

Smarden

Second World War 1939 – 1945

Smarden war memorial which is in the form of a well cared for memorial plaque, is situated on an exterior wall of the parish church of St Michaels.

Eleven of the twelve civilian casualties belonging to just two families who are commemorated on the village war memorial, died in or as the result of enemy activity at Smarden, possibly due to flying bombs, as the village is situated on the flight path known as "Doodlebug Alley," with 238 crashing in the Tenterden Administration Area, of Kent which had the dubious distinction of the highest number recorded. Ashford Administration Area having the second highest number with 184, during the war (after the Doodlebug Battle) the Kent Messenger newspaper proudly claimed that the county of Kent had 100 more flying-bombs hit it than had London, but that number included many shot down in the sea. Several of the deaths and injuries to the Kent people were unfortunately due to the interception activities of allied aircraft and anti-aircraft guns trying to stop the Doodlebugs reaching the capital and its densely populated areas, but at a costly price in loss of life and injuries to the people of Kent.

DAVIS, DAVID HENRY. A.F.M. Pilot Officer (Observer), 44271.

Royal Air Force, 59 Squadron,

Died Thursday 1 August 1940. Aged 27.

Son of Albert Edward and Harriette Bertha Davis of Thorn House, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Buried St Valery-En-Caux Franco British Cemetery, Seine-Maritime, France.

Grave Ref: A. 8.

David was a regular serviceman and had joined the Royal Air Force in 1928 as a Boy Entrant, later Leading Aircraftman, 562061. He had served at R.A.F. Kohart, on the North West Frontier, India during the 1930's. His mother had resided at 19, Haven Green, Ealing, W5, and previously at 46, West End Lane, NW6. By 1940 David was with 59 Squadron, R.A.F. flying missions with the British Expeditionary Force in France, and had attended No.1 Observer School, R.A.F. Northcoates, Grimsby, Lincolnshire. On the day that David died his squadron which was part of Coastal Command and had moved from R.A.F. Detling, Kent, to R.A.F. Thorney Island, Hampshire. Flying Hudson's the squadron had started bombing the channel ports in July that year in addition to mounting anti submarine patrols. In addition to having been awarded the Air Force Cross, for service on the North West Frontier, India. David had also been twice Mentioned in Despatches. The morning of Thursday 1 August 1940 was noticeably quiet, but thick overnight mist in low lying regions had probably resulted in most of the minelaying operations that the Luftwaffe normally carried out during the hours of darkness being aborted.

One of the R.A.F. Photographic Reconnaissance Units, Spitfire pilots whilst carrying out a patrol over northern France, had noticed heavy German aircraft concentration at Cherbourg. After circling round the enemy held airfield and filming same he returned back to base, and Fighter Command are notified at once of the build up. Fighter Command controllers then decided that the airfield at Cherbourg should be bombed before the aircraft there can be used in attacks on Great Britain. David's squadrons aircraft was allotted the task of carrying out the raid on Cherbourg, and these would be escorted by 236 Squadron Thorney Island (Long range Blenheim fighters). Ground crews begin to load up the thirteen Blenheim bombers with the required bomb loads while ten Blenheim fighters were prepared and placed at readiness. At 1500 hours Blenheim bomber L8792 TR-A took off from R.A.F. Thorney Island, Hampshire, it being one of the thirteen bombers assigned to the raid, flying the aircraft was the squadron commanding officer, 29 year old Wing Commander (Pilot), Reginald G. S. Morgan-Weld-Smith, R.A.F., B.A. (Cantab.), of Strathblane, Stirlingshire, who like David had also been Mentioned in Despatches. At 1540 hours a break in the cloud appeared just as the Blenheim bombers of David's squadron approached the French coast on course, and the aerodrome on the peninsula could be seen by the crews as they commenced their bombing runs. Not far behind the bombers were the second wave of three 236 Squadron, R.A.F. Blenheim fighters, led by Squadron Leader Peter Edward Drew, which was also lost on the raid. 59 Squadron managed to drop their bombs successfully causing considerable damage amidst heavy Anti-Aircraft and machine gun fire from the aerodrome gun emplacements. David's Blenheim failed to return from the mission to Cherbourg, and the actual cause of loss is unknown. Bearing in mind which separate cemeteries the three crew are buried in, and the locations of each, it would appear to be indicative that the aircraft came down in the sea, possibly having been damaged over Cherbourg whilst carrying out the attack, as where other aircraft, including two of the Blenheim long range fighters of 236 Squadron, R.A.F. that were also loss. Reginald Morgan-Weld-Smith is at rest in St. Pierre-en-Port Communal Cemetery, Seine-Maritime, France. St. Pierre-en-Port is a coastal village about 40 kilometres west of Dieppe, and 15 kilometres north-east of Fecamp. The other member of the Blenheims crew was, 19 year old Sergeant (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner), Peter Pryde, of Trowell, Nottinghamshire. Peter is at rest in Veules-les-Roses Communal Cemetery. Veules-les-Roses is a coastal village 24 kilometres west of Dieppe, on the Dieppe to St Valery-en-Caux main road on the Normandy coast. 59 Squadron, R.A.F. had departed for France on 1 October 1939 under the command of Squadron Leader John B. Fyfe, D.F.C., flying Blenheim V's. Initially the squadron primarily carried out photographic reconnaissance of bridges, harbours and convoys. After the German invasion of France in May 1940 the Squadron withdrew to Thorney Island. The months operations for the squadron in August 1940, during which David lost his life, consisted of, eight convoy escort duties, ten night bombing raids on Cherbourg, and seventeen anti-invasion sweeps. A sad sequel to the loss of David's aircraft occurred the following day, when another of his squadrons Blenheims, (N3587 TR-K) which was flown by 21 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot), Deryck A. Drew, of Oxford, took off from R.A.F. Thorney Island at 0905 hours to carry out a search for his missing comrades, after which to carry out a

