

# The build up to war - Timeline: Key events 1933 – 1939

## 30 January 1933

In Germany, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in 1933. He promised economic recovery, national revival and that Germany would return to international prominence.

## October 1933

Germany withdrew from the League of Nations.

## August 1934

After the death of President von Hindenburg, Hitler combined his current role of Chancellor with head of state and head of government, to become the all-powerful Führer (Leader) of Germany.

## January 1935

The Treaty of Versailles had transferred the Saarland from Germany to France. In January 1935, the people living there voted overwhelmingly to become part of Germany again.

## March 1935

The Versailles Treaty had also placed restrictions on the size of the German Army and Air Force, but from March 1935 the armed forces were built up and conscription was re-introduced.

## 3 October 1935

Italy invaded Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia). Britain and France struggled to coordinate an effective response; they imposed limited economic sanctions, which only pushed Italy into closer co-operation with Germany.

## 7 March 1936

Encouraged by the weak response to Italy's attack on Abyssinia, German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, which had been de-militarised by the Versailles Treaty. Hitler's success in the Rhineland, and lack of opposition from Britain and France, encouraged him to pursue an even more aggressive foreign policy.

## October 1936

Germany and Italy signed a treaty of friendship in October 1936.

## July 1936

Intervention in the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in July 1936, reinforced the divide between Italy and Germany on one side, and Britain and France on the other.

## 3 March 1938

Germany annexed Austria, which was known as the Anschluss (Union) of the two countries. Most Austrian people welcomed this, and there was little international resistance; many viewed it as a natural union.

## Summer 1938

Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland, the German-speaking region of Czechoslovakia, should become part of Germany. Hitler threatened war if the Sudetenland was not ceded to Germany.

## 29 - 30 September 1938

The Italian, British, French and German leaders met in Munich to discuss the question of the Sudetenland. They agreed to accept German annexation of the Sudetenland on the understanding that no further territorial claims would be made. Czechoslovakia was not invited to take part in the discussions, but was forced to accept.

## October 1938

Under the Treaty of Versailles, the former German city of Danzig (present day Gdansk) was established as a Free City run by the League of Nations to provide Poland with access to the sea. In October 1938, the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop met with the Polish ambassador Josef Lipski to discuss the return Danzig to Germany.

## 5 January 1939

Discussions about Danzig became more forceful at a meeting between Hitler and Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck. However, the Poles refused to back down - Danzig was an issue over which they would fight.

## 15 March 1939

Despite the Munich Agreement, German forces occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia.

## April 1939

Hitler ordered preparations for the invasion of Poland. Britain and France gave guarantees to defend Polish independence, but war was still viewed as a last resort.

## May 1939

The relationship between Germany and Italy was cemented in May 1939 by the 'Pact of Steel', a military alliance. Hitler also strengthened ties with Japan, the main threat to Britain's Empire in the Far East.

## 23 August 1939

Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia signed a pact of non-aggression. A secret part of this allowed for German and Soviet invasions of Poland.

## 25 August 1939

In response to the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Britain and Poland entered into a formal military alliance.

## 29 August 1939

Hitler presented British ambassador Sir Neville Henderson with a set of minimum conditions for the settlement of the Polish crisis, and demanded that Poland enter negotiations within 24 hours. Britain and Poland refused and the situation became deadlocked.

## 1 September 1939

The German invasion of Poland began at 4.45am.

## 3 September 1939

**A British ultimatum demanding that Germany withdraw its troops from Poland expired at 11.00am without a reply. Britain and France declared war on Germany.**

## 1939 - 11.15am, 3 SEPTEMBER, WAR DECLARED



This poignant image, taken at RAF Duxford, shows the moment at 11.15am on 3 September 1939 when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced that Britain was at war with Germany.

Gathered in the Officers' Mess are pilots and army officers, probably of the Cambridgeshire Regiment.

The pilot seated third from the right is believed to be **Pilot Officer John Greer "Beryl" Boyle**, a Canadian airman who was killed in action on 28 September 1940 when his Spitfire crashed at Dadmans. He is commemorated in this display and is buried in Lynsted Extension Churchyard.

Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District":

**November 1939**

War conditions prevented the Swale Rural District Council proceeding with a scheme for the erection of houses for agricultural workers, and also delayed progress in Faversham Town Council's housing scheme in Lower Road.

**December 1939**

Finland's heroic resistance was arousing the utmost sympathy in this country and help for the Finnish Red Cross Society was organised in London. This was actively assisted by Mrs. McDougall and her daughters at Provender, Norton, where a Hospital Supplies Depot was set up.



Working party at Provender, Norton, where a Hospital Supplies Depot was established by Mrs. McDougall to assist the Finnish Red Cross Society.

## BATTLE OF THE RIVER PLATE

13 December 1939

The Battle of the River Plate was both the first naval battle in the Second World War and the first Battle of the Atlantic in South American waters.

**Daniel Taylor of Conyer** was serving as a stoker on HMS Ajax, which along with HMS Exeter and HMS Achilles, was a Leander-class cruiser. These took part in a daring and heroic fight against the German Pocket Battleship "Admiral Graf Spee" off the estuary of the River Plate bordering Argentina and Uruguay.

Exeter and Ajax spotted the Graf Spee, which opened fire on Exeter with her main battery. Exeter returned fire, followed by Ajax and Achilles. Exeter had taken three hits, disabling her two forward turrets, destroying her bridge and her aircraft catapult, and starting major fires. Ajax and Achilles moved closer to Admiral Graf Spee to relieve the pressure on Exeter.



HMS Achilles seen from HMS Ajax during the Battle of the River Plate

Thinking the two light cruisers were making a torpedo attack, the Graf Spee turned away under a smokescreen. Exeter withdrew as by now only one of her gun turrets was still in action and she had suffered 61 dead and 23 wounded. Thirty minutes later she engaged again, firing from her stern turret. She was hit again and was forced to withdraw listing to port. The Graf Spee then fired on Ajax that disabled her aft turrets. Graf Spee

then retreated to the River Plate estuary. The British ships took up position in the mouth of the estuary blocking any escape. The German ship put into Montevideo, Uruguay, as it had been hit approximately 70 times; 36 men were killed and 60 more were wounded, including the Captain, Langsdorff, who had also been wounded twice.

Once in port, the wounded crewmen were taken to local hospitals and the dead were buried with full military honours. The captured British seamen were released. Repairs necessary to make the ship seaworthy were expected to take up to two weeks. British naval intelligence worked to convince Langsdorff that a vastly superior force was on its way to destroy his ship if he attempted to leave harbour. He had hoped to break out and seek refuge in Buenos Aires, where the Argentine government would intern the ship.

Although neutral, Uruguay was sympathetic to Britain and Langsdorff knew that his ship and crew would be interned and the British would be allowed access to the Graf Spee. Langsdorff ordered the destruction of all sensitive equipment and prepared to scuttle the ship. It is said that 20,000 watched as the Graf Spee weighed anchor and moved towards the mouth of the estuary. Multiple explosions rang out and jets of flame rose high into the air.

Two days later, in his room in a Buenos Aires hotel, Langsdorff shot himself.



The German battleship ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE in flames after being scuttled in the River Plate estuary off Montevideo, Uruguay

## 1940

The Progress of the War	
April	9 Germany invades Denmark and Norway
May	10 Germany invades the Low Countries
June	3 Evacuation of Dunkirk completed
	11 British troops evacuated from Norway
	22 France capitulates
	29 Germans occupy the Channel Isles
August to October	10 - 31 German air offensive against Britain (The Battle of Britain)
October	28 Italy invades Greece
November	11-12 Successful attack on the Italian Fleet in Taranto Harbour
December	9-11 Italian invasion of Egypt defeated at the Battle of Sidi Barrani

### Gordon Richard HOPPER of OARE

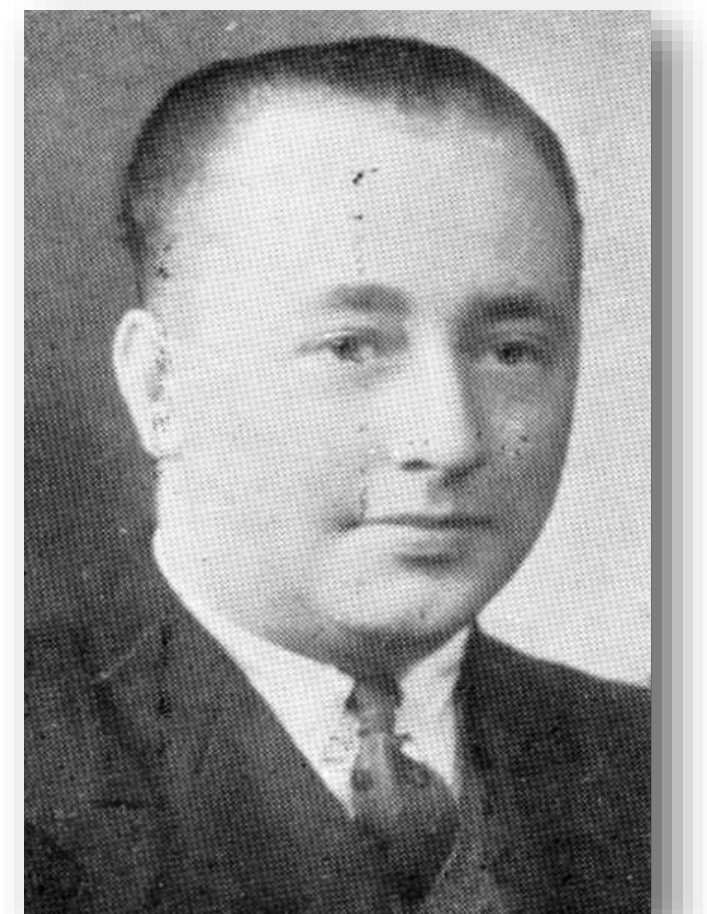
Driver, Royal Army Service Corps

Died of illness on 5 February 1940, aged 23

**G**ordon was born in Dover on 15 June 1916. Son of Alfred and Celia Hopper, the 1939 Register records him living with his parents at The Stores, Church Road, Oare. He worked as a garage hand, car and lorry driver and greaser.

Just five weeks after joining the RASC, he died of sudden illness while stationed at the Army training Camp in Catterick, Yorkshire.

He is buried in Faversham Borough Cemetery and is also commemorated on the Davington School memorial plaque, located in the parish church of St. Mary Magdalene & St. Lawrence, Davington.



# FORMATION OF THE KENT HOME GUARD

**O**n the evening of 14 May 1940, Anthony Eden, the then Secretary of War, made a radio broadcast to the country, asking for men between the ages of 17 and 45 to come forward to enrol in a military force to be called the "Local Defence Volunteers" (LDV). The LDV would be part-time and unpaid. Its primary intention to combat paratroop landings behind the main defence lines such as had just happened in Belgium and Holland.

Men were asked to report to their local police stations where the officers were inundated with volunteers, some even before the speech was completed. It was estimated that 10,000 men from Kent enrolled within the first twenty-four hours. Many more volunteered by post in the first few days. Others brought in guns and ammunition to lend to the LDV. These were held by the police until the actual formation of the LDV.

On Wednesday 15 May, Brigadier General H.S. Franklin, CMG, CBE, DSO, was asked to organise the LDV in Kent. Just two days later, on the evening of 17 May, Franklin was ordered to have 1,500 men on armed patrol by the next evening. By 10.30pm the following night, more than 1,000 armed men were on duty throughout Kent. Most were veterans of the First World War, but few had any idea of what they should do in the event of the German invasion. Even so, it was a great achievement to get so far in just three days.

The LDV faced many problems with the supply of weapons and equipment. Uniforms were hard to come by and when they did arrive, rarely fitted anybody. Steel helmets were at first non-

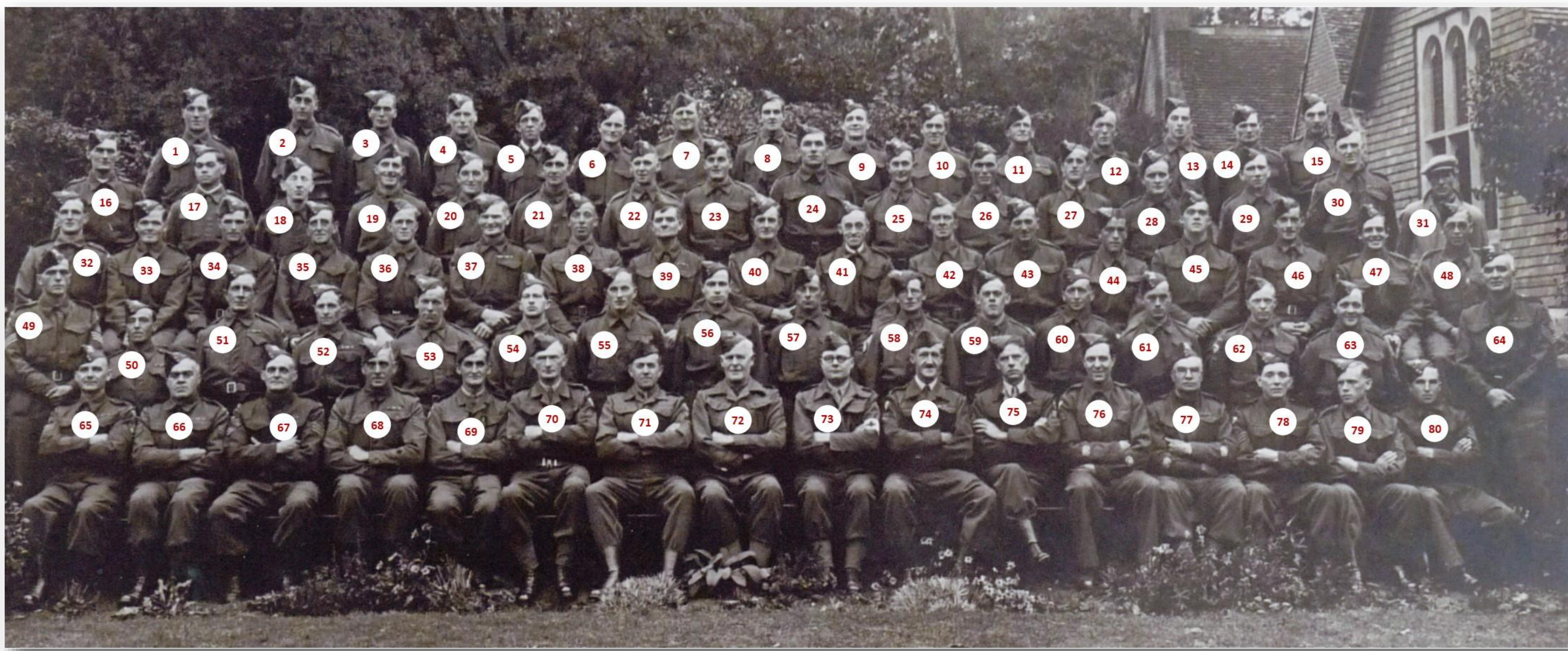
existent and it was a great source of irritation to the men to see the ARP and other Civil Defence Units all with steel helmets when they had none. Also slow to arrive were webbing and gas masks. The LDV were issued with the military type of mask which was greatly superior to the Civil Defence version. The only weapons the LDV had for some time were the assortment of weapons donated after the radio announcement. To counter this shortage, several schemes were tried. One was to produce a special single-slug shotgun cartridge which ruined many a good gun, and another was the use of the Molotov Cocktail or petrol bomb. At one stage, the LDV were even issued with pikes made from a length of gas pipe with a bayonet fixed to the end.

