

# Downham Boys of World War 2

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

"High flight"

Oh ! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth ,  
 and danced the skies on laughter silvered wings ;  
 Sunward I`ve climbed , and joined the tumbling mirth  
 of sun split clouds --- and done a hundred things  
 you have not dreamed of --- wheeled and soared and swung  
 high in the sunlit silence . Hov`ring there  
 I`ve chased the shouting wind along , and flung  
 My eager craft through footless halls of air ....  
 Up, up the long , delirious , burning blue  
 I`ve topped the wind swept heights with easy grace  
 where never lark or even eagle flew ..  
 And while with silent lifting mind I`ve trod  
 The high untrespassed sanctity of space ,  
 Put out my hand and touched the face of God .

This poem was written by John Gillespie Macgee , junr ,, of the Canadian airforce . He was killed in an air accident in 1941 .

**HAROLD JAMES ANDREWS** : Pilot officer . Royal Australian Air Force. Died 18<sup>th</sup> June 1943 aged 21 ;son of William Howard and Lydia Grace Andrews, of South Yarra, Victoria , Australia . ( See James Clark Greenwood , RCAF , died 14<sup>th</sup> June 1943 . these two young men died within four days of one another and it is possible they were killed in the air crash at Magdalen the unit was 17 PAFU ( Pilot Advanced Flying Unit ) ) The Dandenong Journal " Young Dalmore airman loses life in England . Mr and Mrs William Andrews received the tragic news that their 21 yr old son HJ Andrews , P/O lost his life in an aircraft accident in England on June 18<sup>th</sup> ; deep sympathy is felt for the bereaved parents and his two brothers and sisters , Bill and Ron , Marion and Dorothy . " " A tribute to the memory of a very dear friend of P/O Lyndon Jarrett , Sgt Melvin Jarrett and Geoffrey Jarrett , RAAF . " . P/O Greenwood and P/O Andrews are buried in Downham Cemetery next to one another .

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**EDWARD GEORGE ALLEN** , aged 24, bd Le Paradis , Lestrem , Pas de Calais , killed 19<sup>th</sup> May 1940 2nd Bttn, R Norfolk Regt .

As the German Army swept through Belgium and Northern France a massive naval operation was launched in May 1940 to bring home the British Expeditionary Force. At Dunkirk about 335,000 troops were taken off the beaches.

The 2nd Battalion was part of the force whose task it was to delay the German advance while the evacuation took place. It suffered very heavy losses and many men were taken prisoner. The 2nd Battalion had been a thousand strong but only 139 officers and men returned from Dunkirk.

Edward was killed on 19<sup>th</sup> May , so it seems he was spared the massacre of the 97 2<sup>nd</sup> Bttn Norfolk regiment prisoners of the Germans who were shot at Le Paradis .

At a barn at Le Paradis, near Dunkirk, ninety 2nd Battalion soldiers who had been taken prisoner were massacred. The event was the subject of a war crimes trial after the war and the officer in charge, Fritz Knoechlein, was executed . .....

**STANLEY BERNARD ATKIN** , 78 DIV HQ , 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Norfolk Regt , killed between 2-11 Aug 1940 aged 25 . son of John ,retired labourer , living 85 Railway Road , and Harriet nee Sindall : husband of Phyllis Maud ( nee Gore )married 1935 , living Watlington 1939 with her parents . Commemorated London Cemetery and Extension , Longueval "In heavenly love abiding " . London Cemetery and Extension was used again in 1946 by the Army Graves Service for the reburial of Second World War casualties recovered from various temporary burial grounds, French military cemeteries, small communal cemeteries, churchyards and isolated graves, where permanent maintenance was not possible.

