



www.roll-of-honour.com

The Men of Burgess Hill 1939 to 1946

Remembering the Ninety who gave their lives
for peace and freedom during the Second
World War



By Guy Voice

Copyright © 1999-2004 It is only permissible for the information within *The Men Burgess Hill 1939-46* to be used in private "not for profit" research. Any extracts must not be reproduced in any publication or electronic media without written permission of the author.

"This is a war of the unknown warriors; but let all strive without failing in faith or in duty, and the dark curse of Hitler will be lifted from our age."

Winston Churchill, broadcasting to the nation on the BBC on 14th July 1940.

During the Second World War the Men of Burgess Hill served their country at home and in every operational theatre.

At the outset of the war in 1939, young men across the land volunteered to join those already serving in the forces. Those who were reservists or territorials, along with many, who had seen action in the First World War, joined their units or training establishments.

The citizens of Burgess Hill were no different to others in Great Britain and the Commonwealth as they joined the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force in large numbers. Many more of the townspeople did valuable work on the land or in industry and, living close to the sea some served in the Merchant Navy. As the war continued many others, women included, volunteered or were called up to "do their bit".

The Men of Burgess Hill saw service in some of the most pivotal battles and hard fought actions of the Second World War. Others featured in lesser known but equally vital and important engagements.

Burgess Hillians were involved in the disastrous campaign in Norway. They fought and died in fierce rear guard actions in desperate attempts to hold back the advancing German forces in France. Some were killed in the retreat and subsequent evacuations at Dunkirk and other channel ports.

The town lost a young Hurricane pilot in the Battle of Britain. Two men died serving with the Dambusters, one as a rear-gunner on the actual Dams Raid and the other, who was decorated for bravery, in the last weeks of the European War. Flying in famous aircraft such as the Lancaster, Halifax, Stirling, Wellington, Blenheim and the American Liberator others lost their lives on air operations over occupied Europe, including the 1000 bomber raids, or with Coastal Command on shipping protection and anti-submarine duties.

Some died in the early campaigns in Greece and Crete, while many fought in the Desert Campaign, where in 1942 they inflicted the first land defeat on Hitler's forces at El Alamein. From amphibious landings at Sicily, Salerno and Anzio to the bloody nightmare in the mountains at Monte Cassino, onwards they pushed liberating Italy and all the while holding elite German troops away from the Normandy Landing Beaches.

On D-Day, 6th June 1944, along with many from Burgess Hill, the allies landed in Normandy. A young widowed father died helping to build the Mulberry Harbour while others were killed in the fiercely contested battles of June, July and August as the allies moved inland. Others were killed in now forgotten battles to liberate Holland and Belgium while one young man flew a glider across the River Rhine in the largest airborne assault the world has ever seen.

In the Far East lives were lost in the heroic defence of Hong Kong or in the terrible ordeal as a prisoner of the Japanese. One man served with the fabled Chindits and another with the small Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. Another young soldier lived through the war only to die on active service in 1946.

The Royal Navy lost over 50000 men, including two submariners from Burgess Hill who were both decorated for bravery. The crewman of a Fleet Air Arm Avenger Dive-Bomber died when attacking heavily defended oil refineries. Hillians also fought and died on famous ships such as HMS Gloucester and HMS Illustrious with others on lesser-known vessels.

For the Merchant Navy there never was a "Phoney War" and over 35000 lost their lives keeping the nation and its forces across the world supplied in food, arms, ammunition, equipment and medicines. Two came from Burgess Hill.

Decorations for bravery and gallant conduct range from a Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Service Medal, to a holder of the Military Cross and Mentions in Dispatches. Countless other deeds went unnoticed or unrecorded.

Ninety did not see the peace. Most were killed in action but others died from wounds received in battle and some died of illness at home, in training or captivity.

The majority now lie buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemeteries, which are dotted around the world and kept in pristine condition to remind all who visit and pass by of their sacrifice. Others lie in the churchyards of St John's, St Andrew's and St Edward's with many more in other British towns and villages. Others have no known grave and are remembered on memorials from London, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Runnymede to Singapore, Athens, Rangoon and Tunisia.

Each year the town remembers them at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. But here they are only names. As time passes many people will have no knowledge or connection with them and, even some families may not be aware of the things they did or men they were.

My hope is that this book shows something of their, often short, lives and that their interests, deeds and sacrifices will remain in peoples minds.

The Royal British Legion lays a small poppy posy on those war graves within the town each November. I also hope that in the future these men's graves will one day have their plots looked after all year round, as they are abroad, with flowers being planted regularly by schoolchildren or local people.

Finally, when you pass a war cemetery, memorial or churchyard please go in and walk around; write in the visitors book and most importantly thank them for they gave it all away for your tomorrow.

The Men of Burgess Hill are Churchill's unknown warriors

Men of Burgess 1939 to 1946 – The Story is not finished

The story about these men is not yet complete. This is my attempt since Remembrance Sunday 1999 to try and write a small piece about each of the ninety names that appear on Burgess Hill's War Memorial for the Second World War.

Originally I had envisaged writing a few words about each man's family background, where he served, where buried or commemorated and if possible, how he died. For all but five I have been able to record their burial or memorial location and have put Christian names and ages to almost all. These few words now stand around two hundred pages.

How I compiled the information

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and their very helpful team at Maidenhead, has provided the basic information needed to start a project such as this.

I read through every edition of the Mid-Sussex Times from July 1939 to May 1946, located so handily on micro-film in Burgess Hill Library, in order that I might pick up next of kin and family details. I am thankful to West Sussex County Library Service for taking a copy of this study to allow wider public access.

Reading and consulting a very wide variety of published sources such as histories of battles, personal memoirs and, those now rare, expensive but so very important, regimental or divisional histories has proved very helpful. Visits to the Newspaper Library at Colindale and the National Army Museum's reading room have helped to fill many gaps.

Countless letters have been written to military museums and organisations where curators and research staff have been extraordinarily helpful. To give a picture of these men's civilian lives I tried to uncover their education, sporting achievements and employment. This has led me to write to places as diverse as Christ's Hospital, Cambridge University, Shell UK, the British Schools Exploring Society and the Football Association.

I have sought, and in many cases, made contact with a large number of regimental, squadron, corps and ship associations and through their sterling efforts and benevolence they have provided me with valuable information or put me in touch with former comrades. These men, who in every case have their own astonishing stories or have become well known in later life, always answered my many questions with good humour and as much detail as time and memory allows.

Burgess Hill is very fortunate to have local newspapers such as the Mid-Sussex Times, the Leader and Evening Argus. They always printed my letters or wrote articles about my project. I am also grateful to Burgess Hill Town Council's About Town Magazine for their support.

Other newspapers ranging across the British Isles and as far away as Canada published my appeals for information. I also speculatively picked names out of the phone book and wrote to people I hoped would be connected to these men. In many cases, especially through the local papers, it led relations to contact me.

I am truly grateful to the relations who all provided me, with patience and kindness despite my being a stranger and asking many questions, a great deal of information. For these surviving sisters, brothers, sons and daughters I re-awakened memories but unfailingly they were happy to help. I sent questionnaires and wrote follow-up letters and received answers, documents and many photographs, often with notes asking me to keep them.

For some of the men I have managed to write more as information or the circumstances of their deaths is well documented. On the other hand there are some I haven't managed to establish basic family details or the events leading up to their deaths, despite much effort.

A list of sources, credits and references that have been consulted is listed as an appendix.

There is still much more to learn about these men. The book will continue to as, for example, I need to research the bravery and gallantry awards and write to further organisations and museums. It is also my hope to contact many more surviving families.

As such I will periodically issue a new edition. Other copies are held by the Burgess Hill Branch of the Royal British Legion, the Burgess Hill and Wivesfield local history societies and St. Edward's Church.

On completion of my research it is my intention to place all my records, including photographs of the men, with Burgess Hill's local history society. Perhaps in years to come someone can take the book and add to it.

I am not a historian, a military expert or an author. I have attempted to put context and events in their place when writing about these men. My sole aim is for people to learn about them so that they are not just names on a memorial or a wall.

I hope I have done them, their families and their unit's justice.

Any errors are mine alone for which I apologise and will gladly correct these at the next edition's publication.

I am indebted to the committee and members of the Burgess Hill Branch of the Royal British Legion and the late Mr Leslie Norris M.C. Royal Engineers, who have been so very generous in providing donations to assist me with this work.

My thanks to my wife, Tracy, for her support and the understanding shown as I spent many hours on this project and have taken her along on many of my visits to cemeteries and museums.

In closing I wish to place on record my thanks to Colonel John Buckeridge the past President of the Royal Sussex Regimental Association and current President of the Mid Sussex Branch of the Regimental Association, for kindly presenting the "original" folder to the Royal British Legion on the night of their Branch Dinner on 23rd November 2002. It was fitting that the old county regiment, in the sixtieth anniversary year of their involvement in the Battle of El Alamein, and with many of their lads remembered in this book, present it to that other fine organisation who acts as guardian of remembrance in the town and nationally - The Royal British Legion.

Guy Voice
Email: guy.voice@bt.com

May 2004

<u>Roll of Honour</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>Lieutenant Ian William ADAM</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Major Hugh Thomas AITCHISON</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Bombardier William Clifford ANSCOMBE</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Gunner Clifford Ernest APLIN</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Sapper Harold Frederick APLIN</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>A W AWCOCK</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Private Arthur Frederick AVIS</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>2nd Lieutenant Alan BAGOT</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Stoker First Class Stanley Thomas BEARD</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Flight Sergeant (Navigator) Arthur James BEDALE</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Lance Corporal Philip Clark BINGHAM</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Lance Corporal Sidney Lawrence BOXALL</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Warrant Officer Class II Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant Percy A BROCKES</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Second Officer Harry James BROWNING</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Chief Officer Alfred John DeBAUGHN</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Private Edward BUCKMAN</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Private John Louis BURT</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Sapper William Thomas BURT</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Aircraftsman 2nd Class Frederick Richard CADEY</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Sergeant William Paul CHVALA</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Leading Aircraftsman 1st Class Walter William John CLAMP</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Flying Officer (Navigator) Michael Terence CLARKE D.F.C</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>Warrant Officer Class I Regimental Sergeant Major Arthur Walter COLLINS</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>Leading Steward Jack S CRIPPS</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Captain John Michael Gordon DILL</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>2nd Lieutenant Frank D DUESBURY</i>	<i>65</i>
<i>Signalman George Arnold ELSE</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Trooper Frederick Dennard GASSON</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Private George Edward GASSON</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>Corporal Thomas Albert GAY</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Major John Chester GAYE</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>Lieutenant Garnet Henry Cecil GEEN</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Lieutenant Thomas Ellison GODMAN D.S.C</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Pilot Officer Bernard Albert GODSMARK</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>Corporal Sidney George GREEN</i>	<i>93</i>

<i>Flight Engineer Sergeant Gordon William HANCOCK</i>	95
<i>N HANCOCK</i>	98
<i>Paymaster Sub Lieutenant Robert Oswald Charles HAY</i>	100
<i>Flight Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Frederick William HICKMAN</i>	102
<i>Private William Henry HISCOX</i>	105
<i>Private Peter John LAKER</i>	107
<i>Gunner Albert LEANEY</i>	108
<i>Private George Sidney LOOKER</i>	110
<i>Driver Arthur David LOVELL</i>	112
<i>D P JOYCE</i>	113
<i>Private Horace G MARTIN</i>	114
<i>Lance Corporal Stephen Joseph MAXWELL</i>	115
<i>Sergeant (Wireless Operator) Leslie James MILLER</i>	118
<i>Stoker First Class Alfred J MITCHELL</i>	119
<i>Sergeant John William Burt MITCHELL</i>	120
<i>Pilot Officer Stanley Cresswell MIMMACK</i>	126
<i>Sergeant Leslie Eric NEARY</i>	128
<i>Corporal Donald Raymond NEWNHAM</i>	130
<i>Lieutenant Commander Robert Galliano NORFOLK D.S.O.</i>	131
<i>Sergeant Pilot Philip Purchall NORRIS</i>	135
<i>Sergeant J W OULSNAM</i>	139
<i>Leading Aircraftsman Percy Sydney PACKHAM</i>	145
<i>Driver Ronald Benjamin PACKHAM</i>	147
<i>Captain Richard Edward Hope PARKINSON M.B.E.</i>	149
<i>Lance Corporal Dennis Charles PLUMMER</i>	150
<i>Sergeant Air Gunner Derek Ronald PUTTICK</i>	152
<i>Able Seaman Albert Henry RAPSON</i>	154
<i>G REESON</i>	155
<i>Gunner Albion George Herbert REASON</i>	156
<i>Pilot Officer Sidney Clifford ROGERS</i>	159
<i>Private Charles Herbert ROUGHT</i>	160
<i>Warrant Officer Wireless Operator (Air) Norman Frederick ROUSE</i>	161
<i>Flying Officer Robert Alfred SCRASE</i>	162
<i>Corporal Stanley Reuben SIGGINS</i>	165
<i>Sergeant Harold Thomas SIMMONDS</i>	167
<i>Lieutenant Richard John Foster STANTON</i>	171
<i>Chief Petty Officer Airman Henry George Christie STOLLERY MID*</i>	175
<i>D STUART-VILLIERS</i>	183

Captain Charles Hopewell TAYLER	184
Flight Engineer Sergeant Frederick George TAYLOR	185
Private Frederick Charles TURNER	188
Musician Thomas George UMPLEBY	194
Private Ronald Sydney UPTON	196
Corporal Thomas Martyn John WALDER	198
Petty Officer (Telegraphist) Denis Eustace WALFORD D.S.M.	200
Fusilier Albert John WAYMARK	203
Lance Corporal Bertie WEBSTER	205
Gunner Basil Henry WEBSTER	206
Sergeant Donald Edwin WEST	207
Sergeant Air Gunner Roy James WILSON	212
Private Frank W WICKENS	215
Signalman Robert Harry WOOD	218
Flying Officer Albert Henry WOOLCOCK B.A.	221
Lieutenant Ernest WOOLLVEN	223
Brigadier Victor Augustus YOUNG M.C.	225
Sergeant Peter Henry WARNER	228
Marjory Florence WOOLLVEN	229
Appendices:	230
Sources, Credits, Acknowledgements and Further Reading:	231
Casualties by Year of Death and Country/Area	244
Countries and the Cemeteries they lie in or Memorials they are commemorated on	246
The Author	249
Copyright	250

NB: In this book the asterix after a decoration indicates the awarding of a bar for the decoration of the same type e.g. D.S.O* - recipient awarded the Distinguished Service Order and bar. A bar is the term used to refer to a further award i.e. a D.S.O and two bars indicates the recipient received the award three times.

Where * follows MID (Mention in Dispatches) this indicates a second certificate was awarded.

Lieutenant Ian William ADAM

Service Number: Not known

Age: 19

47 Royal Marines Commando

Killed in Action: 14th January 1945

Buried: Sprang Capelle General Cemetery, Netherlands

Ian Adam was the eldest son of William Alexander and Mary Louise Adam of Tavistock, Wivelsfield Road, Wivelsfield.

He was born in Hove on 25th May 1925 and had three brothers and one sister: Robert Alexander born 2nd January 1927; David Charles Dron born 20th February 1928; Thomas Stuart born 9th January 1929 and Jennifer Jane born 16th July 1934.

William Adam was a native of Edinburgh who worked as a Sales Manager. He had served as an officer with the Canadian Engineers, winning a Military Cross for bravery, in the First World War. He represented the Wivelsfield Ward on the Cuckfield Urban District Council. Mrs Adam originated from Wilton in Wiltshire.

Ian was educated at the Whitgift School in South Croydon and while at school joined the local Home Guard. Serving with the 2nd Platoon, Haywards Heath Company, 13th Sussex Battalion he showed his early promise by being promoted to lance corporal. He also played cricket in his spare time.

Along with Ian all the brothers served in the armed forces during World War Two. Robert served as a Captain in The Royal Engineers in India and Pakistan and later as a Trooper with 21st (Artists Rifles) Special Air Service. David and Stuart both joined the cadets and then served with the Royal Marines and the Buffs (The Royal East Kent Regiment) respectively.

Not waiting to be called up Ian volunteered in 1943 for service with the Royal Marines at the age of seventeen. Following his training, which probably saw him at Lympstone near Plymouth and various locations in Scotland, he was posted to 47 Royal Marines Commando a few days after the D-Day Landings.

47 Royal Marines Commando landed on D-Day as part of 30th (British) Corps on Gold Beach. They were tasked with fanning out westwards from the port of Arromanches to take the harbour, Port-en-Bessin and to join up with the American airborne and ground forces coming in from Utah Beach. Three of the five landing craft bringing them in-shore struck mines and when the survivors had swum ashore and regrouped they had lost forty-six men and almost every wireless set. Despite these losses and the original assault plans being upset by the trouble coming ashore 47 managed to secure their objectives and meet up with their American allies as required.

After initially serving as a Marine he was commissioned whilst in Normandy in July 1944.

47 Royal Marines Commando, and Lieutenant Adam, saw much action in France, Holland and the largely forgotten but important battles of Walcheren Island to clear the Scheldt Estuary, which was fought in desperately cold and wet conditions over a flooded landscape. It is hoped to provide further information on the unit's battles and progress through Europe up to the Walcheren action at a later date.

Ian was originally posted missing in January although the family did not receive official confirmation of his death until June 1945. They did however; receive numerous letters from his commanding officer, second-in-command, brother officers and Sergeant testifying to his gallantry and devotion to duty.

The following excerpt was published in the Mid-Sussex Times and is taken from the letter received by the family from Ian's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel P Donnell R.M.

"He behaved with great gallantry leading his men in a night attack on an enemy strongpoint and was wounded within twenty yards of the enemy. After a gallant fight the position had to be given up owing to a counter attack, and unfortunately, it was several days before the position could be regained. The bodies of his troop commander and several of his men were recovered. There was no trace of Ian and two others. He showed fine promise as an officer. A brave and good leader, keen and enthusiastic, he was a great asset to the unit and is a sad loss to all".

The Mid-Sussex Times also published the following, again taken from a letter received by the family, written by Ian's Second-in-Command, Major Martin Price D.S.O., who was close to the position at the time. *"I can assure you that he acted in accordance with the highest traditions of an officer's duty and with great gallantry".*

The following information describing Ian's death was kindly provided by Professor J O Forfar M.C., who served throughout World War Two as the Medical Officer of 47 Royal Marines Commando.

"I was involved with Lieutenant Adam at Walcheren Island when, in November 1944, the commando was assaulting one of the major batteries there. The German batteries on Walcheren were denying access to the Scheldt thus preventing the Allied shipping from reaching Antwerp, which had already been captured but could not be used until the Scheldt was opened. The freeing of Antwerp was essential if the allied supply lines were to be maintained and the war continued.

Lieutenant Adam was in charge of a section of Q Troop, which was advancing along the dunes. He was ordered by the troop commander to take up position on the right flank with a view to 'taking out' an enemy position ahead. As Lieutenant Adam's sections prepared to advance they came under intense and accurate mortar fire and suffered severe casualties. Lieutenant Adam, uninjured, dashed back for medical help. Going forward I found a scene of great carnage. In a hollow among the dunes lay the remnants of two Q troop sections, a sad collection of torn, contorted bleeding bodies. Eleven marines, including the Troop Sergeant Major, lay dead and eleven had been wounded. Most of the wounded lay where they had fallen but some, dazed and bleeding, had moved out of the hollow. The mortaring was continuing and as the wounded were lifted and carried back two of the small band of rescuers were also wounded. The dead were left. Young Lieutenant Adam had been involved in one of warfare's worst scenarios but undaunted he carried on".

Professor Forfar continues *"In January 1945 Lieutenant Adam took part in the assault by 47 Royal Marines Commando on Kapelsche Veer Island. The island lay in the middle of the River Mass and was being fanatically defended. The defending garrison could only be approached along the top of the broad exposed Bergsche Mass dyke because the lower ground was flooded. Q Troop was the right prong of a two pronged attack. As the troop led by its commander, Captain Stickings, supported by Lieutenant Adam and Corporal Tye, approached the major defences the marines had virtually no cover against rifle, machine gun and*

mortar fire, which they were facing. As the attackers closed in they met defenders protected in a fortified house and in trenches now only a few yards ahead. First Corporal Tye was hit and his left elbow shattered. Next Captain Stickings and Lieutenant Adam were hit: both fell dead. Casualties rose and the attack had to be called off. The German garrison was only overcome when a tank bridge was built to the island and an attack by a far larger formation, an armoured brigade, was mounted.

The bodies of the marines of 47 Royal Marines Commando killed at Kapelsche Veer could not be recovered and it appears they were buried by the Germans along with their own dead".

In late 1946, probably the November, locals working in the area uncovered the bodies of five soldiers. At first it was believed they were all German but it was discovered soon after that one was British although he had no recognition tags. All five men were buried in the General Cemetery at Sprang Capelle, with the British Soldier being separated from the others and recorded as "Unknown".

In 1950 The Imperial War Graves Commission (now the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) asked permission of the Local Government to allow them to provide the grave with a standard headstone that records all British and Commonwealth unknown burials. The graves of unknown men have inscribed on them the inscription devised by Rudyard Kipling "Known unto God". This was completed in June 1950.

In 1951 the Burgomaster of Sprang Capelle received information from a Mrs M G Rijckevorsel that the unknown British Soldier was Lieutenant Ian Adam. Ian had billeted in Mrs Rijckevorsel's house and she had tried for many years after the war to trace "her officer". Her search led to the men who discovered the bodies of the five soldiers. The description they gave of his appearance and looks including the colour of his hair and the uniform he wore left her in no doubt that this was her young British friend. The Burgomaster forwarded the information to the Dutch Minister of Defence who in turn informed The British Secretary of State for Defence.

In 1952 the family visited the grave with Ian's new headstone recording his rank, name, age, unit, date of death and the Royal Marines crest.

Ian's grave is the only British one in the small town of Sprang Capelle and it is still beautifully maintained by the local Dutch people and the Vrienden van de Oorlogsgraven der Geallieerden (Friends of the Allied War Graves). The local community also organises a number of tours among schools to talk about the War and liberation of Holland and during these they talk about the action that Ian died in. Many of the children visit Ian's grave outside of these talks in small groups or with their families.

Ian's name is also recorded on the Haywards Heath War Memorial and on his parent's gravestone at Wivelsfield.

He is recorded incorrectly on both the Burgess Hill War Memorial and the Royal British Legion's Roll of Honour as L W Adam.

Footnote: Professor John Forfar was to become a world leading physician and surgeon specialising in paediatrics. At the time of writing to me in 2001 he was living, and still working, in Edinburgh.

Major Hugh Thomas AITCHISON

Service Number: 105775

Age: 34

2nd Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders

Killed in Action: 26 June 1944

Buried: St Manvieu War Cemetery, Cheux, Calvados, France. Plot 9
Row J Grave 14

Hugh was born on 21st July 1909 to James George Aitchison and Irene Emily Isobel Aitchison (nee Picard) and lived at 50 Woodstock Road, Golders Green.

He married Effie Margaret Noel Aitchison nee Stewart, of Golders Green (died 1990) in 1937 and they lived in Temple Fortune, London. They had one daughter, Janet who was born in 1943.

Hugh was educated at Highgate School between September 1922 and July 1926. He was a member of St Ninian's Presbyterian Church in Golders Green, a keen cross-country runner and an accomplished marksman winning several competitions. Hugh also joined the London Scottish as a Territorial thus extending the family's connection with the regiment as his father had served with them and is believed to have seen active service in the Boer War.

After leaving school he secured a job with Shell Oil commencing employment with them on 19th April 1927. Later in 1932 he transferred to another part of the Shell Group, The Asiatic Petroleum Company Limited (APC), and moved to Japan to take up his new responsibilities. The payroll records indicate that he remained with Shell/APC until 31st August 1938 where his card is then annotated as OAS (On Active Service). A further note lists his date of death and that he was killed in action..

As far as the Family know Hugh never lived in Burgess Hill but his mother was from the town and she had returned here to live in Station Road after her husband's death in the thirties.

With the outbreak of War and Hugh's experience with the Territorial's being much in demand he was commissioned into the Army on 2nd December 1939. He spent most of the war based in Huntley, Aberdeenshire, in preparation against a possible German invasion via occupied Norway.

He was promoted to the rank of War Substantive Captain on 15th December 1942 and made a Temporary Major on 1st October 1943.

It was in Burgess Hill that he met his wife for the last time while he was on his way south to the Normandy landings.

As part of the 15th (Scottish) Division, the 2nd Gordon Highlanders left Findon, near Worthing, on 14th June for a marshalling area near Haywards Heath. They embarked for Normandy from Newhaven on 18th June in LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry) where they spent some time off the French coast due to the rough weather making it difficult to land on 20th June. On being disembarked onto the Mulberry Harbour they then walked the half-mile along this giant structure to the beaches at Arromanches. Once ashore they marched to a bivouac area at Vaux-sur-Seulle where they were inactive for three days but continued to ready themselves for action.

On the 19th June the 15th Scottish Division received orders that they, with the 31st Tank Brigade under their command, would spearhead the next big allied offensive, Operation Epsom on 26th June.

The brief outline for the plan was for the division to attack on a two-brigade front at 07.30 hours. On the right 46th Highland Brigade with the 9th Battalion Cameron Highlanders (Scottish Rifles) and 2nd Battalion Glasgow Highlanders; on the left the 44th Lowland Brigade with the 8th Battalion Royal Scots and 6th Battalion Royal Scottish Fusiliers. Tank support was to be provided by 7th Royal Tank Regiment for 46th Brigade and 9th Royal Tank Regiment for 44th Brigade. A number of "Funnies" from 79th Armoured Division were also available – these were Flail tanks to make passages through minefields, Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers (AVRE) to launch massive petards of great explosive ferocity to clear blockhouses and the like as well as Bridge Laying tanks. In addition the 1st Battalion Middlesex Regiment provided two companies of machine gunners, one to each brigade.

The start line of the operation ran from just north of Le Mesnil Patry eastward along the road to Norrey-en-Bessin. The first objective was to be the ridge that ran from Le Haut du Bosq passing southwards of Cheux and La Gaule. This objective was key as it was to be the observation point for the further advance. On this objective 227th Highland Brigade (10th Highland Light Infantry, 2nd Gordon Highlanders and 2nd Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders) were to pass through 46th Brigade and secure the crossings over the River Odon some five miles from the morning start line. The 11th Armoured Division was then to pass through and move out south-eastward into open country.

The operation was to be supported by almost nine hundred guns, which included the guns of three Royal Navy cruisers. In the barrage alone three hundred and forty four field and medium guns from the Royal Artillery were to be used.

At Le Mesnil and Norrey Canadian troops had been dug in since the day after D-Day (7th June) and the villages were now just heaps of rubble that were swept by enemy machine gun and mortar fire from a slope a few hundred yards southward. The Canadians provided great support to the newly arrived division, especially by removing their own protective minefields, to allow 15th Scottish to reconnoitre the ground over which their attack would cover.

The landscape was typical of the farmland in Normandy and can still be seen here today. It was blind country where enemy observation and machine gun posts were difficult to locate. The land was one of hollows, farm buildings, and small villages with high standing corn fields and pasture land with wooded copses, orchards as well as the deadly Norman hedgerows (thick, high and strong with deep concealed ditches).

The area the division was to assault was defended by excellent quality German troops in the shape of the 12th S.S Panzer and Hitler Youth Divisions.

After dark on 24th June the majority of the guns moved into concealed positions in barns and coppices and remained out of sight the following day. The Royal Army Service Corps delivered ammunition, petrol and food. Gun pits were dug and fields of fire confirmed. Late on 25th June the 2nd Gordon Highlanders moved up behind 44th and 46th Brigades, having as their first objective the next day the ridge running south of Cheux.

Early on 26th June the 2nd Gordon Highlanders took an uncomfortable breakfast in a wet, cold wood and then marched the last three miles to their forming up place in good time for the commencement of Operation Epsom.

At 07.29 orders were passed over Tannoy speakers in the gun pits *"Stand by to fire Serial 1 – one minute to go – 30 seconds – 20 seconds – 10 seconds – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Fire"*. As the artillery and navy opened fire onto targets 500 to 1000 yards ahead the tanks and infantry advanced and closed up towards the barrage.

There was no enemy aircraft present and no counter bombardment, but little could be seen in front as the country with its thick hedges, trees and fields of standing corn along with the constant drizzling rain made for poor visibility. The weather continued to be poor with the men being wet and cold and after a long wait they moved off in an unseasonable hailstorm.

Early casualties were experienced across the Division with many anti-personnel mines taking their toll although the infantry continued to move forward but the advance started to be held up. Unfortunately on top of the enemy resistance the communications between armour and infantry suffered, as radios did not perform well.

The Gordon Highlanders experienced frequent halts and slow progress as the Brigades in front continued to meet stiff enemy resistance and as a result of these delays the fifteen-minute pause, which the barrage made after an advance of about a mile and a half proved too short. This meant that 46th Brigade lost contact with the barrage and the protection it afforded although they continued to push slowly forward against increasing resistance.

With the enemy all around the Glasgow Highlanders moved into Cheux and holding the line in front they continued to receive a ceaseless barrage of mortar rounds and Nebelwerfer rockets (known as moaning minnies because of the noise they made). The Glasgow and Cameron Highlanders lost between them eighteen officers and almost three hundred and twenty men on this first day.

All day 227 Brigade had following up slowly behind this attack and towards its forming up area just north of Cheux. The rain, by now torrential, had not let up and so had ruled out all allied air support and it was not until 18.00 hours that the Highland Light Infantry on the right and the Gordon Highlanders on the left formed up with their tanks. From here they now set out southward through Cheux by the two roads that led to the River Odon.

They found Cheux a heap of ruins with its streets flooded and covered in masonry. This helped to cause a huge traffic jam with troops and vehicles stationary whilst under deadly sniper fire as they tried to work their way through the village. It was decided that the infantry should advance on foot to keep the momentum and they left their carriers and tanks to move out of the village when able.

As the Highland Light Infantry moved off to the right whilst the Gordon Highlanders, with a troop of 9th Royal Tanks who had extricated themselves from the village in support, advanced to the left of the village.

As they approached their next objective, Colleville and the adjoining village of Tourville, A and B Companies were hit by heavy anti-tank and machine gun fire from behind hedges with dug in tanks also engaging the British forces. B Company struggled through to Colleville although it became surrounded by German troops for while. A Company were caught in a cornfield and hit by mortar fire leaving them with considerable casualties and several of the supporting tanks were also knocked out.

With darkness upon them the tanks withdrew out of the village and with much confusion the Gordon Highlanders commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Coleville collected what he could of his battalion and set to work forming a tight perimeter beside the Cheux-Colleville road. C & D Companies had progressed to about one mile south of Colleville in equally difficult conditions. The transport then was able to join the battalion and the men of the Gordon Highlanders spent a very unpleasant wet and cold night digging in as best they could. Throughout the night the Medical Officer and his valiant stretcher-bearers worked to bring men in from outside the perimeter.

The opening day had seen the Gordon Highlanders lose four officers and one was recorded as missing.

With XXX Corps not having occupied Rauray that day (they would the next) and 49th (West Riding) Division held up near Fontenay-le-Pesnil to the west and the enemy still holding Marcelet, and the key Carpiquet aerodrome, on the east, the 15th Scottish Division's salient was becoming exposed on the flanks. This was to be the start of the then famous "Scottish Corridor" and its existence would become vital to the allies over the coming five days.

During the first two days of the operation they had advanced five and a half miles. For the next three days the division held their ground against the might of the 22nd SS and Hitler Youth Divisions who had been reinforced by all or parts of the 1st, 2nd, 9th and 10th SS Panzer and 21st Panzer Divisions.

Operation Epsom finished on 2nd July when the 43rd (Wessex) Division relieved the 15th Scottish and though it had not been the success envisaged it had held down many thousands of German troops and tanks that allowed the Americans away to the west to continue their advance.

The Gordon Highlanders Regimental History states *"A week had elapsed since the Battalion entered their first battle. Majors H.T Aitchison and D.W.I Souter, Captain J.A.A Wishart, and Lieutenants A.B Kiddie and D.H Niven had all been killed and 8 other officers wounded with 254 other ranks killed, wounded or missing. Regimental Sergeant Major Black was among the fallen"*.

A distant relation of the Aitchison family, Richard Allen of Finchley, London, sent this tribute to Hugh's daughter, Janet, in 1998:

"As a Major he was ordered to take a bridge over the Odon, an establish a bridgehead, so that we could sweep round from the south west of Caen, and as you may recall, lay the foundations of the 'Poche de Falaise' as the French call it. We called it the Falaise Box where the fate of the German armies was sealed. Hugh charged the bridge firing from the hip followed by his Sergeant Major and troops giving him covering fire. He was hit, got up, hit again, but that time he did not get up, but his men did establish the Bridgehead so this life was not in vain...I had seen Hugh's grave in 1946...a worthy place in the garden where he rests in that part of 'a foreign field that is forever England'.

The final part of this text quotes the inscription at the bottom of Hugh's grave stone.

The 15th Scottish Division's casualties for Operation Epsom amounted to 31 officers and 257 other ranks killed, 91 officers and 786 other ranks missing and 130 officers and 2590 other ranks wounded.

The divisional history states that Epsom and the "Corridor" were the fiercest fighting it experienced in the whole war. This is a sobering thought, and especially notable, from a division who fought until the end of the war in many

major battles including the liberation of Tilburg, the river Rhine and Elbe crossings and the advance to the Baltic and Lubeck at war's end.

In the final eight days of the war the 15th Scottish Division suffered 325 casualties.

Of the total casualties this fine division was to lose in Northwest Europe, from Normandy to VE Day, one quarter was during Operation Epsom.

From Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery came recognition of the 15th Scottish Division's action *"I would like to congratulate the 15th Division as a whole on the very fine performance put up during the past week's fighting. The Division went into battle for the first time in this war; but fought with great gallantry and displayed grand offensive spirit. Scotland can feel proud of the 15th Scottish Division and the whole Division can be proud of itself. Please congratulate the Division for me and tell all officers and men that I am delighted at what they have done"*.

Hugh Aitchison now lies in St Manvieu War Cemetery alongside many of his men who were killed during Operation Epsom. It is a cemetery afforded great views across the Calvados region and although not on the usual tourist route it is possible for today's visitor to still clearly see the landscape that made fighting here in 1944 so difficult and bloody. There are some excellent local museums that tell the story of these battles and the population still holds the "jock divisions" and the British in very high esteem to this day.

Besides being remembered on Burgess Hill's memorial this gallant young officer is also recorded on the war memorials for St. Ninian's Presbyterian Church (now held at Trinity Church, Golders Green), Highgate School and that of Golders Green. His name appears in the Book of Remembrance at the London Scottish Regiment's Head Quarters at Horsferry Road in London.

Shell International Limited moved from Shell Mex House opposite the River Thames in 1999 and their war memorial is displayed in the new Shell Centre in London. Amongst the many companies of the Shell Group remembered on this memorial there is an inscription that honours Hugh and his colleagues. It reads *"In proud and affectionate memory of our colleagues in the Fuel Oil General Department of The Asiatic Petroleum Company Ltd, London. Who gave their lives for freedom 1939-1945"*. Hugh's name is then listed below.

In 1994 the Gordon Highlanders amalgamated with the Queen's Own Highlanders* (Seaforths and Camerons) to form the Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordon and Cameron). In 2003 the Highlanders served with the British Forces in the Iraq War.

*The Queen's Own Highlanders was already an amalgamation of two regiments featured in this story – the Seaforths and Camerons.

Bombardier William Clifford ANSCOMBE

Service Number: 881212

Age: 33

57 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery

Died: 8th August 1943

Buried: Catania War Cemetery, Sicily. Plot 3 Row H Grave 32

Born in Twineham he had come to Burgess Hill from Blackstone and had been married seven years. He lived with his wife at 18 Norman Road, Burgess Hill and they had two children

William served as a territorial soldier for two years before the war and had seen service with the Royal Artillery during the Battle of France and was evacuated through Dunkirk.

After a period in the UK he was sent out the Middle East in early 1941.

57 Field Regiment trained in Britain during the whole of 1939 as part of 44th Infantry Division and then embarked for service in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force in the spring of 1940. After heavy fighting the Regiment was evacuated from Dunkirk having lost all their equipment in the process.

The Regiment then remained in the Home Counties, being brought up to strength with new recruits, retraining and re-equipping with 25-pounder guns and preparing for a possible German invasion until the summer of 1942.

On 26th May they embarked with 44th Division for Egypt. It is possible that William joined the regiment here as he is reported, by the Mid Sussex Times, to have been posted to the Middle East in early 1941 although I have no official record of this or with which unit he served with prior to 57 Regiment.

The regiment first came into action near Alam Halfa in support of 131st Brigade on 20th August. Having taken part in the operations in the Western Desert, Libya, Tripolitania and Tunisia with 44th Division and, from December 1942, with the famed Desert Rats of 7th Armoured Division the regiment embarked for Sicily on 18th July 1943, where they arrived on 20th July.

From 28th July the regiment was almost continuously in action, supporting the advance of 1st Canadian Division while under command of 5 AGRA (Army Group Royal Artillery). In the week before William was killed the regiment was constantly on the move, firing offensive and defensive barrages and on several occasions coming under aerial attack. On the morning of 8th August, now under the command of 78th Division, it was acting again, in the same area firing regimental targets at enemy infantry positions between 03.15 and 08.20 hours. Otherwise the day was quite and the regiment moved forward once again in the afternoon, by batteries, with RHQ (Regimental Head Quarters) being established at in a small village.

Sadly there is no record of any casualties or any mention of the incident leading to William's death except that the Royal Artillery "Death Cards" record him as being fatally killed when a vehicle was accidentally overturned.

William never saw his second child as the baby was born whilst he was overseas.

Gunner Clifford Ernest APLIN

Service Number: 1734002

Age: 31

242 Battery, 48 Light Anti-Aircraft, Royal Artillery

Died: 29th March 1945

Commemorated: Singapore Memorial, Column 12 Kranji War Cemetery

Son of Mr and Mrs C Aplin of 279 Junction Road and brother to Harold, Jack and two others.

Mr Aplin Senior was a painter and decorator by trade.

Clifford was married to Ethel J (nee Jenner) and they lived in "Brickfields", Gladstone Road with their daughter Celia (there may have been more children but I have been unable to establish this).

Before the War Clifford had owned a retail greengrocery business and was known to many in Burgess Hill and over a wide area of Sussex as he delivered produce.

I am unsure when he was called up for service and he may have been a territorial soldier. He was drafted to the Royal Artillery being posted to 242 Battery, 48 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment

The Regiment was formed as P Light Anti-Aircraft at Harwich on 29th June 1940 and was redesignated 48 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment on 21st July. It was not until 8th July 1941 that 242 Battery, commanded by Major C.E.B Ridley, who had joined from 11 Anti-Aircraft Practice Camp at Stiffkey, took over the gun sites located at Wrabness, Great Bromley, Shotley and Parkestone. This was as part of the air defence network under the command of 6th Anti Aircraft Division whose area covered Essex, Thames, Chatham and Dover.

From 22nd August the whole regiment was withdrawn from its static positions for mobile training, and on 4th September it was mobilised for overseas (tropical climate) service.

On 7th October, while at Southend, it was warned to be ready to move as part of 5 Royal Artillery Regiment; although in the event embarkation from Gourock was delayed until 6th December.

While on passage to Egypt, via the Cape of Good Hope, the convoy was diverted towards the Far East and Java to meet the expected Japanese military threat. The complete 5 Regiment force consisted of 21 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment; 35 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment; 48 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and two heavy artillery regiments, 77 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment and 6 Heavy Anti-Aircraft.

5 Royal Artillery Regiment first landed in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) at Tanjong Priok, Batavia (Jakarta). 48 LAA Regiment, consisting of the batteries 49, 95 and 242 disembarked on 4th February 1942, having called at Singapore on the way. The same day the regiment was dispersed throughout Java, to defend various airfields against the Japanese assault. On 23rd February as enemy actions commenced Headquarters and one battery (242) were at Batavia near the Tjililitan military airfield, 95 Battery at Bandung and 49 Battery at Kalidjati. 49 Battery were heavily attacked by the Japanese and lost over 50 men in this action. The Regiment is recorded as having been captured in entirety by the Japanese on 12th March 1942 and was officially disbanded on that date.

As the regiment was mainly based in West Java the men were imprisoned in that part of the island. Many were then moved down to camps in the vicinity of Batavia's civil prison, Boei Glodok until October 1942. They were then the first of two parties to leave for Borneo via Singapore. After a journey, made in terrible cramped conditions, they arrived at Sandakan, in what was then British North Borneo, where they were put to work building an airfield.

I have no information of Clifford's movements from this time until early 1945 when, as the Allies advanced, the Japanese operated a policy of moving Prisoners of War in order to prevent them from being liberated by possible allied seaborne landings. At Sandakan over two thousand Australian and British Prisoners of War were in a very poor health suffering from disease and starvation.

On 28th January 1945, the Japanese began the first of the 175-mile death marches forcing the Sandakan Prisoners of War to make for Ranau. Four hundred and fifty-five prisoners, including Clifford, were in this first group and by early March 1945, he and about three hundred others were still alive. On 26th March a group of between fifty to sixty men, including Clifford, left a place called Paginatan bound for Ranau. Before arriving at Ranau Camp Number One Clifford died on 29th March at 17.50 hours (Japanese time) on the Paginatan-Ranau track. The cause of death is officially recorded as Acute Enteritis.

The Japanese massacred all the remaining survivors in the final weeks of the war (and some after the official surrender). Only six prisoners, all Australians, survived the Sandakan-Ranau death march, all of them escaping, while just over 2,400 POWs were killed in the process. There were 1787 Australians and 641 British prisoners in the camp at Sandakan.

It says a great deal about the strength of Clifford and his companions, that they endured and survived captivity with all the maltreatment and privations they experienced from March 1942 to their deaths in 1945.

The men of 48 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment suffered terribly during captivity with eighty-three of them dying in captivity.

For many their graves are unmarked and lost, and these men are now commemorated on the Singapore Memorial in Kranji War Cemetery, where the names of all men whose last resting-place is unknown are engraved. Regiments and Batteries did their very best to keep records in the desperate conditions but in most cases only the date of death was noted. Most men were given burials by their comrades but over time, and perhaps through understandable errors in recording gravesites, many of those graves were lost to the jungle.

After the war the Australians recovered what remains they could along the route and the massacre site and they were finally laid to rest at Labaun, an island of the coast of Brunei.

The family waited a long time for Clifford's death to be confirmed and even then details were very sketchy with little detail forthcoming. Ethel remarried and emigrated to Canada after the War.

It was still too painful in 2001 for Clifford's brother Jack to recall these memories and I am very grateful for his assistance in compiling this "biography".

Sapper Harold Frederick APLIN

Service Number: 81914278

Age: 28

663 Artisan Works Company, Royal Engineers

Killed in Action: 17th June 1940

Commemorated: Dunkirk Memorial, Column 23

Harold was born on 10th May 1912 to Mr and Mrs C Aplin of 279 Junction Road and brother of Clifford, Jack and two others.

Harold, known to the family as Addy, followed in his father's footsteps becoming a painter and decorator. He worked for the well-known local firm of Kaye Jones and Son for a period.

Addy was also a keen footballer and played on Saturdays for his local team the Wasps (named because of their yellow and black shirts).

He suffered from poor eyesight and when the first to be called up in the family was younger than he was this troubled him greatly. In spite of his eyesight he volunteered for service and on passing a medical joined the Royal Engineers joining 663 Artisan Works Company in early 1940.

As the expectation of a German attack grew ever closer more British troops were sent to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force and within a month of enlisting Addy and his unit were stationed in France.

At the time of Addy's death 663 Artisan Works Company had been working on the lines of communication and airfield construction in the rear area. They became part of an ad-hoc Royal Engineers formation known as "Beauman Force" south of the German break through to Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk. They were tasked to prevent and delay as best as possible the German advance into north-western France. On or about 14th June "Beauman Force" was engaged in blowing bridges on the River Seine upstream from Rouen and destroying Ferries downstream of the City.

Following these actions and with being issued orders to try and make their escape. 633 Artisan Works Company, including Harold, managed to join many other British troops who were being evacuated from Cherbourg. They boarded the ill-fated liner the SS Lancastria that was sunk off St. Nazaire with the loss of some 3000-6000 men.

Records for the time leading to the evacuation are understandably incomplete or were destroyed and so written after the event. Addy's grave, although not confirmed, is most likely to be inside the Lancastria.

The ship is now a registered War Grave.

A W AWCOCK

Service Number: ??

Age: ??

??

Killed in Action: ??

Buried: ??

I have been unable to trace any record for an A.W Awcock from the CWGC or any other source.

Private Arthur Frederick AVIS

Service Number: 6401084

Age: 22

2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed on Active Service: 14th January 1941

Buried: Rye Cemetery, East Sussex. Section B.C Grave 6283

Arthur was born on 18th December 1919 at Kingswood Cottage, Sheffield Park and was the youngest son of Alfred and Ada Avis (nee Dennett).

At some stage the family moved to live at 4 Council Cottages in Wivelsfield. There were three sisters (one "D") and two brothers (Alfred and "W").

As a young boy he attended Danehill School and outside school time he had been a member of the local scout troop and had a keen interest in fishing.

After leaving school Arthur became a builder's labourer.

He met his future wife, Ivy, in Burgess Hill. She lived at 33 St Andrew's Road with her parents and as a child had attended Junction Road School.

After a period of courtship they were married on 7th August 1937 at Haywards Heath Registry Office and followed this with a short honeymoon in Lindfield whilst the village fair was on.

They made their home not far away from Ivy's parents moving in to 62 St Andrew's Road where their young daughter was born in 1939.

Arthur had been called up in late 1939, just after the outbreak of War, and he enlisted at the Drill Hall in Haywards Heath.

He is believed to have taken part in the ill-fated landings at Norway where he was subsequently evacuated. At some stage after the British Army was recalled from Norway he was posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment and was sent to France. He again saw action and was again evacuated, this time from Dunkirk during May/June 1940.

After the evacuation the troops were all placed in readiness to repel the expected German invasion. The 2nd Battalion was stationed around the Rye area and was tasked with patrolling the coast and observing for enemy troop landings. They also continued to strengthen and improve the defences along the shore by laying barbed wire and mines. Arthur died as a result of an accident, in which a mine exploded on Winchelsea beach and killed him and one other as well as injuring a number of other men.

The family still has the telegram that informed them of his death and is worded in such a way that displays no sympathy or real acknowledgement that the news was so tragic.

The telegram is dated 14th January and timed at 9.20p.m and reads:

"Avis 62 St Andrew's Road Burgess Hill. Regret your husband Number 6401084 Private Avis A Killed by a mine explosion this evening 14th January. Government will send deceased home. If you so wish and cannot afford expense but no other travelling expense will be allowed otherwise"

The Mid-Sussex Times reported Arthur's funeral was held in a Sussex Town (this was Rye) with Military Honours on 18th January 1941. The family have a photograph of Arthur's grave and within shot is another Commonwealth War

Grave also with the crest of The Royal Sussex Regiment engrave on it and is very likely to be the other man killed in this tragic accident.

2nd Lieutenant Alan BAGOT

Service Number: 232576

Age: 19

70th Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps

Killed by Enemy Action: 29th August 1942

Buried: St Andrew's Churchyard, Burgess Hill. Grave 193

Alan was born in Royal Tunbridge Wells on 12th May 1923 to Edward Bagot F.M.S and Ena Bagot.

Mr Bagot Senior had been Inspector General of the Malayan Police and he had been captured by the Japanese and was being held as a Prisoner of War at the time of Alan's death. His mother had escaped from the Japanese invasion and was living at the Franklands Park Hotel in Haywards Heath.

He spent his early childhood with his Grandmother at the Franklands Park attending Rottingdean Preparatory School. By the age of 17 he had also won a number of prizes in various sports at Hassocks.

He grew into a strong athletic young man standing over six feet in height. He went on to Marlborough College in January 1937 where he was in B2 House during his time there and being a keen sportsman he excelled at cricket, tennis, and golf. He had played for the College's First Cricket IX during the 1940/41 Season, which included an appearance at Lords.

Alan left the College in July 1941 and enlisted a little later that year being commissioned into the Army on 18th April 1942.

He joined the 70th Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps in early August. This battalion was the young soldiers' battalion for the regiment and was where those not old enough to take their place in the adult battalions were trained. During Alan's time the 70th Battalion was stationed in Mansgrove Road, Harrow.

In August 1942 Alan was enjoying a period of leave and was visiting his Mother. During this break he and two friends visited Brighton for a day out. While there an air raid began and all three took shelter in a house but unfortunately a piece of shrapnel from an exploding bomb mortally wounded Alan. He was taken to hospital but died shortly after.

In his Obituary published in the 1942 edition of the King's Royal Rifle Corps Chronicle his Commanding Officer wrote "*In the short time he was with us he was developing well and would have made an able young leader*". He had made a good start with the Battalion Cricket Team scoring 46. His Commanding Officer went on to say that his innings was "*in the very best style*".

The Reverend Tindale-Atkinson led the funeral at St. Andrew's Church with Officers of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, the Royal Marines and others attending.

Stoker First Class Stanley Thomas BEARD

Service Number: P/KX103383

Age: 22

HMS Stronghold, Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 2nd March 1942

Commemorated: Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 68 Column 2

Son of Mr George Edwin and Fanny Jane Beard of 107 Church Road, Burgess Hill.

Before the war Stanley had worked for the Anglo-American Oil Company in Burgess Hill.

The Japanese landings at Java went ahead with Batavia (Jakarta) falling on 1st March 1942.

As these landings progressed a strong Japanese naval force patrolled the Indian Ocean south of Java to stop the escape of allied shipping.

By this time HMS Stronghold, the first of the British ships to leave Tjilatjap, was on route to Freemantle escorting the Dutch vessel MV Zaandam, the depot ship Anking MMS-51 and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Francol in company with Her Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) Yarra.

When they sailed on the evening of the 1st March HMS Stronghold was giving anti-submarine protection to the MV Zaandam until midnight, after which the merchant ship was to proceed ahead independently for Freemantle. This was due to a fuel shortage on board HMS Stronghold that required her to reduce speed to a more economical 12 to 15 knots.

About nine o'clock next morning HMS Stronghold was sighted and shadowed for some time by an enemy aircraft. Just before 6 p.m. (a number of reports state she was engaged at 23.15) some 300 miles south of Java she was intercepted by the Japanese eight inch gunned cruiser Maya, and the destroyers Arashi and Nowaki, of Admiral Kondo's force. The two other cruisers of the force, Atago and Takao, were also present, but stood off at some distance, and did not take part in the following engagement.

Action was joined immediately and lasted for about an hour by when HMS Stronghold was on fire and badly battered by gunfire. With her Captain, Lieutenant-Commander Pretor-Pinney fatally wounded and a large number of crew killed and many injured lying on her decks she lay stopped and immobilised in the water.

Maya was some 3000 yards distant on HMS Stronghold's starboard bow and the enemy destroyers were now just 2,000 yards off the port beam. The order "Abandon ship" was given and a few minutes afterwards at about 7 p.m., HMS Stronghold blew up and sank.

The weather was clear with a heavy swell and soon after dawn on the next day, 3rd March, a small Dutch K.P.M. steamer, captured by the Japanese the previous day, picked up fifty survivors of Stronghold from two "Carley" floats. A short time later the cruiser Maya came along and prevented the steamer from rescuing any more survivors.

The rescued men were then transferred to the Maya where *"the treatment afforded us was exceptionally good by Japanese standards as we subsequently found out. We were given medical treatment for wounds and allowed on deck to have a smoke several times daily."*

Stanley was among seventy naval personnel killed in this action. A further five of the ship's company died in captivity. HMS Stronghold was an S Class Destroyer built on 6th May 1919 with a complement of ninety-eight (at the time of her sinking she may have been carrying other military personnel or civilian refugees making for more than 98 on board).

Flight Sergeant (Navigator) Arthur James BEDALE

Service Number: 924566

Age: 26

500 (County of Kent) Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 6th January 1943

Buried: Dely Ibrahim War Cemetery Algeria Plot 3 Row E Grave 7

Son of James Gregory and Winifred Hilda Bedale.

Married to Eileen Louise. They appear to have had children as a memorial notice in the Mid-Sussex Times for January 1945 mentions "*the children*" but I have yet to establish names and numbers.

500 Squadron was originally deployed as a Coastal Command squadron equipped with Avro Anson's being stationed at Detling from 13th August 1939.

In April 1941 they operated Bristol Blenheim IV's and moved to Bircham Newton with detachments being sent to Carew Cheriton and Limavady on 30th May 1941. In November they changed over to American Lockheed Hudson V's and moved to Stornoway on 22nd March 1942.

In August 1942 they moved to St Eval and from there to Gibraltar with a detachment based at Tafaraoui on the 5th November. It was here that in November / December 1942 the squadron provided Ship Reconnaissance Support for Operation Torch, the joint British and American North African Landings.

On 19th November the squadron moved to Blida with the detachment remaining at Tafaraoui. This was the last location of the squadron before Arthur lost his life.

Despite many inquiries and attempts I have been unable to make contact with any member of 500 (County of Kent) Squadron. Further study of Operational Record Books will be necessary to try and uncover more information on the squadron and circumstances leading up to Arthur's death.

The Blenheim was a three seat light bomber powered by two Bristol Mercury XV engines. She could achieve a top speed of two hundred and sixty six miles per hour and was armed with five .303 front firing machine guns and two in a power operated dorsal turret and two remote controlled in a nose mounting. She carried 1000lb of bombs internally with a further 320lb externally mounted.

The Blenheim is one of the unsung aircraft of the war seeing service from the first days of the campaign as well as taking part in the Battle of Britain. It was operated in a wide variety of roles by many allied air forces. One thousand nine hundred and thirty were built but only one surviving flying example survives today and this is privately operated out of Duxford Airfield. It flies regularly at summer air shows as a tribute to the Blenheim and her brave crews.

Lance Corporal Philip Clark BINGHAM

Service Number: 1696115

Age: 28

12th (Airborne) Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment

Killed in Action: 7th January 1945

Buried: Hotton War Cemetery - Belgium Row 1 Plot D Grave 10

Born on 28th May 1916 Philip was the eldest child and only son of Philip Charles and Dorothy Louise Bingham who along with their two daughters Fay and Vivienne lived at "Shallon" 108 Junction Road.

Mr Bingham senior had lived and worked in New York prior to his marriage where he followed his chosen career as an actor and appeared in a number of Shakespearean plays.

On returning to England he met Dorothy (nee Whiting) and they married sometime after the First World War. A little later Mr Bingham bought the Carfax cinema in Horsham in partnership with his brother, Harry. He then moved onto the Palladium at Littlehampton for three years running this on his own before moving to live in Hove on buying the Scala Cinema in Cyprus Road, Burgess Hill.

Philip was born in Horsham whilst his parents ran the Carfax and it is believed he was educated at Groombridge College, Littlehampton with further schooling in Hove. Further education was left aside as Philip began to be increasingly involved in the family business taking on much of the managerial role. The family later moved to Burgess Hill first living in Silverdale Road in a house called Seaton Carew before moving to Junction Road. Later when his father retired, Philip who was then in his early twenties, inherited the business.

In the years prior to and during the early part of the war the Mid-Sussex Times always carried a section on the cinemas in the local area and what films were showing. Alongside each cinema programme for the week was displayed the proprietor's name and thus Philip was very well known in Burgess Hill.

Philip was a keen photographer and had a strong interest in philosophy and contemporary literature. He also played regularly for the Burgess Hill local hockey team and was good friends with George Stollery (who is also remembered in this book). Philip often spent his evenings following the adventures of the Brighton Tigers Ice Hockey Team.

He is believed to have joined the Royal Artillery at the end of 1940 and completed his basic training in Northern Ireland.

Philip met his future wife, Mary Josephine in the early part of the war when as a teacher she came to Burgess Hill with a class of evacuees. This move to the town was part of the Government policy of moving schoolchildren from the London area to more rural areas to escape the Blitz. Mary was teaching children of Primary School age of about 8 to 10 years and at first she was billeted with a family but, along with another teacher, later rented a house in Junction Road.

Mr Bingham senior, who had been in poor health for a number of years died in 1941.

However, as an only son and a cinema owner Philip was granted compassionate leave to attend his father's funeral. Amongst the many mourners at St Andrews Church were representatives from the film industry including a Mr Clarence Lewis of MGM Studios.

It was not until the death of his Father and during his period of compassionate leave that Mary and he became close. Marrying in St Wilfrid's Church in 1943, with the wedding taking place as part of a 48 hour leave they had no opportunity to enjoy a honeymoon together. The birth of their son, Philip M Dominic, followed in early 1944. Mary's mother, who was widowed later in the War, also came to live in the town moving to a house in Mill Road.

Philip was then posted to a local territorial unit, the 70th (Sussex) Searchlight Regiment. This enabled him to oversee the Cinema, which was regarded by the authorities as being a significant contribution to both troop and home front morale.

The 70th were attached to 27th Anti-Aircraft Brigade based at Lingfield who came under command of the 6th Anti-Aircraft Division at Uxbridge. The division's role was to defend the skies in the London District with 27th AA Brigade responsible for the Eastern Counties. The 70th were headquartered at Brighton (believed to be Preston Barracks) and consisted of three batteries 459, 460 and 461. These batteries were based at Horsham, Haywards Heath as well as Brighton. Philip served with 461 Battery who are known to have manned gun emplacements in many areas including Southwater and Ditchling Common as well as Foulness in Essex for significant part of the blitz.

The family have a photograph of Philip taken at Ditchling Common with him operating a light or medium machine gun in an anti aircraft role. This is an interesting picture showing him looking handsome with his moustache in a situation that many film stars were to adopt in films for the public throughout the war years.

However, the constant toll of casualties and very real shortage of replacements from the many campaigns across the world led to Philip being recalled to front line duty and he volunteered, or was transferred, to the infantry and joined the 12th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment. The 12th Battalion became part of the British Army's highly trained elite glider borne infantry that were to be used in airborne landings in Normandy and later at Arnhem. With Philip's departure the running of the Cinema was taken over by women as part of the war effort.

In July 1943, the battalion came under the command of 6th Airlanding Brigade of the 6th Airborne Division at Bulford Camp, Wiltshire where it was to train for its new airborne role. In October it officially became part of the 6th Airlanding Brigade and the battalion adopted the Red Beret with the cap badge of the Dorsetshire Regiment and was granted the privilege of wearing the airborne and Pegasus flashes. Philip also played Rugby during his time with the services and injured an ankle.

On D-Day A Company landed in Normandy by glider with the rest of the battalion following by sea on D+1 (7th June). The Battalion saw action in the hard and costly fighting throughout the "breakout" period in Normandy through to the River Seine. Following the end of the Normandy Campaign in August the Battalion returned to England between 3rd and 7th September.

I have yet to research these actions to add a more detailed overview although I understand that Philip may not have been with the battalion during the Normandy Campaign.

From August to September the allies pushed on across Northern France and into Belgium - "the great swan". In September Operation Market Garden, the Arnhem and Oosterbeek tragedy unfolded. British, American and Polish airborne

troops landed deep in enemy territory to seize and capture the major bridges across the rivers leading up to and including the Rhine at Arnhem. British ground troops tried to push along a narrow road corridor to link up with the airborne troops. For a variety of reasons not to be explored here the operations failed and as winter arrived the Allies were on the brink of entering Hitler's Germany.

The winter of 1944 was one of the coldest in living memory with heavy snow falling until March and temperatures not rising above freezing for weeks. In December the Germans launched their last great ground offensive of the war, when at Christmas they made a surprise attack through the dense Ardennes forest, and pushed the allies back on a wide front. This, the Battle of the Bulge, centred on the American lines and involved thousands of US troops. British forces were involved to the north of the "Bulge" in assisting to hold and then push the German forces back. Germany's aim was to push through the American troops and sweep northwards behind the British and Canadians in an attempt to split the armies. Panic ensued with memories of 1940 being recalled as the Allies desperately tried to stop the German advance.

