**In memory of the residents of the Parish Chesham Bois that served their country during WWII.**



1. **Introduction.**

This record is for the fallen and those who served in World War II and completes the history of those previously remembered from World War 1 inscribed on the main body of the Chesham Bois War Memorial and recorded in the publication *‘In memory of those men of Chesham Bois Parish who served and fell in the Great War of 1914-1918’ by Roger Cook.*

The demographics of Chesham Bois had changed since the Great War as the parish boundary was altered in 1934. Generally the basic change was that the Northern border moved from the River Chess to the Metropolitan railway track. This created approximately a shift of 5% in the population by removing the densely populated Bois Moor Road and other nearby roads and to use an outdated format, the majority of ‘working class’ people from the Chesham Bois Parish. The change of boundary would be a reflection to the type and level of entry into the armed services and the fact that fewer men of the right age were available to fight for King and Country.



*The chart shows the decrease of houses due to the 1934 Parish boundary change.*

Following on from the Great War 1914-1919 publication detailing the fallen it has been a local history project that was required to be completed. The following enables residents to fully understand the people whose names are forever on the Chesham Bois War Memorial.

An attempt has been made to record the following information for each casualty:

* Forenames and Surname, Rank and Service Number.
* Date and place of birth, Date and place of baptism.
* Where enlisted, Regiment and Unit.
* Residence at death, Age and date of death, How died and in which Theatre of War, Grave/Memorial and Reference
* Parents’ names and address, and father’s occupation
* Wife’s name and address
* Medals:

This record has tried to be as accurate as possible but there are a significant proportion of records where the identity of individuals is ambiguous and the detail is not easy to interpret. I have tried to draw attention to these uncertainties in the tabulations of findings.

War memorials sometimes list names that cannot be found in the usual official records. Names appear in official records that do not appear on the expected war memorials. Sometimes it is difficult to determine whether men were listed on the memorial of the place where they were living on enlistment, or the place where they were born. On some war memorials, names, ranks and service numbers are given which helps to identify individuals and in some cases misleading. On other memorials, adopting a policy of equality, only names, without further helpful details, are listed. Without this extra information discovery of individual identities is difficult if the name occurs commonly in the locality. Sometimes memorials list both men who served as well as those who died and it is not always easy to distinguish between the two. Sometimes forenames were transposed – ‘John Arthur’ in one source appeared as ‘Arthur John’ in another, even though all other details were identical. Occasionally, digits in Service Numbers were transposed. Ages were not always precisely identical to the result of subtracting the date of birth from the date of death.

*Roger Cook. Chesham Bois.*

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**WWII. Inscriptions.**



* Major John E Anthony. 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards.
* Sergeant Keith R Baker. RAFVR.
* Sub Lieutenant John S G Comfort. RNVR.
* LAC William C Corlett. RAFVR.
* Second Lieutenant Ronald H Crabb. RA.
* Captain David M Dobell. General Service.
* Pilot Officer Roy F Ferdinand. RAF.
* Cadet John LF Finch. Merchant Navy.
* Private Harold C James. 1st Battalion Ox and Bucks LI.
* Wren Allison M Kilburn. WRNS.
* Sergeant Harry Kleiner. RAFVR.
* Lieutenant Christopher R Lawrence. 2nd Battalion Beds and Herts Regiment.
* Flight Officer Roderick WP MacKenzie. RAFVR.
* Pilot Officer John Musgrave. RAF.
* Lieutenant Denis C Scott.DSC RNVR.
* Sergeant Eric AV Spencer. RAF.
* Flight Officer George H Turner. RAFVR.
* Wing Commander John L Welch. DFM RAFVR.

1. **Chesham Bois Parish Council details related to the memorial.**

Parish Council Meeting at the Bois Schoolroom 15th August 1919.

Mrs Busk the treasurer reported that a surplus of £10:00 was made following the Peace celebrations. The council unanimously agreed to donate the surplus to the Memorial fund now standing at £80:5:0 with expenditure at £70:5:0. The memorial designed by John Harold Kennard is of Portland Stone in the renaissance style and consists of an elliptical base mounted in one step, the base being panelled on front and sides having a laurel wreath and ribbons carved upon the front. The back is broken out from the ellipse to form a support for the panel that continues upwards from the base and is surmounted by an enriched cornice broken into two scrolls over the centre. A fountain in bronze by Messer’s Wilmer and Co of St Mary’s Axe, London has no cup. Mr W.T Robinson of Chesham has executed the design with the carvings by Mr. Arrowsmith of Stockwell, London.

Memorial Unveiling and Dedication. 11th November 1920.

The service was led by the Rev. T.H Fitzpatrick and attended by the Chesham Boys Scouts troop, Bois School children and teachers, members of the Amersham Free Church, The Parish Council, Miss E.E Porter the secretary and treasurer of the Scouts, Brigadier-General R.J Cooper (Irish Guards) a local parishioner of Clifton Road who played a gallant part in the Gallipoli debacle, members of the St Mary’s Cadet‘s, the Rector and St Leonard’s Church Choir and members of the local Belgium refugees. Brigadier-General R.J Cooper following a few succinct words withdrew the flag disclosing the memorial. The Rector closed the ceremony with the words ‘To the glory of God and in grateful memory of those who gave their lives for King and Country and in a righteous cause I dedicate this memorial’.

Parish Council Meeting.22nd December 1920.

The Parish Council had received a letter from the memorials architect, John Harold Kennard F.R.I.B.A (1883-1926) who in the 1918-1922 Voters Lists lived with his wife Bessie Rosina at ‘Rosemarie’, Hervines Road. At the period of his Bois memorial design he had in a distinguished career also designed in 1919 the National Provincial and Union Bank premises at Oakfield Corner, the Free Church and the store Napier’s. 2 cottages on Bois Common, Amersham for Rural Homes Ltd (1919 Plan 62). Kennard had in 1920 designed houses in Bois Lane. In 1920 he also designed 30 houses in Elm Close for Amersham Public Utility Society (1920 Plan 44). He designed Masonic Hall and bank on Sycamore Road for Carrington Masonic Lodge, (not built) (1920 plan 139). He designed a house at Bois Common, Amersham for S. Fassnidge, designed his own house again ‘Rosemarie’, at Hervines Road. His earlier house in Bois Avenue was also named ‘Rosemarie’ in Chiltern Road. Kennard had advised the Parish Council that they should make an application to the water company for water to the fountain. The clerk stated that a letter had already been sent. Kennard had presented the Parish Council with half a dozen sketches to meet varying circumstances and the accepted design will stand the test of time.



Parish Council Meeting. 11th March 1946.

Councillor Major Herbert Edward Harold Eayres of Inversaid 25 Woodside Ave reported on the progress for the Victory Celebrations to be held Whit Monday 1946.

Parish Council Meeting. 18th November 1947.

Extra names to be added to the side panels of the existing memorial with suitable words on the centre panel. Establish an annual grant to maintain the monument triangle. After discussion it was decided to defer until next meeting.

Parish Council Meeting. 21st March 1950.

It was stated that the memorial had been re commemorated on Remembrance Sunday 1949 led by the Rector Rev A Birkett supported by representatives from Amersham and Chesham, relatives of the fallen and local organisations. The names of the fallen to be inscribed on the existing memorial with reference to the 1939-45 Second World War.

**The water fountain that originally stood by the War Memorial until 1948. Now located in the Chesham Bois Burial Ground.**

Parish Council Meeting. 19th December 1950.

The clerk reported that there was no record was in the councils MoM regarding the rededication. (The clerk may have missed the note of the 21st March)

1. **Local Organisations, Sports Clubs and Chesham Bois Residents who served King and Country.**

Members of the clubs and organisations may not have lived within the Parish Boundaries but are remembered on club memorial boards and other forms of remembrance.

**1st Chesham Bois Scouts on service.**

Throughout the war the Scouts were able to put their war effort work towards Civil Defence Badges - National Service Badges were awarded. In 1940 the Troop had the honour of being awarded the very first National Service Pennant. This Pennant was awarded to the Troop whose members held a certain number of National Service badges and Civil Defence badges, and regularly performed National Service activities. The Troop was also awarded the pennant in 1941 and 1942. The Chief Scout sent a letter congratulating the Troop on this achievement.

Throughout the Second World War of 1939 – 1945, George King restarted “The Trail” thereby keeping up the tradition of contact between those serving their country and the Scout Troop. Most editions reached their destination all over the world and were greatly appreciated by those serving our country. George must have spent hours putting together the newsletter, often every other month. Copies of these are in the records.

Skip wrote every other month on how the Troop was carrying on during the war, and copied letters he received from the Scouts. Censorship meant that only the good bits could be written by the Scouts. Stories about the E.N.S.A shows abound, the swimming in the Mediterranean Sea, football matches amongst the troops, and the meeting with Scouts from around the world are all greatly enjoyed, but reading between the lines the camaraderie as well as the hardship come over, including the extreme heat and freezing cold temperatures endured. Below are extracts from some of the letters.

***Feb – Mar 1943 - Harold Jones writes:***

“…..I am under canvas now myself. A little tent not much bigger than the old hike tents is my present home which has to take me and all my worldly goods. It is dug down below the surface about 2 feet but I’m having it dug a lot deeper. A taste of bitter cold wind which blows at night is enough to make anyone emulate a mole. The Mess is on the same lines. A tent roof over a large hole in the ground but garnished with a few local carpets and cloths, seats carved out of the earth with car cushions make it quite home from home. Hardly camping as you know it maybe, but don’t forget we can’t go home when we get fed up, in fact we can’t even get to civilisation without a lot of trouble so I think you’ll not begrudge us what little comfort we make.”

***Oct - Nov 1943 - Leonard King, Blantyre, Bois Lane writes:***

“I’m afraid that I’m going to follow in the footsteps of Hugh Gwyther and Frank Davies and ask for some Gang Show stuff. It was quite an accident and I’ll tell you about it. Last Sunday we, as a unit celebrated our first birthday. Perhaps you remember that it was a year ago that I was sent down to West Malling. 3 days before this was due to happen it was decided to have a bit of a “do”. The Officers were equal to the occasion and supplied us with a grand tea of Roast Pork, apple sauce, celery, peas, potatoes and plum duff, syrup and tea. Don’t ask me where it came from but it certainly didn’t all come from a tin which was a change. It was also suggested that we have a show and somehow or other the Padre got hold of my name and as I was on duty I couldn’t defend myself with the result that I had to prepare a show not knowing what talent I had and no material to play with!

The only accommodation was the airmen’s mess, a large marquee, no stage, no piano and only 3 days to get cracking! Anyway I sounded one or two people and raked up a string quartet consisting of a ukulele, banjo violin and guitar. I had a chap who could give a monologue and one other turn.

We scrounged some very large planks and mounted on forms made a fair sized stage, and duly decorated it having the traditional backcloth consisting of the side of an old tent strung up on the marquee pole and the whole thing draped with a scarlet parachute pinched from stuff Jerry left behind.

We had the usual R.A.F. circle with No 1 MORU across it and a spark running right through, the whole thing standing out and lighted behind. The electricians put in footlights, 2 large headlights and a spotlight all made in workshops and we had a first class stage.

At the last moment we were able to borrow a piano, also German, and this brought forth more artists. We had no collective rehearsal and after Sunday church service the Show went on and we had 14 items and the whole a smashing success. It ran for 2 hours and really was grand fun and now I’m faced with the problem of producing further shows. Material is lacking and hence my appeal. Its grand giving shows not so far from the front line. English temperament!”

***Jun – July 1944 – Dennis Chance writes from France:***

Well I am now “Somewhere in France! Landed on the beaches nearly a fortnight ago and have been trailing round ever since. First camp was made on a portion of a minefield, overlooked by snipers who have now been shot or captured; some, no doubt you have read about it in the papers, were girls married to the Germans.

Now under canvas “seeing France from one field to another” here again my scouting comes in useful. We have the life of a rabbit by night and a hedgehog by day, except when the men have time to go to town and visit Madame Le Cone who has wine at 150 Franks a bottle that is by day – at night “much more”

We have had variations in weather since arriving, very hot at first, turning to heavy rain and very cold wind, everything thick mud; have not seen my boots for the last 3 days!

***Jun – July 1944 – Frank Stevenson writes:***

It is about three years now since I left the old country which to my mind is much too long and I only hope that when the European conflict is over that I won’t be pushed out to the Far East, as so many of us out here will no doubt be. I’ve done quite a spot of travelling around having had spells in Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, and Eritrea with a short stop in Saudi Arabia and Port Sudan and I’ve seen a large slice of Turkey although I haven’t been into the country owing to the fear of being interned.

I notice some people call it the “Mystic” or “Romantic” East but to my mind there is no mystery or romance about it, only sand, filth, black market and almost anything that goes to make a place unpleasant.

***Oct – Nov 1944 - John Clay writes from India:***

…….You will be interested to know that our canteen is being run by the Indian Boy Scouts. The manager, a King Scout, holds a position equal to that of District Commissioner, and in addition is an A.D.C. to Wavell – Chief Scout of India, who was the originator of this canteen scheme. The Indian Scout who speaks and reads English was very interested in “The Trail” which I lent him……

***Oct – Nov 1944 - Leonard King writes from Italy:***

It’s raining….

Mealtimes are the most exciting moments of a rather humdrum existence. The ground is slippery, rather like a skating rink and one waits expectantly, after the collection of food and a cup of tea, for someone to slip up – and we are never disappointed. It always happens. Rather reminds me of the old custard pie film comedies….Hoots of laughter from everyone because it was just what everyone has been waiting for! How cruel you say – well it isn’t really because you may be the next one and it’s good to get a laugh in first!….

***Dec 1944 – Jan 1945 – Bob Jones writes from France:***

We came to Normandy shortly after D. Day and have put in some hard work since then. But I do not intend to dwell any further on what happened in the last seven months. A good deal of it has been unpleasant and is best forgotten as quickly as possible.

***June – July 1945 – Sergeant Raymond Eayres, RAFVR, 25 Woodside Avenue writes from Lombardi, Italy:***

***Son of Major Herbert Eayres Rt.***

We went by train to Turni and then by road to Reiti where I am stationed at the moment. Our journey by road was delightful. We set off in the dim light of a new moon, and climbed right up into the mountains round tortuous narrow roads, and breath taking hairpin bends. When we reached the summit we looked down into the valleys thousands of feet below, and could see the light of the little villages and hamlets reflecting on the calm waters of the nearby lakes. To see this sight one could never imaging that the horrors of war had passed by so recently.

On return from the war, a reunion was held to welcome all those who had served, back to the Group. Scouting activities continued, the air raid shelters removed, camps at Chalfont Heights, summer camps in Jersey were resumed, and annual Fairs, Gang Shows, Suppers and Competitions were supported with their usual enthusiasm. Chesham Bois Scouts continued to be a driving force within the community of the village.

After the war National Service meant that those who had not served were called to serve their National Service. The Boy Scout Association provided a booklet of notes for the Scout Master to prepare the members of his Group before they left for duty. The objects of the briefing instructed: - ‘the maintenance of Scout Standards and Scout contact’. Positivity and stressing the opportunities and encouraging contact with the Group on their leave, stressing that over confidence and knowing all the answers is dangerous, and to accept responsibility, to avoid idleness and many other pieces of good advice! *[One Hundred Years of 1st Chesham Bois Scout Group. Compiled by Margaret Bell]*

**1st Chesham Bois Scouts that gave their lives in service during WWII for their Country and King:**

### John Lawrence Welch DFM, Warrant Officer, RAFVR 617 Sq. Runnymede Memorial. (See chapter 7 for details)

### Historical Information

The Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede commemorates by name over 20,000 airmen who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe, and who have no known graves. They served in Bomber, Fighter, Coastal, Transport, Flying Training and Maintenance Commands, and came from all parts of the Commonwealth. Some were from countries in continental Europe which had been overrun but whose airmen continued to fight in the ranks of the Royal Air Force.

**John Musgrave, Pilot Officer, RAF 185 Sq.** Chesham Bois Burial Ground. (See chapter 7 for details)

**Albert Hearne. Lance Corporal, 2/4th Bn. Hampshire Regiment.** Born: Amersham 1917, Died: November 1944. Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Italy. Coriano Ridge was the last important ridge in the way of the Allied advance in the Adriatic sector in the autumn of 1944. Its capture was the key to Rimini and eventually to the River Po.

**Stanly Arthur Barrart. Lieutenant, Royal Engineers, Service No 244075.** Born: Amersham 1913, Died: July 1943. Amersham Consecrated Cemetery.

**Maurice F Harding. RAFVR, Warrant Officer, 610 Squadron.** Service No 1314524, Born: Amersham 1921: Died: Feb 1945. Runnymede Memorial.

610 Squadron was attached to No. 13 Group during the [Battle of Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain). It had initially been based at [RAF Gravesend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Gravesend), but moved to [RAF Biggin Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Biggin_Hill) before the German offensive began and was one of the units bearing the brunt of German attacks. It moved to [RAF Acklington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Acklington) for rest and recuperation at the end of August, having sustained severe casualties. During the Battle of Britain the squadron included Pilot Officer, later Squadron Leader Constantine Pegge.

In 1941, the squadron moved south to [RAF Tangmere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Tangmere) where it was one of [Douglas Bader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Bader)'s three Spitfire squadrons of the [Tangmere wing](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tangmere_wing&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Tangmere wing (page does not exist)). 610 Squadron remained based in the UK until 1945, when it moved to the continent to provide fighter cover as the allies entered Germany.

**Scouts that served Home and Abroad during WWII.**

Adam Pyper Kings Royal Rifles.

Alec Young

Bert Marks

Bill Prickett

Bill Steel RN

Bob Fairfax-Jones

Bob Prickett

Bunny Johnson

Charlie Bell

Charlie Mills

Charlie Turney

Cyril Foreman

Cyril Read

Daniel Pearce

Dennis Chance

Dennis Moore

Dennis Southan

Derek Flynn

Don Laverty

Don Teagle

Dora Jeskins (WRNS)

Doug Deland

Eric Royer

Ernie Reynolds

Eva Gyford (WAAF)

Frank Brunning

Frank Davies

Frank Stevens

Fred Bates

Fred Child

G F Hadrill

Geoff Algar

Geoff Hayes

George Harwood

George Puddephatt

Gerald Burns

Gordon Fountain RAF F/SGT. 12 Sq.

H. E H Eayres (Major Rtd)

Harold Jones

Harry Beresford

Hugh Gwyther

Ian Hearn

J Wege

Jack Mills

Jack Peacock

Jamie Reynolds

Jim Carter

Jim Harding

Jim Randall Scots Greys

Joe Bateman

John Honour

John Powell

John Randall

Ken Bates

Ken Collins

Len Clapp MBE

Michael Smith

Norman Deland

Norman Grace

Norman Pearce

Norman Weedon RA

Paddy Turney

Pat Mason MN, SBS

Ray Eayres RAFVR,

Roger Ferraro

Ron Smith

Roy Barrell

Roy Dunning

Roy Mills

Stewart Balls

Ted Morby

Ted Smith

Teddy Williams

Terrance Clitheroe

Tom Mills

Wally Collins

*[50 Golden years of scouting, G. F Hadrill]*

**2nd Chesham Bois Girl Guides.**

There is no record of the troop and their involvement during WWII. They succeed the 1st Chesham Bois Girl Guides.

Mrs. Nancy Strode, the District Commissioner, took over 2nd Chesham Bois Guides, which she did in 1948/9, taking the few remaining Coleshill Guides with her each week. I was a member of 2nd CB at the time, sometimes camped at the Coleshill windmill, and as I grew up Ruth became a good friend. She died in 1968 aged 64, and I took over 2nd CB. *[{Sylvia Dollemore, Long Park]*

**Chiltern RFC.** (Now renamed Amersham and Chiltern RFC.)

The RFU have stated that Chiltern RFC had the largest number of playing members of any affiliated club to fall in WWII.

The memorial board in the Grayburn Room Chiltern RFC club house reads:

**In memoriam to the Chiltern R.F.C members who in the cause of freedom gave their most precious gift.**

**1939-1945**

**Major J E Anthony.** 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards.

**Captain M Cooke-Hurle.** 2nd Northamptonshire Yeomanry, R.A.C.

**Capt. E J R Davies.** R.A

**Captain G L Day.** Seaforth Highlanders.

**Flying Officer B F Dill-Russell.** 115 Sqdn. RAFVR.

**Lieutenant J R Evans.** 3rd Bn Parachute Regiment.

**Pilot Officer W J Frost.** 44 Sqdn RAFVR

**Flight Sergeant D E Gale.** RAFVR

**Captain J H Grayburn. V.C.** 2nd Bn Parachute Regiment (1st Parachute Brigade)

**Lieutenant CN Hembrow**. 42 nd (23 rd Bn The London Reg.) Royal Tank Reg.

**Flight Lieutenant J P Hodgkinson.** **DFC and Bar, D.S.O** RAF 23 Sqdn.

**Captain J E D Lobb.** 51st (The Leeds Rifles)Royal Tank Reg.

**Squadron Leader J McCallum.** R.A.F

**Private O E F Moore**. 1st (Perak) Bn. Federated Malay States Volunteer Force.

**Major H D Oclee**. 1st Bn The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)

**Lieutenant H W Ross.** 1st Bn. Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)

**G E Sale.** War Correspondent.

**Sub-Lieutenant S W Sidford.** RNVR

**Captain D H Smith RA.** 24th Field Regiment.

**Squadron Leader I G Statham. AFC** 177Sqdn. RAFVR

**Captain R T Turner-Hughes**. No.3 Special Services Bn. Royal Welch Fusiliers

**Capt. D D Tweddle.** R.A

On Sunday 22nd October 1939, a committee meeting was held at the pavilion to resolve the clubs position for the duration of the war.

It was resolved: That an extraordinary general meeting of the club be held at the pavilion at 3:00 p.m on Sunday 12th November 1939, for the following purposes:

The extraordinary general meeting of the 12th November agreed the following:

The committee's proposals for limiting expenditure for the duration of the war were as discussed and it was resolved:

That the use of the clubhouse and ground be suspended for the duration of the war, that away matches be played, and that members taking part in such matches be charged one shilling per match. It was agreed that the committee had full powers to deal with any emergency for the duration of the war.

Twickenham as with many other grounds were taken over by various branches of the services. Chiltern's ground was initially used by the local Home Guard.

Chiltern, through the services and enthusiasm of Pat Mason and the availability of his car with petrol, arranged occasional away games of rugby. The Chiltern XV was augmented with medical students from Amersham Hospital. They had been evacuated from the London hospitals.

Ronnie Webb (Webb and Sons, Chesham) then took over as the main organiser when Pat joined the Merchant Fleet. He eventually organised that the clubhouse was let to a displaced Jewish family. They had been bombed out of their own house in London. The family during their occupation added to their family when a baby girl was born in the clubhouse. The rent from the clubhouse occupants and income from a local farmer for the grazing rights, helped to clear the clubs pre-war debt.

On peace being announced the larger rugby clubs started to play again immediately, but Chiltern R.F.C., along with the majority of other local clubs, waited until the summer of 1946 to call a committee meeting to discuss restarting the club. *[80 seasons at Amersham and Chiltern RFC by Roger Cook]*

**Chesham Bois CC and local cricket.**

In the Chiltern area, a limited amount of cricket matches had continued to be played throughout the wartime period, Amersham C.C. Beaconsfield C.C. Gerrards Cross C.C and the Home Guard C.C (later renamed Fencibles C.C) continued but Chesham Bois CC and generally football and other ball games had generally been suspended.

Despite calls from supporters, it was to be a full season after the end of the war before football was to restart in earnest. The local council issued an order to restore the playing fields. They had been used as allotments or turned over for food production during the war time period. Hervines sports ground was to have a new cricket table laid.

**The War years:**

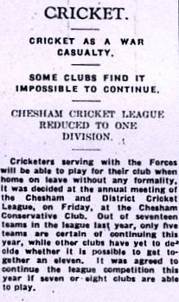
**1939.** The Chesham and District League had a few changes to the membership.

Division 1: Holmer Green CC, Chesham Bois CC, Bellingdon CC, Chartridge CC, Hawridge and Cholesbury CC, Temple End CC, Ley Hill CC, Lye Green CC.

Division 2: Winchmore Hill CC, Brazils CC, Coleshill CC, Ashley Green Institute CC, Buckland Common CC, Chesham Town Social Club CC, Holmer Green II, Chesham British Legion CC, Hyde Heath CC. The Chesham and District League was won for the fifth season running by Holmer Green with Brazils winners of Division 2.

The championship match between Holmer Green and Brazils was cancelled.

The inter league match with Croydon and District was played at Coleshill on Whit Monday with a win to Croydon. The result equalled the overall results for the last ten seasons. The players and officials were guests of Mr D. W Oliver the president of both leagues.