" 7<sup>th</sup> Norfolk Regiment was a 2nd line Territorial Army unit formed on the outbreak of war in 1939. Originally part of the famous 51st (Highland) Infantry Division it served with them in France in 1940 stationed on the Maginot Line, thus escaping encirclement, and Dunkirk. But the reprieve was only temporary. The Battalion suffered heavy casualties when the 51st Division was surrounded and forced to surrender on 12th June. Just 31 members of the Battalion managed to escape to Britain."

**ALFRED LAWRENCE BECKETT** , 5<sup>th</sup> Bttn Seaforth Highlanders , killed in action 23 March 1943 . The Mareth Line, Tunisia . "To support them the 51st Highland division was ordered to send two battalions to hold a sector of the Zigzaoug anti tank ditch. The 5th Camerons and 5th Seaforth found themselves pinned down in the Wadi and caught in tremendous fire. When they were withdrawn, under cover of smoke, at 0300hrs on 24th March they had suffered very heavy losses." (see 51<sup>st</sup> Highland div ) . comm Sfax cemetery , Tunis

son of John Beckett , farm foreman of Salters Lode , and Julia Ada nee Damms late Brooks . "A beautiful memory is dearer than gold , of a son whose worth can never be told " . By

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chance he and Joseph Jesse Bland although in different regiments were at the same place and killed within 4 days of each other in March 1943.

**JOSEPH JESSE BLAND** , lance sergeant , 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion Coldstream Guards. Killed in action 19<sup>th</sup> March 1943 aged 26, commemorated Sfax cemetery Tunisia . son of Frank Bland , painter and decorator , and Bertha Ellen , nee Day , living 1911 in Theatre Yard , Downham . " In the south, the Axis forces defeated in Egypt at El Alamein withdrew into Tunisia along the coast through Libya, pursued by the Allied Eighth Army. Most of those buried in Sfax War Cemetery died in attacks on successive Axis positions at Medenine, the Marinth Line and Wadi Akarit, in March and April 1943 ". " His memory is our greatest treasure , in our hearts he will live forever . "

**HAROLD BLOY.** Private, Royal Pioneer Corps . Born Downham 1922 .Died 14<sup>th</sup> June 1947 aged 25. Stepson of Mrs B Herring , of Downham Market. " Sweet are the memories that never fade of one we loved but could not save . " Harold was the son of Maud Emily Bloy and had a younger brother Maurice . In the 1939 register the family were living in the home of Henry Dack , b 1880, Maud being his housekeeper. She later married Mr Merrell .

**HAROLD BYE**,28 , driver, RASC , 14<sup>th</sup> Dec 1944 , bd Italy. Married Muriel Wright , June ¼ 1940 , DM. Son of Albert and Rose Bye , of Crabbs Abbey Cottages , Downham , farm worker . Buried Santerno Valley , Italy .."Following the fall of Rome to the Allies ; in June 1944 the Germans retreat became ordered and the Gothic line was one of the last defensive stands . The cemetery was started by the British 78<sup>th</sup> Div during the fighting in the Appenines at the end of 1944 . "Father in thy Gracious Keeping , leave we now our loved one sleeping ."

**KEVIN GEORGE CLARK** . 635 squadron .Killed in action over Germany on one of the last raids , 17 aircraft flew from Downham in 31 March 1945 toward Hamburg, Osnabrook, etc and his aircraft ,Lancaster B Mk1 , PB958 , was hit both by an ME 262 and flak . 5 crew were killed and two survived , Air /Gnr/Fg/Off John James Kennelly , who baled out just before Hamburg and was captured and sent to a POW camp. Flt /Sgt Clark, an Australian , was captured on landing and sadly taken by the local militia to a remote roadside and shot . Those killed in the crash were F/O Arthur Lewis , RAAF , 22 ; Flt/Eng Alex Weir , RAFVR, 33; Air/Bomb Eric Chenoweth , RAAF , 20 ; W/Op/Air/Gnr Colin Delaney , RAAF , 20;