**In August 1940, on the insistence of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the name LDV was changed to Home Guard, even though it meant scrapping thousands of armbands already made for the LDV.**

Towards the end of the summer, the weapons situation started to ease with the arrival of a large batch of Springfield rifles from the USA and Ross rifles from Canada.

On 3rd August 1940, the Kent Home Guard became affiliated to the local infantry regiments, those in the western part of Kent to the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment, and those in the eastern part to the East Kent Regiment (The Buffs). Affiliation meant that the men could wear the cap badge of the local regiment.

The Sittingbourne and Faversham battalions were ideally situated to defend the London to Dover road running through both towns. The Faversham battalion comprised ten companies with a total of approximately 2,000 men.



**"C" Company (Faversham) 9th Battalion, Kent Home Guard (1944)**

1 Cpl A W Wood	2 L/Cpl F Austin	3 Cpl G Cork	4 Cpl A W Inward	5 L/Cpl V Page	6 Cpl R Austin	7 Pte H Underdown	8 L/Cpl E Carlton	9 L/Cpl A Manser	10 Pte W Rose	11 L/Cpl C Adams	12 Pte W Crouch	13 Pte P Wood	14 Pte W Beer	15 Pte A Maryon		
16 Sgt J W Fisher	17 Pte C Underhill	18 Pte C Hills	19 Pte A H Day	20 Pte H A Baker	21 Pte J Bruce	22 Pte J Homewood	23 Pte F Tumber	24 Pte F Hodges	25 Pte R Goodwin	26 Pte F Smith	27 Pte W Tumber	28 Pte G Prett	29 Pte W Couzins	30 Cpl E Banks	31 Sgt F Worsley	
32 Pte W Sidders	33 Pte J W Fagg	34 Pte L Apps	35 Pte W Johnson	36 Pte W Johnson	37 Pte W Newport	38 Pte F J Newport	39 Pte W Philpott	40 Pte C Edwards	41 Pte C Harris	42 Pte L Nethercoat	43 Pte L Beacon	44 Pte C Baker	45 Pte J Wyles	46 Pte G Read	47 Pte C Boorman	48 Pte L Pout
49 Sgt A J Revell	50 Pte J E Butler	51 Pte F Pilcher	52 L/Cpl B T Hughes	53 Pte A E Crouch	54 L/Cpl B Wakelyn	55 Pte A Austin	56 Pte J R Rider	57 Pte T H Butler	58 Pte E Leonard	59 L/Cpl N Taylor	60 Pte E W Jemmett	61 Pte D G Bowman	62 Pte W J Silcock	63 Pte E Norris	64 Sgt P Stowers	
65 CQMS H J Bowman	66 Sgt A Lawrence	67 Sgt F J Dixon	68 Sgt E Kirby	69 2/Lt P Goodwin	70 Lt A J Philpott	71 Capt R G Boucher	72 2/Lt, Maj R C Ching OC Coy	73 Capt T T Jardine, MO	74 Lt A Wildash	75 Lt A Duck	76 CSM Macey	77 WO A Taylor	78 Sgt J Mount	79 Sgt W J Boorman	80 Sgt A Goatham	

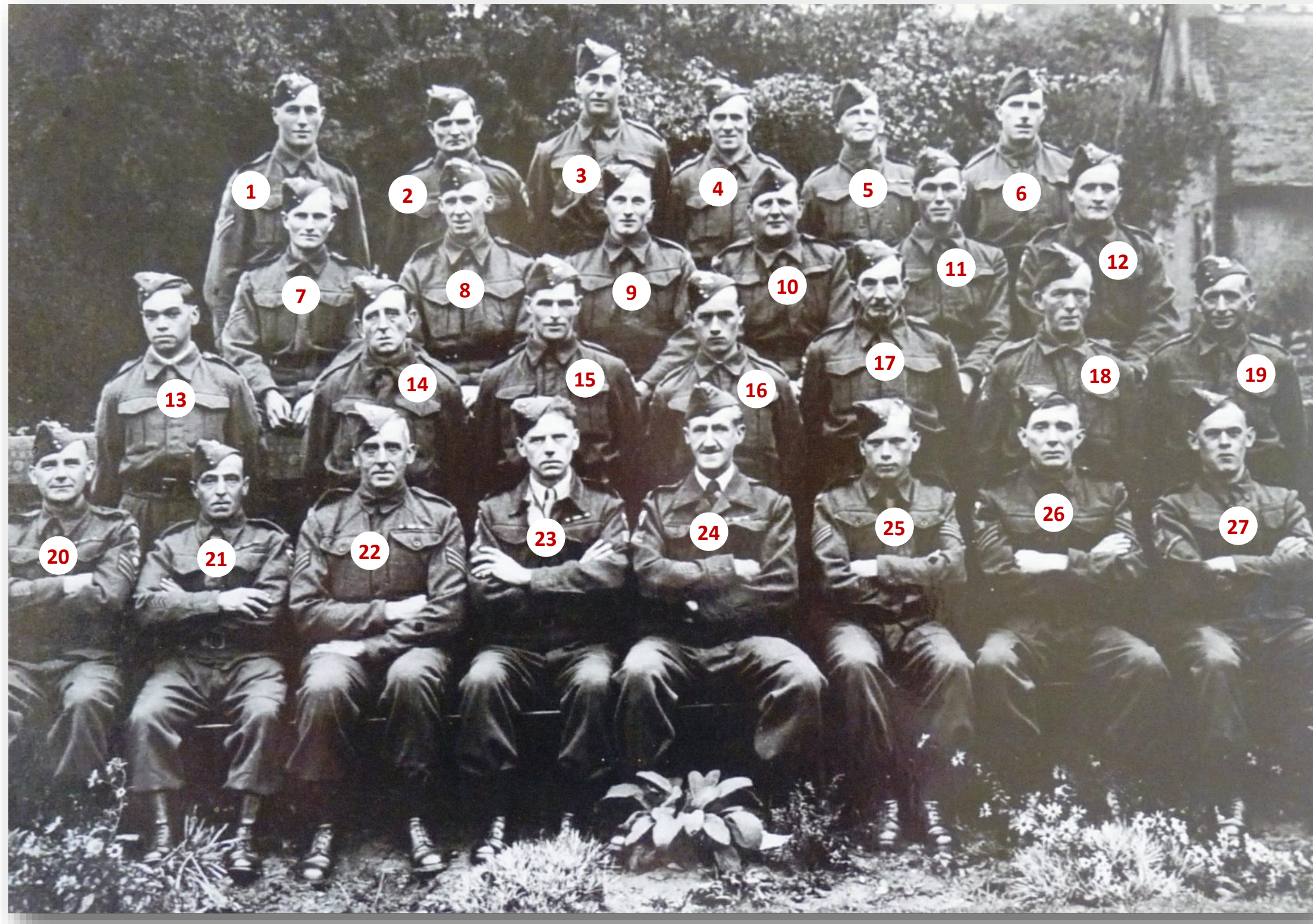


*Major Herbert Seymour Hatfield of Rushett, Norton, was the Commanding Officer of the 9th (Faversham) Battalion, Kent Home Guard.*

*Major Hatfield was a career soldier having served in the King's Dragoon Guards including time in Iraq.*

*He died in 1950.*

# Lynsted Platoon of the Faversham Home Guard (1944)



1 Alf Wood	2 Bill Beer	3 Fred Austin	4 Bill Rose	5 Charlie Adams	6 Arthur "Brusher" Day	
7 Reg Austin	8 Jack Homewood	9 Alan Austin	10 Harry Underdown	11 F Smith	12 George Pratt	
13 Charlie Underhill	14 Bill Johnson	15 Len Apps	16 Doug Bowman	17 Albert Maryon	18 Bill Crouch	19 Ted Jemmett
20 H J Bowman	21 Johnny Butler	22 Ted Kirby	23 Archie Dack	24 Archie Wildash	25 Jim Bowman	26 Jack Mount
						27 Norman

## "Churchill's Secret Army", "The Hush-hush" or the "Stay-behinds"

First formed in Kent to help protect the strategically vulnerable south-east of England, a secret civilian guerrilla force, known as "Churchill's secret army", "The Hush Hush" or "Stay Behinds", was established in June 1940.

In early 1940, England was faced with the very real prospect of a German invasion. In the event of a successful German invasion, this unit would become the British resistance.

The men were picked from those too young or old to join the regular armed forces, in reserved occupations, eg farmers, gamekeepers. The prerequisite being they had an intimate knowledge of their local area. This made poachers welcomed into the force. All members had to sign the Official Secrets Act and many of the men took the secret of their service to the grave. It is estimated that around 3,500 people served in this special force.

### KENT'S SECRET ARMY

In June 1940, under the command of Captain Peter Fleming (older brother of Ian Fleming of James Bond fame) along with Mike Calvert, a Royal Engineers explosives expert, and a detachment of Lovat Scouts, the "XII Corps Observation Unit", a Kent unit, became the prototype for the British Resistance Organisation.

Based at The Garth, a large house at Bilting between Ashford and Canterbury (now known as Bilting House) training started. This included:

- sabotage and combat, including silent killing techniques for use on high-ranking German officials or British double agents
- destroying transport routes,
- disposing of ammunition or fuel dumps,
- destroying airfields,
- generally impeding the advance of opposing forces in any way to allow the main armed forces to recover and counter-attack.

Captain Fleming set some daunting tasks for his trainees. Getting himself in hot water in the process.

*It had been made clear that the regular army were unhappy about the forming of these Units, but had been overruled by Churchill. This would not have been helped by a practice raid on Field Marshall Montgomery's Headquarters, where the trainees removed secret papers from his safe and planted time pencils [a small detonator] in the safe and around the buildings. Army Camps were given the same treatment. All the raids were successful and nobody spotted anything. The men got high praise from Captain Fleming but he received a reprimand from "Monty" for showing up deficiencies in his security and blowing up his flower bed!*



### Suicide mission

Bunkers were dug across the Kent countryside. For secrecy's sake these were built by either Royal Engineers from outside the area or by the units themselves. The entrances were disguised and deep underground there were bunks for five or six men, enough supplies for a fortnight (including a large barrel of rum) and a chemical toilet.

Once the invading forces had reached their base they would wait for the German army to pass over them, then come out, mainly at night, to take out strategically important targets, ammunition and fuel dumps, transport links, assassinate high ranking German officers and even British collaborators.

Some units were given sealed orders to be opened only when the invasion had occurred. This contained the names of local targets (chief of police for example) who knew of their existence and the positioning of the bunker. Their mission would then be to be assassinate them in case they were captured.

The life expectancy of the men was two weeks. Because of the secrecy many thought these men were doing nothing for the war effort and received the infamous white feathers.

The men were stood down after the D-Day landings in 1944. In 1940 Captain Fleming moved on to serve in the newly formed Special Operations Executive.

### Lynsted's "not so secret" bunker

Following talking with villagers who were children at the time of WW2 at the Society's Heritage Days, we know that several inquisitive youngsters from the village were very well aware of the Lynsted's Operation Base in Toll Wood. They were regularly chased off by the Canadian soldiers who were digging the bunker. After this they at times had to be ejected from the bunker where they would go to play!

### Lynsted's Secret Army volunteers - can you help?

**Do you know of anyone who served in Churchill's Secret Army?**

**We would be very interested to hear your stories.**

The Society was recently contacted by the daughter of Lynsted's Village Policeman during the war, Tom Longhurst. Just before Tom's death, he shared with his family that he had been part of this brave group of men.

