

**A FINE SECOND WAR D.F.M. AWARDED TO WELLINGTON X AND LANCASTER II FLIGHT SERGEANT WIRELESS OPERATOR/AIR GUNNER WHO FLEW 28 MISSIONS INCLUDING N'S 431 (IROQUIS) AND 432 (LEASIDE) SQUADRON BETWEEN MARCH 1943 AND JANUARY 1944, INCLUDING NUMEROUS SORTIES TO BERLIN. DURING ONE SORTIE HE HAD FOUND THE UNCOVERED VANES OF THE FLARE TURNING AND THINKING THAT THE THING WAS LIABLE TO EXPLODE HE WAS COVERING IT WITH HIS BODY AND ON HIS FINAL MISSION, A SORTIE TO BERLIN, HIS AIRCRAFT WAS HIT BY FLAK AND HIS PILOT WOUNDED.**



**DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL, G.V.I.R. '1294748 F./SGT., R.A.F.' 1939-45 STAR, AIRCREW EUROPE STAR, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS**

D.F.M. *London Gazette* 27 June 1944. The recommendation states

*"An above average and very efficient wireless operator who has completed twenty eight successful trips and has shown such exceptional operational ability that he has won the confidence and respect of his crew and his superior officers. Under a calm and quiet manner this N.C.O. has shown remarkable skill and coolness, and has been an inspiration to all wireless operators in the Squadron. For his exceptional skill and quiet determination and his devotion to duty, this N.C.O. is strongly recommended for the award of the Distinguished Flying Medal."*

Remarks by Station Commander:

*"F/Sgt Middleton as WO/AG has completed a large number of operational sorties against heavily defended targets, including five attacks on Berlin. At all times he has displayed most praiseworthy enthusiasm, devotion to duty and determination to achieve his objective. This N.C.O. is strongly recommended for the award of the D.F.H."*

Remarks by Base Commander, 29 April 1944:

*"F/S Middleton has completed his first tour and has an excellent operational record. This N.C.O. has displayed outstanding devotion to duty and skill as a WO/AG. By such qualities he has set a splendid example to his squadron. I recommend that he be awarded the D.F.M."*

An extract from one of the letters included with the group recalls an episode involving Middleton 'Once over a target I saw his (Middleton's) body draped over the chute from which, as the bombs went, he dispatched a photographic flare of several million candle power. As he didn't respond to enquiries about his health I assumed he had been injured and went back to investigate, only to find that his intercom had become detached. It transpired that he had found the uncovered vanes of the flare turning and thinking that the thing was liable to explode he was covering it with his body.'



Leonard Edward Garry 'Mid' Middleton was born in, Streatham, London on 25 August 1920 and worked as a clerk before Joining the Royal Air Force on 15 November 1940. Immediately recommended for training as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, he qualified as an Air Gunner at No 8 Gunners School, Evanton on 4 September 1942, being noted as 'Above average, keen and capable', before training as a Wireless Operator at 20 O.T.U., Lossimouth, qualifying as such on 6 December 1942. Having been promoted Flight Sergeant WOP/AIR, he was posted to 'B' flight, 431 (Iroquois) Squadron R.C.A.F. in January 1943 and he, along with the crew he was allocated to (with whom he would serve the rest of his Operational Tour), spent the following month on training and familiarizing flights. Flying in Wellington X's, piloted by Sgt Esdale, Middleton flew his first operational mission to Borkum on 7 March 1943. He would take part in a further 15



