

World War II Air Crashes in East Farndon, July 1944

How the research into the crashes started

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of V E Day in May 2020, East Farndon Parish Council asked several people in the village to research the men and women of East Farndon who served in World War II. Shortly after the research was completed, Alan Langley, our village historian, mentioned that there was some anecdotal talk of an air crash in the village during the war, but no real evidence. That was enough to pique my interest and start the investigation.

The information we knew

Many years ago, Alan was told about an air crash by Ken Gardiner, late of Brierley Farm, Harborough Road, East Farndon. When Ken and his wife Sally bought the farm in the 1960s, someone told Ken that a crash had happened near the Harborough boundary on 13th July 1944. He gave Ken the numbers of the two Wellington Bombers involved and the names of two of the air crew. He also said, "They were flying dangerously loose in formation, and it was struck by no 2." Thankfully, Ken wrote it all down.

This is the information from Ken Gardiner:

The air crash happened near the Harborough boundary on 13th July 1944.

Plane 1 was a Wellington bomber LN509 (Mark 10 type) from 14 OTU (Operational Training Unit) RAF Market Harborough (the 'Airfield site') on the Leicester Road.

A crew of 2 were both killed.

The Pilot was Flt Lt A.C. Shilleto 122927.

"They were flying dangerously loose in formation, and it was struck by no. 2".

Plane 2 was a Wellington bomber LP627 (Same mark and unit)

A crew of 2 were both were killed.

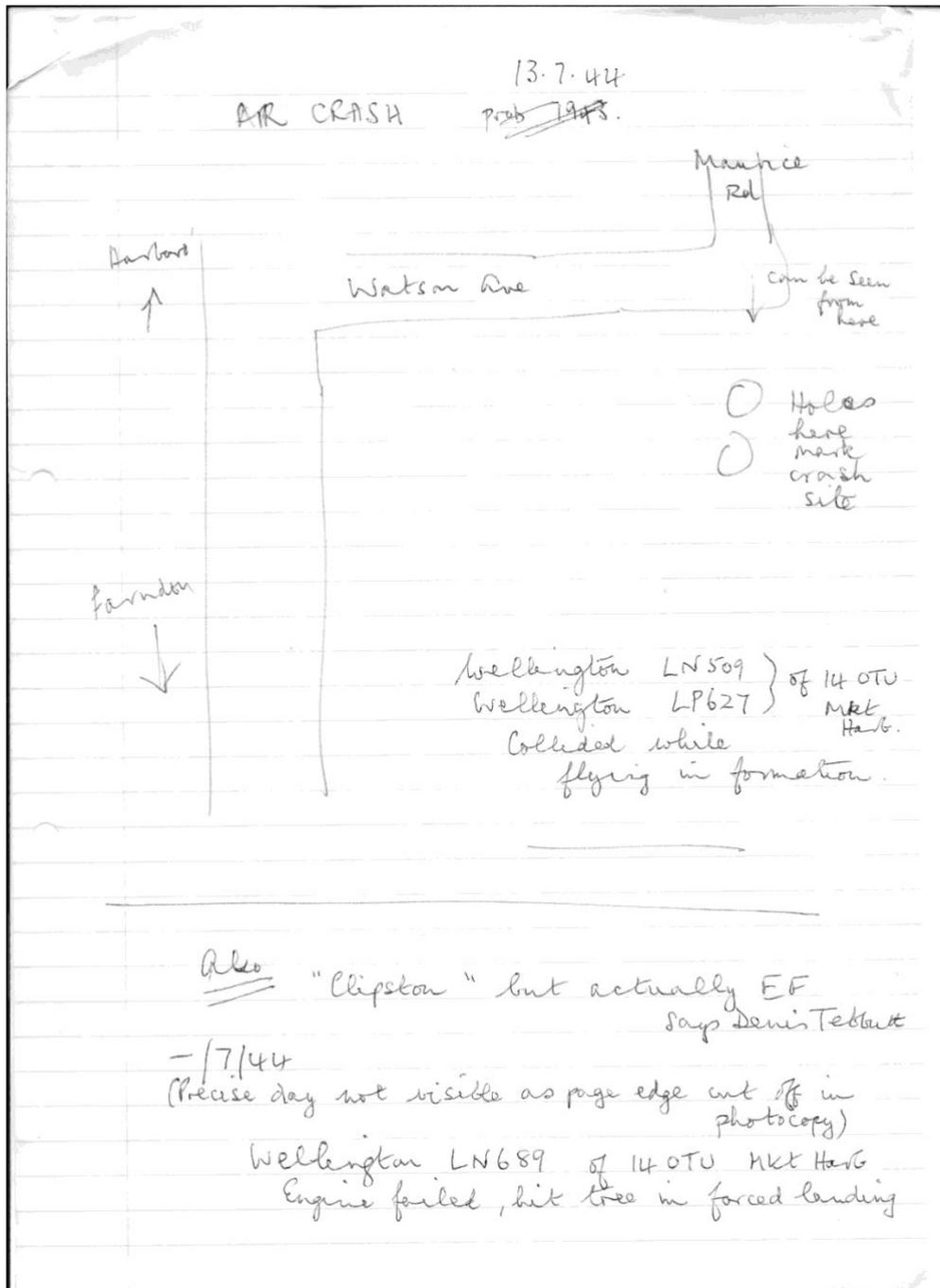
The Pilot was Flying Officer W.D. Browne 124523.

Duration of flight - 5 minutes.

