

Rolvenden

Second World War 1939 – 1945

In addition to being commemorated on the village war memorial, all the servicemen who died are also commemorated on a memorial plaque located in Rolvenden (St Mary) Parish Church, and all have their respective ranks and military formations shown, which due to all being correct has meant that researching further has been by far and away the easiest Ashford, Kent rural parish so far researched. Regretably the two civilian casualties who were mother and daughter are only commemorated on the external war memorial. The additional casualty Robert Brundrett who is shown as a 'Lost Man,' is recorded due to his CWGC (Rolvenden) commemoration details, but at the time of his demise both parents resided at Court Lodge, Hinxhill, Ashford, Kent.

BENTALL, SYDNEY WILLIAM TEMPLE. M.B. Major, 115470.
Royal Army Medical Corps.
Died at sea 30 October 1942.
Born Bournemouth. Resided Kent.
Commemorated on the Brookwood Memorial. Panel 18. Column 1.

BROOKS, EDWARD H. Private, 6286380.
5th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).
Died 6 January 1943. Aged 29.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of William Arthur Edward Brookes and Elizabeth Brooks.
Husband of Robina H. Brooks.
Commemorated on the Medjez-el-Bab Memorial, Tunisia. Face 15.

BRUCE, ARTHUR. Private, D/33169.
8th (Home Defence) Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
Died 18 August 1940. Aged 50.
Son of Alfred and Florence Roena Bruce of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Eastbourne (Langley) Cemetery. Grave Ref: Section B. Grave 154.

BURTON, RONALD WILLIAM. Driver, T/108143.
22 Reserve Motor Transport Company, Royal Army Service Corps.
Died 29/30 September 1940. Aged 22.
Born and resided Hastings, Sussex.
Son of Frank and Edith Mary Burton of Rolvenden Ashford, Kent.
Buried Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent (St. Mary) Churchyard.

BUSS, HORACE H. Lance Bombadier, 1102364.
17 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.
Died 24 November 1943. Aged 37.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Horace Henry and Amy Buss.
Husband of Gladys May Buss of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Sangro River War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: XV. B. 38.

CORDREY, DICK. Gunner, 878364.
234 Battery, 89 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery.
Died 20 May 1941. Aged 20.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Percival John and Constance Isora Cordrey of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Commemorated on the Athens Memorial, Greece. Face 2.
Pre war member of the Royal Artillery.

JELL, DENNIS JAMES. Able Seaman, C/SSX 31106.
Royal Navy, H.M.S. Bramble.
Died 31 December 1942.
Son of Percy James and Alice Jell.
Husband of Kathleen Constance Jell of Rolvenden
Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 54. Column 3.
Built at H.M. Dockyard Devonport, by Barclay Curle, Whiteinch. H.M.S. Bramble was Helcian class minesweeper, which was commissioned on 22 June 1939. When she was lost on 31 December 1942, she was part of the escort force to Convoy JW-51B, which left Loch Ewe, Scotland heading for Russia. In the Barents Sea, whilst returning from a search for stragglers of the convoy, she was sighted and engaged by the German Heavy Cruiser, Admiral Hipper. Her engagement with the much larger ship left her badly damaged, and she was later being sunk by the German destroyer Eckholdt, resulting in the deaths of 8 officers and 113 ratings. Captain Robert Sherbrooke, of H.M.S. Onslow who was in command of the convoy escorts, was later awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry during the enemy attacks. For comprehensive details appertaining to H.M.S. Bramble, and the other ships in her class, the best site accessed has been www.halcyon-class.co.uk as such it is pointless adding more regarding his ship, at this brief commemoration to Dennis.