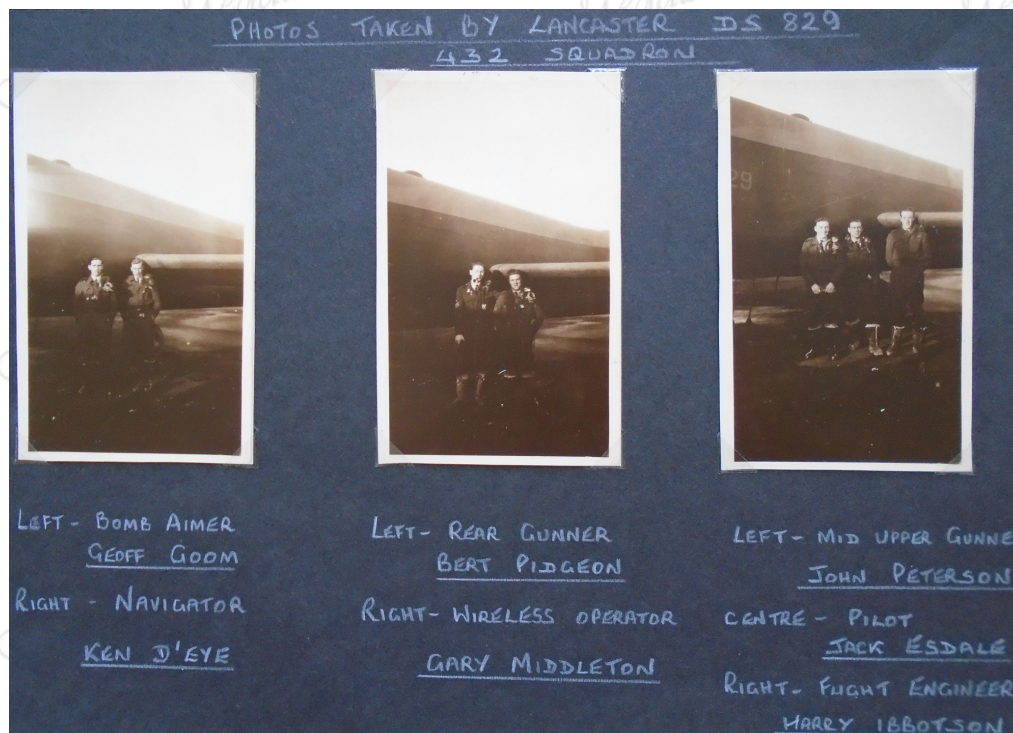
missions between then and 3 August 1943, when he and his crew were transferred to 'A' flight, 432 (Leaside) Squadron R.C.A.F. (again Wellington X's). After 7 further operational missions, on 18 September 1943, Middleton, Esdale and crew were sent to 1679 Conversion Unit, Eastmoor, to convert to Lancaster II's. Conversion complete, they returned to 432 Squadron a month later and they flew their first operational mission on Lancaster's on 26 November 1943, a mission to Berlin, taking part on a further 3 over targets in Germany in December. The last entry in Middleton's log book is for an operation over Berlin on 28 January 1944, the page on which this entry is made is rubber stamped '*Withdrawn from air crew duties*'. From research included with the lot it would appear that the reason for his withdrawal was due to his health having suffered as a result of the stresses and strains of operational flying. During his final month of flying (January 1944), he had no less than six missions to targets in Germany, including three to Berlin. During his final mission, his aircraft was hit by flak:

<https://www.yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk/aircraft/yorkshire/york44/ds829.html>