The Chesham Six-a-Sides introduced Nashleigh Printers and Jessie Mead as new teams to the popular competition. The semi-finals was played out between Page and Thomas and T.Wright and Sons and W&M Mash and F. Racklyeft. The final was won by Racklyeft who scored 119 to W&M Mash 59.

Cricket reports died away in the newspaper as Second World War was declared and there was a rush of sportsmen to join the forces. *[Bucks Examiner]*

**1940.** A difficult period faced sport in Britain with the war in Europe creeping closer to its shores. Many clubs had lost personnel to the services and were unable to continue. At the Chesham Cricket League AGM it was stated that of the seventeen clubs playing in the league in 1939 only five stated they could raise an eleven. Chartridge, Holmer Green, Lye Green, Brazils and Chesham Social Club with Chesham Bois, Chesham British Legion and Ley Hill waiting until they held their own AGM’s. The AGM decided to restart the CDL with one division.

After a nine season wait Chesham Bois CC were again champions of the Chesham and District league. The league secretary Mr A. E Howlett presented the championship cup and medals. Mr Howlett made special mention to the fact that Andy Horwood and Percy Collins had been in the team on all the eight occasions that Chesham Bois had won the championship. The team: Reg King, Jack Reidelberg, Harold Darvell, Tom Hearn, Len Nash, Andy Horwood, Frank Wilson, Percy Collins, Syd Reynolds, G. King, Harold Foster. The league finally consisted of Chesham Bois, Lye Green, Chesham Social Club, Ashley Green Institute, Brazils Sports Club, Hawridge and Cholesbury and Chartridge. Other recorded clubs included Chenies and Latimer, Chesham CC. *[Bucks Examiner]*

**1941.** Chesham BoisCC were about to be mothballed for the duration of Second World War. The league from its inception had gone through many changes as the face of cricket started to give way to the War. The league now consisted of Ley Green, Chesham Bois, Brazils CC, Ashley Green, Home Guard, ‘B’ Platoon (later formed as Fencibles CC) and Chesham Social Club CC.

In the final league game for some seasons Ley Green won the game by 20 runs against Chesham Bois who were the 1940 holders of the league championship. The Chesham Bois XI: G. Walton, R. King, F. Dance, F. Wilson, E. Darvell, T. Hearne, H. Darvell, F. Brandon, S, Reynolds, G. King, J. Reidleberg. The championship was then mothballed for the duration. *[Bucks Examiner]*

**Cricket during Second World War.**

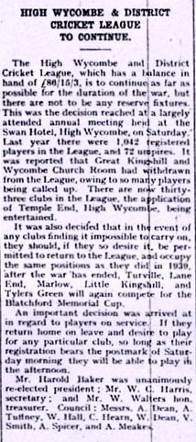
It is recorded that Chesham CC played only one match in 1940 and then the pavilion was rented out to the local Jewish community for use as a synagogue and a school for local Jewish children. In fact one Jewish couple were actually married on the cricket square! Use of pavilions appeared to be common practice as Chiltern Rugby Club also housed a Jewish family evacuated from London.

However, there were plans for a local Home Guard Unit to play some cricket. In 1941 the Bucks Examiner reported "A programme of cricket for the Chesham Home Guard is being organised. Through the kindness of Miss Warrender OBE and the British Legion, the ground and pavilion at Bayman Manor, Lye Green Road has been made available for matches. The season will begin with inter-platoon matches: ‘C’ versus ‘D platoon’ at 3pm on Saturday, May 3rd, and A versus B on Saturday, May 10th. Spectators are welcome and tea will be obtainable on the ground. ‘B’ platoon originally used the Chiltern Rugby Club pavilion as a HQ until the arrival of the more permanent residents.

The ‘B’ platoon was the later basis of Fencibles CC who had the option of using Barn Meadow after the war on the provision that they made the meadow usable for sports.

On May 17th the winner of the first round will play the winner of the second in the final. Later, a Company Eleven will be formed with a view to playing home and away matches against other Home Guard units and other teams. Communication should be addressed to H. Channer, Hon, secretary, 180 Bois Moor Road." However, there is no record that this happened. But Chesham CC allowed Chesham Social Club to use their ground so enabling the Chesham District League in 1941 to continue, albeit in a reduced format and No 7 Section of the Home Guard B Platoon entered this league. They were the unit comprised of men from Hawridge and Cholesbury and played their matches at Hawridge. The 1941 league culminated in a play- off match between Lye Green and Chesham Bois held on the Chesham’s Amy Lane Ground. Lye Green won by 20 runs despite Edgar Darvell taking 6-19 for Chesham Bois. The Home Guard unit finished bottom of the league!

Home Guard Cricket at Chesham 1942: In 1942 at least one Home Guard match was played on the Chesham Ground. Of course they unable to use the pavilion so they changed in the groundsman’s shed on the lower side of the ground. Playing in this match was Lieut. E (Teddy) Ward who captained the Home Guard side.



There was also some works cricket played on the Chesham CC ground during Second World War. Arthur Lyons and Co Ltd, who was based in part of the Amersham Woodware and Toy factory in nearby Moor Road, played numerous games against other local works teams. *[Keith Fletcher]*

**1946.** With the war settled the cricket season came too early for players and administrators to reorganize the league.

The Chesham and District League proposed through their President Mr. DW Oliver a Knock out Competition for one of the two divisional cups. This in place of the league as reorganization of the league was not available until 1947.

Facts have shown that the number of clubs and players were to contract from the end of the War. *[History of Cricket in Chesham and local villages by Roger Cook]*

**Other active clubs that served residents of Chesham Bois:**

Amersham Cricket Club.

Amersham Hill Cricket Club.

Cestreham Cycling and Athletic club.

Chesham Bois Lawn Tennis and Squash Club.

Chesham Cricket Club.

Chesham Darts League.

Chesham FC

Chiltern Table Tennis League.

Home Guard Cricket Club (B Platoon).

**Chesham Bois residents that served in WWII noted on the October 1945 Service Voters list.**

Anderson Phillip M Farren, Bois Lane.

Anderson Robert N Farren, Bois Lane.

Anson George H Backland, North Rd.

Axten David M 35 Woodside Ave.

Axten Peter J Warren Cottage. High Bois Lane.

Baldock Charlie Beacon School, Amersham Rd.

Bauers Alfred J Redland, Clifton Rd.

Benabo Cyril Westfield, Bois Ave.

Bence Ronald M Colaba, Bois Lane.

Bertish Douglas G Weedon, Copperkins Lane.

Bethell Laurence 5 The Woodlands.

Bilson Peter C Grangehurst, North Rd.

Blake Micheal J.L Grange Cottage,

Campbell Lorne M Lockhill, Stubbs Wood.

Capel Edward J Wee Cottage, Bois Lane.

Cheshire Agnes Benslow, Bois Lane.

Clark Alfred H.T Long Meadow, Stubbs Wood.

Clarke Thomas R White End Cott, Hollow way Lane.

Cole Lionel J Stanley House, Bois Lane.

Collins Fred V. H Oaklyn, Bois Lane.

Comben Stanley A Capesthorne, Bois Lane.

Cooper David Salcombe, Woodside Ave.

Crowther Dudley E 26 Woodside Ave.

Curtis William G The Lodge, Chesham Bois Place.

Cusins William A Anthony, Bois Ave.

Daniels David c/o Smith, Ingleside, Bois Lane.

Dannfald Mathias The Warren, Bois Lane.

Darke Joan Tanjong, Stubbs Wood.

Dean Thelma C Atteryn, Copperkins Lane.

De Boos Ernest J Fellbrig, Amersham Rd.

Dolling William G Bisdale, Copperkins Lane.

Duerdoth John P Norland, Bois Lane.

Easton Stanley G The Prospect, Clifton Rd.

Eayres Herbert E. H 25 Woodside Ave.

Eayres Raymond S 25 Woodside Ave.

Elburn Alan T Tresco, Green Lane.

Forbes Hugh A.G Stubbs Ridge, Stubbs Wood.

Genin Gerald E Willow Lodge, Woodside Ave.

Gilbert Edith Cowley, Bois Lane.

Gorringe John A.L Chesham Bois House, Bois Lane.

Griffiths Arthur G Cotehill, Copperkins Lane.

Halsey Rex M On the Green, Bois Lane.

Harding Anthony J Chiltern Cott, Chiltern Rd.

Henshaw Reginald Erne Cott, Bois Lane.

Hill Barbara C Homefield, North Rd.

Hill Herbert C Homefield, North Rd.

Hunt Frederick A 18 Woodside Ave.

Hyatt Arthur J.R Woodside, Long Park.

Jacobs John H Woodland Court.

Kelly Reginald E 8 Woodlands.

King Ernest 34 Woodside Ave.

King Leonard C.V Bois View, Bois Lane.

Kingston-Stewart The Woodlands.

Knight Donald M Camelot, Clifton Rd.

Knight Eric A Camelot, Clifton Rd.

Lane Arthur N New Ways (Long Park Close)

Lawrence Henry G The Rectory, North Road.

Levason Edith M G Homewood, Long Park.

Ling Gerald S G El Esbah, Copperkins Lane.

Mason Patrick L Rose Cottage, Bois Lane.

May Anthony J 23 Woodside Ave.

Mitchell Kenrad V 39 Woodside Ave.

Morton George 18 Woodside Ave.

Murdock Derek M 3 Manor Drive.

Murdock Geoffrey Gunga Din, Manor Drive.

Newton John D Bedgebury, Amersham Rd.

Oakley Thomas E Endwood, Woodside Ave.

Osborne Royston D Alteryn, Copperkins Lane.

Panton Alastair M Thornbury, Manor Drive.

Parker Eric R H The Bungalow, Bois Lane.

Parker Kenneth H The Bungalow, Bois Lane.

Parker Ross H M The Bungalow, Bois Lane.

Passauer Eric L W Dormer Cott, Long Park.

Peiniger Margeret Mc Rae, Stubbs Wood.

Peniston John N Lyddon, Bois Lane.

Peniston Malcolm J Lyddon, Bois Lane.

Pontin Joy Sunshine House, North Rd.

Potter Edward A The Beeches, Bois Lane.

Prince Lorna C Manor House.

Rejall Peggy M Ardwell, Bois Lane.

Roberts Harold 34 Woodside Ave.

Roper Anthony M Wood Edge, Copperkins Lane.

Ross Harold A Linden Lea, Long Park.

Sawfoot George K 12 Woodside Ave.

Schofield Lancelot Long Gables, Bois Ave.

Scott Alan K Warren Cottage, Bois Lane.

Scott Walter D Jacutinga, Bois Ave.

Seabrook James G Wee Cott, Bois Lane.

Seaman Harold E Stubbs Ridge, Stubs Wood.

Simmonds Ella I Field Rest, Green Lane.

Smith Frederick H Chessview, Hollow Way Lane.

Smith Norman H G 1 Annes Corner, Bois Lane.

Smith Walter Ingleside, Bois Lane.

Stalker Hugh J D Casburn Cott,Bois Lane.

Stanley Patrick J H Little Tawney House, Stubbs Wood.

Steel Robert D Dalbrack, Green Lane.

Strode Phillip H Lockhill House, Stubbs Wood.

Sulston Arthur E A Broom Leys, Clifton Road.

Summers William I 36 Woodside Ave.

Sutherland Harry G Holly Cott, Oakway.

Tait John S Woodside, Long Park.

Tarrant Frederick C Stonybrae, Green Lane.

Taylor Micheal F Amberley, Chiltern Road.

Treadgold F R Hillbury, Clifton Road.

Troup Alexander M 15 The Woodlands.

Turner Stanley C White End Cott, Hollow way Lane.

Upfield-Green M E Carhayes, Copperkins Grove.

Wheler Trevor W White Gables, Copperkins Lane.

Williams Richard Conway, Oakway.

Wilson Edward Casburn Cott, Bois Lane.

Wilson Henry J Boisdale, Copperkins Lane.

Wintle Francis J Deemount, Long Park.

Wright Basil R 24 Woodside Ave.

1. **Medals of World War II.**

## Summary of the medals and eligibility criteria

Eight stars were issued for the campaigns of World War 2. The stars are a 6 pointed star, in bronze, with the cypher of King George VI in the centre. The title of each star appears around the cypher and also a different ribbon denotes each separate star. The colours of the ribbons have symbolic significance and are believed to have been designed personally by King George VI.

Two medals, the [Defence Medal](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#defence-medal---1939-to-1945) and the [War Medal](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#war-medal-1939-to-1945), were issued in recognition of general service in World War 2. These are circular medals made in cupronickel.

The criteria for the award of medals to those who had fought in World War 2 were finalised in 1948. In accordance with the criteria, the medals were issued unnamed.

No more than 5 stars may be awarded to one person. Regulations relating to the award of the [Pacific](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#pacific-star---malaya-singapore-and-the-pacific-ocean), [Burma](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#burma-star), [Atlantic](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#atlantic-star), [Air Crew Europe](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#air-crew-europe-star) and [France and Germany stars](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#france-and-germany-star) prevent this from happening.

Those who would qualify for more are awarded a clasp with the title of one of the stars to which they qualify. This clasp is then attached to the ribbon of one of the other stars, as laid out in the regulations.

A candidate may qualify for both the Pacific and Burma stars but is only awarded one of these, which will be the first star earned. He will then receive a clasp with the title of the second star earned which is worn on the ribbon of the first.

Another candidate may qualify for 2 or 3 of the [Atlantic](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#atlantic-star), [Air Crew Europe](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#air-crew-europe-star) and [France and Germany stars](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#france-and-germany-star). In this instance the first star earned is awarded. He will then receive a clasp with the title of the second star earned to be worn on the ribbon of the first. A third star or clasp will not be awarded in this case. The [1939 to 1945 Star](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#to-1945-star), [Africa star](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#africa-star) and [Italy star](https://www.gov.uk/medals-campaigns-descriptions-and-eligibility#italy-star) can all be awarded regardless of which other stars are qualified for.

**World War II**

During [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) (1939–1945) the following were issued (with authorised Clasp or Emblem (if awarded) in brackets) - the first ten are listed in the authorised Order of Wearing:

* [1939-1945 Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1939-1945_Star) (Battle of Britain *or* Bomber Command)



* [Atlantic Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atlantic_Star) (Air Crew Europe *or* France and Germany)



* [Air Crew Europe Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Crew_Europe_Star) (Atlantic *or* France and Germany)



* [Arctic Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arctic_Star)



* [Africa Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa_Star) (8th Army *or* 1st Army *or* North Africa 1942-43)



* [Pacific Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_Star) (Burma)



* [Burma Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma_Star) (Pacific)



* [Italy Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy_Star)



* [France and Germany Star](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France_and_Germany_Star) (Atlantic)



* [Defence Medal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defence_Medal_(United_Kingdom)) (Silver laurel leaves (King's Commendation for brave conduct. Civil))



* [War Medal 1939–1945](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_Medal_1939%E2%80%931945) (Oak leaf)



Hierarchy of Medals:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Level 1 | Victoria Cross |  |  |
| Level 2 | Distinguished Service Order | Conspicuous Gallantry Cross |  |
| Level 3 | Distinguished Service Cross | Military Cross | Distinguished Flying Cross |
| Level 4 | Mention in Despatches |  |  |

1. **Parish of Chesham Bois ‘Roll of Honour’ listing the men who volunteered or were conscripted to WWII.**

This section lists those who were in action during the WWII and were associated with the Parish of Chesham Bois.



**Patrick Lorimer Mason, Merchant Navy and RN SBS.**

Born 1913, Died 1987, Edinburgh, Scotland

Resident of: Sloe Cottage, Bois Lane, Chesham Bois, Later Ashlyn, North Road.

Dr Challoners School, Amersham

Chiltern RFC 1935-1987, President, Chiltern RFC 1964-69, 1973-74

1st Chesham Bois Scout Group.

Pat Mason and Martin Bunny Burbush had returned to Amersham after playing for Old Challoners Football Club, when they decided to take up an invitation to visit the Chiltern clubhouse on a Saturday night .from other Old Challoners who preferred the oval shaped ball, They enjoyed the ‘Apres’ rugby so much they decided to stay - maybe a small loss to Challoners Football Club but over the years an immense gain to Chiltern RFC. Pat had lived in Rose Cottage, Chesham Bois Common, as a young man when his father Capt S.G Mason was transferred to RAF Halton as a gunnery training officer. Pat’s change of sport gave his father great pleasure, for as a young man he played rugby for the Royal Navy, Devonport Services and Devon. He played for Devon against the first touring 'All Blacks' in 1905, losing 55 points to 4. By coincidence, the match was watched by a young *Khaki* Roberts, later to play against the same All Blacks and later a Chiltern RFC member and prosecutor at the WWII Nazi trials at Nuremberg. Pat’s first game for Chiltern was in the 1935-36 season for A XV against London Scottish B. A season later he was elected A XV vice captain, and captain by the 1938-39 season. The war years intervened and since the majority of younger Chiltern members volunteered, the slightly older Pat became the central figure at Chiltern.

However, he soon joined the Merchant Navy. He experienced many hazardous crossings on Atlantic convoys and later Russian Convoys to Arkhangelsk, where twice his ships were torpedoed.

He later volunteered for duty in the Special Boat Service operating out of Alexandria, Egypt. Most of his operations were conducted from a Greek fishing boat, creating diversions for the occupying forces around the Greek Islands.

After the war, Pat worked in the City of London as a chartered company secretary for the Bovril Group of Companies. In 1952, fed up with commuting, Pat took up a position as export manager with Webb & Jarratt, the Chesham-based Brush manufacturing company. In 1957, Webb & Jarratt was sold to United Transport Company, and Pat continued to work under the

new management until his early retirement in 1969.

Pat had been elected club Secretary after the war and continued until 1953, completing eighteen years active member on the club’s committee. He was a founder member of the Buckinghamshire County Rugby Union. Pat was elected as President of the club from 1964 to 1969. He was then re-elected as President for the 1973-74 season, the club's fiftieth anniversary - a worthy gesture by the club members in recognition of his long service to the club. *[80 years of Amersham and Chiltern RFC by Roger Cook]*

**Right Honourable Baron Widgery of South Molton, PC, OBE, TD, LLD (Hon). Royal Engineers (TA), RA.**



Born 1911, South Molton, Devon. Died 1981, Chelsea, London

Resident of: Temporary resident of Chesham Bois.

Position: Flanker

Chiltern RFC 1933-39

John Widgery was born at Ashley House, Paradise Lawn, South Molton in one of the two adjoining houses built for his father, a carpenter, from a legacy left to the family by the artist J.M W Turner, a close relation.

John's early education was at the local South Molton Primary school progressing to the more established Queen's College, Taunton. He left at the age of sixteen to become an articled clerk with solicitors Crosse Wyatt of South Molton. In 1933 he qualified, though never practiced as a solicitor, joining the staff at Gibson and Welldon, law tutors in London. At the same time, he married Helen Yates and moved to the Amersham area and joined Chiltern RFC, where he played until the outbreak of war .John made his debut as hooker for the 1st XV in a 6-6 draw against Slough in 1935. In the 1937 season, he became club Match Secretary, a post he held until the club was suspended for the duration of the war.

At the outbreak of war, he was mobilised along with most of his fellow members from the club’s 1st XV.

He was an effective lecturer in the years leading up to [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) while he was also commissioned into the [Royal Engineers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Engineers) ([Territorial Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_Army_(United_Kingdom))) in 1938, having joined as a [sapper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapper). As a [searchlight](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Searchlight) officer, in 1940 he transferred to the [Royal Artillery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Artillery). Widgery participated in the [Normandy landings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_Landings). By the end of the war he had an [OBE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire), the [Croix de Guerre (France)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Croix_de_guerre_1939-1945), and the [Order of Leopold (Belgium)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Leopold_(Belgium)), and had reached the rank of brigadier. He saw active service with the Royal Engineers for which he became a lieutenant-colonel in 1942.

After the war, John was called to the bar, Lincoln's Inn, and he quickly built a substantial practice on the south-eastern circuit, specialising mainly in the areas of rating and town planning. In 1958 he became QC, was Recorder of Hastings from 1958 to 1961, appointed judge of the Queen’s Bench division and knighted. In 1966 he became the first chairman of the Senate of the Inns of Court and the bar. In 1968 he was promoted to the Court of Appeal and appointed a Privy Councillor.

In 1971 he succeeded Lord Parker of Waddington as Lord Chief Justice with a life peerage and was honoured as a Freeman of South Molton. Shortly after taking over, Widgery was handed the politically sensitive job of conducting an inquiry into the events of 30 January 1972 in [Derry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derry), where troops from the [Parachute Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parachute_Regiment_(United_Kingdom)) had killed 13 civil rights marchers, commonly referred to as [Bloody Sunday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bloody_Sunday_(1972)) (a 14th person died shortly after Widgery's appointment). Widgery was faced with testimony from the soldiers, who claimed they had been shot at, while the marchers insisted that no one from the march was armed. Widgery produced a report that took the army's side. Widgery put the main blame for the deaths on the march organisers for creating a dangerous situation where a confrontation was inevitable. His fiercest criticism of the Army was that the "firing bordered on the reckless".

The Widgery Report was accepted by the British government and Northern Irish Unionists but was immediately denounced by Nationalist politicians, and people in the [Bogside](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bogside" \o "Bogside) and Creggan areas were reported to be disgusted by his findings. The British Government had acquired some goodwill because of its suspension of the [Stormont Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_Northern_Ireland), but that was said to have disappeared when Widgery's conclusions were published. The grievance with Widgery's findings lingered and the issue remained live as the peace process advanced in the 1990s

His later years in office were marred by persistent ill health and mental decline. In [*Private Eye*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Private_Eye) it was claimed that "he sits hunched and scowling, squinting into his books from a range of three inches, his wig awry. He keeps up a muttered commentary of bad-tempered and irrelevant questions – 'What d' you say?', 'Speak up', 'Don't shout', 'Whipper-snapper', etc.". He resisted attempts to get him to resign until the last moment, in 1980. For at least 18 months previously he had not been in control of either his administrative work or his legal pronouncements, he would fall asleep in court and it soon became apparent that he was suffering from [dementia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dementia). He died two days after his 70th birthday, in 1981.

As a personality he was never an easy man to assess. In private life, he was always kind and courteous but seemed to be shy to the point of reticence. He was once described by a Chiltern team member as “The most boring man to talk to other than the Archbishop of Canterbury”. *[80 years of Amersham and Chiltern RFC by Roger Cook]*

**Peter Scawen Watkinson Roberts, RN, VC. DSC HMS Thrasher.**Service No.



Born: 28th July 1917 Amersham. Died: 8th Dec 1979  
Buried at: Holy Cross Churchyard, Newton Ferrers in Devon.

Former resident of: Chiltern Road, Chesham Bois.

Son of: George Watkinson and Georgina Dorothy (nee Tinney) M. 1906

Husband of: Brigid V Lethbridge Plymouth, 1940.

He was born at Chesham Bois in Buckinghamshire on the 28th of July 1917 the son of George Watkinson Roberts an incorporated accountant. He was educated at Falconbury School, Purley in Surrey and at the King's School Canterbury from September 1931 to July 1935 where he was a scholar and was in Langley House. He was awarded colours for boxing, athletics and he played for the Rugby XV.   
On leaving school he joined the Navy and was appointed as a Midshipman on the 1st of September 1936 and posted to the cruiser HMS Shropshire where he served until 1938. He was promoted to Sub Lieutenant on the 1st of July 1938 and served on the minesweeper HMS Saltburn from the 6th of June 1939 until September 1939 when he transferred to the submarine service. He was promoted to Lieutenant on the 16th of November 1939 and from February to April 1940 he served as third hand on the submarine H32, part of the Training Flotilla, serving on HMS Tribune later the same year.   
  