RUNCIMAN, KENNETH. Sergeant (Flight Engineer), 1810353.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 12 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 24 September 1943. Aged 19.
Son of George Darling Runciman and Mabel Amelia Runciman of Forest Row, East Grinstead, Sussex.
Buried Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Kleve, Nordrhein-Westfal, Germany.
Grave Ref: Collective grave 22. A. 15-18.
Kenneth was the Flight Engineer of Lancaster bomber DV225 PH-H, which was flown by 22 year old Flying Officer (Pilot), Alan Guthrie, of Kirby Knowle, Yorkshire. The aircraft took off at 1915 hours from R.A.F. Wickenby,

Lincolnshire on a bombing mission to Manheim, Germany. 628 aircraft took part in the Manheim raid, comprised of 312 Lancasters, 193 Halifaxes, 115 Stirlings, 8 Mosquitos and 5 B-17 Flying Fortresses. The Pathfinder plan worked well and concentrated bombing fell on the intended target area, although later stages of the raid crept back across the northern edge of Ludwigshafen and out into the open country. 32 aircraft failed to return from the raid, they being 18 Lancasters, 7 Halifaxes, and 7 Wellingtons, including Kenneth's Lancaster, exact cause of the reason for the loss of the aircraft is still unclear. All the seven crew members of Kenneth's aircraft are buried in the same cemetery. Lancaster bomber DV225 was delivered to 12 Squadron, Royal Air Force on 25 July 1943 and at the time of its loss had completed a total of 146 hours.

SEYMOUR, CHARLES JOSEPH. Pilot Officer (Flight Engineer), 160592.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 158 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 20 February 1944. Aged 22.

Son of Charles and Florence Bertha Seymour of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent (St Mary) Churchyard.

Charles was the Flight Engineer of Halifax bomber HX351 NP-S, which was flown by Pilot Officer (Pilot), Peter M. Jennings. The aircraft took off at 0016 hours from R.A.F. Lissett, East Yorkshire on a bombing mission to Leipzig, it being one of the 255 Halifax bombers in a formation of 823 aircraft. Only seven minutes after getting airborne the aircraft crashed into a field near Atwick, Hornsea, Yorkshire, killing all the seven crew onboard. Charles's bomber had the sad distinction of being the first of the 78 aircraft lost on the Leipzig raid, which at the time was the most costly of the Second World War. The four Englishmen and two Welshmen killed in the crash were taken to their home locations for burial, and Pilot Officer (Air/Gunner) Gerald Fitzsimmons of the R.C.A.F. from Alix Alberta, Canada, now lies amongst the 1016 casualties who are buried in Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery, Yorkshire of which about two thirds are his fellow countrymen. A memorial plaque was later placed near the crash site, and in 1994 Georgina Wood, then a school girl, came across the long forgotten memorial, and as a personal tribute, placed flowers in remembrance of the crew. Since that time the memorial has been re-sited at the edge of the field, the work being undertaken by her father, George Wood, and where a Service of Rededication was conducted by the Vicar of Atwick, Yorkshire in 1996.

STAPLES, MICHAEL EDMUND. Flying Officer, 83242.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 604 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 9 November 1941. Aged 24.

Son of Major E. C. Staples M.C., Indian Army and Olive Clare Staples of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.

Husband of Doreen Katherine Mary Staples.

Buried Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey. Grave Ref: 21. A. 19.

Michael was a pilot during the Battle of Britain whilst serving with the same squadron as when he died, and was a brother of the next casualty commemorated.

STAPLES, PHILIP ROBERT. Lance Corporal, 6464459.
49th (West Riding) Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps. Royal Armoured Corps.
Died 6 October 1944. Aged 23.
Son of Major E. C. Staples M.C., Indian Army and Olive Clare Staples of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Born and resided Kent.
Buried Heverlee War Cemetery, Leuven, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium.
Grave Ref: 6. F. 21.
Also numbered amongst the forty employees of the Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Company (Great Britain) Ltd, that lost their lives in the Second World War, who are commemorated on the company memorial plaque.
Pre war member of the Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment).

