

# **ANOTHER DOZEN**

**A STUDY OF THE MEN OF MOULTON VILLAGE WHO DIED  
SERVING HUMANITY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939 -  
1945.**

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## **DEDICATION**

**THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY WIFE  
LOIS WHO DIED IN JUNE 2004 AS I WAS FINALISING MY  
RESEARCH FOR THIS MANUSCRIPT.  
WE WERE MARRIED FOR 47 YEARS AND I MISS HER.**

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**Forward © Joy Bratherton**

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## FOREWORD

Glorious. A word used so often to describe the dead of the two World Wars. Our Glorious Dead.....

Over ten years ago I was hawking a copy of my first book from publisher to publisher and being told time and time again there was no market for a book about the men from a Cheshire village who died in the Great War. I decided to publish it myself and since then have written a further three books with colleagues who felt the stories should be told.

From towns and villages the length and breadth of the Empire young men have flocked to the colours to take part in these great adventures. They proved not to be glorious. They were horrendous and bloody and very frightening. In this super little book Geoff Crompton tells the story of “Another dozen.” He tells of their lives, their deaths and where they lay. He resurrects their names and prints them indelibly on our consciousness.

There is a market for these stories. There has to be. We owe them their memory and their constant presence in the history of our land. They went, most without hesitation, they gave all they had. People like Geoff and his projects ensure that we will remember them. Our glorious dead.

Joy Bratherton:

Joy Bratherton is a Primary Schoolteacher and lives with her family in Crewe, Cheshire. She is the dynamic Branch Chairman of the South Cheshire branch of the Western Front Association. For many years she served in various capacities on the National Committee of the WFA, including Deputy Chairman. She is the author of four books on the subject of WW1:

‘Where are the lads of the village tonight?’  
‘For those who lie in foreign fields’  
‘Never to return’  
‘Dear Mrs Jones’

## INTRODUCTION

I watched my mother and her friend Mrs Murray crying in our kitchen. They had just listened to the Prime Minister on the wireless. He had informed the country that we were now at war with Germany. I decided to beat a hasty retreat, away from the tears, and into the yard at the back of our house - I was six years old. Over the next six years I experienced many emotions from excitement to fear. I collected and swapped shrapnel, as the young boys today would collect posters of David Beckham. I saw a balloon barrage, Ack-Ack gun, EWS reservoir and air raid shelter assembled on the big field in front of our house in Brunner Road, Widnes. My dad, having served at Ypres (Wipers) and Italy in WW1, enlisted in the Home Guard. After a days work and a quick meal, he would cycle up to the barracks in Peelhouse Lane, or report for fire watching duties back at the ICI factory where he worked. Although I much enjoyed the TV programme 'Dad's Army' I do think, in some ways, that it does a disservice to the men of the Home Guard - certainly my Dad was no bumbling idiot!! I saw the graves of two German airmen, whose aircraft had crashed onto the ICI recreation ground in Liverpool Road, and felt sorry that their graves were isolated from the rest, as though contaminated in some way. I sat with my parents and brothers, night after night, in the air raid shelter close to our home. I sang carols on Christmas Eve with our church choir to the service men and women manning the guns and balloon barrage sites around the town. Eventually, and in company with my mother and middle brother Len, we sought sanctuary for a few years with my Aunt and Uncle in the relative safety of their home in North Wales. Later in the war my elder brother John responded to the call and found himself, a Lancastrian, serving in the Black Watch!

In December 2001, I published a fully illustrated tribute to the men of Moulton Village, Northwich, Cheshire who died in World War One\*. The book, entitled '34 MEN', was well received, both within the village of Moulton and in the surrounding area. It has been distributed further afield to those with a special interest in keeping alive the sacrifice of the men who fought and died for the freedoms we enjoy today. The book tells the story of the men of the village, their lives up to enlistment and, finally, the circumstances of their deaths. Each year of the war is described along with a thumbnail of life in the village during the conflict.

During the writing of the book I began to feel a little uneasy at the fact that in addition to the men who died in WW1 another 12 names were etched into the Yorkshire stone of the village War Memorial. These were, of course, the names of the lads who followed the example of their forebears a decade or so before and who, once again, were not backward in coming forward to challenge the might and evil of Germany, Japan and their acolytes. I decided that I could do no less than to research these men also and to write a dedication to their memory. Aside from a basic first hand knowledge of WW2, I had little in depth information of that conflict, particularly, the happenings in the Middle and Far East. It was going to be a hard slog to acquire this knowledge and to write anything with any vestige of authority. Nevertheless, I resolved to do the best I could and what follows is my effort at honouring 'Another Dozen' from the village. In the research and preparation of this tribute I have tried to ensure that all details are correct. I am sure, however, that my eagle eyed friends in the village, particularly the lads of the British Legion, will catch me out on a number of points of detail. If they do then I apologise in advance!

Geoff Crompton – March 2005

\* Since the publication, more facts on three of the servicemen of WW1 have come to light. These can be found in appendix 2 at the back of this book.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is no doubt that it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to have put this tribute together without the help, support and understanding of many people and organisations, some of whom are listed below:

Relatives of the 12; the villagers of Moulton and in particular Jack & Elsie Booth; Moulton Village News (Appeals For Information); librarians at Northwich and Winsford; Rev. Andy Greenhough, Vicar of Moulton, for his help in locating the burial details of John H Eyres; Archivists at Cheshire Records Office; the Editors of Northwich/Winsford Chronicles and Northwich Guardian for allowing the publication of photographs and for printing appeals for information; the copyright owners of 'Tommy' by Rudyard Kipling; The Commonwealth War Graves Commission for providing photographs of distant graves/memorials; The Imperial War Museum for use of the picture of a Vickers Wellington Bomber and various other action photographs; Edward Davidson and Dale Manning for the use of their WW2 chronology; Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery for the photograph of the Plymouth Naval Memorial; Robert Owen, Official Historian to 617 Sqn. Aircrew Ass., for providing details of the deaths of the two RAF lads; Melanie Wright-Cooper of the RAF Historical Branch for information on RAF servicemen; Community Internet Services; Portsmouth, for the photograph of Portsmouth Naval Memorial; Brunner Mond Ltd for the use of photographs of their Memorials and in particular Mary Morrison their archivist for providing details of the servicemen listed on the Winnington Memorial; The Naval and Military Press for permission to print illustrations of WW2 campaign medals from their book 'The Medals Year Book'; John Anderson of the Coldstream Guards Association for the illustration of their cap badge; George Vaughan of the RASC Association for the illustration of their cap badge; Ray Westlake for further badge illustrations; Gary Godel for his photograph of the Runnymede Memorial; Ted Finch, Kate Tildesley, Carol Cooper, Roger Mansell and Joe McMillan for supplying information on ships lost by enemy/friendly fire; Mrs Jean Billington of Anderton, Northwich, for the photograph of the Cheshire Regiments graves in Sfax War Cemetery, Tunisia; The Regimental Records Officers of the Regiments served by the 12 and for their help and advice on Regimental war diaries, histories, photographs and badge illustrations; Graham Scott for his photograph of the 'Moulton Crows'; Alan Ravenscroft, for his photographs of Winsford and Whitegate War Memorials; David Coulbeck, Headmaster of Moulton County Primary School, for allowing me sight of old school records; Alan Edwards for the loan of his panoramic photograph of Moulton Village; Peter Brydon of South Cheshire WFA for help with WW2 Medals; my friends Les Burgess and Phil Ashton for both editing and proof reading the finished manuscript; to Lois, my wife, whilst she lived, for yet again tolerating my time away from home and the hours spent in front of my PC putting this tribute together; and finally, to all those unnamed friends and acquaintances who listened, helped, advised and encouraged.

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## THE VILLAGE

Moulton Village stands in the heart of the Cheshire countryside between the towns of Northwich and Winsford. It runs more or less parallel with the River Weaver and is located on a ridge overlooking the vale. The 1086 Domesday Book mentions that 'Moletune' was part of the estate of The Baron Richard de Vernon of Shipbrook. Roughly translated from the old English the entry reads:

"Moulton. Leofnorth held it - he was a freeman. There is one hide paying tax. There is land for 2 ploughs.

There is one villager and one smallholder who have 1/2 plough.

There is 1 acre of meadow; Woodland 1 league long and 1 wide; 1 enclosure.

Value was and is 5 shillings (25p)".

In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Moulton and the surrounding area was purchased by the France-Hayhurst family who took up residence in nearby Bostock Hall. The estate was sold off during the 1950s. Bostock Hall was converted into flats in the late 90s.

Today (2005) the village boasts two places of worship; The Methodist Chapel dating from 1875 and The Parish Church of St Stephen the Martyr built in 1876. It has two pubs, The Lion and the Travellers Rest. It has a County Primary School (built in 1894); Village Hall; British Legion Club; the Verdin Institute and the Moulton Adventure Groups HQ in School Lane.

In 1801, the population of the village stood at 103. Since that time numbers have steadily increased. In 1851 the population had risen to 328; in 1901 to 1004; in 1951 to 1218 and in 1997 to 2330. In this current year the figure is in excess of 3000. The heart of the old village, comprising Main Road, Regent Street, Church Street, Chapel Lane and Chapel Street is now surrounded by new estates of houses, bungalows and flats.

Employment in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by the salt industry and the houses in Regent Street and Church Street were built to house the workers in this industry. At dawn, salt workers would trudge up 'the bank' from their homes, along the path past the sand pit and down through the railway tunnels to the Newbridge Salt Works. Some would walk even further and cross the River Weaver via the bridge to clock on at Falk's Salt Works. When Sir John Brunner and Ludwig Mond established their chemical plants in Northwich, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, men from Moulton sought jobs in their factories at Winnington and Lostock.

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century life in Moulton was typical of a country village. Men worked on the land and at various trades in and beyond the village. Their wives brought up large families in small houses - three children to a bed, not uncommon! The 1891 Census repeatedly lists the occupation of the head of the household as 'Salt Boiler'. The job of a 'Salt Boiler' was to look after large open pans filled with salt brine. He tended the fires under the pans and regulated the flow of brine into them until a combination of



time and heat produced the required crystal size. Various grades of salt from 'block' through to very fine granular were made. The process could take up to a week after which time the pans would be emptied, cleaned and the cycle repeated. It was hot, steamy, sweaty, labour intensive work with the men stripped to the waist and wearing clogs to keep their feet dry.

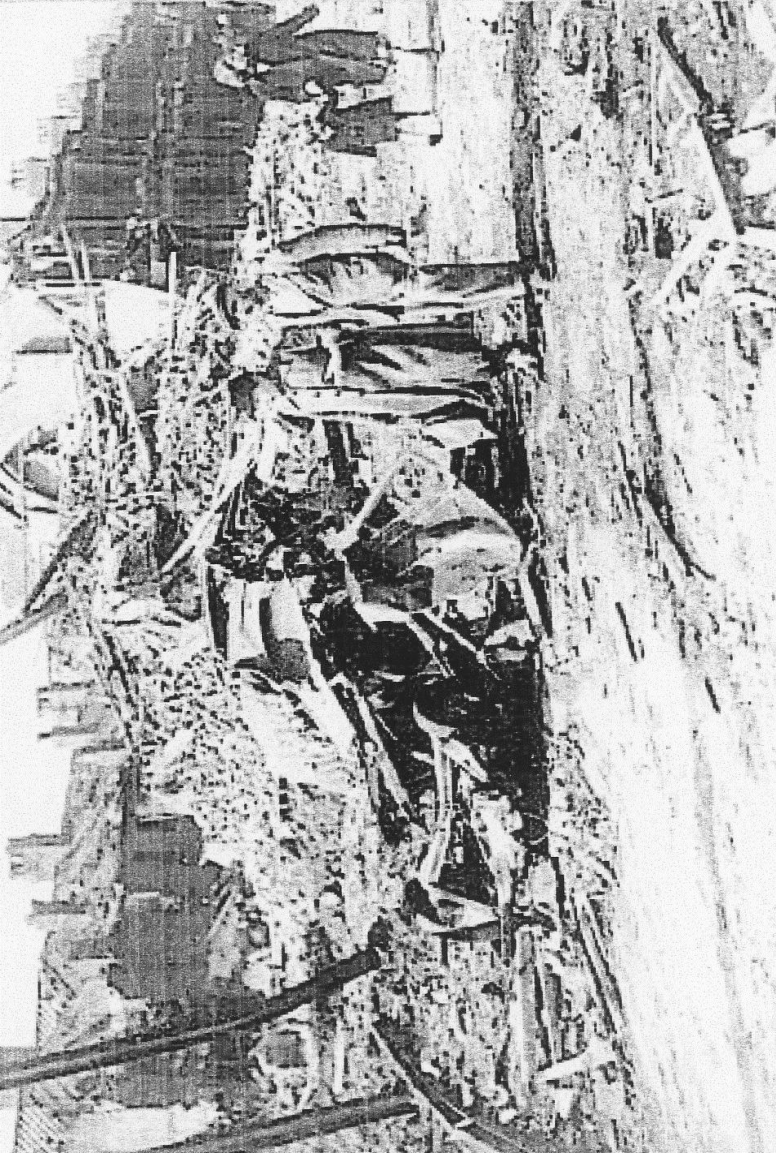
Between the two World Wars life in the village continued much as it had before the 1914 - 1918 conflict. Men returned home from their military service and attempted to pick up their lives as best they could. They tried to put behind them the horror of the trenches, the mud and that all pervading smell of death that had been their companion for four long years. Some would never be able to forget, for they were scarred both in body and in mind. Some had lost limbs, been disfigured by bullet or shell, gassed or shell-shocked.

The population of the village increased slightly from 1100 in 1914 to 1150 or so in 1939. In 1926 and later on, in 1932, new houses were built at the entrance to the village. A new numbering system was introduced affecting most of the properties in Main Road. Although new people arrived they had little effect on the overall size of the village population for by this time families had stabilised at approximately seven or below. Large families of twelve or more were a thing of the past and women, in particular, were glad of it!!

1926 was a momentous year, for this was the year of the General Strike. It was also a red-letter year for Northwich and the surrounding area. Brunner Mond and Salt Union, the main employers of labour in the district, merged with other large chemical companies throughout the land to form Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd (ICI) - a new dawn had begun.

Sometime during the early 1920s at the height of the Depression, many men employed in the salt industry in factories along the banks of the River Weaver were laid off. Being desperately poor, they spent hours each week searching for coal on the local ash/ cinder tips. They would return to their houses covered in coal dust & looking like 'crows' – see Appendix 1 entitled “The Moulton Crows”.

The Village War Memorial stands at the side of Main Road on land donated by the Salt Union Ltd after the Great War. On a raised plinth, the figure of a soldier with his rifle in the 'at ease' position faces Regent Street, and surveys the houses from which many of the 46 men who died in the two World Wars made their last journey. The Memorial was vandalised by mindless idiots in 1998 but has now been fully restored. It is a credit to the Parish Council who oversee its maintenance and keep it in such fine condition. May they be permitted to carry on their good work into eternity.



LIVERPOOL BLITZ - MAY 1941

## **THE TWELVE MEN**

<b>HAROLD BROOKES</b>	<b>Royal Artillery</b>
<b>FELIX FRANK BUCKLEY</b>	<b>Royal Engineers</b>
<b>GEORGE DICKENS</b>	<b>Irish Guards</b>
<b>JOHN HENRY EYRES</b>	<b>Royal Artillery</b>
<b>STANLEY GOULDING</b>	<b>Royal Navy</b>
<b>JAMES ERIC KENDRICK</b>	<b>RASC</b>
<b>WILLIAM GORDON KENNERLEY</b>	<b>RAFVR</b>
<b>RALPH LATHAM</b>	<b>RAF</b>
<b>GEORGE MILES</b>	<b>Cheshire Reg.</b>
<b>GEORGE SHANNON</b>	<b>Royal Artillery</b>
<b>ALBERT EDWARD STOCKALL</b>	<b>Coldstream Guards</b>
<b>FREDERICK WRIGHT</b>	<b>Royal Engineers</b>

**They gave all that they had to save us from oppression, the threat of the concentration camp and gas chamber. May God welcome them into his kingdom and grant them eternal happiness in his house of many mansions.**

## MOULTON VILLAGE WAR MEMORIAL



# **THE VILLAGE WAR MEMORIAL**

## **WORLD WAR ONE**

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 1919 a public meeting was held in the Verdin Institute to consider the question of a memorial to the men of the village who had given their lives during the struggle. The Rev. J T Vale presided. It was agreed that a committee be formed to raise funds by public subscription for a stone monument, bearing the names of those who had fallen. This was to be erected on a suitable site close to the heart of the village. It was estimated that a sum of £350 would be required to complete the work and that £40 had already been subscribed.

By August 19<sup>th</sup> 1919 the design and site for the Memorial was agreed. The Memorial would be in the form of a soldier of the Cheshires, with rifle, and set on a raised plinth of Yorkshire stone. The figure would be sculpted in Italian marble by Mr Samuel Welsby, of Mossley Hill and Widnes. The names of the 34 men would be deeply inscribed on the face and infilled with lead. Salt Union Ltd, having been approached, donated a plot of land at the side of Main Road and more or less opposite the lower entrance to Regent Street. The Subscription Fund was growing, but slowly. It was hoped that the final figure would be reached in the last quarter of 1919.

On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> December 1920 a large gathering of villagers and their guests formed into a procession at the Verdin Institute. Headed by the village band, under the direction of Mr Hitchinson, the procession paraded the village before halting at the Memorial. Members of the Hartford Church Lads Brigade formed the Guard of Honour. Many ex Servicemen were present to pay their respects to those of their fallen comrades who didn't make it home. There were signs of deep mourning as Rev. J T Vale read out the names of the fallen. After hymns, led by the Memorial Choir, Captain W H France-Hayhurst gave the address. He went on to say that he could do no better than to quote the words of the King written on the scrolls presented to the next of kin "See to it that their names are not forgotten". The unveiling service ended with the sound of reveille.

## **WORLD WAR TWO**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1947 a large throng of people from the village and surrounding area gathered at the bottom of Regent Street on Main Road around the War Memorial. Councillor George A Risley, Chairman of the Parish Council unveiled the dedication to the men from the village that had perished for the cause of freedom. The face of the Memorial was newly inscribed:

**ALSO  
IN MEMORY OF  
THE MOULTON MEN  
WHO MADE  
THE SUPREME SACRIFICE  
IN THE GREAT WAR  
1939 - 1945  
(THEN FOLLOWS THEIR NAMES)  
'THEY GAVE THEIR ALL'  
UNVEILED BY  
GEORGE A RISLEY esq.\*  
Chairman of the parish council  
November 2<sup>ND</sup> 1947**

\*George Risley was a long standing Village Councillor. He was a local Insurance Agent and lived in one of the terraced houses at the bottom of Regent Street and only 20 metres from the Memorial.

## THE WEST WINDOW AND TABLET IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, MOULTON



THE WEST WINDOW IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH



THE TABLET IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

## 'TOMMY'

I went into a public-house to get a pint of beer,  
The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here."  
The girls be'ind the bar they laughed an' giggled fit to die,  
I outs into the street again an' to myself sez I:  
    O it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, go away";  
    But it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play--  
    The band begins to play, my boys, the band begins to play,  
    O it's "Thank you, Mister Atkins," when the band begins to play.

I went into a theatre as sober as could be,  
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;  
They sent me to the gallery or round the music-halls,  
But when it comes to fightin', Lord! They'll shove me in the stalls!  
    For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, wait outside";  
    But it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide--  
    The troopship's on the tide, my boys, the troopship's on the tide.  
    O it's "Special train for Atkins" when the trooper's on the tide.

Yes, makin' mock o' uniforms that guard you while you sleep  
Is cheaper than them uniforms, an' they're starvation cheap;  
An' hustlin drunken soldiers when they're goin' large a bit  
Is five times better business than paradin' in full kit.  
    Then it's Tommy this an' Tommy that, an' "Tommy, ow's yer soul?"  
    But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll,  
    The drums begin to roll, my boys, the drums begin to roll,  
    O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums begin to roll.

We aren't no thin red 'eroes. Nor we aren't no blackguards too,  
But single men in barracks, most remarkable like you,  
An' if sometimes our conduct isn't all your fancy paints,  
Why, single men in barracks don't grow into plaster saints;  
    While it's Tommy this, an Tommy that, an "Tommy, fall be'ind,"  
    But it's "Please to walk in front ,sir" when there's trouble in the wind--  
    O it's "Please to walk in front, sir," when there's trouble in the wind.

You talk o'better food for us, an' schools, an' fires. An' all:  
We'll wait for extry rations if you treat us rational.  
Don't mess about the cook-room slops, but prove it to our face  
The Widow's Uniform is not the soldier-man's disgrace.  
    For it's Tommy this an' Tommy that, an' "Chuck him out, the brute!"  
    But it's "Saviour of 'is country" when the guns begin to shoot;  
    An' it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' anything you please;  
    An' Tommy ain't a bloomin' fool--you bet that Tommy sees!