On the 1st of January 1941 he was posted as First Lieutenant to the T Class HM Submarine Thrasher. While he was with the vessel they sank a number of enemy merchant vessels and evacuated 67 Allied soldiers from Crete in July 1941.   
On the 13th of February 1942 Thrasher set sail from Alexandria under the command of Lieutenant H.S Mackenzie RN for her eighth war patrol. Her mission was to patrol the Ionian Sea and the Gulf of Taranto passing Northern Crete while en route.   
At 04.13 hours on the 16th of February she spotted three ships at a range of five nautical miles but was unable to get into a position to make a shot and she proceeded towards Suda Bay. At 08.55 hours a small 1,000 merchant vessel was spotted but not considered to be worth a torpedo. They spotted a number of vessels around Suda Bay but did not decide to attack until, at 11.55 hours, they saw a heavily laden merchant vessel protected by five escorts and two aircraft circling over head. Despite three of the enemy using asdic to protect against submarine attack, Thrasher fired a salvo of four torpedoes at 12.34 hours from a range of 2,000 yards. Shortly after this the submarine was rocked by an explosion thought to have been a bomb dropped by an aircraft. This was followed by the sound of machine gun bullets striking the water above them. Almost three minutes after the first torpedo had been fired; a loud explosion was heard, followed ten seconds later by another one. It was not clear at the time whether this was a ship being hit or depth charges being dropped. In fact they had attacked the 1,756 ton German merchant Arkadia but all torpedoes had missed their target.  
At 12.45 hours the first of a series of 33 depth charges were dropped on or near Thrasher causing minor damage and some discomfort for the crew. At 14.30 hours she came up to periscope depth and saw that three enemy vessels and two aircraft were still searching the area for them. At 15.45 hours they came up again and all was quiet allowing them to surface at 19.06 hours.  
At 01.50 hours on the morning of the 17th of February it was discovered that there was a large hole in the side of the gun platform and an unexploded 100lb bomb lying on the casing forward of the gun. This bomb had a small piece of its tail still attached, which had prevented it rolling into the sea. At 02.40 hours the submarine was put in hard astern and lowered in the water to allow Lieutenant P.S.W. Roberts and Petty Officer T. W. Gould went forward and freed the bomb, allowing it to drop safely over the bow, into the water.  
On closer examination of the damage forward of the gun it was discovered that there was a second, unexploded bomb inside the casing forward of the gun which had penetrated both the side casing and the deck casing above the pressure hull. The space created by the passage of the bomb was no more than two feet high in places but Roberts and Gould lay flat and wriggled past deck supports, battery ventilators and drop bollards. Gould lay on his back with the 100lb bomb in his arms while Roberts dragged him along by the shoulders. While Gould and Roberts tried to move the bomb, Thrasher was surfaced, stationary and inshore, close to enemy waters. If the submarine had been forced to crash dive, both men would drown of which they were both aware. It was 40 minutes before they got the bomb clear, wrapped it in sacking, and dropped it over the side.

For this act, both men were awarded the Victoria Cross which appeared in the London Gazette of the 9th of June 1942.

The citation reads: - "For gallant and distinguished service in successful patrols while serving in H.M.  
Submarine Thrasher."  
"On February 16th, in daylight, H.M. Submarine "Thrasher" attacked and sank a heavily escorted supply ship. She was at once attacked by depth charges and was bombed by aircraft.

The presence of two unexploded bombs in the gun-casing was discovered when after dark the submarine surfaced and began to roll. Lieutenant Roberts and Petty Officer Gould volunteered to remove the bombs, which were of a type unknown to them. The danger in dealing with the second bomb was very great. To reach it they had to go through the casing which was so low that they had to lie at full length to move in it. Through this narrow space, in complete darkness they pushed and dragged the bomb for a distance of some 20 feet until it could be lowered over the side. Every time the bomb was moved there was a loud twanging noise as of a broken spring which added nothing to their peace of mind. This deed was the more gallant as H.M.S Thrasher's presence was known to the enemy; she was close to the enemy coast and in waters where his patrols were known to be active day and night. There was a very great chance, and they knew it, that the submarine might have to crash-dive while they were in casing. Had this happened they must have been drowned."   
HM Submarine Thresher returned to Alexandria on the 5th of March.   
Roberts left Thresher in April 1942 and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross which appeared in the London Gazette of the 30th of June 1942.  
  
He was decorated with his Victoria Cross on the 30th of June 1942.  
He then served on the destroyer HMS Beagle from the 16th of August 1942 until February 1943. For a month from the 18th of May 1943 he served at the Combined Operations base at Troon, known as HMS Dinosaur and from August 1943 he transferred to the training establishment HMS Vernon located at Portsmouth where he remained until July 1945. He was then posted to HMS Black Prince until April 1946.  
On the 16th of November 1947 he was promoted to Lieutenant Commander and served on a variety of ships during the remainder of his career. HMS Defiance from 1946 to 1948, HMS Gorregan from 1950, HMS Apollo from 1952, HMS Cardigan Bay from 1953, HMS Dingley from 1955 until 1956 when he returned to HMS Vernon serving at HM Underwater Countermeasures and Weapons establishment in 1957. In 1959 he moved to HMS Drake.  
He retired from the Navy on the 28th of July 1962 and died on the 8th of December 1979.   
Petty Officer Tommy Gould died in 2001.  
His brother, Lieutenant James Guye Francklin Watkinson Roberts RN OKS of HMS "Exmouth" was killed in action on the 21st of January 1940.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

**Peter Errington Guy Lobb.** MC (North West Europe), Captain: Temp Major, 174 Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps.



Service No. 124425

Born: Erpingham, Norfolk 1910 Died:

Resident of: Manor Lodge, North Road, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Eric St John Lobb and Rhoda (nee Read) M. 1906

Husband of: Elizabeth (nee Lang) M. Amersham 1938.

Chiltern RFC 1929-1947

Peter Lobb joined the Chiltern Rugby Club straight from Sherborne School 1st.XV, eventually securing the 1st XV inside centre position. Peter joined the Westminster Dragoons in the Territorial Army until being called up to serve in the Royal Tank Regiment. He saw service in Europe with the rank of Major, winning the Military Cross. Peter worked in the Stock Exchange and married in 1938 the sister of W N D Lang, the Chiltern captain in seasons 1935/36 and 1936/37 and later President of the club.

P E G Lobb

**WWII**

Operation Greenline 15-18th July was one of many carried out about this time to keep the enemy fighting hard, enlarge the ODON bridgehead, and hold his attention away from preparations being made for a breakthrough EAST of CAEN. The famous Hill 112 was first captured at the end of June and had been furiously fought over ever since. Now the slopes around it were littered with more than two dozen burnt‑out tanks of both sides and the stinking human wreckage of war in the No‑Man's Land, irrecoverable due to fire from the German held reverse slopes. The Hill and pronounced ridges NORTH EAST and SOUTH WEST of it were so shaped that our line, cramped between the wooded ODON stream and the crest, had a foreshortened field of fire compared to the gentle and bare slopes on the German side. Here the enemy held a fine deep position and made us pay dearly for every sally on to, or over, the crest in daylight.

147 Regt RAC*.*were due to attack early next morning but it had to be called off because the minefields were not breached around BARON and various flail tanks and two of its Churchill’s went up on deep laid mines. The following night its attack was called off on account of fog and its first battle took place late on 17 July with 158Infantry Brigade (then under command of 15 (Scottish) Division). In an attack to capture the EVRECY area a long advance down the forward slope leading to that village was planned and from the tank point of view the event must be classed as a very gallant failure. Suffice to say that the attack was too hurriedly staged and the infantry weak from casualties (one composite company being one officer and 50 other ranks strong, the second company consisting of one composite platoon), and they were very tired and could not keep up with the tanks who were compelled to move smartly under 88mm*.*fire from EVRECY village. 150 prisoners‑of‑war were taken but intense mortaring forced the infantry back to their start line and  A  Squadron (Major P. E. G. Lobb) were lucky to get back from a deep penetration of the enemy area with the loss of only six tanks. B Squadron lost four and C Squadron one tank.

Personnel casualties for 147 Regt. R.A.C. from 15 to 18 July amounted to 9 Officers and 36 Other Ranks (of which 4 Officers and 12 Other Ranks were killed).

Peter’s brother J.E.D. (Jim) Lobb also joined the rugby club but was one of the unfortunate members not to return from the war. Jim joined the 51st Leeds Rifles and was serving as a Captain in the Royal Tank Regiment he was killed on the 22nd April 1943 during the advance on Tunis, in the North African campaign. *[80 years of Amersham and Chiltern RFC by Roger Cook]*

1. **A detailed record of each casualty of the Chesham Bois Parish.**

**Major John Eduardo Anthony. 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards.**

Service No. 44241



Born: 1911 Hereford. Died 25th January 1944.

Resident of: Hawks Nest, Worksop, Notts. Formally, St Rode, Chesham Common.

Son of Charles and Maud Anthony (Richards) of St Rode, Chesham Common and Husband of: Janet Malcolm (nee Mac Gregor)-Demy of Magalen College, Oxford 1929- 1932. Married: York Dec 1937. Meadowlead, Bois Lane Chesham Bois.

Buried: Anzio Age: 32 Grave IV.F.7

Memorial: Anzio War Cemetery, Chesham Bois War Memorial, Chiltern RFC Memorial.

**The Anzio Landing (22-29 January 1944)**

In the early morning hours of 22 January 1944, VI Corps of Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark's Fifth Army landed on the Italian coast below Rome and established a beachhead far behind the enemy lines. In the four months between this landing and Fifth Army's May offensive, the short stretch of coast known as the Anzio beachhead was the scene of one of the most courageous and bloody dramas of the war. The Germans threw attack after attack against the beachhead in an effort to drive the landing force into the sea. Fifth Army troops, put fully on the defensive for the first time, rose to the test. Hemmed in by numerically superior enemy forces, they held their beachhead, fought off every enemy attack, and then built up a powerful striking force which spearheaded Fifth Army's triumphant entry into Rome in June.

Most of the beachhead area was within an elaborate reclamation and resettlement project. The low, swampy, malarial bog land of the Pontine Marshes had been converted into an area of cultivated fields, carefully drained and irrigated by an extensive series of canals and pumping stations. Only in the area immediately north of Anzio and Nettuno had the scrub timber, bog, and rotting grazing land been left untouched. At regular intervals along the network of paved and gravel roads crisscrossing the farmlands were the standardized 2-story *podere*, or farmhouses, built for the new settlers. Such places as the new community centre of Aprilia, called the "Factory" by Allied troops, and the provincial capital of Littoria, were modernistic model towns. The twin towns of Anzio (ancient Antium) and Nettuno in the centre of the beachhead were popular seaside resorts before the war.

The plan for the landing was called SHINGLE. Originally conceived as a subsidiary operation on the left flank of an advancing Fifth Army, it developed, when main Fifth Army failed to break the mountain defences in the south, into a major operation far in the enemy rear. U.S. VI Corps, selected by General Clark to make the amphibious landing, employed British as well as American forces under the command of Maj. Gen. John P. Lucas.

The assault force was to be dispatched from Naples, and was to consist of the U.S. 3d Division, veteran of landings in Sicily and North Africa, the British 1 Division from the Eighth Army front, the 46 Royal Tank Regiment, the 751st Tank Battalion, the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Commandos, Rangers, and other supporting troops. This force was the largest that could be lifted by the limited number of landing craft available. It was estimated that the turnaround would require three days. As soon as the convoy returned to Naples, the U.S. 45th Division and the U. S. 1st Armoured Division (less Combat Command B), were sent as reinforcements.

The final plans for SHINGLE were completed and approved on 12 January. D Day was set for 22 January; at H Hour (0200), VI Corps was to land over the beaches near Anzio and Nettuno in three simultaneous assaults. On the right, the 3rd Division, under Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., would land three regiments in assault over X-Ray Red and Green Beaches, two miles below Nettuno. In the center, the 6615th Ranger Force (Provisional) of three battalions, the 83rd Chemical Battalion, and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion would come in over Yellow Beach, a small beach adjacent to Anzio harbour, with the mission of seizing the port and clearing out any coastal defence batteries there.

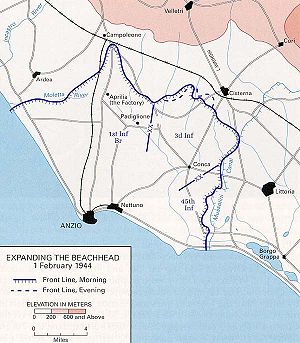
On Peter Beach, six miles northwest of Anzio, the 2 Brigade Group of the British 1 Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. W. R. C. Penney, would make the assault; the 2 Special Service Brigade of 9th and 43rd Commandos would land with it and strike east to establish a road block on the main road leading from Anzio to Campoleone and Albano. All these forces would link up to seize and consolidate a beachhead centred on the port of Anzio.

Initial resistance was light with the key objectives quickly taken. By the 24th January a beachhead had been established several kilometres inland but the hesitancy that followed the initial success of the landings enabled Kesselring time to regroup his defences. Several Panzer divisions including the elite Hermann Goring Division were diverted to meet the allied assault. The real battle for Anzio lay beyond the beaches, in the vicinity of Padiglione Woods, the Alban Hills and the streets of Aprilia, nicknamed the factory.

Admiral Lowry to land the American troops, and Task Force Peter was under Adm. T. H Troubridge RN, for British troops. Since only sixteen 6-davit LST's were available for Peter Beach, eight LSI's had been assigned to provide additional assault craft. Even with this addition, LCI's would have to be used for follow-up waves over X-Ray Beach. Peter Beach was so shallow that only light assault craft could be used.

A beach identification group was designated to precede the assault craft, to locate the beaches accurately, and mark them with coloured lights. Then three craft groups would land the assault waves. Following the first wave, the 1st Naval Beach Battalion would improve the marking of beach approaches and control boat traffic. A salvage group was assigned to lay pontoon causeways after daylight for unloading heavier craft. Back at Naples a loading control group would handle berthing and loading of craft.

The naval craft were assigned as follows:-



*Task Force "Peter" (British)*-

1 HQ ship - 4 cruisers- 8 Fleet destroyers- 6 Hunt destroyers- 2 antiaircraft ships- 2 Dutch gunboats-

11 fleet mine sweepers- 6 small mine sweepers -4 landing craft, -4 landing craft, flak-4 landing craft tank (rocket)

**Order of battle.**

* [British 1st Infantry Division](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_1st_Infantry_Division)
  + [2nd Infantry Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Infantry_Brigade_(United_Kingdom))
    - 1st Bn [The Loyal Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Loyal_Regiment)
    - 2nd Bn [The North Staffordshire Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_North_Staffordshire_Regiment)
    - 6th Bn [The Gordon Highlanders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gordon_Highlanders)
  + [3rd Infantry Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Infantry_Brigade)
    - 1st Bn [The Duke of Wellington's Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Duke_of_Wellington%27s_Regiment)
    - 2nd Bn [The Sherwood Foresters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sherwood_Foresters)
    - 1st Bn [The King's Shropshire Light Infantry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_King%27s_Shropshire_Light_Infantry)
  + [24th Guards Infantry Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Infantry_Brigade_(United_Kingdom))
    - 5th Bn [Grenadier Guards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grenadier_Guards)
    - 1st Bn [Irish Guards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_Guards)
    - 1st Bn [Scots Guards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scots_Guards)
  + [1st Reconnaissance Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1st_Reconnaissance_Regiment&action=edit&redlink=1)
  + 2/7th [The Middlesex Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Middlesex_Regiment)
  + 2, 19 & 67 Field Regiment, [Royal Artillery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Artillery)
  + 81 Anti-tank Regiment, RA
  + 90 Light Anti-aircraft Regiment, RA
  + 23, 238 & 248 Field Companies, [Royal Engineers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Engineers)
  + 6 Field Park Company, RE
  + 1 Bridging Platoon, RE
* [46th Royal Tank Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/46th_Royal_Tank_Regiment)
* [2nd Special Service Brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Special_Service_Brigade) (partial)
  + [No. 9 Commando](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._9_Commando)[No.43 (Royal Marine) Commando](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/43_Commando)

No 1, 2 & 3 [Field Ambulance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Field_Ambulance), [Royal Army Medical Corps](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Army_Medical_Corps)

**British 1st Division,** [**24th Guards Infantry Brigade**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/24th_Infantry_Brigade_(United_Kingdom))**, 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards at Anzio.**

**The Landing:**

There are some phases of a campaign which are no more than a chain of small incidents, dully repetitive, and startling only in their cumulative results: there are other phases which are complete in themselves, lengths snipped off, as it were, from the ribbon of history, which strike the imagination not because so much was achieved but because so much was aimed at. When a great deal is at stake, and failure or success depends upon a few men, war is raised from the level of mere operations to the level of drama. Such, for the 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards, was Anzio.  
  
They saw the beginning but not the close of that campaign. They landed in the beach-head on the first day close behind the assault troops, remained there for six weeks, and were then withdrawn to Naples with the remainder of the 24th Guards Brigade because they were too weakened by casualties to sustain another battle. To narrow down still further the period of their main exertion, it should be realized that during those six weeks the Grenadiers were actively engaged for little more than a fortnight - from the 25th of January to the 10th of February: in that time the Battalion lost twenty-nine officers out of their normal establishment of thirty-five, and five hundred and seventy-seven other ranks out of the eight hundred which compose a battalion’s complement at any given time. These figures give some indication of the violence of the opening stages of the Anzio campaign. What they do not show is the amazing ebb and flow in the fortunes of both the Germans and the Allies: “On one day,” wrote a Grenadier, “we would be in high spirits and boast that we would be the first to enter Rome; on the next day we would be speculating on the chances of a successful re-embarkation from the beaches.” It is this fluctuation which gives the Anzio story its peculiar fascination.  
  
The 1st British Division (Major-General W.R.C. Penney), with which we shall be chiefly concerned, consisted of the 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades and the 24th Guards Brigade. The last-named, unchanged since Africa, had three battalions: the 5th Grenadier Guards (Lieut.-Colonel G.C. Gordon-Lennox, D.S.O.), the 1st Scots Guards and the 1st Irish Guards. On D DAY, Saturday, the 22nd of January, 1944, the Rangers and Commandos were to land at Anzio and Nettuno and secure the port, while the two infantry divisions landed north and south of them on the open beaches - the 3rd U.S. Division in the bay south-east of Nettuno and the 2nd Brigade, with the Scots Guards under command, about six miles north of Anzio. The remainder of the 24th Guards Brigade were not to land until a firm beach-head had been secured, and the American armoured division were to follow behind the infantry.  
  
The 5th Grenadiers embarked on four L.C.I.s at Castellamare de Stabia, having marched to the docks past the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Regiment, Colonel J.A. Prescott, headed by the Band of the Irish Guards. Lines of ordered ships stretched across the Bay of Naples, glittering in the sun, while Vesuvius, mediating on its eruption a few weeks later, looked down upon them crowded by a plum of drifting smoke. They remained in the bay all that night, cramped on the narrow benches below decks, and heard, most of them for the fist time, the plan and detailed orders for the adventure on which they were embarked. The convoy of two hundred and forty-three ships of all types, preceded by a screen of destroyers, sailed out to sea pas Capri at 11 o’clock the next morning. They sailed south all that afternoon, turned west after dark, and finally due north. They had seventy miles to cover before arriving at the rendezvous off Anzio. At dawn the Grenadiers lay three miles off their appointed beach. The sky, which was cloudless, was filled by British and American fighters waiting for air opposition which never came, and on shore the Grenadiers could pick out through their field glasses the indolent movements of the leading British troops. There had been no opposition to their landing. There were a few casualties from beach mines, an 88-mm gun was firing aimlessly at the beaches from some distance inland, but of troops manning the coastal defences there had been no more than a weak German company and a few Italian gunners spread over the entire width of the invasion shore. The Scots Guards had captured a few prisoners from a German regiment, who claimed that they were there by accident: they had been sent to shoot cattle for food.  
  
The Grenadiers also saw from the decks of their L.C.I.s the features of the ground which they had already studied so carefully on maps and air photographs. They recognised the long, low line of dunes, the scrub and coppice of the immediate hinterland, the neat, white farmhouses of Fascist agriculture, and, a dozen miles beyond, the cultivated slopes of the Laziali Hills, backed by the higher ridges of the Appenines. Rome lay in a hollow, fifteen miles to the north. At 9 am the Grenadiers were called ashore, ferried by DUKWs from a sand-bar where the bigger craft ran aground, and marched peacefully down the road to a concentration area a few miles north of Anzio. How very different from Salerno! They halted to await orders and developments. To their surprise, the men were allowed to settle down on the wet sandy soil amongst the scrub, in defensive positions, it is true, but in no danger except from a few random shells which caused the first casualties of the campaign: five Grenadiers were wounded on the beaches. Of ground counter-attack there was no sign. Brigadier Murray was able to drive in his jeep to Anzio, meeting on his way a few bewildered Germans, who fled at his approach, and found the Brigade had so little to do that they whiled away the time by playing bridge and were able to sleep that night in their pyjamas.  
  
This was all very pleasant, but there was scarcely a man of that force who did not ask, and who does not still ask, why the situation was not immediately exploited. There was something uncanny about the silence, and yet no patrols went forward to find out what was happening beyond the three-mile perimeter which had been secured. Some were reminded of the Sulva Bay landings in 1915, when an opportunity was thrown away for want of a flexible plan. They asked why the American armoured division, or such elements of it as were already ashore, could not be sent out in battle patrols to add to the enemy’s confusion, if they did nothing else. It was no longer any secret that the Allies had landed in force at Anzio, and behind the German lines, as we now know, the news had produced a momentary panic. The base establishments and some of the headquarters in Rome were hurriedly evacuated to the north, and preparations were made to withdraw from the Cassino front. There can be little doubt that had the Allies struck boldly on the first or second day they would have gained much of the ground which was won later only in bitter fighting. It might, on the other hand, have exposed them to great risks if the Germans had recovered in time and taken advantage of their wide dispersal to counter-attack down to the very beaches. General Lucas was faced by a tremendous decision: to risk all in the hope of gaining perimeter until he built up his strength to strike. The second plan was the one he chose. By midnight on the 22nd, thirty-six thousand and thirty-four men and three thousand and sixty-nine vehicles had been put ashore.  
All Saturday and all Sunday the 24th Guards Brigade waited in their reserve area close to the beaches, and the other brigades of the 1st Division penetrated no more than three miles inland, meeting one or two small groups of Germans, but not even the skeleton of an organised line of resistance. On Monday the Brigade were told to send an “armoured reconnaissance” patrol through the perimeter to discover where they would fist meet serious trouble, and on the results of this patrol was to depend a more ambitious advance planned for the next day. The patrol was to be sent out by the 5th Grenadiers.

**A quiet landing:**  
  
It is difficult to describe one’s feelings on that journey. It was a beautiful starry night, moonless but with just that suggestion of breeze which made small waves lap noisily on the flat-bottomed bows of the craft. Everyone was very silent, we were packed like sardines in a tin, and he men rapidly got restive and stood up to relieve their cramp. We were all carrying a very full load, and these craft are not designed for Guardsmen! However, we managed somehow to stow ourselves away, together with the wireless sets, the Bren guns and all the other things we had to carry.  
We went in on the second flight that is thirty minutes after the original assault. As H approached we were listening apprehensively for the sound of the defensive fire which we thought was bound to follow.

But everything was quiet - the stillness broken only for a few minutes by the firing of the rocket shell from a ship lying close by. H passed, and we ourselves landed at the appointed time only a few hundred yards from the spot originally planned. Surprise had been complete, the beach was deserted of enemy and we found ourselves able to move about, form up and generally conduct ourselves as if we were on an exercise. Looking back, it all seemed ridiculously easy but it did no appear so at the time; we thought that we were liable to be attacked at any moment. Some poor unfortunates on our left stumbled into a minefield - number of casualties not known - but apart from that incident there was no warlike display on the enemy side.  
  
The Battalion landed in two waves at fifteen minutes’ interval. By the time the second wave had arrived, the first two companies, Right Flank and B, had formed up and were ready to move off to their objectives. We spent little time in getting C and Left Flank into position and moved off from the forming-up place towards the road about four hundred yards distant. It was there that we definitely places ourselves, for the track we followed from the beach joined the main road immediately opposite a house and tower which we all immediately recognised from our study of the oblique and vertical photographs on board ship. The Company Commanders had all been so carefully briefed beforehand that it was only a very short time later that they set off towards their objectives. No opposition was encountered and within two hours of our first landing the rifle companies were in position and digging commenced.  
  
Tim Bull [Major R.H. Bull, MC, commanding Left Flank] claimed first contact with the Germans, an extremely well-placed shot killing a pillion rider on a motor cycle which appeared along the road from Anzio. The motor cyclist himself got away, no doubt to fall into the bag very soon afterwards.  
  
It was now getting on the first light and I went back to the track from the beach hoping to contact Kit Fletcher [Major C.A. Fletcher] and his Support Company vehicles and weapons which we expected to land at about six-thirty. D.U.K.W.s were already streaming up from the beach; but so far no sign could be seen of any Scots Guards vehicles. But very soon afterwards Tony Tuke [Captain A.F. Tuke, Anti-Tank Officer] appeared riding on a D.U.K.W. containing his Jeep and trailer. The 6-pounder guns followed soon afterwards and the process of “de-DUKWING” commenced. It was remarkable how smoothly it went, despite some rather nasty shelling from an 88-mm gun which had suddenly awakened to the fact that we had come ashore and was now registering the road at the point where the vehicles came on to it. But all went smoothly; again we suffered no casualties, and the guns were in position in a very short space of time. Battalion Headquarters was established on the beach road running from Anzio northwards towards the beach on which we had landed. Digging was comparatively easy, for the ground was sandy with no rock. No opposition had been encountered on any of the Battalion’s fronts and it can safely be said that the landing had been a complete success on all sides. News came through of the fall of Anzio and of the success of the American landing parties on the beaches to the south.

General Alexander made a tour of the beach-head that morning, wearing his red hat and riding in a jeep followed by the usual retinue. We were again reminded of the likeness of the operation to an exercise - the Chief Umpire visiting the forward positions and finding things to his satisfaction.  
  
