

# Westwell

## Second World War 1939 – 1945

**MOORE**, JAMES FREDERICK PATRICK. Corporal, 2329499.

6th Airborne Division Signals, Royal Corps of Signals.

Died 9 June 1944. Aged 19.

Born Leicester, Leicestershire. Resided Kent.

Son of Joseph Moore and Mary C. Moore of Westwell, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France. Grave Ref: IIA. L. 5.

Pre war (Boy Soldier) member of the Royal Corps of Signals.

Unfortunately James is commemorated on the Second World War memorial plaque, in Westwell (St. Mary) parish church, with his surname erroneously spelt MOOR.

James was amongst the 8,500 men of his division who were used early on D-Day 6 June 1944, having been formed in May 1943 in preparation for the invasion of mainland Europe. With a 1st Airborne Division formed, the next logical number would have been the 2nd, but in an attempt to fool the enemy, James's division was numbered the 6th, thereby (hopefully) creating the impression that at the time the British army also had another four other Airborne Divisions. One of the prime tasks allotted to the 6th Airborne Division on D-Day, was the capture and securing of the Caen Canal at strategic places. In view of the date of his death, and where James is at rest it would seem likely that he was amongst the glider-borne soldiers that attacked and stoically held the bridges around Ranville. 19 year old Signaller, Benjamin C Connolly, of Grange Town, Cardiff, Wales and 22 year old Signaller, James Sparks, of Glasgow, Scotland, who were also serving in the same unit as James Moore, also fell on the same day and are at rest in the Ranville War Cemetery. Commanding their unit with noted skill, was 34 year old Lieutenant Colonel Desmond Smallman-Tew, from Pyrford, Surrey, who lost his life on 22 July 1944, he too is at rest in the same cemetery as James, and his comrade who fell on 9 June 1944, they being amongst the 2417 interred there. The British 6th Airborne Division served under the G.H.Q. Home Forces, from the time of its raising on 3 May 1943 with the formation of the divisional headquarters, at which time the divisional commander assumed command only four days later, and the divisional headquarters was brought up to full establishment only on 23 September 1943. On 3 December 1943, it passed to control of the H.Q. Airborne Troops for the period between 4 December 1943 and 5 June 1944. From the next day (D-Day) the British 6th Airborne Division came under the British I Corps for its participation in the Normandy Campaign, remaining under control of this formation until 30 August 1944, when it passed to the control of the British 21st Army Group before returning to the United Kingdom on 3 September 1944, as a part of the British I Airborne Corps from 5 September 1944.

**DANTON. HAROLD VINCENT.** Private, 6285834.  
1/5th Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey).  
Died Western Europe Campaign 1 April 1945. Aged 25. Born Wiltshire.  
Resided Kent.  
Commemorated on Westwell, Ashford, Kent war memorial.  
Buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen,  
Germany.  
Grave Ref: 55. D. 10.  
Pre war member of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

**ROBINS, JOHN RUMNEY.** Lieutenant (A).  
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Ark Royal.  
Died 1 August 1940. Aged 33.  
Son of Dr John Norman Robins and Muriel Winifred Robins of Folkestone,  
Kent.  
Buried Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia. Grave Ref: 18. G. 5.  
As John was a naval airman and in view of where he is at rest, it is possible  
that his body was later recovered from the sea, after he had lost his life during  
an attack at 0230 hours. H.M.S. Ark Royal launched an air strike with twelve  
Swordfish torpedo bombers, led by Lieutenant-Commander G. B. Hodgkinson  
on Cagliari, Sardinia. The aerodrome installations were damaged during the  
raid, but two of the Swordfish were lost.

**SKINNER. JACK.** D.F.C. Warrant Officer (Pilot), 1332584.  
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.  
Died 19 March 1945. Aged 21.  
Born 1923 Little Chart, Ashford, Kent.  
Son of Frank and Mary Skinner of Westwell, Kent.  
Jack attended Ashford (Boys) Grammar School between 1934 and 1939,  
where he is commemorated in the Second World War, Book of  
Remembrance.  
Buried Oxford (Botley) Cemetery, Oxfordshire. Grave Ref: Plot H/1. Grave  
226.  
At the time of his demise Jack was an instructor based at R.A.F. Brize Norton,  
Oxfordshire, training other pilots to tow aircraft and died resultant of an  
accident towing a glider. R.A.F. Brize Norton, was used for various forms of  
flying training until July 1942, when it became the home of the Heavy Glider  
Conversion Unit (H.G.C.U.), later being renamed No. 21 H.G.C.U., which  
remained at R.A.F. Brize Norton until 31 December 1945.