# The Battle of Britain - 10 July 1940 - 31 October 1940

## Sydney Philip GREGORY of OARE

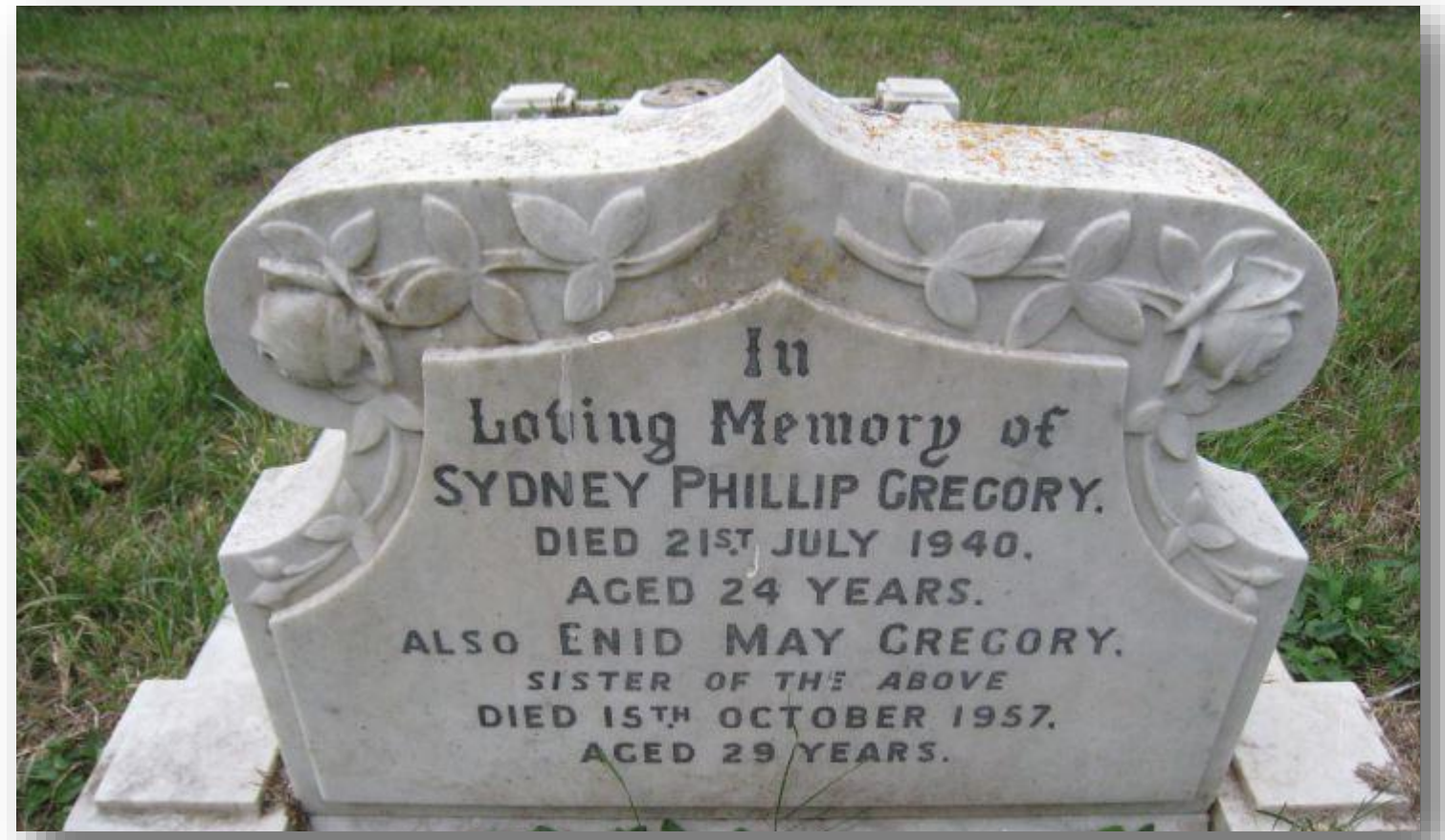
9th Kent (Faversham) Bn. Home Guard

*Died on 21 July 1940, following a bomb blast in Oare the previous day, aged 24*

**S**ydney was born on 31 March 1916 to Stanley Arthur and Hilda May Gregory. Sydney married Rosina Doris Davis in Oare Church on 29 October 1938. At the time of the 1939 Register they were living a short distance from his parents at 4 Amos Cottages, Oare, along with their new-born daughter, Margaret. Sydney worked as a sorter at the brickworks.

On the night of 19 July 1940, air raids in the south-east saw six high explosive bombs fall on Church Road, Oare. On hearing the siren, Sydney left his home to fetch his wife from a neighbour's house just as a bomb fell in the garden. Two further bombs fell in an adjoining field cropped with beans. Sadly, Sydney had been fatally injured and succumbed to his injuries the following day. Mrs Flora Jenkins and Alice Hill were also injured, thankfully not seriously.

Sydney is buried in Oare Churchyard. He is also commemorated on the Davington School memorial plaque, located in the parish church of St. Mary Magdalene & St. Lawrence, Davington.



### Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

*August 1940*

In the first week of the Battle of Britain, the Faversham District received well over a hundred bombs within a period of three days.

Then followed a comparative lull for three days and no further incidents were reported until the evening of August 18th when, during a "dog fight" over the Faversham District two cottages in Luddenham were slightly damaged by cannon shells which exploded in the roof-tops.

### Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

*September 1940*

Sunday 8 September was a National Day of Prayer observed by all our churches.

## Bombs Fall on London Road

**O**n 10 September 1940, bombs wrecked numbers 6 and 7 London Road, Teynham. Two of the occupants subsequently died in hospital from injuries:

### Louisa BANFIELD of TEYNHAM

Civilian

*Died as a result of enemy action on 11 September 1940, aged 57*

**L**ouisa Banfield of 7 Sandown Cottages, London Road, Teynham, died in Preston Hall Emergency Hospital, Aylesford on 11 September 1940 after the bombing of the previous day.

### Elsie May CASTLE of TEYNHAM

Civilian

*Died as a result of enemy action on 11 September 1940, aged 28*

**A**t the time of the 1939 Register Elsie was living at 200 Windmill Road, Gillingham, along with her husband William, who was a ships plumber at Chatham Dockyard. They had married in 1937 and Elsie had given birth to a boy, Peter, in July 1939. Elsie was injured in the bombing of 6 Sandown Cottages, London Road, Teynham, the home of her parents William and Alice Barrett, and died the following day in Preston Hall Emergency Hospital, Aylesford.

# THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

## LYNSTED ON THE FRONT LINE

**O**n Thursday 15 August 1940, at about 3.20pm, stick bombs were dropped on a small area of Lynsted. Villagers working in the fields reported that they had seen the bombs being dropped from a German plane while being chased by three British fighters. The Church received a direct hit but luckily the bomb did not explode.

The bomb, although small, had come through the roof of the north chapel the impact stripping the main roof of tiles and filling the interior with debris. Later, investigation showed that two of the pillars on the south aisle were shifted slightly in the impact blast. The tower remained mainly intact.

Ludgate House (formerly Oak House and Old Oak House, now 1 and 2 Oak Cottages, Ludgate Lane), was seriously damaged. Anchor House (now renamed The Old House) that was then two tenements, lost roof tiles and windows. The damaged part was occupied by Mr Mount and a Miss Mount who received slight injuries. A Mr Richards was more seriously injured.

*“The church was full of debris, with large holes in the pews and other furniture from the bomb splinters .....the amount of dust and broken plaster and pieces of wood all over the church, the broken organ case and open roof were enough to make anyone sad.”*

Lynsted school was also damaged and their log records:

*“All children, the staff and a large number of parents, farmworkers etc congregated in the hall where the windows had been paper stripped and filled with wire netting. These large windows were shattered by the concussion - one piece of the bomb landed in the playground.”*

Following the damage to the church, Rev Ehrmann initiated an appeal for urgent funds for the repairs:

**T**HIS Church was bombed by hostile aircraft on August 15th, 1940, and entirely wrecked, except for the walls, a portion of the roof, and some ornaments. The damage has been assessed at £2,474, but in all probability the total cost of restoration will be £3,000. We cannot tell what the Government will be able to do by way of compensation when the war is over.

Meanwhile, two matters require immediate attention—hence this appeal. They are :

- 1.—The nave and chancel of the Church, as well as the south Chapel are in a state of confusion ; debris must be cleared away, the roof needs supports (else it will fall in), and a covering over it. Only in this way can the pews and other furniture be preserved from damage by bad weather. The estimated cost is £165.
- 2.—At the present time a Chapel has been fitted up for worship at the Vicarage, but it is not adequate for all purposes. The Parochial Church Council, however, feel that one of the Chapels in the Church—the North one—should be restored at the earliest opportunity, so that all the Church services and ministrations, including marriages, may take place therein, leaving the final restoration of the main edifice till the end of hostilities. The estimated cost for this is about £250, at least, but this does not include any amount for the repair of the harmonium or for the organ, both of which are probably so damaged as to be beyond repair. Needless to say, we should be most grateful for the gift of a new organ at a later date. By the kindness of the late Lord Brabourne, this chapel was set apart for worship some years ago, and has been in constant use—week-days especially—until the morning of the fateful day.

This Church, which has suffered so severely is a twelfth century building, possessing several monuments of interest, including a famous one by Evisham. The South Chapel contains the memorials of the Roper and Tyler families, and the North one of the Knatchbull-Hugessen family. Luckily, nearly all these monuments have suffered no harm.

As the cost of printing has to be considered, this appeal does not give all the details we should like to place before our friends, but we are able to print two photographs, showing much of the damage. For these we thank the Editor of the “Kent Messenger.” The Vicar will give any further information gladly if desired.

We are making a general appeal now, to include funds for the whole Church. It is important that these should be in hand, so that the work of restoration may be carried out as soon as ever circumstances permit. We know that there are many friends of Lynsted Church, and we look with confidence to their generosity.

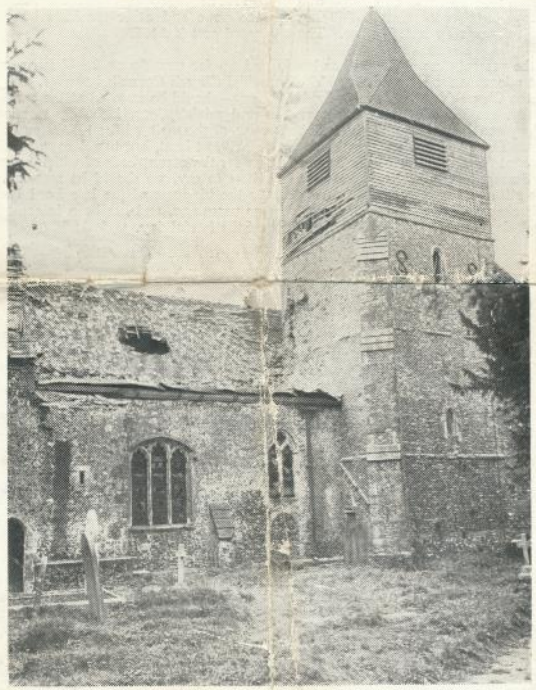
It may be added that much has been done during the past twenty years to restore the Church and the Hugessen Chapel, some £1,500 having been spent in this way. The parishioners have been keenly associated in all the work carried out. Now, however, we venture to seek help from far and wide, as well as from our own people, so that our Church may ere long possess once more its former beauty and usefulness.

The final word to add is that the beautiful stained-glass windows have all been shattered, and their value is not included in any of the sums stated in this appeal. These can only be replaced by personal gifts.

Donations may be sent to the Hon. Treasurer of the Parochial Church Council—Mrs. Belinda Dixon, “Cambridge,” Teynham, Kent ; or to myself. A receipt will be sent in each case.

L. E. A. EHRMANN, Vicar,  
Lynsted Vicarage,  
Sittingbourne, Kent.

LYNSTED PARISH CHURCH.  
Appeal for £1,000



The bomb damage in Lynsted Church

### Bomb Story from Len Apps

In 1979 the then editor of the Kingsdown, Lynsted and Norton Newsletter, David Bage, put out a call for stories from Parishioner experiences in WW2. Len Apps, a member of the Home Guard, responded with the following story that was published in the July 1979 newsletter. It tells of the day Lynsted Church was hit by the bomb that luckily did not explode:

*“On the afternoon that a stick of bomb fell on Lynsted, Len Apps was working in the fields. When he and his neighbour returned home they were stopped a few yards from their gate by a policeman who refused to allow them to go any further because of an unexploded bomb. He insisted that they retrace their steps and find another way home. This they did and were forced to make a long detour before finally getting home. When they did, they just had time to have something to eat before changing into their Home Guard uniform to go on duty. Their duty that night? You can guess. To guard the unexploded bomb!”*

On 15 August 1940 the Luftwaffe’s aim was to attack airfields and Chain Home stations seeking to force Fighter Command into battle. It would be the heaviest day of fighting in the Battle of Britain with fighting taking place over Kent to Suffolk, east Yorkshire, the south coast and the Firth of Forth.

The Luftwaffe flew over 2,000 sorties, the largest during the Battle of Britain, and lost 75 aircraft, while Fighter Command flew 974 sorties losing 34. No serious gaps had appeared in the defences and damage was slight.

For the Luftwaffe, it was “Schwarzer Donnerstag” (“Black Thursday”). It was the last outing of strength for Luftwaffe 5 division that suffered so severely it never made another daylight attack during the entire Battle of Britain.

Ground crew of a Polish Air Force bomber squadron writing messages to the enemy on a bomb at RAF Hemswell, 15 August 1940

© IWM (HU 111733)

# Two pilots who are forever part of Lynsted

The course of the Battle of Britain would change on 7 September. The Luftwaffe mistakenly thought they had done enough to cripple the RAF in the South East and now targeted London. This was a tactical error of such importance that it was arguably the turning point of the Battle of Britain.

On 15 September, the Luftwaffe launched another massive assault believing this would be the end of the RAF's Fighter Command meaning the way would be open for an invasion.

It was a long day of heavy fighting that ultimately saw the Luftwaffe fail and suffer huge losses. Although fighting would continue a little longer, 15 September was an overwhelming and decisive defeat for Germany. **The date was so monumental that it is now commemorated as Battle of Britain Day.**

It was on this day that Pilot Officer Roy Marchand paid the ultimate price when his plane crashed at Nouds Farm.

## Roy Achille MARCHAND

Pilot Officer 73 Squadron, Royal Air Force

*Killed in action on 15 September 1940, aged 22 years*

Roy is commemorated every year at his memorial at Nouds. Roy's life is best described in the words used at the dedication of his memorial, held at Nouds Farm on 15 September 1985 at 11.45am. Just 15 mins before the anniversary of his death:

"Roy was born in Bromley, then in Kent, on 24 August 1918, the only son of Mr and Mrs René Marchand of Hayes Road, Beckenham, becoming a pupil of the Abbey Preparatory School, Beckenham, and afterwards Westminster School. His chosen career had been medicine, and he spent two years at the London University Faculty of Medicine before a holiday in the south of France during 1938 changed his whole outlook. There he had met an EAF Squadron Leader and consequently become ambitious to join the Air Force as a fighter pilot.

In March 1939, he joined the RAF, obtaining his 'Wings' in August of that year before joining his operational Squadron, No. 73, in France at the end of December 1939, flying Hurricanes. In France he was involved in many operational flights, and claimed a number of enemy aircraft destroyed, before being wounded in the shoulder and beneath the left eye in a 'dog-fight' on May 13, 1940. After treatment for this injury he returned home on leave, when he married Miss Jean Cullen. Subsequently he was injured in a motor accident whilst on honeymoon, and both he and his wife spent three weeks in hospital.

He was fit enough to return to his Squadron by July 6, in time to take part in the crucial Battle of Britain. On September 6 he claimed an Me109 as destroyed ten miles north of Maidstone, but ran short of petrol and became disorientated and unable to find his home base of Debden, landing instead at Penshurst Aerodrome.