On 20th December the 6th Airborne Division received orders to move to Belgium with the advance party leaving for Tilbury Docks on the following day. The main body of the division moved from camps in Wiltshire and on Christmas Eve reached a transit camp at Ostend.

On Boxing Day the division was concentrated around the area of Dinant and Namur. The German advance had been halted and the Allies started to move to offensive actions increasingly involving their formidable air power as the weather cleared. On 29th December, the division was ordered to prepare to advance against the tip of the German salient. The Battalion saw bitter action around the villages of Tellin and Bure in freezing conditions of snow, ice and fog. Philip, who had just returned from a reconnaissance mission, was killed by the blast from enemy shellfire at the entrance to a dugout during these terrible battles.

He was buried at first in a local churchyard with two other fallen comrades before being reinterred in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Hotton. Both the battalion's Commanding Officer and a Belgian Parish Priest wrote to Mary to offer comfort and condolences.

The Mid-Sussex Times reporting Philip's death in late January 1945 mentions that he would be fondly remembered for his support for charity organisations in Burgess Hill.

Philip's sister Vivienne (married name Hamilton) was serving as a Leading Aircraftswomen in the Women's Auxiliary Airforce.

70th (Sussex) Searchlight Regiment was disbanded in September 1944.

After the war Mary and her sister (who had served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service – ATS) opened a dress shop in Station Road. It was called "Phillippe" in memory of her husband and traded between 1947 and 1949 when the family moved away to Bournemouth.

Lance Corporal Sidney Lawrence BOXALL

Service Number: T/6396656

Age: ?

3rd Divisional Ammunition Corps, Royal Army Service Corps

Died of Wounds: 28th May 1940

Buried: St James's Cemetery - Dover Row J Grave 41

Sidney was married to Marjorie and they had five children with the family home being at 141 West Street.

He had been employed for three years as a chauffeur to Mr and Mrs Ramsden of "Tagore" in Hassocks before being called up for service.

Prior to the war Sidney had been a member of the Territorial Army serving with the 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment for some nine years leading up to the War.

I have been unable to establish precise movements for Sidney and his unit during the time leading to his death and so I have given an overview of the situation that the Division he was attached to was in.

The 3rd Divisional Ammunition Corps was responsible for unpacking, loading, transporting and delivering all calibre's and types of ammunition to the fighting troops of 3rd Infantry Division who had moved to France on 9th September 1939.

Soon after 5.00 a.m. on 10th May 1940 the German armies began their invasion of France, Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg. By one o'clock that afternoon the 12th Queen's Royal Lancers crossed the Belgium frontier and advanced some sixty miles to the River Dyle. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions were close behind and moved into their new positions the next day.

By 14th May they were on the main front, with the 4th and 48th Divisions in support, in contact with the enemy.

During this period demands for petrol and ammunition were soon received with the 3rd Division requesting some two hundred rounds per gun for their three field regiments equipped with 25 pounder guns (some 36 per regiment) and the anti-tank regiment equipped with 2 pounder guns (some 48).

The German forces forced the French troops back and crossed the River Meuse on either side of the towns of Dinant and Sedan and continued to advance. This had the effect of threatening the security of the British right flank as the Germans looked to push up towards the coast and split the allied forces.

Although the British still firmly held the line along the River Dyle the 2nd Division had to be withdrawn to conform to the move the French units brought on by their withdrawal. The Germans continued to advance on 15th May on a front some fifty miles wide and it became imperative for the British forces to withdraw or risk being isolated. The same day the Dutch Government and with it their armed forces ceased resistance against the Germans.

The orders to withdraw to the River Escaut, and the first stage to the River Senne, came through on 16th May. The Escaut was to be reached by the 19th. In the days that followed every man who could handle a rifle and could be spared from his normal task was formed into small teams to take part in stopping the enemy's advance.

On 18th May advanced units of the 1st German Armoured Division reached the Canal du Nord and occupied Peronne, about twenty miles west of Amiens. The next day saw larger forces of enemy panzers arrive and the battle that took place on 19th was an unequal affair leaving the Germans in possession of Amiens and Doullens, the last rail link to the south at Abbeville.

Elements of the British forces attacked the Germans with some success on 21st but a further withdrawal was still required in order to shorten the front line and free troops on what was from herein a two fronted defence.

By 23rd May the British were back in their original defences, those they had left only thirteen days earlier. The new front was held by the 42nd, 1st and 3rd Divisions and the 2nd, 48th and later the 44th holding the southern flank. The 5th and 50th were quickly moved to plug a gap on the left of the BEF (British Expeditionary Force) due to the crumbling Belgian Army.

The next day a withdrawal to the coast and thus eventual evacuation was decided.

The Corps history records for the 3rd Divisional RASC *"During the withdrawal from the Dyle, everything went well, and I cannot recall any shortages (of supplies). When communications over the Somme were cut we were fortunately fairly well stocked up with two or three day's supplies and another three days stowed away in the supply column. We seemed to have pretty good stocks of petrol and ammunition as well. The only real grumble was the lack of bread, but we had a windfall in discovering a large stock of flour and an empty bakery. Our Quartermaster officer rose nobly to the occasion and at once screened the ranks of the Guards Brigade (7th Infantry Brigade consisting of 1st and 2nd Grenadier's, 1st Coldstream's and an anti-tank company) for guardsmen who had been bakers in civil life. Within a matter of hours a master baker and twenty bakers reported for duty, and we were able to provide for the whole division. All went well until we were back on the frontier, when things became more difficult, and in the withdrawal to the coast we lost the supply column – later to find it had been ordered to re-embark for home on 25th. But the division did not starve."*

The 3rd Division was evacuated through Dunkirk. Sidney died of wounds received after being machine gunned during the evacuation on 28th May. He was brought back to England and is buried in the Communal Cemetery at Dover just below the Castle.

Sidney's name appears in the Roll of Honour on page 662 of the Corps history, along side some 10,000 other men who gave their lives serving with the Royal Army Service Corps in all theatres, on all fronts in every year of the war.

***Warrant Officer Class II Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant
Percy A BROCKES***

Service Number: T/161610

Age: 52

Royal Army Service Corps

Died: 23rd December 1941

Buried: Witham (All Saints) Churchyard - Essex

Percy was the son of Mr Arthur and Mrs Alice Brockes and was born at Witham in Essex.

Married to Mary they lived with their daughter Sybil, at "Happilands", Burgess Hill.

It is very likely that Percy served with the Army during World War One.

Percy died following an operation at Bracebridge Military Hospital in Lincoln.

At his funeral, wreaths were received from the Manager and Staff at "BECS" and from a Mr Dray of Royal George Road.

I have been unable to make contact with any relations to expand RQMS Brockes tribute.

Second Officer Harry James BROWNINGS

Service Number: Not Applicable

Age: 28

SS Essex (London), Merchant Navy

Killed in Action: 16th January 1941

Commemorated: Tower Hill Memorial - London Panel 48

Harry was born in 1912 at Isleworth in Middlesex. He was the only son of the Edward James and Martha Brownings of Gwithian in Grove Road.

Harry went to school in Worthing and then went to sea in 1929 as a cadet and served with many ships during his peacetime career sailing. For much of his peacetime career, and probably during the war, he worked for the New Zealand Shipping Company.

It is likely that Harry rented accommodation or stayed with friends and relations on his leave periods away from the Merchant Navy. In June 1933 his address was given on his twelve-month driving licence, issued by the Motor Licence Office in Brighton, as 22 Waldegrave Road in Brighton. Another annual licence issued by County Hall in Lewes for the period 7th August 1935 to 6th August 1936 records his address as Peppers Farm in Burgess Hill.

On 8th October 1936 he set sail with the 17800 ton TSS Ruahine, under the command of Captain G Kinnell, leaving from London bound for Wellington and Lyttelton via the Panama Canal and Suva. The Ruahine was a refrigerated and passenger ship operated by the New Zealand Shipping Company.

When aged twenty-four Harry married Bertha (nee Norris) at the Congregational Church in Junction Road on 10th July 1937. They moved into their home at Gartree in Crescent Road where they had one son, Christopher, who was born just two weeks after his father's death on 30th January 1941.

After his wedding Harry, working again for the New Zealand Shipping Company, sailed with the RMS Rangitane on 11th November 1937, from London to Wellington and Lyttelton, via the Panama Canal, under the command of Captain A W McKellar R.D., R.N.R. (Ret'd).

They made the return journey to London leaving Auckland on 17th January 1938 again via the Panama Canal.

The Rangitane was one of three sister "Rangi" ships built for the London registered New Zealand Shipping Company - the others were the Rangitiki and Rangitata. Each was 16700 tons and could carry nearly six hundred passengers and had a complement of two hundred and was equipped with large cargo holds. All were built specifically for the England to New Zealand run.

A Rangi ship departed every four weeks for New Zealand making the journey in thirty-two days via the Panama Canal. The service ran regularly from 1929 until 1939, initially leaving from Plymouth but from the mid-1930's from the Blackwell Pier on the Thames where the New Zealand Shipping Company had their UK offices.

Then on 21st July 1938 he sailed again from London with the RMS Rangitane bound for Auckland, via the Panama Canal, under the command of Captain H.L Upton D.S.C., R.D., R.N.R.

It is likely that Harry also served aboard two ships called Devon and Dorset as they feature in his photographs although this has yet to be confirmed. It has also not yet been possible to identify the owners or routes of these ships.

On 20th September 1940 Harry was issued with his Master Mariners Certificate at Shoreham by Sea, which he had qualified for by examination on 9th September.

As yet the list of ships he served on during the war is not known, except for the final operation that was to cost him his life. This was with the 11063 tons SS Essex, which was a modern refrigerated ship owned by the New Zealand Shipping Company. The crews were often never briefed on their destinations until they had left port in order that security breaches could be kept to a minimum. However, large crates loaded onto the SS Essex were labelled "Transit Malta" and gave the crew an idea of their destination.

Malta was a key defensive point in the Mediterranean Sea and was under constant heavy attack from both German and Italian air forces. The routes from Gibraltar to Malta and onwards to the other allied held ports on the North African coast were essential to keeping allied troops supplied with ammunition, equipment, food and medicines and the convoy was part of the constant re-supply operation to Malta. As such the German and Italians attacked the constant flow of convoy ships and their naval escorts from air and sea along all stages of the journey and consequently losses in men, supplies and shipping was heavy.

The SS Essex sailed with from the United Kingdom to Gibraltar with three other merchant ships Clan Cumming, Clan MacDonald and the Empire Song, which was a twin propeller modern ship, under three months old, with a small naval escort.

At Gibraltar they were to become part of Operation Excess, which was made up of four simultaneous convoys that were given massive Royal Naval protection in the shape of Force H under the command of Vice-Admiral Sir James Somerville.

Such was the importance of these convoys, and the cargoes they carried that some of the Royal Navy's most important and famous ships were assigned to Force H. The force included the Battleships Malaya and Ramillies; the Battlecruiser Renown; the Aircraft Carrier Ark Royal and a further seven cruisers, fourteen destroyers and four corvettes. Air cover was also provided by the Royal Air Force when distances allowed.

The main responsibility for Force H was to escort the merchant ships from Gibraltar to Bizerta. SS Essex was due to leave the convoy at Malta, with the other three ships in this element of Operation Excess docking at Piraeus.

The four ships left Gibraltar on 6th January with the two "clans" and the Empire Song all carrying heavy tanks. The SS Essex, with a crew of sixty-seven merchantmen and three gunners from the Royal Artillery, was carrying 4000 tons of ammunition including torpedoes, 3000 tons of seed potatoes and twelve Hurricane fighter aircraft. The Hurricanes were essential to the defence of Malta and the incoming allied shipping and the RAF suffered heavy losses in planes and pilots and needed a constant supply of both.

The SS Essex made Gibraltar safely on the 10th January, docking in Valetta Harbour and started to unload her cargo before being readied for the return journey, probably with wounded later in January.

During her time at Malta the island, harbour and the SS Essex were under constant air attack and she was severely damaged by a bomb from a German dive-bomber in an air raid on the night of 16th/17th January 1941. The bomb smashed into the engine room and caused thirty-eight casualties of which seventeen were fatal. Sadly one of those was Harry.

Two days later the Clan Cumming was damaged in a torpedo raid by the Italian Submarine Neghelli although, in spite of this damage, she managed to limp into Piraeus.

The SS Essex was damaged by further enemy action on 8th March and whilst awaiting repairs was again bombed on 12th April 1942.

The family understands that Harry was buried at sea. After his death Bertha renamed their family home to Waikerie because it was the name of a favourite place of his that he had visited in Australia. Waikerie is situated on the Murray River near Adelaide.

Later, with the family also mourning the loss of Philip Norris, her parents asked her to come and live with them at their home, Millrise in Mill Road.

Edward Brownings had died on 23rd April 1936.

Christopher was to follow in his father's footsteps and joined the Merchant Navy. On 25th October 1976, by now a hovercraft pilot and instructor, he was killed by "gun-runners" whilst working in Alexandria. The final irony to this story is that Christopher's daughter was born a few weeks before he was killed.

John Brown & Company Limited of Clydebank in Scotland built the RMS (Royal Mail Ship) Rangitane in 1929. After the outbreak of war when London was within striking distance of German aircraft, departures for the England/New Zealand route were transferred to Liverpool.

She continued to operate on this route during the war ferrying cargo, troops and other war materials.

On one journey in late 1940 she was intercepted and sunk by the German surface raiders Orion, Komet and Kulmerland, some three hundred miles off the coast of New Zealand on 27th November. Of the three hundred and fourteen aboard sixteen were killed with eighty-four being transported to Germany for internment. Other survivors were put ashore on the small island of Emirau and were rescued by the Royal Australian Navy.

The Ruahine continued in service until 1949.

The combined losses of the New Zealand Shipping Company and Federal Steam Navigation Company in the Second World War amounted to nineteen ships totalling some 195000 tons.

Chief Officer Alfred John DeBAUGHN

Service Number: Not Applicable

Age: 32

SS Empire Lytton (Middlesbrough), Merchant Navy

Killed in Action: 9th January 1943

Buried: Tower Hill Memorial - London Panel 43

Second son of Alfred Percy and Ethel De Baughn.

Mr de Baughn Senior was Headmaster of Junction Road School.

Alfred was married to Winifred Gertrude, who originated from Canterbury, and they made their home in Whitstable. He followed in his Father's footsteps and became a teacher.

At some stage Alfred volunteered for the Merchant Navy. As a merchant sailor Alfred was involved in shipping much needed ammunition, foods, medicines and other supplies to the British mainland and its troops around the world. As yet I have been unable to find out what other ships he served on apart from the SS Empire Lytton.

His last convoy was code-named TM1, which was a 10-knot flotilla sailing from Trinidad direct for Gibraltar and the Operation Torch battle zone (the joint British American invasion of north west Africa) under a light escort.

Southwest of the Canary Islands and out of reach of allied air cover the convoy was attacked by a U-boat Pack. Seven out of the nine tankers in convoy TM-1 were sunk, including valuable supplies of high-octane fuel being lost.

Documents and books suggest that there is a possibility that enemy agents in Trinidad advised the Germans of the convoy and its planned route.

U-514 on passage to the Caribbean sighted the tankers on the 3rd January 1943. After sinking the ship British Vigilance by torpedo she passed through the convoy on the surface and was fired on by several of the tankers (most had some form of gun for protection).

Otenia II exploded and sank on 8th January after being torpedoed by U-436 and the Norwegian ship Albert L. Ellsworth also met the same fate from this submarine.

Then followed the sinking, by U-522, of the Norwegian Minster Wedel and the Panamanian registered Norvik.

Alfred's ship the Empire Lytton was torpedoed by U-444 and subsequently sunk after two further assaults from U442, which was commanded by Hans Joachim Hesse. As late as 11th January, eight days after being sighted, the convoy lost the British Dominion to U-522 with three torpedoes hitting her although it took a further attack by U-622 to sink her in a final coup de grace.

Along with Alfred the loss of lives on Convoy TM1 was very heavy.

The family later moved to Brighton. Alfred had a brother, Norman who served in the Army. There was also a sister who became a teacher and later married and had children. Albert may have been known to the family as Jack.

Private Edward BUCKMAN

Service Number: 6396521

Age: 36

2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action: 26th May 1940

Buried: Hazebrouck Communal Cemetery Plot 4 Row C Grave 4

Son of Mr John and Mrs Esther Buckman.

Mr Buckman senior was a farm hand working firstly at Ditchling Court Farm and then at Gallops Homestead in Streat. In 1931 the family moved to Clayton where Mr Buckman went to work for a Mr Vincent.

Ted, as the family knew him, had four brothers. Samuel was the eldest followed by Ted and then twins George and Alfred. There were two sisters, Mary and Violet.

Samuel had seen service in World War One when, aged only sixteen, he changed his date of birth to make him eighteen and joined The Royal Sussex Regiment. He was eventually "discovered" and was posted to Wales until old enough to go back to the front.

Ted attended Streat School and on leaving he became a Pig Boy working with his Father.

In 1928 or 1929 Ted joined the Army to become a regular soldier where he served for some seven years with The Royal Sussex Regiment. He left the Colours and became a reservist in summer 1936 (probably June).

During his time with the Regiment he served with the 2nd Battalion in India at Rawalpindi, Landi Kotal and Karachi before moving to the Middle East in late 1935. Whilst in Karachi in 1935 the Battalion helped the survivors of the Quetta Earthquake which had killed some 40,000 people. They were also asked by the local authorities to assist with the putting down of a riot that had broken out between rival Hindi and Mohammedan factions. The Battalion then moved the Middle East to act as the Garrison for Port Sudan. They returned home to Devonport at the end of 1936.

Leaving the Army Ted started worked for East Sussex County Council as a member of the Road Maintenance Gang.

On 26th November 1938 he married Kathleen Alice (familiarily known as Leane) and they moved to Yew Tree Cottages in Mill Road.

As War began to look imminent in the summer of 1939 Ted was called back to the Regiment in August and it is likely that he joined them in Belfast where they were then stationed. In late April 1940 the 2nd Battalion was sent to France as part the 44th (Home Counties) Division to bolster the British Expeditionary Force as it looked increasingly likely that Germany would strike at the Allies.

On the 20th May the Germans invaded the Low Countries and started their unstoppable advance towards Dunkirk and Paris. At the outset the British troops advanced into Belgium to hold a number of defensive lines. However, with the Belgian and French Armies soon retreating they withdrew to protect their flanks. Once the Dutch Government ceased hostilities the situation for the British

became desperate as the German Army moved westwards with the aim of striking North to cut the British and French in two.

On the 26th May the 2nd Battalion was ordered to move to Grand St Boie, near Hazebrouck, to relieve 1st Battalion, The Royal West Kent Regiment on the day Edward was killed.

These actions helped the British and their French allies to make their way to the seaports and eventual evacuation.

For the Second World War the family again made a big contribution although Alfred suffered from poor eyesight and missed active service. George served in Italy with a regiment of the Fusiliers and Violet helped the war effort by serving in the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service).

Private John Louis BURT

Service Number: 14622971

Age: 19

2nd Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps

Killed in Action: 31st August 1944

Buried: Forges-Les-Eaux Communal Cemetery, France Military Plot
Grave 46

Son of Richard H and Dora Burt of 3 Jubilee Cottages, St. Mary's Road.

Johnnie, as friends and family knew him, also had a brother, James, and a sister Mary.

Mr Burt senior had seen service in The Great War when at the age of eighteen and a half he went abroad to France to serve with the King's Royal Rifle Corps

Johnnie went to school at London Road and after leaving he went to work as a gardener for Mr A.H. Williams of London Road.

He had been a keen and popular member of The Mid-Sussex Amateur Boxing Club and was a regular competitor in bouts and competitions. His fights with local lads, Johnnie Bett and Des Seal, were well known to people and often reported on in the Mid Sussex Times. At a competition held at the Cricketers Inn in Fairfield Road on 17th April 1940 Johnnie lost a tie to Desmond Seal, who went on to win his class. The competitions were always hard fought and many guest boxers, who had been evacuated from London, represented local clubs.

As soon as he was able he volunteered for service in his Father's old regiment The King's Royal Rifle Corps and he may have been trained in the 70th Battalion, a young soldiers' battalion of the Regiment, before being posted to the 2nd Battalion.

Johnnie landed in France with the 2nd Battalion on 9th June, three days after D-Day, where they served as part of 4th Armoured Brigade. As it was an armoured brigade and was used as a motorised battalion (mechanised infantry) its companies normally operated under the command of the particular armoured regiment that it supported.

Sadly the regimental history published in 1949 states on page 244, with a footnote on page 245, that there was no account available of the battalion in France between landing and 14th August. The report for the period 9th June to 25th August was not received as Major C W Morris was killed in action during July and it seems, perhaps unsurprisingly with the constant battles and casualties, that a replacement was not detailed to record the events. However, it is without doubt that the 2nd Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps played an active part in the many tough actions of the Normandy Campaign and Johnnie would have been involved in these.

In late August the 2nd Battalion was operating deep in France and with the 44th Royal Tank Regiment were ordered to clear up any remaining Germans held within the Falaise Pocket.

This pocket had been the focal point of allied attention as German forces, pushed on three sides by British, Canadian, Polish and American troops, looked to Falaise as a gap by where they could escape. The German forces were harried all the

way by ground troops and allied aircraft, especially the rocket firing Hawker Typhoons, and whilst some escaped many remained in the pocket. The Falaise Gap became a major point in the liberation of Northwest Europe as the Germans lost thousands of men and almost all their arms and equipment.

It was not until the afternoon of 21st August that the orders authorising their advance into the pocket to clear all resistance and take prisoners came through. Three of the companies in the battalion were affiliated to a Squadron of the 44th RTR, with a very muddy track as their axis of attack with a number of villages being given as objectives.

The rain was appalling which saw some of the tanks even being bogged down and the infantrymen's lorries and half-tracks being even more affected. They soon arrived within the "killing ground" where for ten days the air force and artillery had taken a deadly toll on the Germans in an ever-decreasing area of ground. The Seventh and Panzer Armies had effectively been annihilated, and the regimental history mentions that they had heard the claims by the RAF and had viewed them with their "usual" cynicism expecting to see a few lorries and wagons knocked out. It goes on to say *"The sight that met us was indescribable. The whole country was packed with destroyed and abandoned transport, wagons and equipment. Hundreds and hundreds of them were piled high on the tracks, in the fields, everywhere; dead Germans in their thousands lay about; and worse than anything were the dead horses. There were thousands of them, and bits of them, all over the area, stinking to high heaven. Many of us had seen most of the bloodiest battles of this war, in Europe and North Africa, but no one had seen anything to compare with this chaos, this filth, this bloody destruction, and, above all, this stench"*.

The Germans put up very little resistance and the 2nd Battalion received thousands of demoralised soldiers who were guarded and led away to captivity as prisoners of war. The men looked as if they were hardly living having survived ten days of indescribable terror and the power of modern war.

At around midday on 22nd the battalion linked up with American ground forces.

The regimental history again *"We were in this horror for twenty four hours, an experience that few of us wish to have again: the Battalion was then pulled back to breathe fresh air for another twenty four hours before advancing to the east"*.

After the 25th the Battalion moved through the Falaise pocket area again, advancing only ten miles, because of the wreckage. The following few days were a much more pleasurable experience. Out of the pocket they moved into a part of France that was untouched by the war. The weather remained fine and warm and the French people willingly sold fresh produce to the troops. Eggs and meat were enjoyed and they were given large amounts of fruits and wines as they passed through small country villages.

On 28th August the Battalion moved on up to the River Seine and with all companies under command together they harboured around the small village of Ailly, Southeast of Louviers, where they were told to rest for at least two days. Owing to petrol supply problems (due to the need to still transport these by road in trucks from the Mulberry Harbour in Normandy) 4th Armoured Brigade, which was part of XII Corps whose main role was to protect the advancing XXX Corps, could not immediately move.

The 43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division made an almost unopposed crossing of the River Seine at Vernon and secured the eastern side. On the 30th August the

Battalion then crossed the Seine, at a point some 600 feet wide, by Bailey bridge that evening just opposite Louviers where they concentrated on the eastern bank with the rest of 4th Armoured Brigade.

The main responsibility for the British forces was now to advance to the Pas-de-Calais securing the seaports and eliminating the launch sites of the V1 Flying Bomb (Doodlebug) and V2 Rocket which were causing much damage and many casualties in England.

4th Armoured Brigade were tasked with advancing to the town of Gournay, a major road and rail centre, and then on to Amiens, the most important road and rail junction Northern France.

As dawn broke on 31st August the battalion's A Company advanced with the 3rd/4th County of London Yeomanry (a armoured regiment) and met some German resistance although this was brushed aside or bypassed and a considerable advance was made that day. Just short of Gournay, A Company's carriers led their armour through a thick wood. They met a German self-propelled gun just being pulled out of the area. Using their heavy machine guns they captured the gun and killed or took prisoner most of the crew. They captured Gournay that evening and received a hearty welcome from the local inhabitants.

Meanwhile Johnnie's C Company and the tanks of the Scots Greys ran into German resistance during the day at the town of Grumesnil. Number 12 Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Sandy Stow, with a troop of three tanks, suffered casualties in trying to take the village from the south-west. However, Number 10 Platoon, commanded by Lieutenant Dean, infiltrated in from the south-east and cleared the village, killing several Germans and taking about twenty prisoners. Later in the evening Number 10 Platoon entered another village and, covered by the Scots Greys tanks, collected between eighty and one hundred prisoners helped by the light of the burning buildings.

The Regimental Museum believes this action to be the one in which Private Johnnie Burt was killed although it is unclear which Platoon he belonged to.

A letter from his Company Commander, Major R.L Gibbs to the family stated that a bullet had killed Johnnie. He had been taking part in an attack on a pocket of German infantry who had earlier knocked out an allied tank. Johnnie was buried alongside a friend from the same platoon who was also killed in this action. The local French people had made two crosses and covered the Graves with flowers and had the Church ring its bells in the morning as a mark of respect. A letter received from one of Johnnie's friends mentioned that he was buried at the foot of a huge Crucifix in the town cemetery and said that he was given the funeral deserved of soldiers who died in action.

The 2nd Battalion fought gallantly throughout the war in Europe finishing their active service by liberating Denmark. The battalions of the Kings' Royal Rifle Corps saw service and action in every major theatre of the war from the first to the last day. Total casualties amounted to 164 officers and 1,026 other ranks killed, over 5000 wounded with a further 2,030 taken prisoner.

During the Second World War Johnnie's father served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps with Brother James serving in the Army Catering Corps

Footnotes: Major Roland Gibbs became Field Marshal Sir Roland Gibbs, G.C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Chief of the General Staff 1976-77.

Major William Deedes, the co-author of the regimental history, was to become a Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister as well as being an outstanding journalist and editor of the Daily Telegraph.

Sapper William Thomas BURT

Service Number: 2161360

Age: 35

935 Port Construction and Repair Company, Royal Engineers

Killed in Action: 10th June 1944

Buried: Bayeux War Cemetery Plot 10 Row J Grave 4

Thomas was the son of Thomas A and Winnie Burt of 24 Norman Road. There were two sisters, Dorrie and Winnie.

He had been educated at London Road School and was then employed as a Carpenter and Joiner (as was his Father) on leaving. Much of his employment had been on local farms with his final employer being Messrs Stenning Siddall & Co of Ditchling.

On marrying Elsie (nee Harbour) in 1933 they moved to South View Road in Ditchling where their son Richard was born.

Elsie died in early 1942 and Tommy and Richard moved in with his wife's sister, Mrs Ayling, at 3 Parklands Road, Hassocks. In July of that year Tommy was called up for service in the Royal Engineers who no doubt were to make use of his carpentry and joinery skills.

Tommy would have undergone standard infantry training, as all new recruits to the Army do, and from there he would have been posted to a Royal Engineer Unit. He may have been posted straight to 935 Port Construction and Repair Unit or joined them nearer to D-Day. Certainly he would have been engaged in secret training for the positioning of the Mulberry Harbour although he is unlikely to have known its full purpose.

A letter from Tommy's Commanding Officer to his sister-in-law stated he had been engaged with a number of other men on a very important and special task key to the Second Front Landings (Normandy). In spite of the stormy weather the men continued to work to safeguard the men who had already landed. As a result of the weather one of the "special units" the Royal Engineers were placing in position capsized and a number of men were drowned including Sapper Burt. Service friends and the Ships Company (unknown) who were assisting in the operation held a collection for his son, Richard, in order to buy the orphaned boy Savings Certificates.

The Royal Engineers Museum confirmed that 935 Port Construction and Repair Company were part of Number 1 Port Construction and Repair Group, which was responsible for the building of the Mulberry B at Arromanches. 935 PCRC itself was responsible for the Phoenix Caissons while under tow across the Channel and for sinking them in position to form part of the breakwater for the harbour.

Four of these were sunk before being able to be deployed, two by enemy action and two as a result of the bad weather. On 10th June the Phoenixes were being sunk in position along with another breakwater (known as Gooseberries) which was made up of scuttled merchant ships.

The Mulberry Harbour was an amazing feat of British engineering and ingenuity proving key to the success of the Normandy invasion. It remained in service far longer than envisaged helping to supply allied forces throughout north-west Europe until the port of Antwerp was taken later that year.

The Harbour: In 1943 Professor J.D Bernal came forward with an idea of constructing a floating barrier to act as a harbour. Brigadier Bruce White drew up the final designs for the Mulberry Harbours expanding on the original idea with each Harbour being constructed mainly of Phoenix Caissons.

These caissons were in essence floating reinforced concrete blocks and were some 60 metres long by 18 metres high with a width of 15 metres. They were joined together to form two separate harbours on D-Day stretching some nine and half Kilometres in length (the second harbour was laid off Utah Beach but destroyed by a storm on 20th / 21st June 1944).

To anchor these harbours into position it was necessary to sink fifty-nine merchant ships to guard against the harbours being broken up in rough weather. For the construction of the concrete cassions alone some twenty thousand workers were mobilised and many thousands more were involved for the other parts that made up the complete harbour although few, if any, knew what they were helping to build. It is estimated that 600,000 tons of cement and 75,000 tons of steel were used up. The construction took place adjacent to waterways and the construction workers were working at tremendous heights and over water for long hours.

On D-Day, after the initial landings succeeded, the first block-ships were sunk, and then other parts followed including two hundred and ten towed floating breakwaters, piers and huge cassions, weighing in all nearly a million tons.

Port parties - specially trained sailors or Royal Engineers - cleared mines and cut ramps on the beaches ready to receive the shore ends of the piers (these can still be seen). Detachments of Royal Marines stood by to guard the piers and by D-Day plus 12 (18th June) the essential operations were complete with one pier hundreds of metres long with several pierheads completed thus allowing coasters to be unloaded during any tide condition.

These main sections, the huge concrete cassions contained quarters for their crews as well as anti-aircraft defences and empty tanks which when on station were flooded and allowed the cassion to settle. A total of one hundred and forty six caissons were sunk and it took around twenty-two minutes for the sixty largest to be sunk.

The piers consisted of a single steel roadway on steel girders similar in many respects to an ordinary bridge. The design allowed the heaving and twisting of the seas to be withstood, and each span was supported on special floats of varying construction, the sections of the pier were joined together by flexible joints. No length of pier was lifted but for towing into place lengths up to four hundred and eighty feet were joined up. Each pier-head was a ship complete with generators, crew and essential equipment. Others were rigged to accept landing craft onto a false beach, upon which the landing craft could unload their cargoes.

The remains of the Mulberry Harbour can still be seen off the beach at Arromanches. The Museum, which is on the beach at Arromanches, is well worth a visit has a model built and presented by the Construction Company Laing showing how it looked in 1944. The remains of the harbour and the model are lasting tributes to the work of Tommy and those men who died building it and now lie in the beautifully kept cemetery at nearby Bayeux.

Aircraftsman 2nd Class Frederick Richard CADEY

Service Number: 2245611

Age: 28

6329 SE, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Died: 31st October 1944

Buried: St John's Churchyard Extension (St Edward's) Burgess Hill
Sect B Grave 543

Son of the late Mr Richard and Mrs Laura Cadey of "Telscombe", Leylands Road.

Frederick married Olive (nee Gillham) of London in August 1943.

Before the war he worked as a chauffeur and crane driver at Sheffield Park and he joined the Royal Air Force in 1943. It is possible that he and Olive lived at Patcham although she may have moved there after the war.

He was serving in France when he was operated on for a lump on the head. He was evacuated and hospitalised in the UK. From hospital he went home when it was deemed there would be no hope for his recovery as his condition deteriorated.

I have been unable to locate any family member or unearth information on his unit 6329 SE.

Frederick's younger brother Arthur Richard Cadey served as a Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment and was a Prisoner of War after Dunkirk. Arthur was 26 when released from captivity in 1945 and arrived home in January. He had joined up in 1939 and was captured by German Paratroopers in Belgium. He was forced to march for three days with food only being provided by civilians at the roadside; from there he endured a three day journey in a cattle truck to Thorn in Poland where he was interned. During the close of the War he remembers hearing the Russian guns as they attacked from the east. Arthur was eventually moved to another camp and was liberated by American troops. For a time he survived on mangles and other vegetables that they could infrequently take from the frozen fields. Arthur and his comrades suffered terrible hunger and frostbite from the very cold weather.

Frederick now lies with two other Commonwealth War Graves burials in Burgess Hill's St Edward's Churchyard.

Sergeant William Paul CHVALA

Service Number: B46

Age:?

1st Armd Car Regt, Royal Canadian Dragoons, Royal Canadian Armoured Corps

Killed in Action: 6th December 1944

Buried: Gradara War Cemetery, Italy. Plot 1 Row H Grave 68

Son of Mrs S Chvala from North Battleford in Saskatchewan, Canada

Paul was the Fiancé of Molly Scrase of "Dorney" in Janes Lane.

The 1st Armoured Car Regiment (Royal Canadian Dragoons) Armoured Regiment served as part of 5th Canadian Armoured Division and later in 1st Canadian Corps, during the Sicilian and Italian campaigns of 1943 – 1945 before being sent to reinforce Canadian troops in Northwest Europe in 1945.

The Regiment was placed on active service on 1st September 1939. After many changes to its formation and organisation the regiment was finally designated the 1st Armoured Car Regiment (Royal Canadian Dragoons) on 11th February 1941. On 13th November 1941 it embarked for the United Kingdom as part of 5th Canadian Armoured Division. In January 1942 the Regiment became the armoured car regiment of 1st Canadian Corps. It landed in Sicily on 22nd October 1943 and in Italy on 5th January 1944.

In July 1944 it became the reconnaissance regiment of 1st Canadian Infantry Division.

In March 1945 it moved to Northwest Europe and resumed its role as the armoured car regiment of 1st Canadian Corps.

Despite letters to local papers and the North Battleford Telegraph in Saskatchewan I have been unable to make contact with either the Chvala or Scrase families. It is believed that Molly married a Mr Leppard and later moved to the Somerset area.

Leading Aircraftman 1st Class Walter William John CLAMP

Service Number: 1287373

Age: 43

909 Balloon Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Died: 1st February 1943

Buried: Christ Church Esher Churchyard Surrey

Son of William and Emily Clamp of 5 Manor Cottages, Manor Road, Burgess Hill.
There were at least three sons from the marriage.

Walter was married to May and they had a 12-year-old son.

In World War One Walter had served in the Merchant Navy, joining at the age of 17.

During World War Two the Clamp's had two other sons serving in the forces - Driver E R (possibly Royal Army Service Corps) and Ronald, who was a Sergeant, with the Royal Corps of Signals in the Middle East.

Walter was most likely called up for service and posted to the Royal Air Force Balloon Command due to his age.

Re-named from N^o 30 Balloon Group on 1st November 1938, Balloon Command was strengthened by a further three Groups under the command of Air Vice Marshal O T Boyd. The number of squadrons in each group varied from 8 to 16, with each squadron operating between 16 to 45 balloons. Balloon squadrons were numbered from 900 to 999.

Barrage Balloons were a passive form of defence designed to force enemy raiders to fly higher and thus bomb much less accurately. In July 1937 the siting of a barrage was started in London, and on 21st September 1938 it was ordered that this protection was to be extended to certain provincial towns and cities, those initially chosen being Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Liverpool, Hull, Newcastle upon Tyne, Plymouth, Southampton, Glasgow, and Cardiff.

The provincial barrages in each district were to be organised into Auxiliary Air Force Balloon Squadrons comprising twenty-four balloons each. The squadrons further being sub-divided into three flights of eight balloons each and these units were to be administered by the local Territorial Association (sic). In each locality depots were to be formed to administer and provide peacetime head quarters for the balloon squadrons, and to be responsible for the assembly and testing of balloons and the training of balloon crews in time of war.

On 1st November 1938 a separate Balloon Command under the operational control of Fighter Command was formed. Its purpose being to take responsibility for the control and administration of the whole U.K. barrage comprising N^o.1 Balloon Training Unit at Cardington in Bedfordshire, the London Balloon Barrage Group, the Midlands Group, the Northern Group, and the Western Group and in South Wales.

The standard barrage balloon used throughout the war was designated the LZ (Low Zone) and was over sixty-two feet long and twenty-five feet in diameter at its widest part and was filled with over 19,000 cubic feet of hydrogen.

The LZ balloon was flown from a mobile winch and was designed for a maximum flying altitude of 5000 feet. The winch speed limited the raising and hauling down speed to about 400 feet per minute, which meant that the balloons required 11 minutes to reach 5000 feet. When an aircraft struck the cable of a LZ balloon armed with a Double Parachute Link, the cable was severed at the top and bottom by two cutting links. The aircraft thus carried away the main portion of the cable and an eight-foot diameter parachute opened at each end of the wire. Together the parachutes exerted a drag about six times as great as the engine thrust of a bomber, sufficient to stop it almost dead in its tracks, causing the victim to fall out of the sky and crash. As the cable parted from the balloon, a wire ripped off a patch which allowed the hydrogen to escape, causing the balloon to descend slowly to the ground.

In total the Command operated approximately 1,400 balloons by July 1940, of which 450 were stationed in the London area. This number was increased to 2,748 (all theatres), by September 1941. All were mobile units with the balloons mounted on lorries or, in coastal areas, on ships.

Walter had undergone an operation at Woodford in Essex but complications arose and he subsequently died.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show he is buried north of the tower near a shed

Flying Officer (Navigator) Michael Terence CLARKE D.F.C

Service Number: 151151

Age: 22

617 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 16th April 1945

Buried: Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery Poland Collective Grave B 1-5

Son of Doctor James Kilian and Mrs Evelyn Muriel Clarke of Farnham Surrey. Michael was of Irish parentage and was possibly born in Ireland before being educated at Lancing College.

He had for a short time been a Preparatory School Master at Edinburgh House that was evacuated from Lee on Solent to Wellington in Somerset to avoid the blitz on the docks.

Whilst in civilian life he had joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and in 1941 he enlisted for service. I am unsure of his service prior to his undertaking aircrew training that was carried out in Canada from September 1942 to March 1943 where he was commissioned from the ranks in January 1943.

Michael was at some stage posted to 57 Squadron as a Navigator and completed some or possibly all his 34 operational flights with this squadron. Until I am able to confirm the raids Michael undertook the following gives an outline of the work 57 Squadron undertook until his rest period and subsequent transfer to 617 Squadron.

57 Squadron were equipped with Lancaster I and III's based at Scampton until 29th August 1943 when they moved to East Kirkby in Lincolnshire.

The Battle of the Ruhr began on 5th March and 57 Squadron were fully engaged from the outset as is demonstrated by them flying a total of 102 sorties during March.

As welcome relief from the campaign came in April when the Squadron supplied twelve aircraft for a flypast over Lincoln for the "Wings for Victory" Parade (a National Savings event) with other squadron members marching past town dignitaries. They also completed a similar parade later in the month at Cheltenham.

Attacks on the Ruhr continued and the Squadron attacked Spezia in Italy on four occasions in April. Despite the public relations duties the Squadron flew 155 sorties at a cost of six full crews (forty eight men).

In May they attacked the Skoda factory in Czechoslovakia as well as targets in Dortmund and Wuppertal. 57 Squadron were also pioneers in "shuttle raids" attacking targets such as Friedrichshafen in Germany from their base in England and flying through to Maison Blanche in North Africa. The crews were even issued with pith helmets and khaki uniforms!

More raids on Germany followed in June and July with their final operation in the four-month Battle of the Ruhr being Cologne on 8th July. Later in July they again attacked targets in Italy and on the night of the 24th / 25th July they attacked Hamburg being one of the first squadrons to drop "window" (metalised paper strips that confuse enemy radar).

Raids in August included attacks on Milan and Monchengladbach in Germany. On 17th August they took part in the raids on the Peenemunde rocket research establishment. The raid was a success and delayed the advent of the V1 Flying Bombs and V2 Rockets by a number of months.

57 Squadron was again busy during September and October with raids on Mannheim, Hanover and the dreaded Berlin. In December the Squadron raided Berlin again, Leipzig and Düsseldorf with their final raid of 1943 being yet another to the strongly defended Berlin on New Year's Eve.

Technical developments kept apace with the new H2S radar system being fitted to the squadron's Lancaster's. The Squadron was also called upon during January to evaluate a new piece of equipment called "Fishpond" that swept for enemy fighters in the aircraft's blind spot underneath.

The New Year started as busy as the last with attacks on Stettin, Magdeburg, Leipzig, Stuttgart and a further two raids on Berlin.

Nº 57 was called upon to support the first wave of pathfinder aircraft when Stuttgart was raided on the night of 26th / 27th February. Stuttgart was attacked twice also in March.

The first two months of 1944 had seen 57 and 630 (with whom 57 shared East Kirkby with) lose 15 Lancaster aircraft, most on the Berlin raids. The sixteenth raid on Berlin since November 1943 by 57 and 630 took place on 24th / 25th March and it cost them five crews making the total losses for the Berlin raids alone thirty four aircraft (crews consisted of eight men). The final raid of March saw 57 attack Nuremberg where Bomber Command that night lost ninety-four bombers with a further twelve crash landing. The survivors were to see many empty chairs and beds in the messes on their return home.

A change in tactics in preparation for the allied invasion of Europe led 57 Squadron to attack railway yards in Germany and France. They also had an eleven-hour slog to Munich and back and carried out further raids on Brunswick and the heavily defended Schweinfurt ball bearing factory in April.

At the beginning of May 57 Squadron were part of a formation that attacked some 20,000 troops of the German 21st Panzer Division who were stationed at Mailly-le-Camp near Paris. Further attacks on Amiens and Brunswick were completed and mine laying was carried out during the month around Denmark. The night of 24th / 25th May led to an attack on the Ford and General Motors works in Antwerp and a couple of nights later they attacked large German Coastal Defence guns above the cliffs at St Valery-en-Caux. May saw 57 and 630 Squadron's carry out 260 sorties at a cost of nine aircraft.

The first three nights of June were busy as they attacked the Saumur railway tunnel, a radio station at Ferme d'Urville and gun emplacements at Maisy just prior to D-Day going ahead on 6th June.

The crews were kept in the dark about D-Day's location and timing like all others but Nº 57 did play their part by attacking heavy German guns on the hilltop at La Pernelle on the Cherbourg peninsular. The night of the 7th / 8th June they again attacked the 21st Panzer Division who were a very serious threat to the success of the landings and on the night of the 14th June they attacked German transport and tanks in Aunay-sur-Odon. Although some crews were ordered home with full bomb loads the raid was a tragic error as the town was inevitably destroyed and there was no military target there.

With no respite 57 Squadron were tasked with the destruction of a synthetic oil plant at Wesseling near Cologne and although the attack was successfully carried out they lost six of their eighteen crews.

Two raids at the beginning of July were carried out against the caves at St Lue d'Esserant overlooking the River Oise that housed stores for Hitler's V Weapons. With the Allied advance stalled around Caen the Squadron was part of a force that raided bridges in the area and on strong points located within a steel works. Further raids followed in July for Thiverny, Courtrai and Kiel with another raid on Stuttgart on the night of 24th July followed by attacks on the U-boat pens at St Nazaire.

With Operation Dragoon, the allied landings in the south of France planned for August they attacked the railway junction at Givors in late July as these raids saw the onset of more daylight operations for the Squadron. July ended even busier than June was in which N° 57 flew 200 sorties for the loss of ten aircraft.

In August they operated against V-weapon sites at Siracourt, Trossey St Maximin, St Leu d'Esserant and l'Ile Adam as well as other targets at Sequeville, Chatellerault and a night raid on Stettin. Further support was given to the operations in the south of France with the bombing of oil storage tanks and Bordeaux and enemy shipping in Brest Harbour. A further two raids on Stettin and the port of Königsberg, which was vital to German forces fighting Russian troops on the Eastern Front.

September and October continued in the same vein with further attacks on the German heartland in support of the Allies on both fronts including Bremerhaven, Stuttgart, Monchengladbach and Karlsruhe.

December opened with a raid on the 4th / 5th over Heilbron with an attack on Giessen followed by three "dam busting" raids on Urftdam. The Squadron lost more aircraft over Munich and then had long haul raids to the east over Gdynia and Politz.

At the start of 1945 Michael was reported by the Mid-Sussex Times as working as a RAF instructor in Bury before volunteering to return to active duty. (There is some concern over the accuracy of this information, as Robert Owen the Official Historian for 617 Squadron advises there was no known RAF unit located at Bury and no airfield exists. There is a slim possibility that it may be a ground school).

The two squadrons that were part of Michael's life already had close links as five complete crews transferred from 57 Squadron to the newly formed 617 Squadron on 21st March 1943 for the Dams Raid. Two of those crews - under Squadron Leader Melvyn Young D.F.C.*, and Flight Lieutenant Bill Astell D.F.C., lost their lives in that famous raid.

Michael was posted to 617 Squadron at Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire from N°5 Finishing School, Syreston in Nottinghamshire on 3rd April 1945. This finishing school was a unit that took complete crews of Halifax or Stirling Bombers and gave them intensive conversion training to Lancaster's. I suspect that with his vast experience on Lancaster bombers that Michael was training these crews and this would also make the earlier reports concerning Bury incorrect.

617 Squadron were, during Michael's short time with them, based at Woodhall Spa Lancashire being equipped with Lancaster I and III's. In April 1944 the Squadron also took delivery of Mosquito VI's, which led to further detachments going from Woodhall Spa as part of the Pathfinder and specialist bombing teams employed by Air-Vice Marshal Bennett. They remained in these locations until after Michael lost his life.

Michael participated in one operation with 617, which was against the last remaining German Hipper Class pocket battleship, Lutzow.

The attack on the Lutzow was the Squadron's third attempt to sink this ship which was lying on the western side at the northern end of the Kaiserfarht Canal at Swinemunde (now Swinoujscie) after it had been spotted by a reconnaissance plane. The first attack had been attempted on 13th April but was abandoned due to thick cloud cover over the target. A second attack was mounted but the bomber force again ran into cloud and the aircraft were recalled.

The third attempt was requested for the 16th September using a force of twenty aircraft. The Squadron was only able to provide nineteen Lancaster's, and in the event only eighteen were able to take-off.

Fourteen aircraft carried the 12,000lb MC Tallboy deep penetration bomb with the remaining four carrying 12 x 1,000 pounds bombs each.

On this occasion Michael was detailed to fly as navigator with Squadron Leader John Leonard Powell D.F.C., an experienced pilot. Both men were on their second tour of operations.

Michael was not the crew's regular navigator. Both he and the wireless operator on this flight appear to have been last minute replacements for other crewmembers.

This aircraft Lancaster I, NG-228, KC-V was on its sixteenth operation.

Squadron Leader Powell was the first away from Woodhall Spa's runway at 13.49, carrying a load of 12 x 1,000lb bombs and 1850 gallons of fuel. The aircraft circled the airfield for a short time while the other aircraft took off and then set course on the first leg of the route, crossing Lincolnshire and across the Wash to make landfall again at Cromer on the Norfolk coast.

It is not known what happened to the aircraft but it is suspected that flak or enemy aircraft brought it down.

The full crew listing all of who lie together is as follows:

Squadron Leader John Leonard Powell D.F.C aged 29, Flight Sergeant Henry William Felton D.F.M., Flight Lieutenant Michael Terrence Clarke D.F.C., Flying Officer Alfred Laurence Heath, Pilot Officer William Knight, Pilot Officer Kenneth Arthur John Hewitt and Flying Officer James Watson aged 24.

57 Squadron has a memorial, along with 630 Squadron at RAF East Kirby. Michael is remembered on the 617 Squadron Memorial at RAF Woodhall Spa.

Michael's younger brother, Patrick James, served as a Lance Corporal with the Royal Sussex Regiment.

Dr Clarke was a Professor of Bacteriology and Pathology and was attached to the Department of Public Health at Nottingham. He had served as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps during World War One.

Michael was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery in action. This award was announced in the London Gazette on 7th May 1943 but I have yet to obtain the citation from the Public Records Office.

The Lancaster is probably the best known British bomber of the Second World War. She was a seven seat four engined heavy bomber powered by Rolls Royce Merlin XXIV engines with a top speed of two hundred and eighty seven miles per hour. She was a very versatile aircraft and carried many combinations and types of bomb loads including bouncing bombs, Grand Slam and Tallboy High Capacity bombs. Her standard load, far greater than the American B-17 Flying Fortress, was one 22000lb bomb or up to 14000 smaller bombs. Seven thousand three hundred and seventy seven were built in total and at least fifty-nine Bomber Command Squadrons operated them. They flew 156000 sorties dropping 608612 tons of bombs and 51 million incendiary devices. The last operational Lancaster was scrapped in 1950 and few remain intact today with only two in flying condition: one with the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and one in Canada. Both fly in their respective countries to help the public remember over 55000 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives in the Second World War.

Warrant Officer Class I Regimental Sergeant Major Arthur Walter COLLINS

Service Number: 6394556

Age: 39

10th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Died: 19th May 1943

Buried: Cuckfield Cemetery Plot B G Grave 45

Son of Arthur Walter and Jane Collins.

Born in Brighton.

Arthur was married to Olive Majorie and they lived at Thane Villa in Wivelsfield Road, Haywards Heath with their three children.

Before the War Arthur had been a Sergeant Instructor with A Company, 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment at Haywards Heath Drill Hall. He is shown as being on the regimental strength as at 1st September 1939.

Arthur was twice wounded whilst serving with the 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment as part of the British Expeditionary Force in France 1940 when trying to halt the German advance prior to the Dunkirk evacuation.

On returning to the UK had transferred to the 10th Battalion being promoted to Regimental Sergeant Major. The 10th Battalion was at this time serving with 77th Infantry Division in north-east England.

He was travelling on a motorcycle to some outlying companies of the battalion in County Durham when he is said to have skidded and sustained fatal injuries. He had been due home on leave on 8th June and the week prior to his death had been discharged from hospital for an injured knee.

The Funeral was held at St. Edmund's in Cuckfield and the 4th and 10th Battalions sent a bearer party. Soldiers and a detachment of men of the home guard under the command of Regimental Sergeant Major Langley D.C.M., (Home Guard) provided a distinguished guard of honour. The Royal Sussex Regiment sent Major N L Jenkins and Captain Goodaly who represented Lieutenant-Colonel J S McGrath M.C the Commanding Officer of 10th Battalion to the funeral.

There were many floral tributes from the family as well as those from Officers, NCOs and men of both battalions. Flowers from Streamline Taxis of Wivelsfield were received as well as those from Brigadier Gilmore, Headquarters Staff of 203 Infantry Brigade.

Arthur was described at his funeral by one of the men who served under him as "*one of the finest soldiers I ever met*".

Leading Steward Jack S CRIPPS

Service Number: P/LX29039

Age: 37

HMS Nubian, Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 20th July 1943

Buried: Malta Capuccini Naval Cemetery, Protestant Sect (Mens)
Plot F Grave 47

Son of Mr Herbert Edwin and Mrs Emily Caroline Cripps. There were two Brothers, Joe and Billy and sister to Dorothy.

Jack was married to Winifred (nee Hoadley) and they made their home in Haywards Heath living at Conveen in Boltro Road with their six-year-old son, John.

Prior to joining the navy Jack had been a hairdresser in civilian life for Mr P Whall in Boltro Road and then Mr R Allen in South Road.

His connections with the sea then began as he then joined the Union Castle Line for some three and half years as a hairdresser sailing mostly to and from South Africa. On returning to the UK he trained as a ladies hairdresser in London and opened a ladies salon at 16 Boltro Road.

Before enlisting he had been one of the first to join E (Haywards Heath) Company, 13th Battalion of the Sussex Home Guard.

Jack was serving on HMS Nubian, a tribal class Destroyer with a complement of 190 and possibly lost his life in support of the allied landings at Sicily, Operation Husky. It would seem that the ship took his body back to Malta where it was interred in the Military Cemetery. He had seen action at Pantelleria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

HMS Nubian served during the Battle of Cape Matapan 27th – 29th March 1941 as part of the 14th Destroyer Flotilla commanded by Commander RW Ravenhill, although I am unsure if Jack was onboard or in the forces at this stage. On 4th May 1943 the destroyers Nubian, Paladin and Petard intercepted and sank an Italian merchant ship and the torpedo boat Perseo near Cape Bon.

HMS Nubian was built and engined by John I. Thornycroft & Co. of Woolston Southampton.

She was ordered on 10th March 1936 and laid down 10th August 1936. She was commissioned on 1st December 1938 being launched on 21st December of that year by a Mrs Wake-Walker. Her Pennant numbers were: L36 October 1938 - December 1938; F36 January 1939 - Autumn 1940 and G36 Autumn 1940 - June 1949. She was the third ship to have this name and was scrapped in June 1949.

She had served in the Norwegian Campaign and was badly damaged in the stern by the Luftwaffe during the evacuation of Crete in 1941 although she managed to limp back to Alexandria.

Following Jack's death Winifred moved back to her parent's home (Mr and Mrs S Hoadley) at 29, Church Road although she continued to run the salon in Haywards Heath for some time.

He is also remembered on the Haywards Heath War Memorial.

Jack's name is incorrectly spelt on the Burgess Hill War Memorial and the Roll of Honour within the Burgess Hill Royal British Legion as J Crisp.

Captain John Michael Gordon DILL

Service Number: 174028

Age: 23

16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers, Royal Armoured Corps

Killed in Action: 16th June 1944

Buried: Beach Head War Cemetery Anzio Plot 7A Row B Grave 3

Son of Major J M Gordon Dill and Mrs EC Gordon Dill. M.A. formerly of Birchwood.

John was the older of two boys. The name of his brother and if there were any other children has yet to be established. His family background and early years are relatively unknown.

The Dill family was quite wealthy and owned a lodge in Scotland and possibly other properties in England.

He attended Cambridge University and was a blue although it is unclear which college he had attended

John was Commissioned into the Army on 15th February 1941 from Cambridge and joined the 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers at Luton.

At some stage he contracted yellow jaundice and spent a period of sick leave at his Grandfather's house at Coalspark, Buntingford in Hertfordshire. According to Arthur Worthington, who was John's servant* in the regiment from 1941 until his death, he always spent his leave here rather than at the family home. Mr Worthington recalls that Captain Dill's mother was a formidable woman.

In early 1942 he was detached from the regiment to be the Aide-de-Camp (ADC) to Major-General Sir James Crocker who was commanding the 6th Armoured Division. The division was formed in the UK in September 1940 and was at first deployed in readiness for the expected German invasion.

John's regiment, as part of the 26th Armoured Brigade, was serving in the 6th Armoured Division and in recognising the potential of the young Second Lieutenant Dill his commanding officer may have recommended to Major-General Crocker to take him as ADC. The posting at Newton Hall was to last some five months before John asked to return to the regiment, probably being aware that the division was to be posted overseas to North Africa later in the year. He was promoted to Lieutenant 15th August 1942.

In November 1942 the division was posted to join the British and Commonwealth troops who had just completed the great victory over the Germans and Italians at El Alamein and were now advancing westwards.

During the transfer to Africa John went ahead with the regiment whilst his servant stayed behind to pack up his kit, as well as other regimental items that required placing into storage. Mr Worthington recalls that *"Mr Dill had stuff to send home, including a case of guns bought as a twenty first birthday present. He also had a gun dog and an old Indian carpet, which was on the floor of his tent. I sent this all home and a few months later, whilst in Africa; I received a letter from his Mother complaining that the carpet was wet and disgusting."* Mr Worthington went on to say that he would have dumped it but Mrs Dill had requested it be sent home!

It is worth noting that on his journey out to join Lieutenant Dill and the regiment Mr Worthington's ship was torpedoed and sunk with the loss of seventy men.

In early 1943 the Regiment received the new American Sherman tanks which were a vast improvement on their old Valentines and Matildas, both in terms of protection and firepower. It was with these tanks that the regiment fought in the battles of Fondouk, Kournine and the final battle for Tunis in April 1943.

During the Tunisian Campaign, the Commanding Officer of the Lancers was ordered to push one of his squadron's down the Wadi Maguellil and swing outwards, north and south, when past the village. The attempt to turn south out of the wadi resulted in two tanks of Lieutenant Dill's troop being destroyed.

On 6th May, when the regiment was advancing through Frendj, A Squadron lost three tanks, one being the second tank Lieutenant Dill had destroyed under him during this campaign. Fortunately he was not seriously hurt on either occasion.

After the closure of the African Campaign with the ejection and surrender of the Italian and German armies the regiment was rested whilst the allies assaulted and captured Sicily. The 16th/5th had fought many hard battles across the deserts being awarded 9 Battle Honours and once the Italian campaign was underway they then landed and joined the 5th Division.

The date of John Dill's promotion to Captain is uncertain. He is mentioned in the regimental history as a Lieutenant in North Africa and Italy.

The regimental history describes how they had landed in Italy with an element of hope that the advance would be speedy now the allies were in their stride. Unfortunately, it records that four days into the campaign it had taken on the pattern of a World War One battle with hard fighting enemy troops in well fortified positions making progress slow in difficult terrain.

The 5th Division's crossing of the River Garigliano, a key feature and German defence line, and the subsequent advance had met with stubborn opposition. A seaborne flanking manoeuvre by the 17th Infantry Brigade round the mouth of the Garigliano had miscarried owing to the strength of current, the inexperience of the American landing craft and the failure of pre-arranged signals from the shore. In consequence the 5th Division had progressed little further than the village of Minturno and the ground few a few hundred yards beyond. The strategic and important Point 141 and Mount Natale were still in enemy hands.

The history goes on to say - *"it was with some disappointment that the Regiment received orders, on 22nd January 1944, not to chase beaten up Germans up the road to Rome but to reinforce the shaky bridgehead at the River Garigliano with one squadron, with the object of helping the infantry hold Minturno and support them in a proposed attack on Point 141 and Mount Natale".*

On this day the allies, under the United States VI Corps, made an amphibious landing at Anzio, some sixty miles to the North. A Squadron, under Major D D P Smyly, was given the task of supporting the new bridgehead and on the evening of 22nd they started off. Crossing the river safely they arrived near Minturno by dawn where they quietly hid their tanks away in a quarry on the south side of the village. This had been an uneventful night, with the exception of Major Smyly's jeep losing a wheel as it came off worse when in collision with a tank. The area was very congested as in addition to the Lancers the area contained HQ 13th, 17th and 201st (Guards) Brigades and later Tactical HQ for 5th Division.

The area was not good tank country. It was one full of closely cultivated olive groves and grapevines with many hedges forming thick boundaries. With the exception of looking up roads the visibility was rarely more than a dozen yards. Much of the ploughed land on either side of the roads was boggy and the verges, and many other places, were thick with both anti-tank and anti personnel mines. To make matters more miserable it was raining hard.

That afternoon two troops were sent out on defensive roles. 2nd Troop under Lieutenant F O Bills, had a fairly uneventful day as they moved out to the right flank, in support of the 2nd Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and took over from a troop of 40th Royal Tank Regiment on the eastern outskirts of Minturno.

The other troop, 3rd under Lieutenant John Dill, had a more testing time. It was ordered to support an attack being mounted that day at 16.30 astride the road leading North from Minturno. The 6th Seaforth Highlanders to the right of the road were to capture Point 141 and on the left the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers were tasked to take Mount Natale.

Lieutenant Dill's tanks were to advance up the road and give support to either battalion of infantry as required. If the attack succeeded they were then to act in an anti-tank role against the inevitable enemy counter attack.