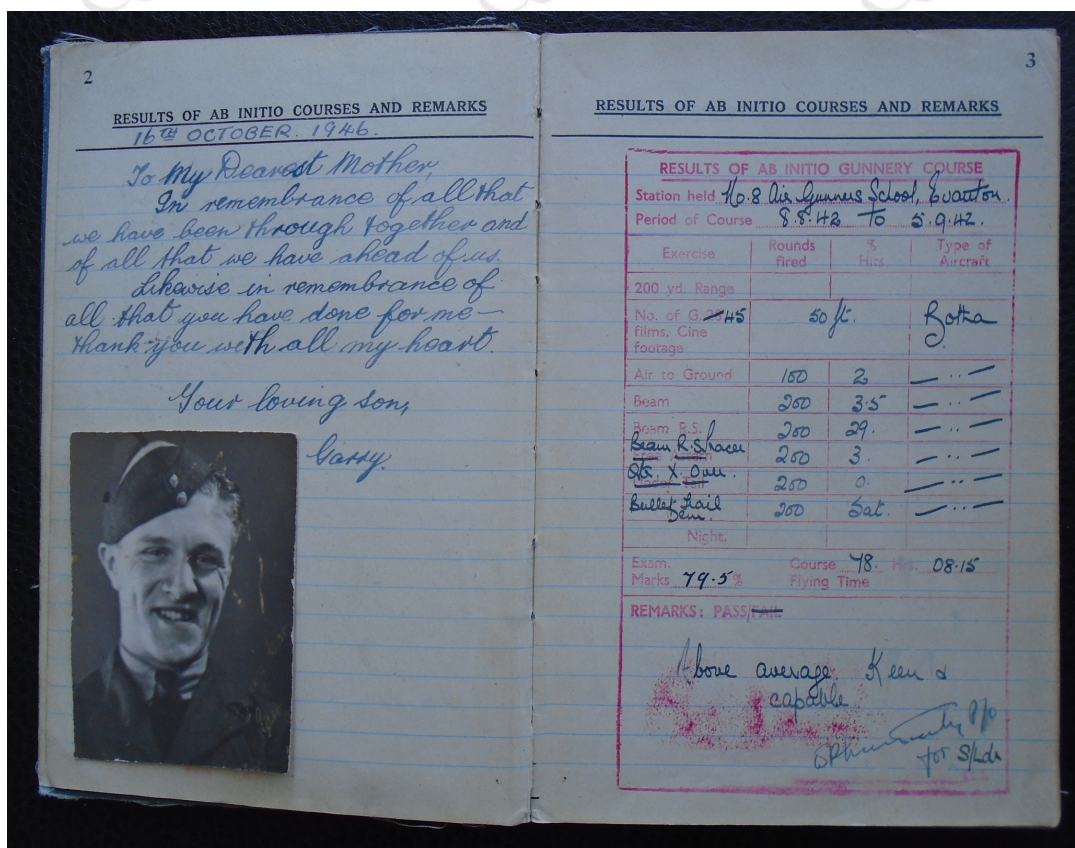
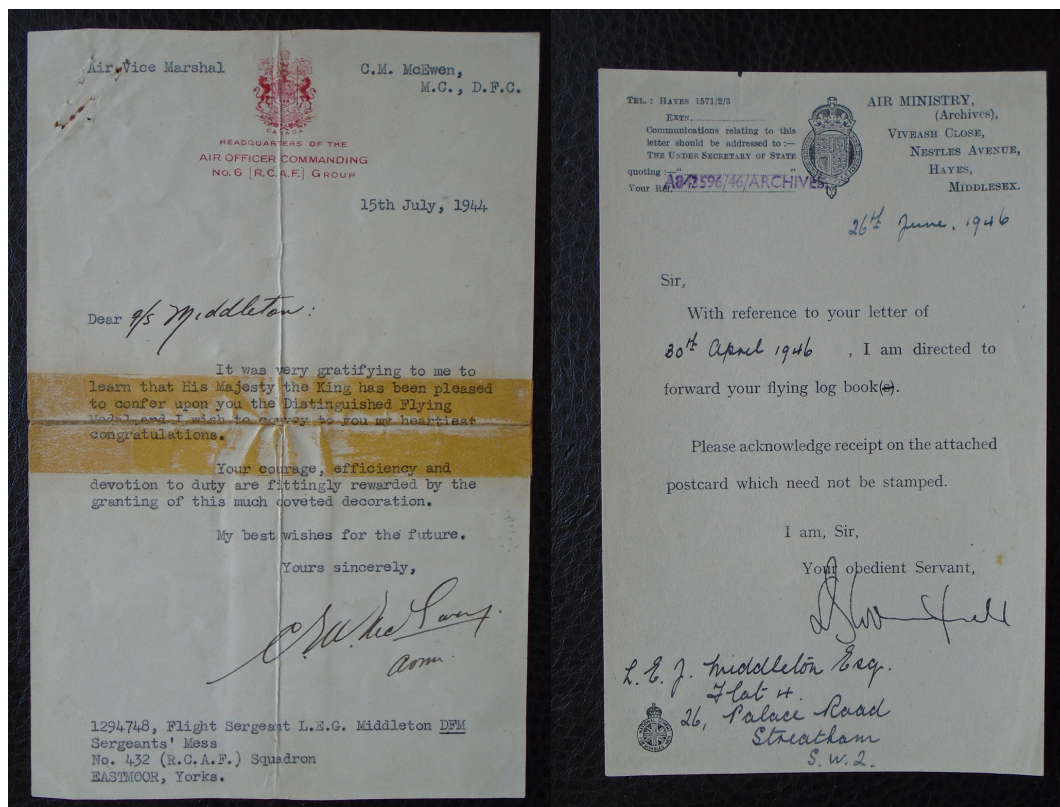
Since his last mission, was also the final mission of the his Operational Tour, no stigma whatsoever was attached to him being withdrawn from air crew duties and in April 1944 he was recommended to be awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. He was discharged from the R.A.F. on 25 May 1944, noted a '*physically unfit for Air Force service although fit for employment in civil life*'