On September 14, the Squadron was again heavily engaged, losing several of its aircraft and pilots. Pilot Officer Marchand's aeroplane was damaged, with bullets through the port main tank, port aileron, main spar and another through the top of the radio mast. Roy was uninjured, but doubtless shaken, and perhaps the strain of the previous hectic few months played their part in his failure to return from another fight on September 15. At 12 noon, during a bitter engagement south of London, Roy's Hurricane (Serial No. P3865) tilted earthwards in a roaring terminal dive to crash at Nouds Farm near Sittingbourne. Roy had made no attempt to bale out and was killed instantly, leaving a devastated family including his young pregnant wife, Jean. Later, she gave birth to a baby daughter, Carol, now Mrs Carol Ventura. Roy's parents died some years ago in Switzerland, and his mother, Constance, who was utterly heartbroken by the bereavement, wrote these final touching words in her personal diary:

'He was the loveliest and most precious gift that God could bestow on any mortal on earth, and I, his mother, shall mourn him all the rest of my days.'

Roy's Squadron's records report that on that day a stricken Hurricane fell away from the fight unnoticed. At this point the fighting was at its height and as his colleagues ran low on fuel and ammunition, they gradually returned to base with claims for 3 enemy fighters destroyed. All the 73 Squadron pilots were thought accounted for as the one pilot missing had reportedly force-landed at Biggin Hill. In the evening, after further hard fighting during the afternoon, the Squadron were informed that Roy had crashed and been killed.

Heartbreakingly, Roy's wife had been waiting at the Squadron dispersal point seeking news of her husband. Two flying officers were given the unenviable tasking of breaking



the news to her.

The Squadron's diary paid tribute:

*"P/O Marchand was an excellent pilot and a charming and unassuming boy who was never ruffled by anybody or anything. We will sorely miss him."*

The record for the day closed with the words:

*"The Squadron feels that to some extent the death of gallant MARCHAND to-day has been avenged by the day's good work."*

### The Memorial

The memorial that stands at Nouds is of polished granite. It originally stood on the grave of Roy Marchand in Bromley Hill Cemetery, Lewisham, until the 1970s when it was gifted to the London Air Museum by Roy's late father, René. On the museum's closure, it was placed in storage.

The Tangmere Military Aviation Museum acquired the Museum's entire collection in 1982. After 3 years, the museum felt the monument should be displayed at a more suitable location. Roy's grave was by then marked by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Museum decided that an appropriate place for it to be situated was on, or close to, the spot that Roy lost his life. Thankfully Mr and Mrs Rex Boucher, the owners of Nouds Farm, arranged that it would stand on the spot where Roy died, set amidst the country-side over which so much fighting took place.

These arrangements were approved by Roy's daughter, Mrs Carol Ventura, and as a result plans were laid for the erection of the memorial and its dedication ceremony to be held on September 15, 1985, the forty-fifth anniversary of the event.

The ceremony was seen as being of such great importance that the traditional Battle of Britain parade in Faversham was cancelled to give the Lynsted dedication priority.

Dignitaries including the High Sheriff of Kent, dignitaries and representatives from the RAF were among the around 200 that attended. The Rural Dean and Vicar of Faversham, the Rev Gordon Manley, and Vicar of Lynsted, the Rev Bill Hill officiated.

The memorial has been described as the finest for any Battle of Britain pilot, bearing a pair of carved RAF wings and a brass and enamel crest of 73 Squadron, motto 'Protector and Avenger'.

The inscription reads:

*"In ever dear and loving memory of our only son, Pilot Officer Roy A Marchand, aged 22, killed in action Sept 15 1940 during the Battle of Britain. One of the few to whom is owed so much."*



© Stephen Palmer (WMMR-28225)

**John Greer (Beryl) BOYLE**  
**Pilot Officer 41 Squadron, Royal Air Force**  
**Killed in action 28 September 1940, aged 26 years**

**B**orn on 27 March 1914 in Casselman, Ontario, John (known by his nickname of "Beryl") was the son of Dr William Joseph Patrick Boyle, BA, and Marie Catherine Greer Boyle, of Ottawa, Ontario. John had one older brother, William Joseph Patrick, and two younger siblings, Mary Nora Aline and Joseph Thomas. His father died in April 1924 and his mother remarried in the early 1930s to Harry D Miller.

John was educated at the Glebe Collegiate Institute in Ottawa, Ontario where he studied art and represented the college in gymnastics.

On graduation John worked for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Ottawa, enabling to pay for flying lessons and gaining his private pilots licence through the Ottawa Flying Club.

Around 1936, Canadians applying for RAF commissions. John resigned from his position in 1937 and travelled, at his own expense, to England along with around fifty applicants, to enlist.



John in the 1932 Glebe Collegiate Gym Team

John joined the RAF on a short service commission in August that year, being posted to 9 Flight Training School, Hullvington, Wiltshire on 24 October 1937. With training completed he was posted for training to No.1 Air Observers' School at North Coates, Lincolnshire on 15 August 1938. On 22 May 1940, he transferred to No 5 Officer Training Unit then to 611 Squadron based at RAF Duxford, where he was at the outbreak of war.

John saw action in defence of our escaping troops at Dunkirk between 26 May and 4 June 1940. After which he moved to 41 Squadron, Hornchurch, Essex.

On 11 August he shared in the destruction of a Junkers 88. On 5 September, twenty-two different German formations attacked within eight hours. During these raids, John destroyed a Messerschmitt 109. His combat report illustrated the intensity of the day's fighting:

*"I was Green 3 ... patrolling between Maidstone and Ramsgate. Interception was made at 20,000 feet; enemy aircraft varying from 16,000 to 22,000 feet. Green Section attacked bombers [Do 17s] in line-astern formation. Seven or eight Me 109s were*

*covering these bombers. Three Me 109s came in between me and Green 1 and 2. I attacked the most convenient e/a, starting to fire from above with quarter deflection closing in to dead-astern. A four or five-second burst was enough. The 109 broke up, with flame and smoke coming from the right-hand side; it immediately rolled on its back and spun."*

On 5 September he destroyed a Messerschmitt 109, on the 9 September a Henkel 111, on the 15 September a Messerschmitt 109, also "sharing" a Dornier 17, and on the 17 September two Messerschmitt 109's.

There was no let up in combat. The Luftwaffe changed tactics to smaller bomber formations and on 28 September, the Germans launched two attacks with London as the objective. John had "scrambled" from RAF Tangmere, Chichester, Sussex, in Spitfire No. X4426. During a dog fight over Charing, his aircraft was hit and sustained serious damage. At 10.37am, his Spitfire crashed in flames at Dadmans. He was killed instantly. The remains of John Boyles Identity Card bearing his signature was rescued from the burning Spitfire by local firemen.



On that day the RAF lost 16 aircraft and 9 airmen. It was indicative of their combat fatigue that they had shot down only 3 fighters.

John is buried in the Lynsted Churchyard Extension. His headstone bears the words:

WHAT A PITY IT IS  
 THAT WE CAN DIE BUT ONCE  
 TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY



# THE BLITZ : 7 September 1940 – 11 May 1941

**Charles Henry APPS of Newnham**  
**Gunner, 98 (Surrey and Sussex Yeomanry) Field Regiment,**  
**Royal Artillery**  
**Died as a result of enemy action on 16 November 1940,**  
**aged 27**

**S**on of Charles William and Ethel Maud Apps of Champion Court Cottages, Newnham, Charles was serving at the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich and died as a result of the bombing in the Blitz.

The Royal Arsenal was bombed almost every night during this time.

Charles is buried in Greenwich Cemetery, Section Grave 71. Screen wall, Panel 1.



**Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"**

**December 1940**

During a raid over the south-east on December 11th, two parachute mines drifted down in fields at Doddington, the explosions doing damage to the First Aid post which was manned at the time. Happily, no one was injured.



**Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"**

**February 1941**

At Teynham an appeal was issued for funds to carry out temporary repair of the damage done to the Parish Church by bombs dropped in the vicinity. (The amount needed - about £100 - was contributed and the church was re-opened after being out of use for two months.)

**"Scrap with Raiders"**

On February 2nd a British Fighter crashed at Stone Crossing, Buckland after a "scrap" with enemy raiders, the pilot being injured.

Bombs between Stone and Teynham on February 10th did no damage.

**Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"**

**March 1941**

A large number of incendiaries fell near the Mid Kent Water Company's pumping station on the Newnham Road, on the night of March 14th, but no damage resulted.

**Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"**

**May 1941**

The night of May 12th was a very noisy one and several incidents were recorded, happily no damage and no casualties were reported. However ten bombs which failed to explode were found at Newnham bottom.

May 14th saw a shell fall on Colgate's Farm, Oare, but failed to explode.

**Richard BEACON of Conyer**

**Auxiliary Fire Fighter**

**Killed as a result of enemy action on 17 April 1941, aged 27**

**B**orn on 19 February 1914, Richard was the elder son of Richard, a brick setter, and Florence Maria Winifred Beacon (née Taylor) of Eastwood Cottages, Conyer. Richard was living at Rayleigh, Maidstone Road, Borough Green, Kent and was employed as a barman.

On 17 April 1941 at around 2.00am, Richard and his fellow firefighters were returning to their station after attending a fire in Chancery Lane, London. Richard was standing on the running board of a Fire Service car that was towing a pump. As the vehicle turned into Court Downs Road in Beckenham they came across a fire and offered their help. Sadly, a high explosive bomb exploded about 20 feet behind the car and fragments pierced the petrol tank. This ignited the petrol and the vehicle became enveloped in flames killing Richard instantly.

Richard was one of over 900 civilians in London who died that night.

He is buried in Beckenham Cemetery and Crematorium, Elmers End Road, Beckenham. Richard is also commemorated on a plaque displayed on the Beckenham Fire Station.



**William LEACH of Doddington**

**Civilian**

**Died as a result on enemy action on 23 April 1941, aged 63**

**L**ate of Margaret Manor, Doddington, Kent. Born on 30 November 1878, William was the son of the late Barnet Leach and Mary Ann Leach.

William was married to Emily Leach and they lived at 30 Chaldon Road, Fulham.

William was employed as a Cinema Attendant.

He died as a result of bombing at 57 Red Lion Street, Holborn.



The Progress of the War		
March	11	Lease-Lend Bill passed in USA
	28	Battle of Cape Matapan
April	6	Germany invades Greece
	11–9 Dec	The Siege of Tobruk
May	20	Formal surrender of the remnants of the Italian Army in Abyssinia
	20–31	Battle of Crete
	24	Sinking of HMS Hood
	27	German battleship Bismarck sunk
June	29	Germans occupy Channel Isles
	22	Germany invade Russia
August	12	Terms of Atlantic Charter agreed
November	18	British Offensive launched in the Western Desert
December	7	Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour
	8	Great Britain and the USA declare war on Japan

## Lynsted's losses begin

### Frederick Charles RUCK of Lynsted and Teynham 1522687 Private, 10th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment Killed in a training accident on 26 February 1941, aged 29

Frederick was the eldest of the three sons of Frederick and Rosa Ruck. Frederick was born on 28 December 1911 and had two younger brothers, Sidney Edward and Leslie Gordon. Frederick followed his father into the local fire brigade at just 17.

On 12 December 1931, Frederick married Violet Minnie Fisher in Rodmersham Church and went on to have 3 children, Frederick in 1932, Yvonne in 1936 and Sylvia in 1937.

At the outbreak of war the family was living at 106 (Wanstalls) London Road, Lynsted

Frederick was the first of Lynsted's war casualties. At the time of his death, Frederick was on exercise at the army ranges at Hythe. On 26 February 1941 Frederick, along with 2 of his colleagues from the 10th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment, Leonard Baines and Andrew McVey, were killed in a live ammunition exercise. In records of the war in Hythe, a visitor with a holiday bungalow close to the range, notes the day that the three soldiers were killed by a bomb exploding during a practice exercise. The Army Casualty List confirms his accidental death.

Frederick's full Fire Brigade ceremonial ceremony, took place on 3 March 1941 at Teynham Church.

On 8 March 1941, the East Kent Gazette carried a detailed article about Frederick's life and funeral:

#### On Active Service Fireman's Impressive Funeral

The funeral of the first Teynham Man serving in H.M. Forces to be killed by enemy action in the present war took place at Teynham Parish Church on Monday (26th February 1941).

He was Private Frederick Ruck, of Wanstalls, London Road, Lynsted, who was killed in action on Friday in last week, whilst serving with the 10th Staffordshire Regiment. Private Ruck was twenty-nine years of age, and he leaves a wife and three children.

The eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Ruck, of Station Row, Teynham, Fred Ruck was an old boy of Teynham School. He was closely connected with the Parish Church, where he had been a choirboy, a server, and a Scout.

At the age of seventeen he followed his father by becoming a member of Teynham and Lynsted Fire Brigade, and the action of the Chief Officer in enrolling him a year under age proved fully justified, for he became one of the Brigade's most efficient members. In recognition of his service to the Brigade, Private Ruck was accorded a fireman's funeral.

The body was borne to the church on the Faversham pump, which also carried a large number of floral tributes. Section Officer D. Aylward led the cortege at the slow march, with Chief Officer W.S.Holmes (Faversham Brigade) at the head of the procession of firemen.

The Rev. W.C.B.Purser (Vicar of Teynham) met the cortege at the lych gate and intoned the opening sentences, the coffin being borne into the church by members of the Teynham and Lynsted Brigade, names, Firemen S.Snashall, H.Dixon, S.Wood, and S.Miles. The service was read by the Rev. T.G.Williams (assistant priest), and the lesson by Leading Fireman W.J.Butt. The committal prayers were said by the vicar.



The family mourners were the widow, the bereaved parents, Messrs. Sidney and Leslie Ruck (brothers), Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ruck, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ruck, Messrs. Bert, Sidney, Stanley and Reginald Ruck, and Mrs. Pilcher (uncles and aunts), Messrs. Bert and Jack Fisher (brothers-in-law), and Mrs. Ivy Hudson (sister-in-law). Two members of deceased's regiment also attended.

Other members of the Teynham and Lynsted Brigade present were Second Officer F.Sherwood Third Officer A. Snashall, Fireman A. Stanley, and Private Malcolm Friday (a member of the Brigade now serving in H.M.Forces). Other members of the Fire Service included deceased's old Chief Officer, Section Officer A.E.Ferris, with Mrs. Ferris, Second Officer Cory and members of the Sittingbourne and Milton A.F.S., and Station Officer Boorman and a contingent from the Faversham Borough Brigade.

It was noted with appreciation that with the Faversham Brigade were four members of the L.C.C. Fire Service who were spending a week's rest as their guests.