<http://aircrewremembered.com/lewis-arthur.html>

**JIM COLLEN** , 5<sup>th</sup> Norfolk Regt , POW , Chungkai , 11 March 1944 .

The Japanese aimed at completing the railway in 14 months and work began in June 1942. The two sections of the line finally met near Konkoita towards the end of October 1943 and the completed line, 424 kilometres long, was operational by December 1943. The graves of those who died during the construction and maintenance of the Burma-Siam railway (except for the Americans, whose remains were repatriated) were transferred from camp burial

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grounds and isolated sites along the railway into three cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar. Chungkai was one of the base camps on the railway and contained a hospital and church built by Allied prisoners of war. The war cemetery is the original burial ground started by the prisoners themselves, and the burials are mostly of men who died at the hospital.

## **Reginald James Cook . Flt Lt . 608 Squadron.**

A survivor of 608 Squadron , from Downham during the war and his post war service . An emotive & rare WW2 – DSO, DFC, DFM Group of 7 Medals Awarded to Flight Lieutenant R J Cook, *Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve*, who as an Observer with 15 Squadron took part in numerous Sorties against Targets in France & Germany in 1941, for which he was Awarded the DFM Retraining as a Pilot, he was assigned to 608 Squadron, Piloting Mosquito's in the Elite Pathfinder *Light Night Striking Force*, being twice more recognised for his Gallantry.

Post-War, he continued to Fly with British South American Airways and was Captain of the ill fated 'Star Dust' Avro Lancastrian Airliner that *Disappeared Without Trace* on a Flight between Buenos Aires & Santiago on 2nd August 1947, the Wreckage of his Aircraft only being discovered in 1998: the meaning of 'Star Dust's' cryptic last Morse Code Message 'STENDEC' (Descent) has been debated ever since and has been the subject of various Documentaries & Books.

The London Gazette 10th February 1942 - The recommendation states:

*'This Airman has participated in Sorties against Enemy Targets, including Dockyards, Railways, Oil Refineries, Aerodromes and other Targets in Enemy Country. He has participated in attacks on Berlin on 4 occasions. In December, 1941, Sergeant Cook was the Observer of the Leading Aircraft of a formation of Stirlings which took part in a Daylight Raid on the Enemy Warships at Brest. His precise Navigation enabled the Formation to Bomb their objective at exactly the stipulated time, in spite of Fierce Opposition. Sergeant Cook is a most efficient Navigator, Bomb Aimer who has consistently displayed Courage & Perseverance.'*

On his Operational Tour ending, Sgt Cook returned to [Canada to Train as a Pilot](#). He was Commissioned Probationary Pilot Officer on 16th May 1942, and was promoted Flight Lieutenant on 16th May 1944, and by the Autumn 1944 was serving with 608 Squadron. 608 Squadron & *Light Night Striking Force* – 1st August 1944 to 28th August 1945. From August 1944, 608 Squadron formed part of the Elite *Light Night Striking Force* of No.8 (Path Finder) Group, operating with Mosquitos out of Downham Market, Norfolk. 608 and the other Mosquito Squadrons of the *Light Night Striking Force* performed a host of different Duties for Bomber Command, though mostly Flying Diversionary & Independent harassing Raids. Due to the speed & range of the Mosquito, they were ideally suited for hit & run Operations and would sometimes Fly 2 Sorties in a day. Another benefit was the effect they had on German Civil & Military Morale, because Mosquitos were rarely shot down by either German Fighters or

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anti-Aircraft Fire. A German Fighter pilot would write of them: *'We had to meet the two quite different uses of the Mosquito. Firstly, there was the Nightly Raid to Bomb Berlin and 2ndly their use as Pathfinders at High Altitude in the Ruhr. Night after night, 30 to 40 Mosquitoes flew to Berlin and dropped Bombs and the Psychological Stress on the Berliners was considerable. Flak & Searchlights were moved to Berlin without having any considerable or lasting effect. The Mosquitoes flew at Altitudes above 30,000-ft and after crossing the Elbe lost height to Fly over Berlin at the highest possible speed to avoid the concentrated Flak. The direction of the Flights across Berlin was different with each Operation.'*

