

## Group Captain Ronnie Churcher DSO LVO DFC and Bar

Ronald George William Churcher was born at 20 Wenban rd in Worthing on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1922.

Ronnie attended Worthing High School for Boys and upon leaving school joined a local solicitors office.

At the age of 18 Ronnie enlisted in the Royal Air Force and commenced training to become a bomber pilot.

In late 1941 Ronnie joined 106 squadron flying the Handley page Hampden which had entered service in 1939.



In spring 1942 Guy Gibson took command of 106 squadron by now flying the unreliable Avro Manchester twin engine bomber precursor of the immortal 4 engine Avro Lancaster. Ronnie took part in the first 1,000 bomber raid on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1942 which attacked Cologne at night.

106 Squadron re-equipped with the Avro Lancaster and Ronnie flew a further 30 missions and was then rested and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross(DFC) after being recommended by Guy Gibson.



Returning to operations Ronnie was appointed Flight Commander of 619 Squadron flying Lancasters and after a further 21 missions he was again rested and awarded a bar to his DFC (the equivalent of a second DFC).

In July 1944 he volunteered for 627 Squadron flying the DeHavilland Mosquito attacking targets in northern France. On the night of Sept 19/20<sup>th</sup> 1944 Ronnie was target marking with Guy Gibson who had returned to active duty after the Dambusters raid of May 1943. Sadly Gibson and his navigator Squadron Leader Warwick were lost over Holland.

Churcher's 75<sup>th</sup> and final operation was on Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> 1944 resulting in the award of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) in recognition.

Subsequently Ronnie joined the King's Flight and served for 3 years resulting in the award of the Victorian Order for his work.

He served in Malaya between 1950 -1960 and returning to Britain assumed command of 216 Squadron flying the DeHavilland Comet based at RAF Lyneham.

His last RAF role was as Air Attache based in Rome.

In retirement he gained a Humanities degree from the Open University.

Ronnie Churcher passed away on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013.



**David Pateman, Worthing Society Member**

REF:

RAF Museum Archives and Library dept  
West Sussex Records Office Chichester.  
Old Azurians Association.  
Metheringham Airfield Museum.