Rudyard Kipling

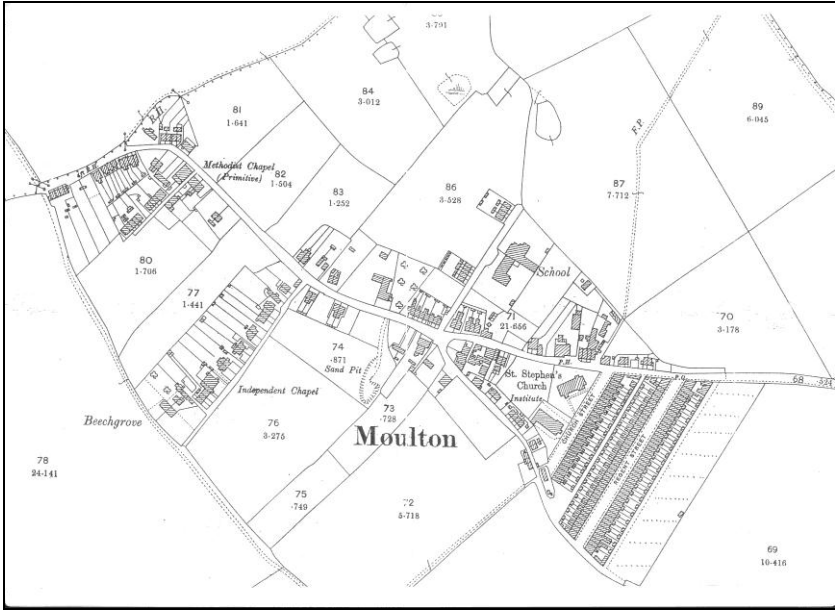


REDEDICATION OF THE CENOTAPH AFTER WW2



PHOTOGRAPH OF MAIN ROAD, MOULTON TODAY (2005)





MOULTON c. 1900



AERIAL VIEW OF MOULTON c.2000

## BUILD UP TO WW2

From August to November 1918, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, in a brilliantly planned campaign, both outflanked and breached the Hindenburg line with his British 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Armies. Discredited, dispirited and weary, after 4 years of war, the German C in C, General Erich Von Ludendorff, offered his resignation to The Kaiser but this was refused. However, 'Kaiser Bill', knowing the war was lost, decided to sue for a negotiated and 'honourable' settlement.

When the German front line troops on the Western Front, some having fought throughout the conflict, learned that their leaders were suing for peace, they were mightily angry. Their confidence in their fighting ability was undiminished and they refused to believe that they were beaten. After all, they said, "Here we are, still confronting the enemy on their soil with not one yard of our Fatherland in their hands". The logic of this thinking was true, but what was not taken into account, was that their reserves were completely exhausted and that the Americans were in the process of committing millions of men to the fray. The German Army and their people at home took the capitulation so badly that the humiliation and resentment of it all festered and corroded their thinking as the years went by.

To compound the ignominy of their disgrace, the Treaties of Versailles and St-Germain, signed in 1919, were designed to bring Germany to its knees. Alsace-Lorraine was given to France with many other tracts of territory going to Belgium, Denmark, Czechoslovakia Poland and Russia. The League of Nations, formed in April 1919, took control of her overseas possessions. The German Army was reduced to 100,000 men and forbidden to have an air force or tanks. Her Navy was reduced to six capital ships and no submarines. Reparations to the Allies of £6.5 billion (£175 billion in 2005 terms), combined with the loss of their coal producing regions of Saar and Upper Silesia, was a recipe for bankruptcy and clearly this was the wish of many countries! When the terms of the Versailles Treaty were made known, public anger throughout Germany knew no bounds. In a grand gesture of defiance, the German Fleet, held by Britain in Scapa Flow, was scuttled by the skeleton crews left on board. The dye was cast for a dynamic leader to take control and to restore honour and stability to a Germany devoid of both. Cue, one Adolf Hitler - enter world stage, far right!

Hitler served in the trenches of the Western Front in the Great War having enlisted at the outbreak of the conflict. He was an Austrian and served with the 16<sup>th</sup> Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment attaining the rank of Corporal. He was gassed in 1918 and awarded two Iron Crosses for bravery, one ironically, on the recommendation of his Jewish company commander!

In the early 20s Hitler became the leader of the renamed National Socialist German Workers (Nazi) Party. His attempt, in November 1923, to seize power in the now infamous 'Beer Hall Putsch' failed and he was imprisoned. Whilst in jail he wrote

'Mein Kampf' (My Struggle), a book that was to become the Holy Grail of the Third Reich. 1929 saw the Wall Street crash and in 1930 the Nazis become the second largest political grouping in Germany. On his release from prison, Hitler again took up the baton of the leadership of the Nazi Party and was elected Chancellor in January 1933. By the end of 1933 Japan had quit the League of Nations because of the criticism for her policy towards Manchuria. Germany followed suit soon after. In June 1934, Hitler, in what was to become known as the 'Night of the Long Knives', assassinated more than 1000 of his political opponents, removing many more from their sphere of influence. In August Hitler declared himself Fuhrer and Chancellor. In 1935 Hitler tore up the Treaty of Versailles and introduced military conscription. Later on he stripped the Jews of their rights and placed the Gestapo above the law.

From mid 1936, Germany and her Allies began their relentless march towards their ultimate destiny - World War Two. In March 1936 German troops re-occupied the Rhineland. Italy, under Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia and in July a civil war started in Spain. In the 1936 Olympic Games, American black athletes, including the great Jessie Owens, incensed Hitler and his racist Nazi Party, by beating his white, 'master race' athletes in major field and track events. In October General Franco was declared head of the Spanish state. By mid 1937 the world powder keg of unrest was well alight with Stalin purging his Red Army generals in Russia.

In the spring of 1938 Hitler invaded Austria and announced a union between the two countries. In August, Germany mobilised and a month later the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, returned to Britain thinking that he had appeased Hitler at Munich - how wrong he was! By October German troops occupied the Sudetenland and the Czechoslovakian government resigned. Over the night of the 9/10 November - 'Kristallnacht' (The Night of Broken Glass), German mobs went on the rampage in an orgy of destruction against Jews and their property.

## **1939 - CHRONOLOGY**

If the Jews had not got the message that they were in for special treatment at the hands of the Nazis by the end of 1938, then the speech by Hitler, during his Reichstag rally, at the end of January 1939, left them with no room for doubt as to his intentions. By mid March Germany had fully occupied Czechoslovakia and by the end of the month resistance to General Franco in Spain was at an end. To protect their backs, whilst pursuing other conquests, the Nazis signed a non-aggression pact in August with the Russians. Two days later Britain and Poland agreed and signed a Mutual Assistance Treaty. Cocking a snook at this, Germany invaded Poland on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Without hesitation, Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany. The Americans decide to stay out of it and proclaimed their neutrality.

A British Expeditionary Force under the command of Field Marshal Gort, set off for France on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Just 25 years earlier, 100,000 men of a similar Expeditionary Force, and under the command of Field Marshal Sir John French, had marched into

France and Belgium with flags flying, arms swinging and drums beating. They were, as the German Kaiser had described them with a sneer, a 'contemptible little Army' or, as they fondly called themselves thereafter - 'The Old Contemptibles'. In that war to end all wars, they were going to be home by Christmas, and would give the Hun a bloody nose. Such was/is the confidence of youth!

Canada then joined the Allied cause and on September 17<sup>th</sup> Russia, not to be outdone by Germany also attacked Poland. Warsaw fell to the Nazis at the end of the month. Germany and Russia reached an amicable agreement over the division of Poland. Back in Germany the Nazis began their policy of ridding the country of their long-term sick and disabled citizens. In mid October U47, under the command of Leutnant Gunther Prien and with great skill, navigated his submarine through the boom and into the British anchorage at Scapa Flow. He there sank the battleship HMS *Royal Oak* with the loss of nearly 900 seamen. Prien then made good his escape into the open sea. Russia invaded Finland at the end of November bombing Helsinki on the last day.

At the start of December three British cruisers based in the Falklands received a radio message from the *Doric Star*, a merchantman, in distress in the South Atlantic. The ship was about to fall into the hands of the German pocket battleship, *Graf Spee*. The three cruisers, HMS *Ajax*, *Achilles* and *Exeter*, under the command of Commodore Harwood, started to hunt down the German ship and to get to grips with both her and her skipper, Captain Langsdorff. On 13<sup>th</sup> December they tracked down their quarry and in an intense battle, inflicted sufficient damage on the bigger ship to force her to run for cover in Montevideo harbour on the River Plate. Short on ammunition and fooled into thinking that a larger fleet of British warships was waiting for her over the horizon, Captain Lansdorff scuttled his ship at the mouth of the river. Three days later he committed suicide in Buenos Aires - an honourable man, who treated our captured seamen well and with dignity.

The year closed with the introduction of meat rationing in Britain, the arrival of the first Canadian troops and the expelling of Russia from the League of Nations.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1939 includes the following items:**

Free membership of the Club for all members of HM Forces was agreed. A Forces Fund to be set up with a handsome donation from the Club. Any serviceman or women acting as a pianist in the Club to be allowed 2 shillings & 6 pence towards free drinks for their services. A 'Christmas' cigarette fund to be set up for village lads and lasses. A Whist Drive to be organised for the Forces Fund on 16<sup>th</sup> November. Invitations to be sent out to local Pubs, Clubs, Churches, School and Parish Council inviting them to nominate representatives for service on the Forces Fund Committee.

## 1940 - CHRONOLOGY

Food rationing was introduced into Britain in January. Today, nutritionists are keen to say that the people of Britain were never healthier than they were during the 1940s. Certainly, the rations were small but adequate and people filled up with whatever they could lay their hands on. In this respect vegetables were a great 'filler'. Lawns rose gardens and flowerbeds were turned into vegetable plots overnight as the people began to 'Dig for Victory'. The keeping of poultry in back gardens and allotments became popular. Hens were fed on boiled potato peelings and bran plus anything else that could be found. Ration books, full of tiny coupons, were issued - light brown books for adults, blue for school children and green for the under 5s. Each person received a weekly allowance of 4 to 8 oz of bacon, 2 to 4 oz of tea, 1 to 8 oz of cheese, 8 oz of meat, 8 oz of sugar, 2 oz of butter, 4 oz of margarine and 1 egg (unless you kept your own hens!). A small bar of chocolate was allowed every two weeks and fruit was purchased whenever and wherever it could be found. Queues quickly formed outside butchers, grocers and green grocers shops whenever 'off the ration' food arrived. When the grapevine whispered that the local green grocer had over ripe bananas on 'blue books', housewives would rush to queue for their share of these brown and sometimes, partially decomposed, exotic fruits. Food and clothes rationing lasted until well after the war. It was finally abolished in the early 50s when the man in the street began to question why it was that, although food was freely available in liberated Europe, it was still rationed in Britain. The cry went up "who won the \*\*\*\*\* war anyway?"

In February, Germany began to actively engage in their 'Final Solution' to the 'Jewish problem', when they laid the first bricks of the now notorious Auschwitz concentration camp. Over the next 5 years six million Jews would be murdered in one of the world's greatest inhumanities. The spring saw the end of the short Russo-Finnish War, when the Finns, having fought valiantly in defence of their homeland, ceded some of their land to Russia in a treaty which ended the conflict. The cost to this small nation was 65,000 men killed. Britain's Grand Fleet's anchorage at Scapa Flow was bombed by the Luftwaffe, resulting in the loss of the first British civilian war casualties. Germany invaded Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium and Luxembourg in that order and it was at this time that Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister. He immediately asked President Roosevelt for the use of 40 old US destroyers, but his plea fell on deaf ears. On 15<sup>th</sup> May, Holland surrendered and by the end of the month Belgium also. The evacuation of our forces from the beaches at Dunkirk by the Royal Navy, aided by those magnificent civilians in their little pleasure boats, ended in early June. By mid June Norway had surrendered, Italy had declared war on Britain and France and the German Army had entered Paris. To round off a disastrous half year for the Allies, France capitulated and signed an armistice with Hitler.

Determined that the French Fleet should not fight on the side of the Axis Powers. Churchill agreed with Vice-Admiral Somerville, commander of Force H, that the French naval command should either respond to the orders of the Royal Navy or be immobilised.

Somerville, commanding his ships off the French naval base of Oran, Algeria, gave the French the ultimatum. The French reject both suggestions and were then subjected to heavy gunfire from the British Fleet. The battleship *Bretagne* and other lesser known ships were sunk with the loss of many men. Some ships escaped but were later bombed from the air as they fled to the port of Toulon. At the time of these actions the Royal Navy was in the process of seizing over 100 French vessels and 5000 seamen in the Channel ports. Over the next week or so operations against the French Navy continued with vessels either sunk or severely mauled. Marshal Petain and his Vichy Government broke off diplomatic relations with Britain in protest.

By mid July the Luftwaffe were hitting airfields and other military targets on the South coast of England and Hitler was planning his 'Operation Sea Lion' - the invasion of Britain. At the same time his thoughts had turned to Russia and he began planning the campaign to attack that country in the spring of 1941. British aircraft production was now in full flow with 400 planes rolling off the assembly lines each month. July ended with the Russian Armies marching into Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

August 2<sup>nd</sup> saw Hitler issuing orders to Reichsmarshal Goring for the destruction of the RAF and the British aircraft industry. Throughout the rest of August and September the Luftwaffe flew thousands of sorties over Britain in an attempt to achieve their objectives. The young men of the RAF, to their everlasting glory, rose to the challenge and daily shot down ever increasing numbers of enemy fighters and bombers.

Helped by radar, the RAF directed their Spitfires and Hurricanes onto the German planes without them having to waste effort in scouring the skies for the enemy. In a rousing speech, Churchill paid tribute to the 'Few' with words that would immortalise their sacrifice for ever "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few" he said. Over the 23/24 August the Luftwaffe made the very grave error of bombing London. Two days later, and in retaliation, the RAF mounted their first air raids over Berlin. Having 'sown the wind' Germany would, in the years to come, 'reap the whirlwind'. On 15<sup>th</sup> September, the turning point of the Battle of Britain was reached when the Luftwaffe heavily bombed many major cities in England and Wales. However, the tide was on the turn, for Germany lost 56 aircraft to the RAF's 26 on that day. On learning of these figures, the Luftwaffe High Command were finally convinced that they could not win the air war against Britain. By mid October Hitler made the momentous decision to postpone 'Operation Sea Lion' until the spring of 1941.

By early November General Wavell and his Commonwealth force were shaping up to drive the Italians out of Sidi Barrani in North Africa. One week later the Fleet Air Arm created mayhem when it torpedoed the Italian Fleet in their harbour at Taranto. Many ships were sunk, including three battleships. However, it was not all 'good news'. The industrial city of Coventry in the East Midlands, came under repeated attack from the Luftwaffe and took a mighty pounding. Hungary and Rumania entered the war on the side of the Axis Powers. The persecution of the Jews gathered pace when a ghetto was established in Warsaw.

In early December, General Wavell began his desert offensive against the Italian 10<sup>th</sup> Army at Sidi Barrani. The Italians were well beaten after only two days of fighting and more than 40,000 Italian troops surrendered to the Allies. As Christmas approached, Hitler let it be known to his general staff that he intended to invade Russia in the new-year - code name for his new campaign - 'Barbarossa'. Italy appealed to Hitler to send troops and armour to North Africa without delay.

The year ended with Anthony Eden becoming British Foreign Secretary, President Roosevelt stating that America would become 'the arsenal of democracy'. London came under very heavy attack from German aircraft loaded with tons of incendiary bombs. These 'fires from hell' set the centre of the capital ablaze and killed scores of civilians.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1940 includes the following items:**

It was agreed that a grant of 5 shillings (2005 = £10) be allocated to each new member of the Forces Fund and that travel assistance be given to family members travelling distances to visit their wounded relatives in hospital. The purchase of fire fighting equipment, to protect the Institute in the event of air raids, was discussed and agreed. A dance and hot pot supper were arranged for October to swell the coffers of the Forces Comforts Fund. Mr A Darlington donated a 10 shillings (2005 - £20) prize for a Christmas draw for the Forces Fund. The committee agreed that each member of the armed forces should be given a 5 shillings postal order as a Christmas box.



TWO SPITFIRES ON PATROL

Dedicated to the memory of Frederick Wright



## **FREDERICK WRIGHT**

Sapper  
4124550  
Royal Engineers

Killed in action on Sunday 17 November 1940. Aged 26

He is buried in OVER (ST JOHN) CHURCHYARD, Winsford, Cheshire  
Grave 1195



Other Memorials: Christ Church, Winsford, Cheshire - Memorial Tablet  
Awards to Frederick Wright (See pages 87 & 88)



## Dedicated to the memory of Frederick Wright

Frederick Wright was indeed a man with courage as his watchword. He enlisted in the Royal Engineers as soon as war was declared in September 1939. He then volunteered for that most hazardous of jobs - Bomb Disposal. This was a task that required nerves of steel, and the kind of heroism that we lesser mortals can only gasp at! He died with several of his unit in 1940 whilst trying to defuse a German time bomb in the Nuffield Ammunition Factory at Coventry. He was 26 years old.

Fred was not a Moulton man for he was born in 1914 at 174 Weaver Street, Winsford. He was the son of Frederick and Sarah Jane Wright. His father was a Corporal in the Rifle Brigade in WW1 and fought on the Western Front for most of that war. Fred and Sarah had four children – 2 boys and 2 girls. On leaving school in Winsford, Fred (jnr) became a painter and decorator for a local firm. In the mid 30s he met and married Jessie Alcock and they set up home at ‘Mayfield’ in Main Road, Moulton. Jessie, was a Moulton woman who lived as a youngster with the parents of her cousin Silas (Si) Whalley at 1, Main Road, Moulton. Later on, Fred and Jessie moved to 97, Wharton Close, Winsford. They had two children, Beatrice and Margaret. Beatrice was born in 1937 and Margaret 3 months or so before her father died in 1940. Tragically, Beatrice died at a young age in the mid 40s of leukaemia.

Fred liked a pint but sometimes overstayed his leave! This, sometimes, resulted in a visit from the ‘Redcaps’, those ‘gentlemen’ of the Army Police so revered by the ordinary ‘squaddy’!

After his death Fred was buried in St John’s Churchyard Cemetery, Winsford. His grave inscription includes the following:

“His life nobly given to save others – Rest in peace”

Fred was the first man from Winsford to die in WW2. He was not given a military funeral much to the distress of his wife Jessie. After the war Jessie moved to a ‘prefab’ at Kingsway, Winsford. She married Sam Shaw and they had one child, Susan. Alan Ravenscroft, the local Winsford historian, managed to obtain a War Widows Pension for Jessie in the 1990s when rules governing war widows who had subsequently remarried were changed. Jessie died in 2000 and both she and her second husband Sam occupy the same grave as Jessie’s son Sapper Fred Wright.



97 WHARTON ROAD, WINSFORD TODAY (2005)

## 1941 - CHRONOLOGY

The end of January saw British and Australian troops take Tobruk in North Africa with the capture of 27,000 Italian prisoners. However, ominous clouds were gathering for Hitler had taken the decision to prop up the Italians by creating a new force - The Afrika Korps under the command of General Erwin Rommel - the 'Desert Fox'. In early March, the amazingly successful U47, commanded by the very brave and bold Lieutenant Gunther Prien, was finally sunk by depth charges fired from the destroyer HMS *Wolverine*. On the other side of the Atlantic, President Roosevelt signed the Lend Lease Act which, although most welcome, placed the British in hock to the Americans for many a long year after the war. March ended badly for the Allies with the German battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* returning to French waters having sunk well over 100,000 tons of Allied shipping.

On land the 'Desert Fox' attacked and took El Agheila using tanks and equipment much superior to that available to the British and Australian forces. On the 6<sup>th</sup> April German forces invaded Yugoslavia and Greece and four days later captured Zagreb. By the end of the month it was all over when Yugoslavia and Greece surrendered to the Nazi steamroller.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> May Rommel committed his forces to an attack on the garrison at Tobruk but was repulsed. Nevertheless, the siege of this beleaguered town by the Germans was about to begin. On the 9<sup>th</sup> May a very significant event occurred at sea. U110 had been depth-charged to the surface and captured; a complete 'Enigma' cipher machine and code books were discovered during a routine search of the submarine. She later sank whilst under tow which was fortunate, for the Germans never realised that one of their cipher machines was in the hands of the Allies. On the following day, the deputy Fuhrer, Rudolph Hess was captured when he flew to Scotland in the misguided belief that there was an anti Churchill, anti communist faction in Great Britain. His plan was to use this group to undermine the British war effort. Whilst Hess was being captured in the north of the British Isles, the Luftwaffe and the RAF were trading blows over London and Hamburg. However, the German air war was gradually being lost in the skies over Britain. In the middle of May, German aircraft continuously pounded Crete ahead of a planned invasion. The German battleship *Bismarck* and consort, the heavy cruiser *Prince Eugen*, set sail for the Atlantic and their ultimate destiny. In the Mediterranean German forces commenced their assault on the island of Crete where they suffered severe losses at the hands of the British and Greek forces. However, a bad strategic decision allowed Maleme airfield to fall into the hands of German paratroopers who then had a base for their reinforcements. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the month, the cruisers HMS *Norfolk* and HMS *Suffolk* spotted *Bismarck* and her consort in the Denmark Strait. The German ships immediately turned about and headed towards the Arctic Circle. On the following day HMS *Hood* and HMS *Prince of Wales* engaged the two ships but, to the dismay of Churchill and the whole of Great Britain, HMS *Hood* was sunk and HMS *Prince of Wales* broke off the engagement having taken some severe direct hits. Only three of HMS *Hood*'s 1416 crew were saved. Three days later the British Navy took their revenge when Swordfish aircraft from HMS *Ark*

*Royal* immobilised *Bismarck* with torpedoes dropped by her planes. The following day she was sent to the bottom by torpedoes from HMS *Norfolk* and HMS *Dorsetshire*. To round off the month, British and Greek troops retreated from the island of Crete to leave the German Army in complete command. Although 18,000 Allied troops were taken off the island, a further 17,000 were made prisoner. The cruiser HMS *Calcutta* was lost during the retreat.

In June the Allied armies invaded Syria and Lebanon. It was at this time that Hitler made the fateful decision to attack the Soviet Union in the operation code-named, 'Barbarossa'. The Germans immediately made great advances and quickly captured Minsk.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July the RAF bombed the harbour at Brest. They managed to hit the heavy cruiser Prinz *Eugen* causing her considerable damage and killing over 50 of her crew. Two days later Stalin, alarmed at the advance of the German Army, called for a 'scorched earth' policy. It had little effect on the marauding German troops, for seven days later they crossed the River Dnieper in the Ukraine. Later the British Army occupied Syria. On the Russian front things were going badly for the Russians with their whole battle line in a state of collapse. On the other side of the Atlantic, President Roosevelt took the decision to suspend all relations with the Japanese and to freeze their assets in the United States. The month closed with Reichsmarshal Goring issuing instructions for the 'Final Solution' of the Jewish problem.

