

Willesborough

Second World War 1939 – 1945

ALKIN, HORACE VERRIER. Apprentice.
Merchant Navy. Motor Vessel 'Silverpalm' (London).
Died at sea 9 June 1941. Aged 18.
Son of Mrs Alkin of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 97, also commemorated
in the Ashford Grammar School, Second World War Book of Remembrance where he had attended between 1933 and 1939.
It is possible that Horace died three days before the 9000 ton cargo ship Silverpalm was sunk by two torpedoes fired from the German submarine U-371, which was commanded by Heinrich Driver at 0326 hours on 12 June 1941 in the North Atlantic. It might be that the date of death recorded for Horace was originally an E.D.D. (Estimated Date of Death) which of necessity was, albeit rarely, sometimes the best method used due to, and resulting from prevailing wartime conditions. All 68 people onboard perished when the ship sunk, consisting of the Master 44 year old Richard Leng Pallett, of Surbiton, Surrey, 53 crewmen, 11 gunners and 3 passengers. M.V. Silverpalm was last positively sighted on 1 June 1941 in the North Atlantic, but was later reported as missing on 15 July 1941. The British trawler 'Cave' spotted a lifeboat with 8 bodies, in the assumed area of the Silverpalm sinking.

BARTON, H. Not yet traced.

BROOKS, ROBERT WALTER EDWARD. Ordinary Seaman, P/JX 215518.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Fiji (58).
Died 23 May 1941. Aged 24.
Son of Ernest and Alice Brooks.
Husband of Nellie L Brooks of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 50. Column 1.
Robert and those lost with H.M.S. Fiji are commemorated on a memorial plaque which is located inside Portsmouth Cathedral, Hampshire.
Built by John Brown Shipbuilding & Engineering Company Ltd., Clydebank, Scotland, H.M.S. Fiji, a Fiji class light cruiser was commissioned on 5 May 1940. During the Battle of Crete 1941, Robert's ship, commanded by Captain Peveril B.R.W. William-Powlett, R.N. was in 'Force B' which was comprised of two cruisers and two destroyers, that were under Admiralty orders to carry out sweeps of the west coast of Greece from Cape Matapan to Sapienza, to try and intercept any seaborne enemy forces making for Crete. Throughout 21 May 1941 all the allied naval vessels were subjected to heavy enemy air attacks, with at least twenty six being recorded, and several suffered damage and loss. The following day the aerial attacks became even more intensive,

with at least 67 being recorded. 'Force B' as with all other similar naval formations suffered damage and loss, the light cruiser H.M.S. Gloucester commanded by Captain H.A. Rowley, D.S.O., R.N. was sunk in the Antikythera Channel, about 15 nautical miles west of Antikythera Island, Greece in position by German Ju-88 and Ju-87 bombers at approximately 1600 hours, and Robert's ship at about 1900 hours. H.M.S. Fiji, after having survived some 20 bombing attacks in four hours, was initially hit by a bomb from a single Messerschmitt Me 109 aircraft which flew out of the clouds in a shallow dive and scored a hit very close to the ships port side amidships, when she was approximately 45 nautical miles south-west of Crete. Although badly damaged, H.M.S. Fiji was still able to steam at a reduced speed until half an hour later, when another single enemy aircraft dropped three bombs which scored direct hits on Robert's stricken ship, and she had to be abandoned after developing a heavy list and sank within five hours with the loss of 17 officers and 224 ratings. Two Royal Navy destroyers H.M.S. Kandahar commanded by Commander W.G.A. Robson, D.S.O., R.N., and H.M.S. Kingston commanded by Commander P. Sommerville, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N. picked up 533 survivors from Robert's ship, of which some later died of their injuries, and as such it would seem likely that Robert was sadly amongst their number. There is also the possibility that Robert died resulting from an injury from the time when his ship was put out of commission for six months following an attack on her by the German submarine U-32 on 1 September 1940, in view of the fact that Robert is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, the former seems the most plausible. It seems right in this brief tribute to Robert too also briefly make mention of his ships 32 year old Padre, the Reverend Christopher Champain A.M. who gave his life by repeatedly diving into the sea to rescue sailors from certain death, he was an England Rugby player, and not surprisingly the only one of the team to be awarded the Albert Medal. Captain Peveril B.R.W. William-Powlett, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O., R.N. (1898-1985) fortunately survived the sinking of H.M.S. Fiji and was the Governor of Southern Rhodesia from 1954 to 1959.

BURKE, R.E. No Clear trace. Five casualties are commemorated by the CWGC, for of whom show home and family details, non of which is relevant to Ashford or indeed the county of Kent. The remaining casualty has been entered below, as he appears to be the best match. Caution is advised however regarding accuracy, should anybody at some future date carry out more detailed research into the war memorial or this casualty in particular.

BURKE, ROBERT EDWARD. Sailor.

Merchant Navy, S.S. San Gerardo (London).

Died 31 March 1942. Aged 18.

Commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 92.

At 2222 hours on 31 March 1942, the unescorted 12915 ton steam tanker S.S. San Gerardo commanded by 44 year old Master Stanley Foley, was hit by two torpedoes fired from the German submarine U-71 and sank by the stern southeast of New York, U.S.A. The tankers master, 47 crew members, two D.E.M.S. gunners and one passenger were lost. Three crew members and three gunners were picked up by the British tanker Regent Panther and landed at Halifax, Nova Scotia. At the time of her loss the tanker built in 1922 by Palmers Shipbuilding & Iron Co Ltd, of Jarrow and Hebburn-on-Tyne, was

owned by the Eagle Oil & Shipping Co Ltd, of London, and was laden with 17000 tons of fuel oil en-route from Curacao for Halifax. In command of the U-71 was 33 year old Kapitänleutnant, Walter Flachsenberg, who was promoted to Korvettenkapitän on 1 July 1942. A native of Mönchen-Gladbach, Germany, Walter Flachsenberg survived the Second World War and died on 3 November 1994, aged 86.

BUTLER, JOHN ERNEST. Gunner, 1698062.
474 Battery, 76 Searchlight Regiment, Royal Artillery.
Died 14 November 1944. Aged 28.
Born Kent. Resided South West London.

Son of Henry Edgar and Selina Rose Butler of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Ashford (Willesborough) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section O. Grave 152.
Possibly John had been ill or injured for some time prior to his demise, because his unit was disbanded in September 1944, having been engaged in airfield defence as part of the 64 Anti-Aircraft Brigade since July 1940.

CAPELING, WILLIAM KEITH. Sub-Lieutenant (A).
H.M.S. Saker, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.
Died 30 April 1944. Aged 20.
Son of William Frederick and Jessie Alice Capeling of Ashford, Kent.
William is commemorated in the Ashford Grammar School Book of Remembrance where he was a pupil between 1934 and 1939.
Buried Portsmouth Naval Cemetery, New Hampshire, U.S.A. Grave Ref: Lot 162.

At the time of William's demise, H.M.S. Saker was a Fleet Air Arm accounting base in Washington D.C., U.S.A., having been commissioned on 1 October 1941 and remained as such until 1948. William died in an aircraft accident which occurred at Bar Harbour, Maine, U.S.A.

CHITTENDEN, EDWARD ANTHONY GEORGE. Boy 1st Class, C/JX166822.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Naiad (93).
Died 11 March 1942. Aged 17.

