“For your tomorrow we gave our today”

Remembering those killed

in the Second World War

from the Parish of St. Paul, Wokingham

St Paul’s Church is rightly proud of its First World War Memorial with its 62 names. There is no equivalent memorial for the Second World War, partly because the Rector of the day, the Rev’d Patrick Hepburne-Scott, struggled to put together an accurate list of those who had been killed from the parish, and partly because the Town preferred a central record.

Jim Bell has now worked with commitment and skill to compile a list of 44 people from the parish who were killed in the Second World War.

Of those 44, three died on the road to Dunkirk, three during the evacuation from France itself and two trying to make it home from France after the main evacuation had finished.

One died when HMS Hood was sunk,

another when a Merchant vessel disappeared off North Wales.

Four died as Prisoners of War.

Two died shortly after the War on active service.

Eleven served in the RAF and five in the Royal Navy.

Five died from illness or in an accident.

Together, they represent every service, every theatre of war and all of the vagaries and misfortunes of wartime. We hope that publishing the information we have gathered will encourage others to come forward and add to what we know and what we can give thanks for.

All of them deserve to be remembered by name

and with lasting thanksgiving under God.

Fr Richard Lamey, Rector

ANDERSON, Ian Francis/ Pilot Officer, 53 Squadron, RAF

of Ashridgewood, Wokingham.

Ian was born on February 25th, 1917. He attended Eton College, and was admitted as Pensioner at Trinity College, Cambridge on October 1st, 1935. Ian was the son of Lt-Col. Francis Anderson, DSO, MC (1888-1925) who served in WW1 with the Black Watch, and Vera Maud Allfrey. Anderson was killed on April 9th, 1941, aged 24, and buried in All Saints Churchyard, Wokingham. 53 Squadron were part of Coastal Command, based in Cornwall and flying Bristol Blenheims at the time.

BAMFORD, Anthony Bernard Joseph/ Able Seaman, HMS Hood

of Haslemere, 247 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham.

Anthony was educated at Palmer School and then at Ranelagh School, Bracknell, having won a scholarship. Anthony joined the Royal Navy at sixteen. He was trained at Portsmouth, subsequently joining HMS Hood. He became an A.B. at eighteen and served in the Mediterranean, being present when the Royal Navy sank Italian ships in Taranto harbour. His father had fought in the same area in the First World War. In May 1941, HMS Hood and the battleship HMS Prince of Wales were ordered to intercept the German battleship Bismarck and the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen which were en route to the Atlantic where they were to attack convoys. On 24 May 1941, early in the Battle of the Denmark Strait, HMS Hood was struck by several German shells, exploded and sank. Anthony was 19. His name appears on Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

BARNES, Thomas Wilfred/

Private, 4th Royal Berkshire Regiment

of The Bungalow, Buckhurst.

Thomas was born in Alton, Hampshire. His name appeared in St. Paul’s Parish Magazine as a casualty.

Thomas was killed at Dunkirk on May 26th 1940, aged 34. The Wokingham Times states that there was a Dunkirk Commemorative cigarette case for him but it is not reported who collected it on his behalf at the presentation in Wokingham Town Hall on August 14th 1940. He is buried in Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium.

BAXTER, Malcolm/ Flight Sgt. Bomber Command, RAF Volunteer Reserve

of 56 Matthews Green Road, Wokingham.

Malcolm was educated at Cordwalles School, Camberley, and Leighton Park School, Reading, and was later employed by the Anglo-Saxon Oil Co. He joined the R.A.F. in the autumn of 1940. He was unmarried and lived with his mother. Malcolm was the Captain and Pilot of a Halifax bomber. He was killed, aged 21, during a raid over Bochum, Germany on June 12th 1943. Two months previously he had applied for a transfer from instructor’s duties to more active service. He is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

BIDWELL, Jack/ Sgt. Bomber Command, RAF Volunteer Reserve

of 186 Reading Road, Wokingham.