August started badly for the Russians who lost Smolensk and 350,000 men when they surrendered to Hitler's advancing troops. However, it was not all a 'bed of roses' for the Germans, who were losing more and more of their tanks and finding the weather and terrain against them. Nevertheless, by the 20<sup>th</sup> German troops were at the gates of Leningrad and the siege of that city then began. In an attempt to supply Russia with armaments through the back door the brave, but very often forgotten seamen of the British Merchant Marine, began their horrendous convoy duties to Archangel.

Ominously, on the 1<sup>st</sup> September, all Jews living in the occupied territories of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich were instructed to wear prominent yellow stars on their clothing. This order coincided with the completion of the first experimental gas chambers at Auschwitz. By mid September the Germans had taken Kiev and by the end of the month had put to death nearly 35,000 Jews in that city.

As October opened so did Operation 'Typhoon' - the German advance on Moscow. They took Odessa on the 16<sup>th</sup> and Kharkov some days later with their troops on the outskirts of Sevastopol by the end of the month.

Kursk fell to the Germans on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November. Some 4/5 days later the RAF pounded Berlin when they sent over 169 fully loaded bombers of which 21 failed to return (21x7 = 147 airmen). Two days later Yalta, in the Crimea, fell to the Germans. On the 13/14<sup>th</sup> of November the pride of the Royal Navy, HMS *Ark Royal*, was badly damaged by a German U-boat when en route to Malta. On the following day whilst under tow to Gibraltar HMS *Ark Royal* gave up the ghost and sank 25 miles short of the Rock. Towards

the end of the month the Germans captured the Russian city of Rostov but lost it a week later to counter attacking Russian troops. The German Army was now starting to feel the might of the Russian forces and the German High Command decided to abandon their advance on Moscow. In North Africa an Allied attempt to break out of Tobruk failed.

At the start of December the weather took a turn for the worse around Moscow and Russian troops took advantage of this by launching a major counter offensive against the Germans. In North Africa the 'Desert Fox' had completely encircled Tobruk but was short of supplies. His troops were in a poor state and in no condition to press home their advantage. In the Pacific a Japanese task force launched their infamous attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour. In this surprise attack the Americans lost five battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers and over 3,500 men killed or injured. Immediately after the attack both America and Great Britain declared war on Japan. This was followed by a declaration of war by Germany on the United States, a decision by Adolf Hitler that would cost him the war. As Christmas approached Rommel decided to retreat from Tobruk and to retire to the Gazala Line. In the Far East the Japanese mounted air attacks on the Philippines and landed troops on Bataan Island. Other landings took place on the coast of Malaya and Thailand. The men from Nippon were also engaged with the Chinese and captured the city of Shanghai after fierce fighting. Their success continued when they took Bangkok in Thailand. Having lost HMS *Ark Royal* in the Mediterranean in November, Winston Churchill was devastated to learn that HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse* had been sunk by Japanese bombers in the waters off Malaya. The Japanese continued their relentless advance and landed at three points in Burma. The year drew to a close with the Russians on the Eastern Front in the ascendancy. The Germans having been first held up were now being driven back and the Red Army, aided by their climate, were taking their revenge. Deluded into thinking that he could do a better job than his generals, Hitler took complete command of the German Army, a move that ultimately would negate any chance of a German victory.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1941 included the following items:**

In May it was agreed that 5 shilling (2005 - £10) be allocated to each village serviceman or servicewoman. In July a draw was proposed for the Forces Fund - the prize, a bottle of port or a fowl. In August the Club Committee agreed to donate 2 x 20 packets of cigarettes as prizes for the Forces Fund draw. In December a donation of £10 (2005 - £400) was made to the Forces Fund.

Moulton School Log for the year makes many references to children being late for school due to warnings of impending enemy air raids. In January and May the Log records the welcoming of 79 evacuees to the village from towns and cities under attack from enemy aircraft.

Dedicated to the memory of John Henry Eyres



## JOHN HENRY EYRES

Gunner  
1691530  
122 H.A.A. Regt., Royal Artillery

Who died on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September 1941. Aged 25

He is buried in DAVENHAM (ST. WILFRID'S) CHURCHYARD, Cheshire, UK  
New part. Row H. Grave 36



JOHN HENRY EYRES' HEADSTONE IN DAVENHAM CHURCHYARD

Other Memorials: Brunner Mond Memorial, Winnington, Northwich  
Awards to John Henry Eyres (see pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of John Henry Eyres

Jack Eyres, for that was his preferred name, was always keen on motor bikes and in the end they were to be the death of him. Jack died in Birmingham on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> September 1941 when the Army motor cycle he was riding was in collision with a coal lorry. The verdict by the local coroner was ‘Accidental Death’.

Jack Eyres was born on 5<sup>th</sup> March 1916 and was the eldest son of John and Martha Eyres of 26 Regent Street, Moulton. He was one of nine children living in a two up and two down terraced house – how they slept is anyone’s guess! His father John was a general worker at Brunner Mond Ltd and later (1926) ICI Ltd. Jack attended Moulton Council School and was a popular lad, particularly with the young ladies of the village! On leaving school at 14, he secured a job with a local farmer and was renowned for his ploughing ability. Indeed, he won a local ploughing competition before deciding to leave the land and to seek his fortune with ICI Ltd.

Before war began Jack married Emma and they settled at 12 Regent Street, Moulton. They had a little girl, Enid, who was born on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1939. Jack was a very active member of both the Verdin Club and Moulton Liberal Club (Now Moulton British Legion).

A full military funeral for Jack Eyres was held at Davenham Parish Church on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 1941. Members of his Regiment acted as pallbearers and there were many other service men and women in the congregation. The Rev. S M Rawland, Vicar of Moulton, officiated, assisted by an Army Padre from the Royal Engineers.

Jacks wife, Emma, who had never been a ‘well’ woman, died in 1951. She was 33. It was said that she never did recover from death of her dear husband Jack.



EMMA EYRES



12, REGENT STREET,  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)

## 1942 - CHRONOLOGY

The birth of the new year saw the Japanese 48<sup>th</sup> Division occupy Manila in the Philippines. British forces in North Africa reached Mersa Brega and El Agheila. In Malaya General Wavell ordered a withdrawal of his troops to a defensible position south of the River Muar. On the outskirts of Moscow there was fierce fighting between Russian and German forces. The Japanese moved into the Dutch East Indies with attacks that would ultimately see the fall of Borneo, Sarawak, Sumatra, Java, Bali and Timor. To counter a threat from the Japanese, a decision was taken to move the Australian divisions from North Africa to locations closer to home. Kuala Lumpur had fallen to the Japanese on the 12<sup>th</sup>. German U-boats operating off the eastern seaboard of America began to take their toll on shipping in that area. The Japanese moved into Burma but the Russian counter offensive was having some success with German forces being pushed back towards Smolensk. In Berlin, Heydrich presented his plan to Hitler for his 'Final Solution' which would see all European Jews sent to extermination camps. The island of Malta, in the Mediterranean, was suffering daily bombardment by the German Luftwaffe (in April 1942, the island and her people were awarded the George Cross by King George VI for their valiant defence against the continued onslaught of the German airforce). Singapore was under increasing attack from Japanese Zero aircraft and further north, Allied forces were in retreat south of the River Muar. The 'Desert Fox' began his counter offensive from El Agheila. British reconnaissance aircraft spotted the battleship *Tirpitz* at anchor in a fjord east of Trondheim. The 2<sup>nd</sup> British armoured brigade received a mauling from Rommel near to Msus. In Malaya General Wavell agreed a withdrawal of British forces to Singapore. By the end of the month American troops began to arrive at prepared bases in Britain. Rommel then took Benghazi and the US positions on Bataan were becoming more and more tenuous.

February saw Allied forces in North Africa in retreat from Gazala whilst US forces attacked Japanese naval bases in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands. In Singapore General Percival rejected Japanese proposals to surrender but by mid February Japanese forces had gained a foothold on the island. The battle cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sheltering in the harbour at Brest made a run through the English Channel towards a home port. The dash was not detected until the ships passed Le Touquet but *Scharnhorst* was severely damaged by a mine at the mouth of the River Scheldt and *Gneisenau* was crippled by shellfire. As soon as she docked she was further damaged in an Allied Bombing raid. On the Eastern Front the German Army was getting their act together and were slowing the Russian advance. The debacle of Singapore reached a conclusion when General Percival surrendered to General Yamashita bringing to an end a very sorry episode in British military history. It was later estimated that British losses totalled 138,000 against the enemies less than 10,000.

March started with the evacuation of Rangoon. The repaired battleship *Tirpitz* left Trondheim to mount her first raid against Allied merchant shipping. Japanese troops landed in New Guinea and in Java 100,000 Allied troops surrendered to the rampant men of Nippon. On 11<sup>th</sup> of March General MacArthur left the Philippines with the now famous

words 'I shall return'. At the end of the month, the only dry dock capable of accommodating the battleship *Tirpitz*, was put out of action for the duration of the war when the old destroyer *Campbeltown*, loaded with high explosives, was rammed against the dock gates at St. Nazaire. A magnificent action carried out by those magnificent men of the British Navy and Commandos.

April saw American and Filipino forces on the Bataan peninsula under continuous attack from Japanese troops. Ordered to flee from Colombo because of a threat from a superior Japanese naval force, HMS *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall* were hunted down and sunk by Japanese aircraft. Soon after, news was received that all resistance on the Bataan peninsula was at an end and that 75,000 prisoners, of which 12,000 were American, had been taken. Having achieved the majority of their objectives in the Indian Ocean Japanese forces began to return to the Pacific sector. The British Far East Fleet withdrew to the Persian Gulf to lick their wounds. Japanese forces were now advancing through Burma at a rapid rate of knots. For the first time in the war Japan received a taste of its own medicine when B25 bombers, flying from the US carrier *Hornet*, raided Tokyo. Until then Japan had felt safe from such attacks but now became paranoid about their vulnerability. Japanese fighter aircraft were ordered home from the Pacific sector to defend the home front.

On the Eastern Front German forces began to consolidate the ground they had gained and were cheered by the spring weather which lifted their spirits and moral. Although well beaten in the Battle of Britain, the German airforce began night attacks on the cathedral cities of Britain. April ended with British forces retreating in front of the Japanese in Burma.

Early May saw the fall of Mandalay in Burma, and soon after the German summer offensive in the Crimea began. Some days later the defence of Corregidor ended with the surrender of 15,000 US and Filipino troops. As Japanese troopships headed for Port Moresby in Papua they were confronted by a US naval force in what became known as 'The Battle of the Coral Sea'. This battle at sea was very much one fought by carrier based aircraft flying into the attack from over the horizon. The Japanese aircraft losses were huge and the advance on Port Moresby was abandoned. On the Russian Front the Russians counter attacked near Kharkov but the Germans had some success in the Crimea when they forced Russian troops to withdraw. Having lost two thirds of their original force, exhausted British troops retreated from Burma into India leaving the Japanese in complete occupation of that country. In North Africa, Rommel began his offensive against the Gazala line, but was opposed by superior Allied troops, tanks and artillery. Towards the end of the month good news was received confirming that Nazi terror Chief Heydrich had been fatally wounded in Prague by Czech resistance fighters. The offensive by the 'Desert Fox' and his troops in North Africa was becoming unstuck due to a shortage of supplies. May came to an end with 'Bomber' Harris ordering the first 1000 bomber raid over Germany - the target Cologne. A total of 40 aircraft failed to return but German moral was severely dented.



The 'Solution to the Jewish problem' commenced in June, when a fully operational Auschwitz concentration camp, began the mass murder of men, women and children by gassing. After the success of the Cologne raid, the RAF mounted a further 1000 bomber raid on Essen. In the battle for Midway in the Pacific, aircraft from both sides were lost in profusion as they attempted to sink each other's aircraft carriers. In the end the Americans gained the upper hand by sinking all four of the Japanese vessels. The action around this tiny island, midway between Japan and Hawaii, saw the first defeat in battle of the Japanese for 350 years. In a barbaric reprisal for the assassination of Heydrich, the population of the small Czech village Lidice were murdered by Nazi troops. Brilliantly led by Rommel, the Afrika Corps broke the British lines and captured El Adem, leaving Tobruk isolated. On the 21<sup>st</sup> June, Tobruk itself succumbed to the superiority of the German force that saw the Allies lose 30,000 men to the German POW cages. Vital supplies were also lost. Typically, Rommel did not hang about and quickly crossed into Egypt reaching El Alamein, by the end of the month. The month ended on the down beat when the Russians ordered the evacuation of Sevastopol on the Crimean peninsula but their Black Sea Fleet was too weak to supply the necessary support to take off the soldiers.

The second half of 1942 began with German troops closing on El Alamein. Sevastopol fell and Russian resistance in the Crimea came to an end. Convoy PQ 17 en route from Iceland to Archangel was located by German reconnaissance aircraft which summoned U-boats into the area. They, along with land based aircraft, created havoc with the convoy which was then ordered to scatter. As the surviving vessels reached their destinations the enormity of the losses became apparent. A total of 24 ships had been lost carrying nearly 4000 tanks and other vehicles as well as 200 aircraft - 96,000 tones of supplies in all. Hitler ordered his Army Group 'B' to take Stalingrad without first making sure that they had the means and ability to do so. In North Africa fighting between the Afrika Corps and the Desert Rats reached stalemate. After heavy street fighting Rostov fell to the advancing German troops. On 7<sup>th</sup> August, whilst en route to take charge of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army, General Gott was killed in an air crash and General Bernard Montgomery was selected to replace him. American troops began landing in the Solomon Islands and gained footholds on Guadalcanal and other smaller islands. The Russians sustained a heavy defeat when General Paulus outflanked them and captured 270 tanks and 35,000 prisoners. A large convoy bound for Malta was attacked by Axis aircraft and submarines. In this engagement the aircraft carrier HMS *Eagle* was lost and other escorts damaged. The armies of Nippon did not intend to give up Guadalcanal easily and landed reinforcements to confront the American troops. A commando raid on Dieppe proved to be a disaster with 3,350 British troops either killed or captured. In addition a destroyer and 100 aircraft were lost. On Guadalcanal the Japanese forces were annihilated when they attempted to take the American base. Off the Eastern Solomons in a fierce battle, the Japanese carrier *Ryujo* was sunk and the US carrier *Enterprise* damaged.

By the end of August, the Russian forces around Stalingrad were shrinking as the Germans started to increase the pressure. More Japanese reinforcements were landed on Guadalcanal in an attempt to remove the Americans from their foothold.

At the beginning of September German troops had reached the suburbs of Stalingrad and Rommel's forces were being driven back by Monty and his men in the battle of Alam Halfa. The liner *Laconia*, transporting troops, their families and Italian prisoners of war, was sunk by a U-boat off the Ascension Islands. Whilst attempting to pick up survivors this U-boat was itself sunk by a US Liberator. After this action Admiral Doenitz ordered his U-boat commanders to make no future attempts to rescue people from the sea. In New Guinea the Australian defenders were being pushed back towards Port Moresby and off the coast of Guadalcanal the US carrier *Wasp* was sunk by a Japanese submarine. In a dramatic change of fortune, the Aussies in New Guinea halted the Japanese advance and started to push the little men from Nippon back towards their start line.

Over the month of October fierce fighting continued on all fronts with advancing British forces in Burma making their first contact with the Japanese Army. In a demonstration of his gross inhumanity and vindictiveness, Adolf Hitler ordered the execution of all captured British commandos. At the end of October General Montgomery launched the battle of El Alamein. A night attack by Japanese forces on Guadalcanal resulted in heavy losses when their efforts were thwarted by the defending Americans.

In North Africa Rommel put two fingers up to the order from Hitler instructing him and his men to 'stand and die'. Instead, he continued his retreat to Fuqa. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November operation 'Torch' began when US troops landed in North Africa. By the middle of the month the Allies had retaken Tobruk and the Japanese were still attempting to dislodge the Americans from Guadalcanal. All was not lost on the Eastern Front either for the Russians had started a counter offensive at Stalingrad. The severe Russian winter was now creating misery for the poorly clad German forces. British troops took Benghazi in Libya as the Russians began to encircle the Germans at Stalingrad. At the French port of Toulon Admiral La Borde took the decision to scuttle the remainder of his French Fleet including 3 battleships and 7 cruisers. In Tunisia German troops counter attacked and retook Djedeida and Tebourba. In New Guinea the Japanese counter attacked the Australians who had by then reached the beaches at Buna. German forces entered Bizerte in Tunisia and captured 16 French ships including 9 submarines.

By mid December winter again decided to come to the aid of the Russians when the Volga froze over. This good fortune allowed supplies to be sent over the ice to troops on the west side of Stalingrad. With fresh tank support the Aussie troops in New Guinea started to take the initiative. General Paulus was having a torrid time in Stalingrad and asked Hitler for permission to break out: Hitler refused saying the 6<sup>th</sup> Army will do its historic duty and fight to the last. At home Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden told the House of Commons of the mass executions of Jews by the Nazis. As the year closed, British forces were repelled by the Japanese when they tried to take Rathaung in Burma. At Guadalcanal the Japanese Commanders received orders from Tokyo to evacuate the island and to cede it to the Americans.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1942 includes the following items:**

In addition to other previously agreed initiatives the club committee decide to support Mrs Churchill's 'Russian Fund'. In August it was resolved to send a 10 shillings (2005 - £20) Christmas gift to each of the village service men and women. In September there was a debate to decide who was entitled to be included in the 'Comforts Fund' list. This resulted in 15 names being deleted including the name of George Shannon who would later die in a Japanese POW camp. Thankfully, there was very strong resistance in the club to this action with the result that all 15 names were reinstated in October. To close the year, the committee gave both the Secretary and Treasurer a gift of £3 - 3 shillings (2005 - £125) each plus a pipe in recognition of their hard work for the 'Forces Fund' over the year.

In July, the Northwich Guardian reported that the Verdin Institute of Moulton had donated the following from their 'Forces Fund': Merchant Navy Benevolent Fund £25; Manchester Royal Infirmary £3 - 3shillings; Winsford Albert Infirmary and Northwich Victoria Infirmary £2 - 2 shillings each; National Institute for the Blind £2 - 2shillings ; Winsford and Moulton District Nursing Association £3. Gifts to men and women serving in HM Forces £140.



ARTILLERY FIRING AT EL ALAMEIN

Dedicated to the memory of Harold Brookes



## HAROLD BROOKES

Lance Bombardier  
3535752  
4/2 Maritime Regt., Royal Artillery

Killed in action on Monday 12 January 1942. Aged 28

His name is commemorated on the PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL  
Panel 72, Column 1.



PORTSMOUTH NAVAL  
MEMORIAL

Other Memorials: Winsford Town Memorial; St Mary's Memorial, Whitegate, Winsford; Salt Union Memorial, Winsford; Family Grave Stone, Whitegate Churchyard Cemetery, Winsford; Memorial Tablet, St Stephen's Church, Moulton; Meadow Bank Methodist Chapel, Winsford (now closed)\*\*  
Awards to Harold Brooks (See pages 87 & 88)

\*\*The wall plaque originating from this Chapel can now be found (2005) on the wall of the Winsford Sea Cadets HQ.

## Dedicated to the memory of Harold Brookes

Jim Buckley of 7 Church Street, Moulton worked with and became a good friend of Harold Brookes when they were thrown together at ICI's Salt Works, Winsford. They were both general workers and each day had the unenviable job of sorting through the thousands of hessian sacks returned from customers for reuse. The work was dusty, dirty and hard. Jim was probably the last person from Moulton to see Harold alive, when he spotted him waiting for a bus at the 'Beehive' corner at the end of Main Road, at 3.0pm one day in May 1941. Harold was not in uniform but told Jim that he was about to report for duty to his new ship berthed in Manchester docks. This was to be Harold's last home leave.

He was a Winsford lad and was born at the outbreak of WW1. He was the son of Thomas and Emily Brookes of 2 Meadow Grove, Meadow Bank, Winsford. He had two sisters, Jessie, the eldest, and Margaret. He attended Meadow Bank Council School and also Meadow Bank Methodist Church where he later became a Sunday school teacher. He was a quiet, well liked and decent man.

In November 1939 Harold married his sweetheart Dora Brooks who lived at 78 Regent Street, Moulton and they settled in the village at 'Treetops' 37, Niddries Lane. Dora was aged 27 and Harold 25. Dora also worked for ICI Salt at Winsford as a packer.

It is not altogether clear if Harold and Dora married before or after he enlisted in the Army. Nonetheless, he was called forward to serve in the Royal Artillery and eventually passed out as a gunner to serve with the 4/2 Maritime Regiment. This Regiment was trained to operate 'Oerlikon' anti-aircraft guns (and the like) on board merchant ships.

Harold's first posting was to a ship scheduled to sail for Brazil to pick up foodstuffs for the UK. His first port of call was Rio de Janeiro and it was here that he purchased a decorated tray for his sister Jessie. The tray shows an illustration of Christ the Redeemer, that famous statue of which overlooks the city of Rio from the hills above. It is inlaid with butterfly wings under varnish and is now treasured by Jessie's daughter, Gillian Benbow, who lives in Sandbach.