During his reconnaissance Lieutenant Dill had noticed a stretch of some two hundred yards of road, which he considered to be extremely dangerous. The 40th Royal Tank Regiment had lost one tank there and it was almost certainly covered by German anti-tank guns. To minimise exposure, and casualties to his men, he arranged for each tank to make a dash across and then regroup under the cover of a house with conspicuous blue shutters.

The move was started with Lance Sergeant Ritchie's tank leading. Lieutenant Dill went next, by which time the enemy would be very alert to British tank activity, followed by his troop corporal's tank. During the dash and once they arrived at the house Lieutenant Dill could see no sign of Lance Sergeant Ritchie's tank. The signs were ominous as this could only mean that he had gone too far. Meanwhile Lieutenant Dill and his remaining tank were required to support the infantry in what proved to be a difficult task owing to the poor visibility and the intense shelling of both sides so much so that it was hard to identify friend from foe. To make matters more difficult Lieutenant Dill had no direct wireless contact with either infantry commander and had to pass information, and requests, back via his Squadron Leader who was at the Infantry Brigade HQ. It was only in the early stages of the battle could Major Smyly tell him how those leading companies were progressing.

The support given to the Seaforth Highlanders was relatively successful, as Lieutenant Dill was able to engage a number of German posts to their front. Identification was made easier as the enemy was using green tracer rounds. Against strong opposition the Seaforth's captured Point 141.

Most difficulty was experienced on the Royal Scots Fusiliers front. Their Commanding Officer was killed at an early stage in the action and two companies took the wrong route through the thick countryside. The Second-in-Command of the Fusiliers and one company were able to reach the top of Mount Natale but were driven off by German counter attack. Enemy shell and mortar fire was heavy with both infantry and tanks receiving a good share. Later that day the Seaforth's were also driven of Point 141.

At nightfall Lieutenant Dill's 3rd Troop withdrew under orders. 17th Infantry Brigade made no further attempt to advance during the next few days although A Squadron 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers had three tank troops deployed around Minturno in support of the infantry who were in defensive roles.

During this period Lieutenant Dill took out a foot patrol to search for Lance Sergeant Ritchie's tank but without success.

On 30th January 17th Infantry Brigade staged a night attack on Point 141 and Mount Natale. Because of the darkness no tank support was feasible although 2nd Troop under Second-Lieutenant F.O Bills acted in an anti-tank role. It was in this action that a Seaforth Highlander 6 pounder anti-tank gun located near Minturno cemetery was destroyed by German fire and Sergeant Barker of 2nd Troop rescued the Seaforth's officer under intense shelling and mortaring. It is reported that this non-commissioned officer acted with great coolness and courage throughout the day, and was later awarded the Military Medal.

During this day the unfortunate Lance Sergeant Ritchie, his crew and tank were discovered some three hundred yards beyond the cemetery. This was not an easy situation for the troop being able to see but being unable to reach their comrades for some time

John Dill is not mentioned again in the regimental History until June when on the 4th it states Captain Dill assumed command of A Squadron in place of Major J A Dubs who had been wounded. He had between January and early June been promoted.

On the 7th June, the day after D-Day in Northern France, the regimental history records A Squadron under Captain Dill being deployed to a flank position as they advanced up Highway 4 but it was found impossible to make further progress before dark.

Various other appointments were made to the Regiment during June 1944 and Captain Dill was to be Second-in-Command of A Squadron as Major Dubs replacement was found and taken on strength.

Between Rome and Perugia, Captain Dill was, as the Regimental History describes, *"very unluckily killed by an enemy shell which landed on his turret top"*. Mr Worthington mentions that he was drinking a glass of wine at the time.

Mr Worthington also wrote *"he was a good officer and we got on well, he never told me off, even when I burnt his pants with a hot iron. I went on all his leaves with him, with the exception of one when he brought me back a pair of shoes and a watch"*. Mr Worthington also told me, as indeed the previous paragraphs show, that Captain Dill *"was a very brave man and should have won a medal"*. It is perhaps something to consider that with so many brave and selfless acts carried out each single day by this generation of men that neither a Military Cross nor even a Mention in Dispatches was considered for the twenty three year old John Dill.

John's Grandfather, Dr J.F Gordon Dill O.B.E., was the founder of the British Provident Schemes for Hospitals.

Lance Sergeant James Ritchie is buried in Minturno Cemetery, Italy. He was 31 years old.

Second Lieutenant Frederick Oliver Bills was promoted to Lieutenant but was later killed in action on 15th July 1944. He is buried in Arezzo Cemetery, Italy.

It seems that Majors Smyly and Dubbs and Sergeant Barker M.M., all survived the war.

Captain John Dill is remembered on a roll of honour in Belvoir Castle near Grantham in Lincolnshire, where the regimental museum is located. In 2002 the museum opened a special display remembering their actions in the desert and Italy.

The 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers continued to serve in Italy during World War Two being awarded eighteen battle honours.

*Arnold Worthington joined the 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers from the Durham Light Infantry. At Luton he met John Dill who asked him to be his servant (the title was used by the Lancers but other regiments referred to this post as Batman). Mr Worthington agreed, being helped to make his decision by the benefit of an extra £1 per month staff pay.

When his officer was killed Mr Worthington went on to look after a further two officers.

It should also be noted that whilst he had the post of Batman he, like all other cavalry soldiers, carried out foot patrols, assisted in clearing buildings and fighting the enemy in an infantry role when required.

In his letter to me in September 2002, Mr Worthington then aged 90 included a photograph taken from the regimental history and he added on the reverse the lines, which show the mark these actions made on these men. *"We went to Africa with tanks with 2 pounder guns against the German tanks and 88mm guns. We had 64 killed in North Africa and 32 in Italy"*. To this day he speaks with great pride and a high regard for Captain Dill, "his" young officer.

After the war the regiment served mainly in West Germany and saw service in Aden, Hong Kong, Cyprus, Beirut and Northern Ireland. They were part of the British contingent during Operation Desert Storm seeing action in The Gulf War in 1991 being awarded the Battle Honour Wadi Al Batin.

They amalgamated with the 17th/21st Lancers to form The Queen's Royal Lancers on 25th June 1993.

2nd Lieutenant Frank D DUESBURY

Service Number: 77221

Age: 22

2nd Battalion, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment

Killed in Action: 10th December 1940

Buried: Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery - Egypt Plot 7 Row H Grave 9

Son of Colonel Harry and Mrs Beatrice Duesbury of "Byways", Folders Lane, Burgess Hill.

Younger brother H, possibly Harry.

Frank attended Brighton College in 1932 and in 1937 went to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst where he was in Number 4 Company.

Frank received his Commission on 25th August 1938 and joined the 2nd Battalion in Aldershot that same month.

Exactly one year later he was serving in Palestine with the Leicestershire Regiment when the Arab Rebellion was in full swing. He was awarded a Force Commanders Certificate for Distinguished Conduct when fighting against "armed bands" in Acre.

As part of 16 Infantry Brigade, the Battalion moved to the western desert in September 1940. In December they took part in the attack involving some 30,000 troops under General Archibald Wavell. The Battalion was engaged at Sidi Barani and again at Bardia advancing through Buq-Buq and onto Sollum. It was in the following action to capture Sidi Barrani as recorded in the Regimental History that Frank was killed.

On 6th December the Brigade moved forty-seven miles south-west into the desert to rendezvous with the remainder of the division on the Siwa road. The Battalion was transported in some twenty-five Royal Army Service Corps lorries over and above their own transport.

After lying up all day on the 7th, the Division moved thirty-seven miles west on the 8th to Sanyet Awlad Ali. Here, a large amount of information was distributed on the Italian desert encampments, and a plan for the campaign the following day was made known.

In brief this was for:

- a) The camp at Maktila to be shelled by the Royal Navy during the night of 8th/9th, and then for the camp to be contained by "Selby Force" from the Mersa Metruh Garrison (British & Commonwealth Forces).
- b) Nibeiwa Camp to be attacked by the 11th Indian Brigade at dawn
- c) Tummar West Camp to be attacked by 5th Indian Brigade at around noon
- d) 4th and 7th Armoured Brigades to engage the Italian armour near Sofafi
- e) the regiment of the Central Indian Horse to protect the Division's right flank. The Divisional Artillery and the 7th Royal Tank Regiment to support the Indian Brigades' attacks in turn. 16th Infantry Brigade was to remain in reserve.

The following two days events are described in the words of the 2nd Battalion's Adjutant, Captain J.H Marriott; *"The whole force, which was to take part in the attack, had apparently motored right round the enemy's flank without being spotted. It had travelled, albeit with a wide dispersion between vehicles, across open desert that was bare of any cover. This achievement must have been largely due to the Desert Air Force fighters, an air force in which a Spitfire was still unknown and a Hurricane was a prized novelty. During the night flashes on the skyline told us that the Royal Navy was shelling Maktila. We lay quiet in our slit trenches, thinking of the morrow and wondering how we were going to stand the test of battle.*

As the next day progressed it became evident that the enemy had been completely surprised. The Italian Commander at Nibeiwa was captured in his pyjamas. By 3.30 p.m. all the allotted objectives had been taken and the Brigade had still not been called on. The Italian prisoners could be seen streaming across the desert into captivity. The Brigade was then ordered forward to Ilwet Matrud, with the task, at first light, of capturing the low ridge at Alam-el-Dab. Here it was to sit astride the south-western communications into Sidi Barrani. The Brigade reached its destination in the dark and went into leaguer. During the night thirteen drunken Libyan soldiers, returning to Nibeiwa from leave in Sidi Barrani, blundered into Captain Havilland's Motor Transport convoy and became the Regiment's first captives. Later on in the night the enemy were reported ahead, and it became apparent that we must be well within three thousand yards of his position. There was, however, the barest information available as to where this was. By 05.00 hours on the 10th December the ration lorries, which were under divisional control, had still not reached the Battalion. No evening meal, therefore had been possible, so it was decided to issue breakfast from the emergency rations carried on the vehicles. Water, however, was extremely short. The supporting artillery, tanks and field ambulance also failed to rendezvous with the Brigade during the night. Despite Brigadier Lomax's protest, Division ordered the Brigade forward. At 06.30 a.m. we advanced. Platoon Sergeant Major Hemstock and his patrol, which had been out on protective duties, could be seen skeltering across the desert to rejoin the columns. They had bumped the enemy in the dark and had lost direction. As dawn broke some light shelling was encountered. Ten minutes later this had intensified and long-range-machine gun fire was being directed into the Argylls' column (The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders), which was now leading, and our column, which was on the right. The situation as we halted was now as follows.

We were on the familiar flat plateau of the desert, which stretched out of sight to our south and west. To the east, on our front and right, were one or two slight folds in the grounds, which led to some bare, dusty mounds and a series of dusty little hills. On these, some 1,200 yards away, the Italians had dug their positions. Instead of sitting astride the Italians Lines of Communication, it was apparent we were going to be forced to roll up the outer western defences of Sidi Barrani.

The carrier platoon under Lieutenant J.W Bryan, who was to be awarded a Military Cross for his leadership in this battle, were acting as a screen some five hundred yards in front of the Battalion. On being held up, they engaged the enemy by dismounted action. Shells almost immediately knocked out three carriers. The leading company, 'B', under Captain Anderson, likewise engaged the enemy with fire. The whole Battalion by this time had dismounted from their vehicles and was busy digging in. We could all see the enemy on our right flank, and even some of his field guns firing at us over open sights. The C.O. (Lieutenant-Colonel C.H.V Cox M.C.) returned from a hurried conference at Brigade. It was invigorating to watch him coolly standing up surveying the

scene, monocle in his eye and his jaw well out. As the only officer who had seen real action before, his calm demeanour did much to keep the Battalion steady. 'D' Company deployed and lead by Major Novis, launched an attack. Despite the support from the mortars, ably brought into action by Platoon Sergeant Major Marriott, they were quickly held up by machine-gun fire ripping across the front.

With the support of the carriers, in spite of the heavy enfilade fire, the Company resumed its advance and carried the enemy position with the bayonet. Thanks to good tactical handling and timing, they got in with a minimum of casualties. The shelling on the centre of the Battalion was still intense. Almost at once the medical lorry, with all its stores and stretchers, was hit. Despite this Captain Milne and his stretcher-bearers did magnificently. Then the Battalion office lorry was hit. Four Rhodesians in the Intelligence Section were killed outright. Next the Signals Officer (Frank Duesbury) was fatally wounded while standing up applying a bandage to Major Serjeantson, who had received a shell splinter. Frank was a fine young officer, and the excellence of the Signal Platoon, which served us so well, was due greatly to his energy and enthusiasm. Private Laughton survived miraculously as a shell burst at his feet. A pick and shovel he was carrying went flying through the air. He was wounded in the foot and neck. The toll of vehicles continued, and we quickly learned to avoid sheltering behind them, for two wretched Cypriot drivers were burned to death by flaming petrol”.

In Frank's obituary printed in the November 1941 edition of the Regimental Magazine, The Green Tiger, he was described as a very keen soldier, and, though quiet, was a good leader. He became the Signal Officer and had, through his enthusiasm, a high technical standard and the section of men he led were seen as excellent. He was seen by many as not only a fine officer and leader but also a friend.

Frank's father, Colonel Duesbury died on 23rd October 1946 after an operation at Brighton. He had served in the Regular Army for forty-one years retiring in 1939. His obituary was published in the May 1947 of the Green Tiger.

H also served with the 2nd Battalion during the war and was still serving in 1947. He also features in the May 1947 Green Tiger edition appearing in a photograph with brother officers of the 2nd Battalion whilst stationed in Bombay.

I have been unable to find Frank in the Army List although there is a listing for a F R Duebury on 25/02/40, which I believe to be an error.

Sadly I have also been unable to contact any surviving family member.

Signalman George Arnold ELSE

Service Number: 2389385

Age: 20

8th Corps Signals, The Royal Corps of Signals

Died: 15th August 1943

Buried: St Peter and St John Churchyard Wivelsfield

Youngest son of Norman and Ruth Else, of Donhead, St Andrews in Wiltshire.
There was also a daughter called Amy.

George lived at 2 St Peters, Ditchling Common

He attended Wivelsfield School and had worked for Allwood Brothers Carnation Nursery.

Prior to joining up he had served with N^o 5 Platoon of the Wivelsfield Home Guard.

George was serving with 3 Squadron, 8th Corps Royal Signals acting as a Dispatch Rider. He was killed in a motorcycle accident whilst on duty and died later from complications in York Military Hospital.

His coffin was transferred from hospital to the train bringing him home via a gun carriage and was escorted by six motorcycles.

The family received many messages of sympathy including one from his Commanding Officer, Colonel J M S Tullock. Floral tributes were received from his own troop 90 Despatch Rider Troop and also 49 Dispatch Rider Troop and 3 Squadron Royal Signals.

His Casualty Card, held by the Royal Signals Museum, provides little other information other than George was not to blame for the accident.

Trooper Frederick Dennard GASSON

Service Number: 7930488

Age: 33

Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, Royal Armoured Corps

Killed in Action: 19th November 1944

Buried: Reichswald Forest War Cemetery Plot 46 Row K Grave 18

Son of William Henry and Ellen Gasson of Ore, Hastings. Widow Dorothy Kathleen

I know nothing about Frederick Gasson except the family information above and so I have outlined his regiment's history during World War Two up until his death in action in November 1944.

With the outbreak of war in September 1939 the regiment was mobilised as a horsed cavalry unit and after being fully equipped and trained it arrived in Palestine at the end of January 1940 on security duties.

In July they lost their horses and began training as motorised infantry but in January 1941 were tasked to switch to coastal gunnery. Three batteries were sent to defend Tobruk and two to Crete. Utilising a variety of guns, the Sherwood Rangers stoically helped defend Tobruk for six months against Rommel's tanks and the Luftwaffe's bombers thus helping this siege to pass into history. When relieved by "properly" trained gunners from England, the Rangers withdrew to Palestine to train, this time equipped with tanks, as part of the 8th Armoured Brigade.

In Crete two Sherwood Rangers' batteries manned coastal guns during the German invasion until all British forces were ordered to evacuate.

With tank training completed the 8th Armoured Brigade, whose sign was a red fox, moved up to the Western Desert in July 1942 where they made their name at Bir-Ridge when Rommel's bid for Alexandria was thrown back in disorder by a stern defence and deadly gunning.

Then came preparations for the Alamein assault in October 1942. Four new tanks that arrived for the Brigade were named Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck and Maid Marian. The Sherwood Rangers would head the attack through the minefield. As Colonel Kellet, the commanding officer of the Rangers, said to Captain McCraith who was to navigate the Regiment *"Put on your white flannels, you're batting first for England"*. After two days of fierce fighting against German tanks and anti-tank guns at Miteiriya Ridge they forced the Germans to withdraw although casualties were high with four officers and eight other ranks killed and eighteen officers and forty other ranks wounded. A further fifteen were missing.

When the Germans began a general retreat, the Regiment swept up to Galal station to cut the across the coastal road, where they destroyed twenty-six enemy tanks. General Montgomery wrote *"The Army Commander congratulates all ranks on their magnificent victory at Galal station, which has done much to help in the final destruction of the enemy forces"*.

Colonel Kellet wrote, *"The Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry, after one year's training as an armoured regiment, won one of the most classic victories standing to the credit of any armoured regiment"*.

When Tripoli was captured a small party of Sherwood Rangers took part in a Victory Parade where Winston Churchill took the march past. In his speech to the men he said *"In the days to come when asked by those at home what part you played in this war, it will be with pride in your hearts you can reply – 'I marched with the Eighth Army.'"*

The 8th Armoured Brigade moved out to El Uotia with new tanks and replacement crews ready to meet an attack by Rommel's Panzer Divisions at Metameur. After the Germans lost fifty-two tanks they retreated behind the Mareth Line.

During this time the Sherwood Rangers, also lost their commanding officer, Colonel Kellett D.S.O., M.P. who was killed as he stood beside his tank shaving when a shell burst nearby.

The Mareth Line ran between the coast and the Matmata hills and after attempts to outflank it, Montgomery decided "a left hook" was required. Three armoured regiments, including the Sherwood Rangers, led the assault followed by the New Zealand infantry, and broke through after one day's fighting. It came at a price as many tank commanders were killed or wounded. The Allies swept on to Tunis and then on 13th May 1943 General Graf von Sponeck surrendered the famous 90th Light Division (a unit held in high regard by allied troops who were always a part of Rommel's Africa Korps). It arrived in the prisoner of war cage complete in every detail down to the divisional brass band. The 90th Light then played their British captors at football and won!

Later that day the 1st Italian Army surrendered to General Freyburg and it dawned on the troops of the Eighth Army that the enemy had finally been finished in Africa. When the prisoners had been counted it was not the 20,000 they had expected but some 80,000.

After a rest the Sherwood Rangers left for home and began the task of training on amphibious tanks – the "Funnies" for the invasion of Europe.

Once back in the UK after a period of leave the regiment moved to Newmarket where they set up camp in Nissen Huts in a large park. The re-equipment started in January 1944 with a draft over one hundred men mostly from the Lancashire Fusiliers. In February the regiment moved up to Kircudbright in Scotland for live firing exercises and this was in fact their first time at firing and operating tanks in "European" type countryside. In the middle of February B and C Squadrons went off for more specialised "second front" training and in fact remained away until the regiment joined up in Normandy. A and Headquarters Squadrons stayed at Chippenham Park and began training drivers on how to waterproof their vehicles as they had been told to expect to land in some five feet of water.

B and C were introduced to the swimming Duplex Drive (DD) tanks, which was strictly a Sherman tank that had vented engines and sea screens to enable it to propel itself through the water. The crews took the tanks out in landing craft off the south coast and practised driving off these off the landing craft at around 4000 yards away from the shore. Further training was carried out at Yarmouth, Portsmouth and Bournemouth learning to disembark and then swim in choppy fast currents.

They were now given an outline of their task on D-Day, which was to be to support the infantry in the initial assault on the beaches. A squadron remained in billets training at Chippenham Park.

A final exercise where the regiment briefly met up was held on 17th April in the Southampton area where all tanks came ashore safely and accurately.

On 2nd June the regiment left for Southampton Docks and eventually after a postponement of twenty-four hours the armada set sail late on 5th June.

As dawn broke on D-Day, 6th June, the Rangers left their landing craft in their amphibious tanks and, through heavy seas with waves five or six feet high, landed on "Gold" beach at Le Hamel. Leading the assault of the 50th Division, they began taking casualties before they were even out of the water. Despite tough German resistance, which did hold up the advance off the beaches until the afternoon, they pushed inland and the following day with their supporting infantry, the Essex Regiment, they were the first allied troops to enter Bayeux since 1940.

However, the area was not suitable for tanks and the number of casualties' rose. The bitter and wearying battles of June and July drew every SS and Panzer division in France to the British sector, while the rest of the front faced half of a Panzer division. It was this dispersion of troops that eventually allowed the American troops to break through to the west of Cherbourg and stream into central France.

With the Germans in retreat in August the Sherwood Rangers crossed the Seine in support of the infantry. They then led the 8th Armoured Brigade across the Somme but in gaining a bridgehead over the Albert Canal in Belgium they ran into fierce resistance from the Germans and endured three bitter days of fighting. Casualties were the worst since the Normandy landings with 2 officers and 21 men killed and many more wounded.

During the Arnhem operation in September the Sherwood Rangers supported the 82nd US Airborne Division and a tank from the regiment's Reconnaissance Group were the first British troops to enter Germany, an event announced on the BBC News. Although the Arnhem Bridge had to be given up, the Rangers helped the Americans hold the Nijmegen Bridge. A memorandum of the U.S. 82nd Airborne said of the Sherwood Rangers "*The Unit on its arrival rendered every possible support to our troops quickly, courageously and without the usual red tape connected with such support*". A brass cup, made from shell cases by regimental fitters, was presented to the Americans by the Rangers, as an indication of the mutual spirit of co-operation between the two groups.

During November the Germans were continuing to hold ground and made progress very difficult and dangerous for the allies. The British plan was to clear the area between the rivers Rhine and Maas and then clear the approaches to Antwerp as well as increasing strength at the Nijmegen Bridge, which was being continually attacked by the Germans. Antwerp was a hugely important objective, as still the allies had no real port facilities. This was due to the poor state of those liberated or that they were still under German control, and this led to the majority of supplies being transported by road and rail from the Mulberry Harbour on the Normandy Beaches.

The Regiment moved to Paulenberg, a small German mining town and, where after the 2nd US Armoured Division (Hell on Wheels) had attacked the railway and its pillboxes south of Geilenkirchen, they would support the inexperienced 84th US Division in taking the town.

The 2nd US Armoured Division (Hell on Wheels) moved up on the 16th November and on the 18th the attack started with massive artillery support and "artificial or

Monty's moonlight" provided (shining powerful searchlights into the sky to provide illumination for the troops).

A and B Squadrons supported an American battalion and they crossed the railway and started work on the pillboxes of the defensive positions known as the Siegfried Line by firing at the slits to enable the infantry to crawl up close and lay explosive charges against the walls.

Lieutenant Charles reached one pillbox before the infantry arrived and with no sappers to be seen he dismounted his crew, and covered by the other two tanks of the troop, captured the pillbox armed with his pistol taking 40 Germans prisoner.

A Squadron moved to capture Prummern and B to capture the high ground Northeast of the town. The area was full of mines and four tanks were lost. Further pillboxes, each with walls up to five feet thick and garrisoned by around 20 Germans with slit trenches made for a very difficult time but by 12.00 noon B Squadron had eliminated four pillboxes and captured 350 prisoners and became the first British troops through the Siegfried Line. During this time the regiment were not only losing tanks to enemy action but because the land was so wet and muddy there were being bogged down.

The Germans now reinforced the area with 10th SS and 15th Panzergrenadier Divisions and between 16th November and the beginning of December where to commit a further eleven infantry and five panzer divisions on this, the Roer valley front.

On 19th November B Squadron and its American Battalion advanced a mile on the high ground south of Wurm. The advance had to be made across completely open country, covered by anti-tank guns sited on high ground north of Wurm. The concrete pillboxes were cleverly and well concealed and gave great trouble to the infantry. The Regiment lost a number of tanks this day and had 9 officers and men, including Frederick Gasson, killed on this day.

The 84th US Infantry Divisional History states *"One of the brightest aspects of the entire action, both in Prummern and in Geilenkirchen, was the tank-infantry team work. It was made all the more interesting by the fact that the tankers were British and the infantry American. The Tankers were veterans and the infantry were going into battle for the first time. The British earned the admiration and enthusiasm of our men, even though they stopped for a bit of tea at the most unlikely moments. They were absolutely fearless and selfless even when they had taken heavy losses. The Siegfried Line was not a playground for tanks. One of our officers who worked closely with them said 'I was sold on the British. Those boys were good. There's not a man in my company who will say there is anything wrong with a British soldier because of the support we got from these tankers'".*

The Sherwood Rangers continued to be involved in further hard fighting around the Rhine and had pushed onto Bremen and beyond by the end of the war. The Regiment was awarded thirty battle honours and received one hundred and fifty nine awards for bravery and gallant conduct including Military Crosses, a George Medal and Distinguished Conduct Medals and American, French and Belgian decorations.

Their last casualty during hostilities was 31 year old Trooper Lawrence Carter from Leeds who was killed on 2nd May, only a day before the German's replied to the British appeals for them to surrender that led to the eventual surrender at 08.00 hours on 5th May.

It is also interesting to note that their fatal casualties were greater for the Second World War where 250 officers and men were killed against the 120 fatalities suffered in the 1914-1928 War.

In 1947 the Sherwood Rangers were revived as an armoured regiment, converting to reconnaissance in 1961. In 1964 the Regiment converted back to tanks before, in 1967, being reduced and reformed as a reconnaissance squadron of the newly created Royal Yeomanry. This lasted for 25 years until 1992 when the Sherwood Rangers were moved to become B Squadron of the Queen's Own Yeomanry, where they operate as reconnaissance for the Allied Command Europe (ACE) Rapid Reaction Corps, equipped with, initially, Fox wheeled reconnaissance vehicles then light tracked armoured vehicles. The squadron rejoined the Royal Yeomanry as Challenger 2 reserves in 1999.

There is some doubt if Frederick Dennard Gasson is the "F Gasson" from Burgess Hill. Although there is only one F Gasson listed among Commonwealth War Graves Second World War casualties, a letter to the RBL in 1994 from a lady (the sister) stated that a Trooper Frederick William Gasson had died of wounds and should be included (this letter was attached to branch minutes).

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has no record of a F W Gasson and the Mid-Sussex Times reports no details of either men.

Sadly the records the RBL, used in to compile the names for the 1994 seem to have been lost. My own suspicion is that an error has been made by including the name F Gasson and that the lady's brother may have died after discharge of those wounds sustained during his army service, a sad and regular occurrence.

That said, and until otherwise, I am happy to ensure Trooper Frederick Dennard Gasson is included to represent the F Gasson on the town's memorial.

Private George Edward GASSON

Service Number: 6403491

Age: 27

1st Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action: 11th February 1944

Buried: Cassino War Cemetery - Italy Plot 7 Row K Grave 7

Son of Walter Frederick and Annie Matilda Gasson of 100 West Street.
George was the third eldest son and had five brothers & six sisters.

George had been educated at London Road School and was employed as a Gardener, first at Silverdale Nurseries and then the PNEU (now Burgess Hill School for Girls). He had been an enthusiastic footballer and was a member of St Albans Cricket Club.

Brothers: Sergeant W H in Royal Engineers, Corporal A J in The Royal Sussex Regiment, Gunner R E in Royal Artillery, Gunner F formerly Royal Artillery as he had been wounded and health impaired since Dunkirk. Of the six sisters: two were in the Women's Land Army and two worked in Munitions for the war effort.

George had been in the Army for four years of which three & half were spent overseas. He had served with the First Battalion all through the African Campaign with the Eighth Army including the actions at El Alamein with the 4th Indian Division.

Following the allied victories in North Africa culminating in the destruction and capture of the German Africa Korps and Italian troops the allies successfully landed on Sicily in July 1943. The invasion of Italy at Salerno and Anzio in September of that year took place and the allies then started the long slog up through Italy where the climate and terrain was difficult and dangerous for attacking troops.

As part of the 4th Indian Division, 7th Indian Brigade, the 1st Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment was moving up in American transport to San Michele when two vehicles, one being the Battalion's issue of ammunition, went over the bank and off the road and were lost.

The following evening over the Rapido River they needed mules to move kit along the lower slopes of Monte Castellone as the terrain was so difficult. During this time they experienced some five hours of shelling, some of which was identified as being friendly (it is here that I suspect George was killed).

Tragically he was due home in May 1944 to marry Aircraftswoman Betty Blunden who was serving with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

I have been unable to contact any surviving member of the Gasson family.

Corporal Thomas Albert GAY

Service Number: 6140645

Age: 26

2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment

Killed in Action: 29th March 1943

Commemorated: Medjez-El-Bab Memorial - Tunisia Face 34

Son of Mr and Mrs Norman Thomas Gay.

Thomas was married, in around 1937, to Nellie Eola and they had two sons and one daughter.

Little is known of Thomas in his early years or even his early military service except that he was a regular infantry soldier prior to hostilities. As a regular he may well have seen action in either France or Norway in 1940.

Thomas, like all paratroopers, volunteered for service with this unit but as I am unable to determine exactly when this was although the training period was lengthy and it is certain he was with the unit on its arrival in Africa. Therefore I have included a brief outline of how the unit came into being as it is possible Thomas may have been one of its original members.

After Dunkirk the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, directed the War Office to investigate the possibility of forming a corps of at least 5000 parachute troops.

The Central Landing School opened at Ringway airfield (now Manchester Airport) on 21st June 1940 to commence parachute training. There then followed further ministry decisions and organisational changes that led ultimately to 11 Special Air Service Battalion being formed on 21st November 1940 and by February 1941 an initial 500 parachutists were trained.

Recommendations were then made to expand 11 Special Air Service (SAS) Battalion to a parachute brigade as soon as possible and this was authorised by the Imperial General Staff at the end of May 1941. The new formation would consist of brigade headquarters, four parachute battalions and one troop of Royal Engineers, with other special units (artillery, signals, medical and supply) being left until later.

The unit was officially promulgated as 1st Parachute Brigade on 31st August 1941 and volunteers were requested from all British infantry resources. The standards of individual fitness were much the same as those applied by 11 SAS. The men were of the highest standard with a normal age limit of between 22 and 32 years and a top weight of 196lb with good eyesight without glasses and good hearing.

Headquarters was formed under Brigadier Richard N (Windy) Gale in early September with 11 SAS becoming 1st Parachute Battalion and the other two battalions being formed from new. The headquarters were based at Hardwick Hall near Chesterfield in Derbyshire.

By November training had started at Ringway and Hardwick Camp and concentrated on bringing these volunteers, all without any prior experience of parachuting, up to the very high standard required. Training included descent, landing and other associated drills as well as new tactics, roles and responsibilities that were evolving for airborne troops.

The 2nd Battalion was formed on the 1st October 1941 under the command of Lt-Colonel Flavell and many of the men had been drawn from Scottish units and the battalion maintained this character throughout the war with C Company in particular being comprised largely of Scots.

In January 1942 the 2nd Battalion was tasked with providing one company to take part in a raid on the French coast. The company selected for this Major John Frost's C Company, and their task was to attack the radar installation near the village of Bruneval, which is some twelve miles north of Le Havre, and steal essential components of the new German "narrow-beam" radar. The Company, who but for John Frost, were unaware of the task that awaited them, trained extensively on Salisbury Plain, and later on the banks of Loch Fyne near Inverary.

The raid took place during the night of the 27th February, where the men jumped from twelve Whitley aircraft. Attached to C Company were a number of additional men from B Company, 9 sappers of the 1st Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers (RE), 4 signallers from Royal Corps of Signals and an RAF radar expert, Flight Sergeant Cox.

Split into five parties the Company secured the radar station and the surrounding area with another group dealing with German Sea defences. Cox and the sapper's dismantled the radar equipment, loaded it onto trolleys, and then took it to the embarkation point. As they approached the cliff face a German machine gun opened fire and Frost allocated another group to help sweep this resistance aside, while others were involved in engagements with several German patrols that began moving towards the area. By 02:15 hours C Company were ready to be evacuated but there was no sign of the landing craft that was due to pick them up. Attempts to signal them by radio and flares were made with no luck. Sometime later the six craft arrived and it was learned that they had narrowly avoided being spotted by a German destroyer and two E-boats and had had to maintain silent until the Germans had passed by.

C Company was successfully taken off the beach by 03:30 hours and headed for home where an escort of a number of destroyers and a squadron of Spitfires met them at dawn, which led them safely to Portsmouth. In addition to the radio equipment, two prisoners were also taken one of, which was a radar expert who was able to provide valuable information.

C Company casualties had been comparatively light given the level of resistance encountered with two men being killed, six wounded and a further six taken prisoner.

The 2nd Battalion saw a change in commanding officer with Lieutenant-Colonel Gofton-Salmond taking charge.

In September 1942, the 1st Parachute Brigade, now commanded by Brigadier Eric Down, was called to Tunisia for its first taste of battle.

Shortly before setting sail Lt-Colonel Gofton-Salmond fell ill and it soon became clear that he was in no fit state to continue and so was put ashore at the order of Brigadier Down, who promoted and gave command of the battalion to John Frost.

In Africa two parachute drops had been planned for the battalion but both were cancelled. However on the 27th November they, with a troop and section of the 1st Parachute Squadron RE and 16 Field Ambulance Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), were put on standby for a new operation.

They were to drop at Pont du Fahs and attack the nearby airfield and from here march twelve miles north and do likewise at Depienne before finally moving a further twelve miles north towards the airfield at Oudna. Once they had destroyed all the planes in these areas, the 2nd Battalion was then to withdraw some twelve miles north-west to St Cyprien, where they hoped to meet up with advancing British troops.

Shortly before take off at midday on the 29th November Lieutenant-Colonel Frost was informed that the enemy aircraft at Pont du Fahs and Depienne had moved from the area. It was decided that the battalion would advance on Oudna from a drop zone that Frost hoped to improvise somewhere around Depienne. Fortunately, a suitable area was found and the daylight drop was unopposed although it had been witnessed by a German patrol. The local Arabs had also noticed the drop and were intent on pilfering the contents of the supply canisters, even after being fired upon by the paratroopers. With the injured sustained on the drop left in the care of the attentive French inhabitants of Depienne, and a platoon left behind to retrieve all parachutes and canisters, as ordered by Brigade HQ, the battalion was able to set off on its long march to Oudna before midnight.

Heavily laden with equipment, they kept moving across the hilly terrain with the cold night not helping their journey until they arrived within sight of the Oudna airfield by late morning. Apart from one wrecked aircraft the area appeared to be deserted of planes. Nevertheless A Company began to make their way forward, while C and HQ Companies moved around their left. Enemy machinegun and Mortar fire opened up from the airfield and caused a few casualties amongst the advancing companies. A Company managed to reach the airstrip, but as they did so, six large German tanks appeared, together with a number of Messerschmitt Me 109 fighters that strafed the battalion with this being followed up by attacks from six JU87 Stuka dive-bombers. However, due to the battalion's good camouflage no casualties were sustained by the attacks from the air and the tanks were finally beaten off. As dusk fell, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost withdrew his men onto some nearby high ground that was better suited for a defensive position. In the morning, the battalion was on the receiving end of an artillery bombardment and inaccurate machinegun fire from a distance. The paratroops used their Mortars to good effect and eventually persuaded the enemy to withdraw, though occasional shots were fired during the day. The 2nd Battalion's radios had so far been unable to contact the 1st British Army and when they succeeded in making contact later that morning they received the dismal news that the drive by their relieving force had been postponed. This left the battalion entirely alone deep inside enemy territory.

The Germans sent a captured paratrooper to inform Lieutenant-Colonel Frost that he was surrounded and that it would be futile for any action other than surrender. Frost was not inclined, and instead as dusk fell he decided to move the battalion to fresh positions on a hill a mile to the south. The Germans followed this by moving up with infantry, tanks and artillery, and throughout the following day, the 1st December, they savagely pounded the exposed 2nd Battalion, who by now were very low on ammunition, medical supplies and water.

Lieutenant-Colonel Frost led his men away as night approached although the many wounded had to be left, as was one of B Company's platoons, which was left behind to search the area for any other casualties. C Company had all but ceased to exist, and as there was no sign of them at the rendezvous point, they too were left behind. The Germans made no attempt to challenge the paratroopers during the darkness, but as dawn drew near it was obvious the British that some sort of defence would be needed or they would be annihilated if

caught out in the open. A reconnaissance patrol was sent forward and returned with news that the El Fedja Farm lay ahead and that this area was just what they required, not least because the Arab owner was keen to provide the paratroopers with fresh food and water. Signs of German activity increased leading to the farm being surrounded at dawn. The attack was eventually made during mid-afternoon as Mortar bombs started to land and machine guns swept the area although they did little damage, as the battalion had been able to dig deep into the soft ground. A Company was challenged twice in the evening, but both attacks were completely broken up by their accurate fire. The main attack came at dusk, but this too was fended off and led to a period of relative calm, which enabled the 2nd Battalion to break away once more. Exhausted and now perilously low on ammunition, the men now headed to Medjez el Bab some twenty miles away, as it was the only place that they were certain Allied troops would be. Lt-Colonel Frost was well aware that the battalion was being tracked by the enemy and during the morning an armoured patrol came very close to his men but fortunately did not see them. Finally during the afternoon on the 3rd December the weary 2nd Battalion arrived at Medjez and marched past the French positions in good order.

Oudna had been an operation that cost the lives of many men with sixteen Officers and two hundred and fifty other ranks being lost with B and C Company's decimated. The battalion received around two hundred reinforcements although many of these men had previously been anti-aircraft gunners with no previous infantry experience but concentrated training soon changed this.

In December the entire Brigade was reunited and deployed in a straightforward infantry role, eventually ending up at Bou Arada in January 1943. The end of the month saw them being transferred under the control of the 19th French Corps and charged with the task of relieving French units on the front line who were withdrawing to re-equip.

On the 4th February the 2nd Battalion was ordered to take and hold a crossroads in the Ousseltia valley against a force rumoured to consist of ten infantry battalions (approximately 1000 men) supported by one hundred tanks. With little in the way of support weapons except their own battalion weapons this was not a happy situation for the battalion and luckily the attack never materialised as the enemy tasked these units for action elsewhere. On the 7th February the battalion was relieved and rejoined the 1st Parachute Brigade.

The Brigade sat peacefully in their positions until the 26th February, when a mixed force of Germans, Austrians and Italians heavily attacked them. The 3rd Battalion bore the brunt of this attack and eventually forced the enemy to withdraw and shelter in a close-by dry and Rocky River bed. Enemy casualties were extremely heavy with approximately four hundred killed and two hundred captured, while the 3rd Battalion had suffered fourteen dead and forty wounded. The other battalions of the 1st Parachute Brigade were also attacked on this day. The enemy moved against the 2nd Battalion's B and C Companies but made no headway. They then attempted to infiltrate between the distant positions of the battalion but the well-sited Machinegun and Mortar Platoons held them at bay.

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion broke up the attack on their positions by catching their foe in a series of cleverly positioned barbed wire entanglements that led them directly into a lethal crossfire at close range.

On the 4th March, the 1st Parachute Brigade withdrew from Bou Arada and moved to Beja, where the 1st Battalion had fought several months previously. The 2nd Battalion was ordered to challenge enemy units situated on some high ground

above the town. In the event the 2nd Battalion captured this hill without encountering opposition and so they were directed onto a neighbouring hill. C Company moved forward to draw enemy fire and highlight enemy positions on the hill for the benefit of British artillery gunners but this promised bombardment never materialised. With this lack of support the 2nd Battalion abandoned the hill and took up defensive positions on another hill called Cork Wood directly to the south of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. On 8th March a large enemy force that included German parachute engineers and the 10th Panzer Grenadiers heavily attacked the 1st and 2nd Battalions. The 1st Battalion's S Company, with the aid of artillery and mortar barrages, succeeded in cutting down the attack on their positions although the 2nd Battalion were pressed hard and suffered many casualties as their ammunition began to run dry. Nevertheless they held their ground in spite of infiltrating enemy units attempting to drive a wedge between them and the 1st Battalion; a wedge that was swiftly removed by an attack by the 3rd Battalion's A Company.

The 139th Infantry Brigade, 5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters, No1 Commando and numerous French units then reinforced them. Heavy attacks by the enemy of divisional strength continued against the 1st Parachute Brigade until 14th March. During this time the Panzer Grenadiers had gained some ground in their attack on the 2nd Battalion in Cork Wood, but this was broken up when they were accidentally attacked by their own Stuka dive bombers. A two-day lull in hostilities then followed until they resumed in earnest on the 17th March.

As a result of this the 1st Parachute Brigade and their supporting units were ordered to fall back several miles to the south-west and occupy three hills, known as The Pimples. The Panzer Grenadiers captured one of these held by a battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment on The 20th March. The 1st Battalion retook it three days later with many prisoners being taken.

On the 27th March the whole of the 1st Parachute Brigade, accompanied by the French Goums, launched a counterattack under cover of a heavy artillery bombardment. The 1st Battalion's advance had been highly successful and they reached their objective during the night after being involved in a savage fight. However the leading A and B Companies of the 2nd Battalion ran into both heavy opposition and a minefield but by the morning they were pressing on towards their objective although they took heavy casualties on encountering a detachment of German parachute engineers and were forced to back away. The 3rd Battalion's B Company was ordered to assist the 2nd Battalion and it arrived in time to assist in helping to repulse a fierce attack by the German parachutists.

The 2nd Battalion went forward once more and eventually managed to fight its way back onto Cork Wood, which they had abandoned several days before. The 1st Battalion had been following along on their left flank and became involved in several confrontations that were swiftly dealt with; most notable was the capture of four hundred Italian troops in a single engagement. By 29th March, the 1st Parachute Brigade had achieved its objectives and consolidated in these positions and they remained here until the 14th April when they moved into reserve positions.

The Battle of Tamera ended along with the 1st Parachute Brigade's lengthy tour of North Africa. Over that five-month period they had suffered one thousand and seven hundred casualties of which during their last and possibly fiercest action, Thomas Gay lost his life.

They had inflicted over five thousand casualties on the enemy and had been responsible for the capture of a further three thousand five hundred enemy troops.

From here the Brigade was moved away in preparation for the airborne assault on Sicily.

As the train in which they travelled moved slowly through a Prisoner of War camp the captured German soldiers recognised the red berets that had so much earned their admiration over the previous months that they ran over to cheer them. As Major-General Browning observed in his letter of congratulations to the 1st Parachute Brigade, *"Such distinctions are seldom given in war and then only to the finest fighting troops"*

It is unlikely very Thomas originated from Burgess Hill as his wife, Nellie herself had lived her early years in London and moved around as a child and young woman, working in service for various families. She had no family remaining and in the late 1930's she moved to the north-east to work for a family.

When stationed in the north-east Thomas met Nellie and it was here that they married.

Her family then moved to Southampton and after the heavy bombing destroyed much of the city and docks, including the house Nellie lived and worked in, she then moved to Burgess Hill.

Nellie was able to tell me that she had seen Thomas only three times in the six years they were married.

One of their sons was later killed in a motor cycle accident in the 1950's.

Lieutenant-Colonel J D Frost D.S.O., M.C. was later to famously command the 2nd Battalion at Arnhem Bridge, the bridge too far, during September 1944. His part was played by Sir Anthony Hopkins in the film "A Bridge Too Far".

Since World War Two the battalions of the Parachute Regiment have served in many of the world's trouble spots including Cyprus, Suez, Jordan, Borneo, Falkland Islands War, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Iraq 2003. The Parachute Regiment has consistently served in Northern Ireland and has suffered fifty-seven casualties through terrorist action including 19 men of the 2nd Battalion at Warrenpoint on 27th August 1979.

Major John Chester GAYE

Service Number: 113168

Age: 29

102 (Northumberland Hussars) Lt Anti-Aircraft /Anti Tank Battery,
Royal Artillery

Killed in Action: 30th July 1944

Buried: Hottot les Bagues War Cemetery Calvados Plot 9 Row D
Grave 9

Son of Sir Arthur Stretton Gaye and Dulcibella Chester Gaye.

Major Gaye was married to Nancy Joan.

He was Commissioned into the Army on Christmas Eve 1939 and promoted to Captain on 8th September 1942.

John Gaye joined the Northumberland Hussars as a Captain sometime during the Sicilian Campaign. He was not listed in the Regimental ORBAT (Order of Battle) for the invasion in July 1943 but is shown for when the Regiment left in October 1943. As he was commissioned in December 1939 he was perhaps serving with another unit or in a staff post.

Returning from the Sicilian Campaign and Salerno Landings in September 1943 the Northumberland Hussars docked at Liverpool on 5th November 1943. They had been away from the UK for twelve days less than three years when they first sailed in to battle.

John was then Second-in-Command of "C" (288th) Battery under the command of Major G.R Balfour.

The Northumberland Hussars were by this stage a very experienced unit with six major battle honours including two amphibious landings under their belts. They were an obvious choice to be placed at the forefront of Operation Overland, the D-Day landings. For the next six months they joined thousands of allied servicemen training in Britain for the assault on the French Coast.

The Regiment was to land at Gold Beach on D-Day with the 50th (Northumbrian) Division as part the 69th and 231st Brigade. 69th Brigade would land at La Riviere and move south by Crepon and Creully to St. Leger on the strategically important Bayeux-Caen road. The Anti-Tank Plan was for A Battery to remain with 69th Brigade until reaching St Leger. C Battery would stay with 231st Brigade for the first phase only and then change over, the Battery going to 151st Brigade (less one troop who went to 56th Brigade). They would then be relieved by B and D Batteries and would then go on an "exploitation" role with 8th Armoured Brigade.

A and C Batteries would be the first of the regiment to land at about H-Hour plus one (that is to say one hour after the first assault landing) followed by the two self-propelled units with B and D Batteries coming after. In addition to themselves the Regiment was allotted two self-propelled anti-tank batteries (189th and 234th Anti-Tank Batteries of the 73rd Anti-Tank Regiment Royal Artillery) who were to be placed under the direct command of the Northumberland Hussars.

As the 1st Battalion Hampshire and 1st Battalion Dorsetshire Regiment's, the lead units of the Gold Beach Invasion force landed, they were met by fortified

positions that had barely been affected by the pre-invasion bombardment. The resistance and fire from the 1st Battalion of the German 716th Infantry Division was fierce and accurate. Unfortunately, the tanks arrived too late to give immediate support to the infantry.

As time progressed from H-Hour the beach became congested due to the slower than expected progress. Many vehicles were coming through four feet of water and some were drowning in the water, as they were off loaded (drowning meant temporary but not necessarily permanent loss). Major G Rae Balfour, the C Battery Commander, was concerned about the rest of his battery and in order to reach his men already on the beach he swam ashore from the craft bringing in the vehicles. This was a sensible move by the major, as his own vehicle did not eventually land until 15.00 hours that day. After a walk of around a mile Major Balfour came upon 231st Brigade Tactical headquarters, in a ditch two hundred yards east of Le Hamel, and enemy resistance had been stiffer than expected. He then met his Second-in-Command, Captain John Gaye, who was also on foot as his "M.14" had drowned on landing. Together they made their way to Asnelles-sur-Mer, the Battery Headquarters assembly area. Captain Gaye reported an "M10" blown up on a minefield, another ashore and heading for the assembly point, and three six-pounder guns on the beach and one drowned. Two jeeps and two fifteen-hundredweight trucks were also drowned.

The Dorsets outflanked Asnelles and the St. Come des Fresnes crossroads establishing themselves on the high ground to the west. On pedal cycles, conveniently borrowed, Major Balfour and Captain Gaye reconnoitred this area and, as it was now nearly 11.00 hours, Captain Gaye returned to the beach in order to try and hurry the guns up to the position. One gun arrived shortly after with the remainder following on through the afternoon.

The Battery continued moving forward with their Brigades as the 50th (Northumbrian) Division moved on to occupy Bayeux on the 7th June and then pushed on another three miles towards Tilly-sur-Seulles, Sully and Longues.

At daybreak on 10th June the German's counter attacked at St. Pierre, which temporarily was a success. The Battery fought a rear-guard action in an infantry role as infantry and tanks fell back with a certain amount of confusion. They regrouped on the infantry battalion's headquarters (8th Battalion, The Durham Light Infantry) where every soldier was positioned for a last-ditch stand. Much good work by Lieutenants Packham, Brameld and the men of the battery helped stem the German attack. Major Balfour sent Lieutenant Packham's troop to "Point 103" to avoid overcrowding in an already risky area. Major Balfour, Captain Gaye and Lieutenant Brameld remained in the village to keep in contact with the quickly changing events. Casualties were however high due to enemy mortars although the actions by the battery certainly helped to reduce losses in men and equipment.

All morning the battle continued and at one time the force within St. Pierre were holding only one small farm and orchard. It was completely surrounded and to those watching further away on "Point 103" it seemed they *"had had it"*. Casualties continued to mount with ammunition running low and the strain beginning to tell on men who had been in action and contact with the enemy for four days and nights.

As the situation became extremely precarious Lieutenant Brameld once more took charge, and with the support of some tanks, helped to stabilise the position. Slowly the German's began to retreat and the Infantry was able to enlarge their positions. The Anti-Tank Platoon had lost four of its six guns, so the

responsibility for holding the position fell to Captain Gaye's C Battery six-pounder guns.

The 8th Battalion, Durham Light Infantry suffered some three hundred officers and men killed, wounded or missing. C Battery had two gun crew casualties when they came under accurate mortar fire and the remainder of the crew had to move to safety and abandon the gun temporarily. As the infantry had lost their guns, every battery piece counted, so Captain Gaye and Driver Bartholomew, who was Lieutenant Packham's carrier driver, volunteered to rescue it. They reached the gun but as soon as an attempt was made to hook it to the carrier another accurate concentration of mortar fire hit the position. Both tried to take cover but Driver Bartholomew was badly injured when the carrier he was sitting in was set ablaze. He needed to be rescued and this was managed but Captain Gaye was then himself wounded in the leg and the gun and carrier were burned out. Stretcher-bearers along with the gallant Lieutenant Packham evacuated both men. Driver Bartholomew's injuries were so serious he was downgraded from active service. Captain Gaye went to hospital for a period before re-joining the regiment. When Major Balfour visited Captain Gaye in the Regimental Aid-Post he was "*almost in tears at the thought of being evacuated*". Four other Battery casualties, one killed, one mortally wounded and two others also evacuated were received. Although short of men the battery continued to have seven out of twelve guns in action. This however changed later on the 10th to five working guns. After a hard fight the German's were pushed back and the position was finally made safe.

The Battery remained in action throughout June and July in the hard fought bloody battles for Normandy, many of which are today forgotten by the public.

John rejoined the Battery on 29th July having been promoted to the rank of Major. While away there had been many casualties and changes of faces and John joined D Battery. Major Balfour, who was also wounded at St. Pierre, re-joined at this time as Battery Commander for B.

The next day A Battery were in support of 231st Brigade, C in support of 151st Brigade and D Battery in support of 56th Brigade, advanced to the final attack against the line from Villers Bocage and Aunay-sur-Odon where they were supported by two hundred and fifty four-engined bombers. Progress was slow and it was not until the three British Armoured Divisions (Guards, 7th and 11th) broke through near Caumont that the enemy fell back and abandoned Villers Bocage.

D Battery was supporting 56th Brigade in its attack south of the Le Lion Vert – Caumont road when Major Gaye was killed by a sniper's bullet while out on reconnaissance.

From the landings on D-Day to the terrible fighting in Normandy and the devastation of the German Forces at Falaise in August the British suffered many casualties. Many of these men lie in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries that are dotted around Normandy away from the beaches in countryside that has changed little since 1944.

John Gaye rests with many of these brave men in the well-kept Hottot-les-Bagues Cemetery in the Calvados region.

Major Balfour and Lieutenant's Brameld and Packham all survived the war.

In 1947 the Northumberland Hussars came back under command of the Royal Armoured Corps as a tank/reconnaissance regiment. In 1967 they became a territorial unit being reduced to cadre strength in 1969. In 1971 The Queen's Own Yeomanry was formed as the second Yeomanry regiment in the Army by reconstitution as squadrons of old regiments which had been reduced to cadre. In 1999 this fine territorial regiment with much history was equipped with Challenger 2 tanks.

Lieutenant Garnet Henry Cecil GEEN

Service Number: 137180

Age: 22?

The Royal Engineers

Killed in Action: 14th January 1942

Commemorated: Singapore Memorial Column 37

Garnet was born on 20th March 1917 or 1918 to Cyril Ormonde and Ada Beatrice Geen of 7 Foley Street, Maidstone Kent.

Garnet had two sisters, Linda and Frances Iris who married Leslie Norris the brother of Philip. He also had five brothers: Bill, Kenneth Roy, Theo, Gordon and Douglas.

Garnet was educated at the Duke of Malmesbury School in Wiltshire. He then joined the Army as a boy soldier where he was first posted to Chepstow in Wales. From his basic training in Wales he went to Chatham where he passed out as a 1st Class Fitter.

He was commissioned into the Royal Engineers on 24th June 1940 and the Army List shows him as being made a War Service Lieutenant on 10th May 1941.

By the time he had been promoted to Lieutenant he was already out serving on the North-West Frontier attached to 13th Field Company, Queen Victoria's Own Madras Sappers and Miners.

Garnet wrote regularly to his sister Iris and his letter to her on Sunday 25th May 1941 mentions his reaching India. He writes *"We disembarked in India on 5th May, and after a lot of worry and trouble about kit etc of mine that had been lost (now found!) made (sic) our way to the HQ of the Queen Victoria's Own Madras Sappers and Miners at Bangalore in Southern India. A two-day continuous train journey from the port of dis-embarkation. From here, I was posted to one of our companies up on the N.W Frontier. I left Bangalore on 13th May and did not arrive here in Peshawar until late in the evening of the 16th."*

He goes on to describe the tremendous heat at Peshawar and that it was considered one of the hottest stations in the summer and, although rainfall was limited, the temperature drops in the winter to below freezing. Out in Peshawar the war seemed far away with no restrictions on rationing or lights at night.

Garnet was able to billet in a bungalow and shared with two or three other fellow officers. These bungalows were furnished and had the luxury of an electric fan. Working hours for the troops were from half past six in the morning through to four thirty in the afternoon. Garnet mentions that prior to his arrival when the weather was really hot no work was done in the afternoon and that he would like to be back in England for the summer with some rain.

He then talks about trying to let Iris know what he is doing by saying *"As you probably know, I can't say too much in my letter but I will endeavour to tell you all I can without giving away any military secrets: Peshawar is only nine miles from the Khyber Pass and sometimes have to go up there "on business". I have been there twice already, and very interesting I found it."*

In a letter to Iris dated 25th August, again from the QVOM Sappers and Miners at Peshawar, he writes *"In a very short while I am expecting to leave Peshawar, for where, and when, I really don't know yet. It is very likely though that I may have gone before you receive this letter."* He also talks about the very hard work, the heat and that the unit is somewhat understaffed. He continues *"About two month's back I went down with Sandfly fever and was admitted to Hospital. I felt pretty foul for a week or so, but after two days leave at a place called Mutrce up the hills, I feel heaps better and was able to return to work again with a swing."* He was also able to spend some time in the Himalayas away from the heat of Peshawar.

Garnet was posted away from Peshawar and moved to the Johore Straits. However, records for the period when Garnet lost his life are quite sketchy although The Royal Engineers Museum suggests he died in the fighting in Malaya in January 1942 before the capitulation of Singapore.

The Royal Engineers records originally showed the date of death as 7th January but this has been deleted and no alternative added. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records the date as 14th January.

On, or about 14th January, there was heavy fighting on the Muar River on the north border of Johore Strait. This seems the likely place for Garnet's death but it is not certain as on 7th January there was similar desperate fighting on the Scim River further north, where the 11th Indian Division practically ceased to exist as a fighting force.

It appears that the Royal Engineers thought Garnet was lost at the Scim River but seem to have had doubts after investigation by the Graves Investigation Unit after the War.

Kenneth Roy Geen served as 1895133 Sergeant Air Gunner Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and was killed in a flying accident on 19th October 1944 aged 22. Roy is buried in Oxford (Botley) Cemetery Plot H/1 Grave 225 and is remembered on the Maidstone War Memorial.

Their Father had served in World War One as a Warrant Officer.

Youngest brother Douglas died aged two from pneumonia.

NB: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission incorrectly lists him as Garnet Harry Cecil Geen Aug 2003). The family have been advised by the CWGC that this will be corrected in the future.

Lieutenant Thomas Ellison GODMAN D.S.C

Service Number:?

Age: 26

HMS Havock, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

Died of Wounds: 4th January 1942

Buried: Capuccini Naval Cem, Malta Protestant Section (Officers)

Plot E Coll Grave 12

Last surviving son of Captain Frederick Tyrrel and Josephine Ellison Godman.

Thomas was born in 1915 and was known as Tony to family and friends.

He was educated at Stowe School between 1930 and 1933 and in his final year here he attended a polar expedition to Finnish Lapland run by the Public Schools Exploring Society (PSES).

The young boys left England from Hull on the SS Arcturusticus on 2nd September and returned later in the month after carrying out experiments and walking many miles.

In 1934 Tony was matriculated by the University of Cambridge and admitted to Trinity College as a pensioner. He passed his First Examination in Engineering Studies in January the following year although it seems that he did not complete his degree.

On leaving university he became a member of a contracting firm but had plans to devote himself to farming. After coming of age his first act was to repurchase the old family home of Great Ote Hall, which the Godman's had been associated with for centuries. He immediately made his mark by distributing coal to the local pensioners at Christmas time.

He married Valborg Cecilie in June 1940 and they made their home at Great Ote Hall.

As a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve officer Tony joined the Royal Navy at the start of the War as a Sub-Lieutenant. In fact he reported to the Admiralty with his 45-ton yacht "Hurrying Angel" the day war was declared offering himself and the craft for their use.

The Mid-Sussex Times and Sussex Daily News both mention when reporting his death in January 1942 that he was posted to a un-named patrol ship and saw active service at the evacuations at Dunkirk and other ports in France. His patrol ship was the last to leave the Harbour at Le Havre, where earlier in the day he had helped to pilot a hospital ship out of the harbour, as there was no other pilot available. At the time of the escape from Le Havre a Senior Officer said of him "(he is) *one of the best officers in our patrol and his untiring devotion to his job is a model for all*".

The patrol ship was infact Her Majesty's Yacht (HMY) Seriola and for this action and his work during the evacuations he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. His award appeared incorrectly as a Bar to the DSC in the London Gazette of 16th Aug 1940 but was corrected to DSC in the 27th August 1940 edition.

As yet I am unsure when he joined HMS Havock.

The papers also report he served in the actions at St Valery and the evacuations of British and Commonwealth forces from Norway, Greece and Crete.

However, Tony was aboard HMS Havock when she was part of the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla, under the command of Lieutenant G.R.G Watkins, during the Battle of Cape Matapan against the Italian Navy on 27th - 29th March 1941.

Later in May during the Battle of Crete, dive-bombers attacked HMS Havock and she sustained damage from a number of bombs landing nearby.

On 15th December the British fleet sailed out to escort the fast supply ship Breconshire from Alexandria to Malta. On the 17th HMS Havock rendezvoused with other ships to form "Force K" off the Gulf of Sirte. They encountered the Italian battleships covering a convoy that is bound for Tripoli and the two cruiser forces engage each other in what becomes the First Battle of Sirte, with the Italians withdrawing. Havock receives some damage during this action.

The Breconshire reached Malta on the 18th December and "Force K" left harbour again to search for the Italian convoy that was still making for Tripoli. Early on the 19th December off Tripoli the British force ran into an Italian minefield with the cruiser HMS Neptune hitting three or four mines and sinking with the only one man surviving. The HMS Aurora is also badly damaged and HMS Penelope received slight damage. Trying to assist HMS Neptune, the destroyer HMS Kandahar also came into contact with a mine. The ships struggled back to Malta and had to be scuttled the following day. Out of the three cruisers and four-destroyer force, only three of the destroyers escape damage.

