



Missing Believed Killed: The Royal Air Force and the Search for Missing Aircrew 1939-1952

Stuart Hadaway

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During the early years of WW2 it soon became apparent that the system for tracing the remains of R.A.F. aircrew deemed 'Missing Believed Killed' was totally inadequate. The Missing Research Section (M.R.S.) of the Air Ministry was set up in 1941 to deal with this problem. It collected and collated intelligence reports from a wide variety of official, unofficial and covert sources in an attempt to establish the fate of missing aircrew, using forensic or semi-forensic work to identify personal effects passed on through clandestine channels or bodies washed up on Britain's shores.

In 1944 the M.R.S. a small team of fourteen men was sent to France to seek the missing men on the ground. With 42,000 men missing, the amount they achieve was limited, although a lot of useful work was carried out through contacts in the French Resistance. The book explains why, men volunteered for the job, and why they worked for so long at such a gruesome task. Facing difficulties in terrain and climate, from the Arctic Circle to the jungles of Burma and Germany and not knowing if the local people would be friendly or hostile.

The book also explains how to trace R.A.F. members through both personnel and operational records, where these records are kept and how to access them.



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