As mentioned above, the Squadron also Specialised in Fast, High-Flying Night Raids on Germany, particularly Berlin. For his Services Cook was awarded the DFC in March 1945 and though the Citation has as yet not been located, the Award would almost certainly have been for this 2nd Operational Tour. This was however not the end of his Service as he Volunteered for another Tour with 608 Squadron. During this Final Tour, he would continue Piloting Mosquito's in the same Role as before and also taking part in the final devastating Bomber Offensive against Berlin. For his sustained Gallantry, he was further awarded the DSO in September 1945.

The London Gazette 20th March 1945 Issue 36997 Page 5 of 8F/Lt Reginald James Cook, DFM (121047), RAFVR, 608 Squadron (No citation printed) DSO London Gazette 18th September 1945. The recommendations states:

*'Flight Lieutenant Cook has proved himself to be a most Skilful & Courageous Operational Pilot. He has recently completed a 3rd Tour of Operational Duty. His Sorties have all been completed over Enemy Territory in Germany & Occupied Europe, and Heavy anti-Aircraft Defences have frequently been encountered. This Officer took an effective part in the Final prolonged Bomber Offensive against Berlin. Flight Lieutenant Cook has operated continuously from the early days of the War till the present time. His many successes have made him a valuable Asset to his Squadron.'*

**WALTER ROBERT COWELL** , RAF , 9 Squadron , or IX squadron , killed in action 20<sup>th</sup> July 1940 aged 20 . Sergt . Commemorated at Runnymede. 9 Squadron was based at Honington and flew Wellington bombers on precision bombing missions . "9 Squadron Operation book . 19/7 20.10pm Eleven aircraft took off for operations . Ten aircraft returned safely . Aircraft L 7795 ( S/L Monypenny and crew failed to return .) son of Robert John and Sarah Elizabeth Cowell, (nee Chapman ) of Porter Street , ag lab.

**DOREEN MAUD DACK . WRAF . ACW2** . Born Downham 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1923 . She was the daughter of David and Elsie Dack who ran a dairy in Priory Road . In 1941 the war came to Downham and an airfield was built on higher land just outside the town . " Construction began in the latter part of 1941 . It was built at great speed . For months on end the roads to Downham and Bexwell were like mud tracks as lorries busily transported sand and gravel from

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pits to the site where hundreds of Irish navvies laid down the concrete runways . By the spring of 1942 the airfield was largely complete . " ( John B Hilling . Strike Hard) Doreen travelled to Norwich on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1941 . She was enrolled as ACW2 on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1941 and then on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1941 transferred to Gloucester .This is followed by a reference in the Unit column of her service record which simply says 13BC and three MMM or HHH dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 1941 . She was promoted to ACW1 in November 1941 . However on 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 1942 she was discharged as being " physically unfit for air force duties ( and crossed through) although fit for employment ( words lost ) " She died at home in Priory Road of cardiac arrest , inanition and anorexia , and is buried in the cemetery next to the church . The commemorative words are " We loved her, but God loved her more . " She died on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1942 in her 19<sup>th</sup> year .

**RONALD ARTHUR DENNIS** , leading Telegraphist , HMS Turbulent , d March 1943 .  
Commanding officer Cmmdr Linton awarded VC for his work in the Mediterranean .

1 Mar 1943 HMS Turbulent (Cdr. J.W. Linton, DSO, DSC, RN) missed with torpedoes but then sank with gunfire the Italian merchant San Vincenzo (865 GRT, built 1905) off Paola, Italy. This attack is believed to have been from Turbulent as it was well within her patrol area. The torpedo-boat Giuseppe Dezza was sent to hunt the submarine but without success. The German merchant Tell (1349 GRT, built 1938) proceeding from Cagliari to Civitavecchia was ordered to alter course to avoid the submarine.