The son of Thomas and Emma Bidwell and husband of Frances May Bidwell (née Howard) of Wokingham, Jack was born in Wandsworth in 1904. He had at least three brothers (Cpl. Alfred Bidwell R.A.F., Cpl. Sidney Bidwell R.A.F, and Alfred) and three sisters. Aged 40, Jack was the flight engineer in a bomber. He was killed while returning from a raid over Munster, Germany on November 18th 1944. He was buried in St. Paul’s Parish Churchyard, Wokingham.

BRANT, Gerald Royston/ Able Seaman, Royal Navy

of 83 Emmbrook Road, Wokingham.

Gerald, aged 19, was one of two RN gunners who were reported missing when the 407-ton S.S. Pamela of Beaumaris was lost without trace off Anglesey while sailing from Bristol to Liverpool on October 11th 1944. 10 men disappeared on the Pamela. His name appears on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial.

BROWNE, Esmond Elliott/ Sgt, RAF Volunteer Reserve

of 177 Reading Road, Wokingham.

Educated at Ranelagh School, Esmond was captain of the football and cricket teams. He won his ‘colours’ for hockey, cricket and football, held a number of records in athletics and represented the Reading Athletic Club in Junior Relay Races. He was also the originator of the school Model Aeroplane Club. At the time Ranelagh had only 100 pupils and 8 members of staff. After matriculating he proceeded to King Alfred’s College, Winchester and obtained Certificates in Advanced French, Advanced Mathematics and English. Esmonde lived with his parents.

*[Sgt Esmond BROWNE continued]*

His father, Edward Elliott Browne (1885-1959), was headmaster of Wescott School from 1924 to 1945. His mother Esme Lilian (d. 10/1973) was also a teacher. Esmond died, aged 22, when his aircraft, a Botha, crashed on overshooting the runway at Turnberry beach in Ayrshire on the 23rd February 1942. The Blackburn Botha was reputed to have various mechanical problems which included propellers disintegrating in flight and tyres bursting on take-off or landing. This led to air crew refusing to fly in them. Shortly after Esmond’s death Bothas were withdrawn from service. He is buried in St. Paul’s Churchyard.

BUCKNER, George Francis William Buckner/ Lance Sgt, Somerset Light Infantry

of 83 Embrook Road, Wokingham

George was the husband of L. Buckner, of West Norwood, London.

At the age of 28, he was killed in France on August 10th 1944.

He is buried in Saint-Manvieu War Cemetery, Cheux, France.

CANE, Maurice John Thomas/ Flight Lt, RAF

of 24 Woosehill Lane, Wokingham

Maurice was born in 1921. He was awarded the DFM in 1942 for *“unshakeable determination in making his attacks, sometimes in the face of severe opposition.”* He was flying in the Middle East at the time, a Sergeant in 148 Squadron. He was later killed, on April 13th 1945 when the wing of his Mosquito hit a tree while on low flying exercises over RAF Oakingham, Cambridgeshire. Both members of the crew were killed. Maurice is buried in Bromley Hill Cemetery, Bromley, London.

CARTER, Victor Ernest/ Sapper, Royal Engineers

of 149 Evendons Lane, Wokingham

Victor was the son of Frederick William Carter (b. 1865), house painter, and Kate Beatrice Carter (b. 1868). Aged 26, he was killed at sea on November 3rd 1943. He is buried in Lajes War Cemetery, Azores.

CASE, Ernest Charles Case/ Signalman, Royal Corps of Signals

of 2 Oxford Road, Wokingham

Ernest was killed in a Road Traffic Accident in the Middle East, aged 18, on January 5th 1946. He is buried in the Suez War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt.

COLLYER, Albert Edward Alexander/ Marine, Royal Marines

of 18 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

Albert attended Palmer School. He was killed, aged 28, at Portsmouth on March 31st 1941. He is buried in Reading Cemetery. His name appears as Collyer in the All Saints’ Memorial Book but is elsewhere recorded as Collier.

