

# Doug and Ernie Tod: St. Vital heroes



The Twins, age 2, relax in a backyard rocking chair made of willows.



Tod Family Collection/St. Vital Historical Society Inc.



Tod Family at 1923 St. Vital Agricultural Fair: Mary Edith (left rear); Frederick (Fred); James (Jim); Walter; Marion; Jean; Mary Edith (Dolly); Elsie; Alexander Roderick (Rod) John (Jock), front left; Eleanor; Doug and Ernie - St. Vital Historical Society Inc.



Tod Family circa 1930 - Back row: John (Jock), Mary Edith (Dolly), Alexander Roderick (Rod), James (Jim), Elsie, Walter. Front left: Marion, Eleanor, Mary Edith, Twins, Alexander, Jean, Fred.

March 27, 1989

Mr. J.A. Phillips  
3 Norland Ave.  
Anlaby High Road  
Hull N. Humber side  
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England

Dear Mr. Phillips,

The Tod family are very pleased that you have an interest in the history of our twin brothers. I will give you a short history of the Tod family.

In 1878 our grandfather, Peter Tod, a farmer, arrived in Winnipeg. He was followed in 1882 by his wife, Christian Bell and their three children, Alexander, William and Isabel. The family settled on the land in St. Vital. They were the first English speaking family in the area. In 1892 Frederick and Mary Hulton and their family arrived in Winnipeg and settled on a farm adjacent to the Tod property. The Tods were from Ayton Scotland and the Hultons were from Bury, a town near Manchester.

Alexander Tod, our father, married Mary Edith Hulton in 1898. They had twelve children, five girls and seven boys. They operated a market garden for many years in St. Vital. Father passed on on September 20, 1937. Mother passed away on February 19, 1969 at the age of 90. She was very active all her life in the church, Red Cross and other community services.

The twins, Doug and Ernie, were the youngest in the Family. They attended Norberry School and Glenlawn Collegiate. After graduating high school they went to Northwestern Ontario to find work, as jobs were scarce in Winnipeg. They found work at the Central Patricia Gold Mine where our brother John was working. They quit the mine and joined the Royal Canadian Airforce on January 25, 1941. They trained in Brandon Manitoba, Montreal and Quebec City Quebec, and the No. 4 Bombing and Gunnery School in Fingal Ontario.

Doug and Ernie graduated from Gunnery School on January 5, 1942. After a weeks leave at home they left for England. There they were stationed with the 75th New Zealand Squadron

in New Market Suffolk. The twins had been inseparable all their lives and wanted to fly together. They were given permission to do so by the Airforce. The twins had over 20 flights into enemy territory with a Canadian crew. The pilot was F/Lt. Arnold Rothchild of Toronto. On one of the missions over Frankfurt their bomber was attacked by German fighters and encountered heavy flak. On the return to base the aircraft was running short of fuel and had to come down in the English Channel. Ernie continued to relay their position on the wireless until they crashed in the Channel thus assisting in a quick rescue. Ernest Tod was awarded the D.F.M. for his excellent work on the wireless. On June 22, 1943 the twins made their second flight out with a new crew of R.A.F. airmen over Mulheim and never returned. It was a great shock to mother and the family to hear of the death of the young twins.

The twin's brother, John, was in the army and fought in France and Holland. He was awarded the Military Medal for bravery. While in Holland he was able to find where the twins were buried and visited the graves. The graves were well kept and covered with beautiful flowers. John met a Dutch family that looked after the graves of the twins while there.

I also joined the R.C.A.F. as a gunner in December 1942. After graduating as a gunner I was also shipped to England. I was sent to Alness Scotland with a Canadian crew to train on the Sutherland Flying Boat. In December 1944 our crew picked up a new Sutherland at Oban Scotland and flew to Ceylon to join the R.A.F. 230th Flying Boat Squadron. When the far east war was over we were stationed out of Rangoon Burma.

A posthumous awarding of the D.F.M. of Warrant Officer Robert Ernest Tod was made on December 12, 1943 at a mass investiture held by the Earl of Athlone in Ottawa Ontario. The Medal was presented to our mother. The Canadian Legion and the Netherlands War Graves Commission organized a tour of Holland for the parents of service men buried in Holland in September of 1962. Our mother and sister went on that tour. They travelled throughout Holland and were able to visit the twins graves in Medemblik.

I have enclosed some newspaper clippings that I hope will be of use to you.

Sincerely

A.R. Tod  
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Tod Family Collection/St. Vital Historical Society Inc.



Courtesy Tod Family Collection/St. Vital Historical Society Inc.



Courtesy Tod Family Collection/St. Vital Historical Society Inc.



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The Tod Boys: Doug, father Rod, brother Johnny (Jock), and Ernie.