3 Mar 1943 It was most likely HMS Turbulent that sank the Italian sailing vessels Gesu Guiseppe E Maria (64 GRT) and Pier Delle Vigne (65 GRT) with gunfire off Milazzo, Sicily, Italy. According to Italian sources the corvette Gabbiano recovered four survivors from the Pier Delle Vigne.

25 May 1943 Commander John Wallace Linton, DSO, DSC, RN was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

**PETER ANSELM DORMAN** . Killed in action over Germany .Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July 1942 . aged 22 , Sgt RAFVR , son of Rev Wilfred Dorman and his wife Alice Marguerite , nee Cregoe , she had been a professional violinist and Dorman and Cregoe families came from Cornwall and Devon . Peter Anselm their third child ,( an older brother John Richard became a priest ) served with 218 Gold Coast squadron . He was killed during an operation of 218 Squadron on Duisburg . 218 had transferred from Marham to Downham and their Stirling bombers took off to mine and bomb the industrial town of the Ruhr . The squadron had only been based in Downham for matter of two weeks . He is buried in Downham Market cemetery . "In dear memory , killed on active service . May light perpetual shine upon him . "

**JAMES CLARK GREENWOOD** . Pilot officer , Royal Canadian Air Force , died 14<sup>th</sup> June 1943 ; aged 19 . son of Oswald and Agnes Greenwood of Niagara Falls , Ontario , Canada . "He sought the glory of his country ; he found the glory of God ." Globe and Mail of Niagara Falls, " died of injuries received on active service overseas ; son of Oswald Greenwood Lookman Crescent , Niagara Falls , Ontario ." 1911 census Lot 17 " Oswald , b 1884 , Laura, b 1885

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,Arthur b 1908 ." Oswald was Presbyterian and son of John a farmer . From the Canadian war memorial " GREENWOOD, JAMES CLARK P/O(P) J23230. From Niagara Falls, Ontario. Killed Jun 14/43 age 19. #17 Advanced Flying Unit. P/O Greenwood was killed when his Miles Master aircraft AZ 811 struck an overhead high tension cable with the tail plane and then crashed at Three Holes Bridge. Pilot Officer Pilot Greenwood is buried in the Downham Market Cemetery, Norfolk, England.

**LT MARCUS HUGH HAWKINS** , Italy , 27<sup>th</sup> Aug 1944 , 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Rifle Brigade . Buried Arezzo cemetery . "All you had hoped for , all you had, you gave . " son of Lancelot and Mabelle Hawkins of King`s Lynn . This last major defensive line ran from the coast some 30 miles (48 km) north of [Pisa](#), along the jagged Apennine Mountains chain between Florence and [Bologna](#) to the [Adriatic coast](#), just south of [Rimini](#). In order to shorten the Allied [lines of communication](#) for the advance into Northern Italy, the [Polish II Corps](#) advanced towards the port of [Ancona](#) and, after a month-long [battle](#), succeeded in capturing it on 18 July.

During *Operation Olive*, which commenced on 25 August, the Gothic Line defences were penetrated on both the Fifth and Eighth Army fronts; but, there was no decisive breakthrough.

. " Another of the German defensive lines was the Gustav line . The Germans made a stand in front of Arezzo in July 1944 . The town was taken on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1944 by 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Div . The site was chosen in Nov 1944 and graves were brought in from other sites . "

**ERIC CHARLES HEMMANT, 100 Sqdrn RAFVR** , died 1st Feb 1945 . Aged 22 . Son of Harold George and Ida Hemmant of Downham Market. Commemorated Durnbach cemetery . "Love`s last gift – remembrance " The Hemmants lived on the Green and Harold was , in 1939, a retired dairy farmer as was his father who lived next door .. Harold married Ida Andrews in 1921 . "100 squadron was reformed in 1942 when it became part of I Bomber Group equipped with Lancaster bombers and based at Grimsby . From 1942 the squadron was minelaying off Brest , Lorient and St Nazaire . Eric was possibly lost on the final raid of January 1945 against the Boschenworke at Stuttgart or possibly the raid against Ludwigshaven . "