Son of Alfred and Lillian Chittenden of Brightside, Sheffield, Yorkshire.
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 58. Column 2.
H.M.S. Naiad a 5,450 ton Dido class light cruiser commanded by Captain G Grantham R.N. was torpedoed and sunk between Mersa Matruh and Sollum at 2001 hours by the German submarine U-565, commanded by 23 year old Kapitänleutnant Johann Jebsen. Edward's ship and other vessels were returning to Alexandria, Egypt after a search for an Axis convoy heading for Libya. Although 82 perished, 582 survived the sinking mainly due to the intervention of an American ship. At the time of the sinking H.M.S. Naiad had been the Flagship of Philip Vian, who later became an Admiral of the Fleet Sir Philip Vian G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O. (1894-1968). Johann Jebsen and his crew had left La Spezia, Italy on 21 January 1942, to undertake an eight week patrol; H.M.S. Naiad was the only ship that the U-565 sunk on the patrol, prior to returning to La Spezia on 17 March 1942. Johann Jebsen, a native of Pellworm, died on 23 September 1944, in the Indian Ocean, off Penang, Strait of Malacca whilst in command of the U-859, which was sunk by the Royal Navy submarine H.M.S. Trenchant (P331).

COLEMAN, FREDERICK THOMAS WALTER. Lance Corporal, 6288418.

4th Battalion. The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Died between 13 and 16 November 1943. Aged 25.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Robert and Emma Jane Coleman of 24 Kennington Road, Willesborough Lees, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Leros War Cemetery, Greece. Grave Ref: 3. A. 5.

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

Frederick was a pupil at the Ashford, Kent North County Modern (Boys) School 1929-1932. For most of the Second World War, his service had been overseas prior to his death, having served in France 1939-1940, followed by Malta 1940-1943. Later in 1943, Frederick fought and died during the disastrous Dodecanese Expedition on Crete, having left Alexandria, Egypt aboard H.M.S. Petard on 22 October 1943, and no doubt helping in the rescue of some of his comrades, when H.M.S. Eclipse was sunk after hitting a mine. Having arrived safely at Leros, the battalion and everybody else on the island were subjected to a massive increase in enemy air offensives which became heavier from 13 November with enemy sorties then averaging about eighty a day, causing havoc with the infrastructure and a high casualty rate amongst the defenders including to Frederick's battalion. It is likely that Frederick lost his life resultant of the enemy air attacks.

COLLINS, DAVID WILLIAM. Private, 6288233.

5th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Died 21 May 1940. Aged 24.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of William and Nellie Collins.

Husband of Elsie I Collins of Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated in Christchurch Church South Ashford, Kent, and on the Dunkirk Memorial, Nord, France. Column 38.

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

CRITTENDEN, JAMES ALFRED. Leading Stoker, CK/X80025.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Orion.

Died 29 May 1941.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 47. Column 1.

James ship was a Leander class light cruiser which at the time of his death undertook a costly but significant role in the evacuation of Crete which resulted in the loss of lives of 112 of the ships company, in addition to 150 of the soldiers onboard her. H.M.S. Orion was hit several times by shells, but most deaths were attributed to Stuka dive bombers. In addition to those lost about another 300 men were also wounded. Despite playing a significant but costly part in the above evacuations, arguably the ships main to claim was reputedly to have fired the first shot in the D-Day landings on 6 June 1944, by accident.

CRUST, HILLYAR ROBERT. Flight Sergeant, 1253122.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 26 October 1943. Aged 21.

Son of Thomas and Isabel Crust of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Singapore Memorial. Column 425.

Hillyar had been amongst the crew of eight aboard a Liberator IIIA, FL926 "J," which took off from its Ceylon airbase at 0544 hours on 26 October 1943, engaged on a long range photographic reconnaissance flight over Car, Nicobar Islands. Estimated Time over the assigned area was set at about 1100 hours, only nine minutes after the E.T. the aircraft's call sign transmission was picked up, from which it was deduced that the Liberator's position was 'spot on' over the right area of Nicobar Island. Despite a series of repeated attempts to contact the aircraft, the initial transmission was the only contact that was made. With the loss of Hillyar's aircraft it was then accepted that there was probably a Japanese fighter aircraft presence in the area, as 160 Squadron, Royal Air Force had lost another aircraft in the same area only three days previously. Later investigations revealed that there were Japanese fighter formations in the area where the Liberators had been lost, including aircraft which were based at Car aerodrome. Hillyar was initially posted as missing in action after taking part in an action off the Nicobar Islands, but later was accepted as died. Between 1932 and 1938 Hillyar had been a pupil at Ashford Grammar School where he is commemorated in the school Book of Remembrance.

DOWLE, PERCY GEORGE. Stoker 2nd Class, C/KX2238.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Neptune.

Died 19 December 1941. Aged 26.

Son of Charles James and Hilda May Dowle.

Husband of Nancy May Dowle of Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 48. Column 1.

Percy 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 John Norman Walton eventually survived the sinking of H.M.S. Neptune, after which he then spent five days adrift in the Mediterranean, before being rescued by an Italian torpedo boat of the Regina Marina on Christmas Eve. Following his rescue he then spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war in Italy. Percy served onboard with George Mabb who is also commemorated on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial. At the time of the loss of H.M.S. Neptune there was considerable effort concentrated on disrupting enemy supply lines from Italy to North Africa. In the months leading up to December 1941, approximately three quarters of ships sailing from Italy to Tripoli, Libya, were sunk. H.M.S. Neptune joined Admiral Cunningham's Malta based 'Force K.' On 17 December 1941 every available ship was deployed in an effort to ensure that the oiler H.M.S. Breconshire arrived safely at Malta. The threat came not only from enemy aircraft but also from two Italian battleships of the Regina Marina, whose presence was a clear indication of the Italians impending intention to sail a convoy to Tripoli, and 'Force K' sailed on 18 December 1941 in an attempt to intercept it. It was blowing hard from the south-west with a heavy sea running, at 0100 hours when the ships of 'Force

K' were approximately twenty miles from Tripoli, when H.M.S. Neptune triggered a mine with one of her paravanes. Directly behind her, H.M.S. Aurora also triggered a mine. Whilst going full astern, H.M.S. Neptune triggered two more mines that damaged her propellers and steering gear. 'Force K' was in a deep-water minefield. During the following three hours there were many attempts to assist both H.M.S. Neptune and the destroyer H.M.S. Kandahar, which was also badly damaged. However H.M.S. Neptune struck another mine at 0400 hours and quickly sank within a few minutes. Just sixteen men survived the ordeal and managed to climb aboard a raft, but during the next five days they died one after another, and only John Norman Walton survived.

DRAKE, ALBERT HENRY WILLIAM. Supply Assistant, C/MX56335.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Phoebe.

Died 26 August 1942. Aged 23.

Son of William Francis and Elizabeth Frances Drake of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated on the H.M.S. Phoebe Association Memorial, Bournemouth, Dorset, which was erected in 2003, and in the Book of Remembrance at Ashford Grammar School where Albert had been a pupil between 1930 and 1937, also commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 64. Column 1.

Albert was last seen alive on deck aboard the 5450 ton Dido class cruiser just before midnight on 26 August 1942, but could not be located the next morning, despite an extensive search having been made for him sadly he was never found. Initially posted as 'Missing at Sea,' but later accepted that Albert had died 26 August 1942. Prior to joining H.M.S. Phoebe on 13 May 1942, Albert had served aboard H.M.S. St. Mary's and H.M.S. Holdeness.