TESTER, KENNETH ARTHUR. Sergeant (Air Gunner), 1397311.
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 57 Squadron, Royal Air Force.
Died 2 April 1943. Aged 25.
Son of Tom and Ethel Ellen Tester of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Nantes (Pont-Du-Cens) Communal Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France.
Grave Ref: Plot L. Row B. Collective grave 16-18.
Kenneth was a crew member of Lancaster bomber W4257 DX- which was flown by 20 year old Pilot Officer (Pilot), Robert L. Pickup of Mold, Flintshire, North Wales. The aircraft took off at 2007 hours from R.A.F. Scampton, Lincolnshire on 2 April 1943, and was amongst 51 aircraft that were assigned to take part on a bombing mission to the port St-Nazaire, France, the aircraft crashed in the target area killing all seven crew who are buried in the same cemetery. it would seem likely that Kenneth was the oldest amongst them, as three were aged 20 and two were aged 21, their Lancaster which was the only aircraft lost on the raid had been delivered to 57 Squadron on 30 September 1942, and the time of its lost, Kenneth's aircraft had completed a total of 329 hours.

TRITTON, ALBERT RICHARD. Gunner, 1708254.
171 Battery, 57 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery.
Died 17 March 1942. Aged 30.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Alexander George and Sarah Amy Tritton.
Husband of Ada Lilian Tritton of Derringstone, Barham, Kent.
Commemorated on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 38.

WATNEY, ALAN NORMAN. Lieutenant, 207668.
2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards.
Died 15 May 1943. Aged 21.
Born and resided Kent.
Son of Arthur Norman and Josephine Grace Watney of Benenden, Kent.
Buried Enfidaville War Cemetery, Tunisia. Grave Ref: VII. A. 32.

WESTON, ROBERT B. Sergeant (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner, 1293607
Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.
Died 10 December 1942. Aged 21.
Son of John Lionel and Mary Jane Weston of Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.
Buried Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent, (St. Mary) Churchyard.

CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

WINTER, ALICE GERTRUDE.

Died 19 July 1944. Aged 38.

Wife of Roland Winter, and mother of Violet who is the next casualty commemorated. Alice and her daughter died at their home 'Little Pookwell, Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.

WINTER, VIOLET GERTRUDE.

Died 19 July 1944. Aged 13.

Daughter of Roland Winter, and Alice Gertrude Winter who is the last casualty commemorated above, Violet died at her home "Little Pookwell," Rolvenden, Ashford, Kent.

LOST MAN

BRUNDRETT, ROBERT. Lance Corporal, VX85959.

2/5th Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force.

Killed in action at Gartha, Libya on 3 January 1941. Aged 33.

Born Ebbw Vale, Monmouthshire, Wales 27 October 1907.

Enlisted Melbourne, Victoria, Australia 1 December 1939.

Resided Court Lodge, Hinxhill, Ashford, Kent.

Sixth son of Walter and Ada Brundrett of Rolvenden, Kent, who also resided at Court Lodge, Hinxhill, Ashford, Kent.

Buried Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt. Grave Ref: 18. E. 1.

Robert, who attended Ashford Grammar School 1918-1922, is commemorated on the Australian National War Memorial, Canberra, Australian Capital Territories, Australia. Panel 31, and on the Melbourne, Victoria, Australia civic war memorial, he is also commemorated on the headstone of his parents grave in Hinxhill, Ashford, Kent, (St Mary) Churchyard, as is his cousin James Edward Brundrett, who is the casualty commemorated above. Two other cousins of Robert and James, died in the Great War, they being Walter who was killed at Vimy Ridge serving in the 10th Battalion, Canadian Infantry (Alberta Regiment), and George of the Cheshire Regiment, attached to the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, who died of wounds at Rouen, France. Although Robert's parents did not die until 1945 and 1951 respectively, his sister Florence Brundrett of Court Lodge, Hinxhill, Ashford, Kent, is shown as being one of his Next of Kin along with his father on the Australian data which has been accessed. The death of Robert occurred only a week short of the second anniversary of the demise of a brother who had perished in a bush fire at Mount Rubicon, Victoria, Australia on 10 January 1939. Unfortunately the road named in Robert's honour on the Little Burton Farm Estate, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, is called ROBERT BRUNDETT CLOSE, as opposed to ROBERT BRUNDRETT.