**DOUGLAS FREDERICK HUNTER** , signal man Royal Corps of Signals , died Burma , 27 Feb 1945 , commemorated Rangoon. Was signaller with 2<sup>nd</sup> Div Signals . Died 27 Feb 1945 , aged 31 . in 1939 was a chemists assistant . son of Frederick Walter , grocery store manager , married to Alice Maude Eggleton , in Oct 1942 . " Work began in 1951 for the reception of graves from four battlefields Akyab, Mandelay , Meiktila, and Sahmaw, which were difficult to access and could not be maintained . After the war several hundred more graves were retrieved from other positions and brought together . "

**JOSEPH WALTER JACKSON** , telegraphist RN . Died 24<sup>th</sup> November 1941 aged 25 on HMS Dunedin . She was a D Class cruiser based in Freetown South Africa searching for a German cruiser when she spotted a mast probably a periscope , At 3.26 pm two torpedoes from U-124 hit her and she sank .Only 4 officers and 63 men survived . The survivors were 4 days and 3

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nights afloat and were finally rescued by an American cargo ship . He is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial . He was the son of Percy and Mary Jackson , of Bexwell Road, Downham Market in 1939 . His father Percy was a certified accountant and special constable .

**JOSEPH HENRY JOPLIN , Capt , RASC , d 18 April 1944 in Surrey.** Born 1912 Hampshire , son of John Joseph Joplin, (club steward of Paradise road, DM , in 1939. Born Rangoon , Burma , 1883. 1911 soldier ) and Caroline Elizabeth Halls ( married Brentwood 1911). Married Elsie Lucina dau of Charles Haderer , pearl merchant of Hackney, in Downham 1940 . "Loved and remembered always".

**FREDERICK ERNEST MOUNCER , 276 Sqdn , RAFVR , Died 17<sup>th</sup> April 1944, Redruth, Cornwall , buried Mundford .** Born 1909 son of Herbert and Emma Mouncer . 276 Squadron was used mainly in the South West for Airsea Rescue based at Portreath . Husband of Mary Alexandra , of Denver . ( brother of Sgt John Henry Mouncer , Suffolk Regiment , d June 1944 ) " Not lost but gone before ".

**REGINALD MANSELL, 80 Anti tank regiment , Royal Artillery gunner.** Son of Harry and Florence ; died 16 Feb 1942 . In 1939 the family are in the Council houses on Wisbech road, father is an agricultural labourer and Reginald is a corn porter . Commemorated Singapore Civil Hospital cemetery , this stands in the Kranji war cemetery "The SINGAPORE CIVIL HOSPITAL GRAVE MEMORIAL stands at the eastern end of the Singapore Memorial. During the last hours of the Battle of Singapore, wounded civilians and servicemen taken prisoner by the Japanese were brought to the hospital in their hundreds. The number of fatalities was such that burial in the normal manner was impossible. Before the war, an emergency water tank had been dug in the grounds of the hospital and this was used as a grave for more than 400 civilians and Commonwealth servicemen. After the war, it was decided that as individual identification of the dead would be impossible, the grave should be left undisturbed. The grave was suitably enclosed, consecrated by the Bishop of Singapore, and a cross in memory of all of those buried there was erected over it by the military authorities (this still exists near Block 8 in the grounds of Singapore General Hospital). 108 Commonwealth military casualties buried in the grave are commemorated on the Singapore Civil Hospital Grave Memorial"

## **WILLIAM GLADSTONE MARCHANT .**

Was born in 1910 in Downham Market, the last of 8 children of Arthur and Alberta Marchant . His father was Arthur Daniel the eldest son of Thomas Marchant a pork butcher of Market Place , Downham . By 1919 Arthur Daniel was an ironmonger and shop keeper of High St , Downham Market . His mother was Alberta Elizabeth dau of Albert Fuller of Cambridgeshire although she was born in Wandsworth , Surrey . She and Arthur Daniel married in 1891 . Later William joined his brother Albert Thomas in Manchester and both became Methodist ministers, Albert in 1932 and William in 1936. In 1938 he was appointed to the Blackpool circuit .