Further research

When the research was started in April 2020, there was no information about this crash on the internet, and it wasn't known where the crash site was. It is unclear why all the websites listing lost aircraft fail to mention it, although not many of these disasters would have been known outside the local areas. During the war, the Press was censored against stories of Allied losses in order to keep the enemy unaware of such losses, and also to keep up people's morale. Reports of these accidents were also very sketchy and most are taken from reports from Air Raid Precautions (ARP) personnel or observers.

In November 2020, Alan came across a map he had drawn many years previously from the information Ken had given him at the time. It clearly shows the crash site as being in the field at Brierley Farm, and Sally Gardiner has confirmed that over the years, remains of aircraft have been found when ploughing the field.



Harrington Aviation Museum kindly provided the map co-ordinates registered for the crash: SP722852 and SP719848. These aren't entirely accurate, but put the crash close to the information on the hand-drawn map. Metal detecting during 2021 uncovered engine parts from a Wellington Bomber on the border of Brierley Farm and New House Farm, close to the site of the crash, which is circled in the photograph below.



It was later discovered that the planes took off from Market Harborough Airfield at 15.15 on a test flight and the crash happened 15 minutes into the flight.

I gave a talk in the village hall about the air crash on July 1st 2022, alongside Theresa Reed, who had been metal detecting on the site of the crash. We speculated about how and where the crash had happened, unable to find any real confirmation. We wondered if one of the planes had landed in the field and the other one on the Gosse (the valley on the east side of Main Street), because there was anecdotal information about smoke being seen on the Gosse.

Afterwards, Denis Tebbutt's grandson, Jon Peacock, contacted me to say that his grandad had been an eye witness to the crash and had further information.

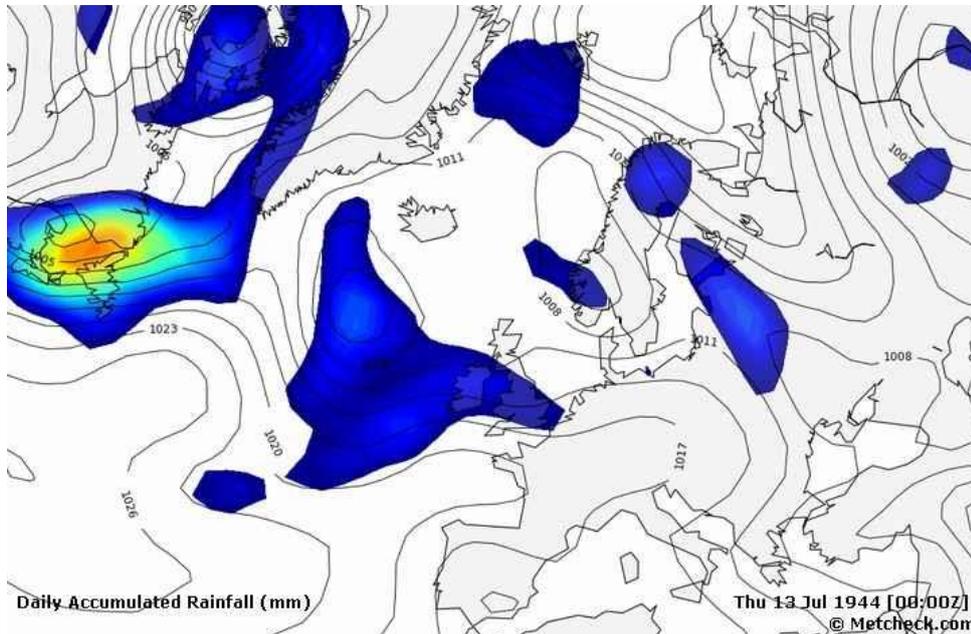
Denis was born in East Farndon in 1933, and was 11 at the time of the crash. He died in 2018, but had told Jon all about the crash.

In 1944, the Tebbutt family lived at Hawthorn Cottage, Main Street, East Farndon, which backs onto the Gosse (part of the route the aeroplanes were flying along), and he therefore had a clear view of what happened.

See photograph of Hawthorn Cottage below, showing the Gosse behind it:



On Thursday 13th July 1944, it was raining with low cloud, and visibility would have been poor. According to www.weather.sumofus.org, the weather was 17C, windy and raining heavily.



Denis was at home with his family and his sister was out on the Gosse collecting thistles. The weather was bad and Denis remembers hearing the planes overhead, then an incredible noise as two of the planes collided and exploded in the field at Brierley Farm. Ammunition on board would also have exploded, adding to the noise and creating a huge fireball. Denis remembered seeing an enormous fire, and the scorch marks in the field can still be seen today. Denis's sister suffered nightmares throughout her life due to the shock and trauma.

Jon's great uncle, Fred Wintersgill was on leave from the navy at that time and heard the explosion from his house on East Lubenham Road, East Farndon. He raced to the scene and was one of the first men there. It is thought that all the men died instantly in the crash. Jon says that due to the shock, his uncle was never the same again.

Jon's Great Grandad, Fred Tebbutt (1891 - 1975) had served in World War I in the Royal Field Artillery, and he was part of the Home Guard during World War II. On July 13th, Fred was on duty at the air field. He was listening to the communication on the radio and watching the planes through binoculars, although the low cloud had made it difficult to see. He heard an incredible noise over the radio, which was the crash, and from the sight of the ensuing fire, he thought his own house in East Farndon had been hit. He jumped into a jeep and raced to the scene, which must have been a harrowing sight. He was put on guard at the site and he said the wreckage was removed and the site cleared away quickly. This would have been for propaganda purposes – not wanting the enemy to know of the losses and not wanting to lower morale in the country.