COTTERRELL, James/ Leading Seaman, Royal Navy

Cotterrell was remembered in the Parish Magazine in June 1940. No other record has been found, either locally or with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

CULLEY, Charles William/ Private, Royal Berkshire Regiment

of 46 Latimer Road, Wokingham

Charles was killed on May 29th 1940, aged 24 during the height of the evacuation from Dunkirk and is buried in Zuidschote Churchyard, B37, Leper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

DANCE, Joseph Edward/ Stoker 1st Class, Royal Navy

of 89 Embrook Road, Wokingham.

The son of Joseph, a bricklayer, and Elizabeth Dance, Joseph Edward had two sisters, Elizabeth (b 1903) and Violet (b 1908). Joseph was killed, aged 35, on December 14th 1940. He was one of the men who had been involved in the evacuation of Dunkirk. He and others were presented with a Dunkirk commemorative cigarette case at Wokingham Town Hall in 1940.

His name appears on Plymouth Naval Memorial.

DIXON, Alan Guy/ Staff Sgt., Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

of 131 Barkham Road, Wokingham.

Alan was reported to have been killed at Dunkirk in 1940. In August 1944 his wife was presented with a Dunkirk commemorative cigarette case as Wokingham’s tribute to her husband. Alan does not appear in military records. His name is also not listed on either the Wokingham Town Hall Memorial or the Memorial Book of All Saints’ Church, Wokingham.

DIXON, George Iley/ Gunner, Royal Artillery

of 52 Barkham Road, Wokingham.

George was killed on June 17th 1940, aged 38, while trying to get back to England a fortnight after the evacuation from Dunkirk had ended. He had reached the South West of France and was buried in Les Portes Communal Cemetery, Charente Maritime, France. He was the husband of Alice Dixon.

DONKIN, Peter Ebsworth/ Flight Sgt. 122 Squadron, RAF Volunteer Reserve

47 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

Peter Ebsworth Donkin was born on January 12, 1922 at Reading to Frank Ebsworth Donkin and Winifred May Primmer. He had two siblings: Dennis and Sheila. Peter married Betty Kathleen Huckings in 1943. Peter was killed on July 20th 1944 when *“he was lost when flying an Auster from Carentan to base.”*

He is buried in Bayeux War Cemetery, Bayeux, France.

FOSBERY, Francis Henry Close/ 2nd Lieut, Royal Artillery

of 5 The Terrace, Wokingham

Francis was reportedly killed instantly, aged 36, in Singapore in February 1942. His name appears on the Singapore Memorial. Unusually, he is not listed in either the Wokingham Town Hall Memorial or the Memorial Book of All Saints’ Church, Wokingham.

*Reading Mercury: Sat 27th Oct 1945*

*It has now been officially reported that 2nd. Lieut. Henry C. Fosbery, 272/80th Anti-Tank Battery, R.A., youngest son of the late W.H.S. Fosbery, M.D., and of Mrs. Fosbery, of 5, The Terrace, Wokingham, was killed instantly in Singapore on February 14th 1942.*

GARDENER, Michael Chase/ 2nd Lieut, Royal Marines

Evendons Lane, Wokingham

Michael was killed on January 6th 1945, aged twenty and was buried in Bergen-op-Zoom War Cemetery, near Antwerp. Michael is not listed in either the Wokingham Town Hall Memorial or the Memorial Book of All Saints’ Church, Wokingham.

*Reading Mercury: Sat 13th Jan 1945*

*Mr. and Mrs. P. Chase Gardener, Evendons Lane, Wokingham, have been informed that their second son, 2nd/Lt. Michael Chase Gardener, a Royal Marines parachute commando, was killed in January. Educated at Rugby School, Gardener, who was 20, became a pupil to the Wokingham Borough Surveyor. He enlisted in June 1943.*

GARRETT, George Edward/ Able Seaman Royal Navy

of 94 Emmbrook Road, Wokingham

According to the census of 1911, George Edward was the son of George (b. 1872) and Annie Garrett (b. 1876). George Snr. was employed as a waggoner on Ashridge Farm where the family lived in one of the cottages. In addition to George Jnr. there was another son and two daughters:- Ellis John (b. 1894), Elsie May (b. 1896) and Doris Emily (b. 1906). George died in England 22nd September 1940 aged 41 and is buried in Liverpool (Allerton) Cemetery.

