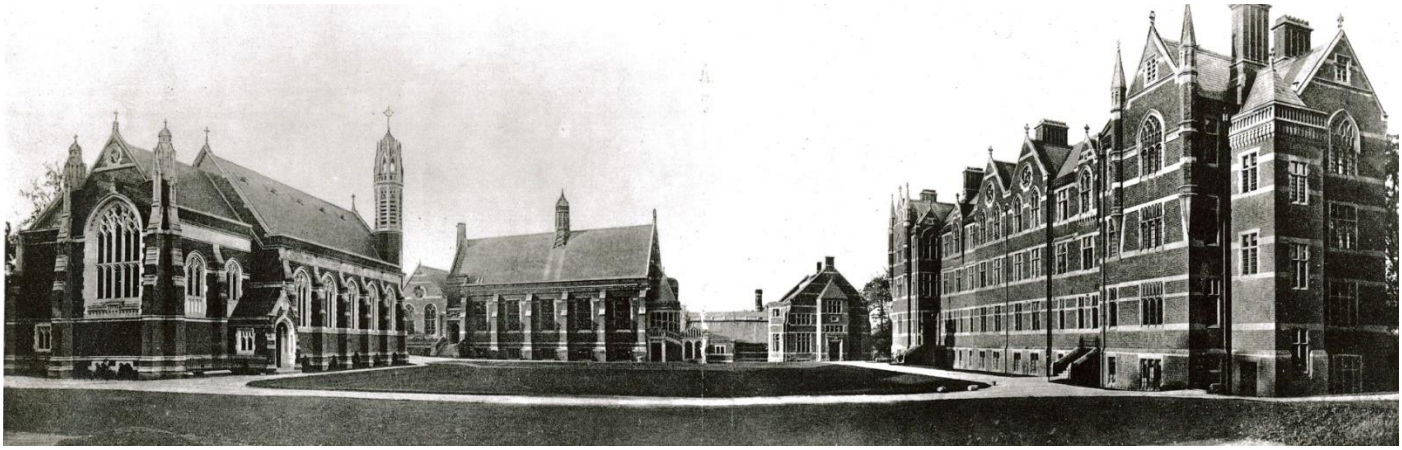
He had two elder brothers, Edward Simpson Roberts who was born in 1912 and Gerald Philip Roberts who was born in 1918, both born in Farsley too. The family had links with Farsley going back several generations, all involved in the textiles business. Their father was a Wholesale Clothing Manufacturer as was their maternal grandfather.

During WW1 Mick's father served with the Yorkshire Light Infantry and as a Captain in 1917 he earned the Military Cross.


Temporary Captain Donald Edward Roberts, M.C., Yorkshire Light Infantry.
For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He was in command of a working party which came under heavy shell fire, causing several casualties to his other officer and men. He collected the remainder, and, under continuous shelling, he worked till dawn and got his men back without further loss.
(M.C. gazetted June 4th, 1917.)

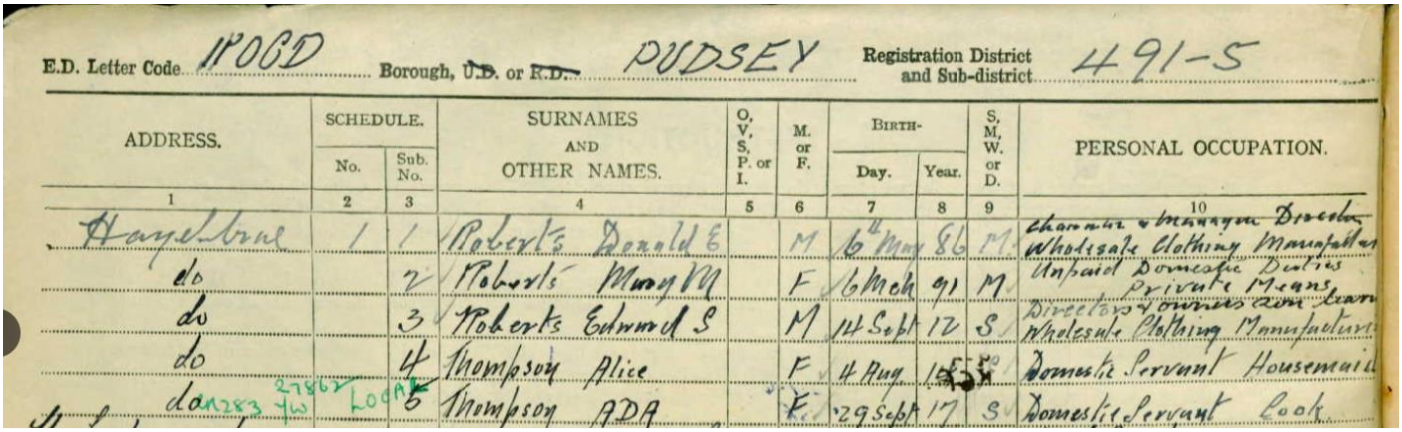
As a child he had attended The Leas School in Cambridge so it is not surprising that his three sons were also educated there once they reached the age of 13. They