EARLE, FREDERICK JOSEPH. Sergeant (Air Gunner), 1332585.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 75 (New Zealand) Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 21 April 1943. Aged 22.

Son of Frederick Earle, and the stepson of Edith A Earle of Guildford, Surrey.

Buried Esbjerg (Fourfelt) Cemetery, Denmark.

Grave Ref: Collective grave A. 11. 11-14.

Frederick was a crew member of Stirling bomber BF506 AA-P, that was flown by 21 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot), Alan G. Tolley, of Wellington City, New Zealand, which took off at 2205 hours on 20 April 1943 from R.A.F. Newmarket, Cambridgeshire, as part of a mixed bomber force of 425 aircraft on a bombing mission to the Baltic ports of Rostock and Stettin on the Oder. Also airborne at the same time was a small diversionary force of 11 Mosquito's to carry out the first ever high level nuisance attack on Berlin undertaken by Mosquito's, they were employed as a diversion for the main force of heavy bombers which had been assigned to attack Rostock and Stettin. Frederick's aircraft was one of 86 Stirling's that were dispatched to attack the Heinkel factory near Rostock, due to an intense smoke screen hiding the factory the bombing pattern was very scattered and with very little physical damage to the designated target inflicted. At 0300 hours on 21 April 1943 Flight Sergeant Cyril Cobb the Wireless Operator (and Air Gunner)

transmitted a signal reporting that the aircraft's starboard inner engine was on fire which was the last communication sent. Twenty six minutes after the transmission being sent, the Stirling crashed at Boegballe north of Vejle, Denmark, killing all seven crew and was later reported as having been shot down by an enemy night-fighter. Although unable to find out for certain, but after checking through various relevant data it would seem likely that the Stirling was shot down by Luftwaffe 'ace' night-fighter pilot, Gunter "Fips" Radosch of 11./NJG 3., who by the end of the hostilities had 65 victories credited to him, he survived the war and died 29 July 1988. The Stirling's crew which had included four New Zealanders, are all interred in the same cemetery. In the next grave to Frederick is fellow crew member Gerald 'Jerry' Town, who was a school friend during the time when Frederick attended the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School from 1932 to 1936, at which time the Earle family resided at 14 Gladstone Road, Willesborough, Ashford. Frederick and Gerald had both enlisted in the RAF (VR) in 1941, Gerald is also commemorated on Ashford civic war memorial and has a tribute to him on this Roll of Honour.

FINN, JOHN HUBERT. Private, 6288440.

Corps of Military Police.

Died United Kingdom 21 May 1944. Aged 25.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of John Hubert Frederick Finn and Florence Wilmot Finn of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ashford (Willesborough) Cemetery, Kent. Grave Ref: Section T. Grave 2189.

Originally enlisted pre war in The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

FLINT, GEORGE ALBERT. Rifleman, 4826508.

12th (2nd Battalion, The Queen's Westminster's) Battalion.

King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Died 19 January 1943.

Commemorated on the Brookwood Memorial. Panel 13. Column 2.

Originally enlisted in the Lincolnshire Regiment.

FRIAR, NORMAN WALTER. Leading Seaman (Radar), P/JX 307147.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Penelope.

Died at sea 18 February 1944. Aged 21.

Son of Frederick John and Patience Mary Friar of 53 Hunter Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 81. Column 2.

Norman and 416 other members of the 5220 ton Arethusa class light cruisers crew perished when his ship sunk immediately after being struck by two torpedoes from the German submarine U-410 commanded by the U-boat 'ace' Oberleutnant zur See, Horst-Arno Fenski off Anzio, Italy. The first torpedo struck H.M.S. Penelope in the after engine room and was followed, 16 seconds later, by a second one which hit in the after boiler room, causing her immediate sinking. The remarkable point of the attack by the U-410 is that the cruiser was making 26 knots when she was hit. As far as can be ascertained, this is a unique case in the history of submarine attacks in all of the Second World War, no other vessel running at such high speed was ever

successfully attacked. 415 of the crew of H.M.S. Penelope, including the captain went down with the ship, and there were 206 survivors. Commanding H.M.S. Penelope at the time of her loss was 46 year old Captain George D. Belben, D.S.O., D.S.C., A.M., (Twice Mentioned in Despatches) of Verwood, Dorsetshire. Norman was a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School from 1933 to 1936, and had enlisted in the Royal Navy in 1941. Norman had previously served aboard the corvette H.M.S. Kingcup on convoy escort duties, and had been onboard the ship during the bombardments of North Africa, Sicily, Pantellaria and Italy. Norman had been originally posted as missing following the sinking of H.M.S. Penelope. The submarine commander Horst-Arno Fenski survived the Second World War, a native of Königsberg, East Prussia he was only 46 years old when he died in Hamburg, Germany on 10 February 1965.

GARNER, WILLIAM JOHN. Lieutenant, 276439.

1st Battalion, The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey).

Died 24 May 1945. Aged 21.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of William Percival and Florence Ellen Garner of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated in the Book of Remembrance at Ashford Grammar School where William had been a pupil between 1934 and 1941.

Buried Rangoon War Cemetery, Myanmar. Grave Ref: 1. C. 18.

GATES, TONY ALAN. Fusilier, 14689168.

6th Battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers.

Died 11 February 1945. Aged 19.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Ernest William and Caroline Ann Gates of 80 Albemarle Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Tony had been a pupil of the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School from 1936 to 1939.

Buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Grave Ref: 58. J. 9.

Originally enlisted in the General Service Corps, and had also served in The Buffs(Royal East Kent Regiment), the East Surrey Regiment and also the Green Howards. Tony served in the United Kingdom 1943-1944, prior to taking part in the D-Day Landings on 6 June 1944, after which he fought in other actions in Normandy and other parts of France, later being in action throughout the North West Europe Campaign in Belgium and Holland. Tony was moved to the cemetery where he now lies following the cessation of hostilities, as the other two soldiers from his battalion who were killed on the same day are at rest in Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands, near to where they fell. They being Private John Baker from Middlesbrough and Corporal John McInnis from Aberdeen. Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, was created after the Second World War when burials were brought in from all over western Germany and is the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the country.

GILHAM, ERNEST THOMAS. Private, 14559722.

1st Battalion, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Died Italy 28 July 1944.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Thomas Richard D and Lillian Fanny Gilham.

Husband of Rose Man Gilham of Gillingham, Kent.

Buried Florence War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: VI. D. 10.

Ernest had been a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School from 1929 to 1930.

Originally enlisted in the General Service Corps.

Ernest was amongst the 32 men of his battalion who were killed outright or died of wounds during its assault on Monte Sclari south east of Florence, Italy and probably lost his life at point 770. Having been initially carried forward on tanks to point 706 the terrain then became far too steep for tanks, soon after starting to climb on foot Ernest and his comrades were subjected to intense machine gun and mortar fire from well prepared enemy positions, despite their mounting casualties which had also included 79 men wounded, the forward platoons of the battalion got within 400 yards of the mountains summit.

GOODWIN, CECIL ERNEST. Aircraftman, 1422022.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 29 June 1944. Aged 42.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. S. Maris of Ashford, Kent.

Buried Willesborough Cemetery, Ashford, Kent.

Grave Ref: Section T. Grave 2226.

GOWER, LEONARD FRANK (Len). Chief Petty Officer Cook, C/MX46136.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Curacoa.

Died Friday 2 October 1942. Aged 35.