GOBLE, John Albert/ Private, 4th Bn Royal Berkshire Regiment

of 14 Commons Road, Wokingham

The 4th Bn were a Territorial battalion who served under Major-General Montgomery. John was killed on the retreat to Dunkirk, aged 21, on May 21st 1940.

He is buried in Coxide Military Cemetery Vi H 4, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.

GRIST, Albert Henry George/ Private, Ox & Bucks L.I.

of 134 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

Albert Henry was the son of George Herbert Grist (1873-1962), a stationary engine driver who worked at the local water works. He married Daisy in 1908. George was the only member of the family born in Andover in Hampshire. Albert’s mother, was Edith Daisy (1886-1965) and his sister was Marjorie Irene (b. 1910).

Albert was killed, aged 35, in Italy on February 17th 1944. His name appears on the Cassino Memorial, panel 8, Cassino, Frosinone, Italy.

GROVER, Alfred Henry/ Driver, Royal Army Service Corps

of Toutley Hall Cottages, Emmbrook

Alf was born in 1923 and enlisted in August 1942. He crossed to Normandy on the 15th June 1944. He was killed on the 5th September 1944 near Lille. Reports say that his truck was ambushed by retreating SS soldiers. He hid his injured co-driver under leaves in a ditch and held off the enemy with his rifle. Afterwards he and five French Resistance fighters were found dead, along with one German. He was initially buried at the roadside but his remains now rest in Lille Southern War Cemetery. His father, Alfred, was buried in St Paul’s Churchyard in 1930.

HARVEY, John Charles

of 5 Denmark Street, Wokingham.

Possibly Bandsman John Charles Harvey, **Royal Berkshire Regiment, who d**ied September 16th 1940, aged 26. His name appears on the Dunkirk Memorial. If so, John’s parents were John William Harvey (1879-1958) and Lilian Elizabeth Walker (b. 1880). He had two brothers: Arthur Winston Walter Harvey (b. 1916) who is understood to have died in infancy, and Frederick William Harvey (1919-1995).

HATCHER, Robert James/ Lance Corporal, Royal Army Service Corps

Coombepyne, Barkham Ride, Wokingham

Robert died in a Prisoner of War Hospital, Thailand, on March 12th 1943, aged 35. He worked on the infamous Thailand-Burma Railwayand was buried with Military Honours in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, one of the main cemeteries for victims of Japanese imprisonment who died while building the Burma Railway.

He is not listed in either the Wokingham Town Hall Memorial or the Memorial Book of All Saints’ Church, Wokingham.

KEMISH, George Francis Lennard/ Private, Army Catering Corps

9 Portland Place, Denmark Street, Wokingham

George is believed to have been killed on December 17th 1945. He is listed on the Town Hall and All Saints’ War Memorials as Francis R Kemish. His name does not appear in military records.

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| KENNETT, Harold Thomas/ Colour Sgt., Royal Norfolk Regiment  of 100 Matthews Green Rd., Wokingham  Harold was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Edward Kennett and husband of Vera M. Kennett. Harold was killed, aged 29, on August 6th 1944. His name appears on the Bayeux Memorial. |  |
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KILBY, Harold Stanley/ Gunner, Royal Field Artillery

of 5 Oxford Road, Wokingham

Harold died on November 29th 1942 aged 23 while a prisoner of war in Italy.

He is buried in Ancona War Cemetery, Italy.

KNAPP, George/ Flight Lt RAF Volunteer Reserve

of 63 Oxford Road, Wokingham

George was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Knapp and was born in 1923. He got married a few months before we went out to Burma, where he served for some time. He was killed in a flying accident in Singapore after hostilities had ended on October 27th 1945 aged 22 and was buried with full military honours in Kranji War Cemetery.