Through Fred's account, it is thought that three or four Wellington Bombers were flying together in formation. They were flying a loop from Market Harborough Air Field at Gartree, and were coming back to the air field when two of the planes touched wings. The planes didn't have radar and so never flew in fog – they were always grounded under these conditions. If low cloud had suddenly formed, then it would have sat in the steep-sided Gosse

valley, because the mist and cloud sinks and holds here. The planes would have been following the ground, and as they banked, they wouldn't have been able to see each other. This is probably why the original eye witness account said they were flying in loose formation – it's very possible that they would have been unaware of each other's positions.

The following photograph was taken during low cloud in September 2022, showing how the mist sits in the valley. The planes would have flown along this route, with the pilots experiencing very poor visibility.



Jon's grandad always talked about the planes coming down together in the field at Brierley Farm, and two huge gouges in the land still exist. Denis and Jon used to metal detect on this site together, not on the Gosse, so it is thought that there is just one crash site.

This is an aerial shot of the area taken in April 1944. Brierley Farm wasn't built until 1952, so the crash site and surrounding area would have been all fields.





This photograph is taken from Maurice Road, facing south. The planes would have been flying north towards the airfield. There are two dark patches of land underneath the electricity cables – we think this is where the planes came down. The cables weren't installed until 1968, so wouldn't have been there at the time of the crash.



This photograph is taken facing north, in the direction of travel. Again, the dark areas can be seen.

Internet research

The following information was found on the International Bomber Command Centre, Losses Database, giving us the names of the four airmen who died:

Plane 1:

PILOT: SHILLETTO, ALFRED CECIL

Rank	F/L
Forename(s)	Alfred Cecil
Surname	Shilleto
Gender	M
Age	
Decorations	
Date of Death	13-07-1944
Next of Kin	Son of William and Elsie May Shilleto. Grandson of Mrs. A. D. Dunkinson, of Brockenhurst.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Aircraft	Vickers Wellington X
Serial Number	LN509
Markings	

MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Burial/Memorial Country	United Kingdom
--------------------------------	----------------

Burial/Memorial Place	Brockenhurst (St. Nicholas) Churchyard
------------------------------	--

Grave Reference	North side of churchyard.
------------------------	---------------------------

IBCC MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Phase	1
--------------	---

Panel Number	96
---------------------	----

ENLISTMENT INFORMATION

Service Number	122927
-----------------------	--------

Service	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
----------------	-----------------------------------

Group	92
--------------	----

Squadron	14 OTU
-----------------	--------

Trade	Pilot
--------------	-------

Country of Origin	United Kingdom
--------------------------	----------------

FELLOW SERVICEMEN

<u>Everett J (W/O)</u>

LAST OPERATION INFORMATION

Start Date	1944-07-13
-------------------	------------

End Date	1944-07-13
-----------------	------------

Take-off Station	Market Harborough
-------------------------	-------------------

Day/Night Raid Day

Operation Air Test

Reason for Loss Collided with another Wellington LP627 near the airfield

WIRELESS OPERATOR: EVERETT, JACK

Rank W/O

Forename(s) Jack

Surname Everett

Gender M

Age 23

Decorations DFM

Date of Death 13-07-1944

Next of Kin Son of Herbert George and Isobel Everett, of Brighton. Husband of Mary Agnes Everett, of Kirkdale, Liverpool.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Aircraft Vickers Wellington X

Serial Number LN509

Markings

MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Burial/Memorial Country	United Kingdom
--------------------------------	----------------

Burial/Memorial Place	Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery
------------------------------	------------------------------------

Grave Reference	Sec. Z.F.U. Grave 69.
------------------------	-----------------------

IBCC MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Phase	1
--------------	---

Panel Number	33
---------------------	----

ENLISTMENT INFORMATION

Service Number	751065
-----------------------	--------

Service	Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve
----------------	-----------------------------------

Group	92
--------------	----

Squadron	14 OTU
-----------------	--------

Trade	Wireless Operator
--------------	-------------------

Country of Origin	United Kingdom
--------------------------	----------------

FELLOW SERVICEMEN

<u>Shilleto A C (F/L)</u>
--

LAST OPERATION INFORMATION

Start Date	1944-07-13
-------------------	------------

End Date	1944-07-13
-----------------	------------

Take-off Station	Market Harborough
-------------------------	-------------------

Day/Night Raid Day

Operation Air Test

Reason for Loss Collided with another Wellington LP627 near the airfield

Plane 2:

PILOT: BROWNE, WILLIAM DESMOND

Rank F/L

Forename(s) William Desmond

Surname Browne

Gender M

Age 21

Decorations DFC

Date of Death 13-07-1944

Next of Kin Son of Arthur William and Margaret Frances Browne, of Hale, Cheshire.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Aircraft Vickers Wellington X

Serial Number LP627

Markings

MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Burial/Memorial Country

United Kingdom

Burial/Memorial Place

Oxford (Botley) Cemetery

Grave Reference

Plot I/2. Grave 246.

ENLISTMENT INFORMATION

Service Number

124523

Service

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Group

92

Squadron

14 OUT

Trade

Pilot

Country of Origin

United Kingdom

MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Burial/Memorial Country

United Kingdom

Burial/Memorial Place

Oxford (Botley) Cemetery

Grave Reference

Plot I/2. Grave 246.

LAST OPERATION INFORMATION

Start Date	1944-07-13
End Date	1944-07-13
Take-off Station	Market Harborough
Day/Night Raid	Day
Operation	Air Test
Reason for Loss	Collided 1530 with Wellington LM509 falling at East Farndon 5 miles WNW of Desborough Northamptonshire.