In early January 1942 the Axis Forces continued their attacks on the ships and island of Malta. During this period HMS Havock acted, as escort to those vital Malta Convoys and in the three months that followed was engaged in action on many occasions. Tony was wounded during December or very early January leading to his death on 4th.

On 5th April 1942 HMS Havock left Malta independently for Gibraltar and on the 6th she ran aground on the Tunisian coast and had to be destroyed. The French interned her crew and others on board. Following the successful invasion of North Africa later, the members of her crew were released from internment.

Tony's father had served with 9th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment and had died in 1917 whilst a Prisoner of War in Germany. In memory of him the family gave the southern portion of the land for Wivelsfield Church.

Mrs Godman worked as a volunteer for the Information Bureau for Soldiers in London during the Second World War, which entailed carrying out many interviews with servicemen everyday.

The Mid-Sussex Times reported that shortly after his death Valborg had stated her intention to continue farming at Great Ote Hall. Tony's Obituary was printed in the Times on 19th January 1942.

Tony's name appears on the Roll of Honour in St. Edward's Church in Royal George Road and he is listed among the names of former PSES boys who gave their lives in the service of their country during World War Two.

HMS Havock was an H Class Destroyer with a complement of 145. She was laid down on 15th May 1935, launched on 7th July 1936 and completed on 16th January 1937. Denny Brothers of Dumbarton, who also supplied her machinery, built her.

At the commencement of World War Two HMS Havock was with the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla on her way to Freetown, having left Gibraltar on the 30th August. On 15th September she provided anti-submarine escort for the first fast convoy from Kingston, Jamaica to the UK.

In April 1940 HMS Havock took part in the "First Battle of Narvik". The 2nd Destroyer Flotilla proceeded up the Ofot Fjord in snow and mist. A torpedo from HMS Hardy blew off the stern of the German destroyer Wilhelm Heidkamp and killed the German Captain. Two torpedoes sank a second destroyer and three others were damaged by gunfire. Six of the eight German merchant ships present were sunk. As the Flotilla came down Ofot Fjord they met five more German destroyers who were superior in armament to the British. HMS Hardy was disabled and beached with the loss of her Captain. The enemy also sank HMS Hunter and disabled HMS Hotspur, which was escorted by HMS Hostile and HMS Havock to Skjel Fjord. Two of the German destroyers, the Georg Thiele and Bernd Von Arnim were damaged by gunfire, the former receiving seven hits and the latter five. As the British retired they met the German ammunition ship Rauenfels, which HMS Havock engaged, ran ashore and was blown up.

In May 1940 HMS Havock joined the other destroyers to form a flotilla under Commander in Chief Nore and was used for defence of the East Coast and also the defence of the Dutch Coast. Shortly afterwards she left Plymouth for the Mediterranean and together with HMS Hyperion and HMAS Sydney was in action off Cape Spada against the Italian cruisers Bartolomeo Colleoni and Giovanni Dela Bande Nere. The rear of Bartolomeo Colleoni was hit and she was left to be finished off by torpedoes, whilst HMAS Sydney pursued the Giovanni Dela Bande Nere. On 19th July HMS Havock was attacked south of Gavdo and hit and was out of action for some weeks. On 2nd October, with HMS Hasty, she surprised on the surface the Italian submarine Berillo, which, after being gunned and depth charged, surrendered and scuttled herself. A number of the crew were captured.

Pilot Officer Bernard Albert GODSMARK

Service Number: 84024

Age: 27

114 (Hong Kong) Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 29th May 1941

Commemorated: Runnymede Memorial - Surrey Panel 32

Son of Mr William Thomas and Mrs Edith Maud Godsmark of 17 West Street.

Bernard was married to Ursula (nee Simpson) and with their 15-month-old child they lived at 203 London Road possibly sharing with the Green family. There was I believe another son.

Ursula was the sister of Sidney Green's wife.

He had obtained a scholarship at Brighton Grammar and on leaving school his first job was as a Prudential Assurance Agent.

As a keen cricketer Bernard played for St Andrew's at Southwick and Allen West's of Brighton.

Bernard joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve before the War becoming a Leading Aircraftsman and he was commissioned in July 1940. It is likely this was during or at the end of his training as aircrew although I have been unable to establish exactly when he joined 114 Squadron.

In March 1941, 114 Squadron was loaned to N^o-18 Group Coastal Command providing convoy escorts, anti-shipping and anti-submarine cover. Specific targets for the Squadron during this time included raids Aalborg and Bergen.

114 were based at Thornaby on Tees in Yorkshire from March-May and then Leuchars in Fife from May to July. At this time the Squadron was flying Blenheim IV.

Towards the end of July the squadron returned to Bomber Command and very soon afterwards on 11th August took part in the famous daylight raid on the Cologne power stations. Four and a half months later on 27th December it participated in another notable operation. In support of the British Combined Operations raid (the first of its kind) against the German-held Norwegian islands of Vaagsö and Maaloy some of its Blenheim's, operating from Northern Scotland, attacked the enemy airfield at Herdla.

During the first seven months of 1942 the squadron was mainly engaged in night-intruder strikes against enemy airfields and in May and June it made diversionary attacks on night-fighter airfields at Bonn, Vechta, Twente, Ardorf and Leeuwarden in connection with the 1,000-bomber raids on Cologne, Essen and Bremen.¹

In November 1942, the squadron was re-equipped with Blenheim Vs and posted to North Africa to give air support to the First Army in Operation Torch landings in North West Africa.

The Blenheim was a three seat light bomber powered by two Bristol Mercury XV engines. She could achieve a top speed of two hundred and sixty six miles per hour and was armed with five .303 front firing machine guns and two in a power

operated dorsal turret and two remote controlled in a nose mounting. She carried 1000lb of bombs internally with a further 320lb externally mounted. The Blenheim is one of the unsung aircraft of the war seeing service from the first days of the campaign as well as taking part in the Battle of Britain. It was operated in a wide variety of roles by many allied air forces. One thousand nine hundred and thirty were built but only one surviving flying example survives today and this is privately operated out of Duxford Airfield. It flies regularly at summer air shows as a tribute to the Blenheim and her brave crews.

Corporal Sidney George GREEN

Service Number: 2570331

Age: 26

Royal Corps of Signals attached 98 Field Regiment Royal Artillery
Signals Section

Killed in Action: 9th September 1943

Buried: Salerno War Cemetery - Italy Plot 4 Row D Grave 26

Son of Mr George and Mrs Edith Green. He also had a sister.

Sidney was married to Muriel Annie (nee Simpson) and they lived at 203 London Road, Burgess Hill (possibly sharing with the Godsmark's). They had married sometime in 1937 or 1938 and had a five-year-old son. Muriel was sister to Ursula Godsmark.

Sidney had been born in Hurstpierpoint and spent his early in the village.

Before joining up Sidney had been employed as a butcher and had worked for Woods in Church Road. As he was a territorial soldier he was one of the first to be called up at the start of hostilities.

He had seen action in France 1940 with the Royal Signals although I am unsure if he served with a regiment, brigade, division or corps.

In June 1942 he was sent overseas and again there is no certainty when he joined 5 Corps Signals and was attached to 98 Field Regiment.

During the time Sidney served with the Regiment they were taking part in the allied landings at Salerno.

I am certain he would have been with the Regiment for the month or so before his death and would have taken part in the landings at Sicily on 10th July 1943. 98 Field, who along with 114 Field Regiment, formed the Sussex and Surrey Yeomanry and were at this time part of the Divisional Artillery for the 50th (Northumbrian) Division and had landed safely by 10.00 am.

The Regiment was involved in a number of actions as they moved along the Cassibile-Florida Road especially on the 13th July when the Green Howards were being held up by strong German positions. The Regiment was able to provide fire support to allow the advance to continue.

After a successful, and in some cases hard fought campaign, the Regiment came to rest in the mountain village of Mineo on 13th August.

Preparations were then made for the forthcoming invasion of Italy with the Salerno Landings being planned for September. The Regiment left the command of the 50th Division and moved to support the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade with whom it would see much action.

On 27th August 98 Field started to prepare and waterproof its vehicles for another amphibious landing.

391 (Surrey) Battery was to land with the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade but 392 (Sussex) Battery were to land with the 5th Division.

The Regiment embarked on to its LCT's (Landing Craft Tank) and LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry) on 2nd September at Catonia and then moved into the Straits of Messina where the allied pre-invasion bombardment commenced.

Resistance was light and by the time the Regiment landed German prisoners were already helping to unload their equipment. The Regiment moved into the Calabrian Hills with their Canadian Brigade.

392 Battery then joined with 231 Brigade to take part in a further Seaborne landing further up the coast at Pizzo on the 8th September. Meanwhile on 6th September 391 Battery, along with 471 Battery, was ordered to rest as the poor quality roads were causing wear and tear on their Priest Self Propelled Guns.

However, on the 7th September the Allies had advanced some forty miles and 391 Battery was called upon to support the Royal Wiltshire Regiment who were facing heavy opposition at Rosarno.

Although it is not possible to confirm this I believe it was in this area on the 9th September that Sidney lost his life.

His Casualty Card, held by the Royal Signals Museum, states he was buried on 10th September on the *Right hand side of the road from Tizzo – Nacastre 75 yards before stone 11 before milestone 464 Nicastre.*

392 Battery had landed with 213 Brigade but the opposition had been light and the German's had broken contact with the allies before the 9th.

Flight Engineer Sergeant Gordon William HANCOCK

Service Number: 576889

Age: 19

106 Squadron, Royal Air Force

Killed in Action: 15th April 1943

Buried: Sauvilliers-Mongival Communal Cemetery - Somme Grave 4

One of five children to William Edward J.P and Elsie Hancock of "Hopefield", London Road, Burgess Hill.

Gordon's brother Norman served with distinction in the RAF throughout the War as well as being involved in the Battle of Britain. The three sisters were Joyce, Doreen and Audrey. I believe eldest sister Doreen served in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

William Hancock was well known within the town having previously been Chairman of Burgess Hill Urban District Council. He was also the Civil Defence Sub-Controller for the Burgess Hill area.

Unfortunately I have been unable to contact any of the Hancock family and also know nothing about his schooling or younger years. I suspect Gordon volunteered for service with the Royal Air Force sometime in 1942 as soon as he reached eighteen.

Gordon served with 106 Squadron who were equipped with Lancaster BI & BIII Bombers based at Syerston, Nottinghamshire. The Squadron took part in raids on Friedrichshafen, Spezia and Peenemunde. Gordon joined 106 Squadron in January 1943 as a member of Pilot Officer L C J Broderick's crew.

The Squadron was at this time under the command of Wing Commander Guy Gibson D.S.O., D.F.C., who left in March to form 617 Squadron in advance of the Dams raids for which he would win the Victoria Cross.

Gordon's Flight Commander was Squadron Leader J H Searby, later Air Commodore, who was the Master Bomber on the famous Peenemunde Rocket Research facility.

Gordon's Operations were as follows:

His first two missions were on 13th and 16th February 1943 to L'orient. An operation to Wilhelmshaven on 18th was followed on 25th to Nuremburg.

In March on the 8th they again attacked Nuremburg with Munich being the target on 10th. The next two nights saw further missions over the intensely defended Reich to Stuttgart on 11th and Essen on 12th. The 22nd they attacked St Nazaire and on 26th Duisburg and then a visit to the dreaded Berlin on 29th March.

His first raid in April was to Essen on 3rd followed by an attack on Keil the next night. The 8th saw them attack Duisburg again. The attack on Spezia on the 11th was one of the first shuttle raids where crews attacked the target deep in Germany and flew onto North Africa before returning to the UK. His final mission was to Stuttgart on 14th April.

On their final operation they had an extra crew member, Squadron Leader Latimer who was their new flight commander as Squadron Leader Searby had been promoted to Wing Commander to succeed Guy Gibson.

They took off at 22.00 hours and successfully attacked the target. They decided to make the return trip at low level and were shot down by Light Anti-Aircraft fire. Des Richards, Secretary of 106 Squadron, was provided with this information by the pilot Les Broderick who was one of three survivors, the others being the Navigator, Pilot Officer J Burns and Sergeant H Jones.

Mr Richards also states *"the 18 operations listed above represent a lot of long and arduous flights, the one on 12th March to Essen when heavy damage was done to Krupps factories which prior to that and the previous raid had been very difficult to locate"*

The crew for Lancaster ED752 ZN-H on the final mission was: Flight Lieutenant Leslie.C.J Broderick, Squadron Leader Jerrard Latimer D.F.C., Pilot Officer J.A Burns Royal Canadian Air Force, Lieutenant (A) Gerard Muttrie RNVR aged 23, Sergeant Harold Buxton aged 31, Sergeant William.T McLean aged 21, Sergeant H Jones and Sergeant G.W Hancock.

Pilot Officer Broderick was one of the escapees in the famous Great Escape from Sagan when the Nazi's murdered fifty allied Prisoners of Wars on recapture. Les was fortunate in being returned to the Prison Camp shortly after thus avoiding the Gestapo.

Squadron Leader Latimer accompanied the crew as an observer and Lieutenant Muttrie Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was attached from HMS Daedalus.

Gordon is also remembered at RAF Metherringham where 106 Squadron's Memorial is sited.

Seven aircraft from 106 carried the identification code ZN-H during the war. Only Lancaster PB-191 survived.

In 1943 the squadron took part in the first "shuttle-bombing" raids (when the targets were Friedrichshafen and Spezia (as taken part in by Gordon)) and the famous attack on Peenemunde. Among the targets attacked in 1944 were a coastal gun battery at St. Pierre du Mont and the V1 storage sites in the caves at St. Leu d'Esserent. In December 1944, it made a 1900-mile round trip to bomb the German Baltic Fleet at Gdynia. March 1945 saw it involved in the bomber force that so pulverised the defences of Wesel just before the Rhine crossing that Commandos were able to seize the town with only 36 casualties. On 24th / 25th April 1945 came the last of the squadron's operations against the enemy - a bombing attack on an oil refinery at Vallo (Tonsberg) in Norway, and a simultaneous minelaying expedition to the Oslo fjord.

During the Second World War N^o 106 Squadron operated on 496 nights and 46 days, flying 5834 operational sorties. In so doing it lost 187 aircraft although its gunners claimed 20 enemy aircraft destroyed with 3 probably destroyed and 29 damaged. A total of 267 decorations were won by the squadron, including a Victoria Cross awarded to Sergeant N C Jackson for conspicuous bravery during an attack on Schweinfurt on 26th / 27th April 1944.

Syerston Airfield was built by John Laing & Son Ltd and opened on 1st December 1940. Other squadrons based here during the war were 49, 61, 304, 305 and 408.

The Lancaster is probably the best known British bomber of the Second World War. She was a seven seat four engined heavy bomber powered by Rolls Royce Merlin XXIV engines with a top speed of two hundred and eighty seven miles per

hour. She was a very versatile aircraft and carried many combinations and types of bomb loads including bouncing bombs, Grand Slam and Tallboy High Capacity bombs. Her standard load, far greater than the American B-17 Flying Fortress, was one 22000lb bomb or up to 14000 smaller bombs. Seven thousand three hundred and seventy seven were built in total and at least fifty-nine Bomber Command Squadrons operated them. They flew 156000 sorties dropping 608612 tons of bombs and 51 million incendiary devices. The last operational Lancaster was scrapped in 1950 and few remain intact today with only two in flying condition: one with the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and one in Canada. Both fly in their respective countries to help the public remember over 55000 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives in the Second World War.

N HANCOCK

Service Number: ??

Age: ??

??

Killed in Action: ??

Buried: ??

I have been unable to locate any listing either civilian or military under the name N Hancock from between 1939 to 1947 in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Records. I believe this name has been included in error and represents the following man who, at the time of updating this tribute in 2003, was still alive.

Squadron Leader Norman Edward Hancock D.F.C, was one of five children to William Edward J.P and Elsie Hancock of Hopefield in London Road, Burgess Hill (next to Upstairs Downstairs).

William was Chairman of Burgess Hill Urban

Norman's brother Gordon was lost serving on Lancaster bombers with 106 Squadron in 1943 (see previous entry in this book). The three sisters were Joyce, Doreen and Audrey. I believe eldest sister Doreen served in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

William Hancock was well known within the town having previously been Chairman of Burgess Hill Urban District Council. He was also the Civil Defence Sub-Controller for the Burgess Hill area.

Norman was married to Marjorie who had served as a Corporal Radio Operator in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and they made their home in Harrow.

He was educated at Lewes County School.

He joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as a Sergeant Pilot in September 1939 and was commissioned in August 1940. Three months later he shot down a ME 110 over the Isle of Wight.

He was posted to West Africa in 1942 where he spent 6 months flying from Sierra Leone.

On his return to England he flew on many train busting missions.

Later with Hyderabad Squadron he escorted Blenheim's from England to Holland protecting them on low level attacks also attacking barges and boats in his plane. He spent a lot of time with Indian adopted Squadron's and then with Punjab Squadron when they converted to Night Intruding.

He made 17 attacks on V1 sites. He flew a Typhoon presented by Fiji Islands to RAF and was chosen to broadcast for BBC Pacific to tell islanders about the work of the Typhoons.

The Mid-Sussex Times reporting about him in 1944 wrote that he went back to his old Squadron for a day and took a fighter up to "keep his eye in" and shot down a V1 Flying Bomb!! Later Staff Officer at Headquarters Night Fighter Group 2nd Tactical Air Force based on the Continent investigating and advising on flying accidents.

Squadron Leader Hancock is listed in Kenneth G Wynne's excellent book "The Men of The Battle of Britain" as being discharged from the RAF in 1947. He was later very involved with the Battle of Britain Association.

Squadron Leader Hancock kindly contacted me in early 2003 to add he was mystified by this inclusion.

Paymaster Sub Lieutenant Robert Oswald Charles HAY

Service Number:?

Age:?

HMS Gloucester, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 22nd May 1941

Commemorated: Plymouth Naval Memorial Panel 61 Column 3

Only son of John William Carey Hay and Olive Hay, of Broadwater, Sussex (formerly "Elgin" in Burgess Hill).

Robert's grandfather, Charles Telkrig Hay, was a District Judge in Ceylon. Unfortunately this is all I know about the Hay family.

On 20th May the German forces started to drop parachutists on a number of key objectives including airfields on to the island of Crete. There followed intense attacks on British and Commonwealth troops by German fighters and dive-bombers.

As the invasion progressed the Royal Navy was despatched to harass any attempt by the Germans to land further troops on the island by a seaborne landing as well as providing support to the defending troops where able.

Robert was aboard HMS Gloucester that early in the morning on 22nd May, as part of a Royal Naval force of four other cruisers and two further destroyers, they were sweeping up to the north of Crete. As they returned from this offensive patrol the German Luftwaffe attacked them. The cruisers, HMS Naiad and HMS Carlisle, were both damaged and as they reached their support force to the north-west of Crete the battleship HMS Warspite was also badly hit by the enemy aircraft.

Later in the day the destroyer HMS Greyhound is caught on her own in the same area and sunk.

The cruiser's HMS Fiji and HMS Gloucester cover the other vessels going to her aid and trying to rescue the survivors. All ships at this stage are now very short of anti-aircraft ammunition.

As the cruisers withdraw at 15.50 hours Junkers JU87's (Stuka dive-bombers) and JU88's (twin-engined bombers) badly damage the Gloucester leaving her on fire and dead in the water. The Abandon Ship order was then given to the crew. HMS Fiji realises she cannot stay as the situation is grave with her commander, Captain P B R W William-Powlett, knowing he would be risking his own ship and crew.

With selfless courage HMS Fiji dropped all her available lifeboats and rafts to help their comrades in HMS Gloucester. Shortly after her departure HMS Gloucester sinks at 15.15 hours and a number of survivors were machine-gunned in the water by the enemy aircraft.

HMS Gloucester's crew suffered terrible casualties with the ship's commander, Captain Rowley, forty-five officers and six hundred and forty eight men, including Robert being killed. Only thirty of the crew survived all of who were taken prisoner.

Three hours after HMS Gloucester sank a single Me109 fighter-bomber flying out of clouds in a low dive and surprised HMS Fiji. With little or no anti-aircraft

ammunition left she was severely damaged in the subsequent attack by a bomb exploding on the port side amidships.

Although severely damaged she was able to limp along for about thirty minutes when another aircraft attacked her dropping three bombs that caused fatal damage. Severely damaged and with no lifeboats or rafts to aid her crew many are lost.

HMS Fiji had survived some twenty bombing attacks over four hours. Under cover of darkness the destroyer's HMS Kingston and Kandahar returned to the scene and rescued over five hundred and twenty three men but sixteen officers and two hundred and twenty eight ratings were lost.

HMS Gloucester was a modern Southampton Class Cruiser with a Complement of 830 commanded by Captain H.A Rowley R.N.

Flight Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Frederick William HICKMAN

Service Number: 1331452

Age: 23

76 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 20th January 1944

Buried: Berlin 1939-45 War Cemetery Plot 4 Row L Grave 10

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Frederick Hickman.

Frederick was married to Beryl who after the war was living in Brighton. Unfortunately I know nothing else about his early life prior to his volunteering for the Royal Air Force. It is unclear if he served as groundcrew before going on to aircrew training.

Frederick served with 76 Squadron on four-engined Halifax BV Bombers based at Holme-on-Spalding Moor in Yorkshire. They were based here from June 1943 until the end of the war in May 1945. During early January 1944 they also received and operated a number of Halifax III's.

Flight Sergeant Frederick Hickman and his fellow crewmembers were lost on the raid of 20th / 21st January 1944 when 769 aircraft were dispatched to attack enemy targets. This force consisted of 495 Lancaster's, 264 Halifax's and 10 Mosquitoes.

Fred's aircraft took off from Holme-on-Spalding Moor at 16.34. The bomber approach route took a wide swing to the north to avoid enemy aircraft but the German fighter controller managed to feed his aircraft into the bomber stream early and the fighters took a steady toll until the force was well on the way home.

The Berlin area was, as so often, completely cloud covered and what happened to the bombing is a mystery. The Pathfinder sky marking (aircraft dropping coloured flares ahead of the main bomber stream to identify the target) appeared to go according to plan and crews who were scanning the ground with their H2S (early radar) sets believed that the attack fell on eastern districts.

No major navigational problems were experienced or reported during this operation.

Bomber Commands were unable to ascertain the effectiveness of the raids until after four further night attacks on Berlin when photo-reconnaissance aircraft was possible. German reports, which were normally accurately compiled, show a complete blank for this night - possibly because the attack missed or perhaps because the Germans wanted to hide the extent of the damage.

Bert Kirkman D.F.C., Honorary Secretary of 76 Squadron was a contemporary of Fred although he cannot remember him despite them both being Wireless Operator Gunners with C Flight.

However he does remember the pilot, Victor Parrott, being a red haired Canadian. Bert also remembers the crew having another Canadian (this was Arthur Gibson) with the Rear Gunner being an Australian (Leonard McCarthy).

Fred's aircraft, Halifax V - LK921 MP-R (Robert) - crashed in open country 15km north-west of Burkemwitz, just North of Mulsestausee and 9km East North East of

Wolfen. The Squadron believes they were victims of a German Night Fighter. All are thought to have died in the aircraft.

76 Squadron were a three Flight Squadron putting up around twenty planes a night. They lost three crews on 20th January with thirteen men killed, four taken as Prisoners of War and four managing to evade capture (crashing in allied occupied France not Germany).

In total Bomber Command lost thirty-five aircraft that night: twenty-two being Halifax's and thirteen Lancaster's.

The next night 76 Squadron lost a further four crews to enemy action with another aircraft crashing in the vicinity of the airfield as it failed to gain height on take off. A further twenty-six men died on 21st January with three being taken prisoner.

Fred is remembered in the Squadron Book of Remembrance, housed in an oak case, in the Church of all Saints, Holme-on-Spalding Moor. There is also a specially commissioned stained glass window dedicated to 76 Squadron in the Church and a granite marble memorial now stands at the site of the old airfield.

Bert Kirkman explained why some of the men who died are not recalled personally by survivors *"It was a tough time. There were always fresh faces in the mess and in the section. You knocked around with your own crew and barely had time to make friends with others - unless you had known them in training."*

The full crew of LK921 MR-R who all lie together was: Flight Sergeant Victor Parrott RCAF aged 26, Sergeant Cyril Claude Vicary, Flight Sergeant Jack Leonard Miriams, Flight Sergeant Arthur Leach Patterson Gibson RCAF, Sergeant James Thomas Hadland aged 27, Flight Sergeant Leonard James McCarthy RAAF aged 20 and Flight Sergeant Frederick William Hickman aged 23.

Holme-on-Spalding Moor was opened in August 1941 and remained as a Bomber Command airfield until 7th May 1945 when it transferred to Transport Command. It closed in October 1945.

Other squadrons serving at the airfield during World War Two were 101 and 458.

Their last operational mission was on 25th April 1945 when twenty-five Halifax's were despatched to bomb gun batteries on island of Wangerooe. Twenty-two bombed primary target with one Halifax aborting and two aircraft being lost to enemy action. On 7th May 1945, No.76 Squadron was transferred to Transport Command.

It is interesting to note that from August 1942 to April 1943 Wing Commander G. Leonard Cheshire, who later joined 617 Squadron winning a Victoria Cross and witnessed the dropping of the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, commanded the squadron.

The Handley Page Halifax was a four-engined bomber that entered service with the RAF in November 1940. She had a crew of seven and was powered by four Bristol Hercules engines that gave a top speed of two hundred and eight two miles per hour with a range when fully loaded with bombs of just over one thousand miles. The Halifax carried 13000lb of bombs and was armed with two.303 machine guns in the nose, a further four in two turrets located in the dorsal and tail.

She also operated as a glider tug for the major airborne invasions as well as being used for anti-submarine work by Coastal Command. Six thousand two hundred were built and it remained in service with the RAF until 1947.

Private William Henry HISCOX

Service Number: 5333453

Age: 28

1st Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment

Died of Wounds: 22nd May 1940

Buried: Templeuve Communal Cemetery - Pas de Calais

Son of Mr and Mrs Frederick Hiscox of Warninglid*.

William lived at 58 Fairfield Road with his wife Ivy Doris May and their two daughters.

He was a member of Burgess Hill Postal Staff and was son-in-law of to a Mr Percy Philpott.

A keen sportsman he played cricket for the Burgess Hill second eleven and also football for Burgess Hill Town's first eleven as left back.

William was a reservist and had previously seen service in the East with the Army and was recalled for service prior to or certainly on the outbreak of war in September 1939.

He joined the Royal Berkshire Regiment and went to the 1st Battalion as they brought their numbers up to full wartime strength and were deployed to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). Although I have yet to confirm this he was probably an "old" soldier of the Royal Berkshires.

The 1st Battalion arrived at Tournai at 06.00 hours on 19th May. The men were bombed and shelled by the enemy prior to being guided to their new positions.

During 21st May enemy penetration into the allied rear areas increased and all communications across the Somme were lost. The Colonel in Chief had already decided that the only course open to the BEF was to withdraw to the Channel ports.

From this point the battle became very fluid and by the 23rd the Battalion with casualties taking their toll was down to twelve officers, two hundred men and six serviceable Bren Guns (a full strength battalion could be expected to number eight hundred plus officers and men).

On the 24th the Battalion was transported to La Bassee to reinforce the British line. It was during this very confused period between 19th and 22nd that William received severe wounds that lead to his death.

He is the only Royal Berkshire man in Templeuve Cemetery.

The Royal Berkshire Regiment, along with other whom fought in these actions, was later accorded the Battle Honour of *St-Omer/La Bassee*. Battalions of the regiment served throughout the war and served in the Italian Campaign, Normandy Landings, Northwest Europe and Burma campaigns.

In 1959 the regiment amalgamated with The Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's) to form The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire).

Sadly in 1994 further reduction in infantry battalions saw this regiment amalgamated with yet another fine County regiment, The Gloucestershire Regiment (The Glorious Glosters) to form The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment.

** The Royal Berkshire Regiment records show William's parents as being Mr and Mrs Frederick Hill.*

Private Peter John LAKER

Service Number: 14266811

Age: 22

9th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed: 4th March 1946

Buried: Tiaping War Cemetery - Malaysia Plot 4 Row B Grave 17

Youngest son of Mr Richard and Mrs Elizabeth Laker the family lived at Adelaide Cottages in Station Road.

The 9th Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment was raised by Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald of the Royal Irish Fusiliers at Ross-on-Wye in July 1940 in the aftermath of Dunkirk.

With the invasion imminent the War Office asked the Army to raise a further sixty new Battalions of Infantry. As his nucleus he used remnants of the regiment's 2nd Battalion, which had been badly knocked about in France.

Initially deployed as coastal defence in East Anglia, the 9th Battalion was converted to armour in 1942 as the 160th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps, following the development of the great tank battles in the Western Desert in 1940 to 1942.

On arrival in India they were then reconverted in to a Combined Operations role at Poona. However, there were never sufficient amphibious craft for them to sustain this role and it was again as infantry that the Battalion went into action from January 1944 until May 1945.

As part of the 36th Division they formed 72 Brigade with 6th Battalion South Wales Borderers and 10th Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment. They saw action firstly in the Arakan and subsequently in North Burma. The 36th Division was the only British Division in the Far East to serve under American command.

At Pinwe and at the Shweli River they won the last Battle Honours to be earned by this famous regiment over a two hundred and thirty plus year history.

As the war finished and after Operation "Zipper", with some 30,000 armed Japanese on the loose and the Chinese communist guerrillas threatening stability, the battalion virtually took over the whole of North West Malaysia from Penang to the Thai border before the arrival of the British Civil Administration.

Peter was killed just before the disbanding of the Battalion when driving a jeep that may have hit a mine. However, Ron Fagg, who served earlier with Peter, believes he was killed when his jeep hit a bullock cart and overturned. At the time of his death Peter was serving in B Company.

The Shiny Ninth was disbanded in March 1946.

Brother Joe was in the Royal Navy as a pre-war sailor and is believed to have died in the 1980's. Peter's sister married a Doctor and they moved to Ireland.

Little else is known of Peter or his family despite his name being added to the War Memorial in 1999 and a plea for information through the papers.

Gunner Albert LEANEY

Service Number: 11266876

Age: 41

311 Battery, 90 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery

Killed in Action: 8th March 1944

Buried: Beach Head War Cemetery - Anzio Plot 7 Row C Grave 1

Albert was born in Hassocks and was the son of Henry and Elizabeth Jane Leaney of 113 Church Road. They also had a daughter.

Henry Leaney had been killed on active service in the First World War serving with 131st Heavy Battery, The Royal Garrison Artillery on 22nd December 1917 aged 32.

During his childhood Albert was educated at London Road School and this is where he met his future wife Kathleen Nellie Esther as they became childhood sweethearts.

They married at St. John's Church with the wedding reception being held at the Boys Club behind St. Albans Hall in Fairfield Road. The site has been somewhat re-developed and is now the Age Concern premises near the Recreation Ground.

Albert and his new bride set up home at 113 Church Road, where they raised two daughters, Marion and Anne. It is possible that his Mother, Elizabeth, may also have been living here as well.

On leaving school he was apprenticed to Eric Gill, the sculptor. Following his apprenticeship he was employed as a stonecutter, lettercutter and sculptor.

His work was wide and varied and took him to many places around the UK. He had worked in many workshops and a large variety of public buildings throughout Britain especially working down in Dorset and other areas of the Southwest of England.

Closer to home he was responsible for the finely carved capitals and the pattern work at Eridge Castle. He also worked on the Black Lion Public House & Hotel at Patcham and his skills were held in high regard, as he was to work at and on Westminster Cathedral. Returning home to spend more time with his family Albert was then employed by Norman and Burt's. With them he worked on many local projects including the new Catholic Church in Station Road, Burgess Hill that was started just prior to his call up (this can be seen opposite to the Potters Pub).

In his younger days Albert had been a good sportsman and saw him keep goal for the YMCA who played at the Fairfield Recreation Ground.

He had enlisted in 1942 and was drafted into the Royal Artillery. He spent some time training in Scotland with his unit and just before leaving for North Africa in the March he came home on embarkation leave bringing his daughters kilts to wear that he had bought in Princes Street.

90 Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Regiment was formed from the 7th Battalion South Wales Borderers on 15th November 1941. They sailed from Greenock on 1st March 1942, arriving in Algiers on 9th March, after which they were transferred to Taranto, in Italy, on 9th December.

The Regiment (consisting of 311, 312 and 313 Batteries) disembarked at Anzio on 22nd January 1944. Its role was to provide anti-aircraft cover for the troops fighting on the beachhead, in this case the Gun Areas, forward lines of communication and concentrations of 1st (British) Division.

In this restricted area the regiment came under sustained artillery and aerial attack, which put several guns out of action and caused a constant stream of casualties.

During March the average daily loss across the whole regiment was between two and three men – totalling sixty-six during the course of the month. On the 8th March there is only one casualty recorded and therefore the inevitable conclusion is that this is Albert Leaney.

Mr Joseph Cribb giving his address as Ditchling Common wrote in the Mid Sussex Times at the time of Albert's death that *"a fine Craftsman has been lost and Albert had been a good companion to me on many Government Buildings and Carving Contracts."*

Ironically, and tragically Albert had cut many thousands of letters and badges on to the Imperial War Graves Commission's headstones after the First World War (now The Commonwealth War Graves Commission).

A headstone of the same design with the Royal Artillery crest now marks Albert's grave in the cemetery at Anzio.

In later years Marion moved to Canada with Anne living in London.

A photo of Albert appeared in the Mid-Sussex Times in April 1944

Footnotes:

Eric Gill.

Born: 22nd February 1882, Brighton.

Died: 17th November 1940 of Lung Cancer at Uxbridge, Middlesex

British sculptor, engraver, typographic designer, and writer, especially known for his elegantly styled lettering and typefaces and the precise linear simplicity of his bas-reliefs. For many years his studio and workshops were located at Ditchling (off Folders Lane, Burgess Hill).

Joseph Cribb

Born: 16th January 1898, Hammersmith.

Died: 6th November 1967

Educated at Latimer School. Served in the Royal Sussex Regiment 1916-1919 and was wounded at the Battle of the Somme. Subsequently became a sculptor and served as Eric Gill's first apprentice. Lived at Ditchling and was one of the founder members of the Guild of St. Joseph and Dominic. His carvings are to be found in churches and public buildings at home and abroad.

Private George Sidney LOOKER

Service Number: 6402460

Age: 21

7th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment

Died of Wounds: 21 May to 9 June 1940

Buried: Pont-De Metz Churchyard - Somme Plot 4 Row A Grave 12

George was the second youngest son of John Thomas and Clarissa Mary Looker of 2 Oak Cottages, Mill Road in Burgess Hill.

George had three brothers. Albert, known as Sonny, was the eldest. Followed by James (Jimmy) and William (Bill). There were also four sisters Olive, Daisy, Ivy and Joyce. All the children attended London Road School.

As a boy George was also a member of the local scout troop.

His father worked as a jobbing gardener.

George's future wife Edna moved to Sussex from the north of England to live in Hurstpierpoint where she worked at Doctor Kelly's Surgery. It was in her newly adopted home village that Edna met George one evening while out with her friends. They both hit it off together and started courting. Marrying soon after they set up home at 1 Oak Cottages in Mill Road.

George has started work as a butcher's boy but by the time of his marriage he was working on road and highway maintenance for East Sussex County Council.

George was a member of the local militia and later the 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment (Territorial Army) and at the outbreak of hostilities when only twenty years old he was called up for active service. On enlistment he may have been originally posted to the 6th Battalion however at some stage he joined the 7th Battalion.

The 7th overseas in the spring of 1940 as Britain started to bolster the British Expeditionary Force in anticipation of the expected German offensive action.

The Battalion was at the St Roche Railway station when aircraft bombed the train causing eighty casualties. They then reorganised in a nearby wood. The 7th Battalion fought its way back to Cherbourg and embarked for Southampton having caused the Germans considerable trouble in their advance through France in 1940. This action was able to delay the German advance by some two days enabling many more thousands of British and French troops to reach Dunkirk and other seaports.

The family was, at first, advised George was missing and only later they were able to determine that he had died of wounds. Edna understands George was one of those men killed in the bombing of the train although the Mid-Sussex Times reports more specifically that a fellow soldier had seen him shot (possibly by aircraft in the air raid).

The family including Edna and George's brothers and sisters later attended a memorial service in Burgess Hill for him.

Sonny served in the Royal Navy with James, who had been in the Territorial Army serving with the Royal Artillery. Bill joined the RAF first serving with Bomber Command and then as a RAF engineer with the ground forces in Normandy.

Edna later re-married, changing her name to Hewson where she set up home with her new husband in Hoddesdan in Hertfordshire.

A photo of George was published in The Mid-Sussex Times on 2nd February 1941 on page 2.

George is also remembered on the family headstone in St. Edward's Churchyard next to the grave of Frederick Cadey.

At the time of writing to me in 2001 Mrs Hewson was rapidly losing her sight and had recently stopped going to her local Royal British Legion. She wrote saying that through the years she had visited George's grave on many occasions with the last and probably final time being in 2000 when she again laid a Poppy Wreath at Pont-de-Metz. On this visit she also stood on the platform at the St Roche Railway Station where sixty years before George lost his life in the Battle of France.

Driver Arthur David LOVELL

Service Number: T/244008

Age: 35

Royal Army Service Corps

Killed in Action: 25th January 1942

Buried: Benghazi War Cemetery Plot 2 Row E Grave 17

Arthur married his wife in 1934 and they lived at 171 West Street with their six-year-old son.

Before the War he worked with his father for Mr Holman the Baker.

He joined the Army at the beginning of 1941 and went abroad in July.

In his last letter to his wife he mentioned that he had been made First Driver. A short time after writing Arthur was killed in an air raid.

On the first anniversary of his death Arthur's wife had the following verse printed in the "Memoriam" notices of The Mid-Sussex Times: *"Not a day do we forget him, In our hearts he is always near, We who loved him sadly miss him, As it dawns another year"*.

Sadly I have been unable to uncover more information about Arthur within the RASC Corps history, as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission does not record his unit. No contact has been made with any family member.

D P JOYCE

Service Number: ??

Age: ??

??

Killed in Action: ??

Commemorated: ??

I have been unable to trace any record for a D P Joyce from the CWGC or any other source.

Private Horace G MARTIN

Service Number: 6396813

Age: ??

2nd Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action: 30th May 1940

Buried: Le Grand Hasard Military Cemetery, Morbeque Plot 5 Row B
Grave 15

Born in Sussex, Horace was a regular soldier who was shown as being on the regimental strength on 1st September 1939.

In late April 1940 the 2nd Battalion was sent to France as part the 44th (Home Counties) Division to bolster the British Expeditionary Force as it looked increasingly likely that Germany would strike at the Allies.

On the 20th May the Germans invaded the Low Countries and started their unstoppable advance towards Dunkirk and Paris. At the outset the British troops advanced into Belgium to hold a number of defensive lines. However, with the Belgian and French Armies soon retreating they withdrew to protect their flanks. Once the Dutch Government ceased hostilities the situation for the British became desperate as the German Army moved westwards with the aim of striking North to cut the British and French in two.

On the 26th May the 2nd Battalion was ordered to move to Grand St Boie, near Hazebrouck, to relieve 1st Battalion, The Royal West Kent Regiment. Now led by Captain Loder as the regiment had suffered numerous casualties to officers and men, the battalion attacked the Germans in the area of Hazebrouck. They captured and destroyed a German Staff car on 28th. On this date they were awaiting support from French tanks before counter attacking the Germans. The French tanks did not arrive and the battalion withdrew. It was during these actions or the withdrawal that Horace was killed.

Nothing is known of Horace or his family despite his name being added to the War Memorial in 1999 and a plea for information through the papers. He is reported in the Mid-Sussex Times as living at an address in Adelaide Cottages, Station Road although discussions with older Burgess Hillians seem to refute this.

Lance Corporal Stephen Joseph MAXWELL

Service Number: 14409151

Age: 19

1st Battalion, The London Scottish, The Gordon Highlanders

Died of Wounds: 12th June 1944

Buried: Minturno War Cemetery - Italy Plot 1 Row D Grave 14

Stephen was the fourth child of Mr George and Mary Cecilia Maxwell of Folders Lane. They had two older daughters Winifride (later Denyer) and Theresa and an older brother Vincent (born 23rd March 1921). The fifth child was John Bernard (born 24th June 1928).

Both Mr and Mrs Maxwell originated from Smethwick in Birmingham and were married on 31st July 1915. During World War One George made wooden propellers at an aircraft factory.

George came to Burgess Hill from the Midlands in 1920 to join the Guild Workshops in Folders Lane. Cecilia with Winifride (Win) and Theresa joined him later in the same year.

They lived in an old wooden army hut at the workshops that was built during the First World War on until approximately 1922, when they moved into a new house. That new house, 96 Folders Lane, was designed by Eric Gill and built by George and lasted until 1982 when it was demolished.

Mrs G M Maxwell (wife of John) contacting me in 2000 said that after living in the property for eight and half years felt that the design was somewhat impractical. Win remembers life being very hard with the families raising all their livestock and growing their crops on land around the workshops.

Mr George Maxwell was a member of the Guild of St Joseph and St Dominic. This was founded shortly after the end of World War One by Gill and Henry Peplar (the printer) for dedicated craftsmen of the Roman Catholic faith. A chapel was built on the site, where services, prayers and holy festivals were observed. The Chapel was demolished after being damaged in the great storm on 16th/17th October 1987.

The Maxwell's and the printers also used the wooden Army huts as workshops. They remained on the site until the 1980's. There was an "L" shaped brick building on the site that housed the mason, the weavers and silversmith. The chief output by Maxwell was very high quality Church furnishing work and looms, for which they were renowned.

George Maxwell wanted eldest son Vincent to participate in the business but he entered the Priesthood.

Stephen was also due to follow in his father's footsteps and work at Eric Gill's workshop. However, on Stephen's death John followed into the workshop on his Father's insistence, although he had set his heart on becoming a farmer. Like his Father he possessed a talent for craft and woodwork.

After initially attending a local cottage school all three of the boys were educated at the Xaverian School, Queen's Park in Brighton. The journeys for the boys were long ones where each day they walked to and from home to the railway station at Burgess Hill. This would take around half an hour in each direction with a further long walk from Brighton Station to the school and back. The school gave a very good standard of education. Mrs G Maxwell as a child lived opposite the school

and she along with her mother was able to watch the processions on festival days in the grounds from her bedroom window.

The Guild was situated just before the Railway Bridge in Folders Lane and when the boys were young they used to open and close the tollgate (by Tollgate Cottage) for passing motorists to earn a little extra pocket money.

Stephen was a past Chairman of the Burgess Hill Youth Club and a keen member of the Boys Scouts in Ditchling, as well as being involved in the Rover Scouts in Burgess Hill.

Before the War interrupted his career plan he had left school and had joined Southern Railways as a Joiner.

Stephen had rushed to join up when aged only sixteen on the second day of the war. His Father, who had served in World War One, had wept on this day, as he knew the risks that Stephen would be exposed to. He enlisted in the Gordon Highlanders because of his Scottish surname and at the time of his death he had been in the Army for thirteen months.

Sister Win, when interviewed by the Mid-Sussex Times in 1995, had told how Stephen's letters became very sad and how he wrote of the appalling mud. On his last leave Win, who also served during the War, asked for some leave to see Stephen but was refused. However, through persistence her leave was granted.

The 1st London Scottish were part of 168 Division and were south of the River Garigliano when they were tasked to clear the enemy from the south side in preparation for a major assault crossing. Activity was at first limited to active patrolling against enemy positions known as "apostle" and "haybag" which had been dug under the ruins of demolished farmsteads.

The Battle Patrol had been repulsed with losses on 11th June. D Company then put in a strong attack supported by mortars and artillery. This attack was successful but heavy casualties were again suffered and only one platoon could be left to hold the position.

The next morning the enemy counter attacked and recaptured the position. That night B & C Companies made a new attack with C passing through to the river while B consolidated and the battalion then held the position until the main river crossing went ahead a few days later. The 1st Battalion received many casualties in this action.

Win told me when I interviewed her in 2001, that Stephen was wounded at Mignano, which may have been this action although further checks will need to be made with the Regimental History to confirm this. He was badly injured in the stomach and had a leg shattered shell and was evacuated from the battlefield to a Field Hospital where he died of his wounds received in action. The family received a number of letters from the nurses and a Priest who were caring for him until he died.

In 1994 the Gordon Highlanders amalgamated with the Queen's Own Highlanders* (Seaforths and Camerons) to form the Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordon and Cameron).

*The Queen's Own Highlanders was already an amalgamation of the Seaforth and Cameron Highlanders.

George Maxwell died on 8th March 1957 aged 67. Cecelia died a few days short of her 88th Birthday in June 1978. Theresa (later Gaskin) died in January 1976. She had five children with her eldest also entering the priesthood. Vincent served the priesthood all his life with his last parish being at Battle in East Sussex where he died in 1987. John Maxwell married in November 1971 but died early in life aged 56 on 1st November 1984

Footnote: Eric Gill.

Born: 22nd February 1882, Brighton.

Died: 17th November 1940 of Lung Cancer at Uxbridge, Middlesex

British sculptor, engraver, typographic designer, and writer, especially known for his elegantly styled lettering and typefaces and the precise linear simplicity of his bas-reliefs. The studio was finally disbanded in 1989.

Sergeant (Wireless Operator) Leslie James MILLER

Service Number: 3045035

Age: 19

10 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed: 12th January 1945

Buried: St Andrew's Churchyard - Burgess Hill Grave B708

Leslie was the eldest son of George and Fanny Jean Miller and with his three younger brothers and sister they lived at 1 Gladstone Road.

He was educated at Junction Road School and London Road Senior School.

Leslie had always been interested in anything to do with flying and prior to joining up he had been a member of E Flight 172 (Mid-Sussex) Squadron Air Training Corps.

Brothers' Norman and Reginald were also in the Air Training Corps.

On leaving school he had been employed as a pastry cook by Mr A N Lyle, the Baker and Confectioner, before enlisting in August 1943.

He completed training as Wireless Operator/Gunner and was at the time of his death helping to train other wireless operators at 10 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit while waiting to join a Squadron.

He had been at his new station for just three days after returning from leave when he was killed. I am certain this would be through some flying accident but further research is required.

The family requested that his body be brought back to Burgess Hill in order that he was laid to rest locally rather than near his station.

The Reverend A.J Newton-Turner led the Funeral Service on 16th January at the Congregational Church. The Hymn *King of Love my Shepherd* was sung during the service. The coffin was draped in the Union Flag.

In addition to Leslie's parents, brothers and sisters the service was attended by his Aunt, Miss M Miller and a Mr J Reynolds and Mrs Stoner. Flight Sergeant Adams travelled down from Scotland to represent the air station.

Floral tributes included those from the family as well as from the Officers, Warrant Officers and Sergeants of the air station, the Corporals, Airmen and Airwomen of the air station, Lyles Bakers, Junction and London Road Schools and the Air Training Corps.

Stoker First Class Alfred J MITCHELL

Service Number: R/KX102195

Age: ??

HMS Egret, Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 27th August 1943

Buried: Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 78 Column 2

HMS Egret was part of the 1st Escort Group, a Royal and Commonwealth Naval Force, on anti-submarine duties in the Bay of Biscay on 27th August when thirteen German Dornier Do217 aircraft attacked.

The ships had been warned at 10.30 hours by Naval Intelligence to expect an attack from German aircraft carrying some form of secret weapon. One officer from each ship was detailed to observe the weapon and its action including how it was released from the carrying plane. They had been advised that it was likely to be a "flying bomb".

With the patrol to the south of Cape Finisterre the enemy aircraft are sighted. It is believed that a combination of thirteen, single-engined, Junkers JU87 Stuka and four-engined Fokker Wolf Condor Maritime Patrol aircraft attack the ships.

At around 13.00 hours HMS Egret is hit by one of these bombs and blows up. The Canadian destroyer HMCS Athabaskan is also severely damaged. The missile that hit HMS Egret was observed to fly across wind seemingly being directed by another aircraft. HMS Egret was cut in half and sank within fourteen seconds and when the smoke had cleared all that could be seen of Egret was her bow upside down in the water.

The Royal Navy later established that the ships had been attacked with the new Hs293A liquid propelled glide bombs. HMS Egret has the dubious distinction of being the first ship to be sunk by a guided missile.

Of a complement of some two hundred and fifty aboard HMS Egret there were only thirty-six survivors. Alfred Mitchell was among those killed.

The shipbuilding company Whites built HMS Egret and she was launched on 31st May 1938 with the pennant number U75.

The Hs293A had a small rocket engine with a 500-kg warhead weighing 1045 kg at launch. The Hs293B was wire-guided version of the missile. They were released from about 20000 feet and both types of Hs293 versions had an eight and half kilometre range against their primary target – unarmoured ships.

HMCS Athabaskan although badly damaged was able to limp back to Plymouth.

I have been unable to trace any next of kin or other details relating to Alfred's life.

Sergeant John William Burt MITCHELL

Service Number: 7016298

Age: 27

1st Battalion, The London Irish Rifles, Royal Ulster Rifles

Killed in Action: 6th January 1945

Buried: Forli War Cemetery - Italy Plot 3 Row C Grave 16

John William Mitchell was the only son of John H and Annie Mitchell who lived at 45 West Street with their two daughters.

Known to the family as Billy he was educated at London Road School and had been a member of St John's Church Choir since he was a young. On leaving school at fourteen he worked for Dockerill's the Grocers in their shop in London Road as an Errand Boy and later as a grocer's assistant at Richardson's in Royal George Road. Billy had also worked for at Mr Bish's Greengrocery.

He had had been keen on Theatrical pursuits and had arranged concerts and plays with his sisters for various charities.

On turning eighteen Billy had wanted to try and expand his horizons and when he saw an advert for a grocer's assistant in Epsom he applied. He was taken on and he moved into lodgings in Tolworth in Surrey.

Billy would come back to Burgess Hill for weekends to visit family and friends. His sister (Mrs Joan Pope) recalls him having a girlfriend in the town called Nancy.

He was called up in September 1939 for active service and joined the London Irish Rifles. The following pages outline some of the battalion's travels and the battles they fought. The regimental history is very thorough and it often reads like a novel and although not mentioned by name Billy was very involved until his death. With so much information to hand I have recounted the 1st Battalion in England, their travels round Cape Horn and through to Iraq followed, in detail, by their first action in Sicily. Their early movements in Italy are also given but four major actions are only briefly mentioned before moving on the final weeks of his life near Forli. Eventually I aim to add more on those four major battles at Castelforte, two at Anzio and the Gothic Line.

The 1st Battalion was part of the 1st London Division, which deployed between Faversham and Whitstable in Kent in the early summer of 1940 in readiness to defend against the expected German invasion. Here they guarded roads, rivers, rail junctions and other strategic points whilst patrolling the locality and manning roadblocks. They were to remain in this area throughout the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, which was particularly difficult for many of the men whose families lived in the areas under attack. The regiment organised a party to visit London each day to check up on the men's families. Inevitably this often led to sad and worrying news.

A reorganisation took place with the 1st Battalion becoming part of the 2nd London Infantry Brigade where it was re-formed into 168 Brigade with the 1st Battalion London Scottish and 10th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment. With 167 and 169 Brigades they made up the 56th (London) Division under Major-General C F Liardet. Its divisional sign was the Black Cat – a link to Dick Whittington.

Winter 1940 saw the 1st Battalion take up winter quarters around Royal Tunbridge Wells and in early 1941 they moved to Ashford in Kent. Here they continued to

conduct both training, and although the threat had somewhat receded, anti-invasion duties. Later in the spring they were paraded in front of General B L Montgomery (later Field Marshal) in London. He said to them *"You have a splendid battalion. The men have the light of battle in their eyes. I am proud to have the 1st Battalion of the London Irish Rifles under my command; if every battalion in the Army was like them we should do well."*

The 1st Battalion undertook another period of coastal duty with their headquarters located at the barracks school at Hythe. The Regimental History mentions *"Some of the companies on beach-defence duties received a small anti-tank gun which they trundled up and down the beach roads behind fifteen-hundredweight trucks. It was all part of the mammoth scheme to fool the enemy regarding Britain's strength and her preparedness because, although gun drill was regularly and efficiently carried out, the guns were never fired, even on the practice ranges, and would have been utterly useless if the Germans had come. Vital parts, including the sights, were missing, but the enemy's intelligence never discovered that fact, otherwise Hitler might have changed his plans."*

They then moved to Haverhill in Suffolk where apart from more training they helped pick sugar beet.

In June 1942 the 1st Battalion was under canvas at Ickworth Park, near Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk when the King visited them. The battalion was put on full war establishment with first-line reinforcements from the Essex, the Royal Berkshire, the Royal Sussex and several other English county regiments.

During the two-year period in England, with Billy being good at sports he had represented the regiment at both football and cricket.

The 1st Battalion was then posted overseas embarking at Liverpool on 27th August, in HMT Orduna, formerly a cargo and passenger liner of ten thousand tons belonging to the Pacific Steam Navigation Company. Stopping at Freetown and Cape Town with two further changes of ship they reached Basra and after a short stop progressed up-stream to Marquill, where they disembarked.

Then followed a most uncomfortable journey in trucks through a desert sandstorm to a large transit camp alongside the Baghdad railway at Az Zubair, a small Arab village. A fortnight was spent at Az Zubair, during which there were lengthy desert marches to harden the battalion once again. On 15th November the battalion entrained for the north. The journey was made in covered goods wagons with an opening on either side, at which guards had to be on the alert against prowlers, particularly when halts were made at lonely stations as supplies and weapons were likely to be removed by locals. Changing stations at Baghdad the next day involved a brisk march through the Iraqi capital and then they entrained to continue northwards to journey's end at Kirkuk, about six hundred miles north of Baghdad.

The only operational duties performed by the battalion during its stay in Iraq were to guard the oil installations against saboteurs and parachutists, and also the many large dumps of ammunition placed in the hills in case the Germans broke through the Russian defences in the Caucasus.

The London Irish left Kirkuk on 1st April 1943 for a trek in lorries across the Trans-Jordan desert to Palestine. Training in combined operations techniques was carried out at Kabrit, a small Royal Naval station. Leave was given to the battalion and visits were paid to Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, and the Services Holiday Camp at Nathanya on the Mediterranean coast north of Tel Aviv. 168

Brigade were now attached to the 50th Division for landing operations – the invasion of Sicily.

168 Brigade, with the 1st Battalion London Irish, began to reach the island three days after the initial invasion that started on 10th July. The 1st Battalion had sailed from Suez in the SS Karoa at the end of June and left there for Port Said on 1st July. Two days later it joined a convoy of twelve ships sailing to Alexandria, which was reached on 4th July. The battalion went into camp for a few days before re-embarking on 8th July. The SS Karoa was the first British merchant vessel to enter Syracuse harbour. The battalion docked without mishap on 13th July and marched to an assembly area five miles from the port.

They then marched some eight miles to Mellili and from there to Carlentini where their task was to mop up any German forces along the Calentini-Agnone Road. They captured a number of their enemy including some parachutists.

An attack by the brigade was now planned. They were to go through the bridgehead that had already been forced over the Gornalunga River near the Primosole Bridge. This was to take place on the night of 17th July with the London Irish on the left of the thrust, the London Scottish on the right and the 10th Royal Berkshire Regiment in reserve. Support was to be given by the whole of the divisional artillery plus a field artillery regiment, a medium artillery regiment, and two regiments of self-propelled Priest guns. In addition the Cheshire Regiment machine-gunners were to fire in support, and the light "ack-ack" to fire directional tracer on the flanks of the attack. The objective given was the Fosso Bottacetto.

The Battalion's plan of attack put A Company on the right, C Company in the centre, D Company on the left, and B Company in reserve; a mortar detachment in a carrier in support of each forward company and three carriers in reserve. The assembly area was very close to a vineyard that gave only low cover from view. It had seen considerable fighting earlier and was strewn with dead and quantities of equipment and smashed vehicles. The movement of wheeled vehicles was very difficult and all trucks were virtually confined to one narrow track in and out.

The London Irish had moved up in daylight through the vineyards and had remained under cover. The start-line was one thousand five hundred yards beyond them and to reach that they clambered through German barbed wire a foot high. The order to advance was given at 22.00 hours and they moved off with fixed bayonets. The ground was flat and hard with little cover apart from some shallow ditches.

The leading companies had covered about two thousand yards and were four hundred yards from a wall, which was their first objective, when the supporting barrage opened. When it lifted they went in to the attack and with the wire being cut they reached the earth bank and clambered over. The enemy had not manned this but as the men passed this they saw another bank much higher some thirty yards away. The Germans started to open fire. The London Irish forced their way up the bank clearing the area and then saw their main objective in front of them. As they made towards it the enemy opened fire with machine-guns and mortars. Along the gully from left and right German machine-guns fired deadly bursts about knee-high. Mortar bombs burst and shells came from two light-calibre guns hidden away on the flanks. An oil-storage tank just behind the German lines was hit and the whole area was illuminated as by day. Many of the London Irishmen were caught in the glare and some were killed at short range. The crossfire hit their carriers and so the infantry lifted their mortars out and deployed them in open ground with no cover available. During a vital

thirty minutes two carriers received direct hits with one having all three of its mortar crew wounded. The others mounted their mortar in a shallow ditch and fired on. In the centre, C Company reached their objective and fought the enemy hand-to-hand among the pillboxes and earthworks. D Company on the left pushed on but became pinned down by enemy fire. Each company had lost valued officers and many men. The intense enemy fire from the right was due to the fact that the London Scottish had been unexpectedly and heavily opposed from the wood on their front which earlier had been reported empty. This prevented adequate support being given to the London Irish from that direction and their right flank became exposed. By midnight the leading platoons were back on the bank one hundred yards from the Fosso Bottacetto. This gave some cover from the enemy fire. Stretcher-bearers moved fearlessly over the ground, tending and evacuating the wounded. Accurate and valuable support from the gunners and their own mortars enabled the London Irish to hold tight and maintain their positions.

A plan for a battalion from the reserve brigade, the Green Howards, to move through the rear of the London Irish and to try to widen the bridgehead was put into operation at 01.00 hours. However, this was not successful as they received heavy casualties and were forced to retire. The forward companies had been holding but any attempt to advance was met by heavy enemy fire. If the London Irish maintained their position they would find themselves exposed at daylight on a clearly defined bank, very close to the enemy, with both flanks in clear view, and with practically no cover from the German machine-guns, mortars, and grenades. The forward companies had already suffered heavy casualties and their ammunition was running short. The brigade commander decided that the London Irish should be withdrawn by daylight.

In a speech to his men later their colonel stated "*It (the position) was manned by units of the Hermann Goering Division, who are regarded as among the most formidable of the present German Army, and by parachutists of the Luftwaffe, who are specially picked men. We have left our mark on them without any doubt at all*".

The 1st Battalion went back into the line, taking over from the Royal Berkshires on the right of the road to Catania. Here too they received the attention of the enemy as they were greeted with a heavy mortar concentration causing more casualties.

Catania eventually fell to the allies and 168 Brigade started a series of movements on the slopes of Mount Etna. Movement forward was difficult as roads were narrow with stone walls on either side and olive groves afforded a defending rearguard much cover. As they advanced in daylight they were engaged by German troops and steadily lost more officers and men.

During the invasion and islands capture the 1st Battalion suffered some one hundred and sixty casualties, of who forty were killed.

The 1st Battalion left Messina at the end of September and landed in Italy after the main landings and marched to a camp just outside Salerno. 168 Brigade then crossed the Volturno near Caserta and assembled by Pignatore. They then took over frontline positions at Calvi Vecchia, where Highway Six crossed a deep ravine by a bridge that the Germans had destroyed. At this time The Scots Guards reached the mountain village of Rocclietta where strong resistance from the Germans on the Calvi Risorta ridge had held them up. The London Irish were tasked to move at night into the hills to a gully behind Rocclietta and attack the

next day through the Scots Guards positions. However when the London Irish attacked next morning the enemy had already withdrawn.

Advancing northwards the battalion was engaged in mine clearing as well as patrolling and supporting attacking troops.