*from a local newspaper: Thursday 1st May 1997*

*A Wokingham wartime hero is finally having his name included on the town’s war memorial 51 years after his death. At a special ceremony attended by the Mayor, Cllr. Tina Marinos, and the Royal British Legion, on Sunday May 11th, Flight Lieutenant George Knapp’s name will be included on the Roll of Honour on the War Memorial at the Town Hall.*

*George Knapp, of Oxford Road was 24 years-old when he was killed in action while stationed in Singapore in October 1945. He was killed two months after VJ day in 1945 and was buried in Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore.*

*His cousin, David Searle of Farnham Surrey, together with Don Morris, of Wokingham’s Royal British Legion, campaigned to have his name put on the War Memorial after several months of research. Mr. Searle found out that his cousin, who attended Ranelagh School in Bracknell had not been included on the town’s Second World War honours list after digging around his family tree. Both men had served with the RAF and had corresponded during the war. There was some confusion as to whether Mr. Knapp had been killed in action as he died after VJ day. Many rebels were still fighting at the time of his death.*

MARSHALL, Ernest/ Sgt, Royal Army Service Corps

of 27 Oxford Road, Wokingham

Ernest, aged 26, died on board HMS Wakeful during the evacuation of Dunkirk on May 29th 1940. His name appears on the Dunkirk Memorial. A destroyer, HMS Wakeful, returned back to Dunkirk on the 28 May, embarked 640 troops on the 29th of May and was then attacked off the Belgium coast by E-boats (fast torpedo boats) based at Antwerp which emerged from the mist while Wakeful was returning to Dover. She was torpedoed twice and split in two with the bow sinking immediately. Only one soldier and 25 crew members survived.

NEALE, Reginald Arthur/ Warrant Officer Class 1, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

3 Molly Millar Lane, Wokingham

Reginald was the son of Reginald Charles and Lillian Kate Neale and the husband of Violet Odenia Neale. He was killed, aged 36, in Hong Kong on December 22nd 1941. He is buried in the Sai Wan War Cemetery, Hong Kong.

NORRIS, Aubray/ Private, Pioneer Corps

of The Rising Sun, 18 Oxford Road, Wokingham

Aubray died on November 18th 1941 aged 32 in Battle Hospital, Reading.

He is buried in St. Paul’s Churchyard, Wokingham.

PARRY, Walter Donald Parry/ Leading Aircraftman, RAF

of 24 Howard Road, Wokingham

Before hostilities broke out, Walter was the Landlord of the *Queen’s Head* in The Terrace. His wife Eva Lizzie looked after the business while he was in the forces and continued to do so after his death.

He was killed, aged 37, on May 31st 1945 on his way home on leave when an American truck collided with the bus in which he was travelling.

Walter and his wife Eva are both buried in St. Paul’s Churchyard.

RANCE, Owen Ernest/ Sgt., 101 Squadron, RAF

of 7 The Terrace, Wokingham

Ernest was killed over North West Germany on December 27th 1941 aged 21 in a Wellington bomber. He was buried in Rheinberg War Cemetery, north of Cologne. His parents wrote on his grave: *“In everlasting memory of our only boy.”*

REEVES, Gordon Ernest Reeves/ Captain, Royal Army Service Corps

*Poppers,* 182 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

Gordon was the son of Wokingham Mayor, Ernie Reeves (1890-1963). He married Gertrude Greaves in 1934 and was to have taken over his father’s removal company after the war. Reeves died in hospital of black water fever in Freetown, Sierra Leone on February 18th 1943 aged 32. He is buried in Freetown (King Tom) Cemetery.

ROSE, Lionel John/ Gunner, Royal Artillery

of *Clovelly*, 113 Evendons Lane, Wokingham

Lionel was killed at sea on December 1st 1944, aged 32.

His name appears on the Singapore War Memorial.

# SHAFER, Ronald Frederick Douglas/ Sgt. (Flight Engineer), RAF

# of Aukland Mill Lane, Earley

# Ronald, aged 23, was one of the crew of two Lancaster bombers of 12 Squadron, Wickenby that were shot down by an intruder whilst on a night training flight on the 4th of March 1945. His plane crashed at Weekly Cross on the A16 near Alford in Lincolnshire. Four of the crew were buried in the local cemetery and Ronald was buried in St. Paul’s Churchyard.

