

David Henry Balchin 1924 – 2002

By

James C. Retson

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<https://www.retson.ca/balchindavidhenry1924.pdf>

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David Henry Balchin, son of Alfred Balchin and Minnie Jessie Parfitt was born 18 May 1924 in Keewatin, Ontario.

Father Alfred Balchin was born in England and married Minnie Jessie Parfitt in England before emigrating to Canada in 1911.

They settled in Keewatin. They had 9 Children,

- i. Richard Frederick David Balchin b. 21 Jun 1912 Keewatin, Kenora, Ontario, m. Hazel Verna Eilbeck 17 Aug 1935 Kenora, d. 04 Nov 1970 Vancouver, BC, age 23 years
- ii. Arthur Sidney Alfred Balchin b. 11 Jun 1914 Keewatin, d. 21 Oct 1947
- iii. Albert Kenneth Balchin b. 10 Apr 1916 Keewatin, d. 13 Apr 1917 Keewatin 3 days
- iv. Dorothy Elizabeth Balchin b. 19 Mar 1918 Keewatin, m. Thomas J.E.B. Brown 26 Aug 1939 Kenora, d. 10 Oct 2002 Kenora
- v. Joan Florence Balchin b. 11 Jul 1919 Keewatin, m. Harry E. Johanson 26 Aug 1939 Keewatin, d. 01 Oct 1994 Kenora
- vi. Margaret Jessie Balchin b. 17 Feb 1923 Keewatin, m. Frederick James (Fred) Hackett 1941 d.19 Feb 1995 Steinbach, Manitoba
- vii. David Henry Balchin b. 18 May 1924 Keewatin, m. Elsie Dora Hulmes 06 Mar 1946 Keewatin, d. 01 Oct 2002 Kenora
- viii. Elizabeth Mary (Molly) Balchin b. 23 Jan 1929 d. 26 Nov 1930 Keewatin, 10 months
- ix. Charles Martin Balchin b. 09 Jan 1932, d. 27 Oct 1942 Keewatin, Age 10



Richard, David, Minnie (Mother), Margaret, Alfred (Father) Art



Dave listed with the RCAF. He as Tail-end Gunner, met his crew of No. 101 Squadron consisting of Pilot: Flight Officer. Gene Mitchell Atyeo J28179 RCAF, Navigator: Sgt. John William Lovatt 1583191, Air/Bomber: Flight Officer. Blake Latimer Patterson J29695 RCAF, Wireless Operator Air Gunner: Fl/Sgt. John French Andrews J89901 RCAF, Air/Gunner (Mid Upper): Flight Sergeant Clement Fred Robert Pearce J/89902 RCAF, in February 20 1944 at No. 28 Operational Training Unit at RAF Wymeswold, Loughborough, Leicestershire on course No. 33.

The crew was joined by Flight Engineer Sergeant Charles Trevor Keeling on May 19 when the crew was posted to No. 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit at RAF Lindholme in the West Riding of Yorkshire and its satellite RAF Sandtoft. On July 7, the crew was posted to No. 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna. Flight Sergeant Hans Heinz Schwarz joined the crew when it began using Airborne Cigar (ABC) transmitter equipment which jammed German Fighter control frequencies.

The crew started flying on the 10 July 1944. Its first operational flight with the squadron in aircraft 'V2' was a night raid to Revigny, France on July 14. Arriving at the target already further bombing, was called off and bombs were dropped over bombs in the North Sea. The second operation on the July 18, in aircraft 'T', was a daylight raid to Mannerville in France, the third operation the same day was a night raid to Aulnoye. On 2 August, the next operation in aircraft 'W' was a daylight raid to Joigny Laroche followed on same day by another daylight raid to Conquereaux. The next 5 operations were flying in 101's famous 'S' sugar DV245 including a daylight raid on the 3 August 1944 to Trois-St-Maximin, the target a V2 rocket site, on August 4 a daylight raid to Pauillac, a submarine refuelling base, on August 5 on another submarine base at Blaye, on the Garonne Estuary, on August 7 a night raid over Caen, targeting military objectives and on August 10 to Dijon to bomb railway marshalling yards.