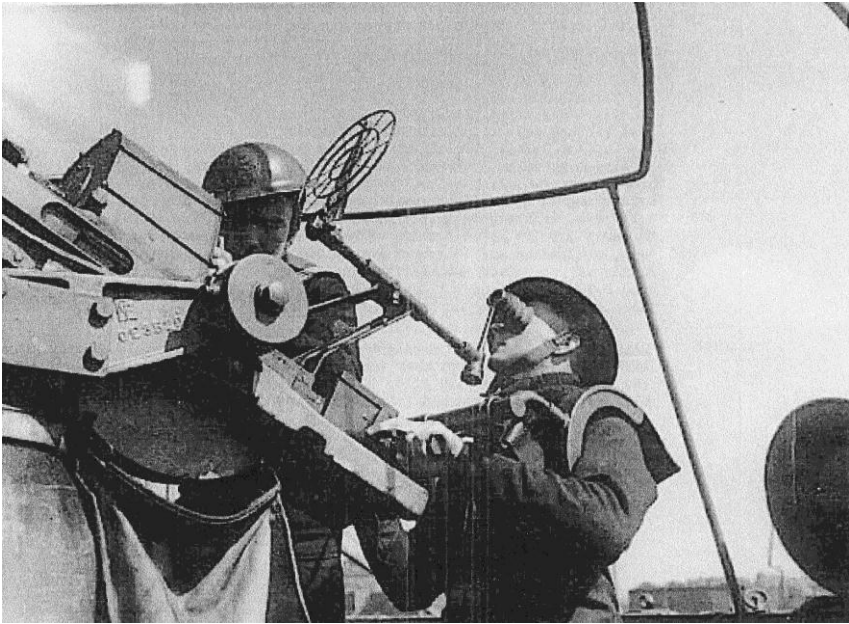
On Harold's third and last voyage he was ordered to report to SS '*Quickstep*', a coastal collier lying in ballast at Southend. '*Quickstep*' was to form part of a small coastal convoy, FN3, sailing to Methil on the Firth of Forth in Fife. The ship was built in 1928 on the east coast of England by Smith Dick and Company. The ships company totalled 28 including 2 Army gunners and 4 Naval gunners (DEMS – Defence of Merchant Ships). At 09.00 hours on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1942 convoy FN3 set sail for the Firth of Forth. At 13.10 hours, and just East of Clacton on the Essex coast, disaster struck when the ship '*Ariadne*', directly ahead of '*Quickstep*', passed over a mine, which bobbed to the surface and exploded against the hull of '*Quickstep*'. Damage was extensive and the funnel quickly collapsed before the ship sank. Two Army gunners, three Naval gunners and eight

Dedicated to the memory of Harold Brookes

crew were killed. The survivors were taken ashore at Harwich. Harold Brookes was 28 years old.

In October 1942 a memorial service was held for Harold at Meadow Bank Methodist Church. The church was packed with relatives, friends and workmates. Some time after Harold's death Dora married George Aspinall from Cuddington. They had one daughter, Marilyn who later went to live in South Shields.

Ironically, the only sailor from Moulton to lose his life in WW1, Leading Seaman Bill Cookson, was killed in the same neck of the woods as Harold Brooks. Bill's ship, HMS 'Mechanician' was struck by a torpedo fired from a German U-Boat off the Isle of Wight.



'2 GUNNERS MANNING AN 'OERLIKON' ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN ON BOARD SHIP'

Dedicated to the memory of Harold Brookes



HAROLD BEFORE THE WAR



HAROLD WITH HIS NEPHEW  
ANTHONY WHO DIED AT 15  
(HOLE IN THE HEART)



'TREETOPS' 37, NIDDRIES LANE, MOULTON TODAY (2005)

Dedicated to the memory of William Gordon Kennerley



## **WILLIAM GORDON KENNERLEY**

Sergeant

1060557

150 Sqdn. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Killed in action on Tuesday 5 May 1942. Aged 21

His name is commemorated on the RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL, Surrey, UK  
Panel 87



**RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL**

Awards to William Gordon Kennerley (See pages 87 & 88)



## Dedicated to the memory of William Gordon Kennerley

On one of his leaves, Tom Ashton recalled that he and Gordon (for this was the name he liked to be known by) along with Teddy Berry and Enoch (Knocker) Hough went on a bit of a pub-crawl around the local hostelrys in Winsford. This would not have gone down very well with his father, Walter, who was a staunch Methodist, and much against the evils of drink! During his youth, Gordon, who was a liberal Methodist, attended church three times each Sunday at the Methodist Church in Chapel Street.

A true born and bred Moultoner, Gordon lived at 'Fox Cottage', 113 (number 57 prior to renumbering in the 1930s) Main Road, Moulton. He was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1921 the younger of two sons of Walter and Annie Kennerley. He was a very likeable lad and always full of life. Ralph, his elder brother by 18 months, lives at Broxton, Chester (2005) and served in the RASC during the war. He escaped from France via St. Nazaire in 1940, and then fought as a 'Desert Rat' in East Africa against Rommel and his Africa Korps.

Gordon's father, Walter, worked as a train guard on the railways. At weekends he insisted that Gordon complete his household chores – shopping, cleaning the chicken coup, brushing paths etc, before being allowed out to play. Fred Hickson, one of Gordon's best friends, remembers spending hours with Gordon and his brother Ralph walking the countryside around the village. Gordon was a crack shot and often bagged a rabbit or two on Whitby's Farm with his air rifle. Although a fair footballer, Gordon was not in the same league as his pal Fred Hickson or indeed, another one of his school chums, Jack Booth.

On leaving Moulton Council School, Gordon was employed in the Revenue Office at Northwich. Sometime before he was 18, he met and fell very much in love with Kathleen Edwards who worked in a bank in Northwich. In the early days Kathleen's father was employed as a gamekeeper at Bostock Hall and the family lived at Oak Tree Farm. Later, Mr Edwards took over Moulton Post Office and it was at this time that the two young people met. Before Gordon departed for his RAF training he asked Kathleen to marry him. She said yes, and they became 'unofficially' engaged.

On completion of his recruit training, Gordon volunteered for flight duties and was trained as a rear gunner in bomber aircraft. At this point it should be noted that the men, who manned Lancasters, Wellingtons, Liberators, Stirlings, Halifaxes and the like, were the bravest of the brave. In particular, the rear gunners, whose trip life average was only 4 or 5 'sorties' over enemy occupied Europe. Gordon was posted to No. 150 Squadron at RAF Snaith, Nr Selby, East Yorkshire and from there flew a number of bombing missions over Hamburg, Essen, Stuttgart and the Ruhr. He was one of a six man crew of a Vickers Wellington III Bomber number X340, code named JN-A.

## Dedicated to the memory of William Gordon Kennerley

On the last night of his final leave home, Gordon met up with his pal Fred Hickson, who was on leave from the Royal Engineers at the time. They sank a few pints and said their farewells.

At 22.25 hours on the night of 5<sup>th</sup> May 1942 Wellington X340, commanded by Flight Sergeant Ron Bell, took off from RAF Snaith. The Wellington cruised at 12,000 feet as it made its way towards the target area. It was in good company, for in the same formation were 49 other Wellingtons, 4 Avro Lancasters, 13 Stirlings and 11 Halifaxes. They were to attack Stuttgart, targeting both the city itself and the Robert Bosch factory that made dynamos, injection pumps and magnetos. This factory was judged to be one of the most important targets in Germany.

It is not possible to say whether F/Sgt Bell and his crew of five were shot down on the outward or inward leg of their flight. What is known is that the aircraft came down into the sea off the Dutch coast. All six of the crew perished but only two bodies, those of F/Sgt Bell and his Co-pilot Sgt. Stan Heslop, were recovered. As these two airmen were in the cockpit of the plane it can be assumed that they were thrown into the sea on impact. The other 4 lads must have been trapped in the body of the Wellington as she sank.

F/Sgt Bell is buried at Den Burg General Cemetery and Sgt. Heslop at Bergen General Cemetery. Interestingly, in this same Cemetery lie the remains of S/Leader H M 'Dinghy' Young and his crew who were shot down returning from the 'Dambusters' raid twelve months later. Losses that night from 150 Squadron were 3 Wellingtons.

After the war ended Kathleen Edwards moved to Canada and married a Hungarian man whilst over there. Later she moved back to the UK with her husband. Kathleen died in 2000.



'FOX COTTAGE' 112 MAIN  
ROAD, MOULTON TODAY  
(2005)

Dedicated to the memory of William Gordon Kennerley



VICKERS WELLINGTON BOMBER

Dedicated to the memory of James Eric Kendrick



## **JAMES ERIC KENDRICK**

Lieutenant  
143230  
Royal Army Service Corps

Who died on Thursday 8 October 1942. Aged 27

He is buried in KIRKEE WAR CEMETERY, India  
Grave 7. F. 10.



Awards to James Eric Kendrick (See pages 87 & 88)

Dedicated to the memory of James Eric Kendrick

Eric, for this was how he was known, was born on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1915 at Kirkdale, Liverpool. His parents were William and Mary Jane Kendrick who originated from Manchester. When they first moved to Moulton village they lived at 92 Main Road. William, who was a mounted police sergeant, stabled his horse at the back of his house in School Lane. Some time later the family moved to 69 Main Road – the ‘posh’ end of the village! Number 69 was more or less opposite Togo Villas where Felix Buckley and George Dickens lived. Eric was the eighth of nine children (5 boys and 4 girls). They all made it to adulthood with the exception of Doris, the youngest, who died in infancy.

As a youngster Eric attended Moulton Council School and was a member of the congregation at St Stephen’s Church. He was a bright lad and at eleven passed the examination allowing him to attend the Verdin County Grammar School, Winsford. On leaving the Verdin he applied and was accepted for the post of clerk in the Civil Service. He attended night school, sat the Civil Service examinations, and passed with flying colours. Prior to enlisting in HM Forces, Eric was sweet on a young lady named Bessie!

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1939 Eric enlisted in the Royal Army Service Corps at Edgware, Middlesex. He then went to Aldershot for his recruit training and after just four weeks was posted to GHQ 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon, BEF La Baule, France. Six months later he returned to Ramsgate to attend an OTC (Officers Training Course). On passing out, 2nd Lieutenant Eric Kendrick was despatched to 931 Company, RASC, Tewkesbury to begin his duties as a leader of men. At the end of January 1942 he received orders to report to Kakul in India (now Pakistan). He then moved two or three times to other places on the sub-continent including Rawlpindi. Members of the RASC tended to be scattered around the British Army and attached to Regiments or placed wherever they were needed. Accordingly, there is little information on Eric’s service in the field. From his Army records all that could be uncovered was the fact that he died of wounds on board HMT *Lancashire* in the harbour at Bombay. He was 27 years old.

Eric was the apple of his mother’s eye and she never recovered from the death of her last born son. Indeed, it is said, that she turned to drink in her utter despair. In a monumental twist of fate Eric was buried in a small cemetery at Kirkee, India. Some 24 years earlier, Horace Hitchinson, from the same little village in Cheshire was also put to rest there after he had died in WW1. So, two men of Moulton, share the same plot of land on the other side of the world. When Eric’s gravestone was erected his parents paid for a special inscription as follows:

‘In life dearly loved  
In death sadly missed  
Loving Mam, Dad and Family’.

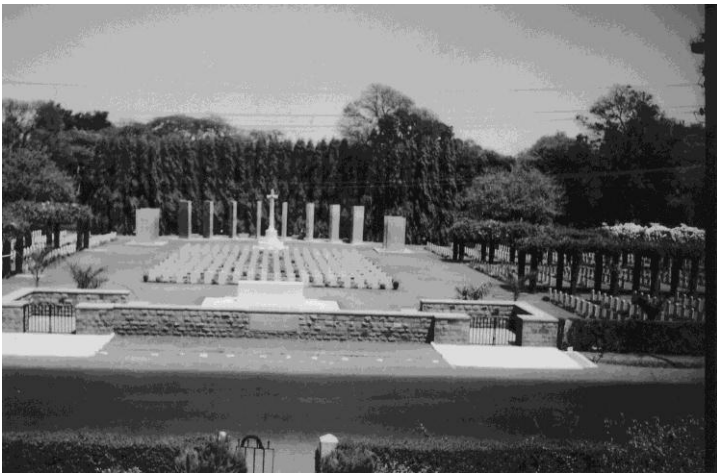
Dedicated to the memory of James Eric Kendrick



69, MAIN ROAD,  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)



ERIC AND HIS SISTER IN MOULTON  
SCHOOLYARD c. 1923



KIRKEE CEMETERY, INDIA

## 1943 - CHRONOLOGY

As the New Year dawned, German troops on the Eastern Front began to retreat from the Caucasus. In New Guinea British forces started to pressurise the Japanese at Buna and Sanananda. At Stalingrad, Russian troops were fighting hard to try and recapture the City. On Guadalcanal, the strength of the American force began to erode all Japanese resistance. Papua was retaken on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January and the following day, in East Africa, Montgomery's Eighth Army took Tripoli. At Stalingrad, Field Marshal Paulus surrendered his southern unit (6<sup>th</sup> Army). German U-boats claimed to have sunk 200,000 tons of shipping during the month.

At the beginning of February the remaining German troops in Stalingrad surrendered. Later the Russians claimed to have found 150,000 dead Germans in the ruins. Their defeat at Stalingrad was the first major setback for Hitler and his Generals. Some days later the Russians took Kursk. In Burma the first 'Chindit' operation, under the command of General Orde Wingate, went into action. This force, comprising British, Gurkha and Burmese troops, was designed to fight covertly behind enemy lines. It was most successful, and gained the respect of all who came into contact with it. For 10 days towards the end February the inexperienced US 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division fought and tried to cut their milk teeth on the German Panzers in North Africa. However, they were up against hardened, experienced troops, and received a severe mauling. The seesaw, which was the Russian front, saw the Russians re-take Kharkov. In the Pacific the Americans landed 9,000 troops on the Russell Islands. A counter offensive by Field Marshal Von Manstein's troops on the Eastern Front created a huge gap of 120 miles in the Russian line. Norwegian soldiers, trained in the UK, parachuted into Norway and attacked the Norsk Hydro 'heavy water' plant near Ryukan. This raid struck a blow at the heart of the German atomic research programme.

In the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in the Pacific, a Japanese troop convoy en route for New Guinea was severely damaged by US aircraft. The Japanese lost 3,500 troops as well as four destroyers and 25 aircraft. In Burma the Chindits were successful in cutting the Mandalay - Kytikyina rail link. The RAF began bombing the Ruhr and the Germans began to withdraw from Tunisia. The end of an era arrived when Rommel withdrew from North Africa. Things appeared a little brighter for the Germans in Russia when they re-captured Kharkov. A total of 98 ships in two convoys sailing from New York and Nova Scotia were attacked by 37 U-boats. Twenty-seven ships were lost for the price of one U-boat sunk. In Russia Von Manstein's counter-offensive was going well with Russian losses running at 40,000 casualties and 600 tanks. In Tunisia the Eighth Army broke through the Mareth Line and Gafsa was retaken by Patton's US Corps. In the Battle of the Bering Sea, a US force of cruisers and destroyers intercepted a superior force of Japanese ships heading for the Aleutians. The Americans gave the Japanese a bloody nose and saw the enemy turn for home. The Axis infantry was badly mauled in the battle for the Mareth Line and some Italian units were so demoralised that they lost all will to fight on.

Early April saw the Japanese embark on a plan to build a new railway in Northern Burma. To achieve their ends they forced 60,000 Allied POWs to labour on the project. Of these 15,000 would die of exhaustion, starvation and inhumane treatment. The Allies continued their advance in Tunisia when they took Sfax, 150 miles from Tunis. The Japanese Admiral, Yamamoto was killed when his aircraft was shot down by American Lightnings. In the Warsaw ghetto, Waffen SS troops attacked Jewish resistance fighters and shot out of hand any they captured. The slaughter was horrific as the Nazis attempted to pound the Jews into submission. As the month ended one of the greatest deceptions of the war was perpetrated when the body of a Royal Marine Officer was washed ashore in Spain. On the body were faked documents referring to the planned invasion of Sardinia and a feint attack on Sicily. It was, of course, a very clever trick that hoodwinked the Germans who began to transfer huge numbers of troops to Sardinia and Northern Italy. The story of this ruse was brilliantly told in the film 'The Man Who Never Was', starring Clifton Webb.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May the Allies took Tunis and Bizerte. By the 13<sup>th</sup> all resistance had ended when German and Italian troops surrendered to the victorious Allies. The final prisoner count was 250,000. In Warsaw the uprising was finally crushed when German troops blew up the synagogue there. The final death roll showed that some 14,000 Jews had been killed in the fighting and another 40,000 transported to the Treblinka extermination camp.

Allied successes in North Africa were enhanced when news was received that RAF 617 (Dambusters) Squadron, led by Wing Commander Guy Gibson, had successfully attacked dams on the Mohne and Eder rivers in Germany. Colossal flooding occurred which played havoc with Germany's industrial heart. Eight of the 19 aircraft (56 men) failed to return. Guy Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross but was later killed during a reconnaissance flight over Europe.

To compound the German atrocity in Warsaw, Heinrich Himmler ordered the liquidation of all Jewish ghettos in Poland. June 10<sup>th</sup> saw the first combined bombing raids with US aircraft flying during the day and the RAF at night. Two days later, Dusseldorf was bombed by 693 planes which dropped a total of 2000 tons of bombs within 45 minutes of reaching their target. German fighters shot down 27 of the planes as they attempted to return to the sanctuary of their airfields in England. Aerial reconnaissance aircraft over Peenemunde brought back photographs of a new rocket site with rockets sitting on launching ramps ready to be launched against targets in Southern England. At the end of June 500 British bombers hit Cologne inflicting severe damage. In the Pacific US forces established a bridgehead at Nassau Bay, New Guinea.

As the second half of 1943 dawned the greatest tank battle in history was about to take place at Kursk on the Russian Front. After dark on 9<sup>th</sup> July the Allied invasion of Sicily began with gliders landing airborne troops to create a bridgehead for the main sea borne elements the next day. Because of high winds and faulty navigation many gliders fell into the sea but sufficient men were landed to disrupt enemy coastal defences. By the end of



the day British and US troops occupied four towns including Syracuse. At the battle of Kursk on the Eastern Front things were not going too well for the German tanks and they began to fall back to their start line. As the Americans took control of Palermo, cutting off thousands of Italian troops, Churchill and Roosevelt called on the Italians to surrender. Mussolini and his government fell on 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup> and Marshal Badoglio took control. In Germany the first of four raids on Hamburg, designed to destroy the city, was carried out by over 3000 RAF bombers – 87 (87 x 7 = 609 airmen) of which failed to return. Hamburg was flattened and 40,000 inhabitants killed by the huge firestorm created by the incendiary bombs. Back in Britain all fit men, regardless of age, were told that they would now be eligible for service and that all women, under the age of 50, were instructed to register for work.

On the Eastern Front the Russians began the month of August with successes at Orel (to the north of Kursk) and Belgorod. The German 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer Army was decimated with the remnants joining the 9<sup>th</sup> Army. In Sicily things were also going very well for the British and the Americans. By the 17<sup>th</sup> Messina was in their hands and it was then that the Germans decided to give up the fight and evacuate the island. Although 100,000 Italian troops were captured the bulk of the German force escaped to the mainland with their tanks and guns intact. Allied losses were recorded as 7,000 killed with 14,000 wounded. Axis losses were much heavier. British bombers targeted the German rocket installation at Peenemunde and succeeded in delaying the work there for several weeks. The Russians captured Kharkov and by the end of the month were closing in on Smolensk.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September Montgomery's 8<sup>th</sup> Army were the first troops to land in Europe when they went ashore at Reggio on the mainland of Italy. At sea, the battleships *Tirpitz* and *Scharnhorst* with supporting craft attacked Allied bases at Spitsbergen. On the 8<sup>th</sup> Italy surrendered and the following day the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division took the port of Taranto. At Salerno the Allies were not having things all their own way as German troops fought like the devil. Whilst en route to Malta to surrender, the Italian battleship *Roma* was sunk by German aircraft equipped with their new 3000-pound glide bombs. German troops took control of Rome and on the following day rescued Mussolini from his prison in the Abruzzi Mountains. In Sardinia the Germans began to pull out and at the same time their 17<sup>th</sup> Army started its withdrawal from the Kuban peninsula. Having been rescued, Mussolini quickly re-established a Fascist government. Whilst Allied troops were winning the battle of Salerno the Russians were advancing towards Kiev. The RAF raided Hanover on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September with 650 aircraft and dropped in excess of 2,300 tons of bombs. On the same day in Alt-Fjord two British midget submarines attached mines to the hull of the *Tirpitz* and cripple her for six months. Defending German troops halted the British advance in front of Naples. Some days later the Red Army captured Smolensk and Roslavl. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October Naples fell to the Allies and three days later the Free French liberated Corsica. In the Pacific, Wake Island was attacked by US ships and aircraft. The new official Italian Government at Brindisi declared war on Germany. September ended with British troops knocking on the door of Naples.

A total of 291 US aircraft bombed the German ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt and inflicted much damage. However, the Americans, who lost nearly 60 aircraft on this raid, were prompted to discontinue unescorted daylight flights over Europe thereafter. In a raid involving 486 aircraft, the RAF delayed production of V-1 flying bombs for many months when they decimated the factory making them at Kassel. In the English Channel the cruiser HMS *Charbydis* and the destroyer HMS *Limbourne* were sunk by torpedoes fired from German surface ships. **Serving on the *Charbydis* when she went down was a young man from Moulton - Telegraphist Stanley Goulding. He has no known grave.**

November 1<sup>st</sup> saw the Russians capture Kiev in the Ukraine. The Pacific island of Bougainville, occupied by 40,000 Japanese troops and 20,000 naval personnel, was assaulted by the Americans. A Japanese naval force sent from Rabaul to engage the US support ships including the aircraft carriers *Lexington* and *Saratoga*, was badly mauled and forced to retire. However, on land the Japanese forces put up fierce resistance in the jungle. In the Mediterranean, German troops took the Greek island of Leros and captured 9,000 British and Italian prisoners. In Italy the battle for Monte Cassino began. It would be six months before Polish troops would, heroically, prise the Germans from the ruins of the monastery on top of the mountain. RAF bombers dropped 1,600 tons of bombs on Berlin. The Gilbert Islands were invaded by American troops but in the Mediterranean the Greek island of Samos was evacuated by the British. The Americans succeeded with their attack on Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands but paid a very heavy price, losing 1000 men dead and 2000 wounded. Japanese troops, as always, fought to the death and at the end of the day, only a handful were taken prisoner. In Germany Hitler watched a demonstration of the new Me 262 jet fighter but, in an error of judgement, delayed production until mid 1944 whilst the designers converted the plane into a light bomber. In the Mediterranean another glide bomb dropped from a German bomber sank a British troopship off Bougie with the loss of 1000 lives. The month ended with the Germans in Russia having some success when the Russians withdrew from Korosten just 12 days after having taken the town.

