

Profile — Group Captain Charles Patrick “Paddy” Green, DFC, DSO, AE, Mentioned in Dispatches (USA DFC, Soviet Order of the Patriotic War) - 600 Sqn by LAC S. Edwards 600 Sqn RAuxAF



Introduction

Paddy Green was an exceptional fighting leader, who commanded 600 Squadron in its Mediterranean adventure. Through his high standards, personal example, physical courage and tough leadership, he inspired a transformation in the Squadron's fortunes. He had a pivotal role in creating, from a meagre war record; a unit that would end the Second World War with the honour of being the leading night fighter unit in the Allied Air Forces. An intrepid pilot, he flew ops from the start to the end of the war, both by day and by night. His score stood at 14 kills. He won the DFC and the DSO.

Background

Paddy was born in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa on 31/03/1914. His father was Major Charles Green who was sadly to be killed in action in East Africa in 1917. Paddy was 3. His paternal grandfather was Sir Fredrick Green who was a prominent member of Lloyds of London. One of his grandmothers was Alice Cooper, a prominent philanthropist who dedicated her life to the poor of Australia and after whom the town of Alice Springs is named.

As a boy, he travelled all over Europe with his mother, who re-married. Paddy was sent to Harrow School, and later went up to Cambridge. He was extremely athletic and held records for High Hurdles set while at Harrow which stood for 40 years. He was an athletics blue and also skied for Cambridge. He won a bronze medal at the 1936 Winter Olympics as a member of the British four-man bobsleigh team. Later, he competed as a member of the British ski team at Innsbruck. Remarkably, no slouch academically, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society while a young undergraduate.

Green, learned to fly as a lark while studying and travelling in California. His friend, who took lessons with him, was Billy Fiske. Fiske would later have the distinction of being the first US citizen to die in WW2 while flying as an RAF officer. By 1937, both were commissioned into the AAF as fliers, taking up a posts with 601 Squadron at Hendon – also the base of 600 Squadron, and the paths of Paddy Green and 600 would continue to cross...

World War 2

On the outbreak of war, he was called up to full-time service. With 601, then equipped with Bristol Blenheims, he took part in the first intruder mission of the war, when the squadron attacked a seaplane base at Borkum in the East Frisian Islands. He was posted to 92 (East India) Squadron at RAF Tangmere, as a flight commander. The Squadron transferred to Spitfires in March 1940, and Paddy was involved in May of that year in the desperate attempts to provide air cover for the Dunkirk evacuations a few months later as the Blitzkrieg raged.

On May 20th, he had just claimed his first kill, an Me109, when over the channel he was attacked, hit, and badly wounded. He suffered a severe cannon wound to the thigh, leaving a compound fracture and severe bleeding. He calmly thrust his fingers into the open wound to stem flow of blood, and navigated back to RAF Tangmere with his one good hand. He made a perfect landing. He was laid up for several months and only returned to operational flying late in the Battle of Britain. In October 1940, he was posted to command 421 "Jim Crow" Reconnaissance Flight at Hawkinge. The unit operated a mixture of Hurricanes and Spitfires. He was then almost instantly shot down on October 12th suffering more wounding and parachuting into a field of angry young bulls. He was rescued by men from a New Zealand artillery battery who tended him.

On November 25th, with the Blitz in full swing, he gained his second kill, a Do17. Soon, he had also claimed 2 probable Me109s, and in early 1941, when the flight was expanded to become 91 (Nigeria) Squadron, he was appointed to command it.

As per 421 Flight, it appears that the Squadron was largely funded by subscription from the government and people of Nigeria - perhaps leading to the (by contemporary standards) unsavoury nickname that the press had bestowed. 91 soon re-equipped entirely with Spitfires and were engaged on highly dangerous low-level strafing attacks on enemy shipping and in lone, armed reconnaissance over the coast of enemy occupied France. By the time he left 91 Squadron, he was an ace with 5 confirmed kills. He was already gazetted DFC. Such was Paddy's influence that 91 Squadron developed a reputation for ferocious fighting prowess that is still semi-legendary, and persisted long after he had departed.

However, by November 1941, Paddy was at 600 as a Flight Commander. He flew on sorties from RAF Predannack in Cornwall, flying Beaufighter II's. These were fitted with Rolls Royce Merlin engines rather than the Bristol Hercules that they had been designed to take. This was due to a shortage in the supply chain due to the need to fit the Bristol engines onto the new Sterling bombers then rolling off the line. Paddy however described the combination as "the most dangerous aircraft to fly that was ever made". This was no mean feat on the part of Bristol, as the Beaufighter generally has a mixed reputation, both as a superb war-winning aircraft, but also as a death-trap to the unwary or unskilled pilot.