By September 1943 they were located near Monte Camino in the village of Sippicciano and on 3rd December they took part in an attack on the mountain.

The attack went in and the Germans resisted fiercely and as the regimental history states *"Almost every yard might cost a life. For eight days everyone clung on. Rain came in torrents and the nights were intensely cold. Gradually a stranglehold was obtained when the allied troops took vital ridges overlooking the German supply lines. The London Irish did their part. A Company captured Formelli, a small village on the track to Rocca D'Evandr that was the Germans supplies artery. 201 Brigade and 169 Brigade manfully made frontal assaults among the heights, and when the American 11th Corps secured most of the Monte la Difensa, it was the beginning of the end. Within a day or two the Germans had left the whole feature. The London Scottish passed on to Rocca D'Evandro and the London Irish were withdrawn, very wet, tired, and dirty after an eight days' gruelling attack. They had been in it longer than anyone else,"*

The battalion was then pulled out of the line for their first rest in two months.

The regimental history again *"1944 was to be the bloodiest year of the war for the 1st Battalion: its ranks were sorely depleted by heavy losses on four occasions. First at Castelforte, twice at Anzio which followed, and then during the long, bitter struggle for the Gothic Line"*.

In reviewing these actions, which for space I have been unable to recount, the 1st Battalion's commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Baucher wrote *"The main impression I shall always have is of a very happy battalion which would always put all it could into any job provided it knew the reason why. I found the men far above the average in intelligence, and I always felt they should always be told the reason for any order, which I issued. I shall always look back with great pride and happiness to the period March-September 1944."*

By early December 1944 the 1st Battalion was in the line on the banks of the Senio River with the London Irish dug in on one side of the river and the Germans on the other. The river had flood-banks about thirty feet high with a very small stream between the two banks. Both sides were able to constantly hurl missiles at each other and some positions saw them only twenty yards apart. There were several minor battles to whittle out the enemy, and on one occasion the Germans sent over a barrel of explosive which failed to blow up. That provided C Company with an idea, and they retaliated by sending over barrels loaded with explosives that did go off, to the great discomfiture of the enemy. Occasionally the enemy succeeded in getting small harassing parties across the river with the purpose of restricting movement and causing confusion among the London Irish. Normally such parties were not easy to dislodge and frequently a platoon found it necessary to carry out a small-scale attack to drive them back. Casualties during these incidents were not large and any attempt on the enemy's part to retaliate was usually frustrated by the support afforded by the Royal Artillery.

However, casualties did steadily mount and it was during this period of static close quarter warfare that Billy Mitchell lost his life being killed by an anti-personnel mine.

In a letter to the family just before his death he had written saying that he had hoped to come home on leave soon.

Billy had served with the London Irish throughout and had seen some of the bitterest fighting as the Allies pushed the Germans out of Sicily and up through Italy.

The 1st Battalion, along with their comrades of the 2nd Battalion, continued to fight the tough and hard battles in Italy until the end of hostilities where they then acted in a peacekeeping role in the Balkans ensuring fighting between factions did not erupt. As the final days of the war approached they moved into Austria and at Wolfsburg they met up with Russian troops.

Billy's sister Joan (later Pope) served with the Auxiliary Territorial Service during the war.

Pilot Officer Stanley Cresswell MIMMACK

Service Number: 81527

Age: 41

Nº1 Signals Depot, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Died: 9th January 1941

Buried: Woodvale Crematorium, Brighton Panel 3

Eldest son of Joseph and Mary Hannah Mimmack of "Ridge Lea" Goddards Green.

He was married to Winifred Jessie of Hassocks and they lived at 10 The Close, Norbury.

He had four brothers – currently known only by their initials – J, M, H and E.

Stanley was born in Upper Beeding where his Father had been the head of the council school from 1899 to 1935 when he retired.

Stanley was educated at Council's School and then he went on to Steyning Grammar School where he obtained a special scholarship to go to Christ's Hospital between the years 1911 to 1914.

On leaving he was due to take up a career in Banking having secured a position with Barclays although the Mid-Sussex Times reports that he was also apprenticed to a Shoreham Architect and Surveyor prior to World War One.

At the age of eighteen he joined the newly formed Royal Air Force (brought about by the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service) in the final year of World War One where he trained to be a night fighter pilot.

After the War, on being de-mobbed, he started to work with his Uncle in his pianoforte business and was also a "commercial traveller" for the Parker Pen Company at some stage.

Stanley was a talented and skilled musician composing several songs and regularly conducting a dance band in Brighton.

He rejoined the RAF at the start of World War Two as a Fighter Pilot and was injured in a crash in France in early 1940 (I have been unable to find anything more about his squadron or the crash). He was medically discharged from the RAF but after leaving hospital he re-joined in August 1940 as ground staff and was posted to Nº1 Signals Depot.

Stanley died of Pleurisy in Hillingdon Hospital and was cremated at Woodvale in Brighton.

His father was the Senior Warden of Sector 1 Burgess Hill (possibly ARP or Observer Corps?) and was Honorary Secretary of St. John's Parochial Church Council.

A number of men from Nº1 Signals Depot and former Squadron members attended the funeral with Wing Commander H C Tallboy and Flight Lieutenant I G H Drummond acted as two of the pallbearers carrying his Union Flag draped coffin into Church.

Flowers at the funeral included wreaths and sprays from the Officer Commanding Nº1 Signals Depot as well as Officers, Warrant Officers, Flight Sergeants,

Sergeants, Corporals and Airmen of his Squadron. The wreaths were laid at Burgess Hill War Memorial following the cremation.

Hoadley's handled all funeral arrangements.

I believe Stanley was related to a Maurice Mimmack who was married in 1940 to Miss Doris Mary Elstob. Maurice was son of a Mr and Mrs M H Mimmack. This M Mimmack may have been Stanley's brother.

Stanley is remembered on the Christ's Hospital War Memorial and the memorial at Brighton's Woodvale Crematorium, which is by the north chapel.

Sergeant Leslie Eric NEARY

Service Number: 1167643

Age: 22

149 (East India) Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 19th December 1942

Buried: St Mary's Churchyard Everton Huntingdonshire

One of three sons of Mr and Mrs Louis H. Neary.

Leslie lived with his wife, Margaret W B, at 111 Leylands Road.
Margaret was originally from Patcham.

Leslie had been in RAF for two and half years serving with 149 (East India) Squadron. The Squadron was based first based at Mildenhall with a detachment going to Salon in March 1940. At this time the Squadron received Wellington IC's to replace their Wellington IA's. Changing to Stirling I's in November 1941 the Squadron sent a detachment to Lakenheath with the whole Squadron moving there on 6th April 1942.

On the day of Leslie's death his Stirling I was being air tested. At 16.15 over Great Cransden, Bedfordshire the accident happened when during a "height and load" test a structural failure of both wings occurred as the pilot tried to recover from a steep dive. All eight crew were killed.

Leslie's Father, Brother R Neary and his wife, attended funeral. The two other brothers were unable to attend. Officers of 149 Squadron sent floral tributes.

The crew of Stirling R9265 OJ-N were: Flying Officer Edward Arthur Ronald Hunt aged 22, Sergeant Harry Stuart Taylor aged 24, Sergeant George William Williams aged 34, Flight Sergeant George Edward Tait RNZAF aged 29, Sergeant Irvine Norman John McNaughtan RNZAF aged 25, Sergeant James Frederick Alpe RNZAF aged 27, Sergeant Robert Macauley aged 28 and Leslie Eric Neary aged 22.

Brother R Neary was serving as an Aircraftsman and one of the other brothers also served in the RAF.

Wellingtons from 99 and 149 squadrons were among the first aircraft to be dispatched by Bomber Command to attack Berlin on 25th/26th August 1940.

RAF Lakenheath was opened in June 1941 as a satellite to RAF Mildenhall. It was then closed for rebuilding to Very Heavy bomber (VHB) Standard in May 1944.

After the war it was retained as a RAF airfield but was used by the United States Army Airforce.

In 2002 it is home to the 48th Fighter Wing USAF with some 5000 US military personnel and 2000 British civilian employees. It is the largest US Air Force base in England and is the only F-15 wing in Europe. From here missions were flown during the Gulf War in 1991, to Bosnia and most recently the wing supported the actions in Afghanistan.

The Vickers Wellington was a twin engined long range night bomber powered by Bristol Hercules engines giving a maximum speed of two hundred and thirty five miles per hour with a maximum range, when fully loaded, of one thousand five hundred and forty miles. She carried a total bomb load of 4500lb and was armed with eight .303 machine guns located in the nose, tail turret and beam positions. It had started the war as a daylight bomber but with dreadful losses switched to night operations being very a very important part of the RAF armoury at the beginning of the war. Wellingtons served in various roles becoming particularly valuable for training units.

In total eleven thousand four hundred and sixty one Wellingtons were built and continued in service until 1953.

Corporal Donald Raymond NEWNHAM

Service Number: 5345518

Age: 31

2nd Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment

Killed in Action: 6th May 1945

Commemorated: Rangoon Memorial - Myanmar Face 15

Son of the late Mr D Newnham of Ditchling Common and Mrs E Newnham of "Noranda", Western Road. He had two brothers. One, David, served in the National Fire Service during the War.

After leaving school at the age of fourteen Don had worked for Keymer Brick and Tile Company. He was a keen sportsman playing both cricket and football for the club attached to the firm. He also played for Burgess Hill Town. Don played for the Red Triangle Club in the Mid-Sussex Billiard League and had won the Red Triangle Table Tennis Championship.

Don volunteered for service in 1940 and for a while was stationed in Durham where he met and married Nora L in October 1943. Nora originated from Whinney Hill of Northumberland.

He went abroad in February 1944 to India and then on to Burma with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment as part of the 14th Army.

Don saw active service in the battle of the Three Pagoda's near Karenchauny between 26th April and 5th May. The following day was spent in patrolling and hunting out the enemy who were still lingered in the area, which had been an enemy supply depot. With many roads unmarked on the map it was an extremely difficult task that brought about many casualties.

Cases of heat stroke also increased and mosquitoes bit through soldiers' battle dress wherever it touched the body. The monsoon, with its drenching storms and enervating heat, added to the troop's misery and many of the casualties have no known grave.

Don lost his life on the 6th May dying possibly of wounds sustained in the battle of the Three Pagodas, illness or through enemy action in the mopping up operation that day.

Along with Corporal Donald Raymond Newnham there are a further eighty six men of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of The Royal Berkshire Regiment who, having no known grave, are commemorated on the Rangoon Memorial.

In the future I hope to be able to provide more information on the Battle of the Three Pagoda's and to contact relations from the family.

Battalions of the regiment served throughout the war and seeing service in the Italian Campaign, Normandy Landings, Northwest Europe and Burma campaigns.

In 1959 the regiment amalgamated with The Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's) to form The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire). Sadly in 1994 further reduction in infantry battalions saw this regiment amalgamated with yet another fine County regiment, The Gloucestershire Regiment (The Glorious Glosters) to form The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment.

Lieutenant Commander Robert Galliano NORFOLK D.S.O.

Service Number: ?

Age: 33

HM Submarine Thorn, Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 11th August 1942

Commemorated: Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 61 Column 3

Youngest son of Captain Stanley Bernard Norfolk, R.N., and Mary Carmen Norfolk.

He was married to Margaret Mary (nee Collingridge) who at the time of his death was living at 66, The Ridgeway in Wimbledon, Surrey

Robert was born on 5th August 1909 although it is uncertain where he grew up and went to school and his connections to Burgess Hill.

He became a cadet on 1st January 1927 and joined the Submarine Service on 4th May 1931.

After his submarine training he went to the China Station and in December 1931 joining HMS Osiris. In April 1932 he moved to another "O" Class vessel, HMS Odin. In mid 1934 he returned to the UK and joined H43 at Portland as her First Lieutenant. In May 1935 he became the First Lieutenant of HMS Oberon at HMS Dolphin and then in January 1938, Robert began his Commanding Officers' Qualifying Course (or Perisher as it was known in the Royal Navy) at HMS Dolphin. Three months later he reverted back to General Service and then in 1940 he returned to the Submarine Service and on 2nd January 1941, took command of HMS Tribune, Holy Loch. On 27th June 1941 he moved to HMS Thorn.

On 24th August the Boat departed for the Clyde and after a five-month completion programme was commissioned. She then conducted sea trials with 3rd Submarine Flotilla.

HMS Thorn departed Clyde on 22nd September bound for Gibraltar where she arrived safely. She had her first patrol on 3rd October where they used this as a "work up patrol".

They experienced their first contact with the enemy on 8th October when they sighted a merchant vessel being escorted by a destroyer. Lieutenant-Commander Norfolk made an attack firing two torpedoes at each ship. The Admiralty later considered that the attack should have been concentrated on one vessel only and informed the Commander in Chief Mediterranean of their views. The boat arrived back in Malta on 10th October where they joined 1st Submarine Flotilla.

The Flotilla departed Malta on 13th October for a patrol off Argostoli. HMS Thorn then received orders to move to the Tarant-Beghazi route with HM Submarine Trusty and Truant because a large convoy was expected. Nothing was sighted and HMS Thorn returned to her previous duties before arriving in Alexandria on 20th.

They stayed in Alexandria until 10th November when she left on her second sea patrol passing Kaso Strait and landed stores and personnel on a small island of the Paros group.

An unsuccessful attack was made in the Aegean on a "lighted" ship on 15th November although it was later observed to be a Turkish Red Cross relief ship. They made another unsuccessful attack on a small convoy five days later. As they made a second attack enemy aircraft harassed them. That same day the bombarded a warehouse and a power station off Voudia Bay before returning to pick up agents of the Paros group of islands.

On 24th November she picked up agents and twenty-one British troops who had escaped from mainland Greece arriving back in Alexandria three days later.

She suffered a mishap on 5th November when in collision with the Admiralty cable ship, HMS Bullfinch, in the harbour. This required HMS Thorn to spend time in Port Said for repairs.

On 18th December she commenced her third battle patrol and four days later after passing through the Kaso Strait she was detected off Cape Drapano by an unknown number of enemy anti-submarine vessels.

She reached Cephaloni on Christmas Day. On 28th December she sighted a medium sized tanker and carried out a torpedo attack but failed to register a hit. However Robert surfaced his ship and carried out a further attack using the submarine's gun where they obtained two hits before the tanker escaped.

Two days later she had her first success with the 3032-ton ex-Rumanian tanker Campina sailing under the German flag. On route from Patras to Taranto she was sunk by three torpedo hits off Cape Dukato.

She arrived back in Alexandria on 5th January.

Her fourth battle patrol, the only one by a submarine during January, started on 17th. She landed two Yugoslav agents, Rapotec and Shinko, ashore on the 22nd at Port Salonara (Operation Henna) on the Yugoslav Island of Mljet off Dubrovnik. A second landing in this area was postponed.

Then on 28th she made an unsuccessful gun and torpedo action on the 4600 ton Ninnuccia but the torpedoes missed and exploded on the shore. Gun action was attempted by HMS Thorn was forced to dive after shore batteries opened fire. A second attack was successful however and the Ninnuccia was sunk. The submarine suffered damage to her starboard torpedo tubes after she grounded by a lighthouse at eighty feet. Then on the 30th she sighted and sank the Italian Submarine Medusa in the Gulf of Quarnero off the naval base at Pola, Yugoslavia. The following day she observed the attempts to salvage the Medusa before receiving orders to leave the area.

On the 4th February she landed three agents, two British and one Yugoslav, near Mljet (Operation Hydra). Partisans later murdered the two British agents, Major Atherton and Corporal O'Donovan, for the gold sovereigns they were carrying. The Yugoslav Flying Officer named Nedelkovich is believed to have survived. She arrived back at Alexandria on 11th February.

The next patrol, her fifth, was conducted on 25th February off Cephalonia although she was delayed taking up her position due to bad weather. The 5th March HMS Thorn sank the 260 ton armed brigantine Ottavia in the Gulf of Taranto. She met up with HMS Torbay on 6th to "exchange news". On 17th March she arrived back in Alexandria after no further incidents on her patrol.

After a short rest and re-supply her sixth battle patrol started in the Gulf of Sirte and made an unsuccessful attack on three ships. She was also heavily depth charged during this attack after a further three weeks she returned to her base at Alexandria.

On 30th May she sailed out on her seventh battle patrol in the Gulf of Sirte but also moving in part of the Ionian Sea. The following day she joined with HMS Taku and Proteus 150 miles north of Benghazi to intercept a convoy although nothing was sighted. She sighted homing flares for a friendly aircraft on the night of the 3rd / 4th June but was unable to make contact and returned to meet with the Taku and Proteus. Remaining with her two comrades they set into position for Operation Vigorous, an attempt to run an allied convoy from Alexandria to Malta – they were joined by HMS Porpoise and Thrasher.

The 15th June saw her was patrolling off Corfu and Argostoli sighting an Italian battlefleet consisting of two battleships. On 21st June she arrived in Haifa completing her eighth tour. This was HMS Thorn's new base due to the advances made by Rommel's Africa Korps. She tied up alongside HMS Otus before her departure on 21st July to transfer letters for posting as Otus was bound for England.

She departed on her 9th Battle Patrol with orders to lay off Tobruk and Cape Matapan to cries of good luck from her comrades aboard HMS Otus.

On 29th July Robert requested permission to remain off Tobruk and received instructions to do so until 6th August and then proceed to Cape Matapan. This was HMS Thorn's last message as no further contact was made.

Then on 5th she sunk the 5300-ton motor vessel Monviso eight miles off Sidi Suetcher and she then moved northwards during that night.

Two days later, the 7th August, she encountered the Italian torpedo boat Pegaso 30 miles south-west of Gavdhos Island, off southern Crete, which was escorting the steamer Istria from Benghazi. At 12.55 a Junkers JU88 escort aircraft was seen to machine-gun an area of the sea's surface and the Pegaso (Commanded by Lieutenant Mario De Petris) at once moved to investigate. Lieutenant De Petris saw quite clearly *"a periscope which left a wake visible at a considerable distance despite the ruffled surface of the sea"*.

Despite the attack of the JU88 the periscope remained visible and the crew of the Pegaso saw it move at speed to cut across the track of the convoy to arrive on its port side. The periscope was visible for about two minutes before disappearing from view and by this time the Pegaso was closing on the submarine very quickly. A few minutes later, four minutes after the attack of the JU88, the Pegaso off the bow at 1500 yards obtained a good contact. Pegaso maintained a good contact until 13.47 hours carrying out seven depth charge attacks after which electronic contact was lost. Significantly oil fuel and air bubbles appeared on the surface and the Pegaso stayed in the vicinity for some time before taking up escort of the Istria.

In his report of the encounter De Petris later stated *"The submarine manoeuvred in a lively manner to try and avoid the hunt but after the second bombardment her speed had noticeably reduced and shortly afterwards traces of oil were seen"*. It had been on the sixth attack that De Petris had gained the impression that the submarine was attempting to come to the surface. Oil and three notable bubbles of air appeared in succession on the surface. Lieutenant De Petris thought it worthwhile to report that in his opinion there had been something wrong with the

Thorn because prior to the initial attack the periscope had been exposed too long to justify the situation.

The Royal Navy considers this opinion of interest, as there were suspicions that allied aircraft may have earlier attacked Thorn. All sixty-five crew perished with the boat. She is now registered as a War Grave.

All the crew's names are recorded on the Royal Naval Memorial at Portsmouth.

Lieutenant-Commander Norfolk's award of the Distinguished Service Order appeared in the London Gazette on 19th May 1942 and was presented to his next of kin. The award of the D.S.O., was recognising HMS Thorn's four Mediterranean War Patrols between October 1941 and February 1942, as well as the sinking of the Medusa.

Apart from Robert's D.S.O., other awards for the crew consisted of one Distinguished Service Order, a Bar to a Distinguished Service Medal and five other D.S.M's and eleven Mentions in Dispatches. It is worth noting that Midshipman J W M Pertwee received a Mention in Dispatches for the first, second, third and fourth War Patrols. He was not aboard Thorn when she was lost and seems to have survived the war.

The Borough of Bedford, Kempston Urban District and Bedford Rural District adopted HMS Thorn in February 1942 under the Warship Adoption Scheme.

The Thorn was a T Class Submarine and was built by Cammel Laird. She was launched on 18th March 1941 with a normal complement of 65. The Royal Navy discharged as dead 60 crew on the 6th August 1942.

Sergeant Pilot Philip Purchase NORRIS

Service Number: 740810

Age: 22

213 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 13th August 1940

Buried: Etaples Military Cemetery - Pas de Calais Plot 46 Row B
Grave 22

Philip was born on 4th September 1917 in Redhill, one of six sons and two daughters to William and Florence Beatrice Norris.

His father took a job with the St John's Common Gas Company as manager of the works in Burgess Hill and they moved to a house in Leylands Road in 1920. The Gas Company then built a new house, called Millrise in Mill Road, for the family and Philip moved here with his parents in the late 1930's.

He was educated at Brighton Grammar School and, like his brothers, belonged to the Congregational Church Youth Club. The family remembers Philip having an interest in boxing.

Philip joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve before the war and he learned to fly at Shoreham Aerodrome. During his short life Philip worked for Lloyds Bank in Brighton until volunteering for service at the outset of the war where he was posted to RAF Wittering to join A Flight of 213 Squadron.

On 16th May 1940 B Flight were moved to RAF Manston from Wittering en route for France. Early the next morning Philip's flight flew to Biggin Hill, where they refuelled before starting operations over France.

Brother Lew remembers Philip flying over Burgess Hill on his way back to Biggin Hill after action if fuel allowed. This moved the local police to make a complaint that Philip was flying too low and disturbing residents!

From 17th May until the time when the last RAF squadrons were withdrawn from France on 22nd May, Philip and his flight continued to operate over France providing support to the British Expeditionary Force on the ground. RAF losses at this stage were high but their gallant action was often unseen by those they were helping, as they operated above the clouds or away from the troops fighting to head off enemy fighters and bombers.

Late on 26th May the whole squadron moved to Biggin Hill and they started flying fighter patrols over the Dunkirk beaches. 213 Squadron were actively involved in the Battle for Dunkirk where their Hurricanes were engaging German aircraft that more often than not outnumbered them. The young pilots accounted for a number of enemy aircraft with Philip shooting down a Messerschmitt Bf109e on 31st May. The Squadron lost a number of pilots during the last weeks of May and first weeks of June in 1940. Philip also damaged a Heinkel He111 bomber, which was later destroyed by Wilf Sizer.

After the Battle of France the squadron remained at Biggin Hill until 18th June when they flew back to RAF Wittering and then on to RAF Exeter, where it became the first squadron of the newly formed 10 Group. This group had responsibility to defend the aircraft factories and other industry around Bristol and the Midlands.

Philip and 213 were very involved in the Battle of Britain. The young Sergeant Pilots were billeted out in a residential area some four miles from RAF Filton, where they were stationed. Filton was a satellite airfield of RAF Exeter.

Sergeant Pilot Mike Croskill (later Flight Lieutenant) remembers being positioned up to a "forced landing ground" in July, which was literally a field with no facilities unless organised by the pilots, themselves. Philip persuaded the Engineering Sergeant to drive them up in his car to a hotel in a small town where he talked the hotelier to let them all have baths. The hotelier obliged by charging them 6d each!

Mike Croskill also remembers 213 being used as a night-fighter unit for a period in July when they were patrolling in the Bristol area, but he mentioned this was not successful as the red-hot exhaust outlets of the Hurricanes made visibility difficult.

Writing to his brother Leslie, whilst he was at the Sergeants Mess at RAF Exeter, Philip said *"We are managing to cope still, though only just. We are working from dawn to dusk; although we only stand by our machines ready to take off. Still eighteen hours readiness and six hours off don't tend to make one very alert."*

He went on to say *"We have seen very little action in this part, but hope to get cracking some when soon. We are all pretty brassed off with waiting about"*.

Philip and his squadron flew many patrols as the battle heated up as the Germans continued their mass attacks against RAF airfields and the aircraft on the ground or in the sky.

On a patrol on 8th August, some fifteen miles north of Guernsey, Philip flying with Red Section of A Flight spotted along with his Flight Commander "Jackie" Sing a pair of German Messerschmitt Bf109 fighters flying below them. Philip flew down to attack one of the planes and Sing observed bullets strike one the 109's auxiliary fuel tanks as Philip opened fire. Jackie Sing then attacked the stricken fighter ensuring it crashed.

The German aircraft Philip engaged on his last action were twin-engined Junkers JU88 bombers of Lehr Geschwader I from Orleans Bricy and Fliegerkorps VIII single-engined Junkers JU87 (Stuka) dive-bombers.

The weather on 13th August, Adler Tag (Eagle Day), was mainly fair with early morning mist and some drizzle with some cloud present over the Channel. Heavy raids on Eastchurch had followed heavy raids on Portland, Southampton and airfields in Hampshire and Kent earlier that day.

In the afternoon of 13th August, Number 10 Group prepared to put up strong forces to engage 20+, 50+, 30+ and 30+ formations, which had shown up on radar screens coming from Jersey and heading for the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. First on the scene was a heavy forward sweep of Me109's, which became involved with 213 and 152 Squadrons while 238 Squadron Hurricanes fell in with a force Me110's who were supposedly escorting some JU87 Stuka's.

Mike Croskill's logbook records about 30+ Me109's and 30+ Me110's setting upon them.

Most of the JU88's got through to Southampton where serious damage was done with large fires being started in warehouses and docks and a number of casualties being inflicted.

Philip's Hawker Hurricane (P3348) was shot down and he failed to return from this action over Portland. His body was recovered along the French coast and interred in a local cemetery until being placed in a military cemetery after the War.

During the time Philip was killed the Squadron was flying up to 8 patrols a day, more often than not, losing one or two aircraft and pilots a day.

The Squadron received their Hurricane I's at RAF Wittering in late 1939/early 1940.

Philip's Brother Leslie served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in Northwest Europe with 52nd Lowland Division and was awarded a Military Cross for bravery. He very sadly died in 2003.

Another brother, Eric, served in The Royal Corps of Signals. The Norris family is related to three other Burgess Hillians who gave their lives during World War Two. Garnet and Roy Geen were brothers of Iris, Leslie's wife. Harry James Brownings was married to sister Bertha (Birdie).

Lew and Ken Norris were later to become part of the design team for Donald Campbell's Bluebird.

The Hawker Hurricane was a single engine fighter powered by the famous Rolls Royce Merlin XX engine. Armed with twelve .303 machine guns it was capable of a speed of 342 miles per hours. There were more Hurricanes involved in the Battle of Britain than the Supermarine Spitfire. The Hurricane destroyed more enemy aircraft than all other defences, air and ground combined and without it and the bravery of the young pilots the battle would not have been won. It should also be noted that the Hurricanes lower maximum speed put it at a distinct disadvantage when tackling the faster Messerschmitt Me109. Over fourteen thousand were built and were sent to Russia, Finland and Turkey as well as being operated by other air forces.

Hurricanes today make up a central part of the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

The Messerschmitt Me109 was an outstanding single engine fighter having first seen service in the Spanish Civil War in 1936. It was powered by a Daimler Benz 12-cylinder engine and was armed with one 30mm cannon firing through the propeller shaft and two .51 inch machine guns above the engine. It was to see service throughout the war.

The Messerschmitt Me110 was a three-seat fighter powered by two Daimler Benz 12-cylinder engines defended by one rear firing machine gun. Its performance in the Battle of Britain was less successful than hoped as it was unable to compete with the manoeuvrable Spitfires and Hurricanes.

It was however used very successfully as a night fighter deployed against allied bombers and was used in all theatres including Africa and Norway. Going through many variants over six thousand were built with the last coming of the production line in March 1945.

Heinkel He 111 was a twin engined medium bomber with a crew of five. Powered by two Junkers Jumo engines she had a top speed of two hundred and twenty seven miles per hour and operated at a maximum height of 6700 metres. Its bomb load was some 1000kg in total and it played a major part in the bombing of Britain during the Blitz.

Junkers Ju87 Stuka was a single engined two-seat dive-bomber. It was powered by a Junkers Jumo engine and had a maximum speed of two hundred and fifty five miles per hours and was armed with two 7.92 forward firing machine guns and twin 7.92 cockpit mounted rear firing machine guns. The Stuka carried a load of one 1800kg bomb or other alternative loads.

It had brought terror to troops and civilians in the early part of the war as it dived out of the sky with a siren fitted to emit a loud scream. Although successful early on it was soon shown to be very vulnerable to the fast RAF fighters and also suffered heavy losses against the Red Army on the Eastern Front in 1943.

Junkers Ju88 was a four-engined bomber/dive bomber with a crew of three. It was one of German's most successful aircraft of the war operating throughout in many guises and roles. It was powered by two Junkers Jumo engines and was capable of a maximum speed of two hundred and ninety two miles per hour. The Ju88 was armed with seven machine guns to the front, rear and below the fuselage and carried 2000kg of bombs and she also played a key part in the Blitz.

Sergeant J W OULSNAM

Service Number: 2717277

Age: 32

3rd Battalion, The Irish Guards

Killed in Action: 3rd August 1944

Buried: St Charles (Chalen) De Percy Cemetery Plot 1 Row F Grave 11

Son of Mr and Mrs J Oulsnam Chaddesden Derbyshire. He was married to Elizabeth Ann of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Sergeant Oulsnam may have been a career soldier or a reservist called back to the colours at the outbreak of war. He may have served in either the 1st or 2nd Battalion seeing action in France, Norway, Africa and Italy before joining the 3rd. Unfortunately, the regimental history does not mention him by name and I have therefore given a detailed list of the events of the 3rd Battalion leading to the probable night of his death. It is possible that with all the action that the 3rd Battalion had seen leading up to the 3rd August he may have been wounded and died of those wounds prior to the action on 3rd August. However, regardless of the date Sergeant Oulsnam is known to have been with the Irish Guards and had had seen continued and often heavy fighting during the Normandy Campaign.

By October 1941 the number of recruits for the Irish Guards had accumulated at Hobbs Barracks in Lingfield to over one thousand two hundred men and it was from these that the 3rd Battalion was formed.

In November 1942 the 1st Battalion was mobilised with the 24th Guards Brigade and moved to Ayrshire to become part of the 1st Division.

At the end of February 1943, 1st Battalion sailed for North Africa and from this point on the 3rd Battalion was responsible for producing the replacements to the 1st Battalion. In the next six months twenty six officers and six hundred men were sent to the 1st Battalion.

In July 1943 the 3rd Battalion was ordered to send its best-trained company to the 4th Battalion Scots Guards in the Guards Armoured Division.

In October 1943 the 3rd Battalion moved to Malton in Yorkshire to take the place of the 4th Battalion Scots Guards, who were to be disbanded. With the 1st Battalion being sent back to England in April 1944 after suffering terrible losses in Italy the 3rd Battalion could form more companies and by June the battalion consisted of three companies of Irish Guards and "X" Company Scots Guards.

The 3rd Battalion then moved with the 2nd Battalion from Yorkshire to Eastbourne to be nearer the Normandy coast in readiness for their deployment. They still were formed of three companies of Irish Guardsmen with the fourth company coming from X Company Scots Guards as the need for recruits joining the 1st Battalion continued to affect overall battalion numbers.

In mid-June the battalion finally received orders to go overseas and they left Eastbourne on the 16th dividing into marching and vehicle parties. The marching party consisting of four rifle companies embarked on the Llangibby Castle at Southampton on the 20th. The vehicle party – comprising Battalion Headquarters, Support Company and the transport – were crammed into an American liberty ship at Tilbury on the 19th.

The Battalion landed at Arromanches on the 23rd after three rough days at sea. The area was quiet and they moved into Bayeux two days later. Here they remained for a further two days before moving to La Gaule and La Bayude farms where they first faced German troops for the first time on the 28th June.

Taking the salient as a theatre, Colonel J O E Vandeleur described the seating in this way. *"The 3rd Battalion were in the dress circle, that is to say the village of Cheux was in the stalls with its farthest edge in the battle. The Battalion had its left-hand company - 'X' Company, Scots Guards - in the corner seats in contact with the enemy on Capriquet aerodrome. The remainder of the Battalion was tucked into the back seats of the dress circle behind the Welsh Guards in Cheux. The Coldstream Guards, with some rather cheap seats in the circle (the outside edge), were holding the village of St. Morcellet."* Here the Battalion stayed patrolling by night and being heavily shelled by day.

On the 4th July they watched a Canadian attack on the nearby Capriquet aerodrome and said a temporary goodbye to the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards on the 11th July.

The 2nd were moved back to St. Martin des Entrees with the rest of the Guards Armoured Division to take part in Operation Goodwood".

The plan for Operation Goodwood was for the three armoured divisions (Guards, 7th and 11th) and their supporting infantry to cross the bridges, passing through the 6th Airborne and 51st Highland Divisions, and fan out overwhelming the German positions around Cagny and Bourgebus. The Guards Armoured would then swing left and take Vimont with the two other divisions driving south to Falaise.

During the night of the 17th the operation commenced with the three armoured divisions moving north-east across the bridgehead. The Guards Armoured Division followed the 11th Armoured Division to their starting position at the newly built bridges over the Caen Canal and River Orne.

Here they waited behind the 11th Armoured until the bombing commenced. The move up to the positions was tiring for the 2nd Battalion starting at eight o'clock in the evening and marching through the night to cover the 30 miles eventually cooking breakfast about half past ten in the morning.

Sergeant Oulsnam's 3rd Battalion did not leave St Martin until one o'clock with Reveille at Midnight and breakfast before moving off in lorries for an uncomfortable journey being cramped and bumped along roads and tracks. Clouds of choking dust half-blinded the drivers who already tested to the limit by driving in blackout conditions had only white tapes and an occasional muffled light to guide them making the conditions worse.

Unlike the tank crews, who had petrol stoves, the Guardsmen mixed soil and petrol to make a soggy mix to boil water for food and tea. The RSM, in time honoured tradition of the British Army, said he expected every man to shave as he would any normal morning. Officers and men removed equipment and tops as they queued to shave in vehicle mirrors or used shards of mirrors or small looking glasses propped against tank tracks.

The 11th Armoured made off first at half-past seven and met some surprised German tank crews who surrendered with sleep still in their eyes. They then set off at full speed leaving the Guards Armoured behind. The 2nd Battalion did not

receive word until a quarter past eight when a brigade officer arrived telling them to move off at eight o'clock. Fifteen minutes later, the 2nd Battalion was off with No 3 Squadron leading behind the Coldstream Guards. The orders were passed back by squadrons: *"The Battalion is to get into positions south of Caen-Troarn railway, where it will be available for future action when the Grenadiers have contained Cagny and the Coldstreamers are headed for Vimont."*

At the bridges, the Guards Armoured got mixed up with the 7th Armoured Division also trying to cross. They finally crossed and caught up the 11th but they were now two hours too late and surprise was lost with the 11th already halted due to lack of security on each flank. In Cagny itself, the RAF had broken up the German defences but now high-quality troops were filling the gap as the 11th arrived.

When the Grenadiers passed a small farm called Le Priour (Priory Farm), they lost half a squadron of tanks through fierce enemy action. The Coldstream Guards tried the other flank with the same deadly results. When the 2nd Battalion arrived, they found nine smoking Grenadier tanks all in a row.

Just past Priory Farm towards Cagny, the 2nd Battalion lost its first tank. This was followed closely by two others before they realised that three German Panther tanks, armed with the frighteningly powerful 88mm gun, was firing at them from within the Priory Farm orchard. Not being able to directly challenge the Panthers, the Battalion altered their course and continued on into Cagny. The village was all confusion as the Grenadier and Coldstream Guards exchanged shots with various Germans.

The 2nd Battalion's Colonel Finlay and his second-in-command Major Giles Vandeleur were given orders to bypass Cagny and move through Frenouville on to Vimont. On the way to Frenouville heavy German tanks were encountered and this led to both British and German troops trying to seek each other out. At half-past nine the order was given to stop although they had not been able to go any further than the outskirts of Frenouville.

The 3rd Battalion had followed in their 15 hundred weight lorries and had dug in around Priory Farm. However, as soon as they had finished digging they were given orders to move on to Frenouville, which they had been told was in British hands.

Major Anthony Eardley-Wilmot led N^o 2 Company on. Colonel J O E Vandeleur received new orders but was only able to retrieve the last companies as N^o 2 was already gone. The rest of the Battalion was to move through Cagny first and then on to Frenouville with the Colonel leading the way with X Company Scots Guards.

Once through Cagny, they realised that Frenouville was still in enemy hands when a German machine gun opened up on them forcing X Company to dig in and wait for morning.

Major Eardley-Wilmot had taken N^o 2 Company to the edge of Frenouville when they found the Germans and they dug in just feet away from the enemy and waited for morning. At first light Major Eardley-Wilmot went off himself to find the rest of the Battalion. He arranged for smoke to be dropped by the Royal Artillery and went forward to lead the company back.

For this gallant action Major Eardley-Wilmot was later awarded the first Military Cross for the 3rd Battalion but sadly did not live to receive it.

At nine in the morning the two Battalions were told to hold firm at Cagny. Later that night the headquarters of the two battalions were together amongst the gravestones of the village cemetery as the Germans shelled Cagny and Priory Farm, where the battalion transport was waiting. As dawn broke they realised they were in a exposed position and came under sniper fire but with the 2nd Battalion tanks moving in to support them the position became a little less hazardous.

Here they stayed, in relative peace but for air raids and "*mild*" shelling until the 22nd July when late in the night the 3rd Battalion moved back to Faubourg de Vaucelles. The 2nd Battalion had meanwhile moved to Mandeville. The two Battalions now waited in pouring rain for something to happen.

To protect the exposed American flank, the Guards Armoured Division was ordered to attack as part of the 8th Corps along with the 11th Armoured Division and the 15th Scottish Division and 6th Guards Tank Brigade. From their position in Caumont, the 8th Corps was to attack due south through the Bocage country and on to Estry, Vassy, and Condé-sur-Noireau.

Before the Guards Armoured Division attacked, General Adair decided to reorganise the Division into "*Bocage Battle Groups*" of one infantry and one armoured battalion each to take advantage of hard lessons learned earlier at Cagny.

5th Brigade now consisted of 1st and 2nd Grenadier Battle Group and the 5th Coldstream and 2nd Irish Guards Battle Group. The 32nd Brigade consisted of the 1st Coldstream and the 3rd Battalion Irish Guards Battle Group and the 1st and 2nd Welsh Guards Battle Group. This new organisation was based solely upon where the battalions happened to be when the reorganisation took place.

The attack began at five minutes to seven in the morning of 30th July. At this time both battalions of Irish Guards were at St. Martin des Entrees waiting orders to move. At midnight the 2nd Battalion and the 5th Coldstream moved off to Caumont. Next afternoon at teatime the battle group was ordered to move south through St. Martin des Besaces to the small village of Beny Bocage some six miles south. They immediately ran into heavy traffic in St. Martin and realised they would never reach Beny Bocage before dark. They decided to stop short two miles north of St. Denis Maisoncelles and continue the attack in the morning.

At five o'clock in the morning on 1st August, the Battle Group moved on toward St. Denis. Seven tanks were hit by enemy shellfire and no progress was made until the Germans withdrew from St. Denis at around one o'clock in the afternoon. Once in town, they discovered only one destroyed German tank and the Brigadier then gave the order "*No further advance*".

All this time the 3rd Battalion had been waiting north of Caumont where they had spent a somewhat peaceful night although the weather was very hot and the roads "*unbelievably*" dusty. At five in the morning they had driven down through Caumont to St. Martin des Besaces and waited here until the 2nd Battalion's battle was over. Once St Denis Mainsoncelles was taken they then moved through the 2nd Battalion onto the next objective just past St. Denis, which was attacked at six o'clock that evening and was a success as the Germans withdrew. The 3rd Battalion had suffered very few casualties since the enemy opposition had been light but as dusk fell the German infantry moved northwards to meet them and the forward companies (Scots Guards) had some skirmishes in the evening.

Two troops of tanks from the 5th Brigade were then ordered to take Le Tourneur but reported back that it was too heavily defended. Headquarters then ordered Colonel Finlay of the 2nd Battalion to find Colonel J O E Vandaleur of the 3rd Battalion and give him orders to take Le Tourneur and its bridge over the River Souleuvre by three o'clock on the morning of 2nd August.

At two o'clock N° 2 Company, under Major Anthony Eardley-Wilmot, and X Company Scots Guards started off. After aggressive patrolling south and south-east towards the crossings of the river they seized the bridges and within the hour they had completed taking the town. This opened the road for the allied advance to continue to St Charles de Percy.

Colonel Vandaleur said in a report at the time *"People will probably remember little of these two operations - the day and the night attack - because they went easily and with little cost"*.

After the rest of the Division had passed through the position at dawn on the 2nd August the 3rd Battalion had spent a quiet day troubled only by snipers. After seven men had been wounded a patrol went out and brought the in snipers in - they were from III/752nd Grenadier Regiment of the 326th German Infantry Division.

Nothing more happened until they were ordered to move up to St. Charles de Percy on the following afternoon of the 3rd August. The weather was hot with the road dusty and littered with dead horses and other detritus of the war. They came under enemy observation, partly because of the dust and the companies took to the ditches at the side of the road. They were constantly shelled and frequently machine-gunned as they made their way along the winding road. They reached St. Charles de Percy just before dark where Colonel Vandaleur was told to capture Montchamp and Maisoncelles that night.

Having learnt their lesson at Cagny, the Battalion moved forward cautiously on a narrow front from one limited objective to another.

N° 1 Company, under Major D Kingsford, led on the right of the road to the first objective the village of Courteil. A mile down the road to the east of St Charles de Percy they ran straight into the Germans Spandau machine gun post and came under heavy fire that held them up. The left was also tried but the enemy fire was just as intense.

The Regimental History states *"that with Battalion HQ was Major Batt, a Squadron Leader with 1st Grenadier Guards, who led one of his troops of tanks up the road to join N° 1 Company where they together dislodged the Germans (Major Batt was killed the next day)"*. Colonel Vandaleur mentions two troops of Coldstream Guards tanks assisting the Battalion in three attempts to remove the Germans in this action.

N° 4 Company then moved three hundred metres through N° 1 Company to deepen penetration and take the next objective, a farmhouse and orchard, halfway to Maisoncelles, which they did with slight losses.

The combat group, composed partly of Scots Guards men, then again attempted to penetrate four hundred metres further east to try and gain the village of Courteil, but were held up by strong enemy resistance.

It was by now very dark and the country consisted of small fields, thick hedgerows and deep cuttings. This concerned Colonel Vandaleur as it might hold

large numbers of Germans and he ordered his men to halt and dig in. Events and casualties later on were to show that his concern was indeed correct.

Sergeant Oulsnam was killed in the actions leading up to the Battalion digging in that night.

Colonel Vandaleur wrote on 7th August 1944 *"The men have been perfectly splendid, full of fight and very steady, and it is tragic that we have lost so many N.C.O's and fine guardsmen during this last engagement, vis:- 17 killed and 57 wounded. This type of fighting in the bocage is very tricky as one's view is usually limited to not more than 150 yards and the Germans use snipers, sniping machine guns and, worst of all, sniping tanks or anti-tank guns to the best of their advantage"*.

Following these actions the Irish Guards continued to play an active role in the liberation of France and on into Germany until the end of the war. They fought in many famous battles, such as the ground operation to reach the airborne troops at Arnhem, and in many small but equally bitter and difficult lesser known actions.

Sergeant Oulsnam lies alongside many of his fellow guardsmen in the peaceful cemetery at St Charles (Chalen) De Percy Cemetery.

Unfortunately despite various efforts, including letters to his parent's hometown newspaper, I have yet to learn his Christian name, other details or even his family connections to Burgess Hill.

The 3rd Battalion was withdrawn to England in February 1946. The Irish Guards continue to faithfully serve their country to this day but the 2nd and 3rd Battalion's were both disbanded in 1947.

Colonel J O E Vandaleur was one of the Irish Guards most distinguished soldiers and his part in the film "A Bridge Too Far" is played by Sir Michael Caine. In September 1944 he led an attack on the bridge over the Meuse-Escaut Canal at De Groote Barrier during Operation Market Garden – the codename for the Arnhem operation. This bridge is now known as Joe's Bridge although there is currently some debate as to which Joe it is named after.

Leading Aircraftsman Percy Sydney PACKHAM

Service Number: 1460248

Age: 41

5003 Airfield Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Died: 20th January 1945

Buried: St John's Churchyard Burgess Hill Section A Grave 270

Son of the late Mr Reuben Packham and Mrs Margaret Packham.

Percy married Elsie Carter from Croydon in 1930. They had three daughters and were living at 32 Newport Road at the time of his death.

His Mother, Margaret saw her family devastated by the two world wars. She lost her husband Rueben who was serving with the 7th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment and was killed in action on the Western Front on 8th August 1918. He is buried in France.

Her son Benjamin served with the 12th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment and lost his life on 17th October 1916 aged 26. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing.

Her Grandson Ronald was killed in action whilst serving with the Royal Army Service Corps in 1941 and his tribute appears in this book after Percy's.

Percy had returned to camp after a 48-hour leave pass but two days later he collapsed and died on 20th January as a result of a brain tumour.

Before joining the Army he had been a bricklayer and had worked for Burgess Hill Company, Norman & Burt as well as various other firms.

He had joined up in 1941 and spent two year's of his time with the RAF in the Orkneys on airfield construction.

First formed as Works Squadrons in April 1941 for the maintenance and construction of airfields, it was not until 1943 that the name was changed to Airfield Construction Squadrons, which seen as a more appropriate name.

An Airfield Construction Squadron consisted of every known trade or profession involved in the building and construction industry. There would also be certain RAF trades attached to an Airfield Construction Flight or Squadron, i.e. cooks, medical staff and clerks etc. This was essential under wartime conditions when a flight or squadron arrived on a station to carry out a project or to repair bomb damage.

Types of squadron were formed 1941 to 1943 and were known as Works Squadrons No's 1 to 21 and No's 51 and 53. With the name change in 1943 a four-number system was bought into use as follows:

- 28 RAF Airfield Construction Squadrons were numbered 5001 to 5028
- 1 Polish Airfield Construction Squadron numbered 5029
- 2 RAF Airfield Construction Squadrons numbered 5051 & 5053
- 6 Mechanical & Electrical Squadrons were numbered 5151 to 5156
- 7 Plant Squadrons were numbered 5201 to 5207

It is believed that the number of men serving at the end of World War Two with the Airfield Construction Wings was in the region of thirty thousand plus.

The funeral service at St. Edward's was led by The Reverend E.F Day, the assistant priest at the Church.

The coffin was draped in the Union Flag and the principle mourners included his daughter Miss D Packham (daughter) and his brother and his wife Mr & Mrs H Packham. Percy's sister Miss F Packham was also present.

Flying Officer Titmiss represented 5003 Squadron as were members of Norman and Burt.

The Directors of Norman & Burt arranged the funeral. Floral tributes included those from the family and his squadron.

Driver Ronald Benjamin PACKHAM

Service Number: T/188522

Age: 25

308 Reserve Motor Transport Company, Royal Army Service Corps

Killed in Action: 30th April 1941

Commemorated: Athens Memorial - Greece Face 8

Son of the late Benjamin and Beatrice A Packham who was living at of 81 Fairfield Road. Percy had a sister - Lillian Beatrice.

His Grandmother, Margaret saw her family devastated by the two world wars. She lost her husband Rueben who was serving with the 7th (Service) Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment and was killed in action on the Western Front on 8th August 1918. He is buried in France.

One son Benjamin served with the 12th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment and lost his life on 17th October 1916 aged 26. He has no known grave and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing.

Another son, Percy died whilst serving with the Royal Air Force in 1945 and his tribute appears in this book before Ronald's.

Before the war Ronald worked as a roundsman for Holloway's the bakers.

He joined the Army in April 1940 and after training was sent to the Mediterranean in November that year.

It was here, on either land or sea, that Ronald lost his life. Other men from his unit, 308 Reserve Motor Transport Company were lost on ships at this time.

The following outlines the role of the RASC especially during the period Ronald was with them in Greece.

The Royal Army Service Corps were second line formations that supported units in the field. Although described as second line they were very much in the front line as they brought up the ammunition, food and other logistical supplies needed every hour of every day by the fighting troops.

These units not only transported supplies but also provided field bakeries, cold storage depots, petrol depots and filling centres as well as bulk storage, butchery and numerous other miscellaneous detachments.

Ronald's unit, the 308 Company, along with their sister company 312, were part of the third line echelon supporting the second line RASC Company, 211, who provided supplies to the 1st Armoured Brigade.

Ronald had written to his mother in February saying he was in Egypt just prior to his move to Greece in early March.

By the end of March the bulk of the British Forces were ashore with the 1st Armoured Brigade stationed on the Bulgarian frontier guarding the Ruel Pass. Although in position the British, Australian and New Zealand Forces had not had the time to really establish themselves and were therefore at a great disadvantage when the Germans attacked on 6th April.

The main German thrust was aimed at the Aliakmon line, which held the main British Force consisting of two infantry divisions. The armoured brigade, who withdrawing from their original front on 10th April as the Greek Macedonian Army they were supporting had been surrounded by rapid German advance, joined with these divisions on 13th April.

Because of the overwhelming German air superiority a further withdrawal was made to a defensive line entitled Thermopylae by the 20th.

It became obvious that evacuation was a certainty although the German Luftwaffe had rendered the port of Piraeus practically unusable as a port. The Greek Army capitulated on 21st April and the evacuation, already timetabled for the 28th was brought forward to the 24th/25th April.

During this time the work of the RASC was constant and fraught with danger as units requested trucks to transport troops to evacuation areas or ammunition, food and medical supplies to rear guards or other troops. Later in the war they would also take on the duties of Air Despatch Crews, so important at Arnhem and in the jungles of Burma, dropping supplies to troops from RAF crewed aircraft.

A large number of RASC men were taken off Greece by the SS Slammat but the ship was sunk off Crete with survivors being picked up by His Majesty's destroyers Wryneck and Diamond.

In confused operations as these, with many units being dispersed and suffering heavy losses, the accurate recording of actions and casualties does not always take place or that the paperwork is lost later during a retreat or evacuation. Therefore there is little detail to what and where 308 Company were in the latter stages of the Greek action.

The Corps history cites examples of brave RASC men holding German forces at bay or attacking the enemy often with fatal results. It goes on to say *"It cannot be assumed that that they (the men of the RASC) will not be involved in fighting"*. Moreover it continues *"During the latter period, their work was ceaseless, they were continually driving under air attack and suffered many casualties. Even when they had destroyed their vehicles and were assembled on the beaches awaiting evacuation, there was an immediate response to any appeal for volunteers to take over vehicles and drive inland again"*.

Ronald's name appears in the Roll of Honour on page 693 of the Corps history, along side some ten thousand other men who gave their lives serving with the Royal Army Service Corps in all theatres, on all fronts in every year of the war.

The Corps won numerous decorations for bravery during the war. It is sad that these men and their vast mammoth like achievements are often not spoken of in the same breath as the fighting troops. Two men of the RASC won the ultimate award for valour, the Victoria Cross, during World War One.

In 1965 they amalgamated with the Transportation and Movement Control Service of the Royal Engineers to form the Royal Corps of Transport. A further reorganisation took place in 1993 as a reduction in Army strength saw the coming together of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Royal Pioneer Corps, Army Catering Corps, and the Postal and Courier Service of the Royal Engineers, to form Royal Logistic Corps.

Captain Richard Edward Hope PARKINSON M.B.E.

Service Number: 88370

Age: 21

4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Died of Wounds: 4th November 1942

Commemorated: El Alamein War Cemetery Egypt Plot 29 Row H
Grave 5

Richard was the third son of Dr William Gerald Parkinson M.A., M.D., and Bessie Margaret. The family lived at Grovelands in Burgess Hill.

Mr Parkinson Senior was originally from Gateshead and had qualified as a Doctor in 1909.

During World War One he served as an officer with the Royal Army Medical Corps, seeing active service at Gallipoli and in France. He was wounded in 1917 and his injuries were serious enough for him to be medically retired from service. He then set up in General Practice although it is not known where.

The Parkinson family moved to live at Grovelands in Burgess Hill in 1930 on William's retirement as a GP. Although soon after coming to the town he set up in Practice with Doctor McCarter. In his time in Burgess Hill he had also been a member of Burgess Hill Urban District Council. He died aged 58 on 16th March 1941.

Richard was born on Lincolnshire but nothing else is known of about his childhood and school years.

Before the War Dick had served in the 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment (Territorial Army) as 9th Platoon Commander in "A" Company. He is shown as being on the regimental strength on 1st September 1939 and it is very likely that Dick was with the 4th Battalion when they were part of the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940.

At some early stage in the War he returned to the Regimental Depot, as there was a shortage of officers to assist with recruit training.

During the Battle of El Alamein he is understood to have been A Company commander when he was hit by a shell and terribly wounded dying in hospital later (possibly as a Prisoner of War as reported by the Mid-Sussex Times).

He was recorded as being a War Service Lieutenant on 1st January 1941 and being promoted to the rank of Temporary Captain on 6th July 1942.

I am unsure how or why his M.B.E., was awarded but would suspect it is within the Military Division and not Civil.

The eldest brother was "W", a Doctor like his Father. The other two brothers were Christopher and "D".

After Mr Parkinson senior's death Mrs Parkinson moved to Oving in Buckinghamshire.

Regimental histories often mention the death of an officer but unfortunately I have been unable to find any mention of Dick.

Lance Corporal Dennis Charles PLUMMER

Service Number: 14402663

Age: 20

1st/6th Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment

Killed in Action: 12th May 1944

Buried: Cassino War Cemetery Italy Plot 12 Row E Grave 10

Son of Charles William and Gladys May Plummer of 20 Norman Road.
Dennis had two brothers, George and Norman.

All three brothers were schooled at London Road being taught by Mr Woolcock.

He was a very keen and good young sportsman having been a member of the Mid-Sussex Amateur Boxing Club since its formation in 1938. His bouts in the light heavy weight class were regularly reported on in the Mid-Sussex Times and he won a number of cups and medals. Aside from boxing Dennis also played football for Burgess Hill and cricket for St. Andrew's.

Dennis had enjoyed belonging to the Air Training Corps belonging to 172 (Mid-Sussex) Squadron where he was a Corporal. Previous to this he had been a member of the Church Lads Brigade.

Leaving school he worked for the Petroleum Board (Shell Mex) as a driver's mate where he helped to deliver paraffin and diesel to surrounding farms.

Dennis volunteered for the Army and joined the county regiment in 1942. It is not known which battalion he served with although it is believed to be the 4th. He was posted to North Africa in November 1943 with the Royal Sussex but was then transferred with a number of others to the East Surrey Regiment to help their reconstruction after heavy losses. From here he went on to Egypt and Italy with the East Surrey's.

Being a Lance Corporal Dennis was commanding the Bren gun team for his section.

The East Surrey's were follow up troops at Cassino III. They were waiting in the forward assembly area at the rear of Monte Trocchio for the order to cross over the assault bridges laid over the Rapido River to the west of Cassino. They spent an uncomfortable 24 hours and were subjected to a fair amount of shelling. One of the Battalion Ammunition vehicles was hit sending shrapnel and munitions flying everywhere. The author states "funny how the ammo vehicles always get hit!"

Just before dark on 12th May, Colonel H.B.L Smith M.C. was asked to attack the enemy positions across the river. Colonel Smith states he was given the option of attacking before dark behind a hastily laid barrage or at first light. He elected for first light after a brief time to reconnoitre the ground and enemy positions. Although enemy resistance then collapsed and supported by armour the Battalion took the position with relative ease this was not done without casualties. Dennis along with eight other men of the ten-man section was killed.

His parents received his last letter written the day before his death on 21st May.

A Memorial Service was held at the St Albans Mission Church in Fairfield Road with Reverend E H Marsh leading the mourners and was attended by many friends of the family as well as the Church Lads Brigade who acted as pallbearers and Guard of Honour.

His Father was a Platoon Sergeant in the Burgess Hill Home Guard.

Sergeant Air Gunner Derek Ronald PUTTICK

Service Number: 1807665

Age: 21

12 Operational Training Unit, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed: 24th November 1944

Buried: Banbury Cemetery - Oxfordshire Grave 11638

Derek was born on 10th November 1923 and spent his early years in Merton, before his parents, Ronald Vernon and Nellie Maud Puttick moved to Burgess Hill. They settled in Inholmes Park Road living in a house called Glenesta. There was also a sister to Derek but no other details are known.

Derek was educated at Blakesley House Preparatory School in Merton Park and then at Ruttish School in Merton.

Having been fascinated with aircraft since a young boy he made model planes as a hobby and was one of the first members of Burgess Hill's Air Training Corps.

He joined up for service with the RAF in late 1942 or early 1943. He had been trained as a pilot and successfully completed all his training, however, a regrouping within the Airforce led to him starting to re-train as air gunner and he was posted to 92 Group's 12 Operational Training Unit. Here he was assigned to a crew on a Wellington X Bomber. He was promoted to Sergeant in August 1943.

Having almost completed this training Derek was due to come home on leave for a few days at the end of November before being posted to a operational bomber squadron but he was killed in a flying accident just prior to his course completion.

Derek and his crew had taken off from Chipping Warden at 17.05 hours in Wellington NA783 for a night navigation exercise. At around 21.10 hours the inhabitants of Litchborough, some eight miles south west of Northampton, heard the sound of a low flying aircraft circling the area. Then came the sound of a crash as one of the bomber's wingtips dug into the ground.

All members of the crew were killed and are buried in a wide range of cemeteries across the UK. Derek's funeral took place in the RAF cemetery at Banbury, which was near to his training base. Floral tributes were received from the station officers and sergeants, the corporals and members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force, as well as the Officer Commanding the Burgess Hill Air Training Corps Squadron.

The full crew that was lost that night were: Flight Sergeant Thomas Keenay age 22, Sergeant Ronald Peter St Leger age 20, Flying Officer John Herbert Povey age 20 and Sergeant's Harry Daniel age 19 and Derek Puttick.

John Povey hailed from St Leonards and is buried in Hastings Cemetery. The others in the crew were buried as follows: Thomas Keenay in Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Ronald St. Leger in Wembley and Harry Daniel lies in Knutsford, Cheshire.

Chipping Warden in Oxfordshire was opened as an airfield in August 1941. It had three runways and was used solely by 12 Operational Training Unit. It closed in December 1946.

Operational Training Units were vital in providing the constant stream of replacements needed as Bomber Command suffered terrible casualties.

Inevitably many tens of hundreds of those who trained with OTU's also lost their lives.

Able Seaman Albert Henry RAPSON

Service Number: P/SD/X999

Age: 27

HMS Mona's Isle, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve

Killed: 25th September 1942

Buried: Tynemouth (Preston) Cemetery - Northumberland Section K
Grave 14516

Son of William G and Emily C Rapson they lived at 23 Newport Road.

It is believed that Bert grew up in Burgess Hill probably attended London Road School.

Before the War Bert had been a Milkman for Mr J Reid in Fairfield Road.

As a member of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve he was called up prior to the commencement of hostilities.

Bert was killed as a result of a shooting accident on board ship.

He was buried with full Naval Honours at Preston Cemetery in North Shields and his Father, Mother, three brothers (Anthony, Frederick and William) attended the funeral. His sisters were unable to attend (how many is not known).

Wreaths from the Ship's Company and Dene Hollow School Burgess Hill were laid at his grave.

I have been unable to find any reference to a HMS Mona's Isle. A Mona's Isle was sunk off Dunkirk in 1940 but this was an Isle of Man packet steam ship.

G REESON

I have been unable to trace any record for a G REESON from the CWGC or any other source with a connection to Burgess Hill.

However, Albion George REASON has connections with Burgess Hill and with the information available I believe that it is he who is commemorated on the memorial.

Gunner Albion George Herbert REASON

Service Number: 7071

Age: 38

Federated Malay States Volunteer Force

Killed in Action: 23rd June 1943

Buried: Kanchanaburi War Cemetery - Thailand Plot 6 Row F Grave 67

Albion George Reason was born in Brighton on 26th August 1904 to Herbert Flaxman and Violet Elsie Reason of "Rushmere", Junction Road. He later married Pamela Kate and at some stage they moved to the Federated Malay States (now Malaysia).