reconnaissance patrol of Le Harve. At 1105 hours N3587 TR-K was shot down over Le Harve, by a Bf 109 E-4 flown by Oberleutnant Paul Temme, the Gruppenadjutant of I./JG 2, killing the Blenheims three crew who are at rest in Ste. Marie Cemetery, Le Havre, France. David was of the Jewish faith, and numbered amongst at least 46 Jewish airmen known to have been one of "The Few" in the 'Battle of Britain.' His name appears in Morris, and his Jewish Chaplain card states his death was notified to the Jewish Council on 5 February 1941 and was published on the 14 February 1941.

HINDS, WILLIAM HENRY. Corporal, 6288179.
5th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Died 17 November 1943. Aged 22.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Hubert George and Sarah Lily Hinds.

Husband of Joyce Leah Hinds of Malvern, Worcestershire.

Buried Sangro River War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: II. C. 6.

Pre war member of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

HOLNESS, FREDERICK CHARLES.

Died 24 March 1943. Aged 23.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. F. T. Holness of 8 Council Houses, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Frederick died at Stanhays Agricultural Engineers Works, Godington Road, Ashford, Kent, and is also probably the casualty who is commemorated on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial, but as C. Holness. Frederick was amongst the victims of a German 'hit-and-run' attack on the town of Ashford, Kent which was particularly heavy on 24 May 1943. A number of the civilian casualties who are commemorated on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial, lost their lives during the raid. Although German documentation accessed shows that the 'prime target' at Ashford, Kent on that date was in fact clearly the railway works and goods yards, but numerous other bombs fell at other locations in the town and surrounding area. Stanhays Agricultural Engineers Works in Godington Road, Haywards Garage in New Street and Snashalls Bakery were all hit with resulting loss of life. In addition to these premises numerous private dwellings and the 'prime target' were also bombed. What could easily have been a tragedy of even more magnitude was when the Victoria Road County Junior School, next to the railway station received a direct hit and was virtually totally demolished, despite which thanks to the well practiced evacuation plan having been implemented, not a single death amongst the staff and pupils occurred. The transcriber of these brief commemorations recalls his former Head Master, Mr Thomas (Tom) Gilbert recalling the above raid about ten years after the event at a morning assembly at his Ashford Secondary School. Cleverly, Mr Gilbert had managed to draw parallels about the devastation the raid had caused there in Ashford, and the tragedy of the casualty roll from the raid, and compared it to a biblical story. However the memory which lingers most is when he remembered the exasperation on the part of some of his charges, when they asked him what make and type of aircraft the enemy were strafing the area, in addition to the bombing, and he had replied along the lines that he neither knew nor cared.