The floral tributes were sent as follows: - "In loving memory of my darling Husband," from his wife Violet. "To our darling Daddy," from Boy, Yvonne, and Sylvia. "In loving memory of our dear Boy" from Mum and Dad. "In loving memory" from Sid and Les (brothers). "With deepest sympathy, from all ranks of the 10th Battalion, South Staffordshire Regiment. "Fondest love and sympathy," from Uncle Charles and Auntie Rose, Ron, and Mavis. "In deepest sympathy to dear Uncle Fred," from Pat and Ivy. "In affectionate remembrance," from Uncle Albert and Auntie Em and Barbara. "In sincere sympathy," from Auntie Lucy and family. "In loving memory," from Uncles Bert, Sid, Stan, Reg, and Aunties Ada, Flo, Bertha and Rose, Herbie and Jane. "With deepest sympathy," from Uncle Alf and Aunt Sis and family. "In memory of Fred," from Bert, Floss, and kiddies. "In ever-loving memory of our dear Brother-in-law," from Ivy and Vern ("Rest always in peace") "In deepest sympathy," from Dorothy and Laurie. "He was my pal," Malc and Belle. "To Fred, in loving memory," from Minn and Jack ("Sleep on, dear boy, your work is done"). "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. Capes (friend), "With deepest sympathy," from his old Workmates, Lynsted. "With deepest sympathy," from his old Skip and Mrs Ferris. "Deepest sympathy," Mr and Mrs. F.Tinley. "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Smith. "In memory of Fred, with deepest sympathy," Mr. and Mrs. Laves, 76, London Road. "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. P.French and family. "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Friend and Mr. and Mrs. Kite ("God's greatest gift - remembrance"). "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Gage. "With deepest sympathy," Officers and Men of the Teynham and Lynsted Fire Brigade. "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Ford, Joan, and Georgie ("Gone, but not forgotten"). "In deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Hyland. From Mr. and Mrs. Friday and family ("Lest we forget"). "With deepest sympathy," from Mr. and Mrs. Kemsley, Station Row. "With deepest sympathy," Mrs. Godden. "In deepest sympathy," from the Chief Officer, Officers, and Members of the Regular and Auxiliary Services of the Sittingbourne and Milton Fire Brigades.

Frederick's wife, Violet, was left widowed with three children. The First World War had claimed her father when she was just 2 years old, when HMS Hogue was torpedoed by an enemy submarine on 24 September 1914. Violet remarried in 1943 to Victor Berry. She died in 1998 in Banbury, Oxfordshire.

Frederick is buried in Teynham churchyard near the east boundary. In addition to the Lynsted memorial, Frederick is also remembered on the Teynham War Memorial and in the Roll of Honour in "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District".

## Robert Henry (Bertram) MILLS

Canteen Assistant, HMS Fiji, Navy Army and Air Force Institute (NAFFI)  
*Lost at sea as a result of the sinking of HMS Fiji, 23 May 1941, aged 24*

**R**obert was born on 2 July 1916 to Mabel Mills, originally from Faversham. On 29 May 1924 his brother, Richard Henry Mills was born in Ospringe. At the time of the 1939 Register census, Robert was living with his Uncle and Aunt in Hythe, where he was working as a barman.

### The story of HMS Fiji:



HMS Fiji (pennant number 58) was a Crown Colony-class light cruiser of the Royal Navy, named after the then Crown colony of Fiji. She was the only ship of the Royal Navy to bear the name.

Fiji was launched on 31 May 1939 and was the first of the Crown Colony class to enter service. She was commissioned on 5 May 1940, and initially joined the Home Fleet.

On 31 August 1940 she sailed for the African Atlantic coast

to take part in Operation Menace, the attack on Dakar. Before she could join the taskforce, Fiji was damaged by a torpedo from U-32 on 1 September and had to return to Britain for repairs, which lasted for the next six months. She was fitted with radar and her Anti-Aircraft armament was also marginally increased.

She returned to service in March 1941 and was assigned to patrol the Denmark Strait for German raiders. She missed the homeward bound German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer, and in April she was reassigned to Force H to blockade the German heavy ships then stationed at Brest. With Force H, she sailed into the Mediterranean to support operations to relieve the island of Malta.

On completion of these duties she participated in the Battle of Crete. On 22 May 1941 she was acting in company with the destroyers HMS Kandahar and HMS Kingston shortly after the loss of HMS Gloucester. These ships fought on and shot down one attacker and damaged two others. She finally expended all of her anti-aircraft ammunition fighting off numerous air attacks that persisted for two hours.

HMS Fiji, having survived some 20 bombing attacks in just four hours, was initially hit by a bomb from a single Messerschmitt Me109 aircraft which flew out of the clouds in a shallow dive. It scored a hit very close to the ship's port side amidships. At this time she was approximately 45 nautical miles to the south-west of Crete. Although badly damaged, HMS 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 Fiji.

Captain Peveril William-Powlett gave the order to abandon ship and at 20.15hrs, Fiji rolled over and sank. Two Royal Navy destroyers; HMS Kandahar commanded by Commander W.G.A. Robson, DSO, and HMS Kingston commanded by Commander P. Sommerville, DSO, DSC picked up 533 survivors from Fiji, of which some later died of their injuries.

The 32 year old Padre, the Reverend Christopher Champain, who was awarded the Albert Medal, gave his life by repeatedly diving into the sea to rescue a not insignificant number of sailors from certain death.

Sadly Robert was lost at sea.

On 30 May 1941, in a letter to the First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound, Admiral Cunningham wrote, "The sending back of Gloucester and Fiji to HMS Greyhound was another grave error and cost us those two ships. They were practically out of ammunition but even had they been full up I think they would have gone. The Commanding Officer of Fiji told me that the



*The Sinking of HMS Fiji by John Hamilton*



Gloucester was black with planes."

Robert is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, panel 61, column 2.

Robert and all of those lost on HMS Fiji are also commemorated on a memorial plaque which is located inside Portsmouth Cathedral, Hampshire.



At the time of Robert's death, his mother Mabel, now Fobbister, was widowed and living at 216 London Road, Lynsted. She died in 1976.

## Arnold Edward TAYLOR of Doddington

P/JX 234946 Ordinary Seaman, Royal Navy

*Killed on the sinking of HMS Hood on 24 May 1941*

**A**rnold was born on 8 October 1908 in Kingston upon Thames, Surrey, to Edward and Alice (known as May) Taylor. Arnold was one of six children (3 boys and 3 girls).

The family later lived in Westerham, Kent but by 1934 Arnold was a fruit farmer living at Little Frith, Doddington.

When word first came to his parents about the loss of HMS Hood they at first believed that he was not on the ship at the time as he was recovering from a bout of German measles. Sadly, Arnold had just re-joined the Hood.

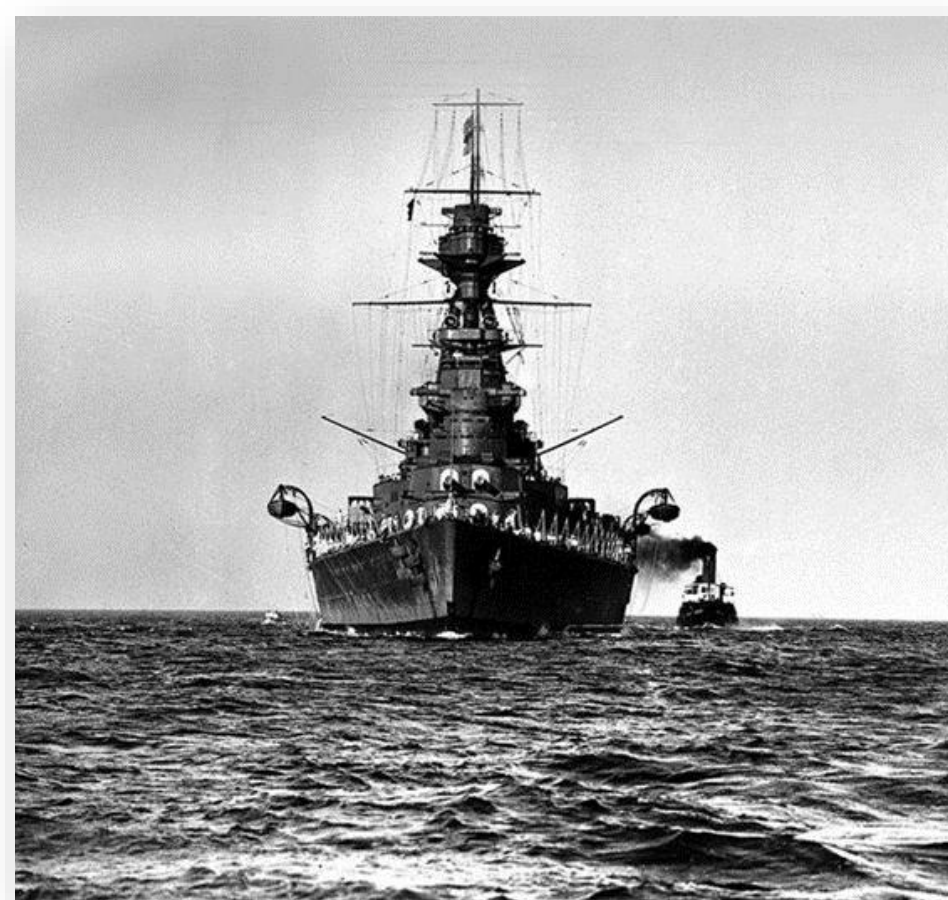
### Hood's last Battle

HMS Hood was the largest and most iconic British warship of its time.

On 22 May 1941 HMS Hood (in which Vice Admiral Holland had raised his flag only ten days previously) put to sea to search in the Denmark Strait for the German battleships Bismarck and Prinz Eugen. On 24 May, at 5:35 am, Bismarck was sighted and Hood altered course to intercept. At 5:53 am the ships opened fire and scored hits almost at once. At 6:00 am Hood was hit between the after funnel and the mainmast. There was a huge explosion and she sank within three minutes.

Of the ship's company of 1,418 men, there were just 3 survivors.

The loss of this iconic ship and so many men was a devastating blow felt throughout the country.



It was the largest death toll ever in any British warship. The equivalent to the destruction of three regiments of soldiers. It took less than 15 minutes. 71 of those lost were teenagers - 'boy seamen' aged 16 or 17. HMS Hood is the largest Royal Navy warship ever to have been lost in action.

The military implications were very serious. The Admiralty was concerned that losses of merchant ships to U boats were becoming overwhelming, and the presence of Bismarck could only add to the losses should she reach the convoys. With HMS Hood sunk, the situation became desperate, hence Churchill's famous signal to the fleet "Sink the Bismarck" which led directly to the pursuit and destruction of Bismarck three days later with the loss of 1,995 of her crew of 2,200.

On 6 June 1941, the Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser reported:

### LOST IN H.M.S. HOOD

Amongst those announced as having been lost in H.M.S. Hood appears the name of Arnold Edward Taylor, R.N.V.R., of Little Frith Farm, Doddington, son of the late Mr E.A. Taylor and Mrs Taylor, of The Mount, Westerham. It will be recalled that another son of Mr and Mrs Taylor, Capt. A.H. Taylor (who formerly commanded the Westerham Territorials) was awarded the M.C. last July.

Arnold is remembered on the Doddington and Newnham and Westerham Memorials. Also on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 51, Column 2.

All of those lost are memorialised at the Hood Chapel, Church of St John the Baptist, Boldre, Hampshire. The officer in overall command Vice Admiral Lancelot Holland, who was amongst those lost on the Hood, used to worship in St John's Church Boldre Church with his family. After the war, his widow Phyllis Holland arranged for a memorial to be established at Boldre where an annual service of commemoration has been held ever since. In 2015 the Hood's ship's bell was recovered from the seabed and now sits in the chapel.

*Painting by J.C. Schmitz-Westerholt, depicting Hood's loss during her engagement with the German battleship Bismarck on 24 May 1941.*

*HMS Prince of Wales is in the foreground.*



### Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

June 1941

Lynsted Parish Church, which was very extensively damaged by bombs in August 1940, was partially re-opened for worship during this month. In the interval services have been held at the Vicarage, where a large room had been converted into a chapel.

June 1941

On the night of June 5th, 1941, the Small Pox Isolation Hospital at Luddenham suffered slight damage when four high explosive bombs fell at Moon Farm, Luddenham.

### Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

September 1941

Hop-pickers at Nouds Farm, Lynsted, on receiving their wages, donated £10/10s/0d to the RAF Benevolent Fund.

### Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

November 1941

On November 11th, the anniversary of Armistice Day, two parachute mines at Newnham killed three sheep and damaged houses.

### Peter George HILLS of Newnham

Leading Aircraftsman 1331347, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve  
Died by accidental drowning on 2 November 1941, aged 19

The son of Kenneth William (who was serving as a special constable) and Winifred Clara Hills (née Anderson) of The Stores, Newnham, Peter was born on 18 August 1922.

Peter had just successfully completed his pilot training at Sumpter Field, Americus, Georgia, when he, alongside another Leading Aircraftsman, Harold Norman Evans, also 19, accidentally drowned at Jacksonville, Duval County, Florida, USA.

In the Midlands, a local paper, the Evening Despatch reported on 3 November 1941:

#### MIDLAND R.A.F. MAN FEARED DROWNED IN U.S.A.

While bathing in the sea near Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.A. man has been drowned and another, a Wolverhampton man, is missing, feared drowned.

The men Peter G. Hills, aged 19, of Newnham, Sittingbourne, Kent, and Harold Evans, aged 19, of 66, Wynn-road, Wolverhampton, Staffs, were on weekend leave.

Artificial respiration was given to Hills for over an hour without success.

Harold A. Newland, of London who was accompanying the two R.A.F. men, but did not go swimming with them, is helping in the search for Evans.

Evans would have been 20 on Thursday. He joined up just before last Christmas. Previously he worked at an engineering company in Wolverhampton before he joined up.

Harold Evans body was recovered and he and Peter are buried next to each other at Oaklawn Cemetery, Jacksonville, Plot Sec. D. R. L294. Grave 5 and 6.

A commemorative stone in honour of Peter is to be found on the grave of Ernest and Annie Josephine Hills (his grandparents) in the extension churchyard of St. Peter & St. Paul at Newnham in Kent, England.



