

Withington Wheelers Service Record in World War II



Four Withington Wheelers were killed in WWII, the Withington Wheelers Memorial Trophy records their names.

Flying Officer Harold Laverick RAF Deputy Bombing Leader.

12 Squadron, Lancasters. Harold trained in Canada. Served in 21 operations.

Missing in Action on Berlin operation 24 August 1943.

P/O Harold Laverick. Bomb aimer (died 24th August 1943 Lancaster DV158 PH-A2) 12sqd

From the website; "To The Memory of Flying Officer Norman Ashburner"

<http://urswick.com/Those%20who%20gave%20their%20lives/Flying%20Officer%20Norman%20Ashburner%20-%20Edition%201.pdf>

to quote from the website.....

"23/24 August 1943. Berlin

727 aircraft - 335 Lancasters, 251 Halifaxes, 124 Stirlings, 17 Mosquitos - despatched to Berlin. The Mosquitos were used to mark various points on the route to Berlin in order to help keep the Main Force on the correct track. A Master Bomber was used; he was Wing Commander JE Fauquier, the Commanding Officer of 405 (Canadian) Squadron. The raid was only partially successful. The Pathfinders were not able to identify the centre of Berlin by H2S and marked an area in the southern outskirts of the city. The Main Force arrived late and many aircraft cut a corner and approached from the south-west instead of using the planned south-south-east approach; this resulted in more bombs falling in open country than would otherwise have been the case. The German defences - both flak and night fighters - were extremely fierce. 56 aircraft - 23 Halifaxes, 17 Lancasters, 16 Stirlings - were lost, 7.9 per cent of the heavy bomber force. This was Bomber Command's greatest loss of aircraft in one night so far in the war."

The Memorial of inscribed stone panels at Runnymede commemorates by name some 20,389 airmen and women lost on operations from UK & NW European bases during WW II. All have no known grave.

Norman Ashburner and his crew are recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as follows:

Ashburner, Norman Flying Officer

Barrass, Richard Sergeant

Bye, Verner Charles Flying Officer

Fraser, George William Flight Sergeant

Gleeson, Thomas James Sergeant

Peace, Walter Thomas Sergeant

Laverick, Harold Flying Officer

Sergeant Tom Frith RAF

Wireless Operator / Air Gunner

Bristol Beaufort Torpedo Bomber. Shot down off Malta 21 June 1942. Buried in Tripoli.

Tom Frith aged 24, a navigator in Beaufort Bombers shot down in the Mediterranean on his first foreign mission. He is buried at Tripoli.

A short history of Tom Frith's family tree can be found on the *Denton Local History website*

<http://www.dentonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk/Dentonian/i41.htm>

"Tom's grandmother Olivia Jack was licensee of the Marlborough Inn, Ryclal Mount, Hightown. Olivia's daughter Mary Elizabeth (Lizzie) married Joe Lomas Frith at Manchester Cathedral in 1913, he was a plumber one of six children of a stone-mason from Chapel en le Fnth. The couple eventually moved to the Farmer's Arms and brought up their family there. In later life their two daughters also held the licenses of Manchester pubs - Joan, the Wilton Arms Denton and Mary, the Bay Horse, Longsight.

Sadly the name Fnth has died for this branch of the family because the male line was extinguished in the Second World War. Tom Frith aged 24, a navigator in Beaufort Bombers went on his first foreign mission. He was shot down in the Mediterranean and is buried at Tripoli.

Details of War Grave in Tripoli War Cemetary;

unitshipsquadron	country	servicenumberExport	cemeterymemorial	gravereference
217 Sqdn.	Libya	'978528'	TRIPOLI WAR CEMETERY	11. H. 21.

Additionalinformation

Son of Joe Lomas Frith and Mary Elizabeth Frith, of Longsight, Manchester.

Sergeant Geoff Jones

RAF Observer

Bristol Blenheim Bombers.

The WW Journal from May 1944 reports that Sergeant Geoffrey Jones RAF Navigation was reported missing on 1st December 1943. A letter from Geoff's mother gave the following details;

"Last August whilst bombing Messina Geoff's Blenheim bomber was hit by AA fire, the inside of the plane was ablaze but Geoff managed to put it out with his hands and feet. Then an engine caught fire and they were forced to ditch in the sea, the crew managed to get in their dinghy. After four days afloat with only malted milk tablets and water they were sighted by a plane which sent out an Air Sea Rescue Launch. After ten days in a rest camp Geoff was sent back to operational flying and then on 1st December 1943 they had to turn back from a raid on Lybia when their plane developed engine trouble. The plane never reached base and Geoff was listed as Missing in Action.

Killed in Action

AB Fred Wheeler

Royal Navy

Killed during assault boat landings at Salerno, Southern Italy on 7 September 1943.