Our supporting arms at this point consisted of our usual battery of 25-pounders. We also had a FOO (pronounced as spelt and not in individual letters) who had on call the naval guns of two destroyers lying out in the bay. Each destroyer had six 4.7-inch guns and I have very distinct recollections of young Monk (the FOO) coming to us throughout the morning and pleading for targets which, unfortunately - or fortunately as the case may be - we were unable to supply.  
  
The 24th Guards Brigade (Brigadier A.S.P. Murray) consisting of the 5TH Grenadiers, 1ST Irish, the balance personnel and vehicles of the Scots Guards, and Brigade Headquarters landed on the beaches at almost midday, and we reverted to their command.  
  
The Grenadiers had been ordered to take up positions further to our right, that is between ourselves and Anzio, while the Irish Guards were to take over our positions, and we meanwhile would push forward towards the right centre of the perimeter that hat been formed. We received this instruction with little enthusiasm - merely because we didn’t relish the idea of digging trenches for the use of the Irish Guards. Still we did have the satisfaction of pushing forward and thereby enlarging the beach-head. We moved during the late afternoon and took up positions on the main road running north from Anzio in what we called the Triangle. B Company were the farthest north straddling the road; Right Flank occupied positions on the right of the road; C Company were in the woods on the left; while Left Flank, Battalion Headquarters and Support Company were dispersed in the woods between the road and C Company. It wasn’t a very satisfactory position - we could only see a very short distance by reason of the trees and scrub - but we had command of the road leading from Anzio towards the north, which is what really mattered.  
  
We were subject to a little shelling that evening and Right Flank sustained some casualties including one killed. But apart from that al was very quiet and we heard encouraging reports from the beaches of the stores and supplies that were being landed and made available. Reports of American progress on the right were also received. It is not too early for me to stress how difficult it is to obtain an accurate picture for what our allies are doing. No one ever seems to know for certain. We continually hear rumours of successes or reverses, with wild estimates of numbers of enemy and tanks, etc, involved. These generally have proved to be grossly exaggerated, so we always treat American reports with a great deal of reserve. It is annoying that it should be so, for it has given Harry Keith a great deal of extra work in ferreting out information which should otherwise come to us as a matter of course in the form of Intelligence Summaries and Reports.  
  
Sunday found us still in the Triangle with no news as to what the general intention was to be. There was no shelling, but no casualties. Enemy aircraft began to show a certain amount of attention to us - particularly at about last light - and we were treated to several displays of anti-aircraft gunfire with a certain measure of success.  
  
**Overall Operations:**  
Rushing new units into the line piecemeal as fast as they arrived, the Germans were making every effort to keep the Americans from reaching Highway No. 7. In the attacks of 25-27 January the 3rd Division reached positions one to two miles beyond the west branch of the Mussolini Canal; it was still three miles from Cisterna. It became evident that an effort greater than was immediately possible would be necessary to reach the division's objective. General Truscott therefore called a halt in the advance to regroup for a more concentrated drive.

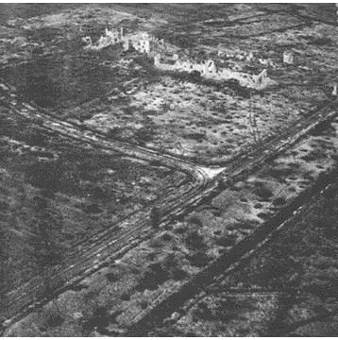
To parallel the drive of the 3rd Division, the British 1st Division had been ordered to move up the Albano road to Campoleone, to secure this important road and railway junction as a jump-off point for a further advance. With the arrival of the 179th Regimental Combat Team (45th Division), VI Corps released from Corps reserve, the 24th Guards Brigade for this move. A strong mobile patrol up the road on 24th January surprised an enemy outpost at Carroceto, and continued four miles farther inland to a point north of Campoleone. To exploit this apparent enemy weakness, General Penney on 25th January dispatched the 24th Guards Brigade, with one squadron of the 46th Royal Tanks and one medium and two field regiments of artillery in support, to take the Factory (Aprilia) near Carroceto.

However, the *3rd Battalion, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (3rd Panzer Grenadier Division)* had occupied the Factory the night before. The 1st Scots Guards and 1st Irish Guards pushed through a hasty mine field across the road and the 5th Grenadier Guards then drove the enemy from the Factory, capturing 111 prisoners.

The enemy, sensitive to the loss of this strong point, counterattacked strongly the next morning. Twenty tanks and a battalion of the *29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment* thrust at the 5th Grenadier Guards in the Factory. Their main assault was repulsed, but they continued to feel around the flanks until they were finally driven off that afternoon.

The Germans left behind four burning tanks, one self-propelled gun, and forty-six more prisoners. By the morning of 28th January the 24th Guards Brigade had advanced one and one-half miles north of the Factory. The 1st Division then paused to regroup for an attack on Campoleone.

**The Factory was a model farm community built in 1936 as part of Mussolini’s reclamation of the Pontine Marshes. The factory is located on the Alban Road that goes from Anzio to Rome.**



Daily Accounts of the Battle of Anzio, The German perspective between 22 January to 31 May 1944

Allied landings at Anzio in the morning of 22 January came as a surprise to the German High Command, and confronted the German defense at its weakest point, in respect to time and place. Army Group C had believed in the possibility of an Allied landing because concentrations of troops and ships had been reported between Naples and Sicily since 13 January. However, pending the outcome of the operations on the Garigliano River, the execution of an amphibious landing seemed improbable. This opinion was further supported by the belief that the German counterattack from the right flank of the 10th Army would create a crisis. This would delay a planned landing. Heavy air raids on the railways and roads in central and northern Italy could not be interpreted as preparations for a landing since it was also possible that these raids were intended to cut the 10th Army supply lines.

In view of the threatening Allied breakthrough at the Garigliano River, Army Group C had withdrawn combat forces from the Rome area and transferred them to the south for the counterattack.

The only units remaining in the Rome area were battle-fatigued and not prepared for offensive warfare.

The strength of the troops remaining in the area west of Rome was so small that they could merely be employed for coastal observation in the Tarquinia-Terracina sector. Units were committed along the coast as follows:

Sector Tarquinia - Mouth of the Tiber: 46 miles long

Two battalions of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division were located on the coast, and one battalion in the rear at Lake Bracciano. The following Italian coast artillery was available: two antiaircraft guns (7.6 cm), twelve light howitzers (10 cm), twelve heavy howitzers (15 cm), eight guns (7.5 cm), and six guns (10.5 cm).

Sector Mouth of the Tiber - Anzio - Mouth of the Astura: 41 miles long

The following units were located on the coast: two engineer companies of the 4th Parachute Division, one engineer company of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, and one Panzer Grenadier Battalion of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. The following coast artillery was available: one howitzer (7.5 cm), seven howitzers (10 cm), eleven howitzers (15 cm), three guns (7.5 cm), eight guns (10 cm), two guns (10.5 cm), three guns (15.5 cm), and six guns (17 cm)

Sector Mouth of Astura - Terracina: 32 miles long

The Reconnaissance Battalion of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was employed for coastal observation. The following coast artillery was available: four antiaircraft guns (7.5 cm), five antiaircraft guns (9 cm), two howitzers (10 cm), two guns (7.6 cm), four guns (10.5 cm), two guns (12.2 cm) and two guns (15.2 cm).

The Rome - Alban Hills area

One Panzer company, one Italian assault gun company, one light antiaircraft battery, units of the 4th Parachute Division, and replacement units of the Panzer Division Herman Goering. Units of the 4th Parachute Division and the Panzer Division Herman Goering were not completely up to strength nor trained.

As a result, Allied landing forces met practically no resistance in the morning of 22 January, and no German forces were available for an immediate counterattack. The situation was rendered more serious for the German army because the only headquarter in the Rome area was Army Group C headquarters. No other staff was available to organize an emergency defense.

German air reconnaissance had failed. Neither the embarkation of invasion forces nor their approach was observed. At about 0500 Headquarters Army Group C received the first report of the landing. The basic German documents of Army Group C and of Headquarters I Parachute Corps outlining the course of the landing and the subsequent battle are not available. Therefore, information about events until the evening of 25 January was limited to records of telephone calls between Army Group C and its armies. These notes give the following situation until 25 January 1944, when the 14th Army took over command of the beachhead.

The critical situation at the southern flank of the 10th Army had necessitated the commitment of all trained German reserves available in the Italian Theater. The absence of immediate German countermeasures, in the face of Allied landings south of Rome, could cut off positions of the 10th Army. This would lead to the collapse of the entire southern Italian front. Army Group C, recognizing this dangerous situation, intended to establish a defensive line on the beachhead as quickly as possible. At the time, it had to be assumed that the disembarking Allied forces might seize the Alban Hills, the key position in the area south of Rome, before sufficient German troops could be brought up for defense. Those considerations determined the necessity for a German counterattack. For this purpose, reinforcements were to be transferred to Italy from other theatres.

After the Allied landing was reported, Army Group C initiated the following measures. First it alerted the 4th Parachute Division, which was being activated pursuant to the provisions of Operation Richard, and the replacement units of the Panzer Division Herman Goering, both in the Rome area. Their mission was to block all roads leading to Rome and all roads leading from the south to the Alban Hills.

The Commandant of Rome, Brigadier General Schemer, was assigned to the tactical command in the landing area. Second, at 0600, Army Group C sent a report to the Armed Forces High Command that a landing tool place, and requested that the task force provided for in Operation Richard be sent to Italy. The Armed Forces High Command ordered the following troops from other theaters to Italy: the 715th Motorized Infantry Division, the 998th Artillery Battalion (GHQ troops), the 1st Battalion, 4th Panzer Regiment, and the 301st Panzer Battalion (with remote-controlled demolition vehicles) were to be transferred from the West. The Commander in Chief Southeast was to furnish the 114th Light Infantry Division (Jager Division), and two artillery battalions (GHQ troops) because neither the Commander in Chief East, nor the Commander in Chief Southeast could provide a second division as was planned in Operation Richard because of the transfer of troops to Russia, the immediate activation of the 92nd Infantry Division, in Italy, was ordered.

The following units, from the Replacement Army in Germany, were ordered to Italy. Headquarters LXXV Corps, the Infantry Demonstration Regiment, 1026th Grenadier Regiment, 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the Artillery Demonstration Regiment, the Rocket Demonstration Battalion, three battalions of security troops, two battalions of Russian volunteers (Ost-Bataillonen), six construction battalions, and the 508th Panzer Battalion with Tiger tanks.

Third, at 0710, Headquarters Army Group ordered Headquarters 14th Army to transfer to the assault area all forces provided for in Operation Richard. The 14th Army ordered the 65th Infantry Division, from Genoa (less one regiment), 362nd Infantry Division, from Rimini (less one regiment), and 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division with two regiments (one from Livorno and one from Lubiana) to proceed immediately to the beaches. These troops left for Rome on the evening of 22 January and during the course of 23 January.

Fourth, at 0830, Army Group ordered Headquarters 10th Army to transfer the Headquarters of I Parachute Corps and all combat troops that could be spared to the beachhead as quickly as possible. Units most suitable for release by the 10th Army were the 71st Infantry Division and the bulk of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. Only parts of these divisions were employed on the 10th Army front, while the remainder was still on the march from the north. In addition, local reserves were also withdrawn from the southern front.

Since tanks were landed at the very beginning of the Allied landing at Anzio, it was important to release antitank forces and artillery for employment at Anzio. The following troops of the 10th Army were moved to the beachhead on 22 January and during the night of 23 January. From the area of Cassino came the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division (less one regiment, one artillery battalion and one engineer company), the staff, reconnaissance battalion, one artillery battalion and one antiaircraft artillery battalion of Panzer Division Herman Goering, reconnaissance battalion of the 26th Panzer Division, antitank battalion (panzerjäger) of the 71st Infantry Division, 525th Heavy Antitank Battalion (GHQ troops), 450th and 451st Light Artillery Battalions (GHQ troops), and 764th Heavy Artillery Battalion (GHQ troops). The Adriatic sector lost the 3rd Battalion, 1st Regiment of the 1st Parachute Division, the machine gun battalion of the 1st Parachute Division, one battalion of the tank regiment of the 26th Panzer Division, and 590th Heavy Antitank Battalion (GHQ troops). Headquarters 71st Infantry Division and all elements of the 71st Infantry Division now enroute from the north to the 10th Army were thrown into the Anzio positions. At 1700, Headquarters I Parachute Corps assumed command in the sector Tarquina-Terracina and established a defensive line around the Allied beachhead with all available and arriving forces as they were allotted by 10th Army.

Tenth Army units moved to the beaches rapidly despite enemy air raids. This was made possible by employing staff officers, available at Headquarters Army Group, 10th Army, and Corps to reroute the traffic. These officers had to divert troops arriving from northern Italy and originally destined for the southern front of 10th Army, in the direction of the beachhead. Units with no organic transportation were brought up quickly by the use of available supply columns. Available rear area troops were employed to clear the icy, snow-covered mountain passes.

The Allied advance on the beachhead on the first day of the landing did not conform to the German High Command expectations. Instead of moving northward with the first wave to seize the Alban Hills and northeastward with Mount Lepini as the target, the landing forces limited their objectives. Their initial action was to occupy a small beachhead. This measure fully corresponded with the Allied landing plan, a copy of which had fallen into German hands at the beginning of the operation, but German defenses and troops were insufficient to prevent further advances, had they been made. Consequently, during 22 and 23 January, the German Command had time to reinforce the defenses, so that by 24 January the beachhead was encircled and the Allied reconnaissance patrols met German resistance.

Initially, the only available forces for the construction of a defensive line, except for the minor detachments alerted in the Rome area, were the units allotted by the 10th Army. Under the command of I Parachute Corps, three divisional sectors were set up. Reinforcements were assigned to these sectors as they arrived. The 4th Parachute Division was in command of the Western Sector. The six infantry and two artillery battalions in this sector were hastily assembled. Their mission was, in addition to the occupation of defensive positions, to protect the coast up to the Tiber River. The 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division commanded the Center Sector. This sector was to be the center of resistance since the first objective of the Allied attach was assumed to be the Alban Hills. Therefore, its front was less broad and more strongly manned. The Eastern Sector, considered unsuitable for an enemy attack, was under the command of Headquarters, Panzer Division Herman Goering, which had only incomplete units at its disposal. In addition, those units were responsible for the protection of the coast as far as Terracina.

The 71st Infantry Division was moved to the coastal sector above the line, Tiber-Tarquinia because the German command expected another Allied landing north of the Tiber. Previously, three battalions of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division were employed in this sector.

When it became clear on 22 January that the Allied landing at Anzio was a major operation, Headquarters Army Group C decided in the evening to discontinue the counterattack at the Garigliano River. Thus, additional troops would be made available for commitment against the beachhead. In the evening of 22 January, Army Group ordered the 10th Army to send three grenadier battalions and one artillery battalion from the Panzer Division Herman Goering, one panzer grenadier battalion and two artillery battalions from Regiment Brandenburg, 60th Engineer Battalion (GHQ troops), and one antiaircraft artillery battalion (GHQ troops) to the beachhead. In addition, the 26th Panzer Division, which was employed on the left flank of the 10th Army, was relieved and transferred to Avazzano. This division was to participate in the intended counterattack at Anzio.

On 22 January, the situation on the beachhead had improved considerably for the Germans. From signal intelligence and prisoner of war statements, it was learned that the Allied landing forces were under the command of the VI Corps (US). The Allied forces identified on the beachhead were the 3rd Infantry Division (US), 1st Infantry Division (BR), 751st Tank Battalion (US), and 504th Parachute Regiment (US). It was believed that the 45th Infantry Division (US) and the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion (US) would be landed as reinforcements. As the Allied forces made no preparations for a large-scale attack on the first day of the landings, the German command estimated that the Allies would improve their positions and bring up more troops during the following day. During this time, sufficient German troops would arrive to prevent an Allied breakthrough. The previously prepared plans, to move troops quickly to a threatened area, as well as preparations for designating specific units as reinforcements is landings were made, now benefited the German command. While the transfer of troops from the 10th Army had to be improvised, the disposition and departure of the detachments from the 14th Army, the West, the Southeast, and from the Replacement Army, proceeded according to plan without requiring specific orders. At 1900 on 22 January, the troops of the 14th Army began to leave their areas in northern Italy. On 23 and 24 January, the transportation of troops from France, Germany and the Balkans began. These forces arrived in Italy by 31 January despite constant enemy air attacks on roads and railroads. By this time, the advanced detachments of these units were already employed at the beachhead.

No major actions occurred on the beachhead during 23 January. On the 10th Army front, the enemy continued his attacks south of Cassino with undiminished ferocity. The crisis arising from the combined attacks of the 34th and 26th Infantry Divisions (US) delayed the dispatch of reinforcements to Anzio. Telephone calls between Field Marshal Kesselring and the Commanding General, 10th Army in the evening of 23 January clearly indicated that the Army Group Commander believed that the danger of a large-scale expansion of the beachhead was no longer imminent.

On 22 and 23 January, the German Air Force repeatedly struck at the landing fleet and disembarkation points on the beachhead., and made frequent reconnaissance flights over the Ligurian and Adriatic seas as the German Command expected further Allied landings, because of the unusual lack of enemy activity. Allied preparations for a major attack were not observed on the beachhead. However, movements of troops and tanks north of Anzio, on the Aprillia Road, were reported. Stronger enemy reconnaissance patrols were expected there during the next day.

24 January was generally uneventful. As was anticipated, the Allied landing forces limited themselves to reconnaissance and patrolling towards the north, as well as adjusting their artillery fire on German positions. By this time, the German defenses had been strongly reinforced and the German Command considered the danger of an Allied breakthrough to be removed. A telephone call made by Army Group indicated that on 24 January a total of 70 batteries, including antiaircraft, were available for German defenses. This estimate of the situation was supported by the belief that the enemy did not have sufficient troops available on the beachhead for a large-scale attack. It was learned that the 2nd Armored Division (US) and a British tank brigade were newly deployed on the beachhead. This would, at most, give the enemy a total of three infantry divisions, one armored division, and two or three armored battalions or brigades.

The strength of these troops was considered insufficient for an attack on a strategic objective such as the Alban Hills, as such an operation would require effective flank protection. Therefore, it was expected that for the next few days the enemy would only attempt to expand and consolidate his beachhead for a full-scale attack. Army Group C concluded that the enemy would make only local attacks. Those raids would not begin before 26 January since the enemy had just adjusted his artillery in the afternoon of 24 January.

With these assumptions in mind, Army Group C decided to launch a counterattack to destroy the Allied landing forces or drive them back into the sea. the time for such an attack depended on the arrival of reinforcements. Every effort was made to deliver the blow before the Allied forces had completed their initial consolidation. In preparation for a German assault, Army Group C ordered Headquarters 14th Army, on 24 January, to take over the command at the beachhead. In addition, 14th Army was ordered to hasten the consolidation of forces to be used in the counterattacks. The 26th Panzer Division and the 56th Rocket Regiment (at Cassino) were ordered to the beachhead, and were designated as further reinforcements for the attack. The attack was not to be started before 28 January, as the initial regrouping could not be completed sooner. However, in the event the Allies should start their assault prior to this date, the German counterattack was to begin immediately, from defensive positions.

The first major action on the beachhead occurred on 25 January. After a raid on Aprillia before noon had been repelled, the Allied troops successfully captured the town at 1600, after a desperate struggle. The Allies also gained some ground in the northeast, but were thrown back at Porgo Piave by a German counterattack. More Allied troops disembarked on the beachhead during the day, while forces of the German Air Force in Italy frequently raided troop transports and disembarkation points. The movement of German reinforcements from the south to the beachhead was facilitated as Allied attacks in the area of Cassino had slackened and bad weather limited Allied Air Force operations. Bad weather was considered to the most favourable for the execution of a German counterattack. Success or failure depended on the activity of the Allied Air Forces, and on naval artillery support, as was demonstrated at Salerno. Under bad weather conditions both factors would be reduced to a minimum. However, destruction of railroads by Allied air attacks caused a delay in the arrival of ammunition and reserves from the north.

At 1800 on 25 January, the 14th Army took over command in the Cacina sector (south of Liverno) - Terracina. At this time the following German troops were employed in the area of Rome.

Sector north of the Tiber River - Tarquinia

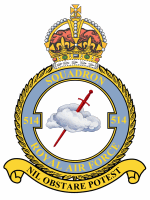
Elements of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 71st Infantry Division.

Sector south of the Tiber River - Terracina

Headquarters I Parachute Corps; numerous GHQ troops; and elements of the 4th Parachute Division, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, Panzer Division Herman Goering, 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, 26th Panzer Grenadier Division, 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, 1st Parachute Division, 356th Infantry Division, and 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

All these units were employed in the defense line on the beachhead, with the exception of elements of the 4th Parachute Division and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. These excepted units were employed along the coast on both sides of the beachhead. Moving towards Anzio were the following German divisions: 26th Panzer Division, from the left flank of the 10th Army; 65th Infantry Division (less one grenadier regiment and one artillery battalion) from Genoa; 114th Light Infantry Division (Jager Division) from the Balkans; two regiments of the 362nd Infantry Division from the coastal section Rimini; and 715th Infantry Division from southern France.

**Sergeant Keith Russell Baker, RAFVR 514 Squadron.**



Service No. 1852412 Rear Air Gunner.

Born: 1924 Amersham, Bucks. Died: 13th June 1944 Gelderland, Holland.

Temporary resident: Mount View, Hollow way Lane.

Son of Reginald and Edith C Pedder Baker of The Caravan, Mount View, Hollow way Lane.

Buried: Ermelo (Nunspeet) New Cemetery, Gelderland, Holland.

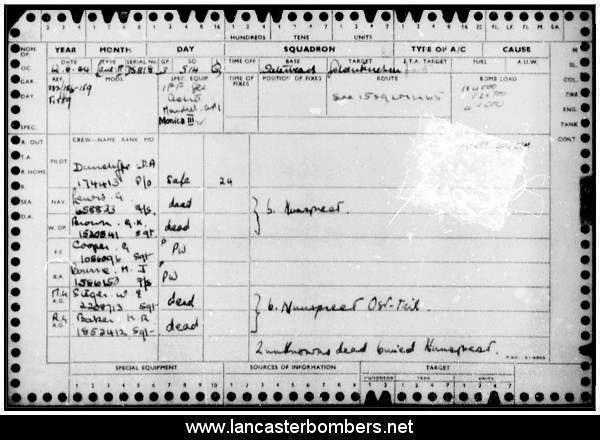
Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

No.514 Squadron had been formed at Foulsham, Norfolk, on 1st September 1943, as a heavy-bomber Squadron in No.3 Group. Operations began in November 1943 with Lancaster II’s. It gradually changed over to Lancaster1’s and Ill’s during the summer of 1944. Almost all Lancaster's were equipped with three Frazer-Nash (FN) hydraulically operated turrets, each with .303 calibre machine guns. The FN-5 nose turret had two guns. The FN-50 mid-upper turret had two, and the FN-20 tail turret and four. It will therefore be seen that my domain in the rear turret possessed the fire-power of four machine guns.

No.514 Squadron continued flying operations from Waterbeach, the final being 24th April 1945, when 13 Lancaster's bombed marshalling yards at Bad Oldesloe. The Squadron remained at Waterbeach until the end of hostilities, for much of the time with three flights and a complement of over 30 aircraft. The price of victory over Germany did not come cheaply. Operational losses from RAF Waterbeach amounted to 122 bombers: - 33 Wellingtons, 8 Stirling's, 81 Lancaster's, 73 of those Lancaster's which did not return being from my own Squadron.

In the comparatively short period of 18 months No.514 Squadron flew 3675 operational sorties. Its personnel won 1 DSO, 84 DFCs, 1 bar to the DFC, and 26 DFMs. Immediately before the German capitulation the Squadron dropped food supplies to the starving Dutch people and, subsequently. Its aircraft were busily employed on ferrying liberated POWs to England from France and Belgium. The Squadrons last mission before VE day occurred on the 7th May 1945 when 20 Lancaster's dropped supplies to the Dutch population at The Hague.

Crew: Lancaster MK.II - DS818 - JI-Q (Maggie) - 13 Jun 1944 - Mission: Gelsenkirchen  
  
1238964 - 174413 - P/O - Pilot - D. A. Duncliffe - RAFVR - Age 21 - EVD  
  
1086096 - Sgt. - Flight Engineer - P. G. Cooper - RAFVR - Age .. - POW  
  
658833 - F/Sgt. - Navigator - G. F. Lewis - RAFVR - Age 23 - KIA  
  
1586150 - F/Sgt. - Bomb Aimer - H. J. Bourne - RAFVR - Age .. - POW  
  
1520541 - Sgt. - Wireless Operator / Air Gunner - G. K. Brown - RAFVR - Age .. - KIA  
  
2208713 - Sgt. - Mid Upper Air Gunner - W. E. Steger - RAFVR - Age 20 - KIA  
  
1852412 - Sgt. - Rear Air Gunner - K. R. Baker - RAFVR - Age 20 - KIA



**Sub-Lieutenant John Seaton Guy Comfort, RNVR HMS Sphinx.**

Service No.

