

Hamstreet

Second World War 1939 – 1945

BENSTEAD, CHARLES EDWARD. Sergeant (Air Gunner), 1383049.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 103 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 7 September 1942. Aged 28.

Son of Horace Victor and Alice Benstead.

Husband of Edna Violet Benstead of Kingsnorth, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands. Grave Ref: 12. I. 6.

Charles was an Air Gunner on Halifax bomber W1219 PM-?, which was flown by Squadron Leader (Pilot), Clive L. Saxelby. The aircraft took off at 0106 hours from R.A.F. Elsham Wolds, Lincolnshire in a mixed bomber force of 207 bombers that took part in a raid on Duisburg, Germany. Due to the prevailing weather conditions it prevented concentrated accurate bombing of the target area, despite which Duisburg reported its heaviest raid to date, with 114 buildings of different types destroyed, and 316 seriously damaged, in addition to which, 86 people were killed. Only 8 aircraft were lost on the mission, and Charles was the only member of the eight crew of his Halifax that lost their lives. Six of his comrades were captured following the crash, but Flight Lieutenant (Navigator) L.C. Pipkin evaded capture with a lot of help from the Belgium Comete Line members, in particular that rendered by Jean Mober who was active within the S.I.S., M.A.R.C. and L.U.C. prior to her arrest on 18 June 1943. "Despite being subjected to horrendous torture whilst being held at St Giles Prison, Jean never yielded any information to her torturers, and was sentenced to death on 2 July 1944, aged 42. Probably Flight Lieutenant Pipkin's initial success during his evasion, was helped by the fact that the aircraft had an eight man crew, as opposed to the customary seven on a Halifax. The German's doubtless satisfied with the standard seven men crew who had been captured, and resulting from same did not instigate a search programme. Sadly it would appear that Squadron Leader (Navigator), Leonard Charles Pipkin D.F.C. and Bar, who died on 30 August 1944, and is buried in Hendon Cemetery is the same R.A.F. officer who Jean Mober and others helped to save in 1942. Clive Saxelby, the bombers pilot, was one of the officers who took part in "The Great Escape," which was later made into a Hollywood film starring the late Steve McQueen. Whilst waiting in the tunnel close to the foot of the final ladder, along with other officers Clive was waiting his turn to exit the tunnel, when shots were heard, upon hearing them the waiting party turned, and went back along the tunnel expecting to be shot at any moment. Unlike many of those who were murdered by the German's following the escape, Clive survived the Second World War, and died on 22 March 1999.

BUTTON, HENRY GEORGE. Lance Sergeant, 6289065.
2nd Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)
Died 2 November 1942. Aged 31.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Harry and Elizabeth Button.
Husband of Nellie Button of Hamstreet, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 55.
Pre war member of the regiment.

Henry was probably one of the two men who were killed on the night of 1/2 November, by an anti-personnel mine, whilst in a fighting patrol led by Second Lieutenant I. A. Pearson, who was wounded, as was eight of the other ranks with him. Lieutenant's R.J.H. Brisley and Moore, along with Sergeant Jaycocks did extremely well in evacuating the casualties from the minefield.

JONES, REGINALD SIDNEY. Driver, 2017259.
573 Army Field Company, Royal Engineers.
Died 14 July 1941. Aged 21.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Mr and Mrs W A Jones of Warehorne, Ashford, Kent.
Buried El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt. Grave Ref: XXX. H. 24.
Also commemorated in Warehorne Ashford, Kent (St. Matthew) parish church.

NEWTON, EMMANUEL. Leading Stoker, D/KX82345.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Neptune.
Died 19 December 1941. Aged 31.
Son of Emmanuel and Ethel Newton.
Husband of Violet Amy Newton of Orlestone, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel Column 2.
Emmanuel was a victim of the tragic maritime disaster that occurred off Tripoli, Libya when his cruiser and several other ships went into an uncharted minefield which resulted in the loss of 764 of the crew, only Able Seaman Norman Walton survived the sinking who then spent five days alone in the Mediterranean before being spotted and rescued by an Italian torpedo boat, after which he spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war in Italy. There is clearly no need to add more details appertaining to Emmanuel's ship, as all is more than adequately covered in detail on the excellent website of the H.M.S. Neptune Association, which can be found at www.hmsneptune.com