WIRELESS OPERATOR: EDGE, STANLEY PATRICK

Rank	W/O
Forename(s)	Stanley Patrick
Surname	Edge
Gender	M
Age	23
Decorations	
Date of Death	13-07-1944
Next of Kin	Son of Robert and Anastasia Edge, of Wallasey.

AIRCRAFT INFORMATION

Aircraft	Vickers Wellington X
-----------------	----------------------

Serial Number LP627

Markings

MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Burial/Memorial Country United Kingdom

Burial/Memorial Place Wallasey (Rake Lane) Cemetery

Grave Reference Sec. 6.R. Grave 56.

IBCC MEMORIAL INFORMATION

Phase 1

Panel Number 31

ENLISTMENT INFORMATION

Service Number 1112606

Service Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Group 92

Squadron 14 OTU

Trade WOp/AG

Country of Origin United Kingdom

FELLOW SERVICEMEN

Browne W D (F/L)

LAST OPERATION INFORMATION

Start Date	1944-07-13
End Date	1944-07-13
Take-off Station	Market Harborough
Day/Night Raid	Day
Operation	Air Test

Reason for Loss

Collided 1530 with Wellington LM509 falling at East Farndon 5 miles WNW of Desborough Northamptonshire.

The following information is taken from Chorley's Volume 7, Bomber Command Losses, giving more information about Flight Lieutenant Alfred Shilleto and Sergeant Jack Everett:

13 Jul 1944	14 OTU	Wellington X	LN509	Air Test
	F/L A C Shilleto W/O J Everett DFM			+ T/o 1515 Market Harborough for a standard night flying test but fifteen minutes later collided with another of the unit's Wellingtons, both aircraft falling at East Farndon, 5 miles WNW from Desborough, Northamptonshire and practically on the border with Leicestershire SW of Market Harborough. F/L Shilleto, who had logged 1,079 of his 1,453 flying hours on Wellingtons, runs in Brockenhurst (St. Nicholas) Churchyard. He had previously served with 207 Squadron and had been involved in a serious Tiger Moth crash on 5 July 1942 (see page 1111). His screened wireless operator had won an immediate DFM in March 1942, while serving with 207 Squadron. Full details of his courageous actions were published in the London Gazette on 7 April 1942; his grave is in Brighton (Bear Road) Borough Cemetery and his service number indicates he was selected, at least, for pilot training in the volunteer reserve in the late 1930s.
	14 OTU	Wellington X	LP627	Air Test
	F/L W D Browne DFC W/O S P Edge			+ T/o 1525 Market Harborough with similar intent and destroyed in the manner previously described. F/L Browne is buried in Oxford (Botley) Community Cemetery while his screened wireless operator, W/O Edge, was taken to Wallasay (Rake Hill) Cemetery in Cheshire.

As referenced above, this is the excerpt from the Supplement to the London Gazette dated 7th April 1942:

751065 Sergeant Jack EVERETT, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 207 Squadron. One night in March, 1942, this airman was the first wireless operator of an aircraft which participated in an attack on 'Essen. After the target had been bombed, the aircraft was hit and the starboard ammunition box smashed. The charges from broken bullets of a spare belt of ammunition caught fire. Despite the danger from the remaining ammunition which the heat was causing to explode,

Sergeant Everett attempted to beat out the flames with his hands and by stamping on them. Having gained control of the flames, he obtained a fire extinguisher and completed the task. By his promptitude and disregard to danger, Sergeant Everett retrieved what may have proved a disastrous situation.

More information about this incident is given further down in the article (see Jack Everett).

The following is taken from a forum on www.rafcommands.com:

Unaccounted Airwomen & Airmen - 13-7-1944

From Henk's List - UK

BROWNE, William Desmond - F/L (Pilot) - 124523 - D F C - RAFVR - Oxford (Botley), Oxfordshire. [Wellington X - LP627 - 14 OTU].

EDGE, Stanley Patrick - W/O (WoP-A/G) - 1112606 - RAFVR - Wallasey (Rake Lane), Cheshire. [Wellington X - LP627 - 14 OTU].

EVERETT, Jack - W/O (WoP-A/G) - 751065 - D F M _ RAFVR - Brighton City (Bear Road), Sussex. [Wellington X - LN509 - 14 OTU].

SHILLETTO, Alfred Cecil - F/L(Pilot) - 122927 - RAFVR - Brockenhurst (St. Nicholas), Hampshire. [Wellington X - LN509 - 14 OTU].

It is unclear why the two crews are listed as unaccounted for.

Update: October 2020 – the RAF has been approached with a request that the men be removed from this list.

Further Information about the Four Airmen

Alfred Cecil Shilleto (Flight Lieutenant, RAF Volunteer Reserves 122927)

Alfred was born on 12th February 1917 in Brockenhurst, Hampshire. According to the England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills & Administrations) 1858-1995, he died in East Farndon, Northamptonshire on 13th July 1944. His death was registered in Brixworth District, Northamptonshire.

Taken from his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate, dated 25th August 1939 at Bournemouth Flying Club: Lived at "Green View", Partridge Road, Brockenhurst, Hampshire. His job was a clerk. (According to the 1939 Register, he worked as a Rating and Valuation Assistant & Fuel Control).



In Memory Of
Flight Lieutenant

ALFRED CECIL SHILLETO

Service Number: 122927

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 13 July 1944

Son of William and Elsie May Shilleto; grandson of Mrs. A. D. Dunkinson, of Brockenhurst.