LST.417, landing ship tank

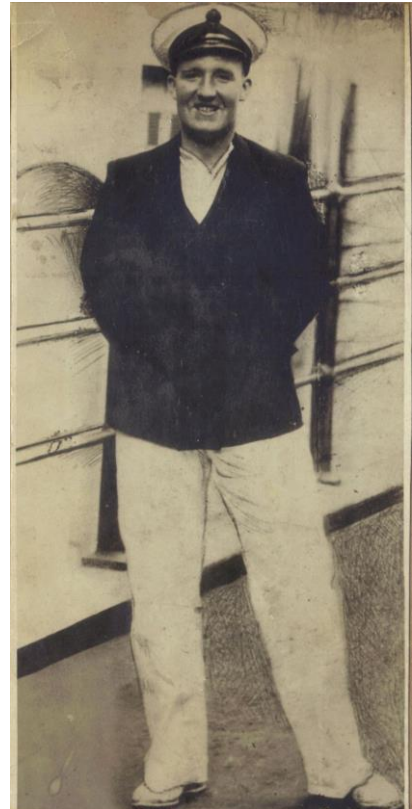
GAMMON, Sidney A, Ordinary Seaman, C/JX 355278, killed

JOHNSON, Walter R, Act/Stoker 1c, C/KX 146158, killed

LORD, Rowland, Ordnance Mechanic, P/MX 98956, killed

WALTER, Eric, Able Seaman, D/JX 284535, killed

WHEELER, Frederick, Ty/Leading Steward, D/LX 23005, killed

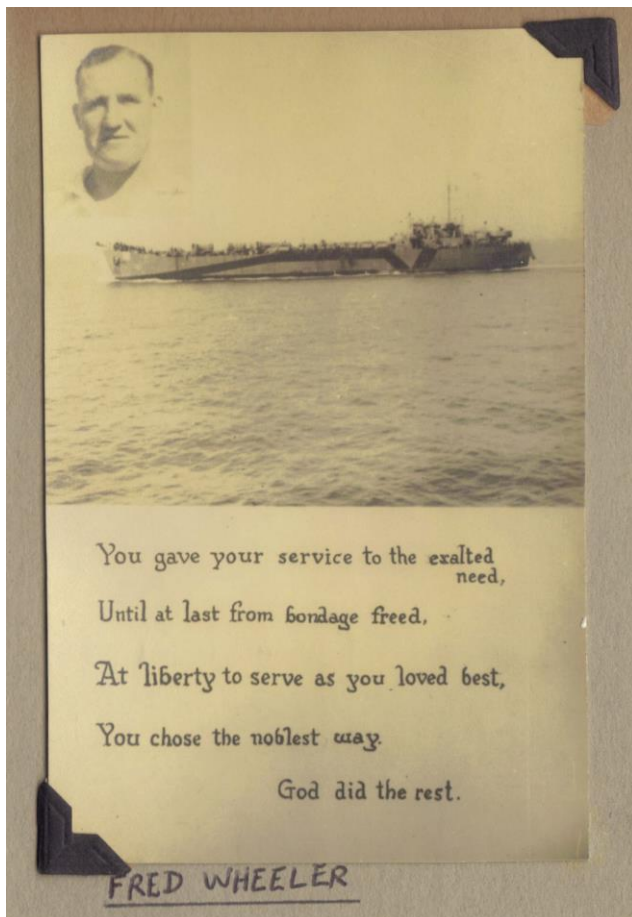


7 Sep 1943

Tank
Landing
Craft
LST417
(left).
Riding at
anchor off
Termini
Imerese

(Sicily), awaiting to sail in convoy FFS.2 for Operation Avalanche (the Salerno landings), she was torpedoed at 2125 hrs by an Italian S.79 VTB belonging to the 278th Sqn, 132nd Group, piloted by Fl.Lt. Vasco Pagliarusco, which had taken off from Littoria airfield, south of Rome. The torpedo hit the port rudder, blowing off 8 metres of stern, the watertight doors were immediately closed and this saved her.

Casualties were removed by LCI.288 and she was taken in tow by LCTs 115 and 306 and run onto the beach. She retracted successfully the following day and entered harbour to be unloaded. Repaired and recommissioned.



You gave your service to the exalted
need,

Until at last from bondage freed,

At liberty to serve as you loved best,

You chose the noblest way

God did the rest.

FRED WHEELER

Other Withington Wheelers in World War II

Wing Commander Bill Williamson RAF

Fighter Pilot commanding 3 squadrons

Flight Lieutenant Herbert Burton RAF

3 operational tours totalling 73 operations on 3 bomber squadrons 1942-44

Flight Lieutenant Harry Burton RAF

Pilot on Coastal Command

Sergeant Maurice Laverick RAF

France 1940, Egypt 1944-45, Palestine 1945

1939 RAF Cranwell Flying Training Course

1940-44 Auto-pilot flight tests on Wellington and Stirling Bombers

1944-45 Spitfire Gyro-Gunsight Specialist

1941-45 Bomber and Fighter Pilot Instructor for RAF

Maurice was a founder of member of two RAF cycling clubs in the UK, RAF Cranwell CC and RAF Mildenhall CC. He was also a founder member of the Merlin Wheelers, formed in Palestine on 2

March 1945. The club was a branch of the fraternity of Buckshee Wheelers.

Maurice was the club BAR Champion at 10,25, 30 & 50 miles and on 18 July 1945 set the Middle East record for 440 yards standing start in 26.2 seconds.

On 10 August 1945 Maurice set the Palestine record for 10 miles in a time of 26m 41secs.

Petty Officer Jim Forbes Royal Navy

North Russia Convoy PQ18 HMS Scylla

Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and Pacific HMS Maidstone

Warrant Officer Ken Perrins RAF

1941-45 Wireless Operator and Air Gunner on bombers in England and Egypt

LACW Flo Perrins WAAF in England

Captain Eric Moore. Indian Army

(Desert Rat) Dick Woore 8th Army North Africa, Sicily and Italy

Leading Aircraftman Charles Haines RAF

Air-Sea Rescue service in Greece

Bombadier Alan Bates Home Guard

Anti-Aircraft Battery in Manchester

Corporal Bill Hall RAF

Engine Fitter / Air Gunner in Egypt

Sergeant McLean RAF

Photographic Observer