### Ernest Charles BAKER of Teynham Gunner 954755, 65 (The Norfolk Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regt, Royal Artillery Killed in action 26 November 1941, aged 23

Youngest of the four children, and only son, of Arthur Ernest and Clotilda Baker of 10 Station Road Teynham (previously of Peanes Cottage Cellar Hill), Ernest was born on 16 May 1918.

The circumstances of Ernest's death is not known, but at the time his regiment had joined with the 7th Armoured Division (The Desert Rats) in the Western Desert Campaign.

On 18 November, as part of Operation Crusader the whole of the 7th Armoured Division was concentrated on breaking through the German 21st Panzer Division. However, the XXX Corps commander, Lieutenant-General Willoughby Norrie, aware that the 7th Armoured Division was down to 200 tanks, decided on caution. During the wait, in the early afternoon of 22 November, Rommel attacked Sidi Rezegh with the 21st Panzer and captured the airfield. Fighting was desperate and gallant: for his actions during these two days of fighting, Brigadier Jock Campbell, commanding the 7th Support Group, was awarded the Victoria Cross. However, the 21st Panzer, despite being considerably weaker in armour, proved superior in its combined arms tactics, pushing the 7th Armoured back with a further 50 tanks lost.

Ernest is buried in Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery that lies on the main coast road from Mersa Matruh through to Libya, and is on the east side of Halfaya Sollum, approximately 12 kilometres from the Egypt/Libya border.

Ernest does not appear on the local memorials.

### Edward George POST of Teynham Inspector, Hong Kong Police Force

Presumed killed in action on or about 18 December 1941 during the Japanese capture of Hong Kong, aged 43

Edward was born in 1898 in Teynham, one of the nine children of Lynsted born James and London born Henrietta (née Humphreys) Post. He is the brother of Alice Post who was commemorated in the Society's First World War project. She had died from TNT poisoning through her work in munitions.

After working as a farm labourer, in 1921, he left for Hong Kong to take up the post as Police Constable in Hong Kong. He did return to Teynham to marry Myrtle Gladys Palmer in Teynham Church in 1927.

Just 14 years later Edward had risen to the rank of Inspector, but sadly war was approaching. Hong Kong was invaded by Japanese military forces on 8th December 1941. The Japanese entered Hong Kong via its northern boundary with Shenzhen. They had occupied southern Guangdong Province since 1937.

18 December 1941

The Japanese launched the invasion of Hong Kong Island by landing first at North Point. The first troops to engage them were the Rajputs who continued to offer resistance until the regiment virtually ceased to exist. Wanchai Gap Police Station stood in the middle of the front line.

During the period of hostilities the Hong Kong Police were designated as militia, by way of the Police (Militia Status) Bill 1941, Police Officers fought and died together with British and Commonwealth military units, mainly in the eastern part of Hong Kong Island. Hong Kong Police Officers were also present at the isolated pocket of defence at Stanley, and manned defence posts at Stanley Police Station and in front of Stanley Prison as Japanese forces

advanced along the Stanley peninsula.

Being close to the location where Japanese forces landed on the night of 18 December 1941, Edward, along with an Inspector O'Connor, formed up all available officers into two squads, and with fixed bayonets and proceeded to King's Road where fighting was in progress between the Japanese forces and 5/7th Rajputs. The party was attacked and retreated to Quarry Bay Police Station, but Inspector O'Connor and Inspector Post were missing and were never seen again.

Those who survived were sent to the military Prisoner of War Camp at Sham Shui Po. Several Police Officers captured by the Japanese when taking part in military operations were treated as Prisoners of War, and were not permitted to transfer to the civilian internment camp at Stanley as they had been captured when fighting.

The British forces surrendered on Christmas Day 1941.

It is not clear how Edward's wife Myrtle fared. She may have been evacuated from Hong Kong as her name cannot be found on any POW list. She next appears on the list of Hong Kong evacuees on the manifest of the QSMV Dominion Monarch, a requisitioned troop ship that sailed from Melbourne, Australia, via Trinidad, arriving in Liverpool on 8 August 1945.

Myrtle may have been in Australia for the duration as she remarried in 1946, to Gerald Pillar who had served as a British Admiralty Official in Australia. She sadly died just 4 years later aged 45.

Edwin is commemorated on the Sai Won Memorial, Hong Kong.

The Progress of the War		
February	15	Fall of Singapore
April	16	George Cross awarded to Malta
October to November	13 - 11	German-Italian Army defeated at El Alamein
November	8	British and American forces land in North Africa

### Leslie Frank BURFORD of Luddenham

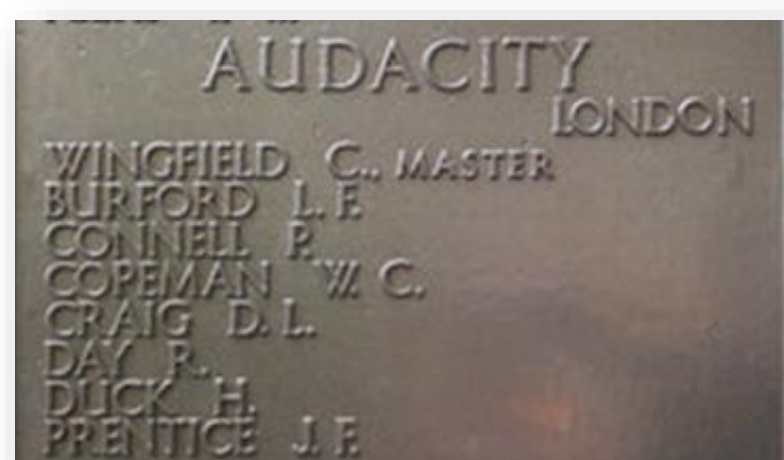
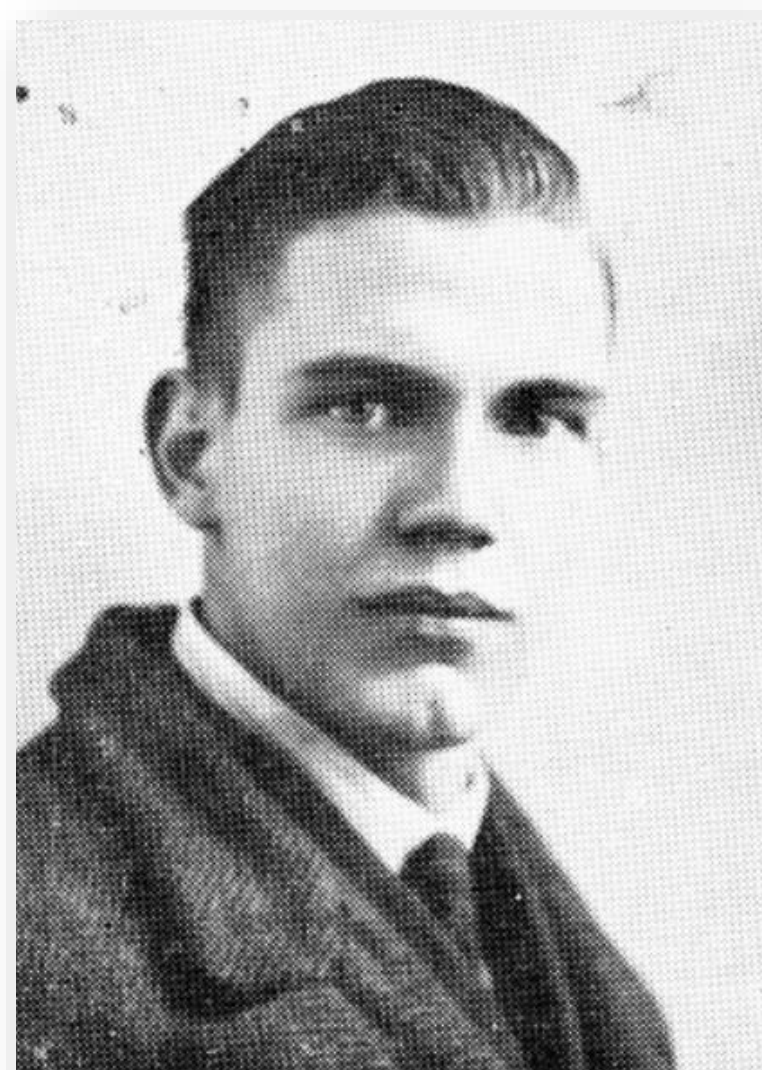
Able Seaman, Merchant Navy

Assumed drowned on 1 March 1942 when the SS Audacity hit a mine near the Humber Light Vessel, aged 24

**S**on of Osborne Thomas and Emily Elizabeth of Four Oaks, Luddenham, Leslie was born in 1917. He married Ellen M Pinfold of Norwich in 1939.

Leslie was the brother in law of Harold Lewis Willis who we also commemorate.

Leslie is remembered on the Merchant Navy Memorial at Tower Hill, London



### Charles Henry GRANSDEN of Lynsted

1100180 Gunner, 21 Medium and Heavy Regt, Royal Artillery  
Died of illness, 4 March 1942, aged 29

**C**harles Henry Gransden was born on 3 Aug 1912 in Milton, to Jesse, a coal merchant (originally from Bredgar), and Alice (née Tippett). Charles had an older sister, Rosa Mary, born in 1905. He also had two younger brothers, Albert Edward, born in 1920, and Laurence Wilfred, born in 1921. All three would die in WW2.

Charles attended Borden Grammar School and, on 5 October 1935, he married Alice Smith. Charles was working as a coal merchant and fruiterer. They set up home in Orchard House, Sandown, Lynsted - which the 1939 Register census records the house as "Nouds Corner Cottages". In 1937, their daughter Una was born.

Military records are scarce but we do know that Charles attestation into the Royal Artillery was on 14 November 1940. His records show that he was due for transfer into the 16th King's Regiment on 25 March 1942. Sadly just 3 weeks before this, Charles died of tuberculosis in hospital in Preston Hall Chest Maidstone on 4 March.

Charles is buried in Sittingbourne Cemetery close to his younger brother Laurence. Laurence had served as a Sergeant Navigator in the Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve. He died when his Wellington Bomber (Wellington X - HE751) lost power while on a fighter affiliation exercise from Lossiemouth and crashed on Elgin Golf Course on 23 January 1944. He was aged 23.

Charles's other brother, Albert, is buried at Monte Cassino, Italy, where he died on 2 May 1944 while serving with the 1/6 Battalion, Surrey Regiment. He was aged 24.

In memory of the 3 boys, the Gransden family donated an electric organ blower to Sittingbourne Baptist Church. A plaque commemorates the event.

In addition, on 12 November 2011, a ceremony was held at Borden Grammar School, to unveil a memorial to commemorate former pupils gave their lives for their country. The school's old boys' association has raised £3,000 to have three old memorial boards refurbished with more names added. The Borden School Soldiers was undertaken by Marc Stewart, a Borden "old boy" and Oxford historian.

Charles's wife, Alice, remarried in 1944.



Extract from: *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald* - 11 April 1942

## BENCH DECLINE TO CONVICT A SOLDIER WHO HAD ALREADY BEEN PUNISHED.

At the Faversham County Petty Sessions on Thursday in last week, before Lieut.-Colonel Cecil Neame (in the chair), Mr P. Johnson (Mayor), Mr W.H. Wilson, Mr G. Sargent and Mrs H.S. Neame. Stanley Clarke, a soldier, was summoned for driving a motor truck without a front white light on February 26th.- Defendant pleaded not guilty.

An officer from defendant's unit said that defendant had already undergone 28 days' detention for the offence.

Dr. Thomas Jardine, of Nouds Lane, Lynsted, stated that at 7.45 p.m. on February 26th he was driving his car along Lynsted Lane in the direction of the village when he noticed a light coming down the road which he took to be a cyclist. He kept on his course and suddenly found himself confronted with the wheel of an Army lorry. He pulled his steering wheel over and put his head down in anticipation of an accident. At the same time his wife, who was with him, shouted out "Look out." Later he examined the Army vehicle and found the offside light was out.

Mrs Jardine corroborated.

PC Longhurst stated that at 10pm on February 26th he examined the Army truck driven by defendant and found it was slightly damaged on the off-side. The off-side light was also out of order. He told defendant he would be reported and said that he was just opposite Bogle House when he saw the lights of another vehicle approaching. He drew in and the car struck him. He afterwards examined his truck and found that the offside light was not working, but the lights were in perfect order when he left his depot.

Defendant said that when he left his depot all the lights were working.

The Chairman said the case would be dismissed on payment of the costs 4/- because defendant had already been dealt with by his regiment and it seemed all wrong that he should be proceeded against twice. The Clerk told him that arrangements had now been made between the police and the Army so that this sort of thing should not occur again in the future.

## Harry Stephen AMOS of Lynsted

### Volunteer, 'D' Company, 23rd Kent (Lamberhurst) Battalion, Home Guard Died following a live firing exercise, 2 June 1942 Aged 36

Harry was born in High Halstow in the Hoo St Werburgh, Registration District" during the first quarter of 1906, son of Thomas William (a shepherd) and Frances Jane (née Holyer) Amos. Harry had a sister, Rose Eva, and a brother George Edward. George would also lose his life serving in WW2.

In the 1911 Census the family has moved to Box Cottage, Tonge. The picture right shows Harry as a member of the Teynham football team.

In 1932, Harry married Doris Lily Kite of Wilkins Cottages, Greenstreet, Lynsted, in Lynsted Church. Harry went on to work as the bailiff to E W Hussey of Scotney Castle Farm and lived in Clay Pit Cottages, Little Scotney Farm, Lamberhurst, where he worked up until his death 10 years later. Harry and Lily had two children, Neville born in 1936 and Michael in 1940.