Serving with the Light Battery of the Federated Malay States Volunteers he was captured by the Japanese in 1942.

Piecing together information on the Volunteers, the Light Battery and Gunner Reason's travels has proved difficult. Although War Diaries were kept by units they were ordered just prior to the capitulation of British and Commonwealth Forces to destroy records and consequently much of the documentary evidence was destroyed. The account of the Lines of Communication troops of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force has been invaluable. These accounts and a chronological order relating to their movements were started by members in captivity at Changi Prisoner of War Camp after capitulation.

The Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces consisted mainly of planters and other Europeans but also included indigenous Malays, Chinese and Eurasians. Initially the training of, and equipment available to, the volunteers, left a lot to be desired as the Federated Malay States Government refused to mobilise the Force either as a whole or in part. This decision on mobilisation was taken as it was felt that the rubber and tin industries would suffer as a result of the volunteers leaving to serve with their units. However, a state of emergency was declared throughout Malaya and orders were given for the mobilisation of volunteers on 1st December 1941.

The Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces (FMSVF) mobilised the following units: Brigade Headquarters, the 2nd Battalion and the Light Artillery Battery at Kuala Lumpur. The 1st Battalion was at Ipoh and Perak with 3rd Battalion at both Seremban and Negri Sembilan. The 4th Battalion was at Kuantan and Pahang with the Armoured Car Company at Ipoh. The Signal Company, Engineer Section, Field Ambulance, Railway Operating and Maintenance Company and the Field Survey Company were all mobilised Kuala Lumpur with the Independent Company at Kroh.

The majority of the FMSVF were tasked as Lines of Communication troops – those detailed to protect and maintain the links in order that supplies and communications could be provided to those troops who were engaged with the enemy at the front line. The 4th Battalion, Railway Operating and Maintenance, Field Survey and the Independent Companies were all posted to other Commands.

On 7th December all units were placed on "War footing" and the following day the Japanese declared war on Britain and its Empire. From the outset the campaign for the British, their allies and the FMSVF went badly. By the 10th December the situation around Kroh had badly deteriorated and orders were given to move one troop of armoured cars and the Light Battery to Ipoh where they came under

orders of the 1st Battalion. At this time arrangements were made for all European civilians to be evacuated to Singapore and it is assumed that Mrs Reason joined them.

On the 12th a column of the 1st Battalion and B Troop armoured cars occupied Grik. They took up defensive positions and sent out patrols. Their move to Grik had been both complicated and slowed by many refugees. On the afternoon of the 13th the volunteers were relieved by a company of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and they then returned to Ipoh.

The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, along with support again from the armoured car troop who were called to assist again from their base at Ipoh, held up heavy attacks by the Japanese on 15th.

On 19th December the volunteers returned once again to Ipoh. Two days later the 1st Battalion, the Light Battery and three troops of the armoured car regiment came under the control of the 11th Indian Division. The Light Battery and the 73rd Battery (4.5 inch Howitzer) of the 11th Indian Division were placed in positions around Port Swettenham.

On New Years Day 1941 there was heavy enemy air activity around Port Swettenham and other key areas. The 2nd January saw renewed air attacks and at around 14.00 hours a small enemy convoy consisting of a small steamer of some 1000 tons and 12 Medium Landing Craft were spotted out to sea northwest of Kuala Selangor. The allied troops were given orders to prevent any landing by the Japanese. As the landing force continued to close on Kuala Selangor the artillery, consisting of two guns of the FMSVF and one troop of the 73rd Battery, opened up on them. Several direct hits were registered on the steamer and two landing craft were sunk. A third landing craft entered the river mouth but was engaged by light automatic and rifle fire whence it turned round and disappeared behind a mangrove. It was presumed to have sunk as in spite of an intensive search no survivors or the craft were found. The remaining Japanese force turned north and once out of artillery range extinguished a fire on board. The Landing had been successfully repulsed.

Following this action one section of the Light Battery was transferred to the Northern section of the defence area which included the Rawang to Batang Berjuntai road and the 8 mile road north to the Kuala Lumpur – Klang road. It is not known which section Reason was with.

On 7th and 8th January Japanese troops landed between Kuala Selangor and Jeram. Other Japanese troops continued to press and push the allies southwards and orders were given that Kuala Lumpur was to be evacuated on the night of the 10th/11th January. Also on 10th the 3rd Battalion FMSVF and 73rd Battery were withdrawn from Port Swettenham and Klang areas at 22.00 hours. The Light Battery was then transferred to the Southern Sector Command, which controlled from Sungei Sepang to the Northern boundary of Malacca, and they were again employed as coastal defence.

However, a further withdrawal was ordered for 12th January and as this meant total abandonment of the Federated Malay States all personnel of Asiatic descent were offered the chance to hand in their weapons and return to their homes. A great many did indeed do this. However, practically all the Chinese, Eurasians and Indians decided to remain with their units fighting on as best they could.

The withdrawal continued again on the night of 13th/14th and the FMSVF Armoured Car Regiment and Light Battery were ordered to move to Pontian

Kechil where the Battery came again under the command of 11th Indian Division. Lines of Communication Headquarters, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions were ordered to Singapore via Segamat.

There is no further mention of the Light Battery and one must assume the Japanese captured them as their advanced continued. On 15th February 1942 General Percival, Commander in Chief of British and Dominion troops in Singapore surrendered unconditionally to the Japanese.

The Changi Prisoner of War (POW) camp diary in the Imperial War Museum refers twice to Gunner Reason. On both occasions he is noted as George Reason, so this seems to indicate that he used this as his preferred Christian name.

On August 27, 1942 he was admitted to Roberts Hospital (the military hospital in Singapore and itself in Changi POW camp) with dysentery, having been brought in from a POW working party on Blakan Mati Island (an island off Singapore Harbour honeycombed with ammunition stores to serve the Big Guns). He thought his wife had gone "Home", but had news from her that she was in South Africa.

This last communication indicates that she probably escaped from Singapore at the last minute by one of the final liners, "Empress of Japan" or "Duchess of Bedford", to leave.

George Reason died in captivity on 23rd June 1943 of "acute enteritis".

Pilot Officer Sidney Clifford ROGERS

Service Number: 141459

Age: 31

1427 FLT, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 10th February 1943

Buried: Haverhill Cemetery - Suffolk Section U Grave 144

Sidney was born to William James and Ethel Maud B Rogers and they lived at 29 Church Road.

His father was a Dentist.

Before the War Sidney was on the staff of Messrs Collets of Charterhouse Street, London and had been a keen angler being a member of Burgess Hill Angling Club.

Sidney joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve in early 1941 after serving in the Home Guard.

He was selected to train as a pilot and part of his training took him to America.

Shortly before his death he had been home on leave having the opportunity to see his family.

The last letter to the family was to an aunt and in it he wrote *"When I look back, I realise I had a life of luxury, a life without fear, everything delightfully safe. But I would not change what I am doing I consider myself privileged to be a pilot, 'captain of my own ship', quite a dashing knight. This game is not marbles or snakes and ladders but a grim trying job of work"*.

Sidney and three others were buried with full military honours. He is reported in The Mid-Sussex Times as having completed many operations over Germany and Italy, although I have been unable to confirm the squadron he served him.

He was awarded a posthumous promotion to Pilot Officer and a letter from the Wing Commander of Sidney's station stated *"I feel certain that you will share with me and his many friends here pride and pleasure that this promotion affords."*

It seems unlikely that Sidney was aboard an aircraft where all crewmembers were killed, as I have been unable to find any mention of his name amongst the detailed volumes of Bomber Command losses compiled by W.R Chorley. I have yet to confirm the role or indeed what FLT (is it Flight?) stands for and as such he may well have been acting as some kind of training instructor. There is also the possibility that he may have died from wounds received during an operation.

Sidney had a brother, Leslie, who was married and had worked in a cycle shop in Church Road before joining up to serve in the RAF as a Leading Aircraftsman.

In a memoriam notice placed by the family to mark the first anniversary of his death the family refer to him as Clifford and there is a mention of "Muffett"

Private Charles Herbert ROUGHT

Service Number: 14603502

Age: 35

1st Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Killed in Action: 18th February 1944

Buried: Cassino War Cemetery - Italy Plot 18 Row C Grave 6

Charles was born in Plumpton and lived in the village until the age of 11 when his Father died. After a period his mother, Miriam Emily, remarried to John Vine.

Miriam and her family of four boys and a girl moved into her new husband's home at Marchant's Farm Cottages in Streat where John Vine worked as a Cowman. The second marriage produced two boys, John and Joseph, and 1 girl.

Charles, known as Nobby to all, met Maud in Burgess Hill and at some stage in the sometime in the early 1930's they married and made their home at 9 Jubilee Cottages, St Mary's Road.

He had worked as a bricklayer for a number of companies, including the firm of Arthur Twaites of Plumpton.

He was also a very keen footballer and turned out for Plumpton at weekends.

Nobby was called up for service in June 1943 and enlisted with the Royal Sussex Regiment at Haywards Heath. After his basic training he joined the regiment at its headquarters, Rousillon Barracks in Chichester. He was posted to the 1st Battalion and sent overseas to join them just after Christmas in 1943.

His brother, William Thomas Rought also served with the regiment for a total of fourteen years with seven being in the colours and seven on reserve. His half brothers, Joseph and John Vine, also served with the regiment and had been with them during the African Campaign in 1940 to 1943.

Nobby had written to the family that he had met his half brother John Vine, who was a corporal with the Royal Sussex Regiment, in a NAAFI (Navy Army Air Forces Institute) near Cassino.

A couple of days later after this meeting they were both killed in action on the same day, possibly on the attack the Battalion made on Point 593.

Warrant Officer Wireless Operator (Air) Norman Frederick ROUSE

Service Number: 954186

Age: 23

105 (Transport) Operational Training Unit, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 24th March 1945

Buried: St Margaret's Church Lowestoft Suffolk Section 3 Row A Grave 23

Norman was married to "E G" who originated or was living in Lowestoft.

Number 105 Operational Training Unit was based at Bramcote near Nuneaton in Warwickshire where it trained aircrew for transportation duties. It is believed that 105 OTU operated Vickers WellingtonX's.

Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any information about Norman, his family or their connections to Burgess Hill. A letter to St Margaret's Church in 2003 went unanswered.

Flying Officer Robert Alfred SCRASE

Service Number: 166036

Age: 20

The Glider Pilot Regiment

Killed in Action: 24th March 1945

Buried: Reichswald Forest War Cemetery Plot 21 Row G Grave 13

Robert was the only son of the late Harry Alfred and Ethel Florence Scrase.

Grandson of Mr Alfred P Scrase of Glendor, Silverdale Road, the former Chairman of Burgess Hill Urban District Council and the late Mrs Scrase of Tower House. Alfred had five sons, including Harry. All five served in the First World War.

Robert was educated at Hill-Crest Preparatory School in Haywards Heath and Brighton College. His pupil number at Brighton College was 7146 and during his time there he represented the College at Rugby in the 1st XV. The College has a photograph of the team but sadly Robert was away when this was taken.

He had two aunt's living at Bankside and The Limes Ditchling Common and it was the Bankside address that is given for him during his time at Brighton College, as his Mother had died in 1942. The date of his father's death is unknown.

He took the Royal Air Force course at Southampton University and joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve. He volunteered for service with the RAF and was accepted in 1942, being trained as a Pilot in Canada.

During 1943 as the invasion of Europe was being planned it was realised that another airborne division was required and on 23rd April orders were given to form the 6th Airborne Division. The divisional number was chosen to confuse the Germans about the British order of battle as only one other airborne division existed, the 1st Airborne Division who were already formed and taking part in actions in North Africa. Due to the uncertainty of when Robert joined the Glider Pilot Regiment I am unable to say if he served with the 1st and 6th Airborne Division during the invasions of Sicily and Normandy respectively.

Robert may have volunteered for the specialist airborne unit, the Glider Pilot Regiment, whose job was to pilot gliders and their cargoes or compliment of troops in to action. The Glider Pilot Regimental Association believe that Robert was one of many RAF pilots seconded to the regiment to replace the heavy losses suffered during the Arnhem operations undertaken by 1st Airborne Division in September 1944.

As a trained RAF pilot Robert attended one of the short courses run to provide these men with infantry training to ensure they were able to fly in their gliders and then fight alongside those he had delivered, which was the role of glider pilots once on the ground.

As the war progressed through late 1944 and into 1945 the allies, after continuously fighting tough battles and actions against German forces, had pushed up to the river Rhine. The Rhine was the last major river obstacle to be crossed and once across on the eastern bank it would allow the troops to break out into the German hinterland.

Operation Varsity was the codenamed operation for the allied airborne assaults to cross the Rhine in what became a pivotal battle in the war and was to become the largest ever airlift in history.

Number 1 Wing, Glider Pilot Regiment provided the pilots to fly 440 Horsa and Hamilcar gliders and where possible they were crewed by one army and one ex-RAF pilot.

The airborne assault would deliver some 14000 men of XVIII US Airborne Corps, consisting of the British 6th Airborne and 17th American Airborne Divisions, on the ground.

They were tasked to seize and hold Diersfordterwald and the ground north of the Wesel up to the River Issel, and secondly the defence of the bridgehead against enemy counter attacks. Once achieved the 6th Airlanding Brigade was tasked to land in company groups as close as possible to their allocated objectives.

Headquarters 6th Airlanding Brigade and the 12th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment would land on LZ "R" (Landing Zone) south west of Hamminkeln, the battalion was tasked to capture the town. The 2nd Battalion, The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry would land on LZ "O" north of Hamminkeln and would take and secure road and rail bridges over the River Issel between Hamminkeln and Ringenberg. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles would land on LZ "U" south of Hamminkeln and would seize and hold the bridge over the Issel on the main road from Hamminkeln to Brunnen.

Headquarters 6th Airborne Division, Headquarters Royal Engineers, two batteries of 53rd (Worcestershire Yeomanry) Airlanding Light Regiment Royal Artillery, the light tank squadron and the 4.2 inch mortar troop of 6th Airborne Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment along with three troops of sappers and a number of other supporting elements would land on LZ "P" north east of Diersfordterwald near Kopenhof, where the main divisional headquarters would be established.

On the night of 23rd March around three and half thousand artillery guns opened fire against the opposing German forces on the east bank of the River Rhine. This added to the heavy bombing that the allies had commenced on 21st February, with three thousand four hundred and seventy one bombers dropping eight thousand five hundred tons of bombs on roads, railways and airfields. Another two thousand and ninety bombers dropped a further six thousand six hundred tons on enemy barracks and positions. Allied fighter aircraft also carried out sweeps over the eastern Rhine area, attacking convoys and anti-aircraft batteries.

At 21.00 hours on 23rd March, men of the 1st Commando Brigade crossed the Rhine in assault boats, while RAF Lancaster's bombed the town of Wesel. At 22.00 hours 12th (British) Corps commenced crossing near Xanten thus launching the land phase of the assault, Operation Plunder. At 23.00 hours 30th (British) Corps crossed the Rhine further north. By nine o'clock the next morning the US 9th Army had started to cross south of Wesel and by dawn 21st (British) Army Group had established a number of bridgeheads on the East Side of the River Rhine.

At 05.30 hours the 6th Airborne Division were already aside their gliders or Dakota aircraft. The dawn broke clear and bright and at seven thirty the huge armada of transport aircraft, gliders and tugs moved off heading for Germany. Over Belgium, the division's aircraft turned north-east and joined the column carrying the 17th American Airborne Division.

As a measure of the allies' pre-assault air offensive and their control of the skies the flight to Germany was without incident. However, as they arrived over the Rhine they flew into heavy anti-aircraft fire and a number of gliders were hit causing casualties and damaging equipment.

The anti-aircraft fire and the heavy smoke over the area also made landing very difficult with a number of pilots unable to pick up their bearings and consequently landing in the wrong place. The Flak caused damage to some gliders in the air destroying them or forcing crash landings, whilst others burst into flames on touching down. Contemporary reports state that although it was a chaotic and very dangerous scene sufficient numbers of each battalion were landed in the correct areas. Furthermore, parties were able to take the bridges over the River Issel. Once landed, the Brigade met fierce resistance and their casualties mounted as the German defenders, in strong points of converted farmhouses backed up by armoured vehicles and self-propelled artillery were encountered.

The entire force for Operation Varsity was landed in just sixty-three minutes with aircraft from the RAF including Spitfire fighters and rocket firing Typhoons supporting the ground troops. One thousand two hundred and twenty seven American P40 Thunderbolts and P51 Mustangs fighters with two hundred and thirty nine B-24 four-engined Liberator bombers dropped essential supplies within an hour of the landings. Over two hundred aircraft of the 8th US Air Force carried out support sweeps to ensure their American and British colleagues carrying out their bombing and supply missions could do so unhindered. Aircraft from the RAF and USAAF carried out further bombing raids in support of the landings as the day continued.

Although mortally wounded by flak on the decent Robert was able to fly his glider onto the LZ and deliver the load. It is reported that although he received immediate medical attention he died shortly afterwards on this, his first operational flight.

Of the four hundred and two gliders that reached the landing zone only eighty-eight landed without sustaining damage. The mission was successful and enabled to allied armies to spread out eastwards into the German hinterland but the cost had been heavy.

The 6th Airborne Division had 347 men killed and 731 wounded. The Glider Pilot Regiment lost 101 pilots, including the RAF pilots, who wore the Red Beret although the Air Ministry forbade this. The RAF lost 43 killed, 153 wounded with 163 aircrew posted as missing.

Corporal Stanley Reuben SIGGINS

Service Number: 13064787

Age: 30

207 Company, The Pioneer Corps

Died: 6th June 1943

Buried: North Front Cemetery, Gibraltar Plot 2, Row H, Grave 2

Son of Robert Stanley and Harriett Siggins.

Stanley was married to Dorothy Florence (nee Redley) making their home at 15 Junction Road in Burgess Hill.

It is not certain when Stanley joined the army although his service number indicates that he would not have served with the British Expeditionary Force in France in 1940.

207 Company was formed at Clacton on 9th September 1940 under the command of Major A.C Riddett D.C.M. Two days later the company moved to Burgess Hill where they stayed for a month before moving to Newington Butts in London on 12th October.

The company was commanded by a major and generally consisted of ten sections of twenty-six men. A sergeant commanded each section with two sections being overseen by lieutenants. The full strength was around seven officers and two hundred and ninety men.

Their time in London was a stressful period where they worked for long periods assisting the civil authorities during the Blitz. They suffered their first casualties on 11th January 1941 when Privates Tompkins and Evans were killed in an air raid. The following day Private Lainton was killed when a German bomb struck the Company's billet at Rowton House.

They moved to a new billet at the Kennington Oval on 14th January and began work for five solid days clearing debris at the Salvation Army Hostel in Westminster Bridge Road.

On 20th January they moved to Reigate with their Headquarters being established at the Lowfield Hotel with the troops being billeted on Lowfield Heath. They then experienced further moves to Charlwood Park Farm in Reigate and on to Redhill. Detachments of men were sent to Biggin Hill and Redhill Aerodromes to support the RAF.

The War Diary becomes illegible at this stage although they remained on "miscellaneous" duties around the Redhill area.

At some stage, perhaps in late October 1942, 207 Company moved to Scotland where on the 1st November they boarded the "Cameronia" at Gourrock.

They arrived at Algiers on 13th November where they were soon put to work unloading ships full of supplies. This valuable work continued right through the year and onto the following March when on the 6th they embarked for Gibraltar for work on the airfield.

Their task here was to dig large tunnels for storage and accommodation safe from enemy air raids and bombardment. The spoil from the tunnels was to be used to extend the airfield in order that it could take heavier bombers and larger transport aircraft.

They were also actively engaged in the defence of Gibraltar and as such were heavily armed. This firepower included one x 6 pounder Quick Firing (QF) gun; eight 6-inch mortars, two 2-inch mortars; eight Bren light machine guns and four Thomson guns with all of the Company carrying personal weapons (.303 Lee Enfield Rifles for the men and Webley pistols for the officers)

This work continued but on 6th June the War Diary for 207 Company reports that a Corporal drowned whilst bathing. Stanley was buried in the Island's cemetery with his company attending the funeral.

His widow placed a small notice in the Deaths column but there is no other information concerning Stanley's death in editions of the Mid-Sussex Times.

207 Company continued working in Gibraltar until 6th March 1944 when they returned to Scotland by ship where they were posted to Kinghorn.

Pioneers are often thought as being "unskilled" labour that dug trenches. However, all these men were trained infantry soldiers and their skills were wide and far ranging. They often undertook some of the hardest and most unpleasant jobs of any troops on the battlefield, including construction work under fire and the burying of the dead. Pioneers served with airborne troops and many joined the commandos as support troops or acted as specialists on missions

They won numerous awards and citations for gallantry and bravery and suffered a heavy number of casualties during the war.

For their work and dedication during the Second World War King George VI bestowed the title Royal on them in 1946 where upon they became The Royal Pioneer Corps.

Sergeant Harold Thomas SIMMONDS

Service Number: 1248156

Age: 22

617 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in Action: 15th September 1943

Commemorated: Runnymede Memorial - Surrey Panel 96

Harold was born on 25th December 1921 in Brighton General and was the only son of Thomas and Elizabeth Simmonds.

Thomas was a gardener and had met Elizabeth whilst they were both working in service. Local to the Burgess Hill area they settled together in the town living at 128 Church Road with Harold and their daughter, Grace (later Blackburn). Thomas had died prior to 1943.

Harold attended London Road School and had been a member of Burgess Hill Swimming Club as well as attending Boy Scouts.

After leaving school he started his working career as a chief at Bolney Grange but had a desire to become a pilot. With war breaking out in 1939 and Harold being able to be accepted for service into the armed forces at the age of eighteen he saw this as his route to achieving his career plans.

In early 1941, as soon as he reached eighteen, Harold volunteered for service in the Royal Air Force initially attending N^o 2 Recruiting Centre on 22nd March 1941 and from there he moved to N^o 3 Recruiting Centre six months later. After three weeks Harold then transferred to N^o 10 (S) Recruiting Centre. He was subsequently posted to RAF Kemble, a Maintenance Unit, on 5th January 1942 and then on to the Coastal Command Station of Mount Batten near Plymouth on 29th May before going to N^o 11 School of Technical Training on 9th September. Although his wish was to be a pilot and flying it is believed by 617 Squadron that until this time Harold was serving as ground crew.

Presumably volunteering for aircrew duties, he was posted to N^o 2 Air Gunners School at Dalcross, near Inverness on 6th November 1942.

During this time Harold also had a girlfriend, Phillis and although they may have met in Burgess Hill or at Bolney Grange this is not certain and they may have met whilst he was serving at one of the aforementioned training stations. Little else is known about Phillis but Grace, who was 17 in 1943, provided me with a photograph of them taken in 1942 in Warrington, Cheshire.

On completion of his gunnery training on 5th January 1943 he was sent to N^o 1660 Conversion Unit, Swinderby in Lincolnshire, to join a newly formed Lancaster crew where he was to complete his training prior to joining an operational squadron. He joined 97 Squadron at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire on 15th March 1943.

Harold may have completed a few missions with N^o 97 but he stayed only a short time as he was transferred to 617 Squadron on 25th March to start training for a special operation – the Dams Raid.

Harold took part in the legendary Dams Raid in 1943 as part of the Squadron formed by Wing Commander Guy Gibson D.S.O.*, D.F.C.*, to drop the bouncing bombs designed by Barnes Wallace on the Dams across the Moehne, Eder and Sorpe rivers.

The aims of the raid were threefold. 1. Cut water supplies for industrial and domestic use. 2. Cause flooding and damage to industrial plants, railtracks and waterways in the valley. 3. Prevent sufficient supplies of water for use in the inland waterway systems that carried much war materiel and supplies.

The design of the bouncing bomb was revolutionary and the training they were required to undertake was new and had to be designed and adapted as they went. Tactics, aircraft handling and aiming the weapon all had to be thought about and practised. To ensure the training was as realistic as possible the crews used a number of locations but particularly at Derwent Water in Derbyshire. The dam here had a close resemblance to that of the Moehne and was selected to provide the crews with the intensive training required and so the crews found themselves "bombing" this many times as they honed their skills.

On the night of the Dams Raid, 17th May 1943, Harold was the rear-gunner in Lancaster ED-906 AJ-J for Johnny. A Flight included Gibson's aircraft (ED-932 AJ-G for George) and was the first wave to attack the Moehne Dam.

At 00.28hours Gibson's Lancaster attacked the dam at a height of sixty feet. The first bouncing bomb dropped on target but failed to breach the dam. Gibson then turned his aircraft around to link up and fly in with another Lancaster, AJ-P, in order to provide extra protection from anti-aircraft fire for the next aircraft in.

This second aircraft, AJ-M for Mother, piloted by Flight Lieutenant J V Hopgood D.F.C*, was hit by heavy flak on its bomb run but the crew did manage to release the bomb although it bounced harmlessly over the wall. AJ-M was badly damaged and crashed shortly afterwards. Only two of the eight-man crew survived to become Prisoners of War. John Hopgood who was awarded a D.S.O., was killed.

AJ-P for Popsie piloted by Flight-Lieutenant Harold Brownlow Morgan "Mickey" Martin arrived on target at 00.38 hours and although escaping serious damage from the heavy flak their bomb detonated short of the wall.

The next plane in was AJ-A for Apple piloted by Squadron Leader Henry Melvin Young D.F.C.*, and was again escorted by two other planes to provide protection. This time the bomb bounced well and sank to detonate against the wall but failed to breach it. AJ-A was shot down by coastal anti-aircraft defences over Holland whilst returning to base.

Then Harold's aircraft, AJ-J piloted by Flight Lieutenant David John Maltby D.F.C, approached the target at 01.39 at a height of sixty feet. The Lancaster's of Gibson and Martin escorted them in on the run-in to yet again draw away the anti-aircraft fire this time even turning on their navigation lights. AJ-J's bomb bounced well and landed as a direct hit and as a result of the explosion the dam wall gave way and the Moehne was breached. Maltby signalled this by firing the pre-arranged success signal, a red very cartridge into the air.

Gibson then told Maltby and Martin to return for home and called Henry Young, Flight Lieutenant David Shannon D.F.C., Squadron Leader Henry Maudsley D.F.C., and Pilot Officer Leslie Knight to follow him to the Eder for the next attack.

AJ-J returned to base at 03.11.

David Maltby was awarded a D.S.O, for his part in the operation with Navigator, Sergeant Vivian Nicholson receiving the D.F.M.,

The other crew members of AJ-J were: Flight Engineer - Flight Sergeant William Hatton, Navigator – Flight Sergeant Vivian Nicholson D.F.M, Bomb Aimer - Pilot Officer John Fort D.F.C., Wireless Operator - Sergeant Anthony Joseph B Stone, Front Gunner - Flight Sergeant Victor Hill and Rear-Gunner - Sergeant Harold Thomas Simmonds.

For their gallantry many of the men, some already highly decorated many times over, received awards including that most rare of awards, The Victoria Cross, for Guy Gibson.

The squadron suffered terrible losses; of the nineteen crews that took part in the raid eight were lost. Although their mission was a success as they had achieved what was asked of them, Air Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris remarked later that missions such as these where Victoria Crosses were awarded along with high losses should not be repeated again.

The next morning the ground crews went on leave for three day and the aircrews for seven many becoming instant celebrities in their home towns and villages.

Harold then flew three further operations against Italian targets: Electrical switching stations for the Italian rail network at San Paulo d'Enza on 15th July and to land in Blida, North Africa. Returning to the UK on 24th July they attacked the docks at Leghorn (Livorno). On the 29th July they mounted a leaflet dropping operation over Milan. The raid on 15th July was recorded in a snap shot taken in Blida after the raid with the crew standing next to Lancaster EE 130 (AJ-A). It may also have been that this was the aircraft they used on the raids on the 24th and 29th July.

The Squadron did not operate again until the night of 14th / 15th September when Flight-Lieutenant Maltby and his crew were despatched as part of a raid on the Dortmund-Ems Canal.

Flying from RAF Coningsby eight Lancaster's, carrying 12000lb High Explosive TallBoy bombs, were escorted by six Mosquito's taking off from RAF Coningsby.

The attack point was close to Munster over Greven near Ladbergen where the canal divided in to two branches. Amongst the cargo carried on the canal was iron ore from Sweden that was vital to the German war effort. The force was split in two with three Mosquito's and four Lancaster's plus two reserve Lancaster's.

The route the aircraft took them at low level across the Wash and north of the Norfolk coast.

The escorting Mosquito's were tasked to deal with enemy searchlights, flak and the ever-present night-fighters. When over the Channel at low level some eight miles north-east of Cromer, a weather reconnaissance Mosquito, flying ahead, reported fog over the target area and the main force was recalled at 00.30. On turning back it seems that Flight-Lieutenant Maltby's aircraft, JA-981 KC-J was possibly caught in the slipstream of another plane and crashed into the sea.

The crash was seen by Flight Lieutenant David Shannon D.S.O.*, D.F.C.*, who circled the area for two and a half-hours until the air-sea rescue vessels arrived. Sadly no survivors were found. David Maltby's body was later washed up on the beach and buried at Wickhambreaux but no trace of his gallant young crew was found.

Their average age was just 20. Like many of their comrades in Bomber Command, Harold and his friends have no known grave and are remembered at the RAF memorial to the missing at Runnymede.

The full crew was: Squadron Leader David John Hatfeild Maltby D.S.O, D.F.C. aged 23, Sergeant William Hatton aged 23, Flight Sergeant Vivian Nicholson D.F.M. aged 20, Flying Officer John Fort D.F.C., Flight Sergeant Antony Joseph Stone aged 22, Flight Sergeant Victor Hill, Warrant Officer John Laurence Welch D.F.M. aged 23 and Sergeant Harold Thomas Simmonds aged 22.

Warrant Officer J.L Welch D.F.M did not take part in the Dam's Raid.

Harold, along with his comrades, is remembered on the 617 Squadron Memorial at Woodhall Spa, which imposingly stands in the shape of the Moehne Dam at the crossroads of this pretty but small village in Lincolnshire.

A memorial to the crews can also be seen in the West Tower of the Derwent Dam. Below the squadron badge the inscription reads *"This stone erected by public subscription to the gallant men of 617 Dambuster Squadron RAF who successfully breached the dams of western Germany in World War II using the bouncing bomb devised by Dr Barnes Wallace. Derwent Dam was chosen because it bore a close resemblance to the German dams for intensive low level practice and bomb aiming techniques. They paid for our freedom."*

A watercolour hangs in Bamford Parish Church of a Lancaster to mark the fact that the crews used the church as a turning point when practising.

Woodhall Spa was opened in February 1942 as a satellite to Coningsby. It closed in 1964.

Other squadrons operating from Woodhall Spa were 619 and 627.

617 are still operational in today's RAF flying Tornado's. They saw action in both Gulf Wars.

The Lancaster is probably the best known British bomber of the Second World War. She was a seven seat four engined heavy bomber powered by Rolls Royce Merlin XXIV engines with a top speed of two hundred and eighty seven miles per hour. She was a very versatile aircraft and carried many combinations and types of bomb loads including bouncing bombs, Grand Slam and Tallboy High Capacity bombs. Her standard load, far greater than the American B-17 Flying Fortress, was one 22000lb bomb or up to 14000 smaller bombs. Seven thousand three hundred and seventy seven were built in total and at least fifty-nine Bomber Command Squadrons operated them. They flew 156000 sorties dropping 608612 tons of bombs and 51 million incendiary devices. The last operational Lancaster was scrapped in 1950 and few remain intact today with only two in flying condition: one with the RAF Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and one in Canada. Both fly in their respective countries to help the public remember over 55000 men of Bomber Command who lost their lives in the Second World War.

Lieutenant Richard John Foster STANTON

Service Number: 85789

Age: 22

2nd Battalion, The Royal Scots

Killed in Action: 21st December 1941

Buried: Stanley Military Cemetery Hong Kong Plot 6 Row B
Collective Grave 3-14

Son of Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Auriol Stanton D.S.O., and Frances May (nee Foster) of Bracka Lodge, Crescent Road.

Richard was one of three sons and a daughter. One brother served as a Major in the Far East, whilst another brother at this time was in the young soldiers' battalion of the Regiment. Their sister was serving as an officer with the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Richard was on the strength of the Regular Army Supplementary Reserve on 22nd February 1939 and was commissioned on 24th August of that year. He was made a War Service Lieutenant on 1st January 1941 and joined the 2nd Battalion, who had been stationed in Hong Kong since January 1938.

The battalion took up positions in the camp at Lo Wu, a mile or so from the Hong Kong/China frontier, on 21st February 1941. It was here that they witnessed an early act of aggression, which caused concern and anger in both Hong Kong and Britain, when Japanese planes crossed the border into British territory to bomb a train on the Kowloon railway, some three hundred yards from the Royal Scots lines.

Towards the end of October 1941, the 2nd Battalion handed over their barracks on Hong Kong Island and moved all their equipment and personnel into Lo Wu. Two Canadian Battalions arrived at this time, with one tasked to hold the mainland line for as long as possible and, when forced to withdraw, it was to join the other on the mainland. The Battalion's of the Mainland Brigade were 5th /7th Rajput Regiment, 2nd/14th Punjab Regiment and the 2nd Royal Scots.

The Royal Scots sector was between Tai Mo Shan and Golden Hill ranging up to the Shing Mun Redoubt, which was a fortification of five pillboxes and concrete trenches. The forward companies at this time were in the following positions from right to left, A with one platoon in the Shing Mun Redoubt and on the extreme right, B Company, under Captain F S Richardson, with Lieutenant Stanton as second-in-command. C Company was on the road to the sea with D in reserve a mile behind the front line. Artillery support was very sparse with only sixteen howitzers being available for the whole south defence line.

The Shing Mun redoubt was in fact twelve acres of rocky and precipitous hillside with a perimeter three quarters of a mile in length, with barbed wire as its outer defence. However, it was far from impregnable as the regimental history commented "*The Shing Mun redoubt was, at best, makeshift.*" The battalion was to spend many hours trying to make it into a suitable defence line, although stormy weather and a threatened typhoon hampered them. Many of the men also started to succumb to Malaria

Each side mounted patrols to gather information and casualties were caused on both sides. Lance Corporal Murray of the battalion was said to be the first British soldier in the Second World War to be wounded by a sword (these were carried into battle by Japanese officers).

Hostilities fully commenced on the 8th December 1941 and the battalion was engaged in heavy fighting with Japanese ground troops. Heavy machine gun and mortar fire pounded the Royal Scots positions, no food or ammunition supplies arrived, and the enemy made probing attacks at night so the situation soon became difficult. Richard's company, like others in the regiment, suffered heavy casualties. On 10th December his platoon, Number 10, narrowly avoided being surrounded as he was able to move his men to a position west of the Castle Peak Road, where they stood fast until mid-day. Slowly the British lost ground as the Japanese made headway on the left flank and, with the other battalions of the Mainland Brigade putting up stiff resistance but losing ground, they were withdrawn to Hong Kong island on the 12th and 13th December.

Action was continuous with the Japanese airforce operating with impunity, as no allied aircraft were available to meet this threat, and as such there were constant daylight air raids that caused many casualties and severe disruption in troop deployment and supply.

On the 18th December the Royal Scots were ordered to stand fast at the Wong Nei Chong Gap in order to prevent the enemy entering the main part of Victoria. The initial Japanese thrust had cut the island in two and the Royal Scots were part of the British force located in the western end of the island. There was a smaller British force at the eastern end and various attempts were made to breakthrough the Japanese lines, as well as holding back further enemy advances, and there was much heavy and desperate fighting.

As soon as the British moved into the Wong Nei Chong Gap they were under heavy Japanese fire and took casualties. Fighting was fierce and as the enemy commanded the high ground at Jardine's Lookout, the British troops were observed where and when ever they moved.

On the 21st December at first light around 06.30 hours, B Company was attacked in force from the direction of Wong Nei Chong Gap. This attack was supported by accurate mortar fire from Jardine's Lookout, but was broken up by B and C Companies, who after heavy fighting over many hours inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. It was during this engagement that Richard Stanton received fatal wounds from which he died in Bowen Road Hospital the next day.

Of the next morning, the 22nd, Colonel White, the 2nd Battalion's commanding officer, later wrote *"All ranks were by this time extremely tired, the companies were weak (in numbers due to many being killed and wounded), and only a few effective officers and senior N.C.O's remained."* From a full strength battalion of some nine hundred men in early November, he could now muster just one hundred and eighty men.

The Japanese attacked, in great strength again along the battalion front at nine o'clock on 23rd December. Although some positions were lost the enemy was again beaten back but at a further cost of another sixty casualties.

Despite this the Royal Scots still carried out aggressive patrols meeting the enemy and causing him great difficulties. At nine o'clock on Christmas morning the men were told action was to be suspended for two hours while some women and children were moved away from the fighting lines. In Colonel White's words *"during this temporary cease-fire the enemy moved troops forward, and bombed, shelled and mortared all known positions. When we requested permission (from British HQ) to dispose of an enemy mortar which was hastily being dug in some*

two hundred yards from our front, permission was refused on the grounds that we were not being attacked until the mortar actually fired on us."

They continued to hold out as best as possible on Christmas Day with Colonel White being summoned to Headquarters at half past three in the afternoon and there, with the commanding officer of the Canadian Winnipeg Grenadiers it was agreed they would fight on to the end. Major H C Harland, who was to be decorated for his part in the defence, later wrote *"we were still holding out but had pulled back to the end of the Stanley Peninsula. The last message we received from Battle Headquarters was that there must be no surrender. After that, all communication ceased. The situation was obviously desperate and we arranged to make a last stand."*

However, just after agreeing to fight to the last they were ordered at twenty to four that afternoon to return to their regiments and fly the white flag in surrender, as General Maltby, considered *"further fighting was useless slaughter."*

Despite the men's protests the white flag was flown Christmas afternoon at forty-three minutes past four. The Japanese, possibly thinking this trick, continued to fire for some time.

When a roll was finally taken after hostilities had ended the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Scots numbered just four officers and ninety-eight other ranks.

Winston Churchill's tribute to the defenders of Hong Kong, *"On Christmas Day the limit of your endurance was reached and capitulation became inevitable. Under their resolute Governor, Sir Mark young, the Colony had fought a good fight. They had won lasting honour which is their due."*

Sadly though, many of the survivors were to lose their lives in the appalling conditions and treatment that was Japanese captivity. Some of the Royal Scots were to be tragically killed when being transported, in locked and filthy small holds, aboard the Japanese ship, Lisbon Maru, they were sunk by a torpedo believed to have been fired by an allied submarine. The Japanese had time to release their charges but chose not too.

Two men of the Royal Scots managed to escape from their camp and both were later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for this feat. Captain Douglas Ford, the officer in charge of the Royal Scots in the prison camp Sham Shui Po, located only a few miles from their original 8th December positions, managed to contact the Chinese to arrange for secret medical supplies to be smuggled into the men. The Japanese Kemptai (their version of the Gestapo) found out. Captain Ford accepted full responsibility and although he received special ruthless torture causing him great physical pain he never gave anyone away. Arrested on 10th July 1943 he was kept on starvation rations until his trial on 1st December for espionage. With two other officers he was condemned to death, where he then waited a further eighteen days with no hope of reprieve. Receiving no proper meals or exercise he was taken away in a truck and executed by the Japanese.

His bravery and courage was remembered by the men, and after the War the following was announced in the London Gazette: *"His Majesty The King approved the posthumous award of the George Cross to the late Captain Douglas Ford, 2nd Battalion The Royal Scots, in recognition of his most conspicuous gallantry while a prisoner of war in Japanese hands."*

Those that managed to live through those desperate war years suffered illness, disease and nightmares for the rest of their, often short, lives.

Richard's father, Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Stanton, was himself a distinguished soldier joining the Royal Scots in April 1900. He first saw active service in the Boer War and then in India.

In World War One he served as Adjutant to the 4th Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment until 1915. Then as Brigade-Major with 147 Brigade until 1916, when he was given command of the 5th Battalion Duke of Wellington's where he continued until 1917 when he was wounded.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for gallant service and Mentioned in Despatches three times. Later invalided out of the Army, he served in the Red Cross during World War Two. He died aged 70 in 1949 thus severing a family link with the Royal Scots that went back to 1866 when his Father was an Ensign of the 1st Battalion in India.

Frances moved to Wincanton in Somerset after her son's death.

**Chief Petty Officer Airman Henry George Christie STOLLERY
MID***

Service Number: FAA/FX 79439

Age: 25

854 Squadron, Fleet Air Arm, HMS Illustrious, Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 29th January 1945

Commemorated: Lee on Solent Memorial Hampshire Bay 6 Panel 1

Henry was born in Lewes of 16th May 1918 to Walter William and Minnie Mary Stollery of 36 St Andrews Road.

Minnie Stollery was brought up at The Bull Public House in Sudbury. Walter Stollery was an auctioneer and had moved to New Zealand as a young man. He left Auckland on 16th June 1898 to leaving to return home to England. On his return he became the licensee of the Rainbow Tavern in Lewes.

Mr Walter Stollery died in 1927. Mrs Stollery then ran a guesthouse in Brighton before moving to Burgess Hill to run the Potteries Cafe in London Road. She died on 30th March 1944 and is buried in St Edwards Churchyard.

Henry was educated at London Road School and then employed by Meeds & Son working for Mr L Bliss as a clerk. His brother, Walter Richard served in The Royal Navy during the War as a Chief Petty Officer winning the Distinguished Service Medal whilst serving on Motor Torpedo Boats. They also had a sister, Joyce.

Henry joined the Royal Navy as a 15 year old Apprentice on HMS Ganges. He then transferred to HMS Nelson at Portsmouth before spending two and half years on the China Station where he then transferred to the Fleet Air Arm when aged 21. During his time on the China Station he may have served aboard HMS Westminster.

On coming home he was posted to HMS Dainty on 13th September 1938. Henry may have then been posted to HMS Kestrel, the Royal Naval Air Station, at Worthy Down during the Christmas period in 1939.

His early war years are not yet known although it is without doubt that he spent most of it at sea on active service.

Henry owned a motorcycle and used this, as petrol rationing allowed, when home on leave.

One incident in Hurstpierpoint, as reported in the Mid-Sussex Times, has Henry being brought before the Magistrate for being under the influence of alcohol whilst on leave. He was found trying to mount and ride his motorcycle when found by a police constable on his beat. The officer then assisted him to the Police Station where he was later charged. The Magistrate fined Henry a small sum noting his war service and that his leaves were rare and short.

Henry was Mentioned in Dispatches for his work on D-Day, 6th June 1944.

Later in 1944 German Dive-Bombers in the Sicilian Channel attacked his ship, the aircraft carrier, HMS Illustrious. Henry was wounded in the ear and thigh during an intense enemy attack in which a bomb killed twenty of his shipmates. He was sent to recuperate in Malta and whilst in hospital he took and passed his Petty Officer's Exam. He joined the ship again a few weeks later and then went Eastwards with them in the autumn of 1944.

The British Pacific Fleet was sent to attack the Palembang oil refineries twice. The Refineries were one hundred and fifty miles from the nearest point on the western (Indian Ocean) coast of Sumatra and were strongly defended by a ring of fighter airfield and anti-aircraft batteries.

Admiral Fraser (Commander-in-Chief, British Pacific Forces) decided on a precision strike by carrier borne aircraft at the refinery. He judged that this method would be more likely to succeed against an oil refinery than a heavy bomber raid would, as a refinery was in essence a few vulnerable points in a massive field. The refineries were a valuable target as it supplied up to some three million tons of crude oil a year to the Japanese after they had captured it from the allies repairing the initial damage sustained when they were captured.

The area was defended by the 9th Air Division of the Japanese 7th Area Army. In January 1945 there were six fighter squadrons and one reconnaissance squadron based in Sumatra. Three of the fighter squadrons were equipped with Oscars (Kawasaki Ki-45 Toryu 2 seater night-fighter) while Nick aircraft (Nakajima Ki-43 Hayabusa single seater fighter/fighter bomber) had been transferred from the Philippines in December 1944, with a further squadron coming from Celebes in January 1945. These names were official code names given to Japanese aircraft by the allies.

Four fighter squadrons defended Palembang itself, operating from a ring of airfields, four of which were within fifty miles of the refineries. Two refineries existed, one at Pladjoe and one at Soengei. It was estimated that three strikes would be needed, one on each refinery and a third mopping up strike. On each occasion the strike would be made by a striking force of Grumman Avengers, strongly escorted by Vought Corsairs, Grumman Hellcats and Fairey Fireflies, while Corsair Ramrod sweeps forestalled enemy fighter interference by strafing the nearby airstrips. The remaining Corsairs and Hellcats, with all of HMS Indefatigable's Supermarine Seafire aircraft would provide Combat Air Patrols (CAPS) over the fleet. Subsidiary strikes on the coastal airstrip at Mana, and Photoreconnaissance (PR) flights over Sumatra were also planned.

With assistance from former refinery workers, the attacks were planned and rehearsed off Ceylon on 13th January. The fleet was designated Force 63 – this being the British Pacific Fleet less HMS Howe, which had gone on ahead to Australia. It sailed for a rendezvous with the oiling group, Force 69, on the morning of 20th January. The HMS King George V and other cruisers and destroyers fuelled during the day although bad weather caused some difficulties for the fleet. After fuelling Force 63 headed for its flying off position, leaving a cruiser and destroyer to accompany the oilers.

857, 849, 854 and 820 Squadron Avengers each with four 500lb bombs were tasked to strike the refinery. Corsairs and Hellcats from 1834, 1836, 1830 and 1839 squadrons escorted them.

They were also preceded, and followed, by 1770 Squadron Fireflies and 1833 Squadron Corsairs.

857 Squadron Avengers and 1844 Squadron Hellcats flew the Mana strike and escort.

Corsairs of 1833, 1830, 1834 and 1836 Squadrons also flew patrols. Two further Hellcats flew PR flights from HMS Indomitable and two Supermarine Walrus aircraft from HMS Illustrious were available for air-sea rescue sorties.

Henry's pilot was Lieutenant Commander William James Mainprice D.F.C of Bexhill.

Flying off was full of incidents, six Avengers of the strike force were withdrawn through accidents and mechanical problems. The Fireflies were delayed, the lead aircraft being unable to lower its flaps although they still managed to overtake the strike before the target, as did the Corsairs.

The strike force crossed the coast at 07.18 hours at 4,500 feet before climbing to fly over the mountains, after which it was intended that they drop to attack the target. However, the Strike Leader decided to maintain their greater than planned for height and caused some confusion as the top and middle fighter cover did not know which height they were supposed to be keeping.

The strike had been detected by Japanese radar when it crossed the coast and fifteen miles from the target the first enemy aircraft appeared, fifteen to twenty Tojo's (Nakajima Ki-44 Shoki single seater interceptor fighter) and Nicks with a air battle developing as the Japanese concentrated on the Avengers. One Tojo and a Nick were claimed shot down with one Corsair of 1833 Squadron reported missing. The task of escorting the four squadrons of Avengers was left to eight Corsairs, as the Hellcats were involved in dogfights all over the target area. The Refinery Anti-Aircraft (AA) batteries had also opened fire but were not putting up too accurate a level of fire. The refinery perimeters were seen to have some thirty khaki or olive coloured balloons being deployed and were flying at around 2,000 feet and climbing. The Fireflies, having just joined the escort, were asked to strafe the balloons but did not acknowledge the signal and they did not possess suitable tracer ammunition for the task. The escorts then chased away twin engined Japanese aircraft, probably Nicks, who appeared to be exercising some form of air-to-ground control of either the anti aircraft guns or other fighters. Three were shot down but there was no noticeable difference in the enemy's co-ordination.

The Fireflies flew down with the Avengers, their cannon and rocket fire raking the area as they took careful aim in a 300-knot dive. The Avengers went in after them and ran onto their targets with the greatest skill and courage. They deployed at 08.11 and attacked at 08.14. N^o.1 Wing leading, in steep glide-dives of about forty-five degrees with six-second intervals between each aircraft, descended from around 8,000 feet to drop their bombs despite being harassed by flak and the balloons. The bombing was remarkably accurate despite some obscuring smoke caused by earlier bombing of some storage tanks.

Admiral Vian's reports assessed the damage as hits on the crude oil distilleries and the run down tanks. Reforming unit, re-distillation unit, cracking unit and distillation units probably were about 30% destroyed, while one hit was achieved on the main boiler and electric powerhouse with two transformers destroyed.

The attack was over by 08.22 and the Avengers emerged from the target area in a long straggling procession. The bombers flew north of Palembang town, encountering intense AA fire, and headed towards the rendezvous, which was over a small island in the Musi River some miles west. The Fireflies were patrolling the air lane from the target to the rendezvous with the Close Escort and some remnant of the Middle Cover was still in company. However, most of the escorts were still engaged in combat up to thirty miles away, and many of the Avengers were unprotected during this critical period. A number of enemy fighters were lying in wait and some of the Avengers were attacked and unable to

call for help due to other radio traffic being transmitted. Another Avenger was lost and several others damaged.

The strike force left the rendezvous at 08.26 and flew homewards. The Fireflies were reported as bogies (allied code for enemy aircraft sightings) numerous times. The strike force crossed the coast at 09.16 and then broke into individual carrier groups before landing at 09.28. Another Avenger failed to reach the fleet and the aircraft was presumed to have crashed in the sea. A Hellcat of 1839 Squadron, acting as Middle Cover had also been lost in the raid with the Japanese capturing its pilot.

The activity of the Japanese fighters showed that the forward CAP aircraft had arrived too late over their targets to prevent many enemy aircraft from taking off; they had been launched after the strike. Five of the ramrod assigned Corsairs had been lost four of them to flak. With a few CAP's overhead, the Ramrods had worked over the airfields, strafing parked aircraft, destroying about 20 of various types including several dummies, a power station, control towers, hangers, motor vehicles and rolling stock were also destroyed. The Ramrods returned by 10.15. The last to return were the two PR Hellcats from HMS Indomitable who had flown off at 08.00 and covered 11 airfields and the target as well as discovering six new airfields.

The Seafires CAPS over the fleet had had an eventful but discouraging afternoon. The day having been filled with smashed undercarriages, bursting tyres and ditching (the Seafires were a conversion of the Spitfire, and expert opinion suggests they were not really suited for carrier work, its undercarriage being too flimsy for repeated deck landings often in pitching seas).

After all the aircraft had been recovered Force 63 withdrew west at a speed of 22 knots. At 14.15 that afternoon, enemy aircraft passed within radar range but the eight Hellcats on CAP were unable to make contact. The destroyer HMS Ursa left the force after taking despatches from HMS King George V to be transmitted from Cocos Island. She rejoined the Fleet on 27th January, when the fleet was fuelling.

The second strike, on Soengei Gerong was planned differently than the first strike and an attack on the British fleet was expected as the Japanese looked to eliminate another potential strike at their oilfields. The strike itself was scaled down, the CAP's over the fleet reinforced and the fighter ramrods would be flown off in two waves, timing their flights to arrive simultaneously over the two most formidable airfields of Lembak and Talangbetoetoe. An alternative flying off position, north of Enggano Island, was selected but not used.

The strike had an important alteration, the Avengers pilots were briefed to break away to starboard (right) and fly in a wide half-circle to the south of the refineries before rendezvousing as before. The trip would be longer but would avoid the intense flak from the north of Palembang town.

This strike consisted of: twelve Avengers from each of the four carriers, escorted by twelve Corsairs as top cover, sixteen Hellcats and twelve Corsairs for Middle cover, twenty four Corsairs in two waves as Ramrods and two Fireflies for armed reconnaissance on the Mana route. Two Hellcats would also fly PR flights, and two Walrus were again on standby for air-sea rescue sorties.

On 29th January the weather conditions were very bad with heavy rainstorms and squally winds combined with a low cloud ceiling. This led to a twenty-five minute delay. Finally flying off started at 06.40. The forming up of aircraft once airborne was very difficult for the aircrews, with the rain reducing visibility to less than half a mile at some stages.

By 07.10 visibility had improved and the strike was delayed as the Strike Leader made another circle of the fleet despite all the units being joined up and this resulted in 3 Avenger squadrons being out of position. The flight finally departed from the fleet at 07.32, only 2 minutes late. An Avenger from HMS Indomitable ditched almost immediately, its crew being picked up by HMS Undine. Three more Avengers and four Corsairs returned early and the strike crossed the coast at 07.40 and began its climb to 10,000 feet. This forced the escort into the clouds and the Strike Leader ignored requests to fly lower by remaining on the pre-arranged flight plan.

The strike encountered an enemy patrol over the Sumatran plain south-west of the refineries when the strike was still more than fifty miles from Palembang. The Top Cover shot down one Tojo and dispersed the enemy patrol. The Avengers sighted their target at 08.40 and began deploying for their attack. The fires at Pladjoe had been extinguished and the balloon barrage was still flying.

The Japanese fighters returned again as the Avengers were deploying. The British continued their attack, passing through two intense areas of flak barrages at 3000 and 11000 feet and through the balloons to drop their bombs. A few balloons were shot down and two Avengers of 854 Squadron were lost to these, one of these is probably Henry's aircraft. The Avengers attack was more accurate than at Pladjoe, until the inevitable smoke from burning oil storage tanks began to obscure the refinery.

The damage was summarised in Admiral Vians' report as: Boiler and electric powerhouses claimed directly hit. The cracking plant was hit and fractionating columns, coke stills, pipe stills and re-run stills suffered damage.

With their bombs dropped, the Avengers straggled out in ones and twos and headed for the rendezvous where the Japanese again set upon them again. Three more aircraft were lost for return of two Oscars and another aircraft – possibly a Hamp. The Avenger pilots handled their aircraft like fighters in prolonged engagements with the enemy aircraft and radio interference prevented the Avengers being able to summon help. The strike force left for the rendezvous at 09.01 and crossed the coastline at 09.55. The strike and escort forces broke into groups for landing at 10.15 although they continued for at least another hour as trailing survivors touched down. Six badly damaged Avengers ditched near the fleet with one crewman dying from his injuries.

The Ramrods were over their targets fifteen minutes before the arrival of the main strike force, but were again just too late. There were few chances for strafing, and instead they vented their frustration on a Japanese barracks on the north bank of the Musi River. One Corsair was lost, the pilot being recorded as missing after he baled out. The armed reconnaissance at Mana, found no activity except a football match, which was interrupted as the men ran to man their defences, which appeared to be one light AA gun. The PR flights landed at 10.30 having surveyed the targets as well as the airfields at Lahat and Palembang and a new airfield at Pajajaman. They also dropped twenty five thousand leaflets over southern Sumatra.

The CAP's over the fleet had driven off a Tojo at 09.17 and a small group of enemy aircraft that appeared some twenty minutes later. A Sally (Mitsubishi Ki-21 five/seven seater heavy bomber) was shot down but the allied victor was also shot down although HMS Undine picked up the pilot later in a dinghy. At 10.26 a much larger formation was detected and turned away before the Seafire and Corsair CAP could reach it, although one Corsair failed to return. Ten minutes later another small group of Japanese aircraft passed some forty miles seaward of the fleet. A serious attack developed about 11.50 when seven Sally's appeared twenty-five miles south-east of the fleet. They were sighted fourteen miles off HMS Illustrious' port beam and two Corsairs visually detected and intercepted them shooting down one Sally down as the fleet turned to the north-west in order to provide a difficult target. However, the aircraft carried on their attack pattern and they were then believed to be suicide aircraft targeting HMS Illustrious and HMS Indomitable. The two carriers and HMS King George V opened fire, which was then joined by the rest of the fleet. HMS Indomitable launched three Hellcats, which were in action immediately with two Sally's being quickly claimed as shot down. Another Sally passing low and flying over HMS Illustrious' flight deck was closely chased by a flight of Seafires where she was then engaged by the same ships guns and crashed into the sea 1,500 yards off the starboard bow. It released what was thought to be a torpedo but may have been a section of fuselage.

HMS Indefatigables' Seafires were seen to engage five of the seven strong attackers with one Sally crashing into the sea only three hundred yards from their mother ship. A second was shot down close astern of HMS Illustrious and a third on HMS King George Vs' starboard beam by the battleship's gunfire. All seven enemy aircraft fell in an action lasting four minutes with no damage to the British surface fleet. Unfortunately two shells from HMS Euryalus had hit the flight deck and control island of HMS Illustrious killing twelve and wounding twenty-one.

At 15.00 Admiral Vian signalled "*Meridian completed*", although enemy aircraft continued to shadow the fleet as it withdrew. Admiral Vian was unable to report the complete destruction of the Palembang refineries but production at Soengei Gerong was at a standstill until the end of March, when both refineries were producing only one-third their capacity. Production reached fifty percent by the end of May and those refineries were to be a greatly reduced asset for the rest of the war.

Sixty-eight enemy aircraft had been destroyed, thirty-eight on the ground and thirty in the air with another seven as probable kills.

The Fleet's casualties were sixteen aircraft lost in combat, with another eleven ditching near the fleet. Fourteen aircraft were lost in deck landing crashes. Total losses were forty-one aircraft lost from three hundred and seventy eight sorties flown. Thirty aircrew were lost, including nineteen Avenger aircrew (six complete crews and Squadron Leader Gunn), the pilots of one Hellcat and eight Corsairs and the two-man crew of a Firefly. Three pilots were seen to make apparently safe landings in enemy territory. Four others were wounded and five more were unfit to fly for some time afterwards.

A third strike, Meridan Three, was abandoned because the oiling group had just enough fuel for the Force to reach Australia. Force 63 refuelled on 30th January, and after HMS Ursa had been detached again with despatches they steamed south for Australia. The fleet reached Freemantle on 4th February and Sydney on 10th February.

In a letter dated 13th February 1945 to the family the Acting Commanding Officer 854 Squadron, Lieutenant R.E Jess D.S.C., Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, wrote that Henry had been a member of a gallant crew. He stated that *"Lieutenant Mainprice had dived through balloons to make sure of hitting the target but whilst diving down their plane was seen to hit a balloon cable at approximately 3000 feet. This ripped off a large part of the wing and as the aircraft was flying at a high speed to complete its attack there was little chance of the crew escaping out of the Avenger."*

As well as the Mention in Dispatches he received on 1st January 1945 for work on his work on D-Day, Henry was also Mentioned in Dispatches a second time on 15th January 194. It is believed this is for the Palembang attack but further research is required.

The Grumman TBF Avenger (Torpedo Bomber-Fighter) was the chief torpedo-bomber of the Pacific War in 1942-45. First flown on the 1st August 1941, the Avenger was designed in an intensive five-week period by Grumman's chief experimental engineer, Bob Hall. Working to tough US Navy requirements, the aircraft featured an internal weapons bay, gun turret, a rear defensive gun position and a crew of three. A door on the right side aft of the wing admitted into the rear fuselage, packed with equipment, flares, parachutes and ammunition. At the lower level the bombardier was provided with a folding seat from which he could either man the lower rear machine gun, or face forward and aim the aircraft for medium-altitude level bombing. The pilot sat in lofty state in a roomy and comfortable cockpit above the leading edge, where his view was perfect.

Its first combat mission saw six new Avengers involved in the Battle of Midway on 4 June 1942. Originally designed as torpedo bombers they were used by the Royal Navy and Royal New Zealand Air Forces. They became an important part of the allied air armoury in the Pacific and the air strikes on Palembang were the Avengers most important operation for the British Pacific Forces. When the last one was built in 1945 a total of 7546 had rolled of the production line.

Vought F4U Corsair was an American single seat carrier based fighter or fighter-bomber armed with six .50 inch guns, two 1000lb bombs or eight 5 inch rockets. The Royal Navy and Royal New Zealand Air Forces also operated this aircraft and Goodyear and Brewster also built it for the Lend-Lease programme. A total of 12571 were with the last in 1952.

The Grumman F6F Hellcat was a single seat carrier based fighter-bomber. The Fleet Air Arm, again provided as part of the Lend-Lease programme used it. She carried the same armament as the F4U Corsair.

The Fairey Firefly was a two-seat carrier based fleet reconnaissance fighter/fighter-bomber. Powered by a Rolls Royce Griffon IIB engine and armed with four 20mm cannon she also had provision for eight 60lb rockets or two 1000lb bombs. This aircraft also operated in the Korean War.

