

Hythe NatWest Bank



The impressive memorial plaque as shown above is located in the NatWest Bank, 75, High Street, Hythe, Kent, and commemorates two Second World War casualties, both of whom had been members of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. At the time that the following airmen had worked at the bank, it would of course have been known as the National Westminster Bank. Unfortunately, unlike the majority of similar memorial plaques which are located in various branches of the Bank, which for the most part are at eye level, that at Hythe is set far higher above a doorway. When the wife of the transcriber of the two following brief commemorations first spotted the above plaque, three of the customers of the bank made similar comments along the lines of passed under the plaque countless times but had never noticed it. When we went back a few days later to attempt to photograph the memorial plaque, a total of eight people had similar comments as those previously, and one elderly gentleman added that he must have passed below the memorial plaque at least once a week for years.

ALLCHIN, JAMES (Jimmie) CECIL ALCUIN. Pilot Officer, 106364. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 102 Squadron, Royal Air Force. Died Saturday 8 November 1941. Aged 21. Son of Alfred Ernest Allchin (1876 – 1958), and Violet Ethel Allchin (née Martin), (1885 – 1973) of Kennington, Ashford, Kent. Commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey. Panel 31, and on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial, also on the Kennington, Ashford, Kent civic war memorial. James Allchin Gardens on the Little Burton Farm Estate, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, is named in his honour and remembrance, he is commemorated in the Ashford Grammar School for Boys Second World War Book of Remembrance.

James' birth was recorded in the East Ashford, Kent, Registration District during the fourth quarter of 1920. He was a pupil at Ashford Grammar School (now the Norton Knatchbull) from 1931 to 1938. Notification that Leading Aircraftman, 1293603, James Cecil Alcuin Allchin was to be commissioned as a Pilot Officer, R.A.F. (V.R.) (on probation) with effect from Sunday 10 August 1941, was published in The London Gazette dated Tuesday 30 September 1941. James was the co-pilot of Whitley bomber Z9128 DY-? which took off from R.A.F. Topcliff, North Yorkshire at 2207 hours in a mixed bomber force of 169 aircraft on Friday 7 November 1941, which were taking part on a bombing mission to Berlin, Germany. At 0642 hours the next morning James aircraft was contacted in response to a request for a bearing, at which time it was thought to be approximately 60 miles to the north of the Island of Borkum, the largest of the seven East-Frisian islands in the southern North Sea, and heading for the East Coast of England. The exact fate of the aircraft is still unclear but it is thought to have run out of fuel, possibly resultant of having strayed off course and using up the allocated fuel supply. Within the space of about an hour, two other Whitley's of 102 Squadron that had also been returning from the same mission requested similar assistance, sadly all three aircraft and crews were lost and are presumed to have crashed at different locations in the North Sea, the fifteen airmen lost are all commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey. Cloud cover over the chosen target area had thwarted the bombers efforts to achieve a concentrated bombing pattern, and they also suffered a mauling by both flak gun batteries and enemy fighters, which resulted in 21 of the aircraft failing to return amounting to about a twelve and a half percent loss rate. James' sister Avis Dorothy Allchin (1912 – 2003), who resided at Church Road, Kennington, had prior to her retirement been the Principal of Ashford Girls School, East Hill, Ashford, Kent.

STICKELLS, ANTHONY MORGAN. Sergeant, 1444397.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 50 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died Wednesday 12 April 1944. Aged 22.

Son of George Stickells and Elsie Stickells (née Smith) of Hythe, Kent.

Commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. Panel 238, also commemorated on the Hythe, Kent civic war memorial, and on the Folkestone, Kent civic war memorial, also on the Second World War memorial plaque at the Harvey Grammar School, Cheriton Road, Folkestone.

Anthony's birth was recorded in the Elham, Kent, Registration District during the fourth quarter of 1921. He was in the seven man crew of Lancaster Bomber ME572 VN-Z, which was being flown by 23 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot) Ernest Alfred Skillen, of the Royal Australian Air Force, who came from Thornton, New South Wales, Australia, when it took off from R.A.F. Skellingthorpe, Lincolnshire at 2054 hours on Tuesday 11 April 1944. The aircraft was in a bomber force which was comprised of 341 Lancasters and 11 Mosquitos of No's. 1, 3, 5 and 8 Groups, Royal Air Force, Bomber Command that were despatched to the spa city of Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany on the night of 11/12 April 1944. The raid was subsequently recorded as having been particularly accurate, and which had resulted in widespread damage and fires in the centre of Aachen, and

in the southern part of the town. Particularly badly damaged was suburb of Burtscheid, including Burtscheid Abbey which was built in 1644 under the Äbtissin Anna Maria Raitz von Frenz. A total of 42,800 incendiaries and 4,047 high explosive bombs were dropped on Aachen on the night of 11/12 April 1944, killing 1,525 people. The Cathedral, the Imperial Palace and many other cultural monuments were destroyed. Together with the suburbs, an estimated sixty-five percent of the city was razed to the ground during the raid, which was the most damaging raid inflicted on Aachen during the Second World War. Control of the air-raid services was quickly lost when some of the first bombs were dropped, which cut communications between the main operations centre and the outlying posts, which doubtless resulted in additional damage and loss of life on the ground. During the raid only 9 of the 341 Lancasters which took part were lost. There is quite comprehensive accessible data appertaining to the loss of 8 of the Lancasters which were lost, but ME572 VN-Z was lost without trace cause unknown, and thus far the Lancaster has never been located.