Born: 1901 Amersham, Bucks. Died: 4th February 1940.

Resident of: Thursley, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Son of Edward James and Hannah Mary Comfort of Chesham Bois.

Husband of Evelyn Clara, Thistledown, Bois Lane, Chesham Bois later Thursley, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Memorial: Chatham Navel Memorial. Chesham Bois War Memorial.

Mentioned in Dispatches: London Gazette June 1940. (Good attempt saving HMS Sphinx)

HMS *Sphinx* (J69) was a [*Halcyon*-class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halcyon_class_minesweeper) [minesweeper](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minesweeper_(ship)) (officially, "fleet minesweeping sloop") of the British [Royal Navy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Navy), which was commissioned in 1939, just prior to [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II). During the war she served in the [North Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Sea) until bombed and wrecked on 2nd February 1940.

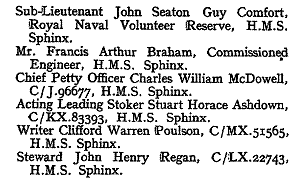
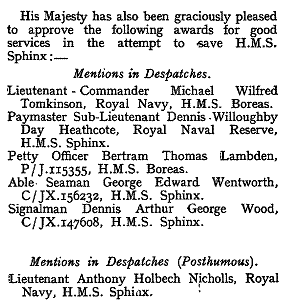
Service history

The ship was built by [William Hamilton and Company](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hamilton_and_Company), [Port Glasgow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Glasgow), with turbine engines supplied by [J. Samuel White](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._Samuel_White) of [Cowes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowes). She was laid down on 17th January 1938, and launched on 7th February 1939. *Sphinx* was commissioned in July 1939, and assigned to the 5th Minesweeping Flotilla, based at [Dover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dover) as part of the [Nore Command](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nore_Command" \o "Nore Command).

The flotilla carried out minesweeping in the English Channel and the North Sea until December, when it was transferred to [Rosyth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosyth" \o "Rosyth).

**Sinking.**

On the morning of 2 February 1940 the Flotilla was minesweeping in the [Moray Firth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moray_Firth), 15 miles north of [Kinnaird Head](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinnaird_Head), in position [57°57′N 02°00′W](http://tools.wmflabs.org/geohack/geohack.php?pagename=HMS_Sphinx_(J69)&params=57_57_N_02_00_W_), when it came under attack by German aircraft. *Sphinx* was hit by a bomb, which penetrated the [foredeck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foredeck) and exploded, killing five men, including the commanding officer Cdr. John Robert Newton Taylor. The crippled ship was taken under tow by [*Harrier*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=HMS_Harrier_(J71)&action=edit&redlink=1), but eventually [capsized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capsizing) 17 hours after being bombed. [*Boreas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMS_Boreas_(H77)) rescued 46 of her crew, but 49 men were lost. The wreck later drifted ashore two miles north of [Lybster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lybster" \o "Lybster) and was eventually sold for scrap. On 7 June 1940 the [OBE](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire) was awarded to *Sphinx*'s senior surviving Officer and two members of the crew, and there were five [Mentions in Dispatches](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mentioned_in_Despatches) , three to crewmen of *Sphinx* and two from *Boreas* three to crewmen of *Sphinx* and two from *Boreas.*



**D e t a i l s   o f   W a r   S e r v i c e**

August                  On completion of trials and storing carried out Minesweeping work-up .

                                Joined HM Minesweepers HALCYON, HARRIER, HUSSAR, LEDA, NIGER,

                                SALAMANDER, GOSSAMER, SKIPJACK and SPEEDWELL and SPHINX.

                                Nominated with Flotilla for minesweeping in Nore Command based at Dover.

September             Deployed with Flotilla for minesweeping in southern North Sea and English Channel to ensure

to                            clear passage for coastal convoys.

December              (Note: Extensive enemy minelaying including magnetic mines was being carried out.

                                For details see THE TORPEDOMEN by EN Poland, HM MINESWEEPERS (HMSO),

                                ENGAGE THE ENEMY MORE CLOSELY by C Barnett and the Naval Staff History.)

1 9 4 0

January                  Transferred with Flotilla to Rosyth in continuation of North Sea duties.

                                (Note: HMS HALCYON and HMS HUSSAR remained at Grimsby as part of 4th Minesweeping

                                Flotilla.)

February                Deployed in Moray Firth with Flotilla for minesweeping.

                3rd          Under air attacks in snow storm 15 miles north of Kinnaird Head.

                                Hit by bomb which exploded in forward structure.

                                Sustained extensive damage causing flooding of both Boiler Rooms.

                                Attempted tow by HMS HARRIER failed due to weather conditions.

                2nd         Ship capsized and drifted ashore 2 miles North of Lybster.

                                (Note: 54 of the ships’ company lost their lives and survivors were rescued by ships of Flotilla.

                                This was the first loss of a Fleet Minesweeper during WW2.)

**Report of  Sub Lt Bellars – Senior Surviving Officer HMS SPHINX**

Sir

I have the honour to forward the following report on the loss of HMS SPHINX on 4th February 1940.

At about 0800 on 3rd February 1940, HM Ships SPHINX, Speedwell and Skipjack commenced sweeping north of Kinnaird Head.

At 0912 Lieutenant A H Nicholls, RN (Navigating Officer), Lt A L Tessier, RNR (First Lieutenant), Commissioned Engineer F A Braham, RN, Paymaster Sub Lt D V D Heathcote, RNR and I were in the Ward Room when the alarm bell rang.

A few minutes later I had reached the wheelhouse on my way to the Rangefinder Director, when a bomb struck the ship forward. I saw that the Bridge was wrecked and so went aft. Just outside the wheelhouse, I met Lt Nicholls, now Commanding Officer. He shouted aft for the .5” guns crew to close up. The crew had already arrived and closed up immediately. After a few bursts the gun jammed and could not be got into action again. I controlled the after gun using barrage C21 but without any success. After about six bombs had been dropped, we were subjected to a machine gun attack from the starboard beam.

As this machine passed overhead, Chief O A Ralls brought the port pair of Lewis guns into action and, standing behind him, I observed his shots penetrating the machine (we kept the Lewis guns loaded with tracer). The planes soon afterwards made off.

The bomb which struck SPHINX had, apparently gone through the back of the T.S. (killing O.D. Skiggs outright), through the front of the bridge, through the forecastle deck and burst on the Mess Deck. The explosion folded the forecastle back on to the bridge and badly crippled the whole fore end of the ship. The Captain (Taylor) was killed outright on the bridge and Sub-Lieutenant Comfort RNVR (lent by the Contraband Control Base, Invergordon) was badly wounded.

One stoker (who I believe was on the Mess Deck at the time) was killed and another mortally wounded (he died a few hours after). There were about six wounded. The behaviour of the wounded was in accordance with the highest traditions of the service.

The Engineer Officer, Mr Braham, then reported to the Captain, Lieutenant Nicholls, that the bulkheads forward were perfectly intact and that the ship was in no danger of sinking. The foremost Boiler Room was evacuated since that bulkhead would have been one of the first to go, and the situation forward was not exactly known. The ship was able to steam on both engines with one boiler.

The Coxswain, CPO McDowell, although his sick bay forward had been wrecked, at once took the wounded to the Ward Room (on the Captain’s orders). The dead were placed in the Captain’s Cabin.

From this period CPO McDowell worked ceaselessly until the ship went down, a period of 17 hours, tending the wounded. He proved himself an expert in first aid using the limited resources at his disposal. He displayed the most exemplary disregard for his own personal comfort and safety. He had not even time to put on a lifebelt, and from reports of survivors he must have lost his life trying to save the wounded. He deserves the highest recommendation.

He was assisted in this work by Able Seaman Murray, the Captain of the hold, Able Seaman Gregson and many others, including Officer’s Steward Regan who acted in the same exemplary fashion as the Coxswain and lost his life in a similar way.

**Last hours of HMS Sphinx.**

An explanatory diagram of the damage to the ship is attached.

Every preparation was then made to be towed stern first. Towing spans, shackles, grass lines, etc were brought up on to the Quarter Deck.

At about 1100 Speedwell took SPHINX in tow, using 3½“wire from Speedwell. Sinkers were slid down the tow to give it added spring. The tow passed, we proceeded slow astern on both engines, keeping out on the quarter of the towing ship. The Engineer Officer all this time, and subsequently, was making frequent visits to the bulkheads forward and reporting to the Captain that the bulkhead appeared perfectly intact.

Both whalers were lowered to the level of the upper deck and the skiff turned out. The Motor Boat was left turned in on account of the list it gives the ship when turned out. Carley rafts were also prepared for putting over the side. The O.O.W. was kept on the Flag Deck and a Quartermaster closed up in the wheelhouse.

The tow unfortunately parted early in the afternoon – about 1300. SPHINX then prepared her own 3½” wire aft and Skipjack proceeded to take her in tow. Sinkers were placed on the wire as before.

SPHINX was then in tow again, and an inspection of the bulkheads forward gave us no reason to suppose that we should fail to reach harbour safely.

After dark the Captain stayed on the Flag Deck and told me to get some sleep in the Charthouse bunk. The First Lieutenant was aft watching the tow. The Engineer Officer was advising the Captain. Chief ERA Ashby, Chief Shipwright Walls and Chief Stoker Kenny were ordered to work in three watches inspecting the bulkheads forward every ten minutes and to report to the Bridge after each inspection. These inspections were all satisfactory, although later on in the evening water began to lap over the top of the Central Store bulkhead and fill up the starboard passage. This was not considered serious at first.

The tow parted again during the last dog watch about 1930 and SPHINX again prepared to be taken in tow. A grass 3½” or 4” was prepared with a dan buoy fitted with calcium flares and the end of this streamed. The grass was tailed with a smaller (2”) one and paid out. The sea at this time was considerably rougher than it had been during the day and the wind made conditions very difficult. At this time it was very noticeable the number of non-seamen ratings who were lending a hand on the upper deck in the general spirit which existed, and that everyone was doing his utmost, no matter what his rank or rating to save the ship. In this respect the Writer Poulson deserves special mention (see later).

This grass was picked up by Harrier but unfortunately the smaller grass must have parted as it was not found on the end of the larger one. SPHINX did not think Harrier was able to pick this grass up, the conditions were so appalling,



All possible preparations were then made to abandon ship. Every possible floating object was lined up along the port side.

The Confidential Books in the Captain’s cabin were left there, locked up in steel chests. Two CB’s, H A Firing Manual and Destroyer Manual which I had on loan, I locked together with other Confidential matter in my cabin in a combination safe. All loose books on issue to the Navigating Officer, Yeoman and P O Tel together with Schedule G24 awaiting distribution to the Flotilla were tied up in bags, each bag with enough weighted books in to ensure it sinking.

The wounded were got up on deck with a view to transferring them to another ship, should one be able to come alongside. Six bags of CB’s were also brought up with the object of throwing them aboard the ship coming alongside.

Speedwell made repeated efforts to get alongside and no praise can be high enough for the magnificent way in which she was handled by her commanding officer, Lt Commander Maunsell RN. Four men managed to jump on board her.

With no tow out SPHINX was now lying almost head to sea, and the starboard passage was filling up, giving a list of 20°or 30° to starboard. To counteract this the Engineer Officer had pumped over all available oil fuel and fresh water and had done everything possible to lighten the ship forward.

The starboard passage was filling up with water as the waves broke over the top of the central store forward. All available hands were bailing and the pumps were being worked by the Chief Stoker under the supervision of Mr Braham, the Engineer Officer.

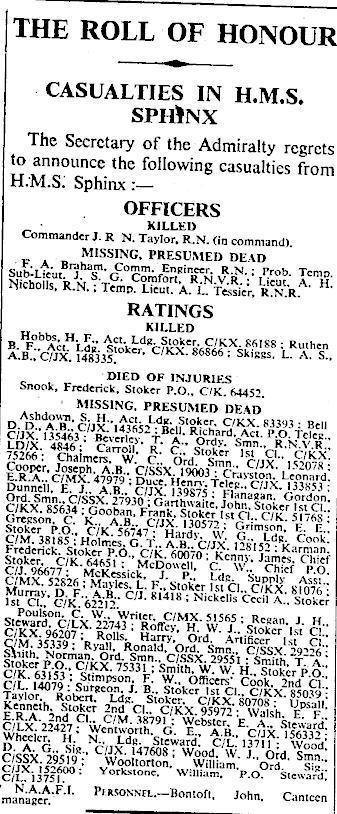
About midnight the Captain reported that we might have to abandon ship, although he still thought, as we all did, that we could hold out till daylight. The wounded had been placed in the Ward Room again.

Boreas, who had been screening us was asked to come alongside. The wounded were brought up to the boat deck again, and the ship’s company ordered to jump for it if they had the chance.

The way in which Boreas came alongside in the sea which was then running – a whole gale was blowing at the time- was a superb example of seamanship, and a number of men managed to jump aboard her.

Boreas gave us a Coston Line gun with a view to passing a wire in, but this was unsuccessful.

The Captain ordered the Carley floats to be streamed, and six volunteers to make an attempt to reach Boreas from the stern. I went aft for this operation and Petty Officer Bell, AB Poore and AB Panton managed to get into a float which we veered astern. Their only thoughts were not to save themselves, but to bring back the wire from Boreas to pull the stern round into the sea. In this they were unfortunately unsuccessful.



We now got the other Carley Float astern and prepared to send another party over. Had this proved successful we should have evacuated the wounded in the same fashion.

The ship now had a bad list to starboard and at about 0300 the boiler rooms and engine room were evacuated, but pumping and bailing continued. The ship could not be steered on main engines alone and it was impossible to hold her stern to sea on the engines alone.

At about 0430 a large wave struck us forward and. filling up the starboard passage, we rolled about 50 or 60 to starboard. The ship had just righted herself when another even larger wave swamped her and completely filled the starboard passage. The ship immediately capsized. I was fortunate in being near a Carley float and with about six others we made our way to the destroyer. The remainder of the ship’s company were clinging to Dan Buoys, etc and wreckage.

The way Boreas came alongside the men in the water was astonishing, and the way her ship’s company worked to save the survivors deserves the highest possible praise. The conduct of those on board SPHINX was of the highest possible praise.

The conduct of those on board SPHINX was of the highest standard. The young ordinary seamen behaved with complete calm throughout. I consider that this conduct was inspired by the cool bearing of Lieutenant A H Nicholls and First Lieutenant, Lieutenant A L Tessier RNR. These officers spared themselves nothing to save the ship. Lt Nicholls was on the upper deck taking charge as Captain of the ship from 0915 until the ship capsized. Although he had had nothing to eat and must have been exceedingly cold after 17 hours on the upper deck, his cheerful disposition encouraged everyone. The safety of the ship was his only concern.

The Engineer Officer, Mr Braham, was equally energetic in his efforts to save the ship and equally regardless of his own personal safety. He built the ship and would have done anything to save her. He could have done no more than he did. Paymaster Sub-Lieutenant D W D Heathcote RNR, an officer new to H M Service, assisted on the upper deck though naturally ignorant of seamanship matters. He also voluntarily collected the CB’s and placed them in suitable bags. In addition to this by his personal example he encouraged and cheered the wounded in the Ward Room.

**Sub-Lieutenant Comfort RNVR was an example by his conduct to all the wounded. He was badly hurt in the hand and the leg, but never once complained. When brought up in a stretcher preparatory to abandoning ship, he asked to be released from the stretcher to take his chance with the rest. He had no lifebelt on but cheerfully awaited his turn.**

The following ratings I consider worthy of a special mention:

1)     CPO McDowell for his attention to the wounded (see previous)

2)     Acting Yeoman of Signals, Yallop. He stayed alongside the Captain from the time of being bombed until we were forced to abandon ship. He worked ceaselessly with the lamps at his disposal, and generally conducted himself with the utmost coolness and fortitude. He might have been doing an exercise at the signal school instead of being in imminent personal danger.

3)     Signalman Woods showed the same unselfish devotion to duty as the Yeoman. After having abandoned ship he saw Stoker Blackburn caught in the A bracket. He immediately swam back to the ship, climbed up the side, and freed him. ‘Come on Blackburn’ he said, ‘We’re going back to the destroyer together’. Blackburn was rescued but no more was seen of Woods.

4)     PO Fedarb (Chief Boatswain’s Mate) worked on the upper deck passing wires etc without ceasing the whole 17 hours. He displayed magnificent technical ability and complete disregard for himself. He greatly encouraged those over whom he had charge in these operations.

5)     Leading Stoker Ashdown worked down in the boiler room from when we were struck by a bomb until ordered to evacuate the boiler room. He would not hear of being relieved, but worked continuously on the pumps to save the ship. He was a source of great encouragement to those with him.

6)     OD Wentworth: this young Ordinary Seaman had just reached the TS when the bomb struck us. All the fingers of his hand were severed. This he completely disregarded, saying, ‘They don’t even give you time to close up do they?’ He then went aft, and I heard him remark upon being asked how he was: ‘Don’t worry about me, what you have to do is shoot them blighters down’. The last time I saw him he was swimming in the water alongside the destroyer, not in the least concerned about himself, but patiently waiting his turn. He unfortunately was not saved.

7)     Writer Poulson. This man is deserving of the highest possible recommendation. Although not a seaman rating, he worked continuously on the upper deck to save the ship. This was not his normal job, but he put more energy and devotion into it than I would have thought possible. In assisting with the handling of wires and hawsers he literally worked his hands raw. He proceeded to joke about this and think nothing of it. Just before the ship capsized he went to the boiler room to see if he could do anything there. When eventually forced into the sea his only thoughts were still for his shipmates. He, and three others, were holding on to a lifebuoy when he was heard to say ‘There is not room for four of us, one of us will have to go, so cheerio’. He then swam to a piece of wreckage and was not seen anymore. I consider this man should be worthy of a high award.

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant,

A W G Bellars  
Sub Lieutenant RN (Senior surviving Officer) 8th February 1940

|  |
| --- |
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**Leading Aircraftsman William Charles Corlett. RAFVR. 242 Squadron.**



Service No. 9325425

Born: 1916. Died 1st September 1944.

Resident of: Annes Corner, (Post Office) Chesham Bois, Bucks

Son of William Henry and Clara May (Post Mistress) 3 Annes Corner, Chesham Bois Common, Chesham Bois.

Husband of Mary Kathleen (Macken) Corlett. Married: June 1941 Amersham.

Captured: 8th March 1942

Held: Java, Singapore, Sumatra (Railway)

Died: Sumatra (Railway)

Memorial: Jakarta War Cemetery, Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**242 Squadron World War II**

The squadron was reformed at [RAF Church Fenton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Church_Fenton) on 30 October 1939 with [Canadian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada) personnel. At first using the [Bristol Blenheim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Blenheim) and [Fairey Battle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairey_Battle" \o "Fairey Battle), it converted to the [Hawker Hurricane](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker_Hurricane) in February 1940.

**The Battle for France**

In May 1940 it moved to [RAF Biggin Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Biggin_Hill) and went into action over France. [Douglas Bader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Bader) was posted to command the Squadron, as a [Squadron Leader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squadron_Leader), at the end of June 1940, that was mainly made up of Canadians that had suffered high losses in the [Battle of France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_France) and had low morale. Despite initial resistance to their new commanding officer, the pilots were soon won over by Bader's strong personality and perseverance, especially in cutting through red tape to make the squadron operational again. Upon the formation of [No. 12 Group RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._12_Group_RAF), No. 242 Squadron was assigned to the Group while based at RAF Duxford.

**The Battle of Britain**

In June 1940 it moved to [RAF Coltishall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Coltishall) in [eastern England](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Anglia) and then [RAF Duxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Duxford) as part of [No. 12 Group RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._12_Group_RAF) and was involved in the [Battle of Britain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain). In 1941 it started offensive sweeps and bomber escorts and convoy patrols.

**Dispersed at Java**

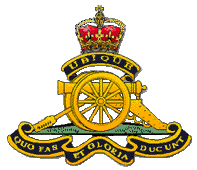
In December 1941 the squadron moved to the [Far East](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far_East) arriving at [RAF Seletar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Seletar) on 13 January 1942. The situation was desperate and it had to move to [Palembang](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palembang) on [Java](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Java) where the squadron collapsed through lack of spares and was dispersed by 10 March 1942.

**Sumatra Railway.**

The exhausted POWs who were forced, during the Japanese occupation, to construct a railway line 215 km long right through mid-Sumatran tropical jungle, had no escape. For over a year, from late May 1944 until Japanese capitulation on 15 August l945 they were subject to the whims of their cruel Korean guards and to their Japanese masters, who had been ordered by Tokyo to construct a railway line between Pakan Baru and Muara at the cost of so many human lives. They acquitted themselves very well in this task. More than ten thousand native slave labourers and nearly seven hundred whites, mostly Dutch POWs died in the torrid Sumatran jungle of malnutrition, beri-beri, tropical sores, malaria and dysentery."We had no medicines and no antibiotics if someone had to lose a leg, the amputation made you feel a bit faint. I did have a bottle of ether, but when I had to operate on an acute ulcer one evening, in the crazy hut of bamboo poles and palm leaves, I could not use my petroleum burner for fear of explosions. Camp mates from the "work shift" stole a battery from a Japanese truck, and by the one slim ray of light from this battery I was able to help my patient. Those who did not work, i.e. the sick, were on half rations: 800 calories a day. The dying got nothing at all, as no-one passed them anything. But this hardly noticed amid all the other suffering. As a result we very soon had a hundred dead per month. The inmates of Camp 2 consisted of approximately 800 men, I told a Jap: "Another 8 months and everyone will be dead". He replied: "Splendid, that's precisely the idea". Nevertheless we got through it.

It was worst at night, the rats ran all over you, but once caught in a home-made trap of spring and a small board, they made a tasty meal. They had marvellous white flesh, even whiter than rabbit pieces. I saw chickens grubbing round the latrines and quickly getting fat from the maggots. And I thought: what's good for chickens is good for people too. So we fetched maggots by the bucketful out of the latrines, washed them, cooked them and gave them with sambal (sauce) to the sick, who then visibly improved because of this extra portion of protein. And in fact I made another discovery in that terrible camp, where people only actually came from the railway to die. We had no disinfectant for treating dirty tropical sores, but once again the maggots provided a solution. I wound an old sheet with maggots in it round a wound and after a few days it was nicely healed.

**Second Lieutenant Ronald Henderson Crabb. RA. 508 Bty 723 Searchlight Regiment.**



Service No. 162812.

Born: 1912 Kincardineshire. Died: Nr Canterbury, Kent. 7th June 1942.

Resident of: Dalbrack, Green Lane, Chesham Bois later Tringwood Grange Chesham.

Youngest son of: Thomas and Willamina K Crabb of Dunlappie, Edzell, Angus, Kincardineshire.

Memorial: Fetteresso, Stonehaven. Chesham Bois War Memorial.



**Captain David Malclom Dobell. General Service, (Intelligence Corps).**

Service No. 191202. Acting Second Lieutenant May 1941, Lieutenant 1941.



Born: 1920 Chelmsford Essex. Died 16th February 1945.

Resident of: 17 Woodside Avenue, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Hubert Dobell and Clive Mary.

Buried: Rheinberg War Cemetery, Germany.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**WWII.**

The General Service Corps' main function was to act as a holding unit for Officers and specialists who have not been assigned to other units or corps; these are primarily reservists. The GSC is usually only active in wartime.

In the years leading up to the Second World War no effort was put into contingency planning for wartime Intelligence Corps. The Army was less prepared for this second Great War than it had been for the first. But for the work of Major, later Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templar there would have no intelligence organisation at all on 04 September 1939. His work, supported by Captain (Retired) F C Davies MC who trained the security sections, allowed the British Expeditionary Force to deploy to France with 31 Field Security Sections.

Upon this small foundation the Corps eventually grew to 3040 officers and 5930 other ranks. The Corps was formally constituted with the consent of King George VI on 15 July 1940, with the formation being notified on 19 July 1940 in Army Order 112.

The skills of the Corp’s soldiers in languages and interrogation were one again used to extract information from the Prisoners of war, and the civilian population of countries liberated by the Allies. The Field Security Sections also boasted an Airborne Section with 89FSS being formed in June 1942 and Lance Corporal Loker being the first cap-badge member to jump from a Whitley bomber over Manchester Ringway Airfield (on the site of the modern Manchester Airport). 89 Military Intelligence Section still serves with 16 Air Assault Brigade, the modern successors of General Urquart’s 1 Airborne Division.