Teynham Football Team c1930 Harry Amos (circled)

Photograph courtesy of Michael Amos

The Lynsted with Kingsdown Society is indebted to Barbara Uren, author of The Lamberhurst Book of Remembrance for allowing us to reproduce below the story of how Harry met his death:

*Harry was a member of the Lamberhurst contingent of the Home Guard, who often trained with the Regular Army at Stair House, Lamberhurst.*

*A "million to one chance" was responsible for the death of Harry Amos, who, at 8pm on June 1st, during a "blitz" (live fire) exercise on Lamberhurst Golf Course, was hit, in the back, by a ricocheting bullet, which had glanced off a hidden stone in the Butts, several yards away from him. He was taken to Pembury Hospital where he died a few hours later. An inquest was held and a verdict of "accidental death" was recorded.*

*"Harry Amos, a member of the Lamberhurst Home Guard, was training with the resident Army group, who were billeted at Stair House, when the incident occurred. The Home Guard trained with all the unites that were billeted there. On the day that Harry was killed we were doing assault course training, under live fire, supervised by the NCO of the Sherwood Foresters. Sadly Harry was hit by a ricochet bullet and died shortly after. He was buried at Lynsted New Churchyard with a military style burial party of Home Guard members of which I was one."*

*Ron Skinner (former member of 'D' Co. HG)*

*On Saturday 6th June his coffin was conveyed to the Home Guard Headquarters, (in Coggars Hall) from Pembury Hospital. Where a short service was held in his honour before he was taken to his final resting place at Lynsted, by a detachment of his fellow Home Guards.*

Extract from Lamberhurst Parish Magazine June 1942:

*The Home Guard attended the morning service at the Parish Church on June 14th, to do honour to the memory of their comrade, Harry Stephen Amos, who was killed accidentally while on duty as a Home Guard. The Vicar in his sermon spoke of him as one who was faithful and trustworthy in his calling, and among men friendly to all. He joined the HG from a sense of duty, but what at first was only duty became to him and interest and a pleasure. Everyone who knew him spoke well of him, and his example and influence were always good. He might be said to have lived an old fashioned simple and godly life. His chief interest was in his home, and the sympathy of all went to his wife and children in their sudden great sorrow.*

On the 12 June 1942 the Kent and Sussex Courier published two pieces on Harry:

#### LAMBERHURST HOME GUARD'S SAD DEATH. HIT BY RICOCHETTING BULLET.

What was described as a "million-to-one" chance was responsible for the death of 36-year-old Harry Stephen Amos, of Little Scotney Farm, Lamberhurst, who died in Pembury Hospital after he had been hit by a ricocheting bullet while on a "blitz" course. The inquest at the Hospital on Thursday was conducted by the Coroner (Mr J.H. Soady), Mr Cecil Vinall representing the War Department.

Major D.F. Mills, Kent Home Guard, said deceased was a trained member of his company. On June 1 they were carrying out exercises on Lamberhurst Golf Course, the men having to cross open country and trenches while live ammunition was being fired in the direction. On the course there was a wall running from North to South, and two Bren guns were fired by a Sergt.-Major and a Corporal. On the evening of the accident the exercise commenced soon after 8pm. Witness was preparing a smoke generator when he heard a shout behind him, and saw three men on an obstacle. Suddenly one of them fell, and when witness went to the spot he found he had been shot. Witness sent for the doctor and the ambulance.

By Mr Vinall: The object of the firing was to create noise and realism. C.S.M. Smith, R.A.S.C., a qualified instructor, said he was on the course with the Home Guard using a Bren gun with live ammunition. The safety butts were 16 yards from the gun, and the wall 32 yards. It was left to his discretion how and when to fire. He had seen no other ricochet that evening. Just before the accident he saw two men helping Amos up the wall. At that time witness was firing at the butt in front of him, and he could see the bullets kicking up dust and dirt. He noticed deceased fall, and he thought the men on the top had let him drop. After examining the bullet found in deceased's body witness pronounced it to be "definitely a ricochet." It might have bounced off a stone in the butts.

Arthur George Leonard, of the Home Guard, said that while he was helping deceased up the wall the latter suddenly exclaimed "I've been hit," and dropped. Dr J.J. Bell said deceased had a lacerated wound on the right side of the back and a fracture of the right shoulder-blade, and was completely paralysed from the arm-pits down. An X-ray examination showed a fracture of the vertebral border of the right scapula and a fracture of the spine. After the bullet had been removed deceased progressed satisfactorily for the first two hours, but then grew weaker, and died from shock and respiratory failure.

The Coroner said it had been given in evidence that this realistic "blitz" training was regarded by the Army authorities as a proper part of the training of the armed forces. It was obvious that the more realistic the training the more useful it was, but it followed that risk was increased. He was satisfied that the shot was not a direct one, but one which had ricocheted. He returned a verdict of "Death from Accidental Causes," adding that the exercise was properly carried out.

Sympathy was expressed with the relatives.

#### LATE MR H. AMOS.

Mr Harry Amos, whose tragic death while on Home Guard exercises is reported on another page, had been in the employ of Mr E.W. Hussey, Scotney Castle, as farm foreman at Little Scotney Farm for ten years. He was 36 years of age, and leaves a widow and two children to mourn their loss. On Saturday morning the coffin containing the mortal remains was conveyed from Pembury Hospital to the Home Guard Headquarters, where a short service was held in the presence of members of the Home Guard with their officers, Major Mills, Capt. Weller and Lieut. Toller. The funeral service was at Lynsted, and was conducted by the Rev. L.E.A. Ehrman. A detachment of the Lamberhurst Home Guard was present under the command of Major Mills, with Capt. Weller. The chief mourners were Mrs Amos, Mr and Mrs T. Amos, Mrs T. Amos, Mrs J. Kite, Mr and Mrs J. Amos, Mr W.J. Kite, Mr S. Kite, Mrs H.H.G. Gridley and Mr S. Holyer. Amongst others present were Mr and Mrs E.W. Hussey, Admiral J.W.C. Healey, Mr Orpin, Scotney Estate Bailiff, and Mrs Orpin, Messrs C. Brissenden, F. Skinner, F. Walters, W. Bishop, J. Veness, W. Rabson, W. Law, H. Humphrey (fellow workmen), and Mr J. Birchall.

Harry's widow, Doris never remarried, and she died in Canterbury Hospital on 6th November 2001 at the age of 91. They are buried together in Lynsted churchyard extension.

## Frederick PAYNE of Norton

**1293749 Sergeant Observer, Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve, Coastal Command**  
**Killed in a flying accident during a training exercise on 6 June 1942, aged 27**

**F**rederick was born on 9 December 1914 in Eastling, the youngest of the seven children of James, a fruitman, and Esther Ellen (née Young). At the time of the 1939 Register Frederick was living along with his parents at 2 Little Rushett, Norton, where he was working as a poultryman

Frederick was the observer on his Beaufort II AW306/K from No 5 RAF Operational Training Unit, Turnberry, Scotland, that took off at 6.49am on 6 June 1942. It failed to return and it was speculated that the plane had descended through cloud into the sea.

At first it was reported that the pilot, Sergeant Horatio Herbert Morris had survived. However, he body was washed ashore at Baleshare, North Uist on 25 June 1942. The bodies of Sergeants Samuel Hunter and Donald Campbell Smith were not recovered and they are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial. Frederick's body was recovered and returned to his family on the day on which he was due to be married. Frederick is buried in Norton Churchyard on 9 July 1942.

The Society is indebted to Sue Middleton, Frederick's Great Niece, for her assistance and permission to use the portrait photograph.



## Philip William PHILLIPS of Doddington

**Lance Bombardier, 917730, 97 (The Kent Yeomanry)**  
**Field Regt, Royal Artillery**  
**Killed in action on 29 June 1942, aged 21**

**S**on of Frederick William and Kathleen of Sale, Cheshire. Born in December 1919 in Sale, Staffordshire, oldest of the six children of Frederick William Phillips of Sale, who pre-deceased Philip, and Kathleen née Atkins of Doddington.

Philip married Maud Apps in 1941. Maud's brother Charles had been killed just a few months earlier in November 1940.

Phillips regiment had arrived in Iraq on 20 October 1941 and was initially under command of Tenth Army before being assigned to 10th Indian Infantry Division on 19 November 1941. On 25 April 1942 he arrived in Egypt on 31 May.

On 5 September 1942, it was reported via the War Office Casualty Section that Philip was missing following action on 29 June 1942. Over a year later, on 23 October 1943, War Office Casualty List No. 1272 reported "On or shortly after' 29/06/1942 now presumed died of wounds.

Philip is remembered on the Alamein Memorial, El Alamein, Maṭrūḥ, Egypt.

Maud remarried in 1944.



## Archibald GILBERT of Lynsted

**C/309782 Chief Stoker, Royal Navy,**  
**HMS Pembroke (Chatham Shore base)**  
**Died of illness 30 June 1942, aged 58**

**A**rchibald was born on 19 July 1884 in Greenstreet, Teynham. He was one of the 11 children of Abraham, a self employed carpenter and fencer, and Amy (née Kemsley). Archibald's older sibling was Percy William. Percy died aged 18 in 1901, while serving as a private in the 10th Hussars, following hospitalisation in St James's Hospital, Woolwich. He is buried in Teynham Churchyard.

His younger siblings were Mildred Kate, Violet Ethel, Edith Nora, Reginald Frank, Hilda Winifred, John Maxwell, Cuthbert Eric and Sybil Irene. In 1900 another daughter was born but died only hours old. Reginald was killed in the First World War. His full biography is published in the Lynsted with Kingsdown Society's book "They Shall Grow Not Old". The full text is also available on the Society website, [www.lynsted-society.co.uk](http://www.lynsted-society.co.uk).

Archibald was born on 19 July 1884 in Greenstreet and christened in Teynham Church on 10 October 1884. At the time of the 1911 Census, Archibald was working alongside his father in carpentry and fencing. The family were living at 22 London Road, Lynsted.

In 1906, Archibald enlisted in the Royal Navy for 12 years. Prior to the First World War he service included time on HMS Acheron, Ramillies, Thelis and Inflexible. During the First World War, amongst the ships he served on were HMS King George V, Leander and Attentive. Records suggest that Archibald served for an additional 10 years, having been promoted to Chief Stoker, leaving the service in 1928.

Immediately on the outbreak of war, Archibald re-joined the Navy and on 26 August 1939 he was stationed at HMS Pembroke (Chatham Shore-base). On 3 May 1940, Archibald transferred to HMS Landrail in Scotland, another shore-base where in the early 1940s, the Royal Navy built an airfield that would be used by the Fleet Air Arm Squadrons throughout the Second World War. Originally called "Strabane Naval Air Station", it was later renamed "H.M.S Landrail, RN Air Station, Machrihanish". During 1940 and 1942, almost every aircraft of the time operated here and a huge number of both Royal Navy and RAF squadrons passed through its gates, making it one of the three busiest front line airfields in Britain.

At some time in 1942 Archibald was taken in and transferred to the Royal Naval Hospital in Gillingham (now the Medway Maritime Hospital) where he died there on 30 June 1942 of coronary occlusion. He is buried in Lynsted Church Extension Churchyard.

## Alan Douglas COMYN of Wychling

**Captain, 40 Commando, Royal Marines (Special Service)**  
**Killed in action or died of wounds 19 August 1942 during**  
**"Operation Jubilee", Dieppe, France, aged 22**

**B**orn 24 October 1919, Bombay, India, Alan was the younger son of Colonel Dr Kenneth Comyn and Cissy Leonore (née Carrozi) Comyn. In 1941, Alan married Lydia Anne Walker in Tonbridge. In 1943 they had a daughter, Annette M Douglas Comyn. At the time of Alan's death, Lydia was living in Wychling.

Alan lost his during "Operation Jubilee", aka the Dieppe Raid, on 19 August 1942. An Allied assault on the German-occupied port of Dieppe, Commandos were deployed in support of a Canadian assault force. 3 and 4 Commandos were to destroy the enemy coastal batteries covering the main landing beaches. Alan's unit, 40 Commando, were to cover the port area and was to be responsible for reinforcements as required. In the pre-dawn run-in the landing craft carrying 3 Commando were fired upon and scattered with the result that only two small parties managed to land, one was overwhelmed. One party was to successfully engage the Berneval battery for some hours before withdrawing. On the other flank at Varengeville, 4 Commando, under the command of Lord Lovat, carried out what was officially hailed as a 'classic operation of war' and completely destroyed the Hess Battery, successfully withdrawing and re-embarking with prisoners. Unfortunately, 40 Commando had committed to their landing, under impossible conditions. Of the 370 officers and men, 76 were lost on the beaches. Among those killed was the Commanding officer, while the second-in-command, Robert Houghton was captured. Of the 24 landing craft which took part, 10 managed to land a total of 24 tanks, all of which were lost.

The main assault lasted less than six hours until strong German defences and mounting Allied losses forced its commanders to call a retreat.

Alan is remembered on the memorial stone sited in the Dorney War Memorial Ground, Village Road, Dorney, Buckinghamshire and on the Portsmouth Naval War Memorial.

His elder brother, Kenneth Fitzwilliam, also served in WW2. He was captured on 15 February 1942 when Singapore was captured. He served the rest of the war in a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp.

Then living at Undercliffe, Pilgrims Way, Lenham, Alan's wife died on 11 April 1964. She never remarried.



*Burnt out tanks and landing craft lie strewn across the beach at Dieppe after the Allied withdrawal.*

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## Extract from "The War Years 1939 - 1945 in Faversham and District"

September 1942

A garden sale and fete at The Grange, Teynham, raised £45 for the work of the YMCA amongst the Forces overseas. It was arranged by Mr L Bull and local YMCA canteen workers.

A British Restaurant established by the Swale R D Council at Teynham, was opened by Mr George Sargent, chairman of the Council.

### John Vivian SHARP of Lynsted

C/JX 148382 Able Seaman, Royal Navy, HMS Arethusa

Killed in action 18 November 1942 Aged 22

John Vivian (Jack) Sharp was born on 14 February 1920. The oldest of the three sons of Harold James William Sharp, a bus conductor, and Elsie Sharp (née Webb). His younger brothers were Eric James, born on 21 March 1927, and Maurice William, born on 16 April 1932.

John's mother died in 1935 and his father married widow Emma Charlotte Reynolds, in 1938. At the time of the 1939 Register Census, the family were living at 3 Vigo Terrace, Lynsted, along with their step-brother Arthur George Hopkins.

Just a few months before his death, John married Dorothy Marion Cheeseman of Canterbury.

At the time of his death John was serving on HMS Arethusa. It had left Alexandria to form a part of the escort for a convoy to Malta that was under siege. On the 18 November, 450 miles from port, she was torpedoed by low flying enemy aircraft, the explosion and resulting fire took the lives of 156 men from the ship's complement of approximately 500. Arethusa was the only casualty of "Operation Stoneage" and the arrival of the four merchant ships of convoy MW-13 effectively marked the end of the siege of Malta.

The ship was badly damaged but managed, after a gallant struggle by her crew, to get back to Alexandria. Experts who examined her later in dry dock stated that it was a miracle she didn't sink.