Remembered with Honour

BROCKENHURST (ST. NICHOLAS) CHURCHYARD

North side of churchyard.



|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Jack Everett (Warrant Officer/Wireless Operator, RAF Volunteer Reserves 751065)

Jack was born in 1921 in Brighton. He had married Mary Agnes Bowe in Apr/May/June 1944 in Liverpool shortly before his death. He is buried at Bear Road Cemetery, Brighton. His death was registered in Brixworth District, Northamptonshire, aged 23.

The following is taken from LS Auction's website (27th November 2019). Some of the information is inaccurate as we know Jack died in East Farndon:



Sold by Order of a Direct Descendant: "Things look bad. It looks like "curtain." But Sergt. Jack Everett, of No. 207 Squadron, is wireless operator of that plane, and Sergt. Everett does not even stop to think about danger. He goes straight into the flaming ammunition, beating the fire with his bare hands and stamping on the heated bullets until he has the flames under control. That is why he now gets the D.F.M.' A newspaper on the exploits of Sergeant J. Everett An Immediate Second World War 1942 D.F.M. awarded to Sergeant J. Everett, No. 207 Squadron, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, who gallantly beat out an ammunition fire during a hair-raising raid over enemy territory in March 1942 - the fire began when a German shell from the Essen anti-aircraft guns narrowed on his Wellington; Everett would lose his life before war's end in a mid-air collision Distinguished Flying Medal, G.V.I.R. (751065 Sgt. J. Everett. R.A.F.), on original ribbon and wearing pin, extremely fine D.F.M. London Gazette 7 April 1942. The original recommendation states: 'On the night of 8th/9th March, 1942, Sergeant Everett was the First Wireless Operator on an aircraft detailed to attack a target in Essen. Shortly after the bombs were dropped, the aircraft received what appeared to be a direct hit from a shell. The shell did not explode but, on its passage through the fuselage, it went through the starboard ammunition box. There was a spare belt of ammunition in the box which became broken up through the force of the impact and the

charges from the broken bullets caught fire. The fire which commenced to spread was reported by the Air Gunner in the mid-upper turret. Although there was danger from the remaining ammunition in the box which the heat was causing to explode, Sergeant Everett went straight to the fire and proceeded to put it out with his hands and feet. Having gained immediate control of it, he then collected a fire extinguisher and put out the fire completely. By this Sergeant's quick action and complete disregard for his personal safety, the fire was dealt with effectively before it came out of control and the aircraft and crew landed safely back at Base.' Jack Everett was born in 1921 at Brighton, East Sussex, the son of Herbert George Everett. He worked in Brighton as a manufacturing chemist at Arthur H. Cox & Co. before enlisting in May 1939 as Wireless Operator and Air Gunner. He was awarded the D.F.M. having flown 31 sorties totalling 186.35 flight hours and received his Medal at Buckingham Palace on 29 September 1942. He later died in a mid-air collision on 13 July 1944 between two Wellington aircraft of No. 14 O.T.U. (Market Harborough). Unusually, owing to the non-operational nature of the flight, each aircraft only had 2 airmen on board, a Staff (Instructor) Pilot and a Staff Wireless Operator. Both Everett and his Pilot, Flight Lieutenant Alfred Cecil Shilleto, were lost aboard Wellington XLN509 which crashed into the North Sea*. According to family repute, no bodies were ever recovered**. Isobel Elliott*** later visited his airbase and the coffin was marked 'not to be opened under any circumstances'. Aged 23, Jack Everett is buried in the Brighton City (Bear Road) Cemetery, his gravestone bearing the words of his wife Mary Agnes, 'In loving memory of my husband Jack'. Sold with copied research and the following original documentation: (i) An original portrait and full-length photograph of Sergeant Everett, together with 3 postcard photographs of his Avro Manchester twin-engine medium bomber, and an outstanding photograph of the interior of his aircraft following the on-board fire. (ii) An original Postagram from Air Marshal Sir Arthur Travers 'Bomber' Harris, signed in ink and dated 17 March 1942: 'My warmest congratulations on the award of your Distinguished Flying Medal'. (iii) Two further letters of congratulations from H.Q., No. 5 Group, including one from Air Commodore H. A. Haines, acting as S.A.S.O., Headquarters, No. 5 Group:

*The North Sea reference is strange because all the deaths were registered in East Farndon. This could have been for propaganda/security reasons.

**All the men were buried

***This should read Isobel *Everett* (Jack's mother). It's probable that the men were badly burned.



In Memory Of
Warrant Officer

JACK EVERETT

Distinguished Flying Medal
Service Number: 751065

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 13 July 1944 Age 23

Son of Herbert George and Isobel Everett, of Brighton; husband of Mary Agnes Everett, of Kirkdale, Liverpool.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND JACK

Remembered with Honour

BRIGHTON CITY (BEAR ROAD) CEMETERY

Sec. Z.F.U. Grave 69.



Brighton (Bear Road) Borough Cemetery

|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

William Desmond Browne (Flight Lieutenant, RAF Volunteer Reserves 124523)

William was born about 1923. According to the England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills & Administrations) 1858-1995, he died on war service on 13th July 1944. He lived at Maitland Ashley Road, Hale, Cheshire. He was buried at Botley Cemetery, Oxford on 18th July 1944. His death was registered in Brixworth District, Northamptonshire, aged 21.