Other members of the Corps were to learn to parachute at Ringway before being dropped as Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents in Europe and the Far East. SOE was tasked by Winston Churchill to ‘Set Europe ablaze’ through acts of sabotage behind enemy lines. The SOE units also collected information and intelligence. The exploits of SOE were portrayed in the official 1946 film ’Now It Can Be Told’ that showed the training and deployment of two agents, one of whom was Harry Ree, an Intelligence Corps Captain. Ree, a Mancunian with an accent so strong that he had to operate in the Alsace region in order to disguise his rather unique French accent, successfully put out of operation a Peugeot factory producing tank parts.

Attempts to flatten the factory by air raids had failed - Ree succeeded by having a quiet word with the owner who obligingly sabotaged his own plant. Later shot crossing from France to Switzerland. Ree was awarded the DSO.

**Pilot Officer Roy Ferdinand Frederick RAF 263 Squadron, Fighter Command.**



Service No: 80817. Granted Commission 9th June 1940

Born: June 1920 West Ham. Died: 12th June 1941. Battle of Britain Pilot.

Resident of: 31 Woodside Avenue, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Horace and Winifred Helena (Cobley) Frederick.

Buried: Chesham Bois Burial Ground.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial

Scout: 1st Chesham Bois Group.

**Westland Whirlwind.**



**Span:** 13.72m/45ft 0ins. **Length:** 9.98m/32ft 9ins **Max weight:** 4,697kg/10,356lb,

**Max level speed:** 313knots/579kph **Power plant:** Two 885shp/660kW Rolls-Royce Peregrine l,

**Total built:** 116

The [Westland Whirlwind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westland_Whirlwind_(fighter)) was the first cannon-armed fighter for the RAF, first flown in October 1938 and at the production stage by 1940. It was a [twin engine](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Twin_engined&action=edit&redlink=1) [heavy fighter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavy_fighter) (also able to function as a [fighter bomber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fighter_bomber) with 500 lb bomb load. With 4 [20mm Hispano cannon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20mm_Hispano_cannon) in the nose, it was more powerful than an 8-gunned fighter like the Spitfire or Hurricane. It was fast, matching the current Spitfire's maximum speed, but performed best at low altitude and was used for convoy escort and against small targets in the channel and northern [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France). Only 114 were produced (compared with over 20,000 Spitfires)

No. 263 Squadron spent the next six months with No 13 group near [Edinburgh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edinburgh). It reassembled on 10 June 1940 at [RAF Drem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Drem) and after two weeks moved to [RAF Grangemouth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Grangemouth) where it spent three months before returning to Drem until November when it moved south to be nearer its intended targets in north France and the [English Channel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Channel).



During its time in [Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland), it was to sort out the final problems with the [Rolls-Royce Peregrine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rolls-Royce_Peregrine) engines and Hispano cannon. To fill the gap the squadron was provided with [Hawker Hurricanes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker_Hurricane) which were flown in action a few times. Production of the Peregrine by Rolls-Royce was slow and it was November before the squadron was fully equipped and the Hurricanes had disappeared.

### One of "The Few"

### Roy joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve and was awarded his 'Wings' at No. 6 Flying Training School on 4th April 1940 and joined 263 Squadron as a Pilot Officer on the 23rd June 1940.  He was soon known by the nickname 'Ferdie' (sounds familiar doesn't it?).  The Squadron at this time was still under training following the disastrous Norwegian campaign when it was virtually wiped out when the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious was sunk on the 8th June 1940.  The Squadron was due to be equipped with the new secret Westland Whirlwind fighter, but due to slow deliveries it was given Hawker Hurricanes instead.  Based at RAF Grangemouth near Edinburgh the Squadron protected the Firth of Forth during the Battle of Britain, and although they did not take place in any fighting, Roy and his colleagues are officially credited as being part of 'The Few'.  Had he lived he would have been entitled to wear the Battle of Britain Clasp on his 1939-45 War Medal.

At one point Roy and three others were detached to Prestwick on the West Coast of Scotland to protect shipping in the Firth of Clyde.  Although he flew many hours on Scrambles and Convoy Patrols he only ever saw one German aircraft.  That was on a "dirty day" on 18th October 1940 over the Firth of Forth, but he only glimpsed it briefly before it disappeared into cloud.  Eventually he converted to the Twin engine Whirlwind and apparently became very proficient on them.

##### This group are from the left P/O Donald Vine, P/O George Milligan, P/O David Stein (Who attended Roy's funeral) and P/O Roy Ferdinand.



The group photograph: Pilot Officer Donald Vine killed 29 December 1940 aged 23.  Pilot Officer George Milligan killed 30 April 1941 aged 22.  Pilot Officer David Stein, missing 31 October 1941.

**Pilot Officer Roy Ferdinand killed 12 June 1940 aged 21.**  The picture was taken here in 'Sunny Scotland' at RAF Drem between mid August and mid November 1940. Donald Vine was killed when he flew into the ground in cloud whilst en-route to escort 2 aircraft inbound from America; George Milligan and Roy were killed as a result of flying accidents; whilst Davy Stein was seen to be hit by flak during an attack on an airfield in France. He was last seen with one engine on fire, but nothing further is known. He probably came down in the Channel.

In December 1940 the Squadron became operational on the Whirlwind, gave up its Hurricanes and moved south to RAF Exeter to join the fighting.  Roy flew his first operational sortie in a Whirlwind on 11th February 1941.  Finally on the 7th April 1941 in Company with Sgt. King he intercepted a Junkers JU88 south of Falmouth.  A brief engagement resulted in damage to the enemy bomber but before they could finish the job it disappeared into cloud.  As with the Hurricanes, the Whirlwinds flew many countless hours of routine Convoy Patrols, and many fruitless Scrambles.

In total, Roy flew 57 operational sorties in Whirlwinds, some 63 hours. He would have flown at least the same again on training flights, but these were not recorded in the Squadron record books. He would also probably have flown the same amount on Hurricanes.

Finally, during the evening of 12th June 1941 Roy was killed in a flying accident. As he approached to land in Whirlwind P7050, eyewitnesses noted that he began a series of steep turns at about 50 - 100 feet. Suddenly the aircraft stalled and crashed, bursting into flames on impact and killing him instantly. The rudder pedals on the Whirlwind, and on most aircraft then and since, were located almost out of sight under the instrument panel. In order to accommodate pilots of all statures they were adjustable fore and aft. The Whirlwind had a button on the pilot’s right which he pressed to move the rudder bar.

An investigation concluded that the rudder bar was not locked into position and had probably slipped when he needed it most, the aerobatics would have been due to him trying to reach it.

The Squadron Operational Record Book noted that he was one of the Squadrons real characters and his death was deeply regretted by all who knew him. He was buried on 27th June, the funeral attended by S/L Donaldson and P/O Stein.

The photographs provided by Robert Bowater were taken in August 1940 at RAF Grangemouth.

Grateful thanks to Robert Bowater for the words, details and the photographs that remain his copyright.  Robert is writing a book about the Westland Whirlwind where much of this information comes from.  *[Dave and James Jackson and Robert Bowater.]*

Funeral of Pilot R. F. Ferdinand - Entry from the Bucks Examiner.

"The funeral of Pilot Officer R. F. Ferdinand, Royal Air Force, only son of Mr. And Mrs. F. H. Ferdinand, of Woodside Avenue, Chesham Bois who met his death while on duty, took place at Chesham Bois Parish Church on Tuesday, and was attended by a large congregation of relatives and friends.

The short service, which was conducted by the rector, the Rev. H. Lawrence, was most impressive. The 23rd Psalm, The Lord is my Shepherd, was first chanted. There followed a short lesson and prayers.

The coffin, draped with the Union Jack and surmounted by three beautiful wreaths from the parents and near relations, had previously been placed in front of the alter. At the close of the service the bearer party, composed of NCO`s and men of the Royal Air Force bore it from the church to the beautiful plaintive notes of Chopin's Funeral March (played by the organist Mr Stanley Chappell) , and placed it on a service tender upon which was also massed a large number of beautiful wreaths. The cortege proceeded to Chesham Bois cemetery, where the committal was read by the vicar.

Among the many people present in the church and at the graveside were members of Chesham Bois Parish Council, Mr L. Aspinall (Vice-chairman), Mr H. Kilburn Scott, and Mr. S A Waters, Mrs. G R Moore, and the clerk, Mr. A W Dean.  Mrs. T Tyrwhitt-Drake represented the Red Cross Hospital Supply.  She was wearing the uniform of her unit.  Squadron leader A H Donaldson (Commanding Officer of deceased’s squadron) Pilot Officer D Stein, and representatives from the St Marylebone Borough Council, by whom the deceased officer was formerly employed, was also present.

The principle mourners were:- Mr & Mrs Ferdinand, Mr A L Ferdinand, Mr W S Ferdinand, Mr Cobley, Mrs Boltwood, Mr Nicolson, and Mrs Nicolson.

Amongst the beautiful wreaths were the following:- “To our beloved Son. In the night and in the morning we will remember him”; “In deepest sympathy, and affectionate memory, from colleagues of the Borough Treasurer’s Department, St Marylebone”.  “From the Officers and all ranks of his Squadron”; From the Commanding Officer of his Squadron “; “ With the deepest sympathy, from the Wardens, Post 18, APR”; “With deep sympathy, from Mr and Mrs. Summers and Billie”; “With deepest sympathy, from Major and Mrs H Eayres and Family”; “Admiration and deepest sympathy, Mr. And Mrs. Wanstell and Anne”; “with deepest sympathy from friends in the Audit Office”; “In memory of a brave airman; Dr. and Mrs. Robert Strang”; “In remembrance, Pat”, ”From fellow Privates of his squadron”; “with deepest sympathy, Mr and Mrs W J Braker, Iris and Roy"; "In affectionate remembrance from Mr and Mrs A E Howlett, Irene and May”; ”With deepest sympathy, Mr and Mrs T L Welch”; “With deepest sympathy, Mrs H Bennett and family”; “In deepest sympathy from all at Rose Cottage, Bois Lane”; “To my darling Roy, with all my love Joan”; “With deepest sympathy, Mr and Mrs Tom Smith”; ”In deepest sympathy and admiration, Mrs Anson and Mrs Moore”; ”With deepest sympathy from Helen”; “Kindest remembrance, Mr and Mrs H L Pink”; ”With deepest sympathy from Uncle Will and Auntie Ethel and Sheila”; ”With loving remembrance from Uncle Jim, Renie and Harold”; ”With deepest sympathy from Joyce and Cyril Marsh”; ”With deepest sympathy from Capt. And Mr S W H Graham”; ”From the Luyken family with deepest sympathy”; ”With proud memory of Roy from Lilian Taylor”; ”To our Roy who gave us so much happiness and of whom we are so proud, Mr and Mrs Nick”; ”From Mr and Mrs J Webster and Mr and Mr and Mrs H Foster with sincere sympathy”; ”With deepest sympathy from Mr and Mrs R S Broadbent, Bertie and Bernita”; ”With deepest sympathy from the 1st Chesham Bois Scout Troup”; ”To dear Roy with sweet memories Mr and Mrs T C Hus” (Bucks Examiner)

**Apprentice John Lennard Frearson Finch. Merchant Navy.**

Service No: SS Essex Trader (London)

Born: Dec 1923, Amersham. Died: 16th January 1941.

Resident of: No 5 The Woodlands, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Percy Frederick and Nora Louise Finch of No 5 The Woodlands, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Buried: Malta. (At Sea?)

Memorial: Tower Hill Monument. Chesham Bois War Memorial.

The SS Essex, a cargo ship made runs to Malta in 1941 and was attacked by German aircraft.

DENIS BURDON WW2 MERCHANT NAVY SERVICE, OUTBREAK OF WAR 1939   
I was only 14 in September1939 when war was declared. My older brother was called up immediately into the army. He trained in Ireland and was later involved in the Normandy landings. 'Operation Overlord'  
Most people were keen to help the war effort. Mother joined the Women’s Voluntary Service and helped in manning a first Aid Station. There was an intense desire by most people to do something.  
I was keen to do something myself so I joined The Air Training Corps with a view to becoming a fighter pilot which was one of the more glamorous jobs at the time but with a high mortality rate. Nevertheless I learnt Aerodynamics, Navigation, Morse Code etc. and went on a few trips with the ATC to local aerodromes. This knowledge was very useful whilst later serving in the MN .  
JOINING UP  
I had a friend at work who had served as an Engineer in the Merchant Navy. He talked me into trying to join the MN. Without previous sea experience no one would accept me so I went to the National Sea Training School (originally Gravesend Sea School) then transferred to an old sailing ship in Sharpness Gloucester called the T.S. Vindicatrix.  
TRAINING & FIRST SHIP  
I endured the 3 months or so training and passed the seamanship exams in 1943. I was then told to report to Middlesborough Merchant Navy Reserve Pool who directed me to the ss. Essex Trader moored at Eston Jetty.  
Merchant Navy 'Pools' were established at all the main ports and all shipping was controlled by the Ministry of Transport who had to allocate about 8000 seamen per week to various Merchant Ships.  
After a wearying slog lugging my kitbag around Eston I eventually identified the **SS Essex Trader** and was dismayed to see the ship covered in a white dust which turned out to be Manganese Ore which it had just discharged. Nevertheless it was my first ship and a quite new 10,000 ton cargo vessel with 'heavy lifting derricks which proved crucial in later exploits in the Mediterranean.  
**OFF TO SEA**  
I was welcomed aboard by the second steward who directed me to a very well equipped 4 berth cabin and gave me a good meal. This was heaven after my Spartan training ship experience. My three cabin sharing shipmates were from Middlesborough, Birkenhead, and Runcorn. We got on well together.  
The ship was really quite new having been built in Sunderland and had only done one trip down West Africa.  
Within a few days we sailed out of the Tees and went north calling at Methyl and Oban (Use of the English Channel was out of the question because of attacks by German E-boats and aircraft.) before loading up in Helensborough with ammunition, military transport vehicles and a great variety of supplies of various kinds.  
**ATLANTIC CONVOYS**  
We were instructed to join a convoy assembly point at Gourock. We joined a 100 ship convoy heading south but because of U- boat dangers we were continually zig-zagging and so took about 3 weeks to get to Freetown, West Africa where we discharged some of our cargo. The R.N Escort consisted of one destroyer and two corvettes which was totally inadequate for the size of the convoy. Alarm bells were ringing and ships were being torpedoed throughout the trip. Our sleep was constantly disturbed by the alarm bells ringing mainly during the night.  
All the ship's crew were allocated to gun stations as assistants to the DEMS personnel who were manning the armaments. On action stations being sounded our instructions was to don our life jackets and 'tin hats' and report to our gun stations. Later on in the war we had an aircraft carrier as part of the escort. Each day there were crashes as planes were trying to land on the heaving deck.  
After Freetown we went to Accra, Takoradi and Lagos where we discharged further supplies for the army and RAF stations there. Our last deliveries were to Lagos where we loaded up with 10,000tons of giant peanuts and sailed for Liverpool. Joining a convoy at Freetown we sailed North with our usual zig-zagging trying to avoid the U-boats.  
**MALTA CONVOYS**After discharging our cargo of peanuts in Liverpool we were ordered to proceed to Gareloch for loading more military supplies for Malta. We joined the usual zig-zagging convoy for heading South for Gibraltar.  
We suffered repeated air and sub attacks on route to Valetta where we discharged our cargo. We then sailed for Casablanca for loading American Sherman Tanks, military transport of various kinds of supplies for discharge along the North African coast, Algiers Oran, Bougie, Bizerta etc. After the Sicily and Italian landings we continued moving troops and supplies across from Africa.  
Our "home port" became Taranto in Italy where we loaded troops and landing craft for an unknown destination.  
This turned out to be St Tropez in Southern France - Operation "Dragoon". Our convoy was attacked by subs, E-boats and aircraft. Many dead and injured were discharged from our ship. A hospital ship was in attendance.  
After about two years we were ordered to Melilla in Spanish Morocco where we loaded 10,000 tons of iron ore for discharge at Middlesborough.

**Private Harold Cecil (Tich) James. 1st Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.**



Service No: 14732296.

Born: June 1926 Amersham. Died: 13th April 1945.

Resident of: ‘Pigeon-Close’, Stubbs Wood, Chesham Bois later 22 Fieldway, Gore Hill, Amersham.

Husband to: Masie Winifred (Timms) formally resident of North Rd.

Son of: Phillip Brutton CBE and Bertha Florence (Wise) James of ‘Pigeon-Close’, Stubbs Wood, Chesham Bois.

Buried: Becklingen War Cemetery, Germany.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

#### Operation Market Garden, the Ardennes offensive and crossing the Rhine

The invasion of the Netherlands began on 17 September; it was known as [Operation Market Garden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Market_Garden) and was a combined land and airborne operation. The 1st Ox and Bucks took part in the ground operation in support of the airborne corridor to Arnhem. The 1st Ox and Bucks led the advance of 71st Infantry Brigade to the Wilhelmina canal where it encountered strong enemy resistance. The ground operation was intended to cross three bridges that had been taken by airborne troops and on into Germany. It would end at the furthest captured bridge at [Arnhem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnhem)—one end of which was taken by [1st Airborne Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_1st_Airborne_Division), although the operation had ended in failure by 25 September. The 1st Ox and Bucks subsequently took part in operations around the Lower [Maas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meuse_(river)) that took place during October and November, including forcing the enemy from its position holding a bridgehead over the River Maas, west of Roermond. Lieutenant Colonel JH Hare, the Battalion's Commanding Officer, was killed during the battle for Hertogenbosch on 28 October and was succeeded by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Howard of the [Royal East Kent Regiment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_East_Kent_Regiment). On 16 December 1944 the Germans launched their last-gasp major offensive of the war in the [Ardennes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ardennes) that became known as the [Battle of the Bulge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Bulge). The 1st Ox and Bucks, along with the rest of its division, was rushed to Belgium shortly afterwards to assist in the defence where it experienced terrible weather conditions, some of the worst Belgium had seen in years. The Allies launched a counter-attack in early January and the German offensive was defeated later that month, by which time the 53rd Welsh Division had been relieved and returned to Holland soon afterwards in preparation for the invasion of Germany.

As stated the 1st Ox & Bucks served in the 71st ('International') Brigade, 53rd (Welsh) Division and on 1st March were heavily involved in the Battle of the Reichswald. There is a 'Grafwegen' on the western fringes of the Reichswald, near to the 53rd Division start line, as well as a 'Grafenthal' on the south eastern corner that is roughly where 53rd Div was on 1st March.

Once the Reichswald had been taken, the allied forces paused to regroup before continuing their advance towards the Hochwald forested ridge, plus [Xanten](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xanten" \o "Xanten) to the east of it, and the US 9th Army. This stage was Operation *Blockbuster*. As planned, it would start on 22 February when the 15th (Scottish) Division would attack woods north-east of [Weeze](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weeze" \o "Weeze), to be followed two days later on the 24th when the 53rd (Welsh) Division would advance southwards from Goch, take Weeze and continue south-westward. Finally, the 2nd Canadian Corps would launch, on 26 February, the operation intended to overcome the German defenses based on the Hochwald and then exploit to Xanten.

By the time the waters from the Roer dams had subsided and the Ninth Army was able to cross the Roer on 23 February, other Allied forces were also close to the Rhine's west bank. Rundstedt's divisions which had remained on the west bank of the Rhine were cut to pieces in the Rhineland and 290,000 men were taken prisoner

In February the 1st Battalion Oxon and Bucks L I was involved in the Allied invasion of the German [Rhineland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhineland), including taking part in the [Battle of the Reichswald](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Reichswald). The five-division assault on the Reichswald Forest, where the battalion was involved in heavy fighting against German paratroopers and armour around the village of Asperberg. The battalion crossed the [Rhine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhine) in late March and was then attached to 8th Armoured Division and continued its eastwards advance, seeing action at other places amongst them [Ibbenburen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibbenburen" \o "Ibbenburen) in April where it saw heavy fighting against determined German marines with the British succeeding in capturing the town. The battalion met fierce enemy resistance at Gross Hauslingen before continuing the advance through Dauelsen, [Gyhum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gyhum" \o "Gyhum) and Wehldorf where the 1st Ox and Bucks eventually reached the city of [Hamburg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg)—captured on 3rd May by British forces, they remained there until the end of the war in Europe.Operation *'Daffodil'* was the codename given to the middle phase of Operation Veritable, the attack by 53rd (Welsh) Division on Weeze, 24th February-1 st March 1945. One of the objectives for 71st Brigade in this assault was the canal crossing at a hamlet called Graf, which is now a northern suburb of Weeze.

Once the canal crossing was taken, 158th Brigade would move through with 'Funny' and tank support to directly assault the town (this phase being designated Operation 'Leek', which took place 1-2 March).  
71st Brigade's attack on the northern flank [of the attack on Weeze] between the railway track, the main road and the river Niers was held up short of Weeze by flooding, heavy DF [Defensive Fire - i.e. artillery] fire and anti-tank ditches. The 1st Ox & Bucks L I were astride the Goch-Weeze railway and 4th RWF east of the railway, supported by the 4/7th Dragoon Guards Tanks. The Fusiliers had a very difficult time and only just succeeded in taking and holding a vital canal to the north of Weeze at Graf.' Lt Col Crozier's diary (OC 1st Manchester’s - divisional MG Battalion) says "March 1st. I put 1,000 phosphorous bombs into Weeze today and set it well alight. ‘’I hope the Bosch found it hot. Our attack came to a stop about 1000hrs. 158th Brigade on first objective but 71st Brigade only partly successful and had very heavy casualties."

**Allied Forces.**

At this stage, 21st Army Group consisted of the [British Second Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Second_Army) (Lieutenant-General [Miles Dempsey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles_Dempsey)), [First Canadian Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Canadian_Army) (General [Harry Crerar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Crerar)) and the [US Ninth Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_Ninth_Army)(Lieutenant General [William Simpson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Hood_Simpson)). While the Canadian First Army would attack along the northern flank, the British Second Army, reinforced, would advance through the[Reichswald Forest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichswald), to the Rhine. The US Ninth Army was to execute [Operation Grenade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Grenade), the southern part of the pincer.

The Canadian First Army had had a severe time clearing the approaches to [Antwerp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antwerp) during the previous autumn. It was, numerically, the smallest of the allied armies in northern Europe and, despite its name, contained significant British units as part of its structure. For *Veritable*, it was further strengthened by [XXX Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XXX_Corps_(United_Kingdom)) (Lieutenant General [Brian Horrocks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Horrocks)). At the start of the operation allied deployment was, from left to right across the allied front:

* [3rd Canadian Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_Canadian_Infantry_Division) (Major-General [Daniel Spry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Spry))
* [2nd Canadian Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Canadian_Infantry_Division) (Major General [Bruce Matthews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Matthews_(General)))
* [15th (Scottish) Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/15th_(Scottish)_Infantry_Division) (Acting Major-General [Colin Barber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Barber))
* [53rd (Welsh) Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/53rd_(Welsh)_Infantry_Division) (Ross) Including 1st Battalion Oxon and Bucks L I.
* [51st (Highland) Infantry Division](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/51st_(Highland)_Infantry_Division) (Temporary Major-General [Tom Rennie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Rennie))

The 1st Battalion moved from the Rhineland to Berlin in November 1945. The battalion was based in [Seesen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seesen" \o "Seesen) in the [Harz Mountains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harz_Mountains) from March 1946 to May 1946 when it moved to Luneburg. In August 1946 the 1st Battalion deployed to [Trieste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trieste)—the following year the [Free Territory of Trieste](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Territory_of_Trieste)—as part of the British-American force there. The battalion left in May 1947.

**Wren Aileen Mercy Kilburn. WRNS. HMS Midge.**



Service No: 42634.

Born: 1923 Amersham. Died: 18th March 1943.

Resident of: Trewithin, Stubbs Wood, Chesham Bois.

Daughter of: Charles F J and Elsie E (Robins) Kilburn of Trewithin, Stubbs Wood, Chesham Bois.

Buried: Chesham Bois Burial Ground.

Memorial: St Nicholas Church, Gt Yarmouth. Chesham Bois War Memorial.



WRNS was revived in 1939 at the beginning of the [Second World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_World_War), with an expanded list of allowable activities, including flying transport planes. At its peak in 1944 it had 75,000 people. During the war there were 100 deaths. One of the [slogans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogan) used in recruiting posters was "Join the Wrens—free a man for the fleet."

H.M.S. Midge was a Coastal Forces Base in Great Yarmouth from 1st January 1941 to 21st July 1945 located at Fish Wharf . At the time it was the base for 53 M.T.Bs, M.G.B s and mine layers primarily used in pairs for shipping convoy escort in the North Sea. On 17th March 1943, there was an air raid which killed 8 Wrens and injured many more. In bad weather at 6.28 a.m a lone Luftwaffe Dornier Do217 flew over the south part of Great Yarmouth and dropped six bombs. One scored a direct hit on a house at the corner of Queens Rd and Nelson Rd South which was used as a WRNS hostel. The house was destroyed and fire broke out. The girls were asleep. The rescuers tunnelled into the rubble and found a group of 5 unhurt. Thirteen were rescued from the ruins, another 27 were badly injured, eight died.