On August 12/13, the crew began its 12th operation undertaken with No. 101 Squadron, taking off from RAF Ludford Magna at 21:34 hrs to bomb Braunschweig, Lower Saxony, Germany. The total force on that night comprised of 379 aircraft including 242 Lancasters and 137 Halifaxes. 17 Lancasters and 10 Halifaxes would not return. The ten aircraft provided by 101 Squadron carried the specialist radar jamming equipment code ABC. Flight Sergeant Hans Heinz Schwarz, the specialist operator on the crew had been chosen because of his fluency in German and therefore able to monitor and jam night fighter traffic with their controllers. A successful run over the target, was completed and the bombs, a mixture of H.E.s (high explosives) and incendiaries were dropped. On leaving the target the plane descended to 16000 ft and leveled out. Shortly after 0110 hours and twenty miles north of Hanover, David Balchin indicated that flack was coming up at the rear and the Lancaster's main fuel tanks were punctured on both sides of the plane. The starboard side tank immediately burst into flames and the order came, "Bale Out". Two of the crew, Sgt. John French Andrews and Fl/Sgt. Hans Heinz Schwarz perished in the evacuation and were initially buried in a joint grave at Ströhen, Diepholz, Lower Saxony. Later they were re-interred at the Heverlee War Cemetery, Belgium in Joint Grave No. 6.E.8

Captured by the Germans on the ground David was taken to Diepholz, and then to Diepholz Airfield where he was handed over to the Luftwaffe. There he joined five other members of the crew. They were transported to Hanover, Frankfurt-on-Main, and to Oberusal. He then started a four-day journey to Stalagluft 7 at Bankow in Silesia with John Lovatt, and Clem Pearce and Gene Atyoe and Blake Patterson being officers were destined for Stalagluft 11 (Sagan).

The six were to remain Prisoners of War for over a year. On January 18, 1945 the prisoners at Stalagluft 7 at Bankow were marched off by the Germans afraid of the advancing Russian. The prisoners walked 256 kilometres (160 miles) for 17 days arriving Goldberg on Sunday February 4th. Later that day they refused to walk any further. They were then boarded enclosed in cattle trucks, fifty-three to a truck. Enclosed in semi-darkness, without enough room for all to sit on the floor, several were required to take turns standing, stand in turn. On the second day they were eventually allowed out to stretch legs. Food rations were half cup of raw uncooked porridge oats. They arrived at Lukenwalde and marched to Stalag 111a. Just before leaving Stalag Luft 7, David Balchin and Clem Pearce learned that their promotions to Pilot Officers had come through. They went to join the officers on the camp on the other side of the road which held the R.A.F officers from Sagan. On April 23, the Russian broke through. However, freedom was yet at hand. The Russians were now required to supply food to thousands of men at the camp. The rations given were even less than had been provided by the

Germans. However, Red Cross parcels could now be used up. V. E. Day came and went. Eventually they were taken in Russian trucks to the Elbe and true liberation on the other side of the River. Americans took the prisoners to Halle via Leipzig where there was a large P.O.W reception centre. In another forty-eight hours they were flown to Brussels and the next day to the South of England. From there we were taken on a top priority train, non-stop, to R.A.F. Cosford, Shropshire which was a rehabilitation centre and hospital for ex P.O.Ws. During World War II 55,000 airman lost their lives on missions, proportionately more than any other service. Similarly, more airman from Kenora died than any other service.



Substantial Information was provided by Sergeant Charles Trevor Keeling and a more full story may be found at following links <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a2974872.shtml>, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/26/a2974926.shtml>, and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/44/a2974944.shtml>

David Henry Balchin, was repatriated back to Canada and returned to Keewatin. He accepted employment with the Ontario Minnesota Pulp and Paper Company. He married Elsie Dora Hulmes 06 Mar 1946 in Keewatin. They had 5 children of which 4 survived infancy.

i. David Balkin b & d 1947 Keewatin, Ontario

ii. Linda Violet Balchin b. Jun 1949 Keewatin, Ontario, m. Ernest Frederick Page
29 Jul 1972 Keewatin, Ontario, d. 25 Aug 2013 Keewatin, Ontario

During the week of October 10, 1974, almost 30 years later, he received a visit from Clem Pearce in Keewatin, when the two wartime crew members had much to talk about. He died 01 Oct 2002 in Kenora.

Sources:

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65566567/david-henry-balchin>

<http://aircrewremembered.com/atyeo-gene.html>, Kenora Miner and News, October 10 1974

<http://www.kenorapubliclibrary.org/library-resources/newspaper-archives.aspx> accessed August 21 2019