Son of Violet Una Frances Gower of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Grandson of Mr L. Gower of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Kilmory Old Churchyard, Arisaig and Moidart, Invernesshire, Scotland.

Grave Ref: Grave 6.

Len was amongst the 338 lost when the liner Queen Mary sliced through the 4,200 ton 'Ceres' class light cruiser amidships, when the Queen Mary was carrying 10,000 American 29th Division troops off Donegal, Ireland heading for the Clyde, to train in the United Kingdom in preparation for D-Day. While both ships were zigzagging, H.M.S. Curacoa commanded by Captain J. W. Boutwood, D.S.O., R.N, crossed the Queen Mary's bow with insufficient clearance. The Queen Mary sliced into her at a speed of 28 knots, cutting the light cruiser in two. Separated by about 100 yards, she sank instantly. Despite the impact of the collision, the Queen Mary did not falter or slow down for fear of German submarines, despite the fact that she had a 40 foot gash in her bow. Captain Cyril of the Queen Mary was under strict orders to not stop for any reason, but his crew and the American soldiers threw lifebelts to the men in the water, which undoubtedly saved many lives, as 102 were picked up by several other vessels which were escorting the Queen Mary. Amongst those who survived the tragedy was the commander of H.M.S. Curacoa. The ship was launched on 5 May 1917, and commissioned on 18 February 1918, she was rearmed as an Anti-Aircraft cruiser from August 1939 until April 1940.

GOWER, VERNON JAMES. Engine Room Artificer 4th Class, C/MX59333.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Kipling (F91).
Died at sea 11 May 1942. Aged 22.
Son of William Louis Punyer Gower and Hetty Louisa Carew Gower of
Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 60. Column 2.
H.M.S. Kipling was a "K" class destroyer, which at the time of her loss was
commanded by Lieutenant Commander Sir A St Clair-Ford D.S.O., R.N., was
bombed by a German JU 88 and sank off Mersa Matruh in the Eastern
Mediterranean. For an excellent source of detailed information appertaining to
Vernon's ship, please see the dedicated website www.kipling.org.uk by
Michael Smith.

HALE, E. No clear trace.

HARRIS, ALAN WILLIAM. Trooper, 7947020.
12th Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps.
Died North Africa 27 April 1943. Aged 20.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of William Henry and Harriet Harris of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Alan attended Ashford Grammar School 1933-1939, where he is
commemorated in the school Second World War, Book of Remembrance.
Buried Massicault War Cemetery, Tunisia. Grave Ref: II. C. 3.

HILLS, BEATRICE DOREEN. Private, W/270394.
Auxiliary Territorial Service.
Died 29 April 1944. Aged 21.
Born and resided Kent.
Daughter of Sidney L Hills and Elsie M Hills of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Beatrice Hills Close, on the Little Burton Farm Estate, Kennington, Ashford,
Kent is named in her honour and remembrance.
Buried Ashford (Bybrook) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section Z. Grave 3035.

HILLS, FREDERICK WILLIAM. Private, 14651035.
1/6th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment.
Died 20 September 1944. Aged 19.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Charles W. F. and Gladys Geraldine Hills of 32 Herbert Road,
Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Coriano Ridge War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: VIII. F. 7.
Frederick had been a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys)
School 1936-1939. Originally enlisted in the General Service Corps in 1943,
and served in the United Kingdom. In 1944 Frederick served in the Italian
Campaign, as a member of the East Surrey Regiment.

HILLS, THOMAS. Able Seaman, C/J48902.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Encounter.

Died 22 April 1945. Aged 44.

Son of Thomas William and Charlotte Hills.

Husband of Daisy Constance Hills of Brook, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ambon War Cemetery, Indonesia. Grave Ref: 31. A. 4.

Built by Hawthorn Leslie & Co. of Hebburn-on-Tyne, H.M.S. Encounter, an E class destroyer was commissioned on 2 November 1934. On 27 February 1942, H.M.S. Encounter took part in the seven hour 'Battle of the Java Sea.' The Dutch 1680 ton Admiral class destroyer H.N.L.M.S. Kortenaer was hit amidships at 1713 hours by a torpedo fired from the 13,300 ton Myōkō class Japanese heavy cruiser Haguro, and broke in two sinking almost immediately, losing 59 from the ships compliment of 171. H.M.S. Encounter rescued 113 from the stricken vessel, but one survivor later died onboard her. 'The Battle of the Java Sea' cost the lives of 6,339 sailors from both sides. H.M.S. Encounter was escorting H.M.S. Exeter to Colombo, Ceylon for repairs when she was scuttled by her crew, after being badly damaged in the Java Sea by the Japanese Heavy Cruisers Myoko and Ashigara on 1 March 1942. It would appear that Thomas died whilst a prisoner of war of the Japanese, as most of the crew were taken prisoner by the Japanese.

HODGES, HAROLD ROY. Private, 14292780.

General Service Corps.

Died 7 October 1942.

Also commemorated in Christchurch Church South Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ashford (Willesborough) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section M. Grave 320.

HOWLAND, WILLIAM JAMES EDWARD. Seaman, LT/JX241622.

H.M.T. Their Merit, Royal Naval Patrol Service.

Died 5 August 1943. Aged 37.

Son of William Richard and Mary Howland.

Husband of Catherine Ada Howland of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Lowestoft Naval Memorial. Panel 11. Column 3.

Leading Seaman, George Robert Coull who served on William's Minesweeper Trawler, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for courage and skill in a successful mine clearance operation. (Swept QZX 120B). London Gazette entry dated 11 April 1944. After six months active sea service the personnel (all ranks) of the R.N.P.S. engaged on mines-weeping and anti-submarine duties were awarded a silver badge, which despite being only about an inch in width was nonetheless a much converted badge and rightly so. Despite the incredible amount of hazardous work which was undertaken by the service and some of their at times rather incongruous nicknames i.e. 'Churchill's Pirates' and 'Harry Tate's Navy,' others would be wholly inappropriate to put in print here, but as the Second World War progressed the taunts turned to heartfelt compliments as more and more mariners became aware of the work being undertaken by the R.N.P.S., and at the same time were also acutely aware that countless numbers were saved resultant of their mine clearance operations etcetera. William is amongst 2385 of the R.N.P.S. who are commemorated on their impressive memorial at Lowestoft, Suffolk, it being the home of 'Harry Tate's Navy,' and which at the

outbreak of the Second World War had the unenviable distinction of being closest to the enemy.

HUXSTEP, PATRICK SOUTHEE. Sergeant 909029.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 55 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 20 April 1941. Aged 22.

Son of Harry Huckstep and Louisa Huxstep of Ramsgate, Isle of Thanet, Kent.

Commemorated on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 243.

Patrick had been a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School 1930-1933. At the time of Patrick's demise, his squadron was equipped with Blenheim IV twin engined bombers, primarily engaged on raids over Libya, and operating from Forward Landing Grounds in the desert.

KEYTE, CHARLES THOMAS. Corporal, 531194.

Royal Air Force.

Died 28 May 1940. Aged 26.

Son of Charles Thomas Keyte and Louisa Mary Keyte.

Husband of Doris Esther Keyte of Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. Panel 22.

MABB, GEORGE. Stoker 2nd Class, C/KX122257.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Neptune.

Died 19 December 1941. Aged 27.

Husband of Kathleen Doris May Mabb of Northfleet, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 48. Column 2.