The official report given by the Admiralty to the next of kin of the dead, read as follows:

*On November 18th 1942, HMS Arethusa formed part of the escort of cruisers and destroyers taking an important convoy through the Eastern Mediterranean to Malta.*

*It was important because Malta needed stores to enable her to fulfil the role allotted to her in the great general offensive operations which had opened with the British Eighth Army's advance from Alamein positions a few days previously. During the day the convoy was passing through that part of the Mediterranean between Cyrenaica and Crete known as "Bomb Alley" and at dusk had reached a position about half way between Derna, on the hump of Cyrenaica, and Malta. Both the convoy and the escorts had been attacked during the day but neither had been damaged.*

*At the very end of twilight, in that difficult light when visibility favours the aircraft rather than the ship, a strong formation of German Torpedo-Carrying Aircraft made a most determined attack upon the escort.*

*The Arethusa was attacked simultaneously from both sides and was able to avoid all but one of the torpedoes. This torpedo hit her and caused a violent explosion accompanied by a severe blast. The blast killed instantaneously all the men in the vicinity. Some not quite so close were badly burned by the flash and some of these unfortunately died later of their injuries. The next of kin of these men were informed that their kinsmen had died from burn injury, but it can now be stated with some certainty that all the remainder were killed at once by the tremendous blast and that they would not have suffered pain.*

*Their bodies were buried at sea, altogether three services were held, and they were taken by the Chaplain very beautifully and reverently.*

*A memorial service was held ashore later when the ship reached port and it was a most impressive service. Correspondence is now being exchanged with the Commodore of the Royal Naval Barracks at Chatham about a permanent memorial to these gallant men to be placed in the Barracks Church. It will probably form a part of the general memorial to all the men of the Chatham Division who lose or have lost their lives in this present war.*



*area of blackened distorted metal, caused by the huge fire after the explosion.*

*Great gaping holes in her hull for'ard, and was well down at the bows, showing she was partly flooded. But what riveted our attention more than anything was the canvas covered objects lying on the mole, laid out in lines and attached to each one a 4" projectile. The bodies of the Arethusa's men mostly marines - who had perished in that holocaust of an explosion and fire, now sewn up in canvas hammocks, waiting to be carried to their last resting place - the sea, on which they had so gallantly served in the cause of freedom.*

*Without any fuss we tied up, and a section of the ships guardrails removed on the starboard side against the jetty, and a wide board placed down on to Aldenham's deck and made fast at the other end. Then commenced the job of sliding the bodies carefully down the ramp and stacking them high on deck, some under the boats davits, some against the torpedo tubes, and more aft towards the quarterdeck, leaving the port side clear for the conduction of the service.*

*The last body brought inboard, the board pulled back, the guardrails replaced, and then two padres came on board followed by a funeral firing party from H.M.S. Orion, and lastly a very young marine bugler.*

*With a signal from the bridge wires were cast off, and Aldenham slowly moved away, to commence her journey to the open sea. At the same time the cruiser had cleared lower deck, the men standing quietly facing outboard, caps removed in a last farewell gesture to their fallen comrades. Suddenly the peace of the afternoon was shattered by the shrill blast of a boson's call from high up on the cruisers bridge.*

*The 'still'. Everybody at attention, and not a sound except the Aldenham's screws churning up the water. Then the 'carry on', as the ship turned away crossing the harbour to the open sea, ensign at half mast.*

*Slowly we cleared the boom and out into the blue calm of the Mediterranean, the sun settling away in the western sky throwing long rays across the placid water.*

*The ships engines shut down and slowly we came to a standstill, and with that the C. of E. Padre stood up on the torpedo tubes platform and commenced this solemn service for burial at sea, his voice sadly droning on, the ships company gathered around with heads bent, and sea breezes playing little tricks on hair and collars. Then it was the R.C. service. Emotionally and bravely, the Padre carried on this sad service until at the conclusion he closed his prayer book with a definite movement. This was the cue for the funeral firing party. At a command from their officer they raised their rifles to the firing position. Then one volley, another and another until the end, and with that the order 'present arms'. A pause and the marine bugler sprang to attention, his bugle ready at his lips. Loud and clear across that still blue water - the 'Last Post'. Slowly the notes died away and the one minutes silence. Everybody and everything dead quiet, even the sea breezes and birds seemed to pause in stillness at this very heart rending moment. Then it was over as if a spell had been broken and men who had volunteered commenced their gruesome task of committing the bodies to the deep.*

*The guardrails were slipped a suitable board positioned, and in pairs the corpses were tilted over the side. Half way through this task some of the bodies were floating having not been sufficiently weighted, and both padres became very agitated, but their fears were soon allayed when P.O. Harvey and another man produced a couple of very long boat hooks, and gently pressed the bodies under until they sank. As the setting sun disappeared below the distant watery horizon, proclaiming the end of another day, so the last body was committed to the deep.*

*All over, the ships engine room was given the order 'slow ahead' and we turned for Alexandria harbour, a wistful look back at a solitary poppy wreath bobbing lightly on the waves. All that was left to show the resting place of those brave men who had paid the extreme sacrifice.*

*Somewhere across the sea in our homelands postmen and telegraph boys would be knocking at doors handing in telegrams, "The Admiralty regrets.....". So much for the fight for freedom.*

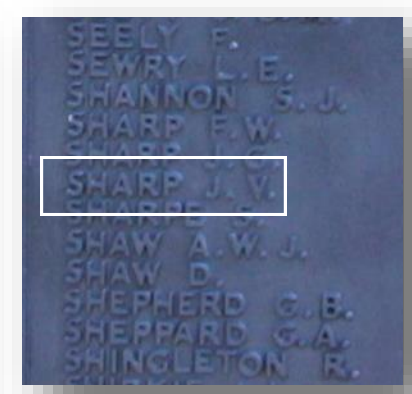
*On landing the padres and firing party, the Aldenham returned to her usual billet (another destroyer had taken over E.M.D.) and at 1800 hours the pipe went out 'Hands muster for additional rum issue'. Quietly the men mustered with their jugs cans, but there was no cheering. They had performed a very unpleasant job, efficiently and dignified, and it had left the ships' company with some very sombre thoughts. Leave was piped for 1900 but no one was interested. All they needed was peace and a long restful undisturbed night.*

It is perhaps reassuring that, wherever possible, our casualties were treated with the dignity and reverence they so well deserved.

John is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 56, column 1.

In 2001, the Arethusa Association members dedicated a tree to the Arethusa's lost crew at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas.

The Society is indebted to the Arethusa Association and Martin Mitchell for their kind permission to reproduce the information showed here and to reproduce the extract from "The Last Destroyer".



In the book "The Last Destroyer", the story of HMS Aldenham 1942-1944, first published 1988, the author F A Mason RN DSM - who saw Mediterranean service on Aldenham from 1941-1944, writes about the part his ship played in the burial of the dead of the Arethusa:

#### The SEA BURIAL

*Speculation soon became reality by the announcement in a tannoy broadcast of the task in hand, and what a gruesome thing it was going to be. At 1500 hours we would slip and proceed alongside the damaged cruiser Arethusa, take on board approximately 50 dead bodies, proceed to a point about 3 miles off Alexandria and conduct a sea burial, the time to coincide with sunset.*

*At the appointed time precisely we got underway and proceeded slowly across the harbour to where the Arethusa lay alongside one of the moles. Approaching, we had chance to size up the damage she had sustained, having been hit by a torpedo dropped from an enemy aircraft. 'X' turret was missing completely, and the whole of the front of the bridge was an*



**Walter Edgar WATSON of Teynham**  
**6096071, Lance Corporal, 6th Battalion,**  
**Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment**  
**Killed in action 30 November 1942, aged 22**

**S**on of John and Louisa Maud (née Reynolds) Watson.  
 Walter enlisted in the 6th Battalion, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment on 19 July 1940. In 1941 he married Irene Mabel Shilling of Milton.

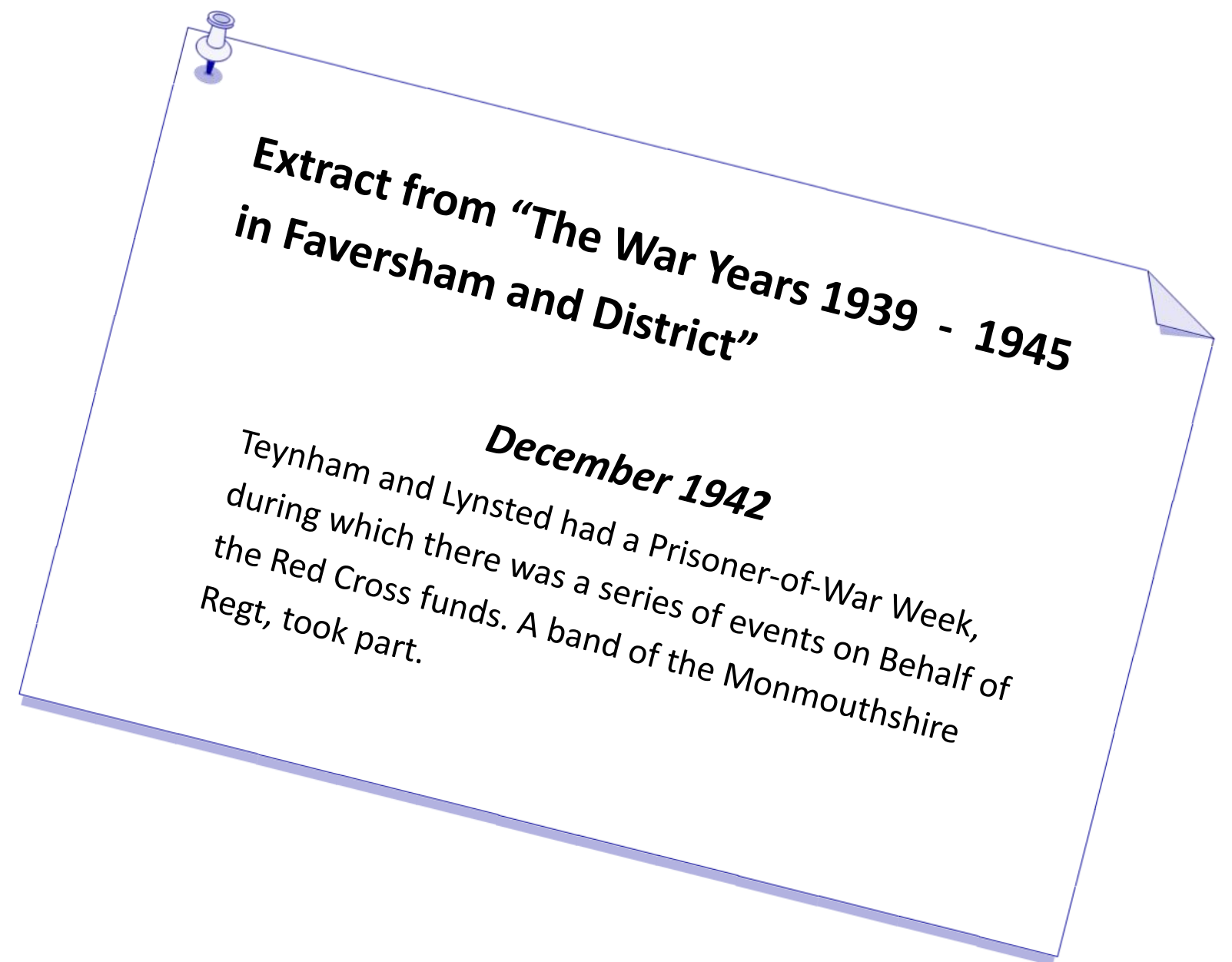
From the time of joining up, the 6th Battalion RWKs were back in the UK to be brought back up to strength they had been overrun by the Germans at Doullens after most of the survivors had been taken prisoner.

In November 1942, they became part of the 78th Infantry Division and played a major role in 'Operation Torch', the Anglo-American invasion of French Algeria. Arriving in North Africa in early November, they moved swiftly east towards Tunis. They distinguished themselves by holding the crossroads at Djebel Aboid for four days against an armoured column. They then advanced only to be halted on 30 November at Green Hill (Djebel Azzag) where they lost 11 officers and 150 other ranks in a heroic attack.

On 24 December 1942, it was reported that Walter was "Missing believed wounded" on 30 November 1942. It was not until 26 July 1944 that he was confirmed "Killed in action" on 30 November 1942.

At the time of his death his wife Irene was living in Teynham. Walter's daughter was born at the end of 1942.

He is remembered on the Medjez-El-Bab Memorial, situated near Majaz al Bab, Tunisia.



**1943**

The Progress of the War		
January	31	The remnants of the 6th Army surrendered at Stalingrad
	28	Battle of Cape Matapan
May		Final victory over the U-Boats in the Atlantic
	13	Axis forces in Tunisia surrendered
July	10	Allies invade Sicily
September	3	Allies invade Italy
	8	Italy capitulates
December	26	Scharnhorst sunk off North Cape

**Francis Henry CLAPP of Lynsted and Norton**  
**Able Seaman, C/JX 173810, Royal Navy, HMS Corncrake**  
**Lost at sea 25 January 1943, aged 24**

**F**rancis was the second son of John Henry, a horseman, and Margaret Frances (née Linkin). Francis was born on 29 April 1919. His elder brother, John G, was born in 1915.



At the time of the 1939 Register Census the family were living at Nouds Farm, Lynsted where the 2 sons were working as labourers.

Francis married Phyllis May Fairbrace of Throwley in September 1941.

Francis served on HMS Corncrake, a 670-ton Mine Layer, that was sailing as an escort vessel in Convoy KMS-8, when she was lost. It is thought she foundered in the North Atlantic in very rough weather on Monday 25 January 1943, with the loss of all 23 hands.

Convoy KMS-8 was a slow convoy comprised of 60 merchant ships and 17 escort vessels, which left the Clyde on Thursday 21 January, and arrived at Bone, Algeria on Monday 8 February 1943.

Phyllis had been informed that Francis was missing. However as the following piece from the Faversham News 9 July 1943 states, some months later he was assumed killed:

**Mrs Clapp of 25 South Road has been informed that her husband, Able Seaman Francis Henry Clapp, previously reported missing, is now presumed killed. Aged 24, he was the son of Mr & Mrs John Clapp of Nouds Farm, Teynham. He worked on that farm for three years before joining the Royal Navy.**

Francis is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 68, column 3. He is also commemorated in the Faversham Book of Remembrance.



Phyllis married Frederick Holmes in 1946. She died in 1997.