

Lest We Forget



There are 18 names from the Second World War commemorated on the War Memorial outside the Parish Hall in Chipstead. Eight of these men served with the RAF, two with the Home Guard and the remainder with various branches of the army. Some older residents will probably have known these families and if anyone has anything to add (or correct) do please get in touch. Lindy Leigh (lindysleigh@gmail.com)

Herbert Gordon Ware Dabnor and Gordon Dabnor

Tragically, father and son died on 8 December 1940 when a bomb was jettisoned on Froghall Farm, Chevening Road. Herbert was aged 46 and Gordon was just 16 years old and both worked on the adjacent Windmill Farm. They had recently volunteered to serve in the Home Guard and were Privates in the 20th Kent (Sevenoaks) Battalion.

According to a newspaper report, Herbert, his wife Ethel, and Gordon, together with a cousin of Ethel's were about to leave the farm when a stick of high explosives came down and destroyed the farm buildings. Herbert was killed outright and Gordon died later that day of his injuries at the Sevenoaks and Holmesdale Hospital. Neither Ethel nor her cousin were hurt, other than suffering from shock and Ethel had a small cut on her arm. Ethel said that the men had been walking ahead of them and had taken the full impact of the explosion, whilst she and her cousin had managed to fling themselves to the ground. (Later that evening a further bomb was dropped near Chipstead Place, but although causing extensive damage there were no casualties).

Herbert and Gordon were buried together at Chevening where Gordon had sung in the choir. Their other son, Frank, served in the RAF during the War and survived. Ethel died in 1973.

The Darby Brothers

Richard, Oliver and John were the sons of Richard Frederick, an estate agent and Gladys Darby, who lived at "Glendale", 9 High Street, Chipstead. Richard and John were both born in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) but I think that Oliver was born in England.

Richard Darby

Richard had been working in Malaya before the outbreak of the War for Harper Gilfallen & Co as their company secretary and served as a Gunner with the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force Light Battery. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese in Singapore in 1943.

He died of diphtheria on 27 June 1943 at Sonkria, Thailand and is buried at Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery, Myanmar (Burma).

Oliver Darby

Oliver was a 2nd Lieutenant with the 1st (Perak) Battalion Federated Malay States Volunteer Force when he died on 17 March 1942 aged 28. He is buried at Taiping War Cemetery, Malaysia

John Darby

John was born in Columbia, Sri Lanka in 1916. In 1937 he sailed to Peru and returned in 1940. He gave his address as "Glendale", Chipstead and his occupation was a clerk.

He was a Major in the Royal Ulster Rifles (attached to 3rd Battalion 1st King George V's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment) when he was killed in action on 28 May 1944, probably in Burma. He is buried at Imphal War Cemetery, India.

Harold Leslie Atkin-Berry

Harold was a Pilot Officer with 107 Squadron RAF, a medium bomber squadron which during 1940 were engaged in attacking shipping and coastal areas of northern France and Belgium. He was based at RAF Wattisham.

He died 10 July 1940 having crashed at Aigneville, France, aged 20, and buried at Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, France. He was mentioned in despatches in the New Year's Honours List of 1941.

He had been posted as missing on 30 July 1940 together with Sgts Robert Cook and Roy Mercer. A personal message in the Sevenoaks Chronicle shows he was still missing in November and it is not known when his parents received the confirmation of his death. He was the son of Maj Herbert and Edith Atkin-Berry who lived at Slamet, Packhorse Road, Bessels Green. His younger brother, Michael Ian, served as a Lieutenant with the 10th Battalion, Rifle Brigade and was awarded the Military Cross in December 1944 for action in Italy.

Charles Richard Chancellor

Pilot Officer RAF Volunteer Reserve serving with 626 Squadron, a heavy bomber squadron.

Charles was known as "Jim" and was born in Lisbon, Portugal in about 1924, the son of Edgar Charles and Margery Chancellor. Edgar was a solicitor and the family lived in Portugal in the 1920's and 1930's but by 1938 the family had moved to Many Trees, Packhorse Road, Bessels Green.

