

Tonbridge NatWest Bank



The impressive memorial plaque as shown above is located in the Tonbridge Branch of the NatWest Bank, 130 High Street, Tonbridge, Kent. TN9 1DE. The memorial plaque commemorates two Second World War casualties, both of whom had been members of staff at the Bank, at which time it would of course have been the National Westminster Bank. The National Westminster Bank erected many memorial plaques after the Great War, in the style of that shown above. Some commemorated a sole former member of the Bank staff, whilst others commemorated more than one person. The inscription on those of the Great War casualties is "IN MEMORY OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBER OF STAFF OF THIS BRANCH WHO GAVE HIS LIFE IN THE GREAT WAR 1914 – 1918." Where there was more than a single commemoration, the wording is GAVE THEIR LIVES. As can be seen on the photograph of the memorial plaque above, the wording was retained on those of the Second World War, but of course the wording was altered to THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939 – 1945. Although we have regrettably thus far only been in a position to add a small number of the National Westminster Bank memorial plaques that are in Kent, on www.kentfallen.com, but in view of some of the 'feed back' comments which their addition to the website have been generated, it should be pointed out here that following the Great War, the National Westminster Bank was most certainly not the only Bank to erect memorial plaques in remembrance of former staff members. A not insignificant number of the banks have since merged. Thanks are due again to Susan F. for very kindly providing the above photograph for inclusion here.

Commemorations

FRANKLIN, JOHN BENJAMIN GOUGH. Captain, EC/1523.

2nd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment.

Died Monday 25 August 1941. Aged 22.

Eldest son of Brigadier-General Harold Scott Erskine Franklin, C.M.G., C.B.E., D.S.O., D.L., and Kathleen Elizabeth Franklin of 21, Manor Grove, Tonbridge, Kent.

Buried Basra War Cemetery, Iraq. Grave Ref: 7. A. 11.

John's father Harold Scott Erskine Franklin was born at Lucknow, India, and during the Great War he had served as an officer in the 31(India Corps) Signal Company, 15th Ludhiana Sikhs, and as such it was not surprising that during his time serving in the Second World War, John served in 2nd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment. Post the Great War, the Indian Government reformed the army again changing from single battalion regiments to multi battalion regiments. The 15th Ludhiana Sikhs at that time became the 2nd Battalion, 11th Sikh Regiment. Following independence the regiment was allocated to the new Indian Army. Brigadier-General Franklin died on Saturday 28 February 1948, at which time he and his wife resided at 21, Waterloo Mansions, Dover, Kent.

MANN, GEOFFREY EDWARD. Flying Officer (Pilot), 125981.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. 540 Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died Friday 16 July 1943. Aged 20.

Son of Thomas Edwin Mann and Mabel Annie Mann (née Foot) of Melnot, 54, Hopwood Gardens, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Buried Milan War Cemetery, Italy. Grave Ref: Joint grave III. B. 12.

Commemorated on the Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent civic war memorial, and on a memorial plaque at The Skinners' School, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

Geoffrey's birth was recorded in the Tonbridge, Kent, Registration District during the second quarter of 1923. The Skinners' School, Royal Tunbridge Wells where Geoffrey had been a pupil is a grammar school for boys which was established in 1887, and was founded by the Worshipful Company of Skinners in response to a demand for education in the region. He was commissioned as a Pilot Officer on Friday 3 July 1942, as was published in The London Gazette dated Tuesday 6 October 1942. 540 Squadron, Royal Air Force in which Geoffrey was serving at the time of his death was formed on Monday 19 October 1942 at R.A.F. Leuchars, Fife, Scotland, from H and L Flights of the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit. The squadron's Mosquitoes carried out reconnaissance missions over Norway, and based a detachment at R.A.F. Benson, Oxfordshire for similar flights over France and Italy. From R.A.F. Leuchars, long-range trips were made to German and Polish Baltic Sea ports, while another detachment based at R.A.F. Gibraltar covered southern France and Algeria in preparation for the landings in North Africa. From February 1944 the squadron was wholly based at R.A.F. Benson from where sorties flown by the squadron ranged as far afield as Austria and the Canary Islands.