For many years Great Yarmouth was a naval base, containing a Royal Naval Hospital. There are three naval plots in the burial ground at Great Yarmouth (Caister) Cemetery which contains war graves of both World Wars, as well as other Naval graves dating from 1906 onwards. Some of the 1914-1918 graves are in groups to the west of the entrance, while others are scattered. After the 1914-1918 War, a Cross of Sacrifice was erected near the mortuary chapel. During the early months of the 1939-1945 War, ground in plot M in the eastern part of the cemetery, north-east of the mortuary chapel, was set aside for service war graves, and this is now the War Graves Plot. It was used for Army, Air Force, Merchant Navy and Allied casualties, and the Naval plot A was used for Royal Naval casualties and for some of the Merchant Navy men; but there are a number of scattered war graves in the cemetery. There are now 168 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war and 115 of the 1939-1945 war commemorated in this site. Of these, 13 from the 1939-1945 War are unidentified. There are also 3 Foreign National war burials there.

People in story: Olive Partridge (formerly Swift)

Location of story: HMS Midge

Background to story: Royal Navy

In 1941, aged 19, I volunteered for the Women's Royal Naval Service. I was accepted, because I was healthy, and well educated, as in World War Two, standards in the Royal Navy were high, and I am proud to have served with them.

I did my training at Mill Hill, near London. It was indeed a testing time. We did a lot of keep fit, and we were taught how to protect ourselves in an emergency, and what to do in a gas attack; which was a threat throughout the war, but to my knowledge, never actually happened. The marching was the hardest part, the feet suffered in the heavy laced up shoes.

We were allowed to choose our future job, and I cheerfully volunteered for maintenance, simply because I thought it would make a change from office work. In due course, five of us set off by train to Great Yarmouth. A more uninspiring sight can't be imagined, in our ill fitting uniforms and our safari type hats. Soon, I am glad to say, we were issued with the up to date hat, complete with band bearing the name of our base, HMS Midge.

We were to be billeted in a former large guest house, but found it had been bombed, so we were taken to a hotel near the sea front, lovely. Most of the civilians had been evacuated, but we had a large number of Service Personnel, Wrens, Waaf and the Royal Navy, ATS, not to mention frequent visits from American servicemen, stationed at nearby Norwich. We were issued with bell bottom trousers, a boiler suit, and oil skins, so we did wonder what we were getting into.

We soon found out. The five of us were marched down to the harbour, or base as we called it, where flotillas of motor gun boats, and motor torpedo boats where moored. MTBs and MGBs for short. There we were taken aboard, and down the hatch into the engine room. I don't know which of us was more astonished, the engine crew or us. The general reaction was, possibly, 'Oh my God'. The engines were hot, having just returned from sea, and the sailors where stripped to the waist. Daphne, a general's daughter, who had led a sheltered life, took one look, and beat it back up the ladder. She went to Signals, a lovely girl, we became great friends, and cabin mates.

I never regretted my decision to stick to with it. We were taught to change plugs, strip down gearboxes and distributor heads, and anything else needed to keep three Hall Scott, or Packard American engines, ready for action. We went out to sea on trials, when the job was finished, and stood on the deck, side by side with the men, as we sailed out of harbour. A mutual feeling of friendship and great respect grew up between sailors and Wrens, which lasted the whole four and a half years. We worked, danced, partied and laughed together. We also experienced great sorrow when any of the boats were missing or damaged. I remember one in particular, No. 313, which limped home with a great hole where the engine room had been. The entire engine room crew had been killed.

I worked with a Petty Officer most of the time, and after the war, we were married. We saw a lot more action before that though. We were regularly shot at by low flying German planes as we marched down to the base to work. We ran for cover, they weren't very good shots, nobody was hit. I must say though, the bombing was devastating; a lot of the service quarters were razed to the ground, including our own. I was sleeping in a top bunk, but found myself blasted from my bed, lying on the floor at the far end of the room, amongst a lot of rubble and glass. It was fortunate for me that I was not in my bed, as a large section of wall and a window fell on it.

There were seven of us in the cabin, and I can truthfully say that nobody panicked, we had great faith in our Naval friends, they dug us out alright, and if they hadn't got a spade, they dug with their hands. Fire broke out, and being short of fire engines, we formed a chain, and passed buckets of water along, from a stand pipe. When the losses were made known, we found many of our friends were injured, or in shock, and had to be sent home. Worst of all, seven Wrens and our Officer was killed, but war time is no time for brooding and we survivors attended a memorial service for our dead comrades, and went back to work.

We saw a lot more action, even a bit of kiss and cuddle on the pier was interrupted by doodlebugs. They made a terrible droning sound when approaching, and it was time to lie under the benches that ran along the pier. We could see their evil red lights through the slats, then silence, and we knew that they had landed somewhere in the town.

We had a very good social life, which helped us through the dark days. We went to the cinema a lot, the pictures we called it, and danced wherever we were invited. A favourite place was across the river, to Gorlston on Sea. It was called the Floral Hall, and a lot of fun was had there. Of course we took our turn on night duty, but whenever we were free, there was somewhere nice to go. If we had an off duty weekend, we would borrow a dinghy from an MGB and row or sail up to the Norfolk Broads. Other times we would ride our bikes into the country, and explore old churches. One Sunday we were in time for the service, and about six of us sat in a pew together. Unfortunately one of us got the giggles and set the others off. I think the vicar forgave us though, as he took us on a tour of the church and grounds afterwards.

In the evenings, we would often go to a fair on Britannia pier, with a glass of Babycham, and a cigarette in a long holder, we felt as girls do, war or peace, it was ultimate enjoyment. When VE Day came we were immediately given passes to go ashore, as leaving the base was called. My fiancé was stationed on the Isle of Wight at that time, and I went across on the ferry, but he was coming this way, so we missed each other. I ended up dancing and singing round Piccadilly Circus, with thousands of people celebrating. VJ Day quickly followed, and we had truly won the Second Great War, along with our gallant allies. With pride, I think we could all say 'Well Done'.

**Sergeant Harry F Kleiner. RAFVR 57 Squadron.**

Service No: 1455874. Flight Engineer, Scampton.



Born: 1913 Wandsworth. Died: 25th May 1943.

Resident of: Dorset House, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Joseph and Esther Kleiner of Dorset House, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Buried: Leeuwarden Jewish Cemetery, Holland.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**World War II**



At the outbreak of war the squadron was based in France equipped with [Bristol Blenheims](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Blenheim) and was engaged in bo mbing and reconnaissance operations during the German invasion. The squadron operated from [Rosières](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosi%C3%A8res" \o "Rosières)-en-Santerre, then [Poix](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poix" \o "Poix) and finally [Crécy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cr%C3%A9cy) before returning to England in May 1940. After a brief stay at [Wyton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wyton" \o "RAF Wyton) the squadron moved to [Scotland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scotland) to commence anti-shipping strikes against the coast of [Norway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norway).

The squadron moved to [Feltwell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Feltwell" \o "RAF Feltwell) in November 1940 to re-equip with the [Vickers Wellington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Wellington). In September 1942 the squadron moved to [Scampton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Scampton) and converted to [Avro Lancasters](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avro_Lancaster). This was followed by a move to [East Kirkby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_East_Kirkby) in August 1943 from where it operated for the remainder of the war until disbanding on 25 November 1945.



 Among the targets attacked by the squadron in 1944 were the V1 storage sites in the caves at St. Leu d'Esserent, and the Mondeville steelworks at Caen, situated only two thousand yards ahead of the advancing British troops. In December 1944, the squadron took part in a raid on the German Baltic Fleet at Gdynia and in March 1945, was represented in the bomber force which so pulverised the defences of Wesel just before the crossing of the Rhine that Commandos were able to seize the town with only 36 casualties. Of this last attack Field-Marshal Montgomery later said: "The bombing of Wesel was a masterpiece, and was a decisive factor in making possible our entry into the town before midnight."

A Bad Night for 57 Squadron - Lancasters ED970 and ED707 Lost to German Night-fighters.

Lancaster ED970 of 57 Squadron took off at 2235 on 23rd of May 1943 from RAF Scampton as one of  826 aircraft targeting the German city of Dortmund . It was shot down by a night-fighter piloted by Maj Helmut Lent, IV./NJGI, and crashed into the North Sea approximately 40 km W of the Dutch coastal town of Egmond aan Zee (Noord Holland). Three bodies were washed ashore; Harry Kleiner, Walter Bennett and Peter Daly.

Sgt Harry Kleiner is now buried in Leeuwarden Jewish Cemetery, while both air gunners rest in island cemeteries on Terschelling and Ameland respectively. The remaining crew, including Pilot Officer John Robert Morton, the navigator, are commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. 

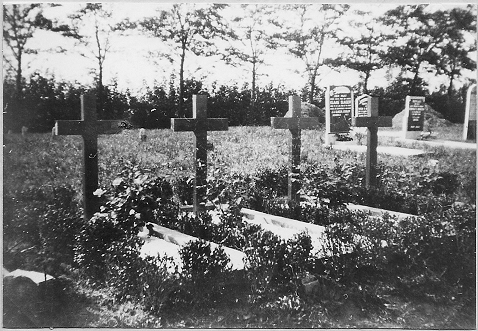
Air Gunner - Sgt. Walter James Bennett, was washed ashore on Terschelling island, 1 month later, 24 June 1943 (around 17.45 hrs). His funeral was on the 29th June 1943 at Longway Cemetery.

The other air-gunner, Sgt. Peter Daly 551847 was also washed ashore and is buried at  Nes Cemetery on Ameland - plot D, row 13, grave 8.

 Sgt. Alexander Keir Henderson  1125769 - age 22 - son of Thomas & Susan K. Henderson, of 23 Kirk St  Dundee; husband of Daisy Henderson, of Lochee, Dundee. Commemorated at Runnymede, panel 153.

Sgt Alan Ramsay Leslie 1551139 -age 20 - Son of James Simpson Leslie and Mary C. B. Leslie, of Aberdeen. Commemorated at Runnymede, panel 156.

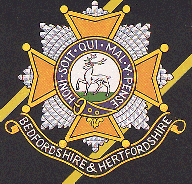
P/O John Robert Morton 129550 - age 22 - Navigator - Son of Henry and Caraline Morton, of Bedford Park, Middlesex. Commemorated at Runnymede, panel 132.  
  
Sgt Peter Hemingway 1392967. Commemorated at Runnymede, panel 153.



**On the extreme right is Harry Kleiner's war-time grave at St. Jacobiparochie.**

**Lieutenant Christopher Roland Lawrence. 2nd Battalion Beds and Herts Regiment.**

Service No: 182212, BA (Cantab) Second Lt. 1941.



Born: July 1919 Clutton, Somerset. Died: 21st November 1942.

Resident of: The Rectory, North Rd, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Rev. George Henry Lawrence MA and Cicely Simonds (Storrs) Lawrence of The Rectory, St. Leonards, Chesham Bois 1923-1945.

Buried: El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

Why Christopher was in the El Alamein area in November 1942 is a mystery as his regiment was elsewhere or never in North Africa but the CWGC has a record of his memorial there. It is possible that he was transferred to another Regiment or Division. Following data is a record of events around El Alamein towards the end of 1942.

EL ALAMEIN WAR CEMETERY contains the graves of men who died at all stages of the Western Desert campaigns, brought in from a wide area, but especially those who died in the Battle of El Alamein at the end of October 1942 and in the period immediately before that.

WWII. W.O Report 169/1704. 2nd Battalion served in India, Iraq, Britain and Palestine during the inter-war years, which found 1st Battalion in Ireland, China, India and Egypt.

During World War II the 1st Battalion initially served in the Middle East, engaged in the Battle of Tobruk (Tobruk-The Birth of a legend by Frank Harrison) as part of the Tobruk Garrison, British 70th Infantry Division, 14th Infantry Brigade but moved to India in March 1942, also fighting on the Burma front and remaining in India until partition. 2nd Battalion fought in the Battle of France in 1940, then remained in Britain re-equipping until March 1943, when it landed in Tunisia. It went on to serve in Italy.

However, the **Second Battle of El Alamein** took place over 20 days from 23 October – 11 November 1942 near the [Egyptian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) coastal city of [El Alamein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Alamein), and the Allies' victory marked a major turning point in the [Western Desert Campaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Desert_Campaign) of the Second World War. It followed the [First Battle of El Alamein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Battle_of_El_Alamein), which had stalled the [Axis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Axis_Powers) advance into Egypt, after which, in August 1942, [Lieutenant-General](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lieutenant_General_(United_Kingdom)) [Bernard Montgomery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_Montgomery) had taken command of the British [Eighth Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Eighth_Army) from General [Claude Auchinleck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Auchinleck). This Allied victory turned the tide in the [North African Campaign](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_African_Campaign) and ended the Axis threat to [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt), the [Suez Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suez_Canal), and of gaining access to the Middle Eastern and Persian oil fields via North Africa. From a psychological perspective, El Alamein revived the morale of the Allied side, being the first major offensive against the Germans since the start of the European war in 1939 in which the Western Allies achieved a decisive victory.

In the end, the Allies' victory was all but total. Axis casualties of 37,000 amounted to over 30% of their total force. Allied casualties of 13,500 were by comparison a remarkably small proportion of their total force.[[84]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_El_Alamein#cite_note-Watson27-100) The effective strength of Panzer Army Africa after the battle amounted to some 5,000 troops, 20 tanks, 20 anti-tank guns and 50 field guns. But the Allies' immediate exploitation of the victory was poor. They were taken by surprise by Rommel's withdrawal, and this combined with confusion caused by re-allocation of units between the three Corps meant they were slow in pursuit, failing to cut off Rommel first at Fuka and then at [Mersa Matruh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mersa_Matruh" \o "Mersa Matruh).

El Alamein was the first great offensive against the Germans in which the Western Allies were victorious. [Winston Churchill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winston_Churchill) famously summed up the battle on 10 November 1942 with the words, "This is not the end, it is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."[[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Battle_of_El_Alamein#cite_note-119) It was Montgomery's greatest triumph; he took the title "Viscount Montgomery of Alamein" when he was raised to the [peerage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peerage) after the war.

By the 11th November the axis forces had been driven out of Egypt. Tobruk was entered on the 13th November with a further brush with the enemy at Ain el Gazala and the Jebel el Akdar was reached. The key Martuba airfields were taken on the 15th November in time to support the convoys from Malta. The next objective was to recapture Benghazi.

**Flight Officer Roderick William Parke (Roddy) MacKenzie. RAFVR 118 (609 West Riding) Squadron**



Service No: 61029.

Born: 1921. Died: 9th March 1942 with 609 Squadron.

Resident of: Minting, Clifton Road, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Murdo and Agnus Teresa (Parke) MacKenzie.

### Buried: Streatham Park, Surrey.

### Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

### WWII.

### On 20 February 1941, No. 118 reformed at [RAF Filton](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Filton), near [Bristol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol), as a [No. 10 Group](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._10_Group_RAF) fighter squadron equipped with [Supermarine Spitfire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermarine_Spitfire" \o "Supermarine Spitfire) Mk.1 fighters, soon supplementing them with Spitfire Mk IIs. On 28 March, convoy patrols began and after moving to [RAF Ibsley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Ibsley) in April, it started to fly escort missions for anti-shipping strikes, as well as defensive patrols and fighter sweeps over northern [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France).

The squadron re-equipped with Spitfire Mk Vbs in September 1941, continuing to fly escort for anti-shipping strikes over the [English Channel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Channel) and for bombing raids. On 12 February it took part in the unsuccessful attempts to intercept the German battleships [*Scharnhorst*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_battleship_Scharnhorst), *[Gneisenau](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_battleship_Gneisenau" \o "German battleship Gneisenau)* and heavy cruiser *[Prinz Eugen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_cruiser_Prinz_Eugen" \o "German cruiser Prinz Eugen)* when they [sailed through the Channel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Channel_Dash), escorting bombers searching for the German squadron. In August 1942, the Ibsley-based fighter wing, including 118 Squadron moved to [RAF Tangmere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Tangmere) to support the [Dieppe Raid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieppe_Raid). The squadron flew four missions during the day of the raid, claiming two [Dornier Do 217](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dornier_Do_217) bombers destroyed.

Action and occasional losses continued into for the rest of the year, with the Ibsley Wing often being led by its dynamic leader - W/C "Widge" Gleed. During December 1941 No 118 maintained a detachment in the far west at Predannack and in early January 1942 S/L J C Carver arrived as [CO](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#CO). The poor weather reduced the number of larger scale operations, and thus more '[Rhubarbs](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#Rhubarb)' were flown. One on the 29Jan42 destroyed a distillation plant, though Sgt Kerr had to bale out of AA863 and four days later during another off Pointe de Barfleur, P/O Ames (a Canadian) was lost in combat with 3/JG 2's Bf 109s. F/O Howard-Williams in Aa964/NK-D managed to shoot one down and damage two others, though his Spitfire was damaged in the combat. The RAF faced a much sterner test on February 12 1942 however, when a German Navy squadron consisting Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen under heavy escort made their audacious voyage back to Germany through the English Channel. No 118 mounted a number of sorties in poor weather to cover the few strike aircraft available, but to no avail and lost P/O Stone to marauding Bf 109s off Ostend.

Later in the month the squadron spent a brief period at Warmwell but returned to Ibsley in early March 1942. From there on the 8th in company with 234 and 501squadrons, No 118 flew a fighter sweep to the Cherbourg area as a diversion to a '[Circus](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#CIRCUS)'. Participating directly in another '[Circus](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#CIRCUS)' the following day the squadron lost **F/O MacKenzie** and another Spitfire was

damaged by enemy fighters and crash-landed on the Dover-Canterbury road on return. Worse followed during an

Anti-shipping '[Roadstead](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#ROADSTEAD)' on the 13Mar 42 when the [CO](http://www.rafjever.org/glossary.htm#CO) flying W3943 went missing. He was picked up on the 16th after three days in a dinghy.

During February 1941 the 609 Squadron moved to [RAF Biggin Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Biggin_Hill). Almost all of the squadron's original pilots were now lost and replacements came from [Belgium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgium), [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poland), [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada), [Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Australia), [France](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France), [USA](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USA), and [New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand) in addition to those from Britain. During the summer of 1941, 609 Squadron carried out fighter sweeps over France. In November 1941, the squadron was withdrawn from the front line, after 18 months continuous fighting and rested at [RAF Digby](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Digby) in Lincolnshire.

In spring 1942 the squadron moved to [RAF Duxford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Duxford) and re-equipped with the Spitfire Mk V. The squadron soon began to replace these with the [Hawker Typhoon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker_Typhoon), which was introduced in an attempt to counter the [Luftwaffes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftwaffe" \o "Luftwaffe) [FW-190](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FW-190) fighter. It became apparent that the Typhoon was better suited for low level attacks against ground targets, such as airfields and armoured vehicles.

Between the years 1939 and 1945, 300 pilots flew with 609 (WR) Squadron. It became perhaps the most international brotherhood of arms since the Crusades. If few of the pilots discovered what a 'Riding' was, warriors from the United States, Poland, the Commonwealth, France, Norway, and above all Belgium, flew, lived, laughed, - and many died - together in mutual devotion to the West Riding Squadron.

1. **Pilot Officer John Musgrave. RAF 185 Squadron.**



Service No: 41197 Acting Pilot Officer 17 Sept. 1938.

Born: Berkhamsted 1919. Died: 30th November 1939.

Resident of: Roseneath, Copperkins Lane, Chesham Bois.

Son of: Sq. Leader Phillip Henry and Bessie Sarah (Cobbold) Musgrave of Roseneath, Copperkins Lane, Chesham Bois.



Buried: Chesham Bois Burial Ground.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**World War II**

No 185's second incarnation began on 1 March 1938, when it was reformed in the bomber role at Abingdon from 'B' Flight of No 40 Squadron.  Initially equipped with Hinds, these were replaced by Battles in June 1938 and in their turn by Handley Page Hampden 1powered by Napier Dagger engines in June 1939.  However, it was destined not to become operational, being used as a training squadron and eventually merged into No 14 OTU on 5 April 1940.  The same day a new 185 Squadron began to form but its existence was short-lived, disbanding on 17 May 1940.

## 30.11.1939 No.185 Squadron RAF Hampden I L4203 P/O. Musgrave crew loss

Operation: Flight from Cottesmore to Heston

Date:  30th November 1939 (Thursday)

Unit: No. 185 Squadron R.A.F.

Type: Handley Page Hampden 1

Serial No: L4203

Location: Grange Farm, Widmer End, Buckinghamshire.

Pilot: P/O. John Musgrave 41197 Age 20. Killed

Obs: Sq/Ldr. Nigel Hope 32173 Age 32. Killed

W/Op/Air/Gnr: A/C 2. Daniel O' Regan 624786 Age ? Killed



W/Op/Air/Gnr: Sgt. Lindsay Thom 580682Age 24. Killed

REASON FOR LOSS:

Hampden L4203 and crew were en-route from Cottesmore to Heston. During the flight the aircraft encountered bad weather with poor visibility. Pilot lost control and aircraft crashed near Grange Farm, with the tragic loss of all onboard.

Pilot Officer John Musgrave had lived in Chesham Bois since childhood. He was educated at Lancaster Royal Grammar School where he took up flying.  For two years he represented his school at Bisley and was a member of the OTC. He joined the RAF in September 1938 and took his preliminary training before taking up his full service. Military honours were accorded at Chesham Bois Cemetery. The service was conducted by the Rev (Group Captain) Cox MC. The coffin was borne on a RAF tender accompanied by the RAF Halton fife and pipe band. Following a brief service at the chapel a firing party and two buglers attended the grave, the coffin dressed with the Union Jack and John’s service cap. The RAF Padre gave a committal service followed by a three rifle volley and the ‘Last Post’.

**Grave of P/O. Musgrave, father and mother.**

**Lieutenant Denis Charles Scott DSC.  RNVR. HMS Daedalus. 855 Squadron.**

Service No: Temp 2nd Lt Aug 1941.



Born: 1920 St. Marylebone. Died: 4th October 1944.

Resident of: The Beeches, Bois Lane, Chesham Bois.

Husband of: June Hillyer, married Hendon1942.

Son of: Charles Meacher and Amy Mary (Wood) Scott The Beeches, Bois Lane, Chesham Bois later of Ashtead, Surrey.

Buried: Castricum Protestant Churchyard, North Holland.

### Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

DSC Award: Hits on motorship & tanker 19.10.42 [investiture 16.02.43]

### WW II.

### Fleet Air Arm operations.

With the expansion of the RAF during the 1930s, however, [Parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliament_of_the_United_Kingdom) decided that the Fleet Air Arm should transfer to the Admiralty.  As a consequence, on 24 May 1939, HQ RAF Coastal Command moved to [Northwood](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northwood_Headquarters) and Lee-on-Solent was commissioned as HMS *Daedalus*, becoming Headquarters of Flag Officer Air (Home).

Not much is known about Denis Charles Scott. Denis joined the Fleet Air Arm, the Royal Navy Air Corps. He was a Sub Lieutenant when he was stationed at HMS Falcon, Royal Navy Air Station, Hal Far, Malta. It was here that he was engaged in an arial attack on a German convoy on 19 October 1942 when his plane scored hits on a motor ship and a tanker. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for this action on 15th December 1942. Later he was attached to 855 Squadron, operating from HMS Daedalus, at Gosport.

Lt. Denis Scott was attached to a Avenger crew that was sent on an anti-shipping mission on 4 September 1944. 855 Squadron had been involved in missions over the English Channel and North Sea in preparation of D-Day. After the invasion the need for the duties of the squadron would no longer be needed. The squadron was to be disbanded in October 1944. Till then, the Avengers of 855 Squadron flew anti-shipping missions in both the English Channel and the North Sea.

Service History:

10.1941 - 02.1942 HMS Jackdaw (RN Air Station, Crail, Fife)

02.1942 - 04-1942 HMS St Angelo (RN base, Malta) (for miscellaneous duties)

30.04.1942 - 10-1942 HMS St Angelo (RN base, Malta) (for Naval Air Squadrons)

12.1942     No appointment listed.

21.12.1942 - 12-1943 Pilot, 786 Squadron FAA [HMS Jackdaw (RN Air Station, Crail, Fife)]

12.1943 - 04-09-1944 Pilot, 855 Squadron FAA [HMS Daedalus (RN Air Station, Lee-on-Solent)]  
Attached to RAF Coastal Command at RAF Thorney Island, On Monday September 4th 1944 Lt. DC Scott, Lt. CH Jeffery & P/O GAS Stephenson took off in Grumman Avenger Mk II, JZ490, on an anti-shipping patrol off the enemy coast between IJmuiden in Holland & Gravelines in northern France. They failed to return to Thorney Island after attacking 3 destroyers, Lt. Scott’s body later washed ashore in the Netherlands and is buried at Castricum Protestant Cemetery, Plot J. Joint grave 13. The other two crew members were never found.