JUDGE, KENNETH CHARLES. Private, 10553717.
Royal Army Ordnance Corps.
Died 25 December 1945. Aged 23.
Son of Charles James and Beatrice Caroline Judge of Smarden, Ashford,
Kent.
Buried Smarden, Ashford, Kent, (St. Michael) Churchyard.

MILLEN, BERESFORD BRUCE. Flight Sergeant (Pilot), 1289479.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.
156 (Pathfinder Force) Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 25 February 1944. Aged 23.
Son of Basil Wickham Millen and Hephzibah Millen of Bethersden, Ashford,
Kent.
Buried Durnbach War Cemetery, Bad Tolz, Bayern, Germany. Grave 8. H. 5.
Beresford was the pilot of Lancaster bomber JA941 GT-A which took off at
1903 hours from R.A.F. Warboys, Huntingdonshire on 25 February 1944, on a
bombing mission to Augsburg, Germany. The aircraft was amongst 594
aircraft taking part in the first large scale attack on Augsburg, Bavaria,
Germany, the mixed bomber force was comprised of 461 Lancasters, 123
Halifaxes, and 10 Mosquitos. The various diversions employed on the raid,
and the splitting of the main bomber force into two separate waves reduced
casualties, despite which 21 aircraft were lost on the mission, they being 16
Lancasters and 5 Halifaxes, at least four of the lost aircraft were due to
collisions. The bombing at Augsburg was outstandingly successful in clear
weather conditions and against this fresh target with only weak flak defences.
The Pathfinder ground-marking was accurate, and the raid became
controversial because of the effects of its outstanding accuracy. The beautiful
old centre of Augsburg was completely destroyed by high explosive and fire,
with much less than the usual spread of bombing to the more modern outer
areas, where some industry was located. There were 246 large or medium
fires and 820 small ones; the temperature was so cold at minus 18 degrees
Celsius that the River Lech was frozen over, and many of the water hoses
also froze. German propaganda capitalised on the raid and publicized it as an
extreme example of Bomber Command 'terror bombing.' When flying at
19,000 feet Beresford's aircraft was located by a German night-fighter which
attacked and destroyed the bomber, which is believed to have crashed in the
vicinity of the garrison town of Lahr in the Black Forest, near the French
border. Five of the bombers seven crew were killed and are at rest in the
same cemetery, and the two survivors of the crash were captured, they being
Pilot Officer W.H. Liddiard who was injured and was confined in hospital due
to same, and Flight Sergeant J.A. Yeomans who was interned in Camp
L6/357, with the prisoner of war Number 2124.

MOORE, EDITH ELIZABETH.

Died 28 July 1944. Aged 73.

Daughter of James and Mercy Holdstock of West Cross, Rolvenden, Kent.

Widow of Obediah Moore.

Edith was injured at her home at Bakers Bridge, Smarden, Ashford, Kent, and succumbed to her injuries later the same day whilst a patient at Ashford, Kent, Hospital.

NEVE, JACK. As commemorated on the Smarden, Ashford, Kent, Second World War memorial plaque, of whom no trace has been made, is probably the following casualty, who was possibly known by all and sundry in the village as JACK NEVE.

NEVE, HENRY JOHN JAMES. Sergeant (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner), 1335481. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 5 July 1943. Aged 20.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Neve of Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Plouguerneau Communal Cemetery, Finistère, Brittany, France.

Grave Ref: Plot 2. Row 13. Grave 6.

REES, NORMAN CHARLES. Private, 3906139.

5th Battalion, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Died 28 May 1940. Aged 36.

Born Monmouthshire. Resided Kent.

Son of James and Mary Jane Rees.

Husband of Bessie Edith Aileen Rees of Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial, Nord, France. Column 114.

Pre war member of the South Wales Borderers.

RIPLEY, ADOLPHUS GEORGE. Air Raid Warden.

Died 16 June 1944. Aged 46.

Resided 18 Tootswood Road, Bromley, Kent.