At the beginning of December Allied bombers mounted raids on V-1 rocket sites in northern France. In fierce fighting in Italy, British troops took Monte Camino. Later some British troops were pulled out of the fighting in Italy to prepare for Operation 'Overlord' - the invasion of France. British forces were replaced by Canadian, French and Italian troops. Before Christmas the RAF were kept busy raiding Frankfurt, Mannheim and the V-1 rocket ramps in France. At sea, *Scharnhorst*, the only operational German battleship, sailed in pursuit of a British convoy. She was, however unaware that the battleship *Duke of York* was shadowing over the horizon! On Boxing Day, in what has now become known as the Battle of the North Cape, the British cruiser squadron opened fire on the German battleship and scored two hits. The *Duke of York* then spotted her and after a three hour battle sent her to bottom. There were but 36 survivors plucked from the sea. In Russia the Red Army launched an offensive on the Ukrainian Front. 1943 ended with the command structure for 'Overlord' in place and a huge bombing raid over Berlin.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1943 includes the following items:**

Throughout 1943 the Committee of the Institute were again busy organising raffles and functions to raise funds for village lads and lasses serving in the armed forces. Prizes ranged from a pair of spectacles, donated by a Northwich oculist, to free tickets for the Regal cinema. Each serving member of the forces was given a total of 15 shillings over the year (2005 - £30.00). In June a member complained that another member had introduced an Italian POW into the bar. The committee resolved that in no circumstances must this happen again.\*

At the AGM in March tributes were paid to members who had died during the past year. These included: Lt. Eric Kendrick, Sgt. Gordon Kennerley and Cpl Harold Brooks.

The local press reported the following: 1) Although the Moulton Council School Savings Group had set a target of £100 to purchase two parachutes and a rubber dinghy for the RAF, they managed to raise £500 and instead purchased two 8000-lb bombs! 2) Pte Harry Adams of 110, Main Road was missing in Italy. 3) Local Red Cross collections raised nearly £15 for the POW Fund and £2 - 12 shillings for the Russian Fund. 4) Davenham Church Players gave a performance of 'Busman's Honeymoon' in aid of the Moulton Forces Fund.

\* Four months later the Italians were on the side of the Allies!



R.A.F. LANCASTER BOMBER

Dedicated to the memory of George Miles



## GEORGE MILES

Private  
4129686  
2<sup>nd</sup> Btn. Cheshire Regiment

Killed in action on Tuesday 6 April 1943. Aged 26

He is buried in SFAX WAR CEMETERY, Tunisia  
Grave VII. E. 2.



Other Memorials: Brunner Mond Memorial, Winnington, Northwich  
Awards to George Miles (See pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of George Miles

Over 60 years after WW2 ended, relatives and friends in Moulton Village and beyond still remember George Miles with affection. George lived with his parents and his two older brothers John (Jack - 'Smiler') and James (Jim) at 35 Regent Street, Moulton. Both his mother Annie (nee Eaton) and his father John originated from Meadow Bank, Winsford, which lies on the other side of the River Weaver from Moulton. George was born in 1917 and was educated at Moulton Council School. He was outwardly reserved but a very caring boy who thought the world of his parents and brothers. He regularly attended the Methodist Church in Chapel Street. George's mother was a very kindly lady who always made her son's friends welcome when they called at her little terraced house. In December 1931 George was elected 'Most popular boy in school' by his fellow scholars.

As boys, George and his pals would play football for hours on the Regent Street 'backs' (waste land to the rear of the terraced houses in Regent Street). Chasing a ball around on the 'backs' was good training for George, for he became a very good amateur footballer, playing for a number of teams in the locality including ICI Ltd. He is said to have had a style of play not unlike that of Vinney Jones and Norman Hunter - hard in the tackle and not to be messed with! He was always considered to be a good loser and played the game for the fun of it rather than the result; unlike today, when the result is everything and the means of achieving it very often suspect! As with Felix Buckley and his dad Tom Buckley, George's father John was a very well known and respected pigeon fancier. His loft was on the Regent Street 'backs'. On race days, or 'flying days' as they were known, all three sons Jack, Jim and George, were used in their turn to run the pigeon rings to the Red Lion and to the 'man with the clock'.

As he grew into manhood George, in addition to his football, took to crown green bowling, snooker and billiards that he played at the village Liberal Club (now Moulton British Legion). He liked a pint as most young men of his age did, this taking preference to his pursuing girls! He joined ICI Ltd., as a drum maker at their Winnington Drum Plant where the continuous cacophony of sound, when newly made empty chemical drums were tossed about, had to be heard to be believed.

Jack Miles, George's older brother was also a very fine local footballer who won many medals and trophies. George was very proud of his brother and threaded his medals on a chain which he treasured. He took them with him to Tunisia but when he was killed there the medals, although handed in, were 'lost' to the family.

Vic Booth, became a very good friend of George, and remembers with affection his kindness to him when he secured a job in the Drum Plant at ICI Winnington. George took Vic in hand on his first working day at the plant and from then on guided him through his early working life there. When they both enlisted in the forces they went their separate ways but met for the last time in 1942 when George was on embarkation leave. They had

## Dedicated to the memory of George Miles

a few drinks and a game of snooker at the Talbot Hotel, Northwich. They never saw each other again.

Jim Buckley, who lived at 7 Church Street, Moulton before he died in 2004, was also a long-standing pal of George. Together they enlisted in the Cheshires at Chester Castle and were posted to the 2nd Battalion. They both did their recruit training at Chester before being selected for training as Machine Gunners. George, was also trained as an Army despatch rider. On passing out Jim was posted to 'A' Company whilst George went to 'B' Company. The 2nd Cheshires were part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Northumbrian Division, 30 Corps Commanded by Major General Brian Horrocks (Later Major General Sir Brian Horrocks of Arnhem and TV fame). Their Company Commander was Major 'Mad Manki' Miller. Other Battalions serving alongside the 2nd Cheshires included The Durham Light Infantry, Green Howards and East Yorkshires. By coincidence, another Moulton lad, Walter Oakes who had lived in Regent Street in his youth, but who had moved away from the village to live at Anderton, Northwich, also joined the 2nd Cheshires and 'B' Company's Machine Gun team. George had been in the Territorial Army before hostilities began so he was no stranger to spit and polish!

Sad to record that before he enlisted in the Army at the outbreak of war, both of George's parents had died at an early age. His mother Annie died in 1934 having been bedridden for over two years. His father, who was a shift worker on the Sodium Carbonate Plant at ICI Winnington, Northwich died a few years later.

All three brothers served in the war. Jack ('Smiler') saw service in the Fleet Air Arm as a flight deck attendant. James (Jim), who had had a chequered career before the war working as a butcher, lorry driver, crane driver and engine driver for ICI at Lostock Works, also saw service in the Army.

Sometime in 1942 George was posted to North Africa and became a 'Desert Rat', fighting there until, in the spring of 1943, he found himself at Wadi Akarit, 40 miles from Tunis. On 1<sup>st</sup> April the 2nd Battalion were concentrated near Mareth and made ready for what was to become know as the 'Battle of Akarit'. On the night of 5<sup>th</sup> April Jim Buckley met up with George and they brewed a cup of tea in the way of the 'Desert Rats'. A biscuit tin was first filled with sand and liberally doused with petrol; this was then set alight, the kettle boiled and the tea 'mashed'. It was the last mug of tea Jim and George would share together.

On the following morning 6th April..... now follows an extract from the War Diary of the 2nd Cheshires: "Having reached point 85, Mellor saw Lieutenant D. Cox moving forward with No. 8 Platoon and went to assist him in getting into position forward of Point 85 to fire in support of the assault of the 6th Green Howards. Meantime,

Dedicated to the memory of George Miles

No. 3 Section moved up into the position chosen for them, led by Private B. Dumbill through a veritable cascade of shelling. Cox's other section ran into a chance burst of shelling just at the moment that the men had left the trucks and were carrying their kit up to the forward rendezvous that their platoon commander had found for them. Lance Corporal R.Reynolds, Private G Q Gill, **Private G Miles and Private W Oakes** were killed outright, whilst both the Section Commander, Sergeant Liptrott and the Section Corporal, Corporal R McDonald, were wounded, as was Privates J G Carter and Pountley" (Private Carter later died of his wounds). George was 26 and is buried in a grave next but one to his fellow Moultoner and pal George Oakes, aged 22, in Sfax Cemetery, Tunisia. He is in good company!



35, REGENT STREET

MOULTON TODAY



JACK, JIM AND GEORGE  
(SEATED) IN MOULTON  
COUNCIL SCHOOL  
PLAYGROUND c. 1923



ORIGINAL GRAVE  
MARKER



SFAX WAR CEMETERY. TUNISIA

Dedicated to the memory of Stanley Goulding



## STANLEY GOULDING

Ordinary Telegraphist  
D/JX 361561  
H.M.S. Charybdis, Royal Navy

Killed in action on Saturday 23 October 1943. Aged 19

His name is commemorated on the PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL  
Panel 81, Column 2.



PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

Other Memorials: Brunner Mond Memorial, Winton, Northwich  
Awards to Stanley Goulding (See pages 87 & 88)



## Dedicated to the memory of Stanley Goulding

Stanley Goulding was a Moultoner who lived with his parents Henry and Beatrice Goulding at No.6 School Lane, Moulton. He attended the local Council School just across from his home and was a very popular scholar. Stanley was born in 1924 and was one of three children. He was a very fit and active youngster who swam, ran well and played football for Moulton Schoolboys. He enjoyed bird watching and spent many hours lying in the fields and hedgerows around the village identifying the different species of bird, both in flight and on their nests. He attended the local Methodist Church in Chapel Street.

On leaving school Stanley joined ICI Ltd at Wallescote Works, Winnington. He was a bright lad and quickly secured a position in the Shipping and Distribution Office. Nevertheless, it was always his secret ambition to transfer to one of the many ICI cargo ships employed in the movement of Alkali products from the River Weaver to Liverpool and beyond. Regrettably, this was not to be, for in 1942, at 18 years of age, he was called forward to serve his country in WW2.

Stanley's mother Beatrice tried to persuade him to join the RAF but he would have none of it. It was the Navy for him, and in the end he had his way. He was instructed to report to HMS *Arthur*, a shore based training establishment, located at the Butlins Holiday Camp at Skegness. He was one of over 50 recruits in his class and he made many friends during his stay there. Stanley passed out of HMS *Arthur* as an Ordinary Telegraphist and was ordered to report on board HMS *Charybdis* at Devonport.

HMS *Charybdis* was a new 'Dido' class Light Cruiser built and commissioned at Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead in November 1941. She had four props and was turbo driven developing 62,000 HP. The ship displaced 5770 tons, was 512 ft. long and 50.5 ft. across the beam. Her top speed was 33 knots and her ships company totalled 535. Her armament consisted of 8 x 4.5" guns, 6 x 21" torpedo tubes, 4 Bofors guns and 24 light Anti Aircraft guns.

After joining his ship, young Stanley experienced many adventures, including escorting convoys to Malta, supporting the Allied landings off Algiers and Bizerta and on one occasion transporting General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, to the Salerno landings in Italy. Whilst off Salerno *Charybdis* was engaged in landing support and air defence duties. In October 1943 the ship returned to Devonport and the crew returned home for a well earned leave.

It is not clear if, during this leave, Stanley met his elder brother Harry, who, by this time, was serving as a navigator in RAF Bomber Command. However, it is for sure that he did meet his cousin Fred Hickson, who at the time, was home on leave from his unit in the Royal Engineers. Fred recalls that on the very last day of Stanley's leave he arrived home to be told by his mother that she had seen Stanley, dressed in uniform, and carrying his

## Dedicated to the memory of Stanley Goulding

kitbag, walking down Main Road towards the Beehive Corner. Fred caught Stanley up at the Beehive and chatted to him whilst he waited for his bus. He asked him for his address and promised to write, which he did. Regrettably, he never received a reply! Knowing that Stanley was taking the bus to catch his train Beatrice and her daughter Brenda walked to the top of the Old Newbridge Road and, as the train passed Stanley waved to them. It was the last time they would see their son and brother alive.

On arrival back at Devonport, Stanley reported for duty in the radio room and was later told that the *Charybdis*, in company with a number of other ships was to take part in 'Operation Tunnel', an action to engage German convoys proceeding along the French coast between Brest and St Malo. The British ships set sail on 22<sup>nd</sup> October and the following day encountered a German convoy somewhere between the Channel Islands and the French coast. The German ships were escorted by four 'Elbing Class' Destroyers who immediately rounded on the British ships. A fierce battle then took place in which the Royal Navy received a bloody nose. Torpedoes from the German destroyers hit both *Charybdis* and her sister ship *Limbourne* causing severe damage. *Charybdis* was hit by two torpedoes one of which struck the ship in the area of the boiler room. She immediately began to sink by the stern and was very quickly lying on her port side in 83 metres of water.

HMS *Charybdis* lost 460 of its ship's company that day including Telegraphist Stanley Goulding who was 19 and had served for just over one year in the Royal Navy. A total of 107 sailors were rescued from the sea. Because of tidal surges in the waters off the Channel Islands, the sea gave up many bodies over the next few weeks. They were washed ashore on Guernsey, Jersey and the French coast. Some bodies were identified and buried in marked graves. Many, that couldn't be identified, were interred in graves marked 'Unknown Sailor'. Stanley may well rest in one of these plots. *Limbourne* remained afloat for a number of hours but finally gave up the ghost and joined her sister ship at the bottom of the English Channel.



HMS CHARYBDIS

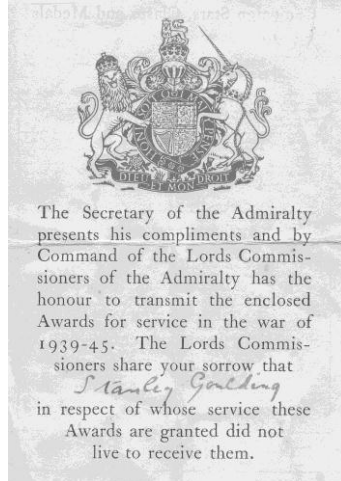
Dedicated to the memory of Stanley Goulding



HMS ARTHUR TRAINING CAMP – STANLEY STANDING BACK ROW  
-EXTREME LEFT



6 SCHOOL LANE,  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)



MEDAL ENTITLEMENT RECORD

Dedicated to the memory of Stanley Goulding



MOULTON COUNCIL SCHOOL FOOTBALL TEAM – 1936/1937.  
RESERVE STANLEY GOULDING IS STANDING FRONT ROW, FAR LEFT



BURMA 1943 – RIVER CROSSING



MACHINE GUN TEAM – WESTERN DESERT 1943



BOMB DISPOSAL UNIT AT WORK



NORMANDY LANDINGS – 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1944

## 1944 - CHRONOLOGY

As the penultimate year of the war began 2400 Allied troops landed on Saidor in New Guinea, quickly taking the harbour and airfield. In an attempt to confuse German administrators, the RAF dropped millions of counterfeit food coupons over cities in the Third Reich. Russian troops advanced into Poland and went on the offensive at Leningrad, breaking through the German lines on the outskirts of the city. In Italy Allied units cleared the way for an advance on Cassino. On 21<sup>st</sup> of the month an Anzio assault force sailed from Naples and on the following day 36,000 troops and 3,200 vehicles landed virtually unopposed on the beaches. They quickly captured the port of Anzio, established a beachhead and started to move slowly forward against little opposition. With the benefit of hindsight, it is regrettable that US General Lucas did not push forward at greater speed and before Kesselring had time to muster his reserve divisions and surround the beachhead. This error, created by the timidity of Lucas, would cost British and American forces dear in the days to come. By the time Allied troops broke out of the beachhead four months later they had lost 29,000 casualties. General Lucas was later relieved of his command and replaced by General Truscott. As the month closed Russian forces relieved Leningrad after a siege lasting 900 days.

At the beginning of February, Japanese troops began an offensive in western Burma to envelop British forces at Imphal and Kohima\*. At the same time American troops captured Kwajalein Atoll for the loss of 370 men against Japanese losses of 8,500. In New Guinea US and Australian forces captured most of the Huon Peninsula. American troops at Cassino made an unsuccessful attempt to reach the monastery from the north. Russian aircraft caused little damage when they tried to bomb *Tirpitz* in Alt-Fjord. The beachhead at Anzio was now under constant attack and US General Mark Clark was very close to calling it a day and evacuating his troops. However, on the other side of the fence, Field Marshal Kesselring concluded, thankfully, that Allied opposition was too strong and decided to back off. At Amiens, in France, British Mosquito aircraft carried out a precision bombing attack on a prison holding 700 French Resistance prisoners. Some 280 escaped but over 80 were killed. To round off the month American forces landed on the Admiralty Islands in the Pacific.

The beginning of March saw heavy fighting on most fronts including Burma, Italy, Russia and the Pacific. The first large scale daylight bombing of Berlin, by planes of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force, began. Although the Americans lost one in ten of their aircraft the Luftwaffe took a severe mauling from supporting fighters. Later in the month nearly 2000 American bombers escorted by over 1000 fighter aircraft paid a return visit to the German capital. At this time Hamburg also came under attack when the RAF dropped 3000 tons of bombs on the city. In Burma, Japanese forces began their assault against British forces at Imphal and Kohima. In their advance through Poland, Russian forces reached the banks of the River Bug. By mid March British troops in Burma were fighting desperately to hold their lines as Japanese forces crossed the Chindwin River. In Italy, the town of Cassino was subjected to assault by 1,400 tons of bombs and nearly 2000 shells. Having arrested the Regent of Hungary, Hitler instructed

his Generals to occupy the country and to set up a new military government there. News of the death in a car crash of General Orde Wingate, the commander of the 'Chindits' in Burma, was received back in Britain with much grief. In the Pacific, Japanese resistance at Bougainville ceased. They had lost a total of 8000 men in their efforts to deny the American forces victory. At the end of the month a desperate situation was building in Burma when Japanese troops cut the Imphal - Kohima road. This left the garrison at Imphal isolated and reliant on supplies from the air. En-route to Nuremberg the RAF suffered the loss of 96 aircraft out of 795 when they were attacked by German night fighters as they neared their target. Some good news was received by the Allies as the month closed when they learned that the Japanese Fleet C-in-C, Admiral Koga, had been killed in an air crash.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, aircraft from carriers HMS *Victorious and Furious*, achieved 14 direct hits on the German battleship *Tirpitz*, killing 122 and wounding 316 members of crew. This raid effectively put the *Tirpitz* out of action for a further three months. On the Eastern Front Russian forces began an offensive to liberate the Crimea. In Burma, a strategy to break through to the garrison at Kohima was devised by General Slim. The strategy worked and on 14<sup>th</sup> the Japanese lines were breached to the west of Kohima at Jotsoma. In the Pacific the Americans attacked Hollandia in New Guinea with a force of 84,000 troops and quickly won the day. On the south Devon coast of England a training exercise for D-Day ended with the loss of 749 US troops when their landing craft were attacked by German E-boats.

During early May, Russian troops liberated the city of Sevastopol. However, 85,000 German troops managed to escape by sea before the Russians could cut them off from the ports. Off Norway the British Home Fleet began a series of operations in an attempt to mislead the Germans into thinking that the expected Allied invasion would be in that neck of the woods. In Italy the Gustav Line was breached in a number of places but at Cassino Polish troops were having a rough time at the hands of the German defenders. Although Kesselring had brought in three more divisions, he knew that these were insufficient to stem the tide. With the Poles now making headway, Kesselring ordered a general retreat of his forces. His decision allowed the Poles, at long last, to claim the prize of Monte Cassino. In preparation for the expected invasion of Europe Hitler made F/M von Rundstedt C-in-C, with F/M Rommel and General Blaskowitz his subordinates. At Anzio, Allied forces started to gain the upper hand and reached the coastal highway at Latina. At this news Hitler agreed to a withdrawal to the Caesar Line. American forces landed in strength at Biak Island, New Guinea but came under pressure from Japanese troops equipped with tanks. The US destroyer *England* sank a Japanese submarine in the Bismarck Sea bringing to six the number sunk in the latter half of May.

June began with the Americans hell bent on reaching Rome ahead of any other Allied troops (a tactical mistake by General Mark Clarke, who could have cut off the bulk of the German forces from south of Rome). They quickly punched a hole in the Caesar Line and attacked through the Alban Hills. Kesselring was forced to retreat to new defensive positions to the north of Rome.