**Sergeant Eric Albert Victor Spencer. RAF ... Squadron.**

Service No: 581537. Wireless Op, Air Gunner.

Born: 1915 Lewisham, Died: 26th February 1941.

Resident of: Abancourt, Clifton Road, Chesham Bois.

Husband of: Agnes L (Ducker) Married 1940

Son of: Albert and Ethel E (Harper) Spencer.

Resident: Abancourt, Clifton Road, Chesham Bois.

Buried: Chesham Bois Burial Ground.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**Flying Officer George Hugh Turner RAFVR 235 Squadron.**



Service No: 127460. Navigator.

Born: Rochford, Essex 1923. Died: 3rd March 1943.

Resident of: Homefield , North Road, Chesham Bois.

Son of: George Grantham Turner and Mabel Clementine (Hewitt) later of Eastcoat, Pinner, Middx.

Buried: Southend on Sea, (Leigh on Sea) Cemetery.

Memorial: Chesham Bois War Memorial.

**WW II**

On 30 October 1939, No 235 reformed at Manston as a fighter squadron and received Fairy Battle light bombers for training purposes in December. In February 1940, it equipped with Blenheims and was transferred from Fighter to Coastal Command on 27 February 1940 for fighter-reconnaissance duties. When the German invasion of the Low Countries began in May 1940, the squadron flew patrols over Holland and during the Battle of Britain was engaged in convoy protection and reconnaissance missions over the North Sea.

Attacks on enemy shipping began in 1941 and the squadron moved to Scotland in June for operations along the Norwegian coast. In December 1941, conversion to Beaufighters took place and in May 1942, it moved to East Anglia for attacks off the Dutch coast, returning to Scotland in January 1943. In August 1943, patrols over the Bay of Biscay began in support of anti-submarine aircraft there and in June 1944, the squadron re-equipped with Mosquitoes. After moving to Banff in September, attacks on enemy shipping off Norway and Demark occupied the squadron until the end of the war and on 10 July 1945 it was disbanded.

[**No. 18 Group RAF**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._18_Group_RAF)**. Under command of Air Vice Marshal A.B. Ellwood, CB, DSC**

**Squadron Type of Aircraft Station**

[No. 144 Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._144_Squadron_RAF) [Bristol Beaufighter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Beaufighter) [RAF Leuchars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Leuchars)

[No. 190 Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._190_Squadron_RAF) [Consolidated Catalina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_PBY_Catalina) [RAF Sullom Voe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sullom_Voe)

[**No. 235 Squadron RAF**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._235_Squadron_RAF)[**Bristol Beaufighter**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Beaufighter)[**RAF Leuchars**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Leuchars)

[No. 455 (Australian) Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._455_(Australian)_Squadron_RAF) [Handley Page Hampden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handley_Page_Hampden) [RAF Leuchars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Leuchars)

[No. 489 (New Zealand) Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._489_(New_Zealand)_Squadron_RAF) [Handley Page Hampden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handley_Page_Hampden) [RAF Wick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wick)

[No. 540 Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._540_Squadron_RAF) [de Havilland Mosquito](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Havilland_Mosquito) [RAF Leuchars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Leuchars)

[No. 547 Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._547_Squadron_RAF) [Vickers Wellington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Wellington) [RAF Tain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Tain)

[No. 612 (County of Aberdeen) Squadron RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._612_(County_of_Aberdeen)_Squadron_RAF) [Armstrong Whitworth Whitley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armstrong_Whitworth_Whitley) [RAF Wick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wick)

[No. 1406 (Meteorological) Flight RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._1406_(Meteorological)_Flight_RAF) [Supermarine Spitfire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermarine_Spitfire)/[Lockheed Hudson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lockheed_Hudson) [RAF Wick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wick)

[No. 1408 (Meteorological) Flight RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=No._1408_(Meteorological)_Flight_RAF&action=edit&redlink=1) [Handley Page Hampden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handley_Page_Hampden) [RAF Wick](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Wick)

[No. 1477 (Norwegian) Flight RAF](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=No._1477_(Norwegian)_Flight_RAF&action=edit&redlink=1) [Consolidated Catalina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consolidated_PBY_Catalina) [RAF Woodhaven](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodhaven,_Fife)

Report of Loss:

Beaufighter VI, EL335 of No 235 Sqn   
Fg Off HALLAM, MICHAEL EDWARD (62662) RAFVR; age: ?  
Fg Off TURNER, GEORGE HUGH (127460) RAFVR; age: 19

**Warrant Officer John Lawrence Welch DFM. 617 (218)Squadron.**

Service No: 744932. Flight Sergeant 20th April 1943 (218 Sq.)



Born: 1920 Holborn. Died: 15th September 1943.

Resident of: 29 Woodside Ave, Chesham Bois.

Husband of: Ena M (Chandler) Welch. Married 1942.

Son of: T L Welch CB and E M (Tyler) of Cranwell, Lincs.

Memorial: Runnymede Memorial and Chesham Bois War Memorial.

Scout: 1st Chesham Bois Group.



The Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) is the equivalent award to non-commissioned officers and other ranks of the DFC and could be awarded for a tour of operations (usually 50 0ps) or an immediate award for one operation. Made from silver, the medal had the recipient name, number and rank on the edge.

**WWII.**

**Dam Busters Raid: 617 Squadron.**

The crew, who flew on the Dam Busters flight in Lancaster JA981 and survived, was the same that flew four months later on the Dortmund-Ems canal raid with the addition of John Welch.

**Sqn Ldr David Maltby** DSO DFC (pilot) Baldslow, Sussex  
**Flt Sgt Vivian Nicholson** DFM (navigator) Sherburn, Co Durham  
**Plt Off John Fort** DFC (bomb aimer) Colne, Lancashire  
**Flt Sgt Antony Ston**e (wireless operator) Winchester, Hampshire  
**Sgt William Hatton** (flight engineer) Wakefield, Yorkshire  
**Flt Sgt Victor Hill** (front gunner) Berkeley, Gloucestershire  
**Sgt Harold Simmond**s (rear gunner) Burgess Hill, Sussex

**Warrant Officer John Welch** (mid upper gunner) Chesham, Buckinghamshire, seconded from 218 Squadron, flew as an extra gunner.

Early in September 1943 new 12,000 lb thin-cased bombs were delivered to RAF Coningsby. It had been decided that 617 Squadron was to continue its role as a specialist low-level bombing unit and deliver this the biggest bomb the RAF had yet carried, in an attempt to breach another German key industrial target, the Dortmund-Ems canal. This waterway stretches over 150 miles, linking the Ruhr valley to the sea. At Ladbergen, near Greven, just south of the junction with the Mittelland Canal, there is a raised section where aqueducts carry the canal over a river. This had long been a target which the RAF was keen on attacking, but so far had failed to breach. Now it had a new weapon, three times the size of the normal 4,000 lb ‘cookie’. The plan was to drop these from very low height into the soft earth embankments of the raised waterways. A delayed fuse would give the Lancaster’s time to get away before the huge explosion.

The eight Lancaster’s detailed for the operation were to be accompanied by six Mosquitoes, specially brought in from 418 and 605 Squadrons. Their role was to deal with searchlights, ﬂak and any ﬁghter opposition met along the way or over the target. The force was to be divided into two sections of four Lancaster and three Mosquitoes each, with the force leader commanding the ﬁrst section and the deputy force leader commanding the second.

The raid was important enough to be given its own code name, Operation Garlic, and was scheduled for Monday 14 September. The new squadron CO, who had replaced Guy Gibson, Sqn Ldr George Holden was to lead the ﬁrst section of four, with Les Knight, Ralf Allsebrook and Harold Wilson. David Maltby would lead the second section: David Shannon, Geoff Rice and Bill Divall. Three Mosquitoes would ﬂy with each group. As deputy force leader, David Maltby was due to drop the special parachute beacons which would mark the target.

**Each aircraft also carried an extra gunner, to operate the mid-upper gun turret. WO John Welch was allocated from 218 squadron to David's crew, so there were eight people aboard when they took off.**

The weather was not good but a separate Mosquito designed for meteorological work had already been sent to the target area and was due to report back. If it found that conditions over the canal were poor, then Group command could call the strike force back.

The aircraft took off and set course for their crossing point on the Dutch coast, south of Texel Island. About an hour later, came the news from the Mosquito on weather-spotting duty. The target was badly obscured by mist and fog. At 0038, a recall signal was sent from the operations room at 5 Group in Grantham. Just as, or just after, the recall signal was received, disaster struck and, somehow, David’s Lancaster went down in the sea.

Maltby and his crew were killed a few months later during [Operation Garlic](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Operation_Garlic&action=edit&redlink=1), a failed attempt at a low level raid on the [Dortmund-Ems Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dortmund-Ems_Canal). His aircraft crashed into the North Sea while returning to base after the mission had been cancelled due to fog over the target.

**218 Squadron.**

With the onset of [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II), the unit was reformed on 16 March 1936 from elements of [57 Squadron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._57_Squadron_RAF) at [Upper Heyford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Heyford) with the [Hawker Hind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawker_Hind) and re-equipped with the [Fairey Battle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fairey_Battle" \o "Fairey Battle) in 1938, and on 2 September 1939, the unit moved back to France, where it began dropping leaflets and flying reconnaissance missions. But by June 1940, having suffered heavy losses while bombing German troops going into France, it was evacuated to England, where it re-equipped with the [Bristol Blenheim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_Blenheim). In November, it rearmed with [Vickers Wellingtons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vickers_Wellington), and began bombing a wide variety of enemy targets with the longer-range Wellingtons. In December 1941, it began rearming with [Short Stirlings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_Stirling) and continued its bombing raids against everything from infantry columns to V-weapon sites. In July 1942, the unit moved to [Downham Market](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Downham_Market) and in March 1944 to [Woolfox Lodge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Woolfox_Lodge" \o "RAF Woolfox Lodge) in [Rutland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rutland). In August 1944, it moved to [Methwold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Methwold" \o "RAF Methwold) with the [Avro Lancaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avro_Lancaster).

**The Fallen of WWII who are not named on the Chesham Bois War Memorial.**

**Captain David Hawkins Smith RA. 24th Field Regiment.**



Service No: 164271

Born: 1909, Amersham. Died: 29th January 1944.

Resident of: Kensworth Cottage, Long Park, Chesham Bois.

Husband of: Marion Elizabeth (Gurney) Smith. Married, Amersham 1933.

Son of: Richard Wilfrid and Hilda Alice of Slough.

Memorial: Anzio and Chesham Bois Burial Ground, Chiltern RFC Memorial.

**WWII.**



**24th Field Regiment.**

The Regiment was stationed at Aldershot when war was declared, as part of 1st Infantry Division and consisted of 22nd/56th, 50th/70th Field Batteries. It served with the 1st Infantry Division during in the B.E.F. during the fall of France, equipped with 18/25 pdrs.

After being re-formed, following its evacuation it served with 48th (South Midland) Infantry Division from January 1940 and by August 1942 it was a Home Forces unit under Army or Corps command, by now consisting of 22nd, 50th and 56th Batteries. In January 1943, the regiment move to the Middle East and by July 1943 was under 8th Army Command for the invasion of Sicily as part of 6th AGRA (Army Group Royal Artillery), XIII Corps.

In September 1943, the regiment was part of 2nd AGRA, X Corps, equipped with 105mm M7 Priest Self Propelled Guns. As an AGRA unit it was attached to 7th Armoured Division as needed for various engagements. In January 1944, it was back under command of 1st Infantry Division, taking part in the Anzio landings. The regiment then remained in Italy until the end of the war.

**Part recollection by Bert Reed 24th Field Regiment Royal Artillery at Anzio.**

We travelled across the sea, still guessing that we would join our forces in Italy. All we had to do was hang around on deck. We were suddenly aroused by someone shouting, *"Land ahead"* We all looked in the direction he pointed.  As time passed things began to take shape. We could see white buildings all along the coastline.

Slowly we reached quayside in the port of Naples and once the ship was secured, gangplanks were placed up the side of the ship and disembarkation started. Men poured out of the ship onto the quayside. Three ton Lorries took us to our Camp and we went through Naples to reach it.  It was called Lammie Camp. It was in an orchard, but, the ground was four inches deep in black dust. This came from the Vesuvius volcano that had recently erupted causing a lot of local devastation.

I soon left the camp to arrive at a holding area at a fishing village north of Naples called Casteellamare. This small fishing village would play an important part in the Anzio invasion. One evening a mobile cinema came and we saw some up to date movies.

We tried to trade our Victory V cigarettes with Italians for wine, but, they would not take them. We always said they were made from camel shit. Gradually our numbers dwindled as we were moved down to the quay to board landing craft. Once we were on board the landing craft, we were not allowed to get off it.

Towards sunset our landing craft slipped their moorings, making for the open sea. Our armada of ships was now making a westerly heading, so, still kept in the dark we incorrectly guessed we were to invade the south of France. However, when we were out of sight of the coast we changed direction and headed northwards. We were called on deck and then told we were going to a place called Anzio some 100 miles behind enemy lines, and only about 30 miles from Rome.

It was getting dark, but, the weather was mild. It almost felt like summer cruise, but, during the night we passed by Cassino where the US 5th Army was engaged. The sky was full of gun flashes from both German and Allied artillery. It seemed surreal and eerie. We crept up the Italian coastline so as to land behind the Germans and attacked them, cross and hold Routes 6 and 7 and cut the enemy supply lines so that the battle of Cassino could be won by the 5th Army. Cassino was a key part of the Gustav line which was holding up the whole of the Allied advance. Italy is perfect country for a defending army with mountains and fast deep rivers forming natural defensive barriers. Hitler had put his best troops into Italy and their Commander Field Marshall Kesselring was doing a canny job making our armies pay dear for every inch of advance. However, with our command of the sea we had the chance to out-flank him and so shorten the whole campaign.

The main landings had already taken place several days before (Jan 22nd). This had been an easy landing because the enemy had been taken by surprise. However, about the time we landed they had recovered from this and building up heavy reinforcements. This meant that the easy part was over so (just my luck) things were getting pretty nasty just as I arrived.

Morning came, and as we approached the shore we saw that the Germans were firing on the town and at our ship in the harbour and out into the bay. All our ships including warships, transports and landing craft were returning fire. This was a spectacular sight and the noise was unbelievable. German aircraft were buzzing around strafing and bombing.



We landed by climbing down the gang-planks into the water almost to our necks – it felt like our helmets might just float away! Military Police directed us to the Lateral Road that ran from the town to the immediate front line. Under constant enemy fire we wore our steel helmets. There was no infantry fighting within the town but, our engineers were clearing rubble, mines and booby traps. However, our beachhead was only seven miles in depth so the enemy front line was pretty close.

We boarded a Three Ton Lorry and travelled down the Lateral Road still under enemy fire. The lateral road was the one which led to the Alban Hills from the town of Anzio. Unfortunately our front line was below the Alban Hills and overlooked by the enemy who had by now got the range and registration of just about everything we had.

We passed the tented army hospital on our right. Just past the hospital we drove into a field and were greeted by a sergeant who directed us to some more tents overlooking the hospital. I was with one other chap in the tent and the flaps were open. As we talked we became aware of the sound of an aircraft engine. Looking out across the hospital towards the town we saw a German fighter flying towards us. We fell flat onto our faces, then, over the engine noise we heard another sound, the sound of machine gun fire. As he fired at us, we could do nothing about it. I was paralyzed with fear. Suddenly he was gone. We looked at each other and my first words were *“that was a close shave”* I thought *“welcome to Anzio”.*

We only spent one night at this camp during which time I had to do night-time guard duty at the entrance on the Lateral road. Traffic passed back and forth when, suddenly there was silence. I was alone with only a rifle defending a field and became apprehensive. I took cover behind a bush. The silence was broken by the sound of tank tracks along the road. I stood there rooted to my position when a large tank appeared. I did not recognize its shape I did not know if it was one of theirs or one of ours. I did not care because I was not going out there to find out! What chance did I have with only a rifle?  It trundled past, and within a short time it returned making its way to the front line. I breathed a sigh of relief.

Next morning a Jeep arrived to take me away to join my regiment. I was a replacement for one of the Signalers who had become a casualty! I got into the Jeep with my gear and the driver informed me I would be joining the 22nd battery of the 24th Field Regiment RA.  As we made our way to the battery he told me the regiment had tracked, 105mm Guns – these were called ‘Priests’ - guns with flash eliminators. The OP's (observation posts) were Sherman Tanks.

We were stopped by a Military Policeman at the crossroads who asked where we were going. The driver told him we were joining our regiment who were in the woods. He told us to be careful, Jerry was shelling the road.

We reached the opening in the woods that would take us to the gun position. The whole place was full of American-made artillery. I asked the driver the reason for all the notices on trees.*"Dust brings shells"* he told me *“if you drive fast the dust rises and Jerry can see it so he fires at us the dust cloud right away”.*

We arrived at the battery command post to be greeted by the signal sergeant, a Scotsman. *“Well lad, you are replacing one of the lads in Battery HQ”* my name would be put on the duty roster for duties on the telephone exchange, and the radio taking fire orders. He took me over to one of the nearby Sherman tanks to meet Bill. The signal sergeant introduced us and left. My new home would be the foxhole which Bill was strengthening with wooden slats from the ammunition boxes.

**The Padiglione Woods, where 24th Field Regiment had their gun sites in 1944.**

It was time to have some food (hard tack rations). Bill introduced me to all the other lads. They were not in a receptive mood. They had been dive-bombed earlier and lost some of their mates. As time went by they seemed to warm to me. We had all been thrown together in this war and none of us really wanted to be there. They were a peace-time regiment on their way home from serving their time in India when the war broke out. It was understandable how they felt.

My duties with the battery were to take my shifts on the telephone exchange and the radio receiving fire-orders from the Observation Post (OP).  I also had to go up into the OP as needed.

Our lines would get cut by shrapnel etc and they had to be immediately repaired so often we would go out with a field telephone, trace the break and repair it. This was not so good in the dark. There were times we had to re-lay the lines because the breaks were so bad. Laying a fresh line meant going out with a 15 cwt truck.  Laying lines from a moving truck is dangerous. Under fire the truck had to move at around 30 mph. We had to stand on the back of this open moving truck feeding the cable from the end of a long pole rather like a fishing rod. The truck would heave and jolt. As well as being under threat from enemy artillery it was even more likely you could be thrown out into the road.

Everything seemed doom and gloom. Gradually I came to understand why this was. We were trapped with our backs to the sea surrounded by superior enemy forces in positions completely overlooking our beach head. Hitler gave very high priority to operations at Anzio because he thought our defeat would be a superb propaganda coup. He called us the ‘Anzio Abscess’.

Late in 1943 the British conducted a successful amphibious landing behind the German lines at Termoli on the eastern coast. This gave the idea for Anzio which was pushed by the British with strong backing from Winston Churchill. However, the forthcoming D-Day operation in Normandy starved us of resources so it was conducted on a shoestring and with barely enough land forces to do the job. All the same, the actual landing was a success catching the German Army by surprise (some officers were taken prisoner still in their pyjamas)  However, such a bold and daring plan required a bold and daring General and the American General Lucas was a cautious commander. Instead of cutting German lines of retreat, supply, and communications behind the Gustav line our armies just dug in under General Lucas’s orders. This gave the enemy time to surround us with superior numbers and heavy artillery. Moreover, the Germans used very high quality troops against us and large calibre artillery weapons. Our Navy could not help much by counter-bombardment because they were under constant air attack (as were we) so we were stuck in an impossible position fighting for our lives. Several of our ships had been sunk or damaged by enemy aircraft and shells from ‘Anzio Annie.  This was our situation from January to late May of 1944. Nevertheless, try as they might the Germans could not force us into the sea and could not take our beachhead from us.

All the same, in the end our Anzio campaign was a success. Hitler put such priority to Anzio, the Germans weakened their forces on other fronts in the hope of wiping out our beachhead. Maybe their General’s mistakes more than cancelled out ours.

General Alexander, the Supreme Commander wrote in his autobiography:

*“Anzio played a vital role in the capture of Rome by giving me the means to employ a double-handed punch - from the beachhead and from Cassino - which caught the Germans in a pincer movement. Without this double-handed punch I do not believe we should ever have been able to break through the German defences at Cassino”*

**The German perspective at Anzio on the 29th January.**

V - 29 January 1944

A. Operations report

51st Mountain Corps took over the coastal sector north of the mouth of the Tiber to the army border at Cecina.

There was less enemy activity than usual on the beachhead. An enemy attack, in battalion strength, on hill 61, 3 km west of Isola Bella was halted by artillery fire. Enemy reconnaissance, in company strength, partially with tanks and armored scout cars, was turned back. North of Aprillia, a stalled tank was destroyed by a magnetic tank charge and other vehicles were destroyed by fire. The enemy was thrown back west of Borgo Piava to Mescarello Creek. Thirteen prisoners were taken. One heavy machine gun and several bazookas were captured. In the evening a concentration of approximately 30 tanks and 70 to 80 trucks loaded with troops was observed in the area of Aprillia.

Harassing artillery fire from the entire beachhead and the sea was primarily directed on the right flank of the Panzer Division Herman Goering. Two cruisers and several PT boats withdrew under coast artillery fire.

B. Intelligence Report

From prisoner of war interrogation it was learned that the 3rd Battalion, 504th Parachute Regiment is still at Borgo Piave; 1st Scots Guards at Macchia del Casale; 5th Grenadier Guards at Cle Vallerata. Disembarkation of troops continues at Anzio-Nettuno. In the evening a large convoy of approximately 100 ships was reported as approaching.

C. Statistics

German losses: 17 killed, 63 wounded, and 24 missing.

Allied losses: 20 prisoners (13 US and 7 British), 2 fighters shot down (1 US and 1 British), 1 machine gun carrier, and several vehicles destroyed.

D. The German Plan of Attack

The main mission of the 14th Army is to annihilate the beachhead, which the enemy is reinforcing. The attack must be made as soon as possible; the date depends on the arrival of the necessary forces, which is being delayed as the railroad system in Italy has been crippled by enemy air raids.

The attack will be launched from north to south along the Albano-Anzio Road, with the main concentration on either side of Aprillia. The date of the attack was to be 28 January, but in a meeting between Army and Army Group Commanders on 26 January D-Day was postponed to 1 February so that reinforcements would be available. These reinforcements were: 1027th and 1028th Infantry Regiments, the Special Artillery Demonstration Regiment, the Special Rocket Projector Demonstration Battalion, and the 1st Battalion of the 4th Panzer Regiment. These units left by train from Germany and are expected to pass through the Brenner Pass on 26 and 27 January. The plan of attack as proposed by the 1st Parachute Corps follows.

Combat Group Pfeiffer

Consists of nine infantry battalions of the 65th Infantry Division and the 4th Parachute Division. Its objective in the attack was to penetrate toward the south and link up with the main group. In addition to the artillery assigned to coastal defense, the group will have 9 light field howitzers (10.5 cm).

Combat Group Graser

Located in the sector previously held by the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. This group will be employed for the main effort. On the right flank of the main effort are the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and the 29th Panzer Division, the latter supported by the 1st Battalion of the 4th Panzer Regiment. On the left flank will be the 715th Infantry Division, making a total of 17 infantry battalions. This unit will have 11 long-range artillery guns (17 cm), assault artillery, 29 heavy field howitzers (15 cm), 34 light field howitzers (10.5 cm), 8 guns (10 cm), 36 rocket launchers (each with five 21 cm tubes), and 8 rocket launchers (each with ten 15 cm tubes).

Combat Group Konrad

This group is composed of elements of the Panzer Division Herman Goering and elements of the 114th Infantry Division, giving it a total of four infantry battalions. Its mission is to penetrate to the Astura Creek from the area west of Cisterna. It will be furnished with 32 heavy field howitzers (15 cm), 42 light field howitzers (10.5 cm) and 3 guns (10 cm).

Corps Reserves

Located in the region south of Albano, it will consist of elements of the 71st Infantry Division and the 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division, with a total of six infantry battalions. The following antiaircraft artillery is to be employed in ground action and air defense at the discretion of the divisional staff.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Antiaircraft Guns | | |
| 8.8 cm | 3.7 cm | 2 cm |
| Combat Group Pfeiffer | 12 | 9 | 42 |
| Combat Group Graser | 43 | 18 | 108 |
| Combat Group Konrad | 11 | 9 | 31 |

Contrary to previous instruction, the attacks will begin simultaneously in the morning of D-Day after a coordinated 10 minute artillery barrage. Only on the southern flank of the beachhead in the area of Borgo Piave a local diversionary attack will be executed on D minus 1.