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William joined the army and was appointed to the Chaplain`s Dept and was gazetted as 4<sup>th</sup> class minister . In 1939 he married at Knaresborough , Yorks , Hildegard Bayersdorf ,

He died on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1945 just as the war was ending , attempting to save the life of a fellow passenger on the ship taking them to Australia which had docked at Chennai , India . He is buried in the Madras War cemetery , Chennai . India . His widow is described by CWGC as of Hamilton , Vic. Australia . His estate was probated by his brother Harold Arthur . (NB Albert Thomas came to a very sad end . He was found drowned by his own hand in 1944 , the inquest said he was depressed about his state of health and the new post he was to take up in Rochdale ).

**WALTER THOMAS OLYOTT**, F/O Air bomber, died 4<sup>th</sup> June 1944 , Normandy , 635 squadron ,son of Thomas ( Police inspector ) and Maude Olyott of Colchester, RAFVR .aged 21. "Essex Newsman 9<sup>th</sup> June 1944 . F/O W T Olyott a pathfinder air observer , son of Insp T Olyott of Colchester Borough Police , has been killed on operational duty . He was 21 and an old boy of Colchester Royal Grammar School . ". Walter was part of the attacks on Northern France preparatory to the D Day landings . He is buried in Downham Market cemetery . " Peace perfect peace . "

**DONALD JAMES RIX** , son of Sidney Thomas ( fish and chip shop owner of Bridge Street ) and Florence , of Downham Market , died 2 Oct 1944, aged 18, 7<sup>th</sup> Btn Hampshire Regt , buried Mook cemetery , Limburgh, Netherlands . The btn fought at Operation Market garden in Sept 1944 , defending the southern end of 2 bridges over the river Wall and stayed until 4<sup>th</sup> Oct 1944 . " Loved and remembered always . "

**ROBERT SADLER** : Flight Sergeant ( wireless operator and air gunner ) RAFVR died 4<sup>th</sup> June 1944 . aged 23 . Son of Richard and Sarah Sadler, and husband of Ada of Flixton , Lancs . " We planned a beautiful future , only to end in a dream . Your heart broken wife Ada . " Robert and Walter Olyott and Wharton all died on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1944 ( Watson died 18<sup>th</sup> June so possibly as a result of a later raid ) All were 635 squadron . " During much of April and May , 635 squadron`s targets were switched to to the enemy` a transport system in France as a prelude to the D Day invasion ( 6<sup>th</sup> June ) and the opening of the long awaited second front . " Robert`s parents were from Salford, and all his siblings worked in heavy industry . He married Ada Croston in Salford in October 1943 : she remarried in Jan 1945 William Quirk.

**PETER ROBERT WADSWORTH** , Royal Marines , killed in action 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 , ashore , D Day . HMS Copra which was not a ship but a shore base , Combined Operations , son of Percy and Edith Wadsworth, he was a lorry driver and Peter was an iron foundry store keeper ( in 1939) and they lived close to London road . Commemorated Chatham Naval Memorial .

**RICHARD GARNEYS WALES** , ,died 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1941 , aged 29 , RAFVR , 254 squadron , son of Dr Edward Garneys Wales and his wife Annie (nee Dowling ; who were married in Stockport in 1902 ) .. They also had a daughter born in 1908 , Nancy Edith Garneys Wales , who died in 1926. and is buried in the Churchside cemetery . Richard was living in 1939 with

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his parents 6 High Street, Downham Market , art student . The Wales were an old Downham family of doctors . Between January and May 28<sup>th</sup> 1941 ,254 squadron was based at Sumburgh and flew Bristol Beaufighters . The squadron was mainly engaged in coastal duties . Commemorated at Runnymede.