had previously been boarders at Caldicott Preparatory School. They were all in North B House at The Leys.



The Leys School, Cambridge

On leaving The Leys his eldest brother, Edward Simpson, returned to Yorkshire where he worked for the Messrs Buckley & Sons Ltd where his father was Chairman and Managing Director. The 1939 Register shows him living with his parents at the family home in Pudsey.



E.D. Letter Code WOCD Borough, U.D. or R.D. PUDSEY Registration District and Sub-district 491-5

ADDRESS.	SCHEDULE. No.	SCHEDULE. Sub. No.	SURNAMES AND OTHER NAMES.	O, V, S, P. or I.	M. or F.	BIRTH- Day.	BIRTH- Year.	S, M, W. or D.	PERSONAL OCCUPATION.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Haysbrae	1	1	Roberts Donald E		M	6th May	86	M	Chairman & Managing Director Wholesale Clothing Manufacturer
do		2	Roberts Mary M		F	6 Mch	91	M	Unpaid Domestic Duties Private Means
do		3	Roberts Edward S		M	14 Sept	12	S	Directors & Trustees Cam. Learn Wholesale Clothing Manufacturer
do		4	Thompson Alice		F	4 Aug	15	S	Domestic Servant Housemaid
do 283 4W	27862	5	Thompson ADA		F	29 Sept	17	S	Domestic Servant Cook

Mick certainly made the most of his time at The Leas School. He was a talented musician and a dedicated member of the Orpheus Society as well as being Head of House, a Prefect and a Cpl in the School Cadet Force. On leaving school, having a wonderful tenor voice, he gained an Open Choral Scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge. After graduation he joined the RAFVR and trained as a pilot.

He joined a bomber crew that first met at Desborough, Northamptonshire in July 1944 during heavy bomber training on Wellingtons.

The crew were 'Mick' Roberts, pilot, John Charles James (known as Jack), a navigator from Manchester, Frederick James Pape, Harold Brickell, a mid-upper gunner from Stockport, William Roberts the wireless operator from Reading, Charles Crookes the bomb aimer from Lewisham and George Whalley a flight engineer from Glamorgan.

After being posted to 186 Squadron based at RAF Stradishall they crewed a Lancaster.



The crew (identities unknown)

In June 1944 Mick lost both of his brothers.

Edward Simpson Roberts was a talented musician while at The Leas. He was a House Prefect and a Sgt in the school cadet force. After leaving The Leas he joined his father in the family business. At the outbreak of war he gained a commission with The Green Howards, the Yorkshire Regiment. He served with distinction during the North African, Sicilian and Italian campaigns. He was killed in action during the Battle of Anzio on 1st June 1944 at the age of 31, having gained the rank of Captain. He earned the Military Cross just weeks prior to his death.

In March 1945, Mick was given special leave to join his parents at the Palace to receive his brother's award from the King.

Major and Mrs. D. E. Roberts, Hazelbrae, Farsley, have been informed that their eldest son, Capt. Edward S. Roberts, M.C., Green Howards, has been killed in action in Italy. He was 31 years old, and it is only a few weeks ago that his award of the M.C. was announced. Before the war Capt. Roberts was factory manager for Messrs. Buckley and Sons, Ltd., wholesale clothing manufacturers, Leeds, of which firm his father is managing director and chairman. He was District Commissioner of the Boy Scouts in the Farsley area, and played Rugby football with Leeds Bohemians.