He was then dispatched to 125 Squadron in June 1942, still on Beaufighters. However, this was not the last 600 would see of him. Meanwhile, as an interlude, Paddy made a fleeting appearance in the 1942 film "First of the Few" – bizarrely as an enemy bomber pilot!

With the "Gong Squadron"

By Christmas 1942, Paddy was back at 600. The City's Own flew Maison Blanche in Algeria, via Gibraltar. They were now to form part of the pursuit of Rommel's Afrika Korps to Tunis. During this period, the Squadron became prolifically high scoring - the press christening 600 "The Black Knights", "The Fright in the Night", and "The Gong Squadron" on account of the number of medals won by aircrew and ground crew alike.

From Algeria, Paddy moved the squadron on into Malta in 1943, and from there to Italy, all the time increasing his own score, and driving up the squadrons score as he went. Operating from Malta to cover the invasion of Sicily, a highlight occurred in July, where he accounted for 7 enemy aircraft in 3 nights, claiming 4 of them in one evening. This led to the awarding of a DSO.

From there, the Black Knights moved along through the Italian campaign, supporting the Allied advance, working in harness with The USAAF's 12th Air Support Command. The reputation earned then was so severe, that it is thought that as a disinformation exercise, the presence of 600 Squadron

was broadcast openly in areas and at times when they weren't in the line of battle - but nonetheless, the Luftwaffe would not fly missions to avoid meeting the "Fright in the Night".

The Squadron took an exceedingly heavy toll, and in particular against the previously menacing and all-pervasive JU87 Stuka, which were "blasted wholesale from the sky" by the Squadron's "Ten-gunned terrors". There are reports that, when one ex-600 pilot was captured after bailing out over Germany, his interrogating officer wanted to know - "So where are the famous 600 these days??"

Reputation and character

One infamous incident in early 1943 illustrates Paddy's commitment to the highest professional standards for himself and his men, when he reprimanded savagely a squadron pilot who had failed to shoot down Paddy himself!

Flying Officer Rob Sprag, a robust South African mistook Green's mount in the darkness for a Ju88. Opening fire, he was amazed to find his victim deftly avoiding the incoming rounds. While aware that it was easy to mistake a Beau at the right angle for the German machine, was now convinced that this was a German machine. Even more so when Green fired off the wrong coloured recognition flare.

Sprag went in again, committed to downing the German intruder. He closed in, fired again, and observed rounds going in to the target – however he was more horrified as the plane swung across his field of fire, and revealed itself to be a Beaufighter like his own!

Returning to base, he reported angrily to the ops staff that he had been forced to have a go at "some bloody fool in a Beau" who had fired off the wrong flares.

Unbeknownst to Sparg, Green had landed, unharmed, some time before and was bristling for a fight. He had a reputation as a tough, no-nonsense man – the kind of man who didn't suffer fools gladly. As his obituary states, he regarded any mistake by any officer or rank, no matter how minor "as an unforgiveable incompetence". There was an immediate inquiry, and Green was heard telling Sprag, "You're a bloody bad pilot," and "You should be ashamed that I'm still able to talk to you – from where you came up behind me you should have destroyed my Beau with your first shot . The wrong identification is forgivable, bad shooting isn't!!"

Of course, no mention was made of Green firing the wrong colour flare! However, on May 5th, the CO made up for things by correctly spotting a Ju88 over Tunis. Despite receiving heavy return fire.

After 600

Paddy made his final claim on 25/01/1944 - his 14th, and yet another Ju88. Had he stayed, no doubt his score would have been higher - but it must be made clear, that as with the other Pilot's of 600, Paddy was not operating on his won, and his success as a pilot was shared with his Radar Operator, R. J. Gillies - himself hugely respected.

However, so successful were 600, that there was little left to do - the priorities of the campaign shifted from air superiority to close support of the advancing armies. Paddy found himself promoted to Group Captain in the summer of 1944, after which he commanded 1 Mobile Operations unit of the Desert Air Force, before moving to the command of a wing of Boston bombers.

Post RAF

Post-war he assisted in the development of jet tactics at the Central Fighter Establishment. He left the Royal Air Force in 1947, married and went back to South Africa. His wife Ruth, was a Canadian nurse, whom he had met in Italy in 1946. Ruth passed away in 1981.

For the next 26 years he worked for the giant Anglo-American Mining and Trading Corporation until retiring in 1977 to a farm, near where Ruth had grown up at Owen Sound near Collingwood, Ontario. With Ruth, he had a son and 2 daughters. He passed away on 10/04/1999, aged 85.

LAC EDWARDS SR , 600 Squadron

1st Draft: 15/03/2011. Daily Telegraph obituary, 17/05/1999, Times Obituary, 06/05/1999