Supermarine Seafire's were the single seat carrier based fighter for the naval version of the mighty spitfire. Powered by Rolls Royce Merlin 55 engines they were armed with two 20mm cannon and four .303 machine guns with provision for two 500lb bombs. It was later equipped with the Griffon engine.

Designed by the legendary spitfire architect, R J Mitchell, the Supermarine Walrus was a four seat spotter-reconnaissance or air sea rescue aircraft. This bi-plane was powered by the Bristol Pegasus VI engine and she was armed with one .303 Vickers K or Lewis gun in the bow position with similar arrangements made in a mount amidships. She gained a nickname as the *Shagbat* and had a reputation for reliability and withstanding damage.

HMS Illustrious had a complement of 1600 and survived the War to be broken up at Faslane in 1956

D STUART-VILLIERS

Service Number: ??

Age: ??

??

Killed in Action: ??

Buried: ??

Although the name D Stuart-Villiers appears on a framed contemporary roll of honour held in store by the Royal British Legion, I have been unable to trace any record for this man with the CWGC, 1901 Census or any other source.

Captain Charles Hopewell TAYLER

Service Number: ??

Age: 60

Intelligence Corps (India)

Killed in Action: 31st July 1944

Buried: Kirkee War Cemetery, India Plot 10, Row D, Grave 6

Son of Charles and Emma Eliza Tayler. He is believed to have been born in London and lived in Islington where he worked a Clerk.

Charles also served as Captain with The Royal Flying Corps during the First World War.

After the retreat from Burma, the British Army set up a group, staffed by Intelligence officers to collect intelligence about Japanese plans and movements and to undertake counter-intelligence.

There was a separate section looking after cryptology in the Far East with a Headquarters located at Delhi.

In 1942, the Intelligence Corps was created and during the war British officers carried out the intelligence work in India. The Intelligence Corps (India) was disbanded in 1947 with the ending of the Raj. It is believed most records were destroyed.

The Museum of Defence Intelligence has no record of Captain Tayler being a member of the Intelligence Corps. However, they do state that this is not unusual as although there were some three thousand officers in the corps there were this number again who worked in intelligence and were on the staff who came from other regiments or corps.

Kirkee Cemetery is a concentration cemetery, which means that soldiers buried here were moved from their place of death and buried together.

Flight Engineer Sergeant Frederick George TAYLOR

Service Number: 567000

Age: 2?

7 Squadron, Royal Air Force

Killed in Action: 1st July 1941

Buried: Esbjerg (Farfelt) Cemetery Denmark Plot A Row 14 Grave 15

Frederick was married with a two-month-old child.

He had been Educated at Kingsbridge Grammar School in Devon and then at the Savoy School in Burgess Hill. Although not a native of Burgess Hill he may have settled here after leaving school or brought his young family here as the war started to have an effect on people in Britain.

At the time of his death his wife and child were staying with Captain and Mrs J.H. Thomas of Erin Manor in Royal George Road.

It is reported that he joined the RAF as a young boy at the age of fifteen and a half to become an aircraft apprentice and three years later passed out as an Aircraftsman.

He had served as an air gunner before being promoted to Flight Engineer Sergeant.

The Mid-Sussex Times reporting his death in 1941 states that Frederick was a crewman in the first RAF Bomber to fly over Germany after the outbreak of the war but evidence suggests this was not with 7 Squadron.

7 Squadron was reformed in August 1940, at Leeming, as the first squadron in Bomber Command to be equipped with four-engine bombers. In October they moved to Oakington in Cambridgeshire and by early 1941 they were ready to begin operations with the new Short Stirling Heavy Bomber.

On the night of 10th /11th February 1941, 7 Squadron made its first bombing attack with the new aircraft, on oil storage tanks at Rotterdam.

Frederick joined the squadron on 21st April but did not take part in their first visit to Berlin. Other early targets in 1941 were Brest, Rotterdam, Emden (the first daylight raid by the Squadron on 28th April).

Frederick's first operation was as flight engineer, his trade specialisation, for Squadron Leader Seale on 11th May. This was against targets over Ham in Germany although they dropped their bombs over Emden as the aircraft had developed technical difficulties.

His second operation on 18th June was flying with Wing Commander Graham, who flew as Captain and with Flying Officer John Kinnane as Second Pilot to a target over Brest in France. His third operation was on 21st June and was again with Wing Commander Graham where they flew over the North Sea searching for a missing aircraft.

On 1st July Aurich and Cuxhaven were selected as the targets and two loose formations of three aircraft, three each from 7 and 15 Squadrons, were airborne from Oakington at noon. The three aircraft from 15 Squadron turned back to base when the cloud cover disappeared.

7 Squadron's aircraft headed by Pilot Officer D T Witt, with Sergeant Bolton as second pilot pressed on in broken cloud with a base of less than one thousand feet. When that ceased to give cover they proceeded to their secondary target, the seaplane base at Borkum.

Flak ships and six Messerschmitt Me Bf 109 fighters fiercely responded as the aircraft approached. The navigator of Witt's Stirling, Deyell then released their bombs from nine hundred feet above the target as a fighter closed in on them. Flight Engineer aboard this Stirling was Sergeant John T Prentice, an original member of 7 Squadron from its early days when based at Leeming and one of the RAF's first flight engineers, known until early 1941, as Fitters II/Air Gunners. He recalled *"When six Bf 109's first attacked I was acting as Fire Controller. During the course of the engagement I was tapped on the shoulder by Flying Officer J L A Mills, the rear gunner, who had been shot in the arm and was unable to continue. I took over his position in the turret and indeed remained there until we reached the base"*.

Pilot Officer Witt had meanwhile thrown the aircraft about, taking evasive action to shake off the Messerschmitt's, as Deyell and Sergeant Savage, the radio operator, looked after Mills. Sergeant Prentice had raced back to the rear turret, which he reached just as a Bf 109 was coming in to attack the Stirling. During the engagement he shot down one German fighter. Once they were able to reach cloud cover Mills was given morphine and bandaged until the badly shot up Stirling N6005 safely landed.

Meanwhile Frederick's plane was last seen north-west of Texel circling a dinghy that contained the crew of Blenheim V6258, a 139 (Jamaica) Squadron aircraft, which had been shot down by a group of Bf 109's from the German unit I/JG 52. It is believed that as they were circling the Blenheim they were trying to fight off a pair of enemy aircraft. The RAF records the Stirling as being presumed shot down at 15.15 hours in this area believing it to have been destroyed by Bf 109's.

German records claim that a Bf 109 of 4/JG 52 destroyed a Stirling at 14.52 hours and that two more were shot down by Bf 109's of this same unit. Bf 110's (twin engined fighters) of 6/ZG 76 near Leeuwarden were also in action at this time. The Luftwaffe timed their claims as at 15.20 hours and 15.21 hours and admitted losing a Bf 110 (possibly the plane believed to have been destroyed by Frederick's crew). The third Stirling N3655, piloted by Sergeant B Madgwick in fact returned safely.

Three crewmembers, John Kinnane, Barrie Nicholls and Frederick are buried in Esbjerg Cemetery with the others sadly not being recovered and consequently they are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

The crew of the 139 Squadron Blenheim all spent the remaining war years as prisoners after being picked up by German naval forces.

The night Frederick was lost another six Stirling's from 7 Squadron, along with thirty nine Blenheims attacked various targets, mostly in north-west Germany. Only six aircraft successfully bombed their targets and of these two Blenheim's (one of these is the 139 Squadron crew) and one Stirling were lost.

The full crew of N6013 MG-A was: Pilot: Flying Officer John Kinnane RAAF aged 29 (Mentioned in Despatches), Second Pilot: Pilot Officer James Gordon Elliott RCAF aged 32, Navigator: Pilot Officer Thomas Everest Bolton aged 27, Wireless Operator: Sergeant Kenneth Huntley aged 20, Frontgunner: Flight Sergeant

Barrie Kendal Nicholls aged 21, Reargunner: Sergeant William George Marsh aged 28 and Engineer: Flight Sergeant Frederick George Taylor.

Frederick's pilot, Flying Officer John Kinnane, joined the squadron on 8th April from No 11 Operational Training Unit (OTU). The Stirling they flew in was received by the unit on 23rd March that year and would have certainly seen action with other crews.

7 Squadron later became part of the Pathfinder Force with 3 Group.

The Short Stirling was a seven to eight seat four-engined heavy bomber powered by Bristol Hercules engines. Her top speed was two hundred and seventy miles per hour and with a full bomb load of 14000lb its maximum range was five hundred and ninety miles. With a reduced bomb load of 3500lb the Stirling had a maximum range of just over two thousand miles. She was armed with eight .303 machine guns, two each in the nose and dorsal and four in the tail turret.

It was the first of the four-engined bombers to enter RAF service and helped carry the war to Germany. However, it had two main drawbacks from that of the other heavy bombers being unable to have its bomb bay adapted to take the larger bombs that were being designed and she could not reach the operating altitude of twenty thousand feet of the newer bombers.

From the beginning of 1944 Stirling's were replaced on bombing operations and they were successfully used as Glider tow aircraft. Official RAF figures show Stirling's flew 18440 sorties dropping 27821 tons of bombs and laying 20000 mines for the loss of 769 aircraft.

Private Frederick Charles TURNER

Service Number: 14680138

Age: 20

5th/7th Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders

Killed in Action: 12th February 1945

Buried: Milsbeek War Cemetery - Netherlands Plot 2 Row G Grave 6

Son of Richard and Edith May they lived at 14 St Mary's Road. Frederick was one of seven children (although no names are known).

Educated at London Road School he had worked first at Messr's Hoadleys Ltd in Church Road and later at Classic Mantles in London Road.

He was in the Home Guard in Burgess Hill before joining up in November 1943 and for a time was stationed in Northern Ireland, possibly with a training unit.

The 5th/7th Gordon Highlanders were part of the famed 51st (Highland) Division. They had fought in the many battles in the African Desert, including the great victory at El Alamein, and then the amphibious invasion of Sicily before being recalled to the UK by Field Marshal Montgomery for the Normandy Landings. At one stage on their journey home the Royal Navy had provided twenty-five escort ships to ensure they delivered their charges safely.

The Division landed back in Greenock, Scotland on 4th November 1943 where special trains were awaiting them as they were taken not to a Scottish location but to Amersham in Buckinghamshire.

They then located in a semi-circle around North London from Slough to Aylesbury and Berkhamstead through to Watford, St Albans and Hertford.

Frederick most likely joined the 5th/7th Gordon Highlanders in January 1944 as the unit went off on disembarkation leave and the Christmas and New Year period allowed for little serious training.

Queen Elizabeth (Later Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother) inspected "her" Battalions on 23rd January with the King inspecting the Gordon's at Stoke Common on the last day of February. The King knew many of these men, as they were estate workers from Ballatur. The Princess Royal (Later Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II) visited troops on 20th February.

Like all of the D-Day and Normandy tasked Divisions training commenced early in 1944. The 51st Highland Division joined with tank squadrons, often with the new Churchill tanks of the Guards Armoured Brigade. Tasks and schemes included bridging, river crossings, gas and intelligence duties, sniping courses, mine lifting and laying as well as the unglamorous but so important patrolling. Route marches were frequent and long as Monty expected high standards of fitness.

Street fighting was practised in the bombed and devastated Limehouse and other East-End areas of London. The Gordon's also worked with flame-throwers on a firing range near Harlington. Street fighting practice was popular with all ranks, as Piccadilly was close by.

Other training included tactics in wooded countryside and night attacks. New wireless procedures and sets were learnt and familiarised and the change to the new American phonetic alphabet had to be digested. Exercises Curb and Snaffle were held in February and March respectively to test out new procedures on the battlefield. All units carried out experiments and practiced the waterproofing of their vehicles including the infantry carriers being waded to three or four feet without "drowning".

In April they moved to East Anglia for more training on night advance techniques, patrolling and river crossings.

The final invasion exercise, Operation Fabius took place in May with the whole division being loaded on ships (this also benefited the Royal Navy), although many of the 51st Highland Division had done this before at Sicily!

The Division was not to be involved in the first beach assault; it would land as the follow up force on 6th June D-Day to 3rd British and 3rd Canadian Divisions who had the task of landing first.

The 5th/7th Gordon Highlanders were the first battalion of the Highland Division to land in France since their sad days at St Valery in 1940. The Division had centred on St Valery and had held the German 4th Corps, a Panzer and Motorised Division (Six Divisions in total) here thus diverting this large enemy force from attacking the withdrawing British troops at Le Havre and Cherbourg. They surrendered when ammunition and food had run out. The French had ensured that the graves of those highlanders had remained well tended through the long years of occupation.

The Gordon's waded ashore through several feet of water weighed down by up to 70lbs of equipment. By 20.00 that evening they were all ashore and were concentrated four miles south of the beaches at Banville.

By D+4 (10th June) the Gordon's were in reserve at Periers Ridge, whilst the 51st Highland Division concentrated around the right flank of the bridgehead on both sides of the River Orne. On 11th June the Division's first battle commenced and the Gordon's reached the village of Touffreville, some three miles south of Ranville, it was empty. It had been cleared by troops of the British 6th Airborne Division. The 5th/7th occupied the village and just prior to dawn large numbers of German troops started to weave their way in. During this day at some stage or other each company and battalion HQ had been surrounded but by midday the Germans withdrew although they had caused twenty-eight casualties.

At some point in the early stages of the Normandy campaign after D-Day Frederick was wounded in the leg. He was evacuated for treatment and rejoined the battalion later, although it is unsure when and as such it is difficult to pinpoint which actions he was involved in. From late June until the ending of the Normandy battles in late August the Division was involved in many battles and much hard fighting steadily losing casualties. It is likely that he rejoined in August or September with an ever-present need to bring experienced troops back to the front as losses were taking their toll.

After the actions of Normandy the next major offensive for the 51st Highland Division was Operation Astonia, the massive attack on Le Havre involving air, sea and ground forces that commenced on 10th September. The Highland Division would attack on the right flank with the 49th (Polar Bear) Division taking the left. The attack was a success both for the allies and the 5th/7th Gordon's who managed to liberate 50 cases of 1934 & 1937 Bollinger Champagne!

On 2nd October the Highland Division relieved the 15th (Scottish) Division who were guarding the supply corridor to Nijmegen by holding a long front from St Odenrode through to Eindhoven. At this stage the British Army was suffering from a very real shortage of front line soldiers through the casualties received during the June to September period, and the need to send men to Italy, Burma and many other areas. Reinforcements were received and men from Royal Army

Service Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps were drafted to infantry units. The 50th (Northumbrian) Division along with two tank brigades were to be disbanded to help the shortage.

A leave camp was opened in Eindhoven for twenty-four hours rest with baths and clean clothes available. Later on 17th October four-day leave periods started with a rest camp in Antwerp.

The next operation for the Division was to be involvement in Operation Colin, the plan to sweep the enemy out of Brabant and clear the area to the mouth of the River Maas and open up the port of Antwerp. This was strategically vital as the ports so far liberated by the allies were in poor states of repair and therefore almost every gallon of petrol, round of ammunition, roll of bandage and tin of food was being sourced from the Mulberry Harbour and beaches far away in Normandy. The 1st Canadian Army along with four British divisions, 53rd (Welsh), 7th Armoured, 15th (Scottish) and the 51st (Highland) would take part.

The operation commenced at midnight on 23rd October the 5th/7th Gordon's being allotted the capture of the village of Wijbosch. With their companies working through minefields and destroying enemy posts they captured the village losing twenty men and taking some thirty-five prisoners. The 5th Black Watch then went through the Gordon's to continue the advance with tank support from 144th Royal Tank Regiment at dawn.

The morning of 25th saw the Gordon's under attack at dawn in thick fog by an eighty strong German patrol. C Company managed to drive them away causing around forty casualties that included twenty-four prisoners. A Company surprised and captured another German patrol and the remainder of the enemy stood up from their ditches and surrendered. The tally for the day was seventy prisoners taken, although they had received twenty-three casualties. The Gordon's then took up residence in Holland, being halfway between Tilburg and s'Hertogenbosch (Den Bosch), and a dozen miles from their objective, the River Mass.

Loon op Zand was a key position defended by enemy troops and 1st Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders were ordered to take it on 28th October. The 5th Black Watch would then pass through them and capture Horst with 5th/7th Gordon Highlanders going through them onto Kaatscheuvel, which was only five miles from the Mass River. They took this with little resistance and collected a further thirty prisoners.

With other Highland Division troops moving up to the river by the 31st October, and with one section of the river remaining to secure, Operation Colin drew to close.

The next offensive action for the 5th/7th Gordon's (some elements of the division had been in action prior to this) was Operation Ascot, the crossing and building bridgeheads on the eastern sides of the Wessem and Noorder canals. These two canals form two sides of a triangle ultimately linking to the third axis - that of the River Maas. The Gordon's Brigade, 153, was tasked to establish the bridgehead over the Wessem canal. Along with the Highland Division, both 15th (Scottish) and 53rd (Welsh) were also involved.

At 16.00 on 14th November, as dusk approached, they set off with the 5th/7th Gordon's on the left and the 1st Gordon's to the right. The ferocity of the British attack, supported by Crocodile flame throwing tanks, stunned the Germans although casualties were high for the 1st Gordon's. The crossing for the 5th/7th "went well". The action was watched and recorded by Chester Wilmot of the BBC, as well as by America's Life magazine.

With the bridgehead secured the divisional Royal Engineers built the bridge across the river to enable the troops to advance and press on with 5th/7th Gordon's moving into Ophoven and Bromholt on 16th and by 17th they had reached and taken all their objectives.

So much so that on 19th November 51st Highland Division Artillery fired their first salvo into Germany.

After the events of Operation Market Garden and the battles for Arnhem and around Oosterbeek in September, the allies had held onto an area lying between Arnhem and Nijmegen of around four to six miles east to west by four miles north to south. It was a flat area of polder surrounded by numerous rivers and tributaries and was known as "the island". Held mainly by British and American troops but with German forces constantly probing the northern area of the island the allies adopted an aggressive patrolling policy. In late November the Highland Division was tasked to relieve the American 101st "Screaming Eagles" Airborne Division and they took up their positions on 27th.

A constant worry to the British was that the Germans would destroy a number of dykes in an attempt to further flood the area and force their enemy off the island. So serious was the concern that every unit had to measure the water level three times a day and report their findings.

On the morning of 3rd December the worries became a reality as the Germans burst a dyke on the River Leck. The British evacuation plan, Operation Noah, came into force and the 5th/7th Gordon's using DUKW's (amphibious troop/supply carriers) and rafts managed to get away okay. Their transport was taken by Ferry at Slijk to safety.

Following this the regiment spent two weeks out of the line with decorations for bravery being awarded to them on 6th December. They included a Distinguished Service Order, a Military Cross, a Distinguished Conduct Medal and four Military Medals.

On 16th December the German Army launched its last great offensive of the war in the west in the Ardennes pushing back the surprised American troops. Eisenhower gave Field Marshal (Monty) Montgomery command of the 9th and 1st US Armies and asked him to stop the Germans.

The Highland Division was placed under the command of 9th US Army but were transferred to the US 1st Army urgently on Christmas Day, thus ruining many lunches and dinners!

The Ardennes offensive had caused much panic and worry during its first days pushing the Americans back over large distances. However, the weather changed on 22nd and with fair skies the allied air superiority allowed them to inflict terrible damage on the German Panzer Armies.

The regiment settled down as the threat of German incursion somewhat lessened and they spent the New Year in cold positions as the snow started falling on 28th December and lasted until the 2nd February.

On 7th January the battle started again as the 51st were ordered to relieve the 53rd Welsh Division with their first objectives being the high ground south of the Marche-Hotton road. The operation started at 09.00 hours on 9th January but the severe snow and ice made any movement except on foot impossible, so much so that sledges were used to ferry ammunition, rations and the wounded about.

As the day moved on 5th/7th Gordon's passed through their comrades towards Hodister but in hilly country with twisting tracks made difficult with snow drifts, road blocks, anti-personnel and anti-tank mines progress was very slow. By nightfall they had taken their first day objectives. The battle and the division's struggle to take their objectives went on until the 15th January with no let up in the cold freezing weather. Again casualties had been high.

The 5th/7th Gordon's were at Turnhout on 20th January where they gave a dance for the nursing sisters of the nearby Canadian hospital before they moved up to Ositerwijk on 23rd.

The next major offensive was for the 1st Canadian Army, with a strengthened and enlarged British 30 Corps attached to it, was to destroy all German forces west of the River Rhine, the last great barrier into the Reich. The operation, codename Veritable, was to commence on 8th February.

30 Corps, now some two hundred thousand men strong, consisted of 15th Scottish, 53rd Welsh and 51st Highland to the right with 43rd Wessex, 11th Armoured and Guards Armoured Divisions plus two further armoured brigades backed by the specialist 79th Armoured Division behind them. On top of this the Royal Artillery provided one thousand and four hundred guns to support the attack.

The 5th/7th Gordon's were detached from 153 Brigade and leant to 154 to provide extra strength during the initial assault on the western edges of the Reichswald.

On 8th February the massive bombardment, greater than that at El Alamein, commenced at 10.45 and the troops advanced. The forest was like a quagmire and the enemy defended with great tenacity using machine gun posts, snipers, Mortars and mines. The forest was dense, often dark, and movement through narrow paths and firebreaks was difficult and dangerous. The 5th/7th Gordon's were ordered to push on and advance further with the 5th Cameronian's, although a large crater helped to hold up and delay their tank support for a time. The enemy was only cleared from this area after a number of fierce bayonet attacks and hand to hand fighting. The 2nd Seaforth Highlanders then took the lead in the advance in this area on 9th/10th January with flame throwing tanks supporting the 5th Cameronian's.

5th/7th Gordon's passed over smashed trenches, pillboxes, fallen trees and enemy dead to take the high ground east of Breedeweg and by midnight, despite heavy casualties their objectives had been taken. During this night the 5th/7th managed to capture one hundred and fifty Germans.

The next night saw the men of the Highland Division being counter attacked by German forces, including paratroops, and being subjected to heavy bombardments of Mortar and artillery or rocket fire.

On the night of 10th and 11th January A Company of the 5th/7th Gordon's approached the town of Gennep but the bridge over the River Niers was blown and they were withdrawn. C Company in concert with tanks occupied Ottersum half a mile to the east. The 5th Black Watch then attempted to assault the river in a silent night crossing eventually taking one hundred and seventy four German prisoners. The Gordon's received some casualties from snipers and machine guns but these obstacles were eliminated through street and house to house fighting.

The 12th February saw heavy fighting continue with 5th/7th and 1st Gordon's alongside 5th Black Watch repelling enemy attacks.

At the end of the three days fighting for Gennep and Heyen the casualties had been heavy with 5th/7th Gordon's losing thirty-one men, including young Frederick Turner.

It is possible that Frederick may have been wounded and evacuated from the Reichswald area before being buried in the Milsbeek area.

The 5th/7th Gordon's and the 51st Highland Division fought on as they moved through the Reichswald towards the main objective of Kessel and Goch. The battle lasted seventeen days and was an action of infantry men fighting hand to hand stalking their enemy and being hunted. The support given to the hard-pressed infantry from Royal Engineers sappers and the signallers from the Royal Signals was highly valued.

The 5th/7th Gordon's remained with the division through to the close of the war fighting in every major action as well as many minor ones. They crossed the River Rhine on 23rd March during Operation Plunder with the 7th Black Watch being the first British troops across. From here they continued the advance into Germany finally crossing the River Weser, with the 5th/7th Gordon's last action being on 2nd and 3rd May in Ebersdorf.

On 12th May a victory parade was held at Bremerhaven when the 51st Highland Division marched past Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Horrocks, General Officer Commanding, 30 Corps. Their massed divisional pipe band accompanied them.

Wherever the Highland Division went they painted their "HD" sign on bridges and buildings to signpost their travels. The HD became so common that other units referred to them as the "Highway Decorators".

This fine infantry division suffered 16,469 casualties including 3084 killed in action during World War Two.

In 1994 the Gordon Highlanders amalgamated with the Queen's Own Highlanders* (Seaforths and Camerons) to form the Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordon and Cameron).

The Queen's Own Highlanders was already an amalgamation of two regiments featured in this story – the Seaforths and Camerons.

Musician Thomas George UMPLEBY

Service Number: RMB/X1145

Age: 20

Royal Marines Band, HMS Uganda Royal Navy

Killed in Action: 13th September 1943

Commemorated: Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 79 Column 3

Son of Thomas Herbert and Isabella Umpleby who lived with their two other boys, Eric and Philip, at 12 Church Lane in Wivelsfield.

Thomas joined the Royal Marines as a fifteen-year-old boy in 1937 straight from Haywards Heath Senior School. He had been a strong footballer and cricketer winning the Hobbs Bat whilst at school.

His early service is unknown although as a bandsman, Thomas was also trained as a medical orderly and would have acted in this capacity when in action.

In a letter to his father received near Christmas time in 1941, when Thomas was serving on the Battlecruiser, HMS Repulse, he wrote to say he had met with his brother Eric, also a musician with the Royal Marines, in Colombo in early December. This had been the first time they had seen each other in almost two years.

Thomas must have left HMS Repulse just after this meeting, as she sailed to Singapore as part of Force Z with the battleship, HMS Prince of Wales. Both ships were sunk by Japanese torpedo and air attacks on the 10th December with the loss of almost one thousand men. Coming three days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour this was a grave blow to both British and Allied superiority in the Pacific. It also removed any final doubts at the Admiralty in London that aircraft could bring about the loss of capital ships.

I have been unable to ascertain exactly when Thomas joined HMS Uganda. She was a Uganda Class Cruiser with a complement of nine hundred and fifty men. HMS Uganda was laid down and built by Vickers Armstrong of Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 20th July 1939 and launched on the 7th August 1941. After completing sea trials she entered service on 3rd January 1943 with the Home Fleet. Thomas probably joined the crew as part of the new compliment of Royal Marines posted to the ship.

She was employed on the protection of convoys from the United Kingdom to Gibraltar and on patrols to intercept enemy blockade runners in the Bay of Biscay area in March and April. For a short period in March she served under West Africa Command with further escort duties in May under Plymouth Command.

On the 19th June she left the UK as the senior ship of a large escort to two convoys, proceeding in company, one bound for North Africa and the other for the Middle East.

The Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean took passage to Malta from Algiers in HMS Uganda early in July.

The Uganda took part in Operation Husky, the allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943, when she was part of Force K, 15th Cruiser Squadron - Mediterranean Fleet. She bombarded Augusta on the night 11th/12th July along with HMS Mauritius and Orion. She took part in further coastal bombardments on 13th and in August she bombarded positions north of Riposto to support the British 8th Army (Desert

Rats) as well as shelling Yelito, on the south coast of the toe of the Italian mainland.

HMS Uganda was still in Force K, when Operation Avalanche, the landing at Salerno, was launched on 9th September. Between the 9th and 13th she fired eight hundred and sixteen rounds in bombarding operations in support of both shipping and ground troops.

At 14.50 on 13th September German Dornier Do127 aircraft, using both types of guided and conventional bombs, attacked allied shipping as they lay off the invasion beaches at Sicily. HMS Uganda was hit by one of the new German radio controlled three thousand-pound glider bomb. The bomb hit the starboard side aft and penetrated through seven decks and the ship's hull before exploding killing sixteen crewmen, including one officer, and injuring a further seven.

Damage Control Teams, under Lieutenant Leslie Reed, managed to get the ship moving on one engine. Her auxiliary engine and steering gear were put out of action and she took in some one thousand three hundred tons of water, which could not be pumped out until the ship was patched up.

She left the Salerno area on the 14th in tow of a tug, the USS Narragansett, escorted by three destroyers and using one engine arriving at Malta on the 15th for preliminary repairs.

Later, when in Gibraltar a patch was put on the ship and her unusable propellers removed, so that she could cross the Atlantic for repair in the Navy Yard at Charleston, South Carolina in North America. She left Gibraltar on the 7th November, and arrived in Charleston on 27th November.

Her refit was completed at the end of October 1944 where she was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy, and commissioned as Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Uganda on 21st October 1944.

She subsequently served with distinction in the Far East during the remainder of the war. She was renamed HMCS Quebec in January 1952 and was later scrapped at Osaka, Japan in February 1961.

It is believed that Thomas was buried at sea along with the other fifteen men killed aboard HMS Uganda on 13th September 1943.

Eric Umpleby married Janice Vern Baumbach, a Nurse, at St Barts Church in New York in 1942.

Private Ronald Sydney UPTON

Service Number: 640092

Age: 20

6th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment

Died of Wounds/Died: 9th February 1941

Buried: Cuckfield Cemetery Plot 6 SE Grave 362

Ronald was born in Burgess Hill on 9th May 1920 to Sydney Clifford and Daisy Florence Upton.

His Father worked as a Farm Bailiff was the grandson of Edwin Street, the owner of the Victoria Pleasure Gardens in Burgess Hill. After running the pleasure gardens the family moved to Riddens Farm near Ansty to live and work.

Ronald attended London Road School and continued to live with his parents when he obtained a job as an underkeeper for Mrs Bernard Drake of Copyhold in Cuckfield. He enjoyed the work and as he gained experience he had intended to become a gamekeeper.

He joined the Territorial Army in 1939 serving with the Haywards Heath Company of the 4th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment. Along with his comrades he spent evenings and weekends training in the local Haywards Heath area and during the summer of 1939 they attended a Summer Camp at Wannock, near Eastbourne. Here on exercises they would put into practice the tactics and drills learnt as Infantry soldiers.

As a trained soldier he was one of the first to be called up on the outbreak of war and is shown on the regimental strength as at 1st September 1939.

He was sent to France with the 4th Battalion, as part of a strengthened British Expeditionary Force, in early 1940. He served as a medic and stretcher-bearer.

As the German Army advanced in May 1940 the British were forced back until they had no option but to evacuate. Ronald, along with many fellow Royal Sussex men, was taken off from St Nazaire in France.

On returning to England he was transferred to the 6th Battalion where he continued to serve as a stretcher-bearer.

Later in the year he had become ill and died from complications arising from an operation at St Bartholomew's Hospital in Hill End, St. Albans in Hertfordshire.

At his funeral service the coffin was draped with a Union Flag and was escorted by four members of his company and the Ansty Platoon of the Home Guard, commanded by Major H H Blaker.

Mr Upton senior attended the funeral in his Home Guard uniform with his wife, daughter Eileen and younger son Edwin George in his scout uniform. Other family members were also present.

Among the floral tributes was one from the 6th Battalion stretcher-bearers.

Messrs Askew Brothers of Cuckfield arranged the funeral.

Eileen served with the Women's Land Army and their Father, who had served during the First World War until being invalided out through illness was a member of Burgess Hill's Home Guard.

After marriage Eileen became known to many people as Eileen Hallett the author of many books on Burgess Hill.

Corporal Thomas Martyn John WALDER

Service Number: 5625409

Age: 27

45 Regiment Reconnaissance, Corps Royal Armoured Corps

Killed in Action: 18th April 1944

Commemorated: Rangoon Memorial - Myanmar Face 1

Son of John Richard and Sarah Walder.

I have been unable to discover any further details about the family or Thomas's early life.

In 1943, General Wavell, then Commander in Chief in India, set Major- General Orde C Wingate D.S.O., with the task of organising guerrilla activity against the Japanese forces in Burma.

The 70th Division was chosen to be the foundation unit for the new Chindit Force.

The Chindits were officially known as Special Force or the 3rd Indian Infantry Division. The 3rd Indian Division was only given in order to deceive the Japanese about British forces organisation and unit structure.

The name Chindit was a corruption of the Burmese word for winged stone lion - the guardians of the Buddhist temples.

The Order of Battle (Formation and units) for the Chindits in January 1944 consisted of six brigades with each being referred to by a nickname. Each brigade had its own head quarters situated near an airfield as well as having a head quarters column in the field.

The 45 Reconnaissance Regiment elected to give up their armoured vehicles and the reconnaissance role they were originally employed as to continue as Infantry. They became part of Enterprise 16th Brigade under the command of Brigadier Ferguson.

The full listing of Enterprise consisted of: 1st Battalion, The Queen's Regiment (21 and 22 Columns); 2nd Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment (17 and 71 Columns); 51/69 Royal Artillery (51 and 69 Columns – Infantry columns made up of Royal Artillery personnel) and the 45th Recce Regiment (45 and 54 Columns – Infantry columns made up of the former Reconnaissance Unit).

The column was the main unit of each force and all operations were column biased. The column was referred to literally, because all personnel moved through the jungle in single file. Each column was essentially of company strength with about one thousand mules supporting each unit.

Each column had four rifle platoons, one heavy weapons platoon (two Vickers medium machine guns, 2 & 3 inch mortar, one flame thrower, two PIATS (Projector Infantry Anti-Tank)), one commando platoon (demolition and booby trap skills) and one recce platoon with a British officer commanding men of the Burma rifles (Karen and Kachin tribesmen).

In January, General Wingate and Lord Mountbatten's visited the troops as a precursor to their first offensive operations against Japanese forces up to and beyond the River Chindwin in February and March.

Between February and May 1944, the Chindits were first deployed in action in Japanese Occupied Burma as Long Range Penetration Troops (LRPT) led by Wingate himself.

Their second expedition was as part of the Fourteenth Army (the "forgotten army") when they made history by being the first troops in Burma to invade by gliders and parachute. The operations took place in the Chindwin area of Burma and they destroyed railway lines and harassed the Japanese by causing havoc throughout the area.

They were then seconded to General Joe Stillwell's American-Chinese Forces and suffered further casualties. They were eventually withdrawn and returned to India where they were disbanded. It was during this period of heavy fighting that Thomas is believed to have lost his life.

45 Recce Regiment was then posted back the United Kingdom, where it was then re-formed as 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment.

The 2nd South Staffordshire's had taken a major part in defending landing zones, and the town of Oosterbeek, in the airborne operation to capture the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem in September 1944. During this action they lost the majority of men as casualties and prisoners of war.

According to the 45 Recce Regiment War Diary, they believe themselves to be the only Royal Armoured Corps Regiment to have fought with the gallant Chindits.

Petty Officer (Telegraphist) Denis Eustace WALFORD D.S.M.

Service Number: P/JX137009

Age: 25

HM (Submarine) P32, Royal Navy*

Killed in Action: 23rd August 1941

Commemorated: Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 52 Column 2

Denis was born in Brighton to Eustace and Daisy Ann Walford who lived with their young daughter, Barbara, at Twittenside in Janes Lane.

He attended London Road School and at the age of fourteen joined the Post Office as a messenger boy. On turning sixteen he joined the Royal Navy.

Keeping his ties to Burgess Hill, Denis married his wife, Winifred Mabel in the late 1930's and they made their home at 45 Mill Road with their two daughters – one was called Eunice the other is currently unknown.

Denis served as a Leading Telegraphist on HMS Snapper, a Class S Submarine that in April 1941 sank five German supply ships and one petrol tanker.

The successes for that operation started on 12th April when she sunk the Moonsund by gunfire in the Skagerrak, and then followed this on 14th April by sinking the minesweepers Behrens and C-Jansen in the Kattegat. It is possible that HMS Snapper also damaged a merchant vessel of seven thousand five hundred tons in the Skagerrak. Later on 3rd July she sank the one thousand and thirty three-ton merchant vessel Cygnus.

After returning from this mission Denis was posted to join a brand new submarine, the P32, which was a U Class small patrol submarine.

P32 was laid down on 30th April 1940 by Vickers at Barrow in Furness and launched in early 1940. She was commissioned into service on 3rd May after a successful set of sea trials. Commanded by Lieutenant D Abdy she had a total complement of four officers and twenty-nine other ranks.

The U class submarines had initially been designed as a training boat but were forced into service by hostilities and the fact that they could be built quickly.

Once her crew were on board and had completed the necessary familiarisation process for the new boat, the P32 was sent to operate in the Mediterranean as part of the Royal Navy's 10th Flotilla (Submarines). This force had been given the job of hunting down and sinking axis shipping convoys between Italy and Africa, as well as, attacking the enemy's surface ships that protected their convoys or hunting allied shipping. 10th Flotilla had its headquarters in Malta, although the submarines themselves did not moor for any length of time within the harbour due to the ever present danger of air attack by the German and Italian airforces.

The Mediterranean was a difficult hunting ground for submarines, in some places deep and clear with the outline of a submerged craft being visible for miles. However, in many of the areas where the 10th Flotilla operated the sea was shallow and poorly charted thus causing many a submarine to bump along the bottom during an attack. The very shallow seas forced submarines to proceed with great caution in areas where the depth was such that the enemy had laid numerous mines as a deterrent to allied raiders. This required the allied boats to sail closer to the coast, but this brought its own risks of trying to avoid the many small craft, housed in numerous bases whose task was to hunt down allied

submarines. The whole operating area for the Malta based submarines was within range of land-based reconnaissance aircraft.

Mirages also created confusion as land and other objects could appear as a distant aircraft carrier or an enemy ship. Another problem, mainly encountered near the Northern Coasts of Africa was that many of the rivers emptying fresh water into the Mediterranean would cause a "layering" effect, where a submarine could drop some one hundred feet in a few seconds in the less buoyant water.

Whilst on patrol on 18th August 1941, the P32 intercepted five merchantmen under escort in the swept channel (free of mines) approach to Tripoli Harbour. Being aware that they were not in a good position to carry out an attack Lieutenant Abdy decided to proceed under the minefield, and after running at full speed for about ten minutes he believed he had cleared the minefield and was in the swept channel.

The captain then ordered the boat up to periscope depth and as P32 was rising she struck a mine forward on the port side. The explosion put out all the lights with the forward control door jamming and she then took on a heavy list to port sinking towards the bottom. All measures were then taken to bring the boat to the surface but to no avail.

The whole of the boat forward of the control room had been destroyed by the exploding mine, killing the eight crewmembers located there. It was soon realised that the boat could not be saved or surfaced and the decision to attempt an escape was taken.

In Abdy's opinion, when interviewed later by the Admiralty, the engine room offered the brighter prospect of escape, as he was concerned about the pressure being put on the forward control room door. However, taking into consideration the number of crewmembers in the engine room (twenty-three) and the amount of time that the P32 had been submerged he decided to split the group up. The Coxswain, Petty Officer Kirk, and ERA Martin volunteered to join Abdy in an attempt to escape via the conning tower.

Abdy and the coxswain escaped successfully but ERA Martin was dead on his arrival on the surface. An Italian Naval vessel later picked up both Abdy and Kirk shortly after being spotted by an aircraft which had been searching the area. No other survivors were seen in the sea.

Abdy and Kirk were made prisoners of war and eventually chosen for prisoner exchange in March 1943. It is believed that allied aircraft may have laid the mine, which P.32 encountered.

The 10th Submarine Flotilla between January 1941 and April 1942 was commanded by Captain GWG Simpson RN, CB, CBE,. It consisted of the following submarines Upright, Utmost, Unique, Upholder (Commanded by Lieutenant-Commander M D Wanklyn who was later awarded a Victoria Cross), Usk, Ursula, Unbeaten, Union, Urge, P33, P32 (Commanded by Lieutenant D A B. Abdy), ORP (Polish) Sokol, P34, P31, Una, P38, P35, P36 and P39.

Between January 1941 and December 1942, the Italians lost one hundred and seventy one ships in the Mediterranean, totalling over half a million tons. The submarines of Malta, supported by others from Alexandria, Beirut and Gibraltar inflicted a high proportion of these losses. Losing that half a million tons of shipping, which included petrol, ammunition, equipment, food and personnel was a key element in slowing down the German advance in Africa which greatly assisted the Commonwealth ground and air troops to push the axis forces to defeat in North African during 1943.

According to the Mid-Sussex Times, Denis was posted missing with the family finally informed on 25th February 1942 that he had been killed in action. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for "*daring endurance and resource in conduct of hazardous and successful operations against the Germans*" prior to his posting to P32.

He had also served on HMS Hood in 1940, and during the Abyssinian Crisis in the late 1930's was a telegraphist in the plane carried by HMS Galatea.

*The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records that Denis was killed aboard Snapper but the Submarine Museum confirm that he was not aboard this boat and was serving on P32 when killed, although the recorded date of death is a few days after she was lost.

Snapper was built at the Royal Naval Dockyard, Chatham in Kent. She was laid Down on 18th September 1933 being launched on 25th October 1934 and was commissioned into service after sea trials on 14th June 1935.

Fusilier Albert John WAYMARK

Service Number: 14756746

Age: 18

11th Battalion, The Royal Scots Fusiliers

Killed in Action: 25th January 1945

Buried: Jonkerbos War Cemetery (Nijmegen) Netherlands Plot 3
Row F Grave 4

Son of John Edward and Caroline Waymark of Lindfield, formerly of Freaks Lane Farm in Burgess Hill.

Albert was born in March 1926 and was educated at London Road School. There were two younger brothers and two sisters. Sister Dorothy, was a Physical Training Instructor in the Auxiliary Territorial Service during the war.

Before volunteering for service Albert had worked for Mrs Godman at Great Ote Hall.

He first joined The Green Howards and was then at some stage transferred to The Royal Scots Fusiliers and went overseas to join his Battalion in the Northwest European Campaign in 1944, although I am unsure at what date this was.

In October 1944 the 11th Battalion was one of the infantry battalions of the 49th (West Riding) Division taking part in the Allied advance operating on the borders of Holland.

The first five days spent in Holland saw the 11th Battalion occupy a defensive position at Zondereigen, close to the Dutch border, guarding the left flank of the Polish Armoured Division, which was in the process of moving northwards.

This period saw days of inactivity interspersed with fierce engagements with the German forces and after a week on the defensive in Maerle the Fusiliers withdrew westwards to Ostmalle.

On the afternoon of 21st October patrols were sent north of the Antwerp - Turnhout Canal where they reached Wuestwezel. Following a small engagement between A Company and German troops, which suffered five killed and three captured, the Fusiliers moved North to reinforce the 1st Leicestershire Regiment who had been counter-attacked by German infantry with tanks.

On 23rd October the Germans attacked D Company and the battalion's Carrier Platoons with infantry and self-propelled guns. One of the guns managed to get behind the 11th Battalion lines causing some concern as two anti-tank guns of the Royal Artillery were put out of action, one by a direct hit, and the other by a burning building collapsing on to it. After much fighting, and brave work by Sergeant Little and his men who got this gun out of the burning house and knocked out the German gun, the enemy withdrew in the afternoon. A battalion of the Hallamshire Regiment who threatened to counter-attack German forces further strengthened the British position.

Troops of the 104 (Timberwolf) United States Division relieved the Fusiliers on 25th October and the battalion moved to Uisschenheaven, where they stayed for three days.

From there they came under the command of Clarkeforce (Brigadier Clarke) and moved back into Holland to take the village of Wouw and cut the main road from Roosendaal to Bergen-op-Zoom. During the night a patrol of C Company, under Lieutenant Gillespie, reached the outskirts of Wouw. Next morning the battalion, supported by tanks, attacked and was soon astride the road between Wouw and Bergen-op-Zoom. After occupying Wouw, they moved back to the area of Brembosch to concentrate together and prepare under cover of darkness for an encircling attack programmed to take Roosendaal from the South.

The battalion attacked with tank support on 30th October but found the town empty as the enemy had already left. A two-day operation then followed in appalling freezing and wet conditions with one platoon spending five hours in waist deep water.

Private soldiers are rarely mentioned as individuals in regimental histories. This period was one of intense activity with regular offensive patrols and probes into enemy held territory. These patrols or offensives often resulted in hard fought actions for the Royal Scots Fusiliers resulting in many casualties being.

According to letters written to the family from Albert's Company Commander he was preparing to go into action when a sniper's bullet killed him. He received prompt medical attention and was evacuated to the nearest Field Hospital where he was operated on but died shortly after.

NB: The Mid-Sussex Times reports that prior, perhaps also during the war, the Waymark family had rented some land from the Maxwell's in Folders Lane to grow crops or graze animals.

Lance Corporal Bertie WEBSTER

Service Number: 3526583

Age: 29

1st Battalion, The Manchester Regiment

Killed in Action: 15th August 1943

Commemorated: Singapore Memorial Column 76

Son of Bertie and Mary Charlotte Webster

Unsure if this is the correct man.

Gunner Basil Henry WEBSTER

Service Number: 11052734

Age: 23

79 (Hertfordshire Yeomanry) Regiment, Royal Artillery

Killed in Action: 29th July 1944

Buried: Cassino Memorial Italy Panel 2

Son of Robert Clasper Todd and Mary Agnes Todd of Oulsmoor Berkshire.

Unsure if this is the correct man.

Sergeant Donald Edwin WEST

Service Number: 649043

Age: 21

78 Squadron, Royal Air Force

Killed in Action: 2nd June 1942

Commemorated: Runnymede Memorial - Surrey Panel 96

Donald was born in Burgess Hill on 7th July 1920, as the only son of Edwin Harold and Amelia West and lived at 108 West Street, Burgess Hill with their daughter.

Donald's father was a native of Burgess Hill, coming from a big family, and he was employed at the Keymer Brick and Tile Works in Burgess Hill. Edwin, was one of six brothers who served in the armed forces during the First World War. Edwin saw service as a Sergeant with the Royal Sussex Regiment on the western front. One of Edwin's brothers, Charles Nelson West was killed in action on 8th September 1916 during the Battle of the Somme and having no known grave is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the missing.

Don, as family and friends knew him, was educated at London Road School and also attended St John's Church where he was choirboy. Both as a child and into adulthood his sister remembers many of his friends later recalling how popular he was.

From an early age he developed a keen interest and great understanding of nature and wildlife. He spent much of his spare time walking in the country as well as fishing and the family can recall his great knowledge of the countryside and his ability to name animals, birds and plants.

This interest led Don into a career as a gardener where he worked for the Kleinwort Estate. With his knowledge and love of the countryside he planned to continue working outdoors eventually to become a gamekeeper.

However, these plans were put on hold as Don volunteered for service with the Royal Air Force when aged 18. He enlisted in Brighton and was sent off for training in Scotland, where on completion as RAF ground staff, he was posted to a Barrage Balloon Squadron at Marchwood in Southampton.

Nº32 (Barrage Balloon) Group was responsible for Nº's 12, 13, and 14 Balloon Centres, at Fareham which covered Eastleigh, Southampton, Portsmouth, and Gosport. Don would have served with one of these centres, although I am unsure to which squadron (numbered 900 to 999) and flight he was with.

The number of squadrons in each group varied from 8 to 16, with each squadron operating between 16 to 45 balloons.

During periods when Don was lucky to get leave (both as ground staff and aircrew) he would often spend his days fishing. On one occasion he found a magpie, which had fallen from its nest and Don took the young bird home helped nurse it back to fitness and then released it back in to the wild.

After a short time Don felt that his service should be in the air and so he volunteered for flying duties, where after receiving training (again probably in Scotland) he was selected as an air gunner in a Halifax, one of the RAF's four engined heavy bombers.

Don was then posted to 78 Squadron and joined them at Middleton St George in County Durham.

78 Squadron was reformed in the rearmament programme leading up to the start of World War Two. The squadron was formed from B flight of 10 Squadron at Boscome Down initially flying Heyford Bombers where they were attached to N^o4 Group Bomber Command.

A move to Dishforth also brought about a re-equipment with Armstrong Whitworth Whitley's. Although re-equipment was complete at the outbreak of the War the squadron were designated as a training unit for the aircrew from the Group's Pool units.

The Squadron was awarded its badge in November 1939 by King George VI and reflecting the aircraft at the time the badge shows a Heraldic Tiger with two tails, which mimicked the Whitley with its two rudders and Tiger engines.

On July 19th 1940, the first operational training unit was formed enabling the squadron to take part in night operations over Germany. The Squadron was involved in the first airborne allied operation of World War Two in February 1941 for Operation Colossus. The RAF carried out diversionary bombing during the operation when British Paratroopers, transported in the Whitley's, destroyed a large aqueduct at Tragino in southern Italy.

The Squadron and its Whitley's moved from Middleton St. George in October 1941 to Croft. RAF Croft was situated on the West Side of the A167 Northallerton to Darlington road and was one of the most northerly airfields built during World War Two for use by Bomber Command. Construction started in 1940 and it developed into a standard bomber airfield with three concrete runways. Although officially known as Croft it was frequently called Neasham by locals. 78 were the first Squadron to move to the airfield on 20th October 1941.

In spring 1942 they re-equipped with Handley Page Halifax B II Bombers, aided by a Squadron Conversion Flight, which was formed on 23rd March in preparation for the changeover.

The Squadron was considered proficient enough on these new aircraft to take part in the first of the Thousand Bomber raids in May 1942. In June 1942 they moved again back to their old home of Middleton St George with the Conversion Flight moving on to Dalton.

Don was involved in the following operations, which have been kindly provided by John Erricker D.F.C., 78 Squadron Archivist from their operational records.

1941

16/17th October – Four aircraft detailed to attack targets at Ostend. Two aircraft attacked the target. Owing to 10/10ths cloud (poor visibility) the remaining two aircraft were unable to identify the target. Bombs were jettisoned in the sea of the Belgium Coast.

23/24th October – Nine aircraft detailed for operations with the target being Kiel. Eight aircraft attacked the target on ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival). One aircraft returned to base with a compass defect.

31st October/1st November – Eight aircraft detailed for operations. The target is Dunkirk and four aircraft located and bombed the target, two aircraft were unable to locate the target and dropped their bombs in the sea. One aircraft had magneto trouble and jettisoned its bombs. One aircraft did not go on the mission owing to "lack of boost" on port engine so just circled the aerodrome and landed again.

1942

5/6th January – 8 aircraft detailed for operations with their primary target being Cherbourg. Two aircraft successfully attacked the target. The remaining six aircraft could not identify the target so all jettisoned bombs safely and returned to base.

11/12th February – Four aircraft detailed for operations against Le Havre with three successfully attacked the primary target. The remaining aircraft did not attack owing to port and starboard extractor trouble. Their bombs were jettisoned safely. All aircraft returned and landed at Boscombe Down.

13/14th February – Three aircraft detailed for operations. All aircraft reached the target on ETA where they experienced tracer being fired through the cloud. All aircraft jettisoned their bombs safely over the target area.

30/31st May – (First Thousand-Bomber Raid) Twenty-two aircraft detailed for operations. Primary target selected as Cologne. Twenty aircraft successfully attacked the target. One aircraft attacked Aachen and with the other returning early owing to failure of outer port engine.

On return one aircraft was severely iced up and the captain ordered the crew to bale out. One member sustained fatal injuries and the aircraft was crash-landed successfully by the captain. One aircraft collided with a Hampden bomber on returning over the UK. Two of the crew died of their injuries, the remainder, with the exception of the Flight Engineer was injured, spent some time in Hospital. A Junkers Ju 88 was definitely destroyed by another aircraft over the target area.

The night that Don died was the second raid carried out by the "Thousand Force" (Arthur Harris's 1000 bomber raids), this time on Essen, although the full 1000 aircraft could not be provided on this night. There were however, 956 aircraft dispatched: 545 Wellington's, 127 Halifax's (78 Squadron's included), 77 Stirling's, 74 Lancaster's, 71 Hampden's, 33 Manchester's and 29 Whitley's.

Don's aircraft Halifax R9364, in which he was the air gunner, took off at 23.03 hours and joined up with the other elements of the force at a pre-arranged area.

The plan was similar to that of the recent first 1000 bomber raid on Cologne, which was, in simple terms to swamp German Flak defences by dropping a large concentration of incendiary bombs in so short a period that the fire services would be overwhelmed and that the fire would consume large areas of the city. The exception on this raid was that the "raid leaders" dropped many more flares flying ahead in Wellington bombers from 3 Group. Despite a reasonable weather forecast, crews experienced great difficulty in finding the target; the ground was covered either by haze or a layer of low cloud. Bombing was very scattered. Essen reported only eleven houses destroyed and one hundred and eighty four damaged, mostly in the south of the city, and one prisoner of war working camp burnt out. Particularly heavy bombing was also seen at Duisburg and Mulheim. 31 Bombers were lost on this raid: 15 Wellington's, 8 Halifax's, 4 Lancaster's, 1 Hampden, 1 Manchester, 1 Stirling and 1 Whitley.

The 78 Squadron Operation Record for that night records:

1/2nd June – Twenty aircraft detailed for operations. Seventeen aircraft successfully attacked the primary target, Essen. One aircraft is presumed missing since nothing heard of either aircraft or crew. A SOS (Flak) fix was given to another aircraft without acknowledgement, that is also presumed missing. One aircraft abandoned operations owing to the rear turret jamming and suspected enemy fighters about. Bombs jettisoned at sea.

The Loss Card for Don's aircraft records:

The SOS Flak (stated the aircraft had been damaged by Flak) and that its Fix (position) was 5203N 0351E. A second class fix, Hull, was given without acknowledgement. Just off the Dutch Coast. Since no further news

The 1942 volume of The Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses by W R Chorley records that the aircraft was engaged by flak, which caused the rudders to stall, followed by a flat spin off the Dutch coast. On impact the fuselage broke into two sections and the two survivors were thrown into the sea. Both were quite badly hurt, but they managed to get into a dinghy and were rescued four days later by a German vessel.

The following are two personal comments provided by surviving members of 78 Squadron.

Pilot Officer Lloyd G "Hap" Geddes (Navigator) Royal Canadian Air Force – *"In 1941/1942, due to the weather, we had a slow winter as far as operations were concerned. Over Christmas, at Croft, we were snowed in and even the rations couldn't get in! For three days we lived on "bubble and squeak" and steak.*

Because we weren't so active, during the days, we spent a considerable time with each other. Some air testing and swinging compasses etc., and in the evening going to The George, a pub a few miles out of Darlington comes vividly to mind. I knew most of the aircrew, a great bunch of guys! As the time went on, through the summer of 1942, they sure petered out fast as the time went on.

I was on the Squadron, at Croft, from September 1941 until 1st June 1942. In the fall of 1941, we did ops in Whitley's and then during the winter months converted to Halifax's. In the spring, we gradually worked into ops in Halifax II's. I was shot down on the second "Thousand Bomber" raid (the night Donald was killed). I was lucky enough to bail out but was taken Prisoner of War and was at Stalag Luft III until the end of the War."

Flight Sergeant Art E Fay (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) Royal Canadian Air Force – *"There was a crew consisting of Pilot Officer John Lawson aged 22 of Nova Scotia, Sergeant Tommy Thompson aged 21 RAF and Sergeant T B Miller G.C., of Nova Scotia (also Sergeant Ronald McGlen aged 20, Flight Lieutenant P.J Jones and Donald). Why I remember them is that on their last trip their radio was left on "transmission" and we could hear the chit-chat all the way to the enemy coast. Of course, they made a perfect target for the German radio controlled guns".*

Sergeant Miller and Flight Lieutenant Jones were the two who survived in the dinghy and were taken prisoner. The other crewmembers were all lost and are commemorated on the RAF Memorial to the Missing at Runnymede.

Later operations for the Squadron included the attack on Peenemunde on the night of 17th/18th August 1943 where the Germans were carrying out rocket research. The Halifax's also directly supported the Normandy Landings during June 1944. Their day to day operations throughout 1944 included many sorties against V1 Flying Bomb (Doodlebug) launch sites in France.

The 78 Squadron memorial is in the churchyard of All Saints Church, Bubwith, near Selby, Yorkshire.

In York Minster, there is a Book of Remembrance containing the names of those airmen, from squadrons based in Yorkshire, who lost their lives during World War Two. It consists of 473 pages of written names and includes 16 pages of squadron crests and four pages listing the aircraft used.

The Handley Page Halifax was a four-engined bomber that entered service with the RAF in November 1940. She had a crew of seven and was powered by four Bristol Hercules engines that gave a top speed of two hundred and eighty two miles per hour with a range when fully loaded with bombs of just over one thousand miles. The Halifax carried 13000lb of bombs and was armed with two.303 machine guns in the nose, a further four in two turrets located in the dorsal and tail.

She also operated as a glider tug for the major airborne invasions as well as being used for anti-submarine work by Coastal Command. Six thousand two hundred were built and it remained in service with the RAF until 1947.

Sergeant Air Gunner Roy James WILSON

Service Number: 3030786

Age: 19

178 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed: 12th July 1945

Buried: Naples War Cemetery Italy Plot 4 Row K Grave 4

Son of James Halbrow and Hather Louise Wilson of Chiselhurst Kent.

Roy was originally from London and, along with two sisters, had been evacuated to Burgess Hill at the start of the war. They lived for a time at 124 Leylands Road. There may also have been three elder brothers - David Arthur, who won a Military Cross, Henry and George

Roy worked at Chandlers Ltd and had been an enthusiastic member of the Air Training Corps before volunteering in 1943.

Nothing else is currently known about Roy's early life or initial training in the RAF.

178 Squadron were stationed in Amendola in Italy from the time that he joined them in August 1944. This was an old German airfield and the crews, surrounded by olive groves, lived in tents. They were never able to fully relax because of the noise and constant movements that an operational base brought with it. The airfield was also located on very flat ground and this often left the accommodation areas flooded after heavy rains.

The Squadron was equipped with the American Consolidated B24 Liberator Heavy Bomber and, whilst Roy was with, them bombed targets in Italy and the Balkans including the Ploesti oil refinery.

The following is an overview of their actions leading up to the time of Roy's death.

In August and September 1944 they supported the underground Polish army by dropping supplies to them. 148 Squadron and 1586 (Polish) Special Duties Flight originally undertook these operations, but heavy losses forced them to be supplemented with other aircraft. On 13th August 178 and 31 Squadron (South African Air Force) were tasked with dropping supplies to the Polish Home Army in Warsaw. This involved a lengthy round trip of some one thousand eight hundred miles with most of the journey over heavily defended enemy territory. Supplies had to be delivered into the heart of the destroyed city.

Most of the Liberators dropped their payload successfully, often in the face of intense fire.

The following night a further eight 178 Squadron aircraft were dispatched and this time they lost three crews, with others suffering damage. They went back again on the 15th/16th but this time could only send three aircraft with one of these returning early due to engine failure. A further three were sent back again on the night of 16th/17th August with yet another crew being lost.

Although they managed to fly supplies in through difficult conditions much of the materiel did not reach its intended recipients and operations were temporarily suspended. They were however, re-instated again for a short period in September as four aircraft flew to Poland on the night of 10th/11th.

At this time other crews from the squadron operated over southern France supporting the allied invasion, Operation Dragoon.

In September it flew further raids over Europe and the Balkans. At the end of the month 178 Squadron aircraft assisted in dropping supplies to Yugoslav partisans in low-level dispatch runs. During this time they also laid mines in the River Danube with more losses in planes and men experienced.

Further drops to partisans were carried out during November and again losses in both men and aircraft were ever present. They also flew British troops to Athens in order to contain and police the uprising led by communists groups and other parties.

Operations and losses continued into early 1945. With aircraft being vectored over mountains for drop zones the weather was constantly bad and this caused crews and aircraft to go missing.

Bombing operations continued, mainly concentrating on railway and communications targets in northern Italy, Austria and Yugoslavia. On the 22nd March they suffered their last loss on an operational mission when attacking the marshalling yard at Villach in Austria. Sadly this last casualty for 178 was caused by it being struck from above by an incendiary bomb that was dropped by another aircraft causing it to catch fire and sending it into a crash dive.

In April they were tasked to support the 8th Army's advance up northern Italy and into Austria. This was very precise work with some crews being requested to drop bombs only a few hundred yards in front of British troops.

178 Squadron's final bombing mission was on the night of 25th/26th April, when twelve Liberators joined with others to attack the marshalling yards at Freilassing, near Salzburg, in the face of heavy enemy flak. Later that night another aircraft dropped leaflets over a number of towns on the Adriatic coast.

As soon as hostilities ended in Italy, the squadron started flying in supplies and petrol to support the 8th Army's advance into Austria. Their last mission before VE Day, 8th May 1945, was when eleven Liberators ferried rations to Rivolto in Northern Italy, again for the 8th Army.

After VE Day they were employed on trooping duties, which included sending men home from Italy who had started to be released from the Army or were former prisoners of war. The Liberators were converted to seat around twenty-seven men and it was during these flights that Roy was hoping to complete the required number of flying hours in order for him to pilot the aircraft.