Charles was the pilot when he and his crew took off from RAF Wickenby at 07.14hrs. on 7 August 1945. Tragically at about 12.00hrs their Lancaster bomber RF159 crashed in the Lamontelarie area of France near Carcassonne and all six on board were killed. Charles was 21 years old and is buried at Mazargues War Cemetery, Marseille, France

Charles had a younger brother, John Russell Chancellor (1925-1984) who served in the Merchant Navy.

Oliver Rye Coomber

Oliver was the son of Alfred and Agnes Coomber and served in 159 Squadron as an Aircraftsman 1st Class, RAF Volunteer Reserve. 159 Squadron flew to India on 30 September 1942 where they were involved with mine-laying, bombing and reconnaissance over Burma, Siam, Malaya and Indo-China. However, it is unclear exactly what job Oliver did with the unit.

Oliver died on 12 January 1943 aged 30 and was buried in Calcutta (Bhowanipore) Cemetery, Kolkata.

I cannot say for certain why Oliver is on the Chevening War Memorial as in 1939 his parents were living in Ide Hill, although possibly in the part which is in our parish. However, his father had spent many years in Chipstead prior to moving to Ide Hill.

Oliver is also on the Roll of Honour at Ide Hill.

Frank Henry Cook

Frank served as a Pilot Officer in the RAF Volunteer Reserve with 99 Squadron flying Wellington bombers based at RAF Waterbeach from March 1941.

He died on 21 April 1941 and is remembered on Panel 31 of the Runnymede Memorial.

Frank was born in Lewisham in 1915, the son of Frank and Mary Cook, who had married the previous year in Sundridge. Frank senior was a chauffeur and in 1939 was living in the chauffeur's cottage at Morants Court.

Harry Duhamel Derwin

Harry was born in 1907 in Bloomsbury, London the son of Bernard Duhamel Derwin, a tailor, and his wife Annie (who were both born in St. Helier, Jersey). By 1911 the family were living at 10 Park Place, Bessels Green. A younger sister, Kathleen Mary was born in December 1911.

Harry married Gladys Mabel Rosier in 1932 and in 1939 Gladys was living at "Tanners", Park Place, Bessels Green.

He served as a Leading Aircraftsman with 73 Squadron RAF, a Hurricane squadron which was based in France. Fearing that their airfields would be overrun the Squadron withdrew from France. Some 40 members of the ground crew, including Harry, died on 17 June 1940, when RMS Lancastria was sunk off the coast of St Nazaire. He is remembered on Panel 22 of the Runnymede Memorial.

Wilfred Ellsley

Wilfred served as a Sergeant wireless operator with 50 Squadron, a bomber squadron based at RAF Waddington and at the time of his death they were operating out of RAF Swinderby. He died on 25 July 1941 when his plane crashed near Thurlby, Lincolnshire and was buried in a collective grave at Thurlby (St. Germain) Churchyard, with three other sergeants.

Wilfred was born in 1920 in Camberwell, the son of Charles, a Customs & Excise Officer, and Ruby Ellsley. He had a younger brother, Howard, who served in the Royal Navy. An older brother, Charles, died shortly after birth.

Charles and Ruby were living in Lewisham in 1939, but came to Riverhead during the latter part of 1941. They lived at 19 Barnfield Road. Sadly, Charles' body was found on the railway line near the Polhill Tunnel on 9 January 1951. Ruby was a member of the Chevening WI and supervised the making of jam during the War.

Edward William Jenner

Edward was a Flight Sergeant with the RAF Volunteer Reserve serving in 514 Squadron, part of Bomber Command, flying Lancasters. He died on 30 July 1944 aged 21 and is remembered on Panel 219 of the Runnymede Memorial.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission states he was the son of Mr E T N Jenner and step-son of Mrs M J Jenner of Chipstead.