Capt. E. S. Roberts

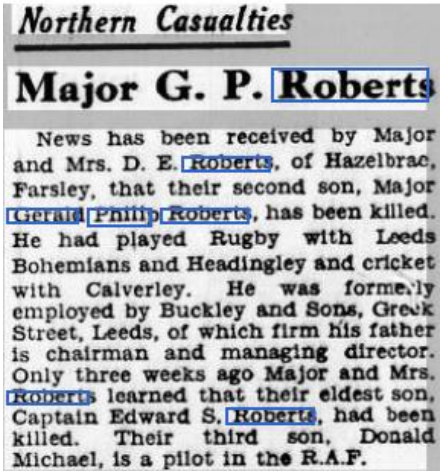
Farsley M.C. Was Anzio Hero

Major and Mrs. Donald E. Roberts, of Hazelbrae, Farsley, attended at the Palace recently to receive from the King the Military Cross awarded to their eldest son, Captain Edward Simpson Roberts, Green Howards, who was killed in the move out of the Anzio Beach-

The citation for the award to Captain Roberts, whose father won the M.C. in the last war, says that a battalion of the Green Howards was ordered to capture Misturno. Captain Roberts was second in command of B Company, whose objective was a point which was vital to the consolidation of the main position. The leading platoon came under heavy fire, and it appeared that the objective would not be taken.

Captain Roberts immediately took command of the platoon and urged the platoon across 250 yards of open ground under heavy fire, finally reaching the objective with 14 men. For four hours Captain Roberts held the position under continuous fire, driving off two enemy attacks until reinforced under cover of darkness.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 27th March 1945



Northern Casualties

Major G. P. Roberts

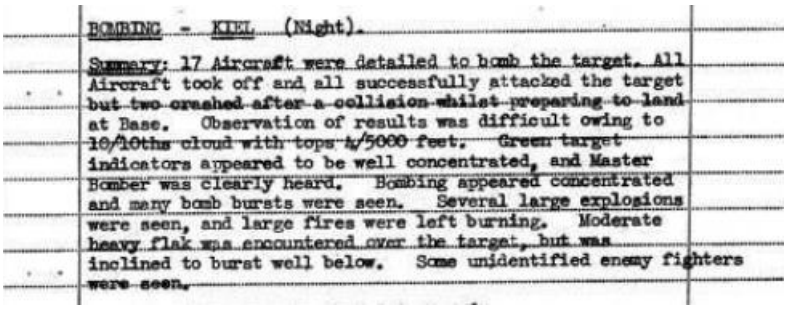
News has been received by Major and Mrs. D. E. Roberts, of Hazelbrae, Farsley, that their second son, Major Gerald Philip Roberts, has been killed. He had played Rugby with Leeds Bohemians and Headingley and cricket with Calverley. He was formerly employed by Buckley and Sons, Greek Street, Leeds, of which firm his father is chairman and managing director. Only three weeks ago Major and Mrs. Roberts learned that their eldest son, Captain Edward S. Roberts, had been killed. Their third son, Donald Michael, is a pilot in the R.A.F.

On 25th June 1944 *Gerald Simpson Roberts* lost his life. While at the Leas, Gerald, a keen sportsman, played football and hockey for the first teams. A prefect like his brothers, he was a Sgt in the cadet force. He too joined his father and brother at the clothing manufactory. At the outbreak of war, Gerald gained a commission in his father's old regiment, The Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. He took part in the D Day landings but was killed during heavy fighting around Tilly- sur - Seulles. The 25 year old Major was buried in the local war cemetery.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer 12th July 1944