His retreat allowed the Americans to liberate the city and to claim the honours! On the south coast of England D-Day arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> June when Allied forces sailed for Normandy in the early hours. Craft of every conceivable ilk was included in the armada including a complete set of 'Mulberry' floating harbours. British and Canadian forces took their beaches 'Gold', 'Juno' and 'Sword' after some resistance. However, having taken 'Utah' Beach in some style the Americans came unstuck in their efforts to take their second objective – 'Omaha' Beach. The decision to drop their amphibious tanks some three miles from the beach in rough seas proved a disaster. Some 34,000 men managed to struggle ashore but more than 1500 died before could reach the relative safety of the cliffs. By the end of the day 150,000 Allied troops were camped on their respective beaches, only ninety days away from liberating Paris. On the island of Biak in the Pacific, US forces captured Mokmer airfield whilst on the Eastern Front Russian troops began to assault the Finnish positions. In the Pacific, fifteen aircraft carriers with close battleship support deployed aircraft against Saipan and other islands in the Marianas Group. The first ten V-1 flying bombs were launched against England from the Pas-de-Calais; only four hit their targets on the mainland. A force of 67,500 American troops forced their way ashore on the Marianas Islands but met with fierce resistance from the little men of Nippon. US battleships shelled Guam whilst on the Eastern Front Russian forces broke the main Finnish positions at the Mannerheim Line. Freak weather in the English Channel saw both 'Mulberry' harbours damaged by storms. In Italy Allied forces north of Rome approached the new German defence positions on the Albert Line. In the battle of the Philippine Sea Japanese aircraft attempted to assault the US Fleet. They lost more than 300 aircraft to less than 30 by the Americans. The sad story worsened for the Japanese when US submarines sank their prize carriers *Tiko* and *Shokaku*. Back in Britain RAF fighter aircraft were beginning to get to grips with the new flying bombs and in some instances used their wing-tips to tip the rockets off their set course – what brave men they were! More than 1000 US bombers with a similar number of fighter escorts bombed Berlin but encountered heavy resistance from anti-aircraft guns encircling the city. In Burma, the siege of Imphal ended when Indian Divisions linked on the Imphal-Kohima road. On the Eastern Front Marshal Zhukov began his summer offensive. On 27<sup>th</sup> June, the major port of Cherbourg was liberated by Allied troops and two days later Hitler sacked F/M Busch and replaced him with F/M Model. The month ended with things going badly for the German Army on the Eastern Front where they lost 70,000 men in a futile battle for Bobruisk.

Early July saw Allied armour struggling to overcome the difficulties encountered by narrow roads and high hedges in bocage country in France. Conversely, Allied forces in Italy were advancing at a huge rate of knots with the Germans retreating before them to their next substantial defensive barrier – the River Arno, running through Florence. In the Pacific US and Australian units landed on Numfoor island off New Guinea and two days later captured the airfield there. On the Eastern Front the Russians captured Minsk and created chaos in the German command structure. To place the V-1 flying bomb menace in prospective Winston Churchill reported to Parliament that 3745 V-1s had breached our defenses with the loss of 2750 civilians – less than one civilian per very expensive flying bomb!

American troops in the Pacific advanced across Saipan much to the consternation of Admiral Nagumo and General Salto who promptly committed suicide in their dishonour. Despite very heroic resistance by the defending Japanese the island fell to the Americans on 9<sup>th</sup> July. During the battle, the Japanese lost 27,000 men against 3000 by the Americans with 12,000 wounded. With their tails up, Allied units closed in on Florence whilst the Russians captured Pinsk. In Normandy as US forces entered St-Lo, Erwin Rommel was severely wounded when his car was strafed by Allied fighters. On the 20<sup>th</sup> July, and in an attempt to bring the war to a close, the very brave Colonel Count von Stauffenberg placed his briefcase containing a bomb under the conference table at which Hitler was speaking. Regrettably, the bomb was on the wrong side of a very substantial table support and Hitler, although injured, was spared to carry on his hopeless task. Americans landed 55,000 troops on the island of Guam and were opposed by 20,000 Japanese defenders. On the Eastern Front Russian troops took Lublin and saw for the first time the horrors of a concentration camp at Majdenek. In the Indian Ocean the British Eastern Fleet attacked Subang off the northern tip of Sumatra. July ended with US troops securing Avranches in France.

At the beginning of August the German Kriegsmarine started to employ 'Linsen' radio controlled assault boats, packed with high explosives, to attack British shipping engaged in the supply of armaments and materials to their land forces in Europe. Various vessels were sunk by these floating bombs including the destroyer HMS *Quorn*. As the Russians approached Warsaw, a Polish uprising against the Nazis began. In the Pacific, the island of Tinian, in the Marianas Group, fell to American troops. Allied forces entered Florence and occupied the city south of the River Arno. In Amsterdam, the secret hiding place of the family Frank was betrayed to the Gestapo. The family was deported to Auschwitz concentration camp where Anne later died in captivity. Thankfully, her diary survived and was published after the war, to be read by millions of people around the world. Although Allied forces were slowly advancing through France, they were being fought at every turn by desperate German troops. Whilst Allied troops pushed forward towards the Falaise Gap, American and French troops landed on the beaches between Toulon and Cannes in the south of the country. At Falaise, Allied troops met with very heavy resistance in their efforts to deny the 'Gap' to the retreating German armour and troops. **It was here during heavy fighting, that Guardsmen Albert Stockall of the 5<sup>th</sup> Btn. Coldstream Guards and of Moulton Village, Cheshire lost his life.** In Poland, Russian troops were knocking on the door of the capital. After very fierce fighting the Falaise Gap was finally closed and tens of thousands of German troops were trapped in the pocket. The drive to reach Paris was going well with the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army at the outskirts of Versailles. As the Allies approached Bordeaux and Lorient the German Navy began to scuttle their U-boats off the coast. With Allied troops nearing Paris, French Resistance fighters began to harass the retreating German forces at every opportunity. To save the city from destruction and, in contravention of the orders from Hitler, General von Choltitz surrendered Paris on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August to the liberating Allied forces. Things were also going well for the Allies in Italy who had crossed the River Metauro.

By the end of the month the Allied drive across France continued with the crossing of the Marne, that river much associated with the early battles of WW1, leaving Reims and Amiens within reach of the advancing troops. British defences now had the measure of the German V-1 flying bombs and were shooting down nine out of every ten launched against England. With Russian troops by-passing Warsaw the fighting between the German occupiers and the Polish Resistance became brutal and unyielding. The Gothic Line in Northern Italy, south of Bologna, was attacked for the first time by Allied forces. The month ended with Bucharest, the capital of Rumania, falling to the Russians.

Early September saw the Allied forces advancing across France at speed. They quickly overran towns whose names were etched into the memory of all those who, however fleetingly, had been associated with, or read about, the battles of WW1; Verdun, Rouen, Abbeville, Arras, Cambrai etc. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month the British Guards Division liberated Brussels and in the south Lyons was taken. In Finland the Russians and Finns agreed on a ceasefire whilst in Northern Italy the Gothic Line was ruptured at several points. In the Pacific US Task Force 38, including 16 aircraft carriers attacked Palau in the Carolines. On the 8<sup>th</sup> September, the first new V-2 rockets were launched against London. The 192 mile flight from The Hague took less than five minutes and the rockets exploded on impact before the sound of their passage could be heard. By the middle of the month British troops entered Holland and the Americans reached the Siegfried Line on the German border. At this point it could be readily said that things were going very well for the Allied Armies all over the globe. However, a setback was about to occur that would be etched into the history of the Second World War in Europe – “Operation Market Garden” and the battle of “Arnhem”. The story of Arnhem was graphically illustrated in the film “A Bridge too Far” when British airborne troops, having reached the bridge at Arnhem were not reinforced by advancing Allied forces, as planned. By the 25<sup>th</sup> September, and despite their heroic efforts, the men holding one end of the bridge were forced to retreat to the outskirts of the town. It was here, that the decision was taken to evacuate the fit survivors and to cross the Rhine in small boats. More than 1000 men were killed in this failed operation with 6,400 taken prisoner. A total of 2400 troops managed to escape to fight another day. The battle for the bridge at Arnhem was the last victory chalked up by German forces in WW2. By the end of the month Canadian troops had liberated Calais and the Americans had occupied the Palau Islands in the Pacific. On the Eastern Front the Russians occupied Estonia on the Baltic Sea.

The beginning of October saw German troops smash the Home Army uprising in Warsaw. More than 200,000 Poles died during the resistance and buildings in the centre of the city were demolished on the orders of Hitler to “punish them for their bravado”. As Hitler’s troops reached their own borders on the Western Front fighting from these diehard Germans became more intense. In Greece British forces took Corinth and Samos and Finish troops fighting on the side of the Russians captured Kemi. At a conference in Moscow attended by Stalin, Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, agreement was reached on the division of Eastern Europe after the war. In the Pacific American forces were moving inexorably towards the Japanese mainland when Task Force 38 was deployed against Okinawa.

German troops were forced to evacuate Piraeus as Allied paratroops landed at Athens airfield and the British on Corfu. In the Pacific, B-29 Super Fortresses were located on the Marianas Islands to carry the strategic aerial war to Japan. Whilst the island of Formosa was being attacked by huge numbers of Allied aircraft, Antwerp on the other side of the world, was being assaulted by German V-1 and V-2 flying bombs. At Riga in Latvia, the Russians were in the process of breaking the German defences. The German Nation was informed on the radio that their beloved Field Marshal Erwin Rommel had died of wounds suffered in battle. However, the truth was very different, for the General was forced to commit suicide by taking poison rather than face charges of being part of the July bomb plot to kill Hitler. On the same day that Athens and Piraeus were liberated the US cruiser *Houston* was put out of action by a Japanese torpedo.

In Latvia, Riga fell to the Russians whilst in Norway, an SOE agent notified London that the battleship *Tirpitz* was in the process of being moved to another anchorage. At Aachen, although isolated, the German garrison was fighting like terriers to hold their positions. In Greece and Southern Yugoslavia German forces were retreating to avoid isolation and the Russians were marching into Czechoslovakia. On the Franco – German border American forces took Bruyeres as resistance at Aachen weakened. In a joint action between Russian and Marshal Tito's partisans, Belgrade was liberated. In the Philippines General MacArthur fulfilled his promise to the Filipino people to return, when 130,000 US troops forced their way ashore at Leyte. As Aachen finally fell to Allied troops Russian forces on the Eastern Front reached the German border. Off the Philippines a tremendous sea battle took place when Admiral 'Bull' Halsey's fleet of battleships, aircraft carriers and destroyers took on the might of the Japanese Fleet commanded by Admirals Kurita and Nishimura. The Japanese Navy received the bloodiest nose of the war and was never again a threat to the US Navy in the Pacific. October ended with RAF Bomber Command dropping over 6,000 tons of bombs on Cologne and the Germans evacuating Salonika. It was during this period that the notorious gas chambers at Auschwitz were used for the last time but the murder continued until the Russians arrived.

In the Far East the Japanese landed 2000 reinforcements on Leyte as US forces continued their advance. As British minesweepers cleared the approaches to Antwerp, fierce fighting on the island of Walcheren was taking place. In the Philippines Admiral McCain's group attacked Luzon. The US aircraft carrier *Lexington* was damaged by a 'kamikaze' attack. American troops finally overcome the resistance on Leyte and moved on to their next objective.

Allied troops fighting in Burma took Fort White whilst the German garrison on the island of Walcheren off Antwerp succumbed. In the Pacific a Japanese convoy carrying reinforcements was attacked by carrier based aircraft. Many ships were sunk including four troop transporters carrying a total of 10,000 Japanese soldiers. 'Tallboy' bombs, dropped by RAF Lancaster bombers, finally saw the demise of *Tirpitz* at anchor off Haakoy Island. *Tirpitz* took three direct hits and more than 1000 German sailors perished when their ship capsized.

On the Eastern Front Russian troops were about to reach the city limits of Budapest. In the China Sea, the Japanese aircraft carrier Junyo was sunk by an American submarine. Advanced units of the French forces by-passed the town of Belfort and moved on towards the Rhine. East of the Ardennes Forest the German 7<sup>th</sup> Army began a series of counter attacks against the Americans. Hitler had convinced his advisors that a drive at the centre of the Allied lines would prove successful and enable him to recapture Antwerp. V-2 rockets were still falling on London and one, which hit a Woolworth store at Deptford, in the South of the city, killed 160 civilians. Near the Philippines 'kamikaze' aircraft damaged four US aircraft carriers off the island of Luzon. RAF Bomber Command destroyed more than 600 buildings in Munich when they dropped 12,000lb 'Tallboy' bombs on the city. On the island of Leyte in the Philippines, the Japanese defenders finished the month in a strong position and on the verge of recapturing Burauen airfield. Whilst B29 bombers raided Tokyo by night the US submarine *Archerfish* sank the Japanese carrier *Shinano* off Honshu.

At the beginning of December the Home Guard in Britain was stood down. In Europe poor weather reduced operations to a minimum but German preparations to counter-attack in the Ardennes, continued apace. In the Pacific the US heavy cruiser *Nashville* was badly damaged when attacked by 'kamikaze' aircraft. In the Ardennes German forces received their orders from Field Marshal von Rundstedt to advance.



BRITISH POWs IN THE  
HANDS OF THE JAPANESE

This battle, which lasted for over six weeks before the German troops were forced to retreat, became known as 'The Battle of the Bulge'. On the same day that this battle commenced, units of the Waffen SS murdered 81 American POWs at Malmedy. In the East, Russian troops all but cut off Budapest as they by-passed the city in their advance. Back in the Ardennes Forest Allied troops were building up their forces to counter-attack the German forward thrust. In the Philippines heavy fighting on the island of Leyte continued. This bloody campaign would cost the Japanese over 60,000 dead against 15,000 Americans dead and wounded.

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1944 included the following items:**

Throughout the year raffles and draws continued apace at the Verdin. Prizes ranged from bottles of Guinness, new laid eggs, sacks of potatoes, crates of vegetables, bottles of spirits, Port and sherry, dressed fowls and cigarettes. At one point during the year 7000 raffle tickets were ordered for sale at 2d each (25p in today's terms). Proceeds from these events were channeled into either the Forces Fund or Soldiers Comforts Fund.

\*The Kohlma exhortation: 'When you go home, tell them of us and say for your tomorrow, we gave out today'.

Dedicated to the memory of George Dickens



## GEORGE DICKENS

Guardsman  
2720446  
1<sup>st</sup>Bn. Irish Guards

Killed in action on Wednesday 26 January 1944. Aged 27

He is buried in ANZIO WAR CEMETERY, Italy  
Grave IV. K. 11



Awards to George Dickens (See pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of George Dickens

George Dickens was born at Gibb Hall Cottages, Antrobus, Northwich on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1917. He was the third son of Sam and Clara Elizabeth Dickens (nee Buckley) and was one of six children (two brothers and three sisters). Sam originated from Wincham and Clara from Pickmere, Northwich. At the start of their marriage they lived in Pickmere but later moved to Antrobus. Sam was employed for 30 years as a borehole driller in the Halford brine fields of Brunner Mond (later ICI Ltd). The family worshiped at Antrobus Parish Church where the three lads sang in the choir. With little for energetic, adventurous, youngsters to do in the village, George and his brothers often fished, illegally, in Belmont Hall Pool. Belmont Hall belonged to Sir John Brunner and it is said that when the warden saw the lads fishing in the pool he would do a 'Nelson' on them! The children attended the village school and later George, who was a fair winger, played football for both Antrobus and Arley. George grew to be 6' - 2" in height and as well as football became an enthusiastic crown green bowler.

On leaving school George was employed as a maintenance worker by the LMS at Northwich. His brother Thomas also worked for the railways as a track worker. At the outbreak of war Thomas was excused military service on the grounds that his work was 'essential' to the war effort. George, on the other hand, was not so lucky, for he was called up when war was declared – such are the fortunes of life! George's best pal was Bill Plant of Comberbach. Bill was taken prisoner by the Japanese in the Far East but survived - he died in the 1990s.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1938 George married his sweetheart Irene Buckley of Moulton and they lived for a little while in Peter Street, off Manchester Road, close to Northwich railway station. They then went to live with Irene's parents at 116, Togo Villas, Moulton and later moved to a small cottage in the village, at the end of School Lane. After George enlisted, Irene, who was the sister of Felix Buckley – see separate dedication – moved back to live with her parents at Togo Villas. George and Irene had one child, Peter, who was born in Moulton. Peter was two years old when news was received that his father had been killed.

After George received his call up papers he was posted to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Irish Guards. He served in North Africa with the 8<sup>th</sup> Army (The Desert Rats) and fought there against the Germans and Italians who were under the command of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. In 1942 George was posted to Hammamet in Tunisia for training. He then went to Bizerta en route for Taranto in Italy. Transported on the *Llangibby Castle* he arrived at Taranto harbour on 7<sup>th</sup> December. The battalion then remained at a staging camp at Monte Carrafa for Christmas and New Year. In early January 1944, the Battalion moved by road to Gragnano where they stayed for the next two weeks. It was whilst here that they learned that their next objective was to be Anzio, south of Rome and that they were to be part of the 6<sup>th</sup> US Corps. The former name for Anzio was Antium and it was here that the notorious Emperor Caligula was born. On the 20<sup>th</sup> January the Battalion embarked into

## Dedicated to the memory of George Dickens

their landing craft and arrived at the secured bridgehead of Anzio on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Battalion were then instructed to position themselves at Selva di Nettuno and to wait there for further orders.

Shortly after they received orders to take the town of Carroceto and in particular, the Fascist Headquarters known as the 'Factory'. They were to attack alongside the Grenadier and Scots Guards. Facing them was the 29<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadier Regiment. At 8.0am on 26<sup>th</sup> January the Germans counter attacked with artillery, tanks and their Panzer Grenadiers. The fighting was fierce but the Guards held their line. At the end of the day they had lost 20 men killed with just below 100 wounded. Among the dead was Guardsman George Dickens of Moulton. He was 27 years old.

George's wife, Irene, remarried Lawrence Carter in 1948. Her son Peter, a TV Engineer, married Barbara Burrows but regrettably died of a heart attack at a very early age. Irene did not live to see her son Peter married.



ANZIO LANDINGS



Dedicated to the memory of George Dickens



GEORGE WITH HIS SON PETER



116, TOGO VILLAS TODAY  
(2005)



ORIGINAL WAR GRAVE



ANZIO WAR CEMETERY

Dedicated to the memory of George Shannon



## **GEORGE SHANNON**

Gunner  
1120105  
Royal Artillery  
Who died on Monday 26 June 1944

His name is commemorated on the SINGAPORE MEMORIAL, Singapore  
Column 30



**SINGAPORE MEMORIAL**

Other Memorials: Brunner Mond Memorial, Winnington, Northwich  
Awards to George Shannon (See pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of George Shannon

When the disastrous Asian Tsunami struck Indonesia in January 2005, the huge wave created by the undersea eruption passed over the wreck of the *Harukiku Maru* lying in deep water in the South China Sea. Her actual position in the Malacca Straights is Latitude 03.15N – Longitude 99.46E., some 60 nautical miles south east of Medan the capital of Banda Aceh Province in Northern Sumatra.

The *Harukiku Maru* was formerly the SS *Van Waerwijk* built in 1909 in Amsterdam. At the time of her launch she had accommodation for 60 passengers and was registered at 3,040 gross tons. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1942 she was scuttled at Tandjong Priok, Java, prior to the Japanese invasion. She was later salvaged by the Japanese and renamed *Harukiku Maru*.

George Shannon, a prisoner of the Japanese since Singapore fell to them in February 1942, boarded the *Harukiku Maru* at Belawan, the port for Medan. The ship was scheduled to sail alone with 720 prisoners of war as well as 780 others to Pekanbaru in North Central Sumatra, some 300 nautical miles from Belawan. The POWs were destined to work on the 'Death Railway of Sumatra' that would eventually stretch from Pekanbaru to Mocra in the south of the island. On the morning of 26<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the *Harukiku Maru* was sighted by H.M.S *Truculent*, a British submarine, which immediately went to battle stations and sank the vessel with torpedoes. Of the 720 POWs on board 177 died with 543 saved. George Shannon did not survive and his remains lie in the South China Sea to this day. He was 31 years old.

George was a Moultoner, the son of Tom and Sarah Shannon. He was born in 1912 at 13, Chapel Lane, Moulton but later, in the late 1920s, moved with his family to 36, Whitlow Lane, Moulton. Tom and Sarah's five children; Jack, Tom, George, Margaret and Annie all attended Moulton Council School. The Shannon's were a close knit family and their grandparents, Tom and Agnes Shannon lived at 12, Regent Street in the village. The family attended the local Primitive Methodist Chapel and all the children were expected to help their father in growing vegetables in their large garden at Chapel Lane.

During the period of the First World War, tragedy struck the Shannon household when Jack (12), George's older brother, drowned whilst swimming on a very hot summers day in the River Weaver. It is said that he was caught in the reeds after he had dived into the water. At the time his father, Tom, was away serving with the RASC on the Western Front. Jack was a very bright man and his brothers and sisters walked in his 'academic' shadow. His parents were broken hearted on learning of his death, for he was the apple of their eye.

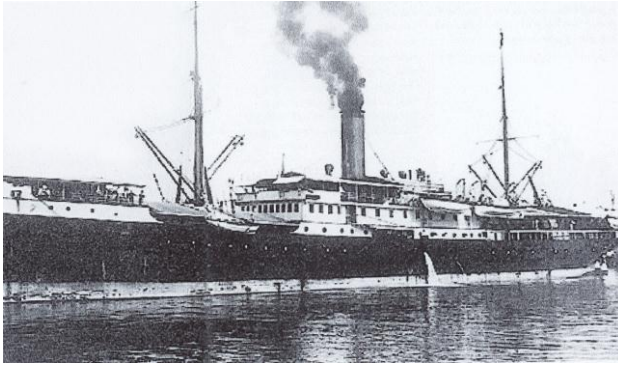
On leaving school George was employed as a fitter at ICI Winnington Works, Northwich. Later, and before the war started, he met and married his wife Edith at Whitegate Chapel. In the early years of their marriage George and Edith lived at 2 Chapel Lane, Moulton.