George, who is recorded on some data with the additional Christian name of Edwin, was a victim of 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 his ships crew. Only Able Seaman John Norman Walton eventually survived the sinking of H.M.S. Neptune, after which he then spent five days adrift in the Mediterranean, before being rescued by an Italian torpedo boat of the Regina Marina on Christmas Eve. Following his rescue he then spent eighteen months as a prisoner of war in Italy. George served with Ashfordian, Percy Dowle who is also commemorated on the Ashford, Kent civic war memorial. At the time of the loss of H.M.S. Neptune there was considerable effort concentrated on disrupting enemy supply lines from Italy to North Africa. In the months leading up to December 1941, approximately three quarters of ships sailing from Italy to Tripoli, Libya, were sunk. H.M.S. Neptune joined Admiral Cunningham's Malta based 'Force K.' On 17 December 1941 every available ship was deployed in an effort to ensure that the oiler H.M.S. Breconshire arrived safely at Malta. The threat came not only from enemy aircraft but also from two Italian battleships of the Regina Marina, whose presence was a clear indication of the Italians impending intention to sail a convoy to Tripoli, and 'Force K' sailed on 18 December 1941 in an attempt to intercept it. It was blowing hard from the south-west with a heavy sea running, at 0100 hours when the ships of 'Force K' were approximately twenty miles from Tripoli, when H.M.S. Neptune triggered a mine with one of her paravanes. Directly behind her, H.M.S. Aurora also triggered a mine. Whilst going full astern,

H.M.S. Neptune triggered two more mines that damaged her propellers and steering gear. 'Force K' was in a deep-water minefield. During the following three hours there were many attempts to assist both H.M.S. Neptune and the destroyer H.M.S. Kandahar, which was also badly damaged. However H.M.S. Neptune struck another mine at 0400 hours and quickly sank within a few minutes. Just sixteen men survived the ordeal and managed to climb aboard a raft, but during the next five days they died one after another, and only John Norman Walton survived.

MAGEE, JOHN H. Radio Officer.

Merchant Navy, SS Port Brisbane (London).

Died 14 November 1942. Aged 54.

Son of Joseph and Anna Magee.

Husband of Margaret Magee of Willesborough Lees, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Becklington War Cemetery, Soltau, Niedersachsen, Germany.

Grave Ref: 17. A. 12.

John was a recipient of Lloyd's War Medal for Bravery at Sea, which had been instituted in December 1940 with the approval of the Admiralty and Ministry of Shipping, to be bestowed on officers and men of the Merchant Navy and fishing fleet in cases of "Exceptional Gallantry at Sea in time of War," it has only ever been sparingly awarded with 530 being given in the Second World War. Some recipients have been also later awarded an additional national honour, such as the George Medal or a grade in the Order of the British Empire etcetera. Built in 1923, the 8,315 ton Port Line, SS Port Brisbane commanded by Master Harry Steele, was sunk by the German surface raider 'Penguin' commanded by Kapitän zur See, Ernest-Felix Krüder on 21 November 1940, in the Indian Ocean. At the time of her loss, John's ship was laden with 5,000 tons of meat, butter, cheese, and 3,000 tons of wool bound for the United Kingdom. Formerly the 7,766 ton Kandelfels, Penguin was second only to the Atlantis as the most successful, it captured or sank more ships than any other raider, her tally of 28 ships, to total 136,551 tons, all achieved in less than a year, from 22 June 1940 to 8 May 1941. Penguin became the first of the German Auxiliary Cruisers to be lost when she was sunk by H.M.S. Cornwall on 8 May 1941.

MARSH, VICTOR STEPHEN. Sergeant, 574642.

120 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 12 August 1942. Aged 20.

Son of Stephen Francis and Adelaide Marsh of Ashford, Kent.

Victor attended Ashford grammar School 1933-1938, where he is commemorated in the school Second World War, Book of Remembrance.

Also commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. Panel 89.

At the time of Victor's demise his squadron were part of 15 Group, Coastal Command based at Ballykelly, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, and equipped with B24 long range Liberators. Whilst engaged on anti-submarine patrols and on convoy protection duties over the Atlantic Ocean the squadron sunk fourteen U-boats, the first being the U-597 which was sunk off south west Iceland on 12 October 1942 with the loss of all 49 hands. When the squadron had its first uboat success it was exactly two months after Victor lost his life over the Atlantic on a convoy protection operation. Ultimately 120 Squadron,

Royal Air Force, ended the Second World War with the highest number of U-boat kills, attributed to any of the Coastal Command, Royal Air Force squadrons.

MARSHALL, W. C. No clear trace, but is also commemorated on the Ashford, Kent, civic war memorial.

MASON, KENNETH REAVLEY. Flight Lieutenant (Flying Instructor), 66563. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 18 May 1943. Aged 29.

Son of Jackson and Ethel Maud Mason.

Husband of Winnifred L. Mason of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

L.R.A.M. (Eloc) Diploma Eng Lit (Lond).

Buried Elloughton (St. Mary) Churchyard Extension, Yorkshire.

Grave Ref: Row 6. Grave 6.

Purely conjecture as no supporting evidence has been sighted, but in view of where Kenneth is at rest, and considering his job whilst serving in the Royal Air Force, it would seem likely that he was probably based at R.A.F. Brighton, Yorkshire, and lost his life during a instructional training flight.

MILLEN, HAROLD LESLIE. Petty Officer, C/J106312.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Goodall. (K479).

Died 29 April 1945. Aged 39.

Son of George and Jane Elizabeth Millen.

Husband of Anna Christina Millen of Battersea, London.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 80. Column 2.

Harold's ship which was a 1430 ton 'Captain' class frigate, which built at the Boston Navy Yard, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. She had been sent to Britain as a 'Lend Lease' vessel from the U.S.A. in October 1943, and was originally intended to be named for U.S. Navy service as the Reybold (DE-275). As part of convoy RA-66 which was the last convoy to be attacked in the war, H.M.S. Goodall, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander James Vaudalle Fulton R.N.V.R., of Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, Scotland, left the Kola Peninsular in north west Russia bound for Loch Ewe, Scotland. At 2200 hours 29 April 1945 when the ship was at the entrance to the Kola Inlet in the Barents Sea, seven miles to the north of Murmansk, Russia, her magazine was struck by a torpedo fired from the type VIIC German submarine U-286, which was commanded by 35 year old Oberleutnant zur See, Willi Dietrich, that cost the lives of 140 of the ships crew. All those on board having been spared only an hour previously when a torpedo from U-968 missed H.M.S. Goodall. Shortly after the sinking of H.M.S. Goodall, the 51 German submariners aboard the U-286 also perished, as the result of a depth charge attack by the Royal Navy frigates H.M.S. Cotton, H.M.S. Loch Insh and H.M.S. Anquilla. H.M.S. Anquilla fired her guns the following day, but not in anger, as her crew had the odious duty of firing a coup-de-grace, sinking the severely damaged H.M.S. Goodall.

NICHOLS, LESLIE WILLIAM. Sergeant (Observer), 902486.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 9 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 22 December 1940. Aged 32.