One of his crew members described him as "*a quiet type but enjoyed a drink which usually took the form of a beer with a Scotch Whisky added (a formidable combination I would think). He used to remark on 'mellowed' the beer. He was cool enough in a crisis (and we had experienced a few) and if I say it myself, we were good enough to have survived.*"

It seems Garry Middleton died in 1948, the previous owner of the group noting that sadly, he may have taken his own life.







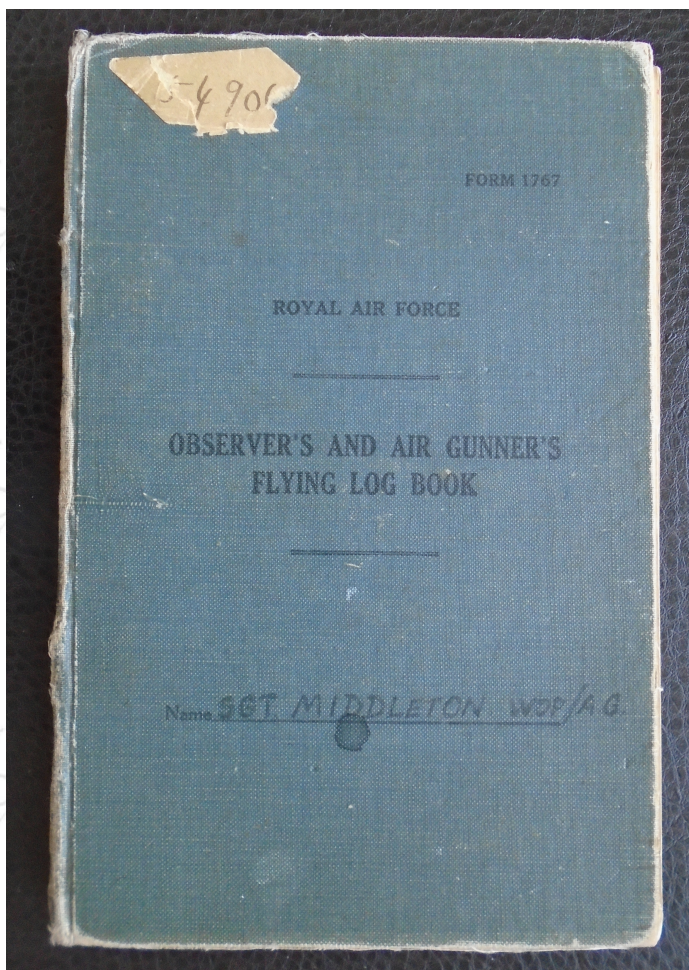












Condition NEF, mounted as worn. Sold with:

- a) Middleton's Observers and Air Gunners Flying Log Book (2 July 1942-28 January 1944) which records all of Middleton's training and operational flying in with 431 and 432 Squadrons including such targets as Essen, St Nazaire, Dortmund, Dusseldorf, Wuppertal, Krefeld, Mulheim, Gelsenkirchen, Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Stettin, Brunswick, Magdeburg etc.
- b) Original congratulatory letter on award of D.F.M. from Air Officer Commanding No. 6 R.C.A.F. Group, dated 15 July 1944
- c) Original forwarding letter for his log book. Dated June 1946
- d) Small portrait photo of Middleton, inscribed to back and dated Oct 1942
- e) Four letters written in the 1980's by two members of Middleton's crew giving much interesting detail.
- F) Copy photos of Middleton and his crew (all named) from one of the above crew

Also with a large amount of research, including D.F.M. recommendation and mission list, Gazettes, R.A.F. service papers, copy pages from book detailing 431 and 432 Squadrons missions; ones Middleton participated in highlighted, 431 and 432 Squadron Operational logs, March 1943- Jan 1944 (on CD) which include all Middleton's missions.