The day before he flew he wrote to his sister saying that there was a storm brewing and he was unsure if they would fly. However, they did fly the next day and the aircraft is thought to have developed some mechanical problem or was adversely affected by the bad weather. Roy is believed to have stayed with the plane when it went down. It is thought the other occupants parachuted out of the aircraft but were all blown out to sea and lost.

Sadly I have been unable to locate any surviving relations to date.

The Mid-Sussex Times reported that when in Italy Roy met up with another Burgess Hillian, Sergeant Johnnie Webb, who was on leave at the time.

Number 178 squadron was formed at Shandur on 15th January 1943 from a detachment of men of 160 Squadron and began bombing operations with Liberators on the same day. In addition to Liberators, Halifax's were used between May and September 1943, and on returning to Egypt in November 1945, the squadron converted to Lancaster's. On 15 April 1946 it was renumbered 70 squadron.

In the period of two and half years 178 Squadron gained a high reputation for skill and expertise. They were rewarded many times for brave and gallant conduct being awarded at least four D.S.O's twenty six D.F.C's (and two bars) and thirteen D.F.M's.

Private Frank W WICKENS

Service Number: 13084508

Age: 36

140 Company, Royal Pioneer Corps

Killed in Action: 9th September 1943

Buried: Salerno War Cemetery Italy Plot 6 Row D Grave 6

Unfortunately no next of kin or family details have been found for Frank.

As his service number is in the "13" series it is almost certain that he did not take part in the battles in France and the subsequent evacuation in 1940. However, at this stage it is still uncertain at what period Frank joined 140 Company. Therefore the following provides a review of their travels and actions during the period until his death in 1943.

140 Company began their life on 10th June 1940, at Westcliffe, under the command of Major Ashdown M.C. They were put on stand by for overseas service moving to Gailles, near Irvine in Scotland on 14th June with a compliment of three officers and two hundred and seventy six men.

On 7th July they moved to Gourock where two days later they boarded the Ormone and escorted by two cruisers and two destroyers of the Royal Navy they set out for Iceland. The journey was without incident and they landed in Reykjavik on 12th July immediately starting work at the docks unloading ships and supplies.

On 26th July they moved to Kaldadarnes, some fifty miles from Reykjavik, to start work on building an airfield although the transfer was hampered by a lack of transport. After a great deal of hard work the airfield received its first arrivals on 27th August when nine Fairey Battle fighters and two Sunderland Flying boats landed.

The 8th September saw their first free Sunday since their arrival two months earlier. A full medical inspection was held and only one hundred of the company was deemed fit to withstand the harsh winter on Iceland so hard had they worked. The diary entry for 20th September highlights the difficulties faced by these men *"Still no transport available and all journeys are made by 'thumbing a lift' or borrowing from other units. Group HQ is 50 miles away and the OC (Officer Commanding) has to 'thumb a lift' to conferences"*.

Finally on 8th October the men of 140 Company were moved into winter quarters in Reykjavik. On 29th October twenty men reported sick with one hundred and forty two fit for work. Captain Groves and one hundred and thirty other ranks left the island for the UK, as they were unfit to stand the winter. Reinforcements for them arrived later that day.

The 3rd November saw their first visit by an enemy aircraft although this led to no offensive action. Thirty-six men are recorded as sick with one hundred and ninety three working. Forty men are unloading a ship in harbour with the remainder on camp construction and training. The 9th November was an exciting day for the men of 140 Company as their first truck arrived, a 15 cwt Fordson. The jubilation was short lived when after unpacking it was realised it had no continuous windscreen and was in fact fitted out for service in the tropics!

On 4th January 1941 one hundred and eighty men started construction of a new airfield, which is to receive American aircraft. The temperature was recorded as

9°C. The weather deteriorated further during January and on 25th the mechanical transport and portable generators on the airfield are all rendered unserviceable as their fuel had frozen. The War Diary added that a Court of Enquiry is convened.

The men are all issued with fur caps on 6th March because of the cold winds and the War Diary reports that at the end of the month the average age of the company is 35.

Showing the dangers these men were under from nature during their time on Iceland, Privates Hurn and Whitworth are killed by a lava fall. The War Diary records fourteen days without rain in September, of which only three were sunny. At this stage they are still quarrying lava on the airfield having moved some 15408 tons in September alone. The total by December for the time since construction started in January reached 341010 tons.

On 1st January 1942 the Company boarded HMT Orbita and left the harsh island of Iceland behind. They landed at Gourock on 4th January and proceeded to London where they all went on some very well deserved disembarkation leave.

After leave the Company located its Head quarters at Bishops College, Waltham Cross in Hertfordshire. Detachments of men were sent to a number of locations to carry out various tasks for the war effort. They were engaged on camp construction at Loughton, Chadwell Heath and Barking, constructing artillery gun sites at Finsbury Park and Brent in London. At Mill Hill, in London they worked with ammunition and loaded Royal Engineers stores at Whetstone as well as maintaining tank traps and defences in and around London and the South.

On 22nd April they moved to Hyde Park Square in London and two weeks later a move to Northholt followed where they worked at the Central Ordnance Depot in Greenford. On 19th July they moved North to Inverary for a month's training before returning to Northolt, where they remained until 2nd November after which they moved to Wolterton Camp.

On 11th November the next chapter of their history was forged when they moved to Hamilton, near Glasgow, for training as part of a Beach Group in preparation for the allied landings on Sicily. Further training as part of the Beach Group was carried out in November at Dundee before a move to Doune on 29th December.

Beach Group's were formed to operate on invasion beaches and unload stores at various points. This job was extremely hazardous – not only from the dangers of enemy fire and air attack but also that the movement of masses of men and machines and munitions in a hostile environment could be unpredictable.

They were issued tropical kit on 1st April and on 10th April, nine officers and two hundred and ninety seven men embarked on the MV Staffordshire at Liverpool for transportation to Algiers. They arrived at their destination on 23rd April and moved to Oued Marsa five days later for further training.

On 24th June they embarked onto an (unknown) ship and then onto LST (Landing Ship Tank) 402 on 25th June. The next day they were subjected to an air attack before disembarking at Sousse on 27th June. They re-embarked at Sousse and after a day sailing arrived in Malta on 6th July. Leaving Malta on 9th they landed on the invasion beaches of Sicily at Rada Di Portpalo, where they began working in their new role as part of 20 Beach Group.

The 14th July saw HQ and six sections move to Marzamemi and then a further move to Parazzola for work at the base and petrol depots.

On 3rd August 140 Company moved up to the Sytracuse-Catanis road as part of 61 Group. Eight sections were now employed on road maintenance to ensure supplies continued along this important artery. Enemy and allied shelling as well as the traffic of hundreds of heavy vehicles including tanks had damaged the rural roads.

The end of the month (27th) saw them move to Fiumefreddo to rejoin 20 Beach Group

On 5th September they embarked from the beaches at Riposto, where four days later on 9th September they disembarked in Italy along with 231 Brigade, for the landings at Salerno where they landed under intense enemy fire at St Venere. Again they were tasked in their role as a beach group, all the while receiving fire from the German forces.

The War Diary states that Lieutenant F Coles was killed with Private F Wickens dying of wounds later. A further nine other ranks were also wounded this day. The Company continued to work on the beaches and was running a Prisoner of War Camp at Sapri on 17th September.

For their work and dedication during the Second World War King George VI bestowed the title Royal on them in 1946 where upon they became The Royal Pioneer Corps.

Signalman Robert Harry WOOD

Service Number: 2590434

Age: 27

Royal Corps of Signals

Died: 8th September 1943

Buried: Kanchanaburi War Cemetery - Thailand Plot 4 Row B Grave 43

Son of Harry and Frances E Wood of Burdocks Farm.

Robert was educated at London Road Senior Boys School under Mr Woolcock.

He had volunteered in 1939 when the War Office appealed for experienced motorcyclists to act as Despatch Riders.

Enlisting in June 1940 he embarked for Norway with the British Expeditionary Force but after four days was evacuated with the Army to Scotland.

He then served in Singapore from October 1941 to the surrender of the Army on 15th February 1942, when he was taken Prisoner, although he was officially listed as missing by the War Department on 4th May 1942.

The Mid-Sussex Times records that he was officially recorded on 3rd June 1943 as a prisoner interned in the Malai Camps as news slowly reached British official sources, possibly via the Red Cross.

The Royal Signals Casualty Card, held by the Museum, shows Robert is then listed as being in Number 4 Prisoner of War Camp, Thailand. The last entry shown reports that he died of Malaria whilst in captivity in Thailand.

Number 4 Prisoner of War Camp was one of six groups of prisoner camps situated along the River Kwai Railway (known to the prisoners as the Death Railway). These six groups controlled some 70-construction camps full of prisoner building the railway and paths through the jungle.

The Headquarters of Number 4 Group was a camp known as Tarsao located some 74 kilometres into the then virgin jungle the original, and the then still existing, bridge over the River Kwai. The group was spread some 16km south to 100km north of this headquarters camp.

When taken prisoner in Singapore, Robert would have been marched some eighteen miles to the north east corner of the island to Changi (now part of the international airport). There are no official records as to where the Royal Signals units were billeted but in late September or early October 1942 groups of around six hundred prisoners were being moved to other locations every day by the Japanese.

The men were taken to the railway station and loaded aboard steel goods wagons with thirty-five men in each truck for a journey that would take five days. Inside there was little enough room to sit, and the steel sided wagon was too hot to lean against during the day and at night the sides were too cold to rest against.

Peter Dunstan, a former soldier in the Black Watch, Japanese prisoner and now archivist of the Far Prisoners of War Association told me when we corresponded in 2001. *"There were never more than two stops a day where the prisoners were issued with a pint mug measure of boiled rice and some vegetable soup. Not being allowed off the train we (prisoners) had to hang out of the train holding on to two mates to go to the toilet."*

During this journey the men were told that they were being moved due to food shortages and that their new location would offer plenty of food, with rest and the opportunity to play sports. However, on arrival we were marched one and half miles to the first camp at Ban Pong, which because of the monsoon, was under a foot of water. All the huts were of a native type construction sleeping on a platform some 18 inches about the mud floor. Without nets and ointments tropical insects tormented them day and night."

After a few days in Ban Pong Robert was marched or transported fifty kilometres to Kanchanburi, then a small town, on the banks of the Rivers Kwai, Noi and Yai. At this stage the railway had yet to be built and the journey was through the thick jungle which was only accessible through narrow paths that had previously been hacked out by other prisoners' hands.

After only a short time here he, and the rest of his party, was marched the seventy five kilometres carrying the few possessions they still had to the base camp at Tarsao where they may have stopped for one night.

They were then marched a further eleven kilometres to a camp known as Tonchan Spring Camp. This camp was at the top of a waterfall, but further down river was a native camp and nearer the source a Japanese military camp. As everyone used the river for drinking, washing and as a latrine the lack of hygiene polluted the water to the extent that many allied prisoners died of Cholera.

Robert was originally buried in the camp cemetery and not the separate cemetery for cholera victims and Peter Dunstan advised me that this would point to Malaria, along with Beri-Beri (malnutrition) being the final cause of death. His original grave number in Tonchan camp cemetery was identified as 188.

The first task the prisoners carried out was to widen the original track in order that the Japanese could drive their lorries through to bring guns, troops and supplies to support their campaign in Burma. Following this the jungle was cleared for the railway with prisoners cutting down bamboo six to eight inches thick growing in clumps of around ten-foot thick. There were no power tools available and the majority of the work was done by hand with blunt axes. This led to many cuts and grazes from the very sharp bamboo thorns growing up to six inches in length, which caused tropical ulcers and led to men losing limbs and ultimately their lives.

Peter Dunstan again *"During the construction the Japanese never supplied medication and the bandages men used were from their own, limited, clothing which was washed and boiled to try and kill the risk of infection as often as possible. Food was broken rice (normally fed to chickens) and was covered in lime to try and prevent weevils. The rice had to be washed to clear the lime and the prisoners more often than not ate the weevils, and other jungle creatures, as sources of protein."*

When hostilities had finished after August 1945, a search team, that included two former prisoners who had worked on the railway and had volunteered to stay behind, identified all the camp cemeteries.

The Japanese and Koreans who had been camp guards were first ordered not to move from where they were. Then under the Army Graves Recovery Service one set of former guards was tasked to dig new graves. These are now the established cemeteries. Another set recovered the bodies from the camp cemeteries so that each night the train would return, along the now infamous railway, to bring those who had died in such terrible conditions to their final resting-place. As far as is known all identified graves were recovered during this lengthy operation.

The notorious Burma-Siam railway, built by Commonwealth, Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, approximately 13,000 prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar). Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre. The Japanese aimed at completing the railway in 14 months and work began in October 1942. The line, 424 kilometres long, was completed by December 1943. The graves of those who died during the construction and maintenance of the Burma-Siam railway (except for the Americans, whose remains were repatriated) were transferred from camp burial grounds and isolated sites along the railway into three cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar (Burma).

For those, like Peter Dunstan, who survived the struggle for life and the terrible conditions and treatment they were forced through, their captivity has never gone away. The Far Eastern Prisoners of War Association has worked tirelessly to seek recognition and reparation for their suffering. The association is a tight knit, but sadly diminishing band of men.

There are families' organisations that work to assist each other, as well as archiving the stories of the men who were prisoners of the Japanese to ensure future generations know of their war service.

Robert now lies in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery. This is only a short distance from the site of the former 'Kanburi', the prisoner of war base camp through which most of the prisoners passed on their way to other camps. There are now 5084 Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. There are also 1896 Dutch war graves here.

Robert's eldest brother, Charles, served in the RAF for eight and a half years including the Middle East. Charles was discharged from the service in September 1943 on medical grounds after two operations.

Flying Officer Albert Henry WOOLCOCK B.A.

Service Number: 73491

Age: 25

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Died: 28th May 1940

Commemorated: Runnymede Memorial - Surrey Panel 6

Son of Henry and Florence Sarah Woolcock of Schoolhouse, London Road in Burgess Hill.

Mr Woolcock senior was the master at London Road School and he may have lived opposite the Kings Head Public House after retirement.

Albert, nicknamed spudgun by the local lads, attended London Road and Lindfield County schools where he obtained a scholarship to go on to Brighton Grammar School. He was then awarded a County Scholarship to St Catharine's College at Cambridge University gaining a second class in Geography Tripos in 1936.

However, it was at sport where he really excelled, playing both cricket and football. He had represented Lindfield School at football and then kept goal for Haywards Heath County League side.

He received a Footballing Blue as a Goalkeeper in his first term of residence at Cambridge and kept goal for the university for four seasons. He was the Honorary Secretary of the university side during the 1935-1936 season. The following season, 1936-37, he was again a blue and was this time made Varsity Captain and, later in the summer of 1937, he captained the side that toured Australia, New Zealand and Ceylon.

Albert was an Amateur International player for England, keeping goal on 13th February 1937 against Ireland at Belfast, where they lost 1-5. He had a better result for his second cap when England beat Wales 8-2 at Rhyl on 29th January 1938.

The Mid-Sussex reported that Albert also played for Brighton and Hove Albion. He kept goal for the Arsenal reserve team in the 1938-1939 season. He was signed as an amateur by them at very short notice when the club had a scarcity of fit goalkeepers through injury and illness. Albert played in two fixtures for Arsenal at Highbury, both in the London Combination League. The first match was against Luton Town Reserves on 29th October 1938 with the second versus Fulham Reserves on 27th December 1938.

Arsenal believes that Albert had played against their reserve team in a friendly match at Cambridge on 27th October. This was two days before his Arsenal debut and he may have turned in an impressive performance, which prompted the club to seek his services.

He also played for the Corinthians, one of the most successful and well-known amateur clubs in early Football Association history. The Football Association kindly provided me with a photocopy of Albert with the Corinthians team when leaving for a tour.

Also good at cricket he kept wicket and opened the batting for St Catherine's College at Cambridge as well as for the Mid-Sussex eleven's.

Albert joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve before the war as a Pilot Officer being promoted to a Flying Officer sometime later (believed to be in 1939).

He was at some stage posted to Belgium, with his Squadron, or possibly as part of the British Mission to the Belgian Army. I have been unable to identify which unit he actually served with and if he was air or ground crew.

The Germans advanced through Belgium and France in May 1940 and the British troops were forced back under the weight of the enemy blitzkrieg (lightning war). Decisions were taken by Government and British High Command to withdraw from the continent and Albert joined the many hundreds of thousands of men making for the ports and beaches.

Albert reached the port of Ostend hours before it was captured by German troops and he was able to board the 689 ton SS Abukir, which had a compliment of some two hundred.

The ship departed the harbour with many on board and she edged her self out into the channel for her journey to England. However, she was spotted and attacked by a German E-Boat (fast motor torpedo boat) and sank in quick time. The SS Abukir had on board some seventy officers, soldiers and airmen of the British Mission to the Belgian Army. She also carried some Belgian Nuns and a group of British schoolgirls who only two hours before sailing had arrived from Bruges after just avoiding the advancing German Army.

The Royal Navy destroyers HMS Grenade and Codrington searched for survivors but only twenty-one passengers and five crewmembers were found alive. They included Captain Woolfenden, Master of the Abukir, who was awarded a M.B.E., and Lloyds War Medal for his courage and spirit during the attack. For six hours he had endured the cold waters of the North Sea before rescue.

Sadly no trace of Albert was found and he is now commemorated on the RAF memorial to the missing at Runnymede. This memorial lists by name over twenty thousand British and Commonwealth airmen from World War Two who have no known grave.

Lieutenant Ernest WOOLLVEN

Service Number: 237670

Age: 27

The Royal Sussex Regiment

Died: 14th April 1943

Commemorated: Medjez-El-Bab Memorial - Tunisia Face 21

Son of Percy Burrell and Annie Woollven of 162 Junction Road, Burgess Hill.
Mr and Mrs Woollven married in 1908 and had four other children Tom, Fred, Betty and Joan.

Percy Woollven was a decorator by trade working for Oram's until volunteering for service with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in 1914 as lance corporal. He was posted for some time in East Africa. After the war he worked for himself and then for Bartletts of Wivelsfield.

Ernest married Mary nee Lithgow) on Easter Monday although it is not certain what year and they made their home at 6 Oaklands Terrace, Perrymount Road in Haywards Heath.

They had one son, John, who was born in March 1943 whilst Ernest was on active service and therefore he never lived to see his son.

Ernest worked for Colonel Maynard in his solicitors' office, Maynard and James, and later he worked for Carpenters Solicitors in Brighton.

He was the Honorary Secretary for the Worlds End Football Club for around two years and Honorary Treasurer of Burgess Hill Junior Imperial League. He also enjoyed cricket and played for St Andrews Cricket Club.

Ernest joined the Territorial Army before the war and was soon promoted to Corporal. He was called back to the Colours in the summer of 1939 and went overseas with the 6th Battalion to bolster the British Expeditionary Force in early 1940.

The Royal Sussex Regiment was heavily involved in the battle of Flanders and the retreat to Dunkirk fielding five battalions – the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th.

After seeing action in France he was evacuated back to England and with his battalion took up positions along the south coast ready to repel the expected German invasion.

He was then commissioned as a Second Lieutenant into the 1st Battalion on 4th July 1942 and moved to North Africa at this time. His Platoon was known within the regiment as "Woollven's Wolves".

During his period of leave in June 1942, before embarking for his posting to the Middle East, Ernest was able to give away his sister Joan at her marriage to Cecil Mansbridge.

Prior to his death he had written to the family *"I am proud to be with the boys. They have seen hell and laughed at it. Their spirit is fine. My battalion has just received a fine compliment, that of being the best in the First Army. It is this reason why we are still in the line while others who came with us are resting. We English are such funny boys we fight like tigers and then give half our cigarettes to the prisoners"*.

The circumstances surrounding Ernest's death are not specifically recorded and there is no record of his passing in the regimental history. Further work will need to be carried out.

Ernest's Grandfather was Walter Woollven who lived in West Street, Burgess Hill. He had eight sons: William, James, Warden, Newton, Percy (Ernest's father), Frederick, Gilbert and one other who.

With the exceptions of Frederick, who was unfit for military service and worked in a munitions factory, and Gilbert who had poor eyesight, all the brothers served in the forces during World War One. Newton was killed in action on 6th August 1916 and is buried in a military cemetery in Abbeville, Burgess Hill's twin town.

Ernest's cousin Marjory was killed in an air raid on London in 1941.

NB: The Army Roll of Honour records Ernest's age as 19. This is an error confirmed by his sister, Joan.

Brigadier Victor Augustus YOUNG M.C.

Service Number:

Age: ??

3rd Anti-Aircraft Division, The Royal Artillery

Died: 24th November 1943

Buried: Edinburgh (Comely Bank) Cemetery Grave D 79

Born in Oldham to the Reverend and Mrs Young of Chiswick.

Victor was educated at Oundle College and then Woolwich. He was married and had one son and the family moved to Burgess Hill in 1941 settling at Killarney in Victoria Road.

He served in France & Flanders and Palestine during World War One and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery, with this being published in the London Gazette on 3rd November 1917.

Between the wars he was also stationed in India. The Army List shows that he held a "Certificate of Gunnery Staff Course" (although this can also mean that he had been specially selected as being qualified as an Instructor of Gunnery). Victor also qualified in Coastal Defence and/or Anti-Aircraft Gunnery - this was after 1922, as the course name was changed by the Gunnery School the year before.

He was promoted to Captain on 1st December 1925 and made temporary Major on 1st April 1935 being posted to 1 Anti-Aircraft Brigade.

In 1938 the responsibility for anti-aircraft artillery was passed to the Territorial Army.

In September 1939 seven AA Divisions were located in the UK, each comprising either four or five AA Brigades of Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery (HAA), Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) and/or searchlight regiments. These comprised the artillery element of Air Defence Great Britain (ADGB). Until 1940, when all searchlight regiments came under Royal Artillery command, a number of these regiments were under Royal Engineers control. Although Groups replaced AA Divisions in 1942, AA Brigades remained operative throughout the war in all theatres. HAA Regiments were equipped with 3.7-inch (mobile) AA or 4.5-inch (static) AA guns. LAA Regiments were provided with 40mm Bofors AA guns and Searchlight Regiments used either 90cm or 150m projectors.

In 1940 three new command units were formed: 1st AA Corps (South of England), 2nd AA Corps (Midlands to Tyne) and 3rd AA Corps (Scotland and Northern Ireland). By February 1941 twelve AA Divisions had been formed, each division under command of an AA Corps. The AA divisions comprised three to five AA Brigades of HAA, LAA and/or searchlight regiments. Seven AA Groups replaced the AA Corps and Divisions in October 1942.

It is likely that Victor left the army at some stage in the twenties or thirties as the Army List records that he was commissioned into the Royal Artillery again as a Major on 15th June 1942.

He joined 5 Medium Brigade, which as part of 9th Anti-Aircraft Division, 1st Anti-Aircraft Corps was responsible for the air defence of Gloucester, Hereford, Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Milford.

5 Medium Brigade had under its command elements of 85th HAA, 88th HAA, of 37th Searchlight Regiment and 47th LAA.

On 10th December that year Victor was appointed Temporary Colonel and became Acting Brigadier on 24th June 1943.

He was posted to 3rd AA Division, which was responsible for the air defence of Edinburgh, Forth and north-east Scotland. Being made temporary Brigadier it is likely that Victor was commanding 36th, 51st or 52nd AA Brigades, who made up the three units in the division.

Victor died of heart failure and was buried with full military honours at Comely Bank cemetery in Edinburgh. The Mid-Sussex Times reported at the time of his death that he was a godson of Queen Victoria although I have been unable to substantiate this.

There are two further additions to this folio for names that do not appear on the Burgess Hill War Memorial but are included because of their connections with the town.

One is a soldier who is buried in the town because of his love for the Sussex countryside. The other is a woman, who was a native of the town but was killed by enemy action during the Blitz in London.

They represent all those with connections to Burgess Hill who served their Country and paid the ultimate sacrifice but for various reasons do not appear on the memorial.

Sergeant Peter Henry WARNER

Service Number: 7012686

Age: 33

56th Battalion, The Reconnaissance Corps, Royal Armoured Corps

Died: 1st April 1941

Buried: St.Edward's Church, Burgess Hill Section B, Grave 357

Peter was the son of George Henry and Nelly Warner.

He had been born in Cork in Ireland but had moved to London in 1927.

He married his wife, Nellie Edith (nee Istead) at Victoria in 1939 and they set up home in East Sheen, Surrey.

Before the War he had been a keen cyclist and enjoyed the Sussex countryside cycling all over. On many of his trips he was a regular visitor to Burgess Hill where he visited his mother-in-law, Mrs H Istead who lived at 64 Park Road.

On the outbreak of war Peter enlisted with the London Irish Rifles and was stationed in Iceland.

After Dunkirk, the Army decided it needed troops to fulfil the reconnaissance role and at first these were organised on the lines of an infantry battalion. Many infantry battalions were transferred en-bloc to form these new units and it may be the case with the London Irish Rifles or that Peter volunteered to transfer.

Peter died after an operation at Benenden in Kent and because of his love for Sussex and his many visits to Burgess Hill he was laid to rest in St. Edwards Churchyard.

At his Funeral Service, led by Reverend E.F Day, the coffin was covered in the Union Flag and men of his regiment acted as Pallbearers. A number of Officers also attended, as did Mrs Istead's brother-in-law, William Charles Crewe.

Peter now lies in a grave marked with a Commonwealth War Graves Commission Headstone next to the Crewe family plot.

Marjory Florence WOOLLVEN

Service Number: N/A

Age: 38 (The Mid-Sussex Times records the age as 28)

Civilian

Died: 16th April 1941

Buried: Not known

Marjory was the eldest daughter of H J and E Woollven of 4 Gladstone Road, Burgess Hill.

Brother's Richard, Robert, Leonard and Gilbert and Sister's Phyllis and Audrey.

She had been born in Burgess Hill but had moved to work in London in 1936, where she lived at 8 Bear Street just around the corner from the Leicester Square Hotel where she worked.

On the night of the 16th April Marjory had been celebrating her Birthday with friends at the hotel when enemy bombs again started to drop on London. During this raid the hotel was hit directly and she was killed.

Even with the war on, Marjory regularly travelled to Burgess Hill every two or three weeks to visit her mother (her father had died sometime earlier). However, Mrs Woollven had heard nothing from her daughter on her birthday and after some days, being concerned; she travelled to London to see her.

When she arrived she discovered her daughter had been killed in the air raid and that the rescue squads were still searching for many of the bodies, including that of Marjory.

Her family attended the funeral although I am unsure if this took place in Burgess Hill or elsewhere.

Appendices:

Sources, Credits, Acknowledgements and Further Reading:

C indicates correspondence with author (letter or email)
I indicates interview with author (telephone or in person)
Q indicates answers on a questionnaire provided by author

Introduction

Extract from "The War of Unknown Warriors" Speech © The Estate of Winston Churchill

Lieutenant Ian William ADAM

Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)

Mid-Sussex Times

The Army List 1945

Mr Robert Adam (Brother) **CQ**

Mr David Adam (Brother) **CQ**

M van Prooijen and Marius Heidveld of Friends of the Allied War Graves (Holland)
(via Mr R Adam) **C**

Professor John Forfar M.C., Medical Officer 47 Royal Marines Commando (Retired)
C

Major Hugh Thomas AITCHISON

CWGC

Army List 1944

Gordon Highlanders Regimental History

"The Fifteenth Scottish Division 1939-45" by Lieutenant-General H.G Martin

Mrs Janet Morrison nee Aitchison (Daughter) **CQ**

Mr Hugh Morrison (Grandson) **CQ**

Mr T.G Mallinson T.D., M.A. Recordkeeper for Highgate School **C**

Katharine Birtwistle, External Affairs Shell International Ltd **C**

Mr N.E.C.Molyneux, Honorary Curator The National Rifle Association Museum **C**

Bombardier William Clifford ANSCOMBE

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

Firepower: The Royal Artillery Museum via their researcher Mr Matthew Buck **C**

Gunner Clifford Ernest APLIN

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Mr Jack Aplin (Brother) **C**

"Sandakan – A conspiracy of Silence" by Lynette Silver **C**

Brian Green (whose Uncle served and died with 48 LAA) **C**

Firepower: The Royal Artillery Museum via Mr Matthew Buck **C**

Mr James Surr formerly 11051597 Lance Bombardier "A" Troop 242 Battery, 48 LAA **C**

The Family of 1808928 Gunner William Cyril Anderton 242 Battery, 48 LAA

Sapper Harold Frederick APLIN

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

The Royal Engineers Museum **C**

Mr Jack Aplin (Brother) **C**

A W AWCOCK

CWGC

Private Arthur Frederick AVIS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Mrs Welfare (Sister) **CQI**

2nd Lieutenant Alan BAGOT

CWGC

Mid Sussex Times

The Army List

Master E J H Gould M.A. Marlborough College **C**

Colonel (Retd) I H McCausland, The Royal Greenjackets Museum **C**

Stoker First Class Stanley Thomas BEARD

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

Royal Australian Navy 1939-1942 by G. Hermon Gill 1957 [Canberra: Australian War Memorial 1985]. The extract in quotation marks is from that source (pp 628-9)

Flight Sergeant (Navigator) Arthur James BEDALE

CWGC

"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford

Mid-Sussex Times

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

Lance Corporal Philip Clark BINGHAM

CWGC

Keith Newman-Knott - The Parachute Regimental Association Surrey/Sussex Branch **CI**

Mrs W Denyer **CI**

Mrs Mary Bingham (Widow) **CQ**

Mr Philip Bingham (Son) **CQ**

Mrs V Hamilton (Sister) **I**

Mrs Saunders (Friend of Philip) **I**

Mr W Manville Formerly 70th (Sussex) Searchlight Regiment **CI**

"Airborne Forces" HM Govt Official History by Lieutenant—Colonel Terrence Otway D.S.O.

"The Glider Soldiers" by Alan Wood

"Go to it – The Illustrated History of the 6th Airborne Division" by Peter Harclerode

Lance Corporal Sidney Lawrence BOXALL

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Story of the Royal Army Service Corps 1939 to 45" by Bell

Mr J Hillier (School friend) **C**

Warrant Officer Class II Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant Percy A BROCKES

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

H.M Government 1901 Census

Second Officer Harry James BROWNINGS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Fourth Service: Merchantmen at War 1939-45" by John Sadler

"Malta Convoys" by David A Thomas

"Merchant Navy Ship Losses in WWII"

Internet sites <http://www.thebells.btinternet.co.uk/rangitane/index.htm>

<http://www.australiatrade.com.au/Shipping/History/index.htm>

Mrs Sally Bannister (Niece) **CQI**

Chief Officer Alfred John DeBAUGHN

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Fourth Service: Merchantmen at War 1939-45" by John Sadler

Merchant Navy losses in WWII describing convoy actions.

Mr G Thomerson (neighbour to the DeBaughn's after the war) **C**

Private Edward BUCKMAN

Mrs Mary Mitchell (Sister) **CI**

CWGC

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Private John Louis BURT

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"Swift and Bold – The King's Royal Rifle Corps, Second World War 1939-1945" by Major-General Sir Hereward Wake and Major William Deedes

The Regimental Museum of The Royal Greenjackets **C**

Sapper William Thomas BURT

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

The Royal Engineers Museum **C**

Aircraftsman 2nd Class Frederick Richard CADEY

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

Sergeant William Paul CHVALA

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Battleford Telegraph, Saskatchewan, Canada **C**

Corporal J Mackzo Regimental Headquarters, Royal Canadian Dragoons **C**

Mrs Joan Mansbridge **C**

Leading Aircraftsman 1st Class Walter William John CLAMP

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Flying Officer (Navigator) Michael Terence CLARKE D.F.C

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everit

"The Dam Busters" by Paul Brickhill

"Bomber Squadrons at War" by Geoff D Copeman

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

"Aircraft for the Many" by Michael J F Bowyer

Internet site www.dambusters.org.uk

Mr Robert Owen, Official Historian, 617 Squadron Aircrew Association **C**

Warrant Officer Class I Regimental Sergeant Major Arthur Walter COLLINS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Army Roll of Honour 1947

Leading Steward Jack S CRIPPS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Cuckfield Urban District War Souvenir Magazine 1946

"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

Captain John Michael Gordon DILL

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

The Army List 1944

The Queen's Royal Lancers Regimental Museum **C**

"History of the 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers 1925-1961" by C.N Barclay

The Queen's Royal Lancers Regimental Association **C**

Internet site <http://www.deathorglory.com>

Mr Arthur Worthington formerly 16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers **CQI**

2nd Lieutenant Frank D DUESBURY

CWGC

The Army List 1940

The Leicestershire Regimental Museum c/o Leicester City Museums Service **C**

"Royal Leicestershire Regiment - Come on Tigers" 1955 and "The History of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment 1928-1956" by Brigadier W.E Underhill.

Signalman George Arnold ELSE

CWGC

Mid Sussex Times

The Royal Signals Museum **C**

Trooper Frederick Dennard GASSON

CWGC

"The Story of the Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry in the Second World War" by T.M Lindsay

Internet site sherwood@times1190.freerve.co.uk

Ministry of Defence – Army **C**

Private George Edward GASSON

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Corporal Thomas Albert GAY

CWGC

The Airborne Museum

The Parachute Regimental Association

Internet sites <http://redcoat.future.easyspace.com/> and

<http://www.angelfire.com/mp/memorials/memindz1.htm>

Mrs Nellie Gay (Widow) **CI**

Major John Chester GAYE

CWGC

Army List 1944

"Overlord" by Max Hastings

"The Northumberland Hussars 1924-1949 by Joan Bright

The Ministry of Defence – Army **C**

Lieutenant Garnet Henry Cecil GEEN

CWGC

Royal Engineers Museum **C**

Mrs Iris Norris (Sister) **CQI**

Mrs Sally Bannister (Niece) **CQI**

Lieutenant Thomas Ellison GODMAN D.S.C

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

Naval Historical Branch (MOD) **C**

Mr John Bridgwood, Old Stoics Society Manager, Stowe School. **C**

Mr Adam C. Green, Asst Archivist Trinity College Library, Cambridge University **C**

Ms Sam Eve, Development Officer, British Schools Expedition Society **C**

Mr Brian Needham, Vice Chairman British Schools Expeditions Services

(Expeditions Dept) **C**

"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

The London Gazette

Internet site <http://www.warships.net/royalnavy/ship-histories/>

The Friends of HMS Cavalier and their Internet site

<http://www.thefriendsofhmscavalier.org.uk/ships/havock.htm>

Pilot Officer Bernard Albert GODSMARK

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

RAF Squadrons at War

Ministry of Defence – Royal Air Force

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

Corporal Sidney George GREEN

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Sussex and Surrey Yeomanry 1939-1946" Lieutenant-Colonel T.D Davis
M.C., RA.

Mr Jack Hillier (School friend) **C**

The Royal Signals Museum **C**

Flight Engineer Sergeant Gordon William HANCOCK

CWGC

"The Berlin Raids" by Martin Middlebrook

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

Mr Des Richards, Honorary Secretary, 106 Squadron RAF **C**

"RAF Bomber Command Losses Volume Four 1943" by W.R Chorley

Ministry of Defence – Royal Air Force **C**

N HANCOCK

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"Men of the Battle of Britain" by Graham Wynn

The Battle of Britain Association **C**

Squadron Leader Norman Hancock D.F.C. **C**

Paymaster Sub Lieutenant Robert Oswald Charles HAY

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Naval Historical Branch (MOD) **C**

"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

Internet site <http://www.warships.net/royalnavy/ship-histories/>

Flight Sergeant Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Frederick William HICKMAN

CWGC

"The Berlin Raids" by Martin Middlebrook

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

Mr Bert Kirkman D.F.C., 76 Squadron Association RAF **C**

"RAF Bomber Command Losses Volume Five 1944" by W.R Chorley

"RAF Bomber Airfields of World War 2" by Jonathon Falconer

Ministry of Defence – Royal Air Force **C**

Private William Henry HISCOX

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"Redcoats in the Wardrobe" – The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment (Salisbury) Museum via Curator Mr David Chilton **C**

Private Peter John LAKER

CWGC

Mrs Lee (Neighbour) from Adelaide Cottages **CI**

"The Shiny Ninth" (9th Battalion The Royal Sussex Regiment 1940-1946) by Murray Gillings

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

The Mid-Sussex Times

Mr Ron Fagg Formerly 9th Battalion, The Royal Sussex Regiment **CI**

Gunner Albert LEANEY

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Mrs Ann Cohen (Daughter) **CIQ**

Mr Ray Avery (Brother-in-Law) **I**

Footnote Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

Private George Sidney LOOKER

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Mrs Edna Hewson (Wife) **CI**

Bill Looker (Brother) **CI**

Mr J Hillier (School friend) **C**

Driver Arthur David LOVELL

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Story of the Royal Army Service Corps 1939 to 45" by Bell

D P JOYCE

CWGC

Private Horace G MARTIN

CWGC

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Army Roll of Honour 1947

Lance Corporal Stephen Joseph MAXWELL

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The London Scottish in the Second World War 1939-45" by CN Barclay

Mrs W Denyer (Sister) **CI**

Mrs G.M Maxwell (Sister-in-Law) **CI**

Footnote Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica

Sergeant (Wireless Operator) Leslie James MILLER

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Mr Alan. P. Pulling (School friend) **CIQ**

Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

Stoker First Class Alfred J MITCHELL

CWGC

Naval Historical Branch (MOD) **C**

"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

Internet site <http://www.warships.net/royalnavy/ship-histories/>

Sergeant John William Burt MITCHELL

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The London Irish at War" by Members of the Regiment

Mrs Joan Pope (Sister) **CIQ**

Pilot Officer Stanley Cresswell MIMMACK

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**
Christ's Hospital Museum **C**

Sergeant Leslie Eric NEARY

CWGC
"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford
"RAF Bomber Command Losses Volume Three 1942" by W.R Chorley
"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey
Mid-Sussex Times
US Air Force 48th Fighter Wing Lakenheath **C**
"RAF Bomber Airfields of World War 2" by Jonathon Falconer
"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

Corporal Donald Raymond NEWNHAM

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
"Redcoats in the Wardrobe" – The Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire
Regiment (Salisbury) Museum via Curator Mr David Chilton **C**

Lieutenant Commander Robert Galliano NORFOLK D.S.O.

CWGC
Margaret Bidmead the Keeper of Archives at the Submarine Museum Gosport **C**
Seedie's Submarine List (Page 46)

Sergeant Pilot Philip Purchall NORRIS

CWGC
Battle of Britain Association **C**
Mr Mike Crosskill formerly Flight-Lieutenant 213 Squadron RAF **C**
"213 Squadron The Hornet Strikes" by Frank Leeson (and **I**)
"The Narrow Margin" by Wood and Dempster
"Air Battle Dunkirk" by Norman Franks
"Men of the Battle of Britain" by Graham Wynn
"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander Jefford
"Axis Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey
"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey
Mr Les Norris M.C. (Brother) **CI**
Mr Lew Norris (Brother) **CI**
Mrs Sally Bannister (Niece) **CI**

Sergeant J W OULSNAM

CWGC
"The History of the Irish Guards in The Second World War" by Major D.J.L
Fitzgerald M.C
Copy of a report written by Colonel J.O.E Vandaleur on 7th August 1944 detailing
the actions of the 3rd Battalion (courtesy of Major G.R Hooton M.B.E. Regimental
Headquarters, The Irish Guards). **C**

Leading Aircraftsman Percy Sydney PACKHAM

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times

Driver Ronald Benjamin PACKHAM

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

"The Story of The RASC 1939-45" by Bell

Captain Richard Edward Hope PARKINSON M.B.E.

CWGC

Army List 1942

Mid-Sussex Times

Mr J Hillier (Friend) **C**

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Army Roll of Honour 1947

Lance Corporal Dennis Charles PLUMMER

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Mr Norman Plummer (Brother) **CIQ**

"Operations of the 1st Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment in the 1939-45 War: North Africa, Sicily and Italy to May 1944" by Colonel HBL Smith M.C.

The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment Museum **C**

Sergeant Air Gunner Derek Ronald PUTTICK

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses Volume Seven - Operational Training Units 1940-1947" by W.R Chorley

"RAF Bomber Airfields of World War 2" by Jonathon Falconer

Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**

Able Seaman Albert Henry RAPSON

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Admiralty Regrets - British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp

Gunner Albion George Herbert REASON

CWGC

Changi Prison War Diary - Imperial War Museum courtesy of Mr John Brown **C**

Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces - Notes on Lines of Communications

Operations December 1941 to February 1942 - courtesy Mr John Brown **C**

Pilot Officer Sidney Clifford ROGERS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

Private Charles Herbert ROUGHT

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau

Mrs K Skinner nee Vine (Step-sister) **CQI**

Warrant Officer Wireless Operator (Air) Norman Frederick ROUSE

CWGC

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt
Air Historical Branch - Ministry of Defence **C**

Flying Officer Robert Alfred SCRASE

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Glider Soldiers" by Alan Wood

"Go to it – The Illustrated History of The 6th Airborne Division" by Peter
Hardlerode

"The History of the Glider Pilot Regiment" by Claude Smith

Brighton College (Association of Old Brightonians) **C**

Corporal Stanley Reuben SIGGINS

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Major J. A Starling (Retired) of The Royal Pioneer Corps Association **C**

Sergeant Harold Thomas SIMMONDS

CWGC

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt
Internet site www.dambusters.org.uk (including the Wainwright family -
relations of David Maltby)

"The Dam Busters" by Paul Brickhill

"RAF Bomber Command Losses Volume Four 1943" by W.R Chorley

"RAF Squadrons" by Wing Commander C G Jefford

Mr Robert Owen, Official Historian, 617 Squadron Aircrew Association **C**

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

"For Your Tomorrow – British Second World War Memorials" by Derek Boorman

"RAF Bomber Airfields of World War 2" by Jonathon Falconer

Mrs Grace Blackburn (Sister) **CQI**

Lieutenant Richard John Foster STANTON

CWGC

Army List 1941

The Royal Scots Museum **C**

Regimental History "A Regiment at War"

"The First of Foot" by Augustus Muir

Chief Petty Officer Airman Henry George Christie STOLLERY MID*

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Sussex Express

Internet site www.british-forces.com

"Axis Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

"American Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

New Zealand Fighter Pilots Museum **C**

Mrs Pam Barber (Niece) **CI**

D STUART-VILLIERS

CWGC

H.M Government Census 1901

Captain Charles Hopewell TAYLER

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
Major Alan Edwards O.B.E., Intelligence Corps Museum **C**
Archives Section of the Museum of Defence Intelligence **C**

Flight Engineer Sergeant Frederick George TAYLOR

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook & Chris Everitt
"RAF Bomber Command Losses Volume Three 1941" by W.R Chorley
"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey
"The Stirling Story" by Michael Bowyer
Squadron Leader Charles Lofthouse D.F.C* Former Chairman 7 Squadron Assocn
RAF (Retired) **C**
Mr Brian Starling, Archivist 139 (Jamaica) Squadron Association RAF **C**

Private Frederick Charles TURNER

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
"Monty's Highlanders – 51st Highland Division in World War Two" by Patrick Delaforce

Musician Thomas George UMPLEBY

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
Royal Naval Historical Branch **C**
"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp
Internet site <http://www.warships.net/royalnavy/ship-histories/>

Private Ronald Sydney UPTON

CWGC
Mrs Eileen Hallett nee Upton (Sister) **C**
Mr J Hillier (Friend) **C**
"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau
Cuckfield Urban District War Souvenir Magazine 1946
Army Roll of Honour 1947

Corporal Thomas Martyn John WALDER

CWGC
"This Band of Brothers - History of Recce Regiment" by Jeremy Taylor
45 Recce Regt War Diary Folder 100 Courtesy David Fletcher, Curator, Tank Museum Bovington **C**
"March Divided But Fight United" by Rolfe Hedges

Petty Officer (Telegraphist) Denis Eustace WOLFORD D.S.M.

CWGC
Mid-Sussex Times
"The Admiralty Regrets – British Warship Losses of the 20th Century" by Paul Kemp
The Submarine Museum Gosport **C**

Fusilier Albert John WAYMARK

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

The Royal Scots Fusiliers Regimental History

Lance Corporal Bertie WEBSTER / Gunner Basil Henry WEBSTER

CWGC

Sergeant Donald Edwin WEST

CWGC

"The Bomber Command War Diaries" by Martin Middlebrook & Chris Everitt

"Bomber Squadrons of the RAF and their Aircraft" by Philip Moyes

"British Aircraft of World War Two" by David Mondey

78 Squadron Website by Mark Turner

Mr John Erricker D.F.C., 78 Squadron Archivist RAF (Retired) **C**

Mrs P Boyd (Sister) **CQI**

Mr Lloyd "Hap" Geddes 78 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force (Retired) via John Erricker **C**

Mr Art E Fay 78 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Force (Retired) via John Erricker **C**

Sergeant Air Gunner Roy James WILSON

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

Internet site <http://213.120.115.68/index.htm> that covers in details "RAF Liberator Squadrons of 205 Group, The South East Asia Command and Bomber Command & Coastal Command"

Private Frank W WICKENS

CWGC

Major J.A Starling (Retired) of The Royal Pioneer Corps Association **C**

Signalman Robert Harry WOOD

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

The Royal Signals Museum **C**

Former Death Railway Prisoner and Archivist of the British Far East Prisoners of War Graves Archives, Mr Peter Dunstan **CI**

Flying Officer Albert Henry WOOLCOCK B.A.

CWGC

Mid-Sussex Times

"The Fourth Service; Merchantmen at War 1939-45" by John Sadler

Mr D Barber of the Football Association Library **C**

Mr Fred Ollier, Statistician and Historian for Arsenal Football Club **C**

Mr J Hillier **C**

Lieutenant Ernest WOOLLVEN

CWGC

Army List 1942

The Mid-Sussex Times

Mr J Hillier (Friend) **C**

Mrs Joan Mansbridge nee Woollven (Sister) **CI**

"The History of The Royal Sussex Regiment 1701-1953" by G. D Martineau
Cuckfield Urban District War Souvenir Magazine 1946

Brigadier Victor Augustus YOUNG M.C.

CWGC

Army List 1943

Mid-Sussex Times

"Divisions of the British Army 1939 to 1945" by Malcolm A Bellis

Sergeant Peter Henry WARNER

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

Marjory Florence WOOLLVEN

CWGC

The Mid-Sussex Times

Casualties by Year of Death and Country/Area

Year/Date	Rank/Name	Age	Country/Area
1939	None for Burgess Hill		
1940			
21 st May	Private George LOOKER	21	France
22 nd May	Private William HISCOX	28	France
26 th May	Private Edward BUCKMAN	36	France
28 th May	Lance Corporal Sidney BOXALL	??	English Channel
28 th May	Flying Officer Albert WOOLCOCK B.A	25	English Channel
30 th May	Private Horace MARTIN	??	France
17 th June	Sapper Frederick APLIN	28	France
13 th August	Sergeant Pilot Philip NORRIS	22	English Channel
10 th December	2 nd Lieutenant Frank DUESBURY	22	Egypt
1941			
9 th January	Pilot Officer Stanley MIMMACK	41	England
14 th January	Private Arthur AVIS	22	England
16 th January	2 nd Officer Harry BROWINGS	28	Malta
9 th February	Private Ronald UPTON	20	England
30 th April	Driver Ronald PACKHAM	25	Greece/Mediterranean
22 nd May	Paymaster Sub-Lt Robert HAY	??	Mediterranean Sea
29 th May	Pilot Officer Bernard GODSMARK	27	North Sea?
1 st July	Flight-Eng Sergeant Frederick TAYLOR	2?	Denmark
23 rd August	Petty Officer Denis WALFORD D.S.M	25	Mediterranean Sea
21 st December	Lieutenant Richard STANTON	22	Hong Kong
23 rd December	WOII RQMS Percy BROCKES	52	England
1942			
4 th January	Lieutenant Thomas GODMAN D.S.C	26	Mediterranean Sea
14 th January	Lieutenant Garnet GEEN	22	Singapore
25 th January	Driver Arthur LOVELL	35	Egypt
2 nd March	Stoker 1 st Class Stanley BEARD	22	Indian Ocean
2 nd June	Sergeant Donald WEST	21	Holland/North Sea
11 th August	Lt-Commander Robert NORFOLK D.S.O	33	Mediterranean Sea
29 th August	2 nd Lieutenant Alan BAGOT	19	England
25 th September	Able Seaman Albert RAPSON	27	North Sea/England
4 th November	Captain Richard PARKINSON M.B.E	21	Egypt
19 th December	Sergeant Leslie NEARY	22	England
1943			
6 th January	Flight Sergeant James BEDALE	26	Tunisia
9 th January	Chief Officer Alfred de BAUGHN	32	Atlantic Ocean
1 st February	Ldg Aircraftsman 1 st Class Walter CLAMP	43	England
10 th February	Pilot Officer Sidney ROGERS	31	England
29 th March	Corporal Thomas GAY	26	Tunisia
14 th April	Lieutenant Ernest WOOLLVEN	27	Tunisia
15 th April	Flight Eng Sergeant Gordon HANCOCK	19	France
10 th May	WOI RSM Arthur COLLINS	39	England
6 th June	Corporal Stanley SIGGINS	30	Gibraltar
23 rd June	Gunner Albion REASON	38	Thailand
20 th July	Leading Steward Jack CRIPPS	37	Malta
8 th August	Bombardier William ANSCOMBE	??	Sicily
15 th August	Signalman George ELSE	20	England
27 th August	Stoker First Class Alfred MITCHELL	??	North Atlantic
8 th September	Signalman Robert WOOD	27	Thailand
9 th September	Corporal Sidney GREEN	26	Italy
9 th September	Private Frank WICKENS	36	Salerno
13 th September	Musician Thomas UMPLEBY	20	Sicily
15 th September	Sergeant Harold SIMMONDS	22	North Sea
24 th November	Brigadier Victor YOUNG M.C	??	Scotland

Year/Date	Rank/Name	Age	Country/Area
1944			
20 th January	Flight Sergeant Frederick HICKMAN	23	Germany
11 th February	Private George GASSON	27	Italy
18 th February	Private Charles ROUGHT	35	Italy
8 th March	Gunner Albert LEANEY	41	Italy
18 th April	Corporal Thomas WALDER	27	Burma
12 th May	Lance Corporal Dennis PLUMMER	20	Italy
10 th June	Sapper William BURT	35	France
12 th June	Lance Corporal Stephen MAXWELL	19	Italy
16 th June	Captain John DILL	23	Italy
26 th June	Major Hugh AITCHISON	34	France
30 th July	Major John GAYE	29	France
31 st July	Captain Charles TAYLER	60	India
3 rd August	Sergeant J OULSNAM	32	France
31 st August	Private John BURT	19	France
31 st October	Aircraftsman 2 nd Class Frederick CADEY	28	England
19 th November	Trooper Frederick GASSON	33	Germany
24 th November	Sergeant Air Gunner Derek PUTTICK	21	England
6 th December	Sergeant William CHVALA	??	Italy
1945			
6 th January	Sergeant John MITCHELL	27	Italy
7 th January	Lance Corporal Philip BINGHAM	28	Belgium
12 th January	Sergeant Wireless Operator Leslie MILLER	19	England
14 th January	Lieutenant Ian ADAM	19	Holland
20 th January	Leading Aircraftsman Percy PACKHAM	41	England
25 th January	Fusilier Albert WAYMARK	18	Holland
29 th January	Chief Petty Officer Henry STOLLERY	25	Indonesia
12 th February	Private Frederick TURNER	20	Holland
24 th March	WO Wireless Operator Norman ROUSE	23	England
24 th March	Flying Officer Robert SCRASE	20	Germany
29 th March	Gunner Clifford APLIN	31	Borneo
16 th April	Flying Officer Michael CLARKE D.F.C.	22	Poland
6 th May	Corporal Donald NEWNHAM	31	Burma
12 th July	Sergeant Air Gunner Roy WILSON	19	Italy
1946			
4 th March	Private Peter LAKER	22	Malaysia

Men whose names appear on the memorial but the Commonwealth War Graves Commission have no record. A. W Awcock, N Hancock, D. P Joyce, D Stuart-Villiers, B Webster

Countries and the Cemeteries they lie in or Memorials they are commemorated on

Country/Cemetery	Rank and Name	Contingent
Algeria		
Dely Ibrahim	Flt- Sergeant Arthur BEDALE	Royal Air Force
Belgium		
Hotton CWGC	L/Corporal Philip BINGHAM	Devonshire Regiment
Burma		
Rangoon Memorial	Corporal Donald NEWNHAM	Royal Berkshire Regiment
Rangoon Memorial	Corporal Thomas WALDER	Reconnaissance Corps
Denmark		
Esbjerg (Farfelt)	Flt-Eng Sgt Frederick TAYLOR	Royal Air Force
Egypt		
Benghazi CWGC	Driver Arthur LOVELL	Royal Army Service Corps
El Alamein CWGC	Captain Richard PARKINSON	Royal Sussex Regiment
Halfaya Sollum CWGC	2 nd Lt Frank DUESBURY	Royal Leicestershire Regiment
England		
Banbury Cemetery	Sergeant Derek PUTTICK	Royal Air Force
Christ Church, Esher	LAC 1 st Class Walter CLAMP	Royal Air Force
Cuckfield	RSM Arthur COLLINS	Royal Sussex Regiment
Cuckfield	Private Ronald UPTON	Royal Sussex Regiment
Haverhill, Suffolk	Pilot Officer Sidney ROGERS	Royal Air Force
Lee on Sea Memorial	CPO Henry STOLLERY	Fleet Air Arm
Plymouth Naval Memorial	Paymaster Robert HAY	Royal Navy
Portsmouth Naval Memorial	Stoker 1 st Class Stanley BEARD	Royal Navy
Portsmouth Naval Memorial	Stoker 1 st Class Alfred MITCHELL	Royal Navy
Portsmouth Naval Memorial	Lt-Commander Robert NORFOLK	Royal Navy
Portsmouth Naval Memorial	Musician Thomas UMPLEBY	Royal Marines
Portsmouth Naval Memorial	Petty Officer Denis WALFORD	Royal Navy
Runnymede Memorial	P/Officer Bernard GODSMARK	Royal Air Force
Runnymede Memorial	Sergeant Harold SIMMONDS	Royal Air Force
Runnymede Memorial	Sergeant Donald WEST	Royal Air Force
Runnymede Memorial	F/Officer Albert WOOLCOCK	Royal Air Force
Rye Cemetery	Private Arthur AVIS	Royal Sussex Regiment
St Andrew's, Burgess Hill	2 nd Lieutenant Alan BAGOT	King's Royal Rifle Corps
St Andrew's, Burgess Hill	Sergeant Leslie MILLER	Royal Air Force
St James's, Dover	L/Corporal Sidney BOXALL	Royal Army Service Corps
St John's, Burgess Hill	AC 2 nd Class Frederick CADEY	Royal Air Force
St John's, Burgess Hill	LAC Percy PACKHAM	Royal Air Force
St Margaret's, Lowestoft	Warrant Officer Norman ROUSE	Royal Air Force
St Mary's Everton, Hunts	Sergeant Leslie NEARY	Royal Air Force
Saint's Peter & John W'field	Signalman George ELSE	Royal Corps of Signals
Tower Hill Memorial, London	2 nd Officer Harry BROWNING	Merchant Navy

Country/Cemetery	Rank and Name	Contingent
Tower Hill Memorial, London	Chief Officer Alfred de BAUGHN	Merchant Navy
Tynemouth (Preston) North'land	Able Seaman Albert RAPSON	Royal Navy
Witham, Essex	RQMS Percy BROCKES	Royal Army Service Corps
Woodvale Crem', Brighton	Pilot Officer Stanley MIMMACK	Royal Air Force
France		
Bayeux CWGC	Sapper William BURT	Royal Engineers
Dunkirk Memorial	Sapper Harold APLIN	Royal Engineers
Eatples CWGC	Sergeant Pilot Philip NORRIS	Royal Air Force
Forges-les-Eaux	Private John BURT	King's Royal Rifle Corps
Hazebrouck	Private Edward BUCKMAN	Royal Sussex Regiment
Hottot-les-Bagues	Major John GAYE	Royal Artillery
Le Grand Hasard CWGC	Private Horace MARTIN	Royal Sussex Regiment
Pont-de-Metz	Private George LOOKER	Royal Sussex Regiment
St Charles (Chalen) De Percy	Sergeant J OULSNAM	Irish Guards
St Manvieu CWGC	Major Hugh AITCHISON	Gordon Highlanders
Sauvilliers-Mongival	F/Engineer Gordon HANCOCK	Royal Air Force
Templeuve	Private William HISCOX	Royal Berkshire Regiment
Germany		
Berlin CWGC	F/Sergeant Frederick HICKMAN	Royal Air Force
Reichswald CWGC	Trooper Frederick GASSON	Nottinghamshire Yeomanry
Reichswald CWGC	Flying Officer Robert SCRASE	Glider Pilot Regiment
Greece		
Athens Memorial	Driver Ronald PACKHAM	Royal Army Service Corps
Gibraltar		
North Front	Corporal Stanley SIGGINS	Royal Pioneer Corps
Holland		
Jonkerbos CWGC	Fusilier Albert WAYMARK	Royal Scots Fusiliers
Milsbeek CWGC	Private Frederick TURNER	Gordon Highlanders
Sprang Capelle	Lieutenant Ian ADAM	Royal Marines
Hong Kong		
Stanley CWGC	Lieutenant Richard STANTON	Royal Scots
India		
Kirkee CWGC	Captain Charles TAYLER	Intelligence Corps
Italy		
Beachhead Anzio CWGC	Captain John DILL	16 th /5 th Queen's Royal Lancers
Beachhead Anzio CWGC	Gunner Albert LEANEY	Royal Artillery
Cassino CWGC	Private George GASSON	Royal Sussex Regiment
Cassino CWGC	L/Corporal Dennis PLUMMER	East Surrey Regiment
Cassino CWGC	Private Charles ROUGHT	Royal Sussex Regiment
Gradara CWGC	Sergeant William CHVALA	Royal Canadian Dragoons
Forli CWGC	Sergeant John MITCHELL	Royal Ulster Rifles
Minturno CWGC	L/Corporal Stephen MAXWELL	Gordon Highlanders

Country/Cemetery	Rank and Name	Contingent
Naples CWGC	Sergeant Roy WILSON	Royal Air Force
Malaysia		
Tiaping CWGC	Private Peter LAKER	Royal Sussex Regiment
Malta		
Capuccini	Leading Steward Jack CRIPPS	Royal Navy
Capuccini	Lieutenant Thomas GODMAN	Royal Navy
Poland		
Poznan	Flying Officer Michael CLARKE	Royal Air Force
Salerno		
Salerno CWGC	Corporal Sidney GREEN	Royal Corps of Signals
Salerno CWGC	Private Frank WICKENS	Royal Pioneer Corps
Scotland		
Comely Bank, Edinburgh	Brigadier Victor YOUNG	Royal Artillery
Sicily		
Catania CWGC	Bombardier Clifford ANSCOMBE	Royal Artillery
Singapore		
Singapore Memorial	Gunner Clifford APLIN	Royal Artillery
Singapore Memorial	Lieutenant Garnet GEEN	Royal Engineers
Thailand		
Kanchanaburi CWGC	Gunner Albion REASON	Fed Malay States Volunteers
Kanchanaburi CWGC	Signalman Robert WOOD	Royal Corps of Signals
Tunisia		
Medjez-El-Bab Memorial	Corporal Thomas GAY	Parachute Regiment
Medjez-El-Bab Memorial	Lieutenant Ernest WOOLLVEN	Royal Sussex Regiment

Men whose names appear on the memorial but the Commonwealth War Graves Commission have no record: A. W Awcock, N Hancock, D. P Joyce, D Stuart-Villiers, B Webster

The Author

Guy Voice was born in Burgess Hill. He joined the Army in 1981 serving with the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars in the UK, West Germany, Canada and West Berlin.

He and his wife now live in Northampton where he is a member of the local Royal British Legion branch.

Copyright

© Guy Voice

It is only permissible for the information within *The Men Burgess Hill 1939-46* to be used in private “not for profit” research. Any extracts must not be reproduced in any publication or electronic media without written permission of the author.