Kenneth Douglas Wright

Kenneth was the son of Kenneth Reginald and Irene Wright. His father was a bank manager they were living at Kettlewell Cottage, Bessels Green in 1943.

In 1942 he was serving as a Flight Sergeant in the RAF Volunteer Reserve with 206 Squadron, a Coastal Command Squadron flying Lockheed Hudson aircraft specialising in anti-submarine warfare.

He died on 26 June 1942 aged 22 and was buried in a joint grave in Kiel War Cemetery, Germany (shared with Pilot Officer David Thomas Williams Phillips). Another 9 RAF personnel died the same day and were buried in the same cemetery.

Richard Christopher Elliott

Richard served as a Lance Corporal with the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade.

He was killed in action on 23 July 1942 aged 28 and is remembered on Column 71 Alamein Memorial, Egypt.

He was the son of Edward and Edith Elliott who in 1939 were living at 66 Westerham Road, Bessels Green. Edward had been a tea planter in Ceylon. Edward and Edith married in Tiverton in 1910 and lived on the Concordia Estate, Kandapola, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). During many of their visits to the UK before the War they stayed at The Wildernesse Country Club, Seal.

Horace John King, BEM

Sergeant with the 4th Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. Horace joined up in December 1939, having been working for English Flour Millers Ltd. at Chipstead Mill as a lorry driver. He had married Emily Chapman in 1938 and they lived in Homedean Road.

In August 1942 he was taken prisoner by the Italians and was hospitalised at Derna, Libya. Three months later the town fell to the British army. Horace told his story to a newspaper correspondent, saying that when the Italians started to leave, they left 33 men in the hospital and that as he was the fittest man left he did what he could for his fellow patients. He asked the correspondent if he could find a doctor as some of the patients were in a serious condition. Horace was mentioned in despatches for his efforts.

A few weeks after he had written to Emily informing her that he had been mentioned in despatches she received the notification that he had been killed in action on 1 Jan 1944 aged 25 and was buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar (Burma).

Stephen Samuel Morris

Stephen was the eldest child of Stephen and Mabel Morris and was born in Poplar, London. By 1918 the family were living in the Sevenoaks area and in 1939 they were living at 53 Westerham Road. When Stephen senior died in 1958 he was living at 28 Bullfinch Close.

Stephen Samuel served as a Private with the 1st Battalion Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment. The family had received notification that he had been posted missing in April 1943 and this was reported in May in the Sevenoaks Chronicle. He was killed in action on 22 April 1943 aged 28 and is buried at Massicault War Cemetery, Tunisia.

Two of his younger brothers also served during the War, Leslie was also with the Royal West Kents and served in Africa and Leonard served with the Royal Navy.

Roy Mills

Roy served as a Sapper with the Royal Engineers 290 Army Troops Company. He served for two years in Iceland and then became part of the Eighth Army in North Africa and then Italy. He had been listed as "missing in action" on 31 May, 1940 but obviously reappeared.

He died on 27 May 1945, his 24th birthday in hospital in Belgium and is buried in Oostende New Communal Cemetery, Belgium

Roy was the son of Edward and Emma Mills of 7 Stairfoot Lane, Chipstead. His father died before the War.

Richard Keith Mounsdon

Richard, known as Dick, was the son of Cecil and Florence Mounsdon. Cecil was an electrical engineer and moved to Chipstead in about 1918 to work for the Sevenoaks & District Electricity Company. Just before War broke out Cecil took up a similar post in Folkestone. Both Cecil and Florence had been active participants in Chipstead life and on Cecil's retirement in 1945 they returned to the area to live in Brasted. Another son served with the RAF.

Dick served as a 2nd Lieutenant with the Royal Artillery in the 48 Light AA Regiment

He died on 1 March 1942 aged 22, although his parents did not receive official notification of his death until 1945. He is buried at Jakarta (Ancol) Netherlands Field of Honour, Indonesia.