Dedicated to the memory of George Shannon

However, sometime after George enlisted in the Royal Artillery in February 1940, Edith, who was pregnant at the time, moved to the home of her parents at The Hollows, Cuddington, Northwich. Edith gave birth to her daughter Georgina Priscilla there in the spring of 1941. By the time Georgina was born, her father had sailed for Singapore via Simon's Town in South Africa. He never lived to see his little girl!

After Singapore fell in early 1942 Edith received no news of George for two years until, in January 1944, she received a card from him saying that he was well and a prisoner of war of the Japanese in Malaya.

After the war Edith remarried and settled in Liverpool. By the year 2003 she had attained the ripe old age of 89 years but was, once again, a widow. Her daughter, Georgina Finning, from her first marriage to George Shannon, died in 1997 aged 56 years.



'HARUKIKU MARU' FORMERLY 'SS VAN WAERWIJK'



36 WHITLOW LANE, MOULTON  
TODAY (2005)



2, CHAPEL LANE  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)

Dedicated to the memory of Albert Edward Stockall



## **ALBERT EDWARD STOCKALL**

Guardsman  
2661256  
5<sup>th</sup> Bn., Coldstream Guards

Who died of wounds on Friday 11 August 1944. Aged 23

He is buried in BANNEVILLE-LA-CAMPAGNE WAR CEMETERY,  
Calvados, France  
Grave XV. D. 19



Other Memorials: Middlewich Memorial, Middlewich, Cheshire  
Awards to Albert Edward Stockall (See pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of Albert Edward Stockall

Victory at the Falaise Pocket (or Gap) in the summer of 1944 was critical to the Allied war plans in Normandy. Falaise was the birthplace of William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, who gave England such a hard time at Hastings! 'Falaise' means 'steep cliff' and it was the gap between these high cliffs that the Allied Armies were determined to close before the German panzer divisions could escape. With the Americans and British attacking from each side of the pocket they eventually managed to cut off the retreating German troops. Some 40,000 did manage to escape but 60,000 were trapped and captured. The Falaise Pocket became known as the 'corridor of death' and it was here that Albert Stockall was killed. It was the first complete victory by the Allies in France and boosted their moral tremendously.

Albert was a Moulton lad who was born in 1921 to Walter and Frances Stockall of 4 Church Street, Moulton. He was their second son from a total of ten children in all – 2 daughters and 8 sons. Walter worked as a road builder for Tarmac Ltd. On reaching school age Albert, like most Moultoners, attended the local Council School in School Lane where he became a good scholar who often came top of his class and won prizes for his good work. He was a very fit young man who became proficient at gym, played cricket and loved to cycle with his pals around the local countryside. In his early years he collected cigarette cards and often 'skinned' his young pals when they played marbles together.

On leaving school he was employed by Ambrose Wilson who ran a smallholding at the corner of Jack Lane, Moulton. Albert was a quiet young man who cared about people. He was not given to bluster or showing off.

In his teens Albert had an obsession with motorbikes and could be found most weekends tinkering with an old AJS and later a more upmarket Aerial model. With his brother Walter and their friends they would ride the bikes on private farmland belonging to Ernie Crimes. The old AJS bike finished up embedded in concrete with a drive belt around the back axle. This contraption was used by Ernie Crimes to drive a machine that pulped the turnips grown on his farm.

Every year before the war a 'Fete' was held at Vale Royal Abbey. One of the attractions was a boxing booth. Anyone who could last three rounds with the Manchester pugilist 'Nipper Plant' could pocket £5, a good deal of money in the mid thirty's (£200 in today's terms). Albert and his two pals, Arthur Brereton and George Mellor, were a 'rum' trio and all over six feet tall. They devised a plan to win the money. Arthur and George would first challenge 'Nipper' and try to last out for as long as they could. When 'Nipper' tired, Albert would enter the ring to attempt to go the distance with him – this he did and the three lads then shared the cash, somewhat bruised but happy!

## Dedicated to the memory of Albert Edward Stockall

Just before the war started Albert and his pals: Tom Ashton, Walter Stockall, Enoch Hough, and the two Kennerley brothers each acquired new cycles. They decided to test them out by setting out on a big adventure to New Brighton on the Wirral (c.90 miles – round trip). They achieved their objective, but at the expense of very sore posteriors on their return to the village!!

Albert was a very handsome young man, well built, and 6' - 4" tall. The girls of the village were smitten by him, but it was Winnie Gill from Middlewich who finally claimed his heart. They eventually married and had two sons, Terrance (Terry) and Kenneth (Kenny).

One month after war was declared in September 1939 Albert volunteered for service in the Army. He was recruited into the Coldstream Guards and posted to Salisbury Plain for his initial training. It was during this time at Salisbury that he became a first class marksman. His older brother, Walter, was very annoyed when he learned that Albert was in the Guards, for he wanted him to join his outfit, the Royal Engineers; maybe he wanted to keep a brotherly eye on him! In those days, it should be explained, the Army tried to keep brothers together. Walter attempted to have Albert transferred without success.

After his recruit training, Albert left Salisbury for more intense battle training elsewhere. He did a spell of guard duty at Buckingham Palace and it was during this period that he ran foul of the notorious Regimental Sergeant Major Britton, the scourge of the Guards Division. It was said that his voice was so powerful that he was the only man in the British Army 'who could whisper across three fields'! RSM Britton once put Albert on a charge for allowing his hat to blow off during an inspection by the Queen! This incident, RSM Britton's bellowing and the Guards regime in general, soured Albert's feeling towards his regiment. By this time four of Albert's siblings were serving in the armed forces; Walter, Royal Engineers; Billy, RAF; Norman, Royal Signals; and Lillian, ATS.

In October 1941 the Regiment formed its 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion and this was destined to become a motorised unit in the Guards Armoured Division. Albert was transferred to this new Battalion and placed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Company. In late spring 1944 he returned home on leave, but had only been with his family for two days, when he received orders to report back to barracks, to prepare for Normandy and the 'D' Day landings. During his short leave Albert found time to visit his brother Ron who was in the isolation ward at Davenham Hospital with diphtheria.

In early August 1944 Lillian, the eldest of Albert's two sisters, and serving in the ATS, received a last letter from him. He chided her about her boyfriend and also mentioned that he had not had a bath for some weeks. He went on to say that he had received a letter from their mother and this had cheered him up 'no end'.

Dedicated to the memory of Albert Edward Stockall

On 11<sup>th</sup> August the 5<sup>th</sup> Coldstream Guards attacked the village of Chenedolle and sustained heavy casualties. One of these was Guardsman Albert Stockall who received a wound to his chest. He was taken to a field hospital but died through loss of blood on the operating table. He was 23 years old.

News of Albert's death was received by his wife Winnie whilst she was at her parent's home at 95, Lewin Street, Middlewich. After the battle for Chenedolle, some of Albert's belongings were found in a field and returned to his wife. After the war Winnie met and married Frank Lewis and they had two children.



95, LEWIN ST. MIDDLEWICH (END HOUSE ON RIGHT) TODAY 2005



ALBERT & WINNIE



WINNIE WITH HER SON TERRANCE



4, CHURCH ST. MOULTON TODAY (2005)



Dedicated to the memory of Ralph Latham



## **RALPH LATHAM**

Corporal  
541973  
Royal Air Force

Who died on Tuesday 26 December 1944. Aged 26

He is buried in LABUAN WAR CEMETERY, Malaysia  
Grave U. C. 10.



**RALPH LATHAM'S HEADSTONE,  
LABUAN WAR CEMETERY**

Awards to Ralph Latham (See pages 87 & 88)

## Dedicated to the memory of Ralph Latham

As Ralph Latham was not born or schooled in the village of Moulton there is very little in the way of records or anecdotes to be found. He was the youngest son of William and Elizabeth Latham who, during the initial years of their marriage, lived at 2 Tower Place, Rudheath. The house is now a distant memory, for it succumbed to the bulldozers, when the new Tesco Superstore was built alongside Northwich Station.

Whilst at Tower Place, William and Elizabeth had ten children – 6 girls and 4 boys. The family then moved to 73 Woodford Lane, Over, Winsford where Ralph was brought up. He was born on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1918 and attended the local Council School in High Street, Winsford. In 1931 his mother Elizabeth died and some time later his father remarried. His new bride was Annie Hughes and they settled in Moulton at 40 Main Road.

Ralph left school at 14 in 1932. After working locally for 5 years he took the decision, in 1937, to sign on as a regular serviceman in the RAF. After his initial square bashing was done, he trained as a Fitter (Engines) and passed out as a Leading Aircraftsman. Prior to the commencement of hostilities he served on a number of RAF Stations in the UK. In May 1941 he was posted to RAF Seletar, Singapore to work in the Repair and Salvage Unit there. Ralph wrote only one letter home to his father in December 1941.

In February 1942 the garrison at Singapore surrendered to the Japanese Army and thousands of Allied servicemen were incarcerated for the duration of the war. Ralph was one of these men and was imprisoned in a Prisoner of War Camp in Borneo. For the next 15 months nothing was heard of him until, in March 1943, notification was received via the Air Ministry from the International Red Cross, that Ralph was a POW.

In September 1944 Ralph was promoted Corporal but died of Malaria just two months later. He was 26 years old. His grave is on the island of Labuan in Brunei Bay off the coast of North East Borneo.



40, MAIN ROAD,  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)



LABUAN WAR CEMETERY N.E.  
BORNEO

## 1945 – CHRONOLOGY

At the beginning of the January counter attacks by the Allies in the forests of the Ardennes gathered pace. Out in Burma, Allied troops landed on Akyab Island in the Arakan and British troops forged forward inland towards the Irrawaddy. The German High Command decided to withdraw units of their SS Panzer Army in the Ardennes and send them to the Eastern Front. In the Pacific, US troops landed in the Lingayen Gulf on Luzon, precisely where the Japanese had landed three years before. In Poland Marshal Zhukov started a new offensive with nine armies pushing forward to the north of Warsaw. Advancing towards Mandalay, in Burma, British forces encountered stiff resistance from the Japanese defenders. By the middle of the month, Russian forces had completely encircled Warsaw and took control of the city shortly afterwards. To avoid a further encirclement, the German garrison at Krakow evacuated the town. This was good thinking on the part of the German High Command for on the 19<sup>th</sup> Tarnow, Lodz and Krakow fell to the advancing Russian forces. In the Far East American aircraft attacked Formosa and Okinawa and in so doing destroyed 100 Japanese aircraft. However, it was not all ‘icing on the cake’, for three of the US carriers were damaged in a retaliatory strike by Japanese aircraft. Towards the end of the month Russian troops liberated the notorious concentration camp at Auschwitz. In the Ardennes German forces were forced to relinquish all territory taken since the start of the campaign. By the end of January, Russian forces were within fifty miles of Berlin.

On Luzon American forces, struggling against fierce Japanese opposition, strengthened their forces by sending in their 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. A force of 1500 US fighters and bombers dropped 2000 tons of bombs on Berlin in that city’s worst air raid of the war. At Yalta the three world leaders Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met to discuss the post war situation. President Roosevelt, who was in very poor health, stipulated that he could only spend six days at the conference. It is said that Winston Churchill, on hearing this news, scribbled a note to Anthony Eden, his Foreign Secretary, which said in effect “Six days to decide the fate of the world – even the almighty took seven!!” At Nijmegen, on the Rhine, British and Canadian troops gained ground despite strong German resistance. In the Pacific the Americans were also doing well and pushing forward towards Manila. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month a Russian submarine sank the German Hospital Ship *General von Steuben* which had sailed from Pillau in the Bay of Danzig with more than 3000 casualties, passengers and crew on board – only 300 were saved. In Burma Allied forces crossed the Irrawaddy at several points whilst in Hungary, the city of Budapest surrendered to the Russian when 100,000 German troops laid down their arms. On the same day 750 RAF bombers attacked the city of Dresden with more US and RAF raids over the following two days. The firestorm created by the bombing accounted for 70,000 lives. This raid, which is still the subject of heated debate today, severed the vital rail link converging on the city, and indirectly saved the lives of many Allied service personnel. US Forces in the Pacific made both seaborne and airborne landings on the island of Corregidor. Some three days later some 30,000 US Marines landed on the south east coast of Iwo Jima. This island was garrisoned by 20,000 Japanese defenders. Japanese

kamikaze aircraft sank the aircraft US carrier *Bismarck Sea* whilst supporting the landings on Iwo Jima. In Burma 6000 men of the British 3<sup>rd</sup> Commando Brigade landed near Kangaw. In a US air raid on Tokyo it was estimated that a total of 27,000 buildings were destroyed. On Corregidor the fighting ended with more than 5000 Japanese dead including many trapped in the honeycomb of tunnels scattered throughout the island.

By early March both airfields on Iwo Jima were in the hands of American forces. The island of Okinawa was bombarded by American aircraft. The devastated city of Manila fell to US troops as the last of the 20,000 Japanese defenders were wiped out. In Germany, American troops entered the Cologne and in a desperate bid to plug the gaps in their ranks, an edict was posted to the effect that all fifteen year olds were to be recruited for the German Army. In a swift advance allied troops reached the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, where they then managed to cross the damaged structure before it could be completely destroyed by retreating German troops. On Iwo Jima in the Pacific Japanese defenders were pushed back into a small pocket on the northern coast. In a massive air raid on Tokyo US B29 Super Fortresses killed 10,000 Japanese inhabitants when a fire storm, created by the bombing, destroyed their wood and paper homes.

In Germany the RAF sent 1000 bombers on a daylight raid over Essen and effectively destroyed the rail junction with 4700 tons of bombs. A similar attack on Dortmund followed some days later. Despite heroic efforts by US Forces on Iwo Jima, pockets of Japanese resistance were proving difficult to shift. By mid March Allied troops had taken Koblenz and were using temporary bridges built by Allied engineers when the Remagen Bridge finally succumbed to heavy German bombing. In Burma heavy fighting continued in the area of Mandalay with the result that two days later the city fell to the 19<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. US troops finally secured Iwo Jima when the Japanese garrison there was all but wiped out. Of the original 20,000 Japanese troops only 200 survived to be taken prisoner. The Americans lost nearly 6000 dead with more than 17,000 wounded in this epic battle. Towards the end of the month the last V-2 rockets were launched at the UK and hit the town of Orpington in Kent. The month ended with Danzig falling to Russian troops and things going well for the Allied forces in Burma.

April 1945 was a momentous month for the Allies with successes on all fronts. In Germany US Armies linked up to cut off more than 300,000 German troops in the Ruhr. In the Pacific theatre of war the invasion of Okinawa began. Nearly 500,000 US troops were ranged against 130,000 Japanese defenders. As transports ferrying the American troops approached the island, Kamikaze aircraft inflicted severe losses on the invading force. In Austria the Russians reached the suburbs of Vienna. In a last ditch attempt to defend the island of Okinawa the 72,000 ton battleship *Yamato* with a cruiser and eight destroyers was despatched from the Inland Sea. Significantly, *Yamato* had only sufficient fuel for the outward passage! On the Ruhr, German troops trapped in the pocket there, attempted to fight their way out. In Burma, British troops drove the Japanese before them as they pushed forward through the Sittang and Irrawaddy valleys. In the harbour at Kiel the German pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* was heavily bombed by the RAF. During

the same raid the cruiser *Emden* and many other vessels were critically damaged. In East Prussia Königsberg fell to the Russians whilst Hanover was taken by the British. In the Philippines US forces on Luzon were steadily advancing towards Manila. On the 12<sup>th</sup> May the free world mourned the passing of President Roosevelt. He was quickly succeeded by Vice-President Harry S Truman. On the following day Allied troops entered the concentration camps of Belsen Bergen and Buchenwald. These troops were then made fully aware of the justice of their cause, when they saw the horror of Germany's attempt to exterminate the Jewish race. On the same day the Russian Army liberated Vienna. After the unsuccessful attempt to take Arnhem, in Operation 'Market Garden' eight months earlier, the town finally succumbed to Canadian Forces. In what was to become East Germany the notorious prison camp for 'bad lads' – Colditz, was liberated. In the Ruhr pocket 300,000 German troops surrendered to the Americans. In Burma the Allied push south was proceeding apace. Russian forces commanded by General Zhukov entered the outskirts of Berlin whilst in Italy Polish troops captured the City of Bologna. Further north US and British troops crossed the River PO and La Spezia was taken. In Berlin the city was finally surrounded and the noose tightened as Russian troops began to fight their way towards the city centre. In Burma Japanese troops fleeing ahead of Allied forces tried to escape into Thailand. In France the old WW1 general, Marshal Petain, was arrested whilst trying to escape into Switzerland. Subsequently he was sentenced to death but his sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment by General de Gaulle. Towards the end of the month Mussolini, his mistress and some fascist colleagues were captured near Lake Como as they tried to cross into Switzerland. They were quickly shot and their bodies mutilated and hung up by their heels from meat hooks in a petrol station forecourt. In Hitler's bunker in Berlin Admiral Doenitz was appointed Hitler's successor. Hitler then married his companion Eva Braun and the following day, at 3.30pm, they committed suicide.

When Hitler's death was announced on German radio on 1<sup>st</sup> May it was coupled with the news that Admiral Karl Doenitz had been elected as his successor. Knowing that the game was up Josef Goebbels ordered that his children be murdered and then instructed a member of his SS bodyguard to shoot both him and his wife. In Yugoslavia, partisans under the command of General Tito, captured Trieste whilst in Italy, German troops finally surrender to the Allies. As the monsoon broke in Burma, the Allies attacked and took the city of Rangoon. In Borneo a mainly Australian force landed at Tarakan. The 2<sup>nd</sup> of May was a 'red letter' day for the whole of the free world, for on this day in 1945, the German defenders in Berlin finally decided to 'give up the ghost' and lay down their arms. On the following day Hamburg and Innsbruck were taken and news was received from the Far East that Rangoon had fallen to British and Indian forces. The German cruiser *Admiral Hipper* was scuttled in Kiel Bay.

On the island of Okinawa, Japanese troops mounted a massive counter attack to try to break the American line, but failed in their endeavours. On Luneburg Heath in Germany, Field Marshal Montgomery met with envoys of the German government to discuss their unconditional surrender. In Denmark, Allied troops entered Copenhagen to strengthen the

ranks of local resistance fighters who had been fighting the Germans on their own. On the 7<sup>th</sup> May General Eisenhower accepted, from General Jodl and Admiral Freideburg, the unconditional surrender of the German nation. The following day was declared VE Day – Victory in Europe. Nazi hierarchy, fleeing the city of Berlin, including Reichsmarshal Goring and Field Marshal Kesselring were caught and interned. Two weeks later Heinrich Himmler was captured by British forces but committed suicide before they had a chance to interrogate him. The month ended with 500 US bombers dropping 750,000 phosphorus bombs on Tokyo which laid waste to 50% of the residential area of the city.

Despite having seen their friends defeated in Europe, Japanese forces in the Far East were still defying the might of the American and British Armies. However, on Okinawa, a critical point was about to be reached. Desperate fighting by the remaining Japanese units saw mass suicides by troops serving the Empire of the Rising Sun. Realising the hopelessness of their situation they took the decision to die, in large numbers, for their Emperor. In Europe the Allies reached an agreement on the division of Germany and Berlin after which they took over government operations. 21<sup>st</sup> June, General Ushijima's body (he had commanded the Japanese Army), was found on Hill 69, having committed ritual suicide. After the surrender of Okinawa, it was recorded that the Japanese had lost 160,000 dead against Americans 12,500. On Luzon in the Philippines, a hopelessly outnumbered Japanese force, was encircled in the Sierra Madre. The island finally fell at the end of the month. General MacArthur was overjoyed at having fulfilled his promise, made in early 1942, when he had said 'I will return'.

At the beginning of July, 30,000 Australian troops landed at Balikpapan in Borneo. Two weeks later, at Los Alamos, New Mexico, the first atomic bomb was detonated. Back in Britain the population went to the polls and elected a Labour government under Clement Attlee. Winston Churchill, who had rallied and led his nation throughout all the grief and hardships of the war, was unceremoniously dumped out of office, as a big, big thank you for his efforts! July drew to a close with two naval encounters; firstly, and in their last naval success of the war, a Japanese submarine sank the US cruiser *Indianapolis* returning to port after having delivered components for the atomic bomb. Secondly, in Singapore harbour, a British midget submarine attached limpet mines to the hull of the Japanese heavy cruiser *Takao* and crippled the beast in its lair!

In the heaviest raid of the war 800 US bombers dropped more than 6000 tons of incendiary bombs onto Japanese cities killing more than 80,000 people\*. History was made on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August when an American B29 bomber, christened 'Enola Gay', dropped the first atomic bomb in history on the city of Hiroshima. More than 80,000 Japanese were killed outright, with tens of thousands more burned and maimed. Three days later, a second bomb was detonated over Nagasaki, killing another 40,000 inhabitants.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> September the US battleship *Missouri* played host to the final surrender of the Japanese nation. Despite the awful death toll of Japanese civilians at Hiroshima and

Nagasaki, it should never be forgotten that these two events saved the lives of tens of thousands of troops and civilians from both sides of the divide. It should also never be forgotten that Allied POW's, who had been grossly ill-treated by their inhuman Japanese guards, were destined for annihilation should the Japanese Military appear in danger of losing a conventional war.

In October the United Nations was officially born when an initial 29 members declared their support and allegiance.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November the Nuremberg war crime trials began when 21 Nazi leaders, including Goring, Doenitz, Raeder, Jodl, Keitel and Hess, were brought to justice. Their trials took many months with some sentenced to death and others to long terms of imprisonment including life. Sadly, Herman Goring, cheated the hangman when he committed suicide just two hours before his appointed time.

In December, Japanese General Yamashita, who commanded the infamous death march of Allied prisoners in 1942, was sentenced to death by the Americans.