He was awarded the DCF (Distinguished Flying Cross) in 1943

Acting Flight Lieutenant William Desmond BROWNE (124523) Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, No. 106 Squadron

SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 10 SEPTEMBER, 1943

BROWNE, William Desmond, FL - DFC - 430910 - 106 Sqn – RAFVR

Taken from RAF Commands

Information on the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC)

The DFC was established on June 3rd, 1918, the birthday of King George V, and is awarded to Officers and Warrant officers for "an act or acts of valour and courage or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy". A straight silver bar is a further enhancement of the DFC, awarded for additional acts under the same terms as the cross.

The award has the shape of a silver cross and was designed by Edward Carter Preston. On the obverse aeroplane propellers are superimposed upon the vertical arms of the cross. Within a central winged roundel, encircled by a wreath of laurels and surmounted by a Imperial Crown, appear the letters RAF. In the central circle on the reverse the Royal Cyphers, GV, GVI, EIIR, appear above the date 1918. The year of issue is engraved on the lower arm of the award. The DFC is issued unnamed.

The ribbon is 1.25 inches wide, and consists of alternating violet and white stripes, each 0.125 inches wide, leaning at 45 degrees from the vertical. Until 1919, the stripes were horizontal.

During the Second World War a total of 20,354 DFCs were awarded, with approximately 1,550 first bars and 42 second bars. Honorary awards were made on 964 occasions to aircrew from other non-commonwealth countries.

A total of 4,018 first DFC's were awarded to RCAF personnel, plus 213 first bars and 6 second bars and also 358 to FAF/RAA/RNZAF persons in RCAF, plus 23 first bars. Also there were 247 DFC's awarded to Canadians in the RAF, plus 34 first bars.

New Zealand RNZAF personnel received 1,032 DFC Crosses, eighty four first bars and four second bars, one Cross was awarded to a member of the Royal New Zealand Navy.

A total of 44 Dutch airmen received the DFC.

In Memory Of
Flight Lieutenant

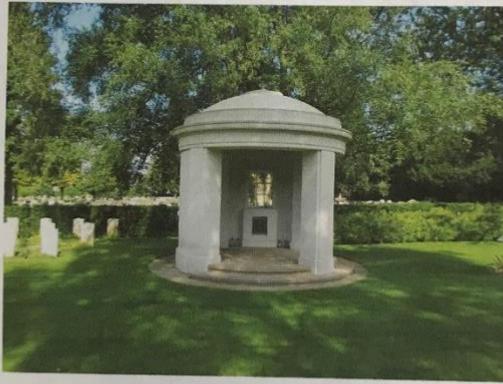
WILLIAM DESMOND BROWNE

Distinguished Flying Cross
Service Number: 124523

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 13 July 1944 Age 21

Son of Arthur William and Margaret Frances Browne, of Hale, Cheshire.

Remembered with Honour
OXFORD (BOTLEY) CEMETERY
Plot 1/2. Grave 246.