**CLARK, HUGH MAXWELL.** Pilot Officer (Observer), 69469.  
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 82 Squadron, Royal Air Force.  
Died 12 August 1941. Aged 24.  
Son of Douglas Edward and Dorothy Clark of Westwell, Ashford, Kent.  
Buried Strijen Protestant Cemetery, Zuid-Holland (South-Holland),  
Netherlands. Grave Ref: 10.  
Hugh was a crew member of Blenheim Bomber T2437 UX-Y which took off  
from Bodney, Norfolk on 12 August 1941 as one of 54 Blenheim's sent on a  
daring low level daylight raid to bomb power stations at Quadrath and  
Knapsack near Köln (Cologne), Hugh's aircraft being amongst those assigned

Quadrath as the prime target, near the targets the Blenheim's came under intense fire from flak guns which resulted ultimately in the loss of 10 of them including Hugh's aircraft which crashed at 1210 hours in the Hoekse Waard polder it being about seven miles south west of Dordrecht, Holland, killing the three crew, one of the reasons for the raid was to try and draw enemy aircraft away from the Eastern Front and thereby helping to alleviate the pressure on the Russians.

Hugh's comrades who perished with him Graham Rolland and Ernest Bainbridge are buried each side of him and were both Lancastrians.

**STROVER, PERCY ELVY.** Private, 5504437.

1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.

Died 10 October 1944. Aged 25.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of William and Elizabeth Strover.

Husband of Betty R Strover of Coulsden, Surrey.

Also commemorated on Ashford (Kent) civic war memorial.

Buried Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands.

Grave Ref:9. A. 9.

Percy is at rest in the grave next to Joseph Hadlum from Ashford, Kent, who also served in the Hampshire Regiment but in a different battalion. Joseph was also a former pupil of the Ashford North County Modern Boys School, where Percy is remembered as Percy Elvey Strover. Percy attended the school from 1929 to 1933 at which time he resided at Buck Street, Challock, Ashford, Kent. Following his enlistment in 1940, Percy first fought in Burma before being sent to the European war theatre. His younger brother Bert Elvey Strover who thankfully survived the Second World War, was also an ex pupil of 'The North' (1934-1937), and he served in the R.E.M.E. as a Driver from 1941, and saw action in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, during the Western Europe Campaign.





**DYGRÝN, JOSEF.** D.F.M. Warrant Officer (Pilot), 787678.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.310 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Born Prague, Czechoslovakia 6 March 1918.

Died 4 June 1942. Aged 24.

Buried Westwell, Ashford, Kent Burial Ground. Grave Ref: 243.

Josef was one of 'The Few,' being amongst the 87 of his countrymen who flew in the 'Battle of Britain' flying a Hurricane, whilst serving as a Sergeant (Pilot) in 1 and 85 Squadrons, Royal Air Force. Although the former was not officially a Czechoslovak squadron it did have a significant number of Czechoslovakian airmen serving in it. Following his retraining on a Hawker Hurricane after reaching the United Kingdom, Josef was initially posted to 85 Squadron, R.A.F. on 14 October 1940 which at the time was based at Church Fenton, North Yorkshire. Only a week later Josef transferred to No.1 Squadron, R.A.F. where he remained for eleven months apart from a period of nearly a fortnight in November/December 1940. Josef's posting to No.1 Squadron got away to a somewhat disastrous and inauspicious start, as on 30 October 1940 whilst landing, he damaged Hurricane I N2433, it being resultant of inadvertently setting the aircraft's flaps in the wrong position. Despite the early blip, in his time with the squadron Josef more than compensated for the repair costs to the damaged aircraft, as on the night on 10/11 May 1941 he took off from R.A.F. Redhill, Surrey in Hurricane IIA Z3687, to engage a German mixed bomber formation that was heading for London, and before Josef returned to land his aircraft, he had shot down three of the enemy aircraft. At 0035 hours whilst above the capital Josef engaged and destroyed a Heinkel HE 111, he brought down another of the same make and type about an hour and twenty minutes later, when it was above Gatwick, Sussex, and at 0325 he engaged a Junkers JU88 close to Biggin Hill airfield, Kent, which he also shot down. On 23 September 1941 Josef was posted to join his fellow Czechs of 310 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, R.A.F. based at Dyce, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and served with them until May 1942. After his time with 310 (Czechoslovak) Squadron, R.A.F., he was once more posted to No. 1 Squadron, R.A.F. which was then based at R.A.F. Tangmere, Sussex, and became involved in the squadron's "Intruder" operations. It was whilst Josef was engaged on an "Intruder" flight to Evreux-Fauville airfield flying Hurricane IIC Z3183 that he was shot down on 4 June 1942, probably by a German flak gun battery near Le Harve. Josef crashed in the English Channel, and just over three months later on 8 September his body was recovered from the sea at Worthing, Sussex, and later interred in the burial

ground at Westwell, Ashford, Kent. Like several servicemen serving with the British forces in the United Kingdom (and elsewhere), who were from Nazi occupied countries, Josef used an alias or “war surname” which in his case was Ligotický. For his gallantry, the British awarded him the Distinguished Flying Medal, in addition to which he also held bravery awards from his native land, they being the War Cross 1939, and Medal for Valour, which he was awarded whilst still a Sergeant, In addition to the ‘kills’ mentioned above he scored two others and also shared in the destruction of another enemy aircraft, which made him the fifth highest scoring Czechoslovakian night-fighter pilot serving in the Royal Air Force. Sincere thanks are due to Rabekka Hrbacek, of Vinohradská, Czech Republic, for providing some of the above information, and also the photograph of Josef Dygrýn.