Son of John James William and Ellen Emma Nichols.
Husband of Marjorie Nichols of Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ashford (Willesborough) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section T. Grave 2330.
Leslie was one of the crew of Wellington bomber L7799 WS-D which was flown by Sergeant (Pilot), Robert N. Harrison, that took off from R.A.F. Honington, Suffolk on an operation to bomb the aluminium and chemical plants at Porto Marghera, Venice, Italy. All six crew were killed when their aircraft crashed at the hamlet of Lullington Court near Alfriston, Eastbourne, Sussex. Shortly after the crash the bodies of the crew were carried to their respective home towns for burial. Leslie's Wellington was the only aircraft lost on the Venice raid, but it has not been possible to ascertain if the Wellington was on its outward or return flight when it crashed.

OWEN, ARHUR STANHOPE. Squadron Leader, 76117. (Mentioned in Despatches).

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 12 December 1944. Aged 37.

Son of Ernest and Cicely Gertrude Owen.

Husband of Christina Baird Owen of Ashford, Kent. M.A., F.C.A.

Buried Sevington, Ashford, (St. Mary) Churchyard, Kent.

PAINE, ERIC JOHN. Lance Corporal, 6291041.

5th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Died 7 November 1944. Aged 25.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Walter and Alice Paine of 67 Bently Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Faenza War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: VI. C.

From 1933 to 1937 Eric was a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School. Eric enlisted in The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) in 1940 initially serving in the 70th Battalion guarding military installations in Kent. He remained in the United Kingdom until 1943, he then served in the 5th Battalion of the regiment in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. During the fighting in Sicily Eric was wounded in the right thigh and evacuated from the battle front, and returned to North Africa where he was hospitalised. By the time Eric was fit for duty again, his battalion had reached the Italian mainland where he rejoined them on the front line, but he was again wounded during the fighting at Monte Cassino, on that occasion he was hit in his left arm. After being again hospitalised he rejoined his unit on discharge from hospital, but was killed in the city of Florence.

PATON, CYRIL. Sergeant (Air Gunner), 904673.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 214 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 9 May 1941. Aged 22.

Son of Thomas and Edith Maude Paton of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated on the General Post Office, Ashford, Kent memorial plaque at the Sorting Office, Tannery Lane, Ashford, having been employed by the General Post Office prior to his wartime service.

Buried Bergen-Op-Zoom War Cemetery, Noord-Brabant, Netherlands.

Grave Ref: Collective grave 32. C. 2.

Cyril was a crew member of Wellington bomber R1226 BU-L which was flown by 30 year old Squadron Leader (Pilot), Frank L. H. Eddison, D.F.C. The aircraft took off at 2210 hours from R.A.F. Stradishall, Suffolk on 8 May 1941 as part of a mixed bomber force flying to Hamburg, Germany. The aircraft crashed at Anna Paulowna near Den Helder, Noord, Holland, killing all the Wellingtons six crew who are interred together at Bergen-Op-Zoom War Cemetery. Squadron Leader Eddison was due to be posted to another Squadron as a Flight Commander on completion of this sortie. Stradishall was the home between 1938 and 1970, to several R.A.F. squadrons, and there is now an impressive memorial to those lost who served at R.A.F. Stradishall, the memorial was dedicated and unveiled in May 1994 at the former airfield, which is now H. M. Prison, Highpoint.

PEPPER, PERCIVAL. Trooper, 7889203.

7th Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps.

Died 17 May 1943. Aged 24.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Ethel May Pepper.

Husband of Hilda Agnes Pepper of Bethersden, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ashford (Bybrook) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section 68. Grave 91.

Pre war member of the Royal Armoured Corps.

PULLINGER, CHARLES ARTHUR. Able Seaman, C/SSX 18280.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Juno (F46).

Died Saturday 21 May 1941. Aged 21.

Son of William Henry and Lucy Beatrice Pullinger of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Brother of William Charles Pullinger, who also died and is the next casualty briefly commemorated below.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 43. Column 2.

Built by Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. of Govan, Scotland, H.M.S. Juno was a 1690 ton J class destroyer, that was commissioned on 24 August 1939. She took part in the Battle of Calabria in July 1940, and in the Battle of Cape Matapan in March 1941. In May 1941, H.M.S. Juno, was commanded by Commander St. J.R.J. Tyrwhitt, R.N., and was in Force C commanded by Rear-Admiral (Destroyers), Rear-Admiral Glennie. His force was to deal with the expected enemy landing at Heraklion, with Force C assigned to undertake patrols to the north of Heraklion. During the passage through the Kaso Straight the force fought off an attack by Italian torpedo bombers, and later an attack by Italian motor torpedo boats. Following the night time patrols north of

the island, Force C then withdrew again through the Kaso Strait. The force then came under renewed attacks from both German Luftwaffe, and Italian Regina Aeronautica airforce squadrons. The attack on Force C lasted from 0950 hours to 1350 hours on 21 May, and during which, at approximately 1300 hours H.M.S. Juno was struck by three bombs and sank in two minutes, when she was about 80 miles south of the Kaso Strait, and sunk approximately 30 nautical miles south-east of Crete. Prior to her loss she had endured and survived some three hours of enemy bombing. Of the three bombs that hit her, two hit her after boiler room and the engine room, flooding her. The third detonated the after magazine, and the resulting explosion from the last bomb broke the destroyer in half. Whilst there appears to be no contradictions regarding the position of the ships sinking (34° 30'N 26° 30'E), there is however masses of conflicting reports regarding what aircraft actually sunk H.M.S. Juno. Some data shows her loss was due to a Stuka dive bomber from the Stukagruppen III/StG 2 which was commanded by Hauptmann, Heinrich Brucker, and was based on the island of Scarpanto, which is situated to the east of the Kaso Strait east of Crete. Other data states that H.M.S. Juno was sunk by an Italian Cant Z.1007 high altitude bomber, which was flown by Lieutenant Morassuti of 50 Gruppo, also based on the island of Scarpanto. A Board of the Admiralty communiqué concerning naval losses in support of the Battle of Crete, that was issued on Tuesday 27 May 1941, names H.M.S. Juno amongst the ships. Other contemporary Admiralty documentation noted, records H.M.S. Juno and others that were either sunk or damaged by enemy bombers, as being attributable to aircraft of the Luftwaffe, as opposed to any due to Regina Aeronautica aircraft, and in the case of Charles's ship it states that Stuka's attacked and sank her. Five officers and 113 ratings were killed in the sinking, and 6 officers and 98 ratings from H.M.S. Juno are recorded as being survivors on the Admiralty documentation. One of whom was her commander who later became Rear-Admiral Sir St. J.R.J. Tyrwhitt. On October 2 1956, India's First Admiral, Rear-Admiral Ramdass Katari, took over as the Flag Officer (Flotilla), Indian Fleet, from Rear-Admiral Sir St. J.R.J. Tyrwhitt, he being the last of the British Royal Navy officers to hold the appointment as the Flag Officer of the Flotilla.

PULLINGER, WILLIAM CHARLES. Able Seaman, C/JX126978.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Partridge (G 30).

Died 10 October 1942. Aged 31.

Son of William and Lizia Pullinger.

Husband of Gladys Maria Pullinger of Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated in Christchurch Church South Ashford, Kent, and on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 55. Column 3.

Built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd, of Glasgow, Scotland, in 1942, H.M.S. Partridge was a 1,540 ton a P class destroyer. H.M.S. Partridge was sunk west of Oran, Algeria by the German U-boat U-565 commanded by Kapitänleutnant, Wilhelm Franken on 18 December 1942. At the time of the sinking H.M.S. Partridge was engaged on an anti-submarine hunt, it being two months after William had died.