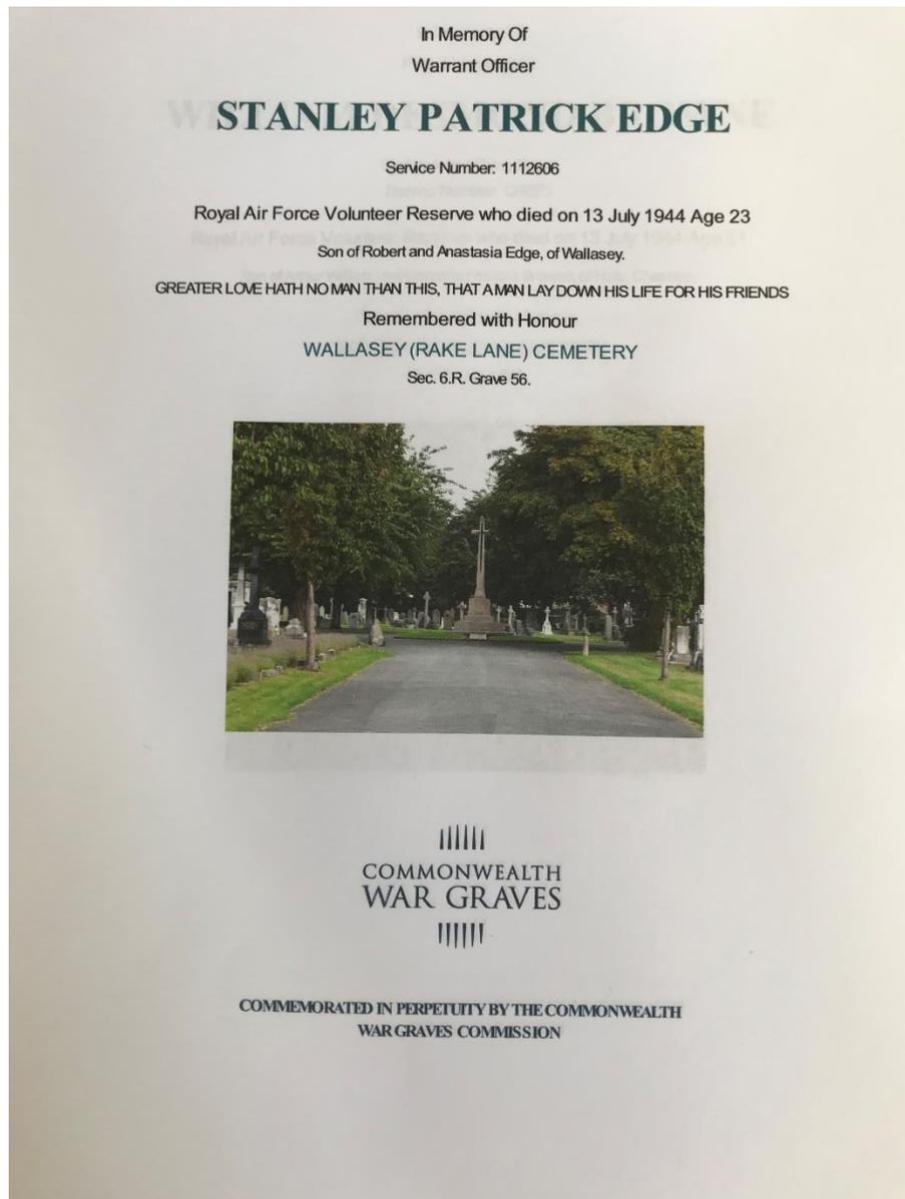


|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

Stanley Patrick Edge (Warrant Officer/Wireless Operator, RAF Volunteer Reserves 1112606)

Stanley was born in Wallasey in 1921. According to UK and Ireland, Find a Grave Index, 1300s – Current, he died in East Farndon, Daventry District, Northamptonshire. He was buried in Wallasey (Rake Lane) Cemetery. His death was registered in Brixworth District, Northamptonshire, aged 23.



A Second Air Crash – 1st July 1944

On the original map (see above), there is also mention of a second crash, which happened twelve days earlier, on 1st July 1944. Denis Tebbutt said that this also happened in East Farndon, although the official information states that it was either two miles north or two miles west of Clipston. Map co-ordinates of the crash provided by Harrington Aviation Museum are SP706823, which is a field close to Sibbertoft Road, Clipston, however we know that the co-ordinates given for the crash on 13th July weren't accurate, and we therefore believe the crash happened in East Farndon.

Denis was 11 at the time of the crashes and a credible eye witness. His grandson, Jon Peacock, has confirmed that his grandad told him the crash happened at the top of East Farndon village, not in Clipston, although the precise location isn't known. Denis said that no one could get near the crash site – it was cleared away very quickly. Again, this would be for propaganda reasons.

This is taken from www.rcfassociation.ca (Royal Canadian Air Force):

CORMAN, JOHN RONALD MERWIN SGT(AG) R94835. From Willows, Saskatchewan. Killed Jul 1/44 age 24. #14 Operational Training Unit (Keep With The Pack). Sgt Gorman was killed when his Wellington aircraft #LN 689 had the port engine fail and then crash two miles north of Clipston, Leicestershire, England. Sergeant Air Gunner Corman is buried in the Brookwood Military Cemetery, Woking, Surrey, England.

Personnel Reception Centre and School of Training

No.14 OTU RAF Market Harborough
 A J L Craig's Posting 16th November to 14th January 1944
 RAF Market Harborough (Nr Foxton) was mainly used as an Operational Training Unit throughout its active days with No. 14 OTU Flying Vickers Wellingtons, Airspeed AS10, Oxfords as well as Hurricanes and some Curtiss P40 Tomahawks from No.1683 Bomber Defence Training Flight.
 No.14 OTU was 1st formed in April 1940 as part of No. 6 Group RAF Bomber Command at RAF Cottesmore, Rutland to Train Night Bomber Crews. Training continued for 3yrs & 3mths until August 1943 when No.14 OTU moved to RAF Market Harborough. It was disbanded on 24 June 1945

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK				Page No. 1
of (Unit or Formation) No.14 OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT				No. of pages used for index
1944 Date	Time	Summary of Events	SECRET.	
1st July		Halifax V; W.7 Squadron; R.A.F. ELVINGTON - Lt. Liggett, Capt. landed here from operations - The crew were interrogated. Wellington Mk.X LN689 crashed at approximately 1445 hrs. 2 miles West of CLIPSTON - Capt F/O W.S. Toms. With the exception of the captain, all the crew were injured, one A/G fatally. R.161422 Sgt. Cecile J.E.G., R.C.A.F. Pupil pilot and 1375297 Sgt. Atkinson K. W. Op. Air suffering from burns and shock were admitted to Leicester Royal Infirmary. R167333 Sgt. Ballagh J.D., R.C.A.F. A.G. received lacerations of the face and neck. R.194835 Sgt. Gorman J.R.M.: R.C.A.F.: A/G was killed. On account of Port engine failure the pilot made a forced landing in a field but hit a tree with his port wing before touching the ground. Category 'E' - A Court of Inquiry was convened. A.C.M. Sir Arthur Longmore visited the station to inspect the A.T.C. Squadron & an attachment.		
3rd		An accident occurred involving Wellington X.HF511 at Market Harborough airfield. Staff Pilot: F/L Rogers, Pupil Pilot: Sgt. Hooker. The starboard tyre burst on take-off, the aircraft swung slightly to starboard at the end of the runway and the starboard oleo leg collapsed. Category 'AC' No Casualty.		

It appears that the aeroplane developed port engine failure, the pilot made a forced landing in a field, but hit a tree with the port wing before touching the ground. The crew of Wellington Bomber LN689 were:

- Captain Flight Officer W.S. Toms (not injured)
- Sergeant J.E.G. Cecile (R161422) RCAF
- Sergeant K Atkinson (1375297) Pupil Pilot, Wireless Operator (taken to Leicester Royal Infirmary suffering from burns and shock)
- Sergeant J.D. Ballagh (R167333) RCAF Air Gunner (suffered lacerations to the face and neck)
- Sergeant John Ronald Merwin Corman (R94835) RCAF Air Gunner. Fatally injured.