Born Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Son of Mrs. Mary A. Ripley of Heathfield Cottages, High Street, Smarden, Ashford, Kent and of the late Albert G. Ripley.

Adolphus died at A. R. P. Post, Tootswood Road, Bromley, Kent. Probably served in the Great War as Private, 2197, Guards Machine Gun Regiment.

The 1901 census entry for Adolphus, shows his family residing at 23 Water Lane, Smarden, Kent.

Albert G. RIPLEY. Aged 37. Born Eastry, Kent. Labourer

Mary A. RIPLEY. Aged 34. Born Smarden, Kent.

William RIPLEY. Aged 13. Born Smarden, Kent.

Daisy M. RIPLEY. Aged 11. Born Smarden, Kent.

Adolphus RIPLEY. Aged 1. Born Smarden, Kent.

Elizabeth RIPLEY. Aged 10 months. Born Smarden, Kent.

SMALL, SYDNEY EDWARD.

Died 29 August 1944. Aged 61.

Son of the late Albert and Sally Small of Blink Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent. Husband of Celia Margaret Small (Neé Cheeseman), who is commemorated below.

Sydney died at his home, 1 Fairview Villas, Smarden, Ashford, Kent, with other family members.

Sydney served as a Corporal in the Home Guard. In the Great War he had served as Private, 211971, Royal Garrison Artillery, and Private, 81028, Royal Army Medical Corps. During the Great War, the above was his home address. His brother Percy F, Small also served in the Great War as Private, G/5097, 13th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, at which time his home address was Blink Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

SMALL, CELIA MARGARET.

Died 29 August 1944. Aged 54.

Daughter of the late Arthur Charles and Mary Ann Cheeseman of 'Forge House,' Doddington, Sittingbourne, Kent

Wife of Sydney Edward Small, the last casualty commemorated above.

Celia died at her home, 1 Fairview Villas, Smarden, Ashford, Kent with other family members.

SMALL, VIVIEN PAMELA.

Died 29 August 1944. Aged 5.

Daughter of Leading Aircraftman Arthur Leslie Small, Royal Air Force and of Marjorie Letitia Small.

Vivien died at her home, 1 Fairview Villas, Smarden, Ashford, Kent with other family members.

SMALL, SUSAN MARGARET.

Died 29 August 1944. Aged 16.

Daughter of Leading Aircraftman Arthur Leslie Small, Royal Air Force and of Marjorie Letitia Small.

Susan died at her home, 1 Fairview Villas, Smarden, Ashford, Kent with other family members.

UNDERDOWN, PERCY HARRY. Leading Aircraftman, 1217243.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 123 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died Italy 4 September 1945. Aged 23.

Son of Percy George and Annie Florance Underdown of Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Udine War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: II. A. 5.

Percy George Underdown served in the Great War as Private, 5991 & 202545, Queen's Own (Royal West Kent Regiment), and Private, 302804, Essex Regiment.

WILSON, JOHN. No clear trace.

WOOD, ANNIE.

Died 24 June 1944. Aged 67.

Resided at Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Widow of Dennis Wood.

Annie died with other family members at her home Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent, at 0620 hours 24 June 1944 when a Flying Bomb which had been shot down by a R.A.F. fighter aircraft crashed on the Wood family residence with tragic loss of life.

WOOD, BEATRICE MAUD.

Died 24 June 1944. Aged 35.

Resided at Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Daughter of W. C. and E. E. Johnson of The Terrace, Little Chart, Ashford, Kent.

Wife of Herbert Wood of Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Death as at Annie Wood brief commemoration.

WOOD, JOHN ALAN.

Died 24 June 1944. Aged 9.

Resided at Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Son of Herbert and Beatrice Maud Wood of Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Death as at Annie Wood brief commemoration.

WOOD, ANNE ELIZABETH.

Died 24 June 1944. Aged 2.

Resided at Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Daughter of Herbert and Beatrice Maud Wood of Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Anne was injured at Berkley Farm and succumbed to her injuries later the same day whilst a patient at Ashford, Kent, Hospital.

WOOD, KENNETH HERBERT.

24 June 1944. Aged 6 months.

Resided at Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Son of Herbert and Beatrice Maud Wood of Berkley Farm, Smarden, Ashford, Kent.

Death as at Annie Wood brief commemoration.