RANDALL, ERNEST WILLIAM. Private, 6297200.
6th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders.
Died 4 February 1944. Aged 21.
Born Edinburgh. Resided Kent.
Son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Randall of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Cassino Memorial, Italy. Panel 11.
Originally enlisted in The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

SPENS, ROBERT RICHARD PATRICK. M.C. Lieutenant 92060.
65 (The Suffolk and Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery.
(T.A.)
Died at sea between 13 and 15 February 1942.
Born India. Resided Norfolk.
Son of Sir Patrick Spens K.B.E., Q.C., M.P. and Lady Spens of Temple,
London.
Husband of Elisabeth Clare Spens of West Kensington, London.
Also commemorated on the Ashford, Kent, civic war memorial, the Lyminge,
Kent civic war memorial, and on the Wye Agricultural College, Second World
War Memorial Plaque, plus the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 39.
At the time of his demise Robert's father was the Member of Parliament for
Ashford, Kent, and from 1931 until 1943 Sir Patrick was also a Commissioner
of the (then) Imperial War Graves Commission and again from 1949 until
1965. As a Captain he had served with distinction during the Great War in The
Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment), being thrice Mentioned in
Despatches and awarded the O.B.E. (Military). Sir Patrick was formerly the
Chief Justice of India. It was in India that Robert Spens first started to pursue
his hobby as a Falconer, and at times prior to his death had contributed to
various publications in respect of same, which had including the Falconer
Magazine.

STAPLEY, ROY STUART. Sergeant (Air Gunner), 1896761.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 101 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 4 November 1944. Aged 19.
Son of Stuart and Dorothy Annie Stapley of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfalen,
Germany. Grave Ref: 28. B. 6.
Roy had been a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School
1936-1937.
He was an Air Gunner on Lancaster bomber NF936 SR-F which was flown by
23 year old Flying Officer (Pilot), Thomas J. Edwards, of Abertridwr,
Glamorgan, Wales. The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Ludford Magna,
Lincolnshire at 1709 hours on 4 November 1944, engaged on a mixed
bomber raid to Bochum, Essen, Germany. Taking part on the raid were 749
aircraft, and was comprised of 384 Halifaxes, 336 Lancasters, and 29
Mosquitos, of No's 1, 4, 6 and 8 Groups. 23 Halifaxes and 5 Lancasters were
lost on the mission. Luftwaffe night fighters caused most of the casualties
amongst the bombers. No 346 (Free French) Squadron, based at R.A.F.
Elvington, Yorkshire, lost 5 out of its 16 Halifaxes on the raid. This was a
particularly successful attack based upon standard Pathfinder marking
techniques. Severe damage was caused to the centre of Bochum, with in

excess of 4000 buildings either destroyed or severely damaged as the result of the raid, several industrial plants and works were wrecked including the important steel works. A lot of the credit for the raids success being attributed to the work carried out by the Pathfinder Force aircraft. Due to the amount of collateral damage inflicted on the night of 4/5 November 1944, it was destined to be the last major raid on Bochum undertaken by Bomber Command during the Second World War. 23 Halifax and 5 Lancasters were lost on the raid, and the exact cause of Roy's aircraft loss is still unclear, all eight onboard the bomber were killed and are buried in the same cemetery. No.101 Squadron R.A.F were unique in having the addition task of operating the A.B.C. radio jamming device in addition to its bombing operations resulting in an extra specialist German speaking crew member being carried. In the case of Roy's Lancaster the specialist operator was 20 year old Flying Officer Bernard Zimring R.C.A.F. from Montreal, Canada, also amongst the crew was 19 year old Sergeant (Navigator) Claud Terriere from Mauritius who has the sad distinction of being one of the youngest Bomber Command Navigators to die on operations in 1944. Roy's Lancaster was delivered to his squadron, ABC equipped on 16 August 1944, and prior to its loss had been amongst the 771 aircraft that had taken part in the key operation to Essen, Germany on 25 October 1944. When lost, the aircraft had a total of 142 hours flying, and was one of two 101 Squadron, R.A.F. Lancasters which were lost on this operation.

TAYLOR, R. No clear trace.

THOMAS, BERNARD. Able Seaman, C/JX145277.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Barham.

Died 25 November 1941. Aged 21.

Son of William John and Ada Maud Thomas.

Husband of Daisy May Thomas of Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 43. Column 3.

Built by John Brown Shipbuilding & Engineering Company Ltd. of Clydebank, Scotland, H.M.S. Barham was a 31,100 ton Queen Elizabeth class battleship.

Commissioned on 19 August 1915, at the time of her loss on 25 November 1941 she was commanded by 41 year old Captain, Geoffrey C. Cooke, R.N.

Bernard and his Captain were amongst the 862 officers and ratings who died when the battleship H.M.S. Barham exploded and sunk. She was struck by three torpedoes fired from the German submarine U-331, which was commanded by Oberleutnant zur See, Hans-Diedrich Freiherr von Tiesenhausen, north of Sidi Barrani, Egypt. Whilst executing their escape after the sinking the battleship, the crew of the U-331 had a miraculous escape, when the submarine plunged to a depth of 820 feet, it being far below its safe depth of 330 feet. The commander of the U-331 survived the Second World War and died in Vancouver, Canada on 17 August 2000, aged 87.

THOMPSON, ALBERT THOMAS. Petty Officer Stoker, C/KX75826.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Gallant (H59).

Died 10 January 1941. Aged 33.

Son of Charles Henry and Emily Thompson.

Husband of Kathleen Margaret Thompson of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 46. Column 3.

Built by A. Stephen & Sons Ltd. of Glasgow, Scotland, Albert's ship, a 1350 ton G class destroyer was commissioned on 25 February 1936. She was mined and badly damaged on the day that Albert died at 0834 hours on 10 January 1941, when she was some 25 miles south-west of Pantellaria in the Strait of Sicily. The destroyer lost her bow in the explosion, and was taken in tow to Malta by the 1,883 ton Tribal class destroyer, H.M.S. Mohawk. At Malta she was beached in Grand Harbour below Floriana. H.M.S. Gallant was destroyed there during an air raid on 5 April 1942 and declared a constructive total loss. She was finally sunk as a block ship at St. Paul's Bay in September 1943.

THUNDER, ALLAN HENRY. Leading Seaman, C/JX 137686.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Sultan.

Died 6 April 1945. Aged 29.

Son of William John and Bertha E. Thunder of Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 83.

During the Second World War, H.M.S. Sultan was a Royal Navy shore based establishment at Singapore, which was destroyed on the surrender to the Japanese in 1942, on the reoccupation of Singapore in 1945 it was re-commissioned AS A Royal Navy base. Probably Allen died whilst a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

TUTT, BERNARD FRANCIS. Sergeant, 1384140.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 97 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 26 November 1943. Aged 29.

Son of George Earl Tutt and Agnes Tutt.

Husband of Hilda Joan Tutt of Tenterden, Kent.

Also commemorated on the Second World War memorial plaque located in Tenterden (St. Mildred's) parish church, and on the Runnymede Memorial. Panel 167.