John Ronald Merwin Corman (6th July 1920 – 1st July 1944)



John was known as Ronnie. He was born in Readlyn, Saskatchewan, Canada on 6th July 1920. His parents were Henry Merwin Corman (1892-1977), born in Stoney Creek, Ontario and Mary Corman (nee Stewart) (1895-1965), born in Glasgow, Scotland. Henry Corman was a farmer and the family lived in Willows, Saskatchewan. Henry and Mary had 8 children.

On Ronnie's enlistment form (which he signed Ronnie Corman), he stated his citizenship as Canadian, however, on his Record of Service, his racial origin is noted as Scottish and on his Record of Service Airmen, his citizenship is noted as British.

He signed up to join the Royal Canadian Air Force on 11th October 1940, aged 20. He had studied aero engines at aeronautical school and gave his occupation as student DPYT (Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program*). He enlisted to do ground work as an aero engine fitter. He was single and enjoyed softball and skating. His temporary address when he signed up was 81 Athabasca St, West Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

According to his Certificate of Medical Examination, Ronnie was 5' 5" tall, weighed 140 pounds (10 stone), and had a ruddy complexion, brown hair and hazel eyes.

He was awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and Ribbon on 15th January 1944 and his Air Gunner Badge on 25th February 1944.

*The Dominion-Provincial Youth Training Program was a federal government measure created in 1937 that provided training and apprenticeship courses for young men and women between the ages of 16 and 30. \$1 million in Dominion funds was given to the provinces in an effort to keep youth off public relief, prepare young people to eventually secure employment, and reduce pressure on the labour market. Courses for women were kept separate and distinct. Beginning in April 1940 the Youth Training Program was expanded, streamlined, and redirected towards the industrial training of young people for war work and eventually evolved into the War Emergency Training Program (1940-1946).

Grateful thanks to local history enthusiast Catherine Ward, who had previously researched this crash and kindly shared this information. Also, grateful thanks to Quantas Corman (Ronnie's great nephew), who kindly provided and gave permission to use the photograph.



Sunday July 11th 2021 – Ceremony to place remembrance plaques, followed by a fly past

On Sunday July 11th 2021, two plaques were placed at East Farndon war memorial to remember the five airmen who lost their lives in the two separate crashes. After the service, the RAF flew a Dakota aeroplane over East Farndon in honour of the men. This is a transcript of the short service, led by Judy Hodgetts, who researched the crashes:

Good afternoon and welcome to this ceremony, which is being held to remember the five young airmen who died in two separate air crashes in East Farndon during World War II. Thank you to East Farndon Parish Council for providing two remembrance plaques, and to Lance Corporal Oli Burton, 22 Signals Regiment, who will place the plaques to honour and remember each man.

Let us remember those who have died for their country in war and peace; those whom we knew, and those whose memory we treasure, and all who lived and died in the service of their country and mankind.

*On 1st July 1944 at 14.45, Wellington Bomber LN689 developed engine failure and crash-landed in East Farndon, although the exact location isn't known. All the crew were injured, and sadly, **Sgt John R M Corman** lost his life. Sgt Corman served with the Royal Canadian Air Force. He was from Willows, Saskatchewan, Canada and was aged 23.*

Placing of the first plaque

May he rest in peace.

Later the same month, on 13th July at 15.30, two Wellington Bombers LN509 and LP627 collided over East Farndon. One plane landed on the border of Brierley Farm and Newhouse Farm; it's thought the second plane landed on the Gosse. All four crew members lost their lives:

*Flight Lieutenant **William Browne** RAF Volunteer Reserve, aged 21*

*Warrant Officer **Stanley Edge** RAF Volunteer Reserve, aged 23*

*Warrant Officer **Jack Everett** RAF Volunteer Reserve, aged 23*

*Flight Lieutenant **Alfred Shilleto** RAF Volunteer Reserve, aged 27*

Placing of the second plaque

May they rest in peace.

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

When you go home, tell them of us and say: for your tomorrow, we gave our today.









A presentation about the air crashes and the metal detecting work was given by researcher Judy Hodgetts and metal detectorist Theresa Reed in East Farndon village hall on July 1st 2022. A video of the evening is available to view on the village website www.eastfarndon.org
Huge thanks to Gary Gouws for filming the evening.

Investigating these crashes has been more than simply finding out the facts of what happened on those fateful days. Throughout the research, I felt I was connecting to each of the airmen who lost their life, honouring them by telling their stories and hopefully bringing closure to any of their family members. I was also struck by how the crash on 13th July had an impact on so many of the villagers, and I wonder if this is why the story wasn't widely known about – perhaps the trauma ran too deep. It may well have been the same for the crash on 1st July, but we have little information about the aftermath of it.

We also have to remember that both the crashes happened within 12 days of each other, with five young men losing their lives. This must have been deeply traumatic for the villagers, and until I spoke with the grandson of the eye witness, I had no comprehension of how it affected the villagers.

What started out as interesting research into an air crash ended up being so much more for me. Along the way, I have met many interesting people and have been humbled by the bravery of the airmen and of those who tried to rescue them. It has been a privilege to work on this project.

With grateful thanks to everyone who helped with this research, in particular Alan Langley, Catherine Ward and Jon Peacock. Thanks also to the local landowners who allowed the metal detecting in their fields: Sally Gardiner, Rob Gowling, Nigel Haynes and Richard West. Also, huge thanks to the Tebbutt and Wintersgill families for passing on the information and also for their bravery in the aftermath of the crashes.

With love, thanks and gratitude to Alfred, Jack, Ronnie, Stanley and William.

Judy Hodgetts
October 2022