**\* 10,000 more than Dresden.**

**MOULTON: The Verdin Institute Minute Book for 1945 includes the following items:**

Once again the people of Moulton worked long and hard during the year to provide funds for the lads and lasses serving in the armed forces. As in previous years, money making events were varied and numerous.

In mid May an article in the Winsford Chronicle described how the village celebrated the news of the Victory in Europe. Streets were crowded with villagers, singing, dancing and waving flags. A service of thanksgiving was held in the Parish Church with the band of the Air Training Corps heading a huge parade to the service. In the evening, an enormous bonfire and firework display took place in a field alongside Whitlow Lane at which an effigy of Hitler was burned. The Chronicle report ended by mentioning that, as in World War One, when 230 men from the village enrolled in HM forces, in World War Two a further 250 men and women marched forward to serve their country. VE Celebrations continued all week and the Church Hall was packed to hear the Cesterian Band playing uplifting tunes to their audience. This event raised £57 (2005 - £1500 - rpi) for the Forces Comforts Fund. Thanksgiving services were held at the War Memorial, Parish and Methodist Churches. These events were well attended by ecstatic villagers, who thanked God and paid homage to the members of the armed forces who had delivered them from the jaws of evil. In particular they thought and prayed for the 12 who would never walk down Main Road again!

Dedicated to the memory of Frank Felix Buckley



## **FRANK FELIX BUCKLEY**

Sapper  
2159091  
Royal Engineers

Who died on Thursday 2 May 1946. Aged 22

He is buried in BARI WAR CEMETERY, Italy  
Grave X1. F. 36



Awards to Frank Felix Buckley (See pages 87 & 88)



### Dedicated to the memory of Frank Felix Buckley

At weekends, during the racing season, young Felix Buckley and his Dad Tom could be found near their loft at the bottom of their garden at 116 Togo Villas. Their eyes searched the sky for a first glimpse of their incoming racing pigeons. As soon as a bird alighted and entered the loft Tom would quickly take off the bird's leg ring, hand it to his son, who would then sprint the 200 yards or so to the Lion Pub in Main Road to present the ring to the 'clock man' who then inserted it into his time piece. Felix was allowed a certain time to run the distance from home but if he decided to travel by cycle this allowance was reduced accordingly! Only after the pigeon had alighted and the ring was safely in the hands of the 'clock man' was Felix allowed out to play with his friends.

Felix was one of nine children to Tom and Mary Jane (Polly) Buckley. Tom was a stonemason and chairman of the local Verdin Institute. Regrettably, one of their children died in infancy, but four girls and four boys survived into adulthood. Felix was christened Frank Felix but was only ever known as Felix. It is said, in the family, that the name was chosen by his parents because they liked the sound of Felix Brunner, the son of Sir John Brunner, one of the founders of the great Brunner Mond Alkali Company at Northwich. Felix was born in 1924 and attended the local council school as well as the local Methodist Church in Chapel Street. He was a quiet lad but had a fiendish temper when roused! He was a very useful footballer and played left half for his school team.

On leaving school Felix secured a job as a van lad with William Shout, Baker and Confectioner, at Davenham. The Bakery was located next door to where Davenham Post Office stands today (2014). He slowly progressed to become a baker and van driver. His job entailed very unsocial hours for he was woken by his mother at 2.00am each morning to enable him to cycle to Davenham and report for work at 3.00am. After making the bread Felix would then drive the van and deliver his night's work to the various outlets in the area – and they say that the youngsters of today have it tough!!

In 1942 and aged 18 years, Felix was called to the colours and posted to 990 Port Maintenance Company, Royal Engineers – Catering. By this time his brother in law, George Dickens, who was married to his sister Irene, was serving in the Irish Guards. George was to die at Anzio in January 1944 – see separate dedication. In July 1943 Felix was among soldiers who forged ashore on Sicily and then into Italy. He remained in Italy up to and after the end of the war and was looking forward to his demobilisation when tragedy struck.

Since a child Felix had been prone to sleepwalking. His mother Polly was so concerned about the danger to her son that each night she would wedge a table against his bedroom door to prevent him from falling down stairs. On the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1946 Felix walked in his sleep for the last time. His room was on the high floor of a barrack block and he fell to his death having walked through an open window. He was 22 years old.

Dedicated to the memory of Frank Felix Buckley  
 Every year, until her death at the age of 86, Polly Buckley placed a wreath of white chrysanthemums on the Village Cenotaph in memory of her dear son.



TRANSIT CAMP ITALY 1945 – MOULTONERS MEET

L-R FELIX BUCKLEY (116 TOGO VILLAS); ROBERT BUCKLEY (118 TOGO VILLAS); JOSEPH STEEL (SCHOOL LANE)



FELIX WITH A FRIEND



CHRISTMAS GREETINGS 1943

Dedicated to the memory of Frank Felix Buckley



116, TOGO VILLAS,  
MOULTON TODAY (2005)



ORIGINAL GRAVE  
MARKER



FELIX

## **MEMORIALS AND TABLETS**

As with the 34 men from the village who died in WW1 the 12 servicemen who perished in WW2 are commemorated on many other memorials around the district. Lance Bombardier Harold Brooks for instance is remembered on three memorials throughout the locality. These are in addition to the Moulton War Memorial and the tablet in St Stephen's Church. Harold originated from Meadow Bank, Winsford, which explains why his name appears on both the Winsford Town and Whitegate St Mary's Memorials. Large employers of labour such as Brunner Mond Ltd and Salt Union Ltd also erected memorials to their dead employees.

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### **WINSFORD WAR MEMORIAL**



**HAROLD BROOKES**

### **BRUNNER MOND MEMORIAL, WINNINGTON, NORTHWICH**



**JOHN HENRY EYRES  
STANLEY GOULDING  
GEORGE MILES  
GEORGE SHANNON**



## THE CROSS OF SACRIFICE



THE CROSS OF SACRIFICE, OR GREAT CROSS, STANDS IN EVERY BRITISH MILITARY CEMETERY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. THIS PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN BY MICHELLE GILL IN BANNEVILLE LA-CAMPAGNE WAR CEMETERY, THE LAST RESTING PLACE OF HER GREAT UNCLE, GUARDSMAN ALBERT STOCKALL.

# CASUALTIES

It is often said that there are 'lies, damn lies and statistics' and to an extent this is true of the casualty tables for both wars. Seldom do any two figures agree. The onerous task of compiling meaningful statistics to reflect the numbers who died from each country is awesome, and one can only conclude that the statistics given below - courtesy of Phil Stokes - are as accurate as any. Having said that, the scale of the slaughter in both wars was such that to be a million out, either way, would have little impact on the overall picture!! In recent years it has become popular for the media and some historians to dwell on the casualties of World War One, and in particular the men lost on the Somme, at Mons, Arras and Ypres. They tend to ignore the enormity of the losses of World War Two, aside that is, from the Holocaust and those who died whilst in the custody of the Imperial Japanese Army. In WW1 the figure for Allied dead is a shade under 5 million. Couple this figure with those lost by the Axis Powers and a total of over 8.2 million servicemen, from both sides emerges. Add to this a further 8.75 million civilians, who perished in all theatres, and you have a combined total of 17 million. On the other hand the dead of WW2 is over 3.5 times greater at 61 million. The breakdown of this figure is as follows:

Country	Military	Civilian	Total (000's)
Soviet Union	8,668	16,900	25,568
China	1,324	10,000	11,324
Germany	3,250	3,810	7,060
Poland	850	6,000	6,850
Japan	1,506	300	1,806
Yugoslavia	300	1,400	1,700
Rumania	520	465	985
France	340	470	810
Hungary			750
Austria	380	145	525
Greece			520
Italy	330	80	410
Czechoslovakia			400
Great Britain	326	62	388
USA	295		295
Holland	14	236	250
Belgium	10	75	85
Finland	79		79
Canada	42		42
India	36		36
Australia	29		29
Spain	12	10	22
Bulgaria	19	2	21
New Zealand	12		12
South Africa	9		9
Norway	5		5
Denmark	4		4
	<b>Total circa</b>		<b>61 Million</b>

Notes:  
The above figures show deaths not wounded.

Although Spain was a neutral country in WW2 some 4,500 volunteers died for the Axis cause and 7,500 for that of the Allies.

## VISITORS

*"ARE YOU THERE GEORGE?*

*WHAT'S UP NOW BILL - DON'T YOU EVER SLEEP, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE?*

*WE ONLY CHATTED ABOUT MONTH AGO AFTER THAT LAST LOT CAME.*

*LISTEN GEORGE, I'VE JUST HEARD ON THE BUSH TELEGRAPH THAT THEY'VE WRITTEN  
A BOOK ABOUT US.*

*ABOUT US?*

*WELL - NOT JUST US, BUT ABOUT OUR MOB - THE SOUTH LANCES.*

*YOU DON'T SAY!*

*IT TELLS OF ALL THE BATTLES WE WERE IN AND EVEN MENTIONS JOE'S VC.*

*WHAT, YOU MEAN MONS, THE SOMME, ARRAS & WIPERS.*

*DEAD ON.*

*WELL I'LL BE BLOWED! PITY THEY NEVER FOUND JOE - HE WAS A GREAT LAUGH.*

*I ALSO HEARD LAST WEEK THAT EVERY NIGHT AT THE MENIN GATE THEY PLAY THE  
LAST POST AND THAT THE TRAFFIC STOPS AND PEOPLE STAND IN SILENCE.*

*YOU'RE HAVING ME ON*

*NO I'M NOT*

*EVEN IN OUR LITTLE VILLAGE BACK HOME, THEY STILL GATHER ROUND A MEMORIAL  
TO US EVERY YEAR AND REMEMBER US.*

*HARD TO BELIEVE THAT BILL - IT'S NOW NEARLY 90 YEARS.*

*I KNOW, BUT THEY DO - WELL, SOME OF THEM DO, ANYWAY?*

*HEY BILL - DO YOU THINK THEY STILL REMEMBER US TWO?*

*WELL, I KNOW THAT SOMEONE REMEMBERS YOU GEORGE*

*DON'T YOU REMEMBER, SIX YEARS AGO, WHEN YOU'RE GREAT GRANDSON AND HIS  
WIFE VISITED YOU AND LEFT FLOWERS?*

*YOUR RIGHT BILL, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT - MADE ME FEEL QUITE PROUD.*

*HAS ANYONE VISITED YOU LATELY GEORGE?*

*NO SUCH LUCK BILL - NOT SINCE MAGGIE CAME IN 1924.*

*A LONG TIME AGO.*

*TOO BLOODY LONG BILL!*

*YOUNG TOM IN THE CORNER GETS A LOT OF VISITORS*

*AYE - I KNOW, HE WAS ONLY SIXTEEN AND A HALF WHEN HE COPPED IT.*

*MIND YOU, WE WERE NOT MUCH OLDER. YOU WOULDN'T THINK THREE YEARS WOULD  
MAKE ALL THAT DIFFERENCE, WOULD YOU?*

*NO - BUT THEY CAN'T GET OVER THE FACT THAT HE LIED ABOUT HIS AGE TO JOIN UP  
TO BE WITH HIS PALS!*

*WELL, HE'S WITH 'EM NOW..... FOR ETERNITY!*

*QUIET NOW - THERE'S A 'CHARA' PULLING UP OUTSIDE THE GATES.*

*GREAT - HOPE THEY'RE NOT ALL DOWN IN THE MOUTH LIKE THAT LAST LOT*

*WE DIDN'T DIE FOR THEM TO BE SAD AND TEARFUL DID WE?*

*NO. BUT ISN'T IT GRAND THAT THEY STILL APPRECIATE WHAT WE DID AND THAT THEY  
STILL BOTHER TO COME?*

*I'LL GIVE YOU A SHOUT TOMORROW BILL AND WE CAN CHAT ABOUT 'EM AND WHAT*

*THEY SAID. WE MAY BE ABLE TO PASS ON SOME NEWS TO THE REST OF THE LADS.*

*OK GEORGE - GLAD THE GARDENERS GAVE US A GOOD DO YESTERDAY, THOUGH THE  
LETTERING ON MY HEADSTONE COULD DO WITH A BIT OF A TOUCH UP!!*

GAC



## CAMPAIGN, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS

1939-45 Star	Burma Star	Air Crew Europe Star
 <p>The 1939-45 Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE 1939-1945 STAR'. The ribbon is dark blue with a vertical red stripe and a horizontal green stripe.</p>	 <p>The Burma Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE BURMA STAR'. The ribbon is dark blue with vertical stripes of orange, red, and blue.</p>	 <p>The Air Crew Europe Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE AIR CREW EUROPE STAR'. The ribbon is dark blue with horizontal stripes of yellow and black.</p>
Africa Star	Italy Star	France & Germany Star
 <p>The Africa Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE AFRICA STAR'. The ribbon is dark blue with vertical stripes of yellow, red, and blue.</p>	 <p>The Italy Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE ITALY STAR'. The ribbon is red with vertical stripes of white and green.</p>	 <p>The France &amp; Germany Star is a silver seven-pointed star with a circular center. The center features the Royal Coat of Arms (GRI VI) and the text 'THE FRANCE AND GERMANY STAR'. The ribbon is blue with vertical stripes of white, red, and blue.</p>



Authors note: Because of the restrictions imposed by the 'Data Protection Act', access to forces Medal Rolls prevented me from obtaining information on each serviceman's entitlement. The campaign medals illustrated above were available to all servicemen who served in the specific theatres of the war. All twelve servicemen would be entitled to both the Defence Medal and War Medal. GAC

## APPENDIX 1

### THE MOULTON CROWS

There is no doubt that many men of Moulton who served in WW2, were members of the 'Moulton Crows' before the war at one time or another. This dance troop, unique in its concept, was known throughout the length and breadth of Cheshire. The men who performed the dance won countless trophies and medals for their performance in fetes far and wide.

Devised in the 1920s by a Winsford dancing instructor and originally known as 'The Relic of the Cornfield', the dance depicts a flock of crows, flapping and dancing around the figure of a scarecrow in a farmer's field. The dance starts with a farmer wheeling a scarecrow, on a wheelbarrow, into the centre of his field. There he erects the figure and leaves. To the tune 'Trumpeter Bob' a line of men, dressed in black crow suits, with yellow beaks, then start to scavenge the newly ploughed field and eventually surround the scarecrow to perform their ritual dance. The farmer suddenly returns, shoots at the crows, wounding one and killing another. At this point, white pigeons are released from the clothing of the scarecrow, to illustrate the ascent of the dead crow into heaven. The lame crow is then helped off the field by others in the flock. Finally the scarecrow, which everyone in the audience up to then, considered to be a dummy, comes to life and walks with stiff arms and legs from the field. Performed, as it was by grown men, all dressed in black, the Crows looked both threatening and evil as they performed their dance.

It is rumoured that the name 'Moulton Crow' originated in the 1920s when many men from the village were laid off from the local salt works. During the day they scavenged for coal on local ash tips and arrived home looking 'as black as crows'.



MOULTON CROWS IN FULL FLIGHT



THE SCARECROW

## APPENDIX 2

### 34 MEN – UPDATE

Since the publication of this dedication to the men of Moulton who gave their lives in WW1, more information on three of the service men has to come to hand. Firstly, one of the ‘unresolved mysteries’ has been resolved; namely that of William Blyth whose name was incorrectly spelt on the Village War Memorial. Secondly, details on one of the expatriates, Herbert Hampton, has been extended. Lastly and in the light of new information, the fourth paragraph in the dedication to John Tomlinson has been rewritten. The three updates are as follows:

#### **REVISION - JOHN TOMLINSON – Page 75.**

John Tomlinson’s details were recorded in the original book on page 75. It is now possible to provide more of his family and army service details. Consequently, the fourth paragraph should now read as follows:

“George and Amelia (nee Sproston) raised a family of four boys and two girls. John was born on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1893 and at 4/5 years old began to attend Moulton Council School. At the time of John’s birth, the Tomlinsons were living at 15, Regent Street but earlier were at number 37 when John married Clara Buckley in 1913. By the outbreak of WW1, John and Clara had 2 children - Annie and John (Jack). John took the King’s shilling soon after hostilities began and sometime later the family settled at 4, Grange Hill Winsford. John was posted to France in the summer of 1915. At about the same time he was listed on the village and school Rolls of Honour as serving in the Durham Light Infantry. A third child, Amelia Ypres, was born in 1916 just prior to John’s death. It is believed that Clara decided to give her daughter Amelia the second name of Ypres because it was at Ypres, that infamous salient in Belgium, where John had served before moving south to Gueudecourt and his eventual death. In May 1916, John’s cousin Enoch Tomlinson enlisted in the RGA. Enoch also went the way of his cousin John when he died of wounds in April 1917 (see pages 113/ 115).

All other paragraphs on page 75 remain unchanged.

#### **ADDITIONS – HERBERT HAMPTON and ERNEST WILLIAM BLYTH**

When the research into the 34 men was concluded very little (if any) detail could be found on these two servicemen. It was decided therefore to publish the book without their personal & service stories. Thankfully, since publication, more information has surfaced and it is with pride and honour that these stories are now included alongside their fallen comrades.

Dedicated to the memory of Earnest William Blyth

## **EARNEST WILLIAM BLYTH**

Private

269543

2/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion King's (Liverpool Regiment)

Died of wounds Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 1917. Age 34

He is buried in Davenham (St Wilfred) Churchyard (new 632)

Medal entitlement: British War Medal; Victory Medal

Earnest Blyth was not a Moultoner. He was born in Downham Market, Norfolk in 1883/1884 and was the son of Frederick Blyth a carpenter and joiner. By 1901 the family were living at 59, Lynn Road, Wisbech St Peter. Earnest is shown on the census for that year as the third of five siblings living in the house. He is 17 and a boot and shoe-maker. Strangely, Mrs Blyth is missing from the census. However her husband Fred is listed as married and not widowed, so it looks very much as if she was away from home for some reason.

At the turn of the century, and at aged 17, Margaret Ann (Annie) Barlow was living with her parents Frederick and Ellen in Chapel Lane, Moulton. At that time, Fred was 43 and Ellen 42. Their 2 year old daughter Hilda was also on the scene. Fred was a railway signaller and Annie is listed as a Schoolteacher! It is also believed that Fred was a school governor. Some 4 or 5 years later Annie had met and married Earnest Blyth and they set up home in London Road, Davenham. Earnest was a manager, possibly of a shoe shop or cobblers. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1906, Annie gave birth to their daughter Gladys Mabelle.

Sometime after their daughter Gladys was born, Earnest and Annie moved to Strangeways Manchester. This area of the city, aside from housing that notorious academy of bad lads, was also a hive of small workshops making clothing and footwear for the retail trade. It may well be that Earnest opened his own shoe-making business there or, alternatively, managed one for someone else. In any case, it was from Strangeways that he strode forth to enlist at the Manchester recruiting office sometime after the outbreak of war.

Earnest was drafted into the 2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Kings (Liverpool) Regiment to train as an infantryman. The 2<sup>nd</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> Kings along with 5 other Kings Battalions made up the 57<sup>th</sup> Division. Little could be found in the records of exactly when he enlisted or indeed, where he served until 1917. He may well have waited until the Conscriptio Bill was placed in

the statute book in mid 1916, in which case he would not be entitled to the 1914/ 1915 Star as mentioned above.

July 1917 was a very mixed month for the 2<sup>nd</sup>/ 7<sup>th</sup> Kings based at Armentieres. According to the Battalions war diary, they began the month in the Houplines sector of the line and for the first fortnight nothing much happened. However, all good things come to an end for the enemy opposite decide to subject the lads from Liverpool to a constant and terrible barrage. During this time the Germans sent over two raiding parties to try to take prisoners. They were give short shrift by the ‘Scousers’ who used bombs and Lewis guns to repel the foe. Losses after these attacks were 4 killed and 30 wounded. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July a gas shell fell on the Quarter Master’s store with the result that 2 men died of wounds and seven were gassed. Gas shelling was severe and frequent at this time and on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 19 officers and men succumbed to this most dreadful of weapons.

The last entry in the War diary for the month of July is an account of casualties for the month and gives some idea of the intense shelling to which the battalion had been subjected. A total of 12 men had been killed with 144 wounded – of these 11 more were to die. It is more than probable that Pte. Earnest Blyth was one of them. It is known that Earnest survived his injuries long enough to be transported to a military hospital at Bagthorpe, Nottingham were on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August he gave up the ghost.

After his death Annie, who may have returned to her old home in Moulton whilst Earnest was fighting on the Western Front, decided to bury her husband at St. Wilfred’s Davenham. The records show that her parents Fred and Ellen, now living at ‘Brackendale’, 120 Main Road, Moulton were the grave owners. In the school records for September 1918, Annie is shown as having resumed teaching but is ‘absent by permission’.

Dedicated to the memory of Herbert Hampton

## **HERBERT HAMPTON**

Private

7730

1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Cheshire Regiment

Died Germany, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 1918. Age 31

He is buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery, Germany. Grave V.G.4.

He is commemorated on  
Sandbach War Memorial,  
Sandbach St Mary's Organ Gallery (Great War)  
Sandbach St Mary's Great War Died Roll Of Honour  
Sandbach St Mary's Great War Roll Of Honour.

Herbert Hampton was born in 1887 in Moulton. By 1914 he had married Alice Bradbury, and had two sons James and John. He was a carter on the horse-drawn wagon between Sandbach Station and the town. He was a member of the Cheshire Regiment T.A. He enlisted at Crewe.

As the war started he was mobilised and travelled to France on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914, joining the 1<sup>st</sup> Cheshires (15<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Division).

He fought at the Battle of Mons. Pte Hampton was reported missing in the local papers on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1914 and as a P.O.W. on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1914. He died at the Bramhar Camp Hospital, at Bawinkle.

Herbert Hampton had the misfortune to be captured very early in the war and the even greater misfortune to die in captivity three days before the armistice.

His brother travelled to the North East to meet the returning P.O.W. ships spending three days there before hearing the sad tidings.

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