186 Squadron's bombing raids were mainly daytime attacks on Kamen, Cologne, Dortmund, Datteln, Munster and Hamm.

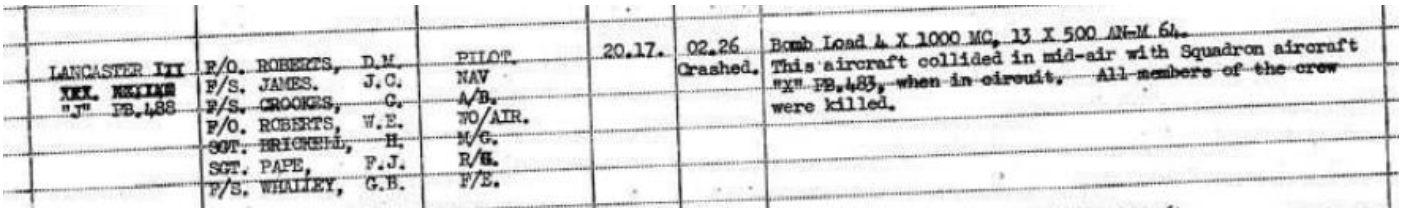
On the 13th April 1945 Lancaster PB488 AP-J with Mick's crew on board took part in their first night raid on the U boat yards at Kiel. Seventeen aircraft took part in this raid and successfully attacked the target.



BOMBING - KIEL (Night).

Summary: 17 Aircraft were detailed to bomb the target. All Aircraft took off and all successfully attacked the target but two crashed after a collision whilst preparing to land at Base. Observation of results was difficult owing to 10/10ths cloud with tops 4/5000 feet. Green target indicators appeared to be well concentrated, and Master Bomber was clearly heard. Bombing appeared concentrated and many bomb bursts were seen. Several large explosions were seen, and large fires were left burning. Moderate heavy flak was encountered over the target, but was inclined to burst well below. Some unidentified enemy fighters were seen.

On return from this raid and while they were in a circuit waiting to land, they collided with another 186 Sqn Lancaster (PB483 AP-X). The entire crew of Mick's aircraft were killed.



LANCASTER III	F/O. ROBERTS,	D.M.	PILOT	20.17.	02.26 Crashed.	Bomb Load 4 X 1000 MC, 13 X 500 AN-M 64. This aircraft collided in mid-air with Squadron aircraft "X" PB.483, when in circuit. All members of the crew were killed.
~~LANCASTER III~~	F/S. JAMES.	J.C.	NAV			
~~"J" PB.488~~	F/S. CROOKES,	C.	A/B.			
	F/O. ROBERTS,	W.E.	WO/AIR.			
	~~SGT. BRICKELL,~~	~~H.~~	M/G.			
	SGT. PAPE,	F.J.	R/G.			
	W/S. WHALLEY,	G.B.	F/E.			

The event is noted by the late Philip Gray, a pilot at Stradishall, in his book Ghosts of Targets Past (1995), in which he writes "throughout the night and all of the following day the clean-up continued. 10 bodies were found, and there were three survivors". One of the survivors, Sgt Bartlett died in hospital. Casualties from PB483,AP-X were Bartlett W K J (Sgt), Gunner E (Sgt), Hale F M (F/S), Russell R C (Sgt) and Somers J V (Sgt).

F/O Donald Mick Roberts was buried in Section U, Grave 150, Haverhill Cemetery.

Sgt John Vidal Somers from the other aircraft, was buried close to Mick in Haverhill Cemetery in Grave 202.

The rest of the crew who perished in the same aircraft as Mick were laid to rest in their home towns. John Charles James (known as Jack), a navigator was buried in Manchester Southern Cemetery. Frederick James Pape was buried in Halliwell (St. Peter) Churchyard. Harold Brickell, a mid-upper gunner was buried in Stockport. William Roberts the wireless operator was buried in Clewer (Vale Road) Churchyard Extension, Clewer. Charles Crookes the bomb aimer from Lewisham was buried

in Hither Green Cemetery. George Whalley a flight engineer was buried in Killay (St. Hilary's) Churchyard.



Farsley Parents Lose All Three Sons

Flying Officer Donald Michael Roberts (23), son of Major and Mrs. Donald Roberts, Hazelbrae, Farsley, has been killed on active service. He was the youngest and only surviving son of Major and Mrs. Roberts, both his brothers having been killed on active service. His eldest brother, Captain Edward Simpson Roberts, M.C., was killed in the Anzio beach-head last May, and his other brother, Major Gerald Roberts, in Normandy.