# At the junction of the A16 with the Louth to Skegness Rd, near Ulceby Cross in Lincolnshire, is an R.A.F. memorial of rough granite. The inscription reads:-

*“In the early hours of March 4th, 1945 Lancaster PB 476(PHY) of Number 12 Squadron crashed near this spot, the victim of a Luftwaffe intruder. This memorial was placed here on the 50th anniversary of the crash to commemorate the crew members who died.”*

SMITH, Christopher Brummell/ Gunner, 137th Field Regt., Royal Artillery

of High Field, Embrook, Wokingham

Christopher died in Siam on October 25th 1943, aged 27, and is buried in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery near Bangkok, Thailand.

SMITH, John Wilfred/ Private, 9th Bn, Royal Sussex Regiment

of 128 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

John was killed in action, aged 25, in Burma on August 15th 1944 and is buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, near Rangoon.

SPRATLEY, Harold Charles/ Gunner, 4th Maritime Bn, Royal Artillery

of 100 Evendons Lane, Wokingham

Harold was married to Annie. Before joining the Army near the start of the War Harold worked for the town council. He served in the Far East defending convoys on anti-aircraft duties. He was initially reported missing at Singapore, believed to be a prisoner of war. In the end it was confirmed that he had been killed in action on February 26th 1942. He is remembered on the Plymouth Naval Memorial.

STREET, William Charles Knapp/ Corporal, 84 Squadron, RAF

of 135 Reading Road, Wokingham

Bar 12 men, William’s entire Squadron was captured when Java was taken by the Japanese. He died while a prisoner of war on January 5th 1943 and is buried in Yokohama War Cemetery in Japan.

WOODERS, William Albert/ Lance Corporal, Grenadier Guards

of 133 Evendons Lane, Wokingham

William was the son of Albert and Louise Wooders, and the husband of Nora Wooders, of Slough, Buckinghamshire. William was killed in action at Dunkirk on June 1st 1940 aged 25 at the height of the evacuation. His name appears on the Dunkirk Memorial.

WILLIAMS, Harold John/ Private, Durham Light Infantry

of 269a Finchampstead Road, Wokingham

Harold was the son of Ellen Williams and stepson of Mr. F. Dungate of Wokingham.

He was killed during the Normandy Invasion on June 14th 1944, aged 34, and is buried in Tilly Sur-Seulles War Cemetery, Normandy.

Also, two local women were killed in air raids and buried in St Paul’s Churchyard

COOPER, Aileen Mary Although she did not usually live in the Parish, Miss Aileen Mary Cooper was the sister of Mrs Elton of Barkham Road, and had been residing there just recently. She was serving with the Women’s Legion, and was actually on duty with a canteen in Bermondsey during an air raid when she was killed by a bomb, on September 15th 1940. She was laid to rest in St Paul’s Churchyard.

*Fri 19th Feb 1943: Well Known Wokingham Woman Killed in Air Raid*

*We regret to record the death of Mrs. Julia Miles, licensee of the Leathern Bottle, Barkham Road. On Wednesday afternoon she visited a cinema in Reading in company with her daughter, Mrs. Hester and her 2-year-old niece. After coming out of the cinema they went to the “Peoples Pantry” for tea and chose a table near the door. While they were having tea the building was bombed, Mrs. Miles being killed instantly. Mrs. Hester sustained serious injuries and was conveyed to the Royal Berkshire Hospital where she is progressing satisfactorily. The child was missing but was ultimately found unhurt with the exception of minor scratches, at the Battle Hospital, where she had been taken from the First Aid Post. Mrs. Miles, mother of Councillor Sidney Miles, took over the licence of the Leathern Bottle in 1925 on the death of her husband, Mr. J. Miles, who was formerly Sgt. Instructor O.T.C. at Wellington College, and came to Wokingham in 1909. The funeral and internment took place on Monday at St. Paul’s Church, the Rev. P.H. Hepburne-Scott officiating.*