

# Pluckley

## Second World War 1939 – 1945

**THORP, ARNELL.** Major.

Home Guard.

Died 15 September 1943. Aged 62.

Husband of Anne Bisdee Thorp of The Old Manor, Pluckley, Ashford, Kent.

Arnell died at The Old Manor, Pluckley, Ashford, Kent.

**ASHDOWN, CHARLES ALFRED.**

Died Sunday 15 September 1940. Aged 18.

Son of Mr and Mrs Alfred Ashdown of Oxley Cottage, Fir Toll, Pluckley, Ashford, Kent.

Also commemorated at Staplehurst, Kent, Railway Station.

Charles, who had attended Ashford Grammar School 1933-1938, was a Southern Railway employee, and he was killed on duty whilst working as a Ticket Clerk at the Railway Station, Station Approach, Staplehurst, Kent. Hurricane N2537 flown by Belgian national, Pilot Officer, Georges Doutrepoint of 229 Squadron, R.A.F. one of two of the squadrons aircraft that were shot down by Luftwaffe Messerschmitt Bf 109's pilots over the Sevenoaks, Kent area on Sunday 15 September 1940. Shortly before midday, Georges Doutrepoint aircraft was shot up badly and he was killed as his aircraft flew for several miles out of control and eventually crashed on Staplehurst Railway Station, killing Charles Ashdown. Another member of the squadron, Pilot Officer R. Smith managed to bale out of his bullet riddled aircraft over Sevenoaks, and fortunately survived but he suffered severe leg injuries. On Monday 15 September 2003, sixty three years to the day after Charles and Georges died at Staplehurst Railway Station, Eric Doutrepoint, Georges son, who was just one when his father died, came to Kent to unveil a new plaque at the station. He said: "I am proud and moved. I did not know my father because I was just one year old, but my mother has some memories and some letters. She cannot come because she is ill but she asked me to tell how it is." Also at the unveiling ceremony, and service of remembrance and dedication, was one of Charles's work colleagues, Jack Wood, who reflected that it could so easily have been him that died and not Charles, his fate determined by a tossed coin to decide who was working that day. Mr Wood explained: "I said to Charlie there's one thing to do with it – there's no trains to get us here, we'll have to toss a coin. Yeah, fair enough, Jack he said, so we tossed a coin and I won the toss. It's unbelievable and I still can't believe to this day that I'm still here because of a toss of a coin. Aircraft from the Belgian Air Force performed an impressive fly-past during the ceremony, whilst Mr Doutrepoint unveiled the memorial plaque commemorating the deaths of his father and Charles Ashdown. Sunday 15 September 1940 was not only the turning point of the Battle of Britain, it was effectively the turning point of the

whole Second World War. Every Fighter Command aerodrome in 11 Group was in some way involved, every squadron within 11 Group participated, as well as the Duxford Wing from 12 Group, and in addition to which a number of squadrons in 10 Group were called upon to protect areas in the south west. Each year 15 September is of course now celebrated in Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries as 'Battle of Britain Day,' when those 'Few' who paid the ultimate price in the summer of 1940 are remembered. We should also from time to time reflect on those who died on the ground, as the result of the aerial combatants.

