

Charing Heath

Second World War 1939 – 1945

No form of commemoration for the men of Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent who lost their lives whilst serving in the armed forces, or as civilians during the years of the Second World War has so far been located, including in the parish church of Holy Trinity, despite the fact that local man John Sage is interred in the churchyard, with the added irony that two of the victims of the Great War who are properly commemorated in the church were probably related to John. That being the case those commemorated here are all unfortunately categorised as being lost men.

BARNES, ROBERT OXLEY. Corporal of Horse, 305253.
2nd Royal Horse Guards (The Blues). Household Cavalry.
Died 15 June 1944. Aged 26.
Born and resided Yorkshire.
Son of Robert and Sallie Barnes.
Husband of Betty Sophia Barnes of Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated Charing (Kent County) Crematorium, Charing, Ashford, Kent.
Pre war member of the Royal Horse Guards. Household Cavalry.

COOPER, FREDERICK GEORGE.
Auxiliary Fire Service.
Died 7 July 1944. Aged 17.
Son of Emily May Cooper of 1 Bank Cottages, Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent, and of the late George Thomas Cooper.
Injured at Swan Street, Charing, Ashford, Kent, and died later the same day whilst a patient at the Hothfield, Ashford, Kent Emergency Hospital.

POWELL, ERNEST.
Died 24 March 1943. Aged 54.
Husband of Edith Kate Powell of 'Oakcrest', Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Ashford, Kent, civic war memorial.
Ernest died at Haywards Garage, New Street, Ashford, Kent.

ROBINSON, JOHN VICTOR. Sergeant, 567796.
15 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 28 August 1942. Aged 23.
Son of Hubert Hedley Robinson O.B.E., Master of the SS Empire Success (London). Merchant Navy died on active service 19 February 1945, aged 58, and of Mrs. C. Helen Robinson of Wimborne Minster, Dorset.
Husband of Ethel M. Robinson.
Commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial. Panel 92.

John was a crew member of Stirling bomber W7624 LS-E, that had been delivered from the manufacturer to No.7 Squadron on 23 August 1942, and then going to John's squadron the following day. Lost on its first operation the aircraft was one of two of the squadrons Stirlings which were lost on the raid. W7624 LS-E was flown by 26 year old Flight Sergeant, Hugh Barton-Smith, B.Sc. R.A.F. (V.R.), of St. David's, Pembrokeshire, Wales. The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Bourn, Cambridgeshire at 2100 hours on 27 August 1942, in a mixed bomber force of 306 aircraft, which was comprised of five different makes of bombers, engaged on a raid on Kassel, Germany. There was only a little cloud over Kassel and the Pathfinders were able to illuminate the area well. Widespread damage was caused, particularly in the south-western parts of the city. Kassel reports showed that that 144 buildings were destroyed, and 317 seriously damaged. Several military establishments were hit, and twenty eight soldiers, and 28 civilians had been killed, and that 187 civilians and 64 soldiers were injured. Among the buildings severely damaged were all three of the factories of the Henschel aircraft company. 31 aircraft were lost on the raid, they being, 21 Wellingtons, 5 Stirlings, 3 Lancasters, 1 Halifax, and 1 Hampden. 142 Squadron, R.A.F. based at R.A.F. Grimsby, Lincolnshire lost 5 of its 15 Wellingtons that had taken part in the raid. Many of the casualties were attributed to night-fighter action, including John's Stirling, the aircraft is thought to have been intercepted and shot down by a German night-fighter, Oberleutnant Victor Bauer of III./NGJ1, and then to have crashed near Bentelo, Overijssel, near Henglo, Holland, where one of the crew 22 year old Flight Sergeant (Air Gunner), Glen Smith R.N.Z.A.F. of Auckland City, New Zealand is buried. At the time of writing the above brief commemoration to John and his comrades, (April 2005), it has been announced on a local television station, and in the press that John's aircraft has recently been located and excavated by the Dutch Army, and that his remains have now been recovered allowing for a fitting burial, and the erasure of his name from the Runnymede Memorial. As the consequence of the discovery, the Royal Air Force are now actively trying to locate any members of John's family. One of the problems now facing the Dutch Army at the time of writing, is the defusing of the aircrafts four heavy bombs, 1900 pounders, which are still onboard the Stirling, which are a type of bomb that has never been defused before in the Netherlands.

SAGE, JOHN THOMAS. Private, 745226.

Army Catering Corps.

Died 3 October 1946. Aged 40.

Son of James and Francis Sage of Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent.

Husband of Hilda Ethel Sage of Ashford, Kent.

Buried Charing Heath, Ashford, Kent, (Holy Trinity) churchyard.

Originally enlisted in the Royal Artillery.