Major Roberts is chief warden for Pudsey, and won the Military Cross in the last war. Mrs. Roberts is a prominent W.V.S. worker.

The headline of the report highlights the devastating loss to Major and Mrs Roberts, the parents of the three brothers.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer - Tuesday 17 April 1945

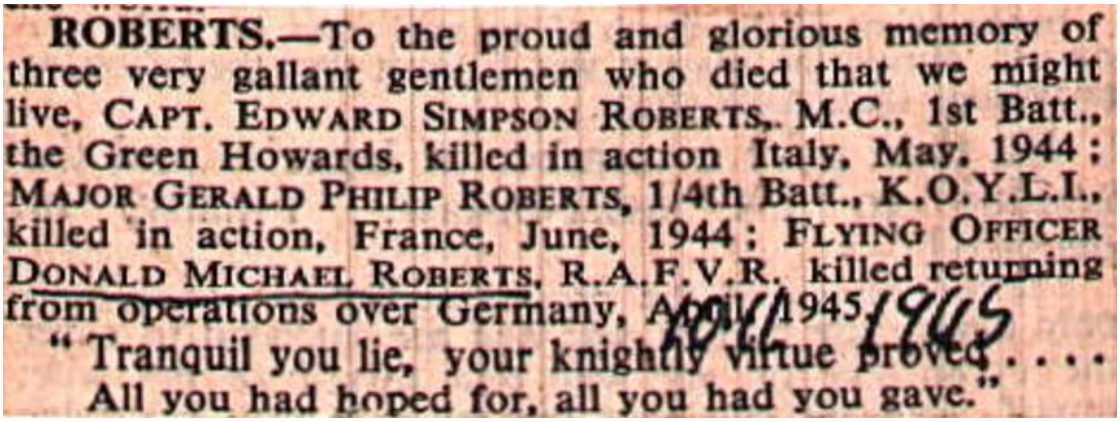
The Leas published this tribute for Flying Officer Donald MICK Roberts.

Flying Officer DONALD MICHAEL ROBERTS, R.A.F.V.R.

North 'B' House, 1935_3—1940_2

Killed on Active Service, April, 1945

No words of mine can adequately express our deep sympathy with the bereaved parents of Michael, who so recently mourned the death in action of his two brothers. Michael came to 'B' in 1935 from Caldicott and continued the splendid family tradition for four happy years. Modest and unassuming, like Teddy and Gerald, he revealed more than average ability in scholarship and athletics, but his greatest distinctions were won in the sphere of music. Michael possessed a tenor voice of rare quality and often delighted members of the Orpheus Society with song-recitals, that to one listener at least recalled memories of the late Gervase Elwes. In more popular vein he gave an unforgettable performance as *Robin Oakapple* in *Ruddigore*. The gaining of an Open Choral Scholarship at St. John's College, Cambridge, gave Michael intense pleasure, as he contemplated a musical career. Joining the R.A.F. as soon as age allowed, he had become an expert pilot, and had been selected for special missions. He lost his life after a raid on Kiel. Few homes have been called upon to make such grievous sacrifice in the cause of freedom; we can but acknowledge and strive to repay a debt that can never be repaid.



ROBERTS.—To the proud and glorious memory of three very gallant gentlemen who died that we might live, CAPT. EDWARD SIMPSON ROBERTS, M.C., 1st Batt., the Green Howards, killed in action Italy, May, 1944; MAJOR GERALD PHILIP ROBERTS, 1/4th Batt., K.O.Y.L.I., killed in action, France, June, 1944; FLYING OFFICER DONALD MICHAEL ROBERTS, R.A.F.V.R. killed returning from operations over Germany, April, 1945.

"Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved . . . .
All you had hoped for, all you had you gave."

On Saturday 10th November 1945, a memorial for the three brothers appeared in the local papers.

In St Wilfred's Church in Calverley is a memorial bearing the names of the three brothers.



With thanks to the Archivist at The Leas School for information about the Roberts brothers school years.