

Herne Bay Blacksole Bridge Memorial



The memorial as depicted above is in memory of 20 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot) Albert Hugo Friday, R.A.F. (V.R.) of 611 Squadron, Royal Air Force who lost his life on Friday 30 August 1942 when his Spitfire suffered catastrophic engine failure, and crashed close to Blacksole Bridge, Margate Road, Herne Bay, Kent where the memorial was erected. As is the case with similar undertakings, a number of people and organisations were involved in the commemoration project, but it was very appropriate and fitting that the honour of unveiling the memorial on Thursday 27 August 2009, fell to Mr. Wally Mankelow, Gabriel Davies the Sheriff of Canterbury and Aldon Ferguson of Wargrave, Berkshire, who is the Historian and Archivist for the 611 (West Lancashire) Fighter Squadron, Auxiliary Air Force. Members of the Herne Bay Branch of the Royal British Legion provided an honour guard with three standards; prayers were said and wreathes laid at the service of dedication and unveiling. Mr. Mankelow, who was a teenager at the time of the crash, said he was keen for Albert Friday to be remembered. He heard the explosion and watched the plane wreckage come down to earth while he was walking to Sunday school with his sister. Mr. Mankelow said "I lived in Herne Bay and when I was eleven years old and I was on my way to Sunday School at about 2.50 pm; I heard an explosion and on looking up I saw parts of an aeroplane coming down and a parachute descending very fast. The

aeroplane was scattered in various places in Herne Bay and the pilot landed in a tree at Blacksole Bridge. The pilot died from a fractured pelvis and a dislocated neck." Mr. Mankelow added, "My dad was killed in the air force and he's got a memorial up at Oakington, Cambridgeshire, and I thought it would be nice that we had something for this young man. He'd taken off with another pilot to intercept a German aircraft but it was a reconnaissance aircraft and was very, very high. They didn't make it up to them. What caused the explosion, we don't know. There's a theory that fumes had built up in the fuel tank and exploded but I don't know if that's right." Mr. Manktelow has researched the crash and been assisted in his quest by Aldon Ferguson, and campaigned for a plaque to commemorate the death Pilot Officer Friday, and the memorial is the successful culmination of those efforts. The memorial plaque was commissioned by Herne Bay Town Partners, and was designed and the artwork undertaken by Roger and James Casement, at Casement Sign & Graphics, Unit 1, Nursery Industrial Estate, Sea Street, Herne Bay, Kent, CT6 8LB. The information about Pilot Officer Friday and the memorial plaque in his memory will now be included in the Herne Bay Cultural Trail. Albert's birth was recorded in the Mile End, London, Registration District during the third quarter of 1922. He joined 611 (West Lancashire) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force at R.A.F. Kenley, Surrey around July 1942, and moved with the squadron to R.A.F. Redhill, Surrey. His first operational sortie was on Tuesday 21 July 1942, in a Scramble from R.A.F. Redhill, to patrol Beachy Head, Sussex from 0515 hours to 0655 hours, during the course of which nothing was sighted. Albert's final operational sortie was on Friday 30 August 1942 which was a Scramble to Maidstone, Kent flying a Spitfire Mk IX (BS 185); he took off from R.A.F. Redhill 1415 hours as Red 2 with Pilot Officer (Pilot), Graham as Red 1. They successfully located and intercepted a German Junkers JU88, which was doing a high 'recce' over the Thames area, but could not get the necessary height to engage the enemy aircraft. For reasons which are still unclear, Albert's Spitfire disintegrated in flight near West Malling, Kent, and broke up at 20,000 feet. Although Albert baled out of the badly damaged aircraft, it is thought that he was struck by parts of the aircraft and was killed. Albert was laid to rest with full military honours as befitted his rank, at Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey. The memorial to which Mr. Mankelow made brief reference, which is in Cambridgeshire, was erected in 1999 is in remembrance of the eight crew of Stirling bomber W7467 MG-? who were all killed when it crashed at 1540 hours on Saturday 17 January 1942, approximately 2 miles north of Earith. It crashed following a collision with a Hurricane from 56 Operational Training Unit, which had made an unauthorised attack on the Stirling. 33 year old Sergeant (Air Gunner) Walter James Mankelow of Herne Bay, Kent was numbered amongst the bombers crew. The 19 year old pilot of the Hurricane also lost his life when he had collided with the Stirling bomber.



FRIDAY, ALBERT HUGO. Pilot Officer (Pilot), 119493.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.
611 (West Lancashire) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force.
Died Friday 30 August 1942. Aged 20.
Born Mile End, London. Resided Hackney, London.
Son of Berthold Leonard Friday and Ruby Friday (née Chard) of Hackney,
London.
Buried Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey. Grave Ref: 22. A. 6.