Bernard was a crew member of Lancaster bomber JB221 OF-W, which was flown by 28 year old American citizen, Flight Lieutenant (Pilot) Carlos Manuel Brown, R.C.A.F. who had been awarded the Croix de Guerre by France. The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Bourn, Cambridgeshire, at 0030 hours on a bombing mission to Frankfurt, Germany. Of the 262 aircraft which took part in the raid only 26 were Lancasters the remaining 236 being Halifax's. All the bombers were despatched on a direct route to their target. Mannheim or Frankfurt? That was the question faced by the German interception controller who suspected one of the two locations was the bombers destination. Unfortunately for the bomber force crews the controller had guessed correctly and chose Frankfurt, which in turn meant that the flak guns were already prepared as the bombers made their approach runs overhead. 12 bombers were lost on the raid, of which Bernard's was the sole Lancaster. It crashed at

Brandau near Reinheim, cause unknown. Although commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Panel 167, as are four others of the crew, it would appear that they and another man are in fact interred at Brandau, and the remainder at Durnbach, and of those interred at Brandau, is the Lancasters pilot. Bernard's father was a native of the village of Aldington near Ashford, Kent, where the Tutt family had resided for many generations.

WEAVER, WILLIAM. Sergeant, 391936.

Royal Air Force

Died 14 May 1942.

Husband of Amy Hilda Weaver of South Ashford, Kent.

Buried Ashford (Willesborough) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section Q. Grave 691.

WEBSTER, WILLIAM HENRY. Gunner, 1099804.

137 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died Malaya 24 April 1942. Aged 30.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Harry and Lucy Webster.

Husband of Alice Ellen Webster of South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Kuala Lumpa (Cheras Road) Civil Cemetery, Malaysia. Grave Ref: 813.

Purely speculation as opposed to having been researched, but in view of the date of William's demise and place of burial it would appear that he was probably a prisoner of war of the Japanese, and when he died was on his way to the Changi Camp, Singapore Island. As the Japanese moved further down the peninsula, a temporary prisoner-of-war camp was established at Pudu Jail, to which United Kingdom and Commonwealth servicemen were taken before being sent to Changi Camp on Singapore Island. Some of them died, of wounds or sickness, while in this camp and were buried in the Cheras Road Cemetery. William being numbered amongst 137 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War who are buried in the cemetery.

WHITE, JOHN HENRY WILLIAM. Craftsman, 10533545.

Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Died 6 October 1944. Aged 29.

Born and resided Kent.

Husband of J M White of Willesborough.

Commemorated on the Singapore Memorial. Column 111.

The Singapore Memorial is known locally as the Kranji Memorial due to it being located in Kranji War Cemetery.

Originally enlisted in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and was possibly numbered amongst the R.A.O.C. personnel transferred to the R.E.M.E. at the time of the corps formation on 1 October 1942.

WHITEHEAD, FRANK EDWARD. Private, 6283134.
'C' Company, 5th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).
Died 20 May 1940. Aged 19.
Born Canterbury, Kent. Resided Kent.
Son of Edward and Hilda Whitehead of 60 Albemarle Road, Willesborough,
Ashford, Kent.
Buried Le Meillard Communal Cemetery, Somme, France.
Pre war member of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) having enlisted in
1939.

From 1932 to 1935 Frank was a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern
Boys School. Only two war casualties are at rest in the above cemetery, the
other being Richard Edwards who came from Islington, London and died in
1916. Frank had left for France with his battalion from Southampton on 19
April and arrived at Le Harve the next morning as a member of the British
Expeditionary Force. Frank was killed in action at Le Meillard, to the north of
Amiens, Somme, France, during the France and Belgium campaign, whilst
trying to affect an escape in a small party, which was fleeing from a massively
numerically superior and better equipped enemy force, which his battalion had
already engaged the previous day, only a few miles from where he was lost
his life. Franks company, commanded by Captain A.D.M. Hilton had been the
first in the battalion to sight and engage German tanks with wholly inadequate
arms, and also whilst at the same time being hampered by fleeing refugees
near Pommera east of Doullens.

WILDE, C. No clear trace.

WILLIAMS, FREERICK. Corporal, 6284729.
Army Catering Corps. Attached to the Royal Artillery.
Died 10 August 1944. Aged 33.
Born and resided Kent.
Husband of Lucy Beatrice Williams of Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Ranville War Cemetery, Calvados, France. Grave Ref: VIII. C. 21.
Pre war member of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

WILDER, FRANKLYN STERRETT. Trooper, 7899190.
10th Royal Hussars, Royal Armoured Corps.
Died 26 July 1942. Aged 25.
Born Kent. Resided Wiltshire.
Son of Franklyn Sterrett Wilder and Gertrude Ann Wilder of Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt.
Grave Ref: 3. D. 10.
Pre war member of the 10th Royal Hussars.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

BARNES, GEORGE EDWARD.

Died 27 November 1942. Aged 30.

Son of Robert and Mary Edith Barnes of 82 Cudworth Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Husband of Ivy Rose Barnes of 20 Curtis Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Died at the Southern Railway Works, Ashford, Kent.

BARTON, GERALD. Despatch Rider.

Home Guard.

Died 24 March 1943. Aged 21.

Son of Frank and Amy Barton of 98 The Street, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Gerald was injured at Stanhays Agricultural Engineers, Godington Road, Ashford, Kent, and died later the same day whilst a patient at Ashford Hospital.

BIRT, ESTHER RUTH MARY.

Died 17 July 1940. Aged 33.

Daughter of Mr and Mrs B. T. Bourne of Godington Road, Ashford, Kent.

Wife of R Birt of 63 New Town, Ashford, Kent.

Esther died at her home 63 New Town, Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated in Bybrook Cemetery, Ashford, Kent, but with Esther's surname spelt BURT.

BYRNE, DONALD JOSEPH. A.R.P. Messenger.

Died 6 January 1941. Aged 16.

Son of Joseph O and Olive Rose Byrne of Tanganyika, British East Africa.

Resided at 39 Bentley Road, Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Donald was injured on 16 September 1940 at Newtown, Ashford, Kent, and died of his injuries at Ashford Hospital on 6 January 1941. He was a pupil at the Ashford North County Modern (Boys) School 1935-1940, where he is remembered as Donald James Byrne.

CORKE, CLEMENT.

Died 24 March 1943. Aged 43.

Husband of Hilda Corke of 18 Church Road Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Clement, who was as a member of the Home Guard died at the Southern Railway Works, Ashford, Kent.

FOX, FREDERICK HERBERT.

Died 24 March 1943. Aged 59.

Son of Richard and Alice Fox of 22 Mead Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Husband of Maude Annie Fox of 66 Cudworth Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Frederick died at the Southern Railway Works, Ashford, Kent.

HUTCHINS, GWENDOLINE.

Died 24 March 1943. Aged 16

Adopted daughter of S.J. and E. Burgess of 1 Mead Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

Gwendoline died at Stanhays Agricultural Engineers Works, Godington Road, Ashford, Kent.

RAFFE, FRANCIS WILLIAM.

Died 16 September 1940. Aged 65.

Francis died with his wife Mary at their home, 95 Newtown, Ashford, Kent.

RAFFE, MARY JANE.

Died 16 September 1940. Aged 64.

Mary died with her husband as commemorated above.

TERRY, JAMES WILLIAM.

Died 26 October 1942. Aged 62.

Husband of Edith E Terry of 43 Curtis Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent.

James died at the Southern Railway Works, Ashford, Kent.

WOODCOCK, RAYMOND HOWARD.

Died 17 July 1940. Aged 2.

Son of Chief Petty Officer F. H. Woodcock (Royal Navy) and D. Woodcock of 14 Godington Road, Ashford, Kent.

Raymond died at 63 New Town, Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated in Ashford, Kent (Bybrook) Cemetery, and on the Ashford, Kent, civic war memorial.