**DONALD ERNEST WALKER** , 205 Squadron , RAFVR , aged 26 , 205 Squadron which was based in Ceylon equipped with Catalina aircraft and used for anti submarine and coastal rescue work . Son of Edward Albert Walker , Registrar of Births Marriages and Deaths in the Downham district and his wife Sarah ( Tuckey) . Born Downham 1917 and died March 1944 . Commemorated Runnymede .

**CLAUDE REGINALD WAY** . Died 2 Sept 1940 , aged 58, Petty officer steward , HMS Ivanhoe . Son of Frederick ( watchmaker ) and Rose and husband of Elsie nee Ambrose , married Downham Market, January 1918. Daughter Mary born July ¼ 1918 . In 1911 Claude is serving in the Royal Navy in Essex and continues until he is discharged in 1935 . In a 1933 directory he is a commission agent living in Lynn Road . And in the same directory his mother Rosa is operating a registry office for servants in the High Street . Rejoins at the outbreak of war and is appointed to HMS Ivanhoe . She was with a flotilla of ships mine laying in the North Sea when HMS Express hit a mine and Ivanhoe going to her assistance was also mined . Attempts were made to make repairs but it was found she had broken her back and the decision was taken to abandon . Later she was sunk by a torpedo from HMS Kelvin . Commemorated Chatham Naval Memorial .

**HAROLD HOPPER WHITEHEAD**, 83 Squadron, Sergeant later Pilot Officer , awarded February 1941 DFM . Son of Thomas Cave Whitehead and Agnes his wife , butcher , of Railway Road , Downham Market . Died 26<sup>th</sup> July 1942 , commemorated Runnymede . 83 Squadron was based in Scampton and was equipped with the Avro Manchester which was replaced by the Avro Lancaster . ( Harold had a brother Reginald Cave Whitehead, Norfolk Regiment , who was a FEPOW but survived )

**PETER WILLIAM WOODWARD** , died 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1943 , aged 22 , 6<sup>th</sup> Btn R Norfolk regt , son of William James ( Singer sewing machine agent ) and Mildred Sarah ( nee Knott ) of Downham Market living 1911 Southsea , Hampshire . The Japanese aimed at completing the railway in 14 months and work began in June 1942. The two sections of the line finally met near Konkoita towards the end of October 1943 and the completed line, 424 kilometres long, was operational by December 1943. The graves of those who died during the construction and maintenance of the Burma-Siam railway (except for the Americans, whose remains were repatriated) were transferred from camp burial grounds and isolated sites along the railway into three cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar. Thanbyuzayat became a prisoner of war administration headquarters and base camp in September 1942 and in January 1943 a base hospital was organised for the sick. The camp was close to a railway marshalling yard and workshops, and heavy casualties were sustained among the prisoners during Allied bombing raids in March and June 1943. The camp

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was then evacuated and the prisoners, including the sick, were marched to camps further along the line where camp hospitals were set up. Commemorated Thanbyuzat cemetery Burma 23 August 1943. "At rest until we meet again . "

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Happily surviving the war , Frederick Charles HODGSON was awarded the George Medal , in 1945 , the citation reads as below . The incident involved the SS Charles Henderson,, at Bari 9th April 1945 , laden with bombs and ammunition, which was on fire.

"Sergeant McGhee was the instigator and organiser of the joint action – although this does not diminish the courage of Sergeant Dalgarno and Sergeant Hodgson, who promptly and voluntarily followed his lead. Sergeant Dalgarno's and Hodgson's efforts materially assisted in putting out the explosion of the bombs below, which would have lead to further serious casualties and would have stopped the efforts going on all around to put out the fires raging."