

Sergeant Donald Henry (Donny) Stephens – Rear Gunner

At just 19 years old, Donny was the youngest of the crew, he'd been brought up in a large loving family of three brothers and two sisters in the Forest Of Dean in Gloucestershire. His idyllic surroundings in rural England, interspersed with picnics and river fishing days brought a lovely quality to life, in contrast to other members of the crew who were from the industrial heartland of the north. An excellent grammar school education at East Dean Grammar at Cindeford, prepared him for the rigors of Aircrew training. But behind his youthful features, he had already experienced deep personal loss. Donny's oldest brother, Trooper Albert William Francis (Alby) Stephens, had been killed in action in North Africa in 1941. Donny had another older brother Steve who was also serving in the RAF. Despite his age, Donny took his role in the rear turret with deadly seriousness. Night after night, he sat in the cold and isolation of the rear gunner's position, scanning the skies for enemy fighters. Affectionately known as 'Tail End Charlie' the Rear Gunner had the essential role of defending the aircraft from attacks from behind. (Source: Ingrid Shepherd and Dawn Woodward, Co-Authors of "From Bomber County to Berlin".)