



**RUSPER & FAYGATE MEN
COMMEMORATED ON
RUSPER WAR MEMORIAL**

WW2

BIRNEY Captain David Leslie 75991

Rifle Brigade attd. No. 2 Commando

Died of Wounds: 28th April 1942, aged 27

Son of Colonel Charles Folliott Birney DSO and Rachel Dorothy Dallas Birney.

Husband of Cecilie Mercedes Randell Birney of New Milton, Hampshire.

Buried: Escoublac-la-Baule War Cemetery, France Plot 2 Row C Grave 9

Extract from 1991 publication

"The Birney family lived at Pucks Croft. David won the shooting prize at Bisley. I remember him as a very good looking gentle person, a little diffident but ready to enjoy himself. He was in the Commando raid, as I recall, at Narvik and afterwards came to church wearing the distinctive Commando dagger sign on his uniform lapel. He refused to talk about Narvik. Later he was on the Commando raid on St Nazaire and I remember being told that he was wounded, captured and died in hospital" (ES)

Extracts from "Wykehamist War Service Record" 1947: Roll of Honour:

...."born June 12 1914 at Simla, the younger son of Col. C.F.Birley DSO.... From 1933-36 he was at Cambridge reading law. In 1937 though working hard in a solicitor's office with little time for practice, at Bisley he helped the O.W. Veterans to win again; won the Stock Exchange aggregate trophy and finally, at the age of 23, carried off the Silver and Gold Medals of the King's Prize with a total score of 283.

On leaving Cambridge he joined the London Rifle Brigade, and stayed in it till in the war he was selected for No. 2 Commando; with them he took part in two raids on Norway, and in the St. Nazaire raid on March 27 1942. He was last seen there wounded, but swimming, and posted as "Missing". After two years of desperate hope, it is now known that he died of wounds a month after the raid and lies buried at Escoublac-la-Baule, near St Nazaire. He married in 1941 Cecilie Wood and leaves behind a daughter, Ann, aged five."



Photo: Commando Veterans' Archive

DE LA RUE Lt Victor St George 153350

Kings Royal Rifle Corps attd. 77th Indian Infantry Brigade

Killed in action 28th April 1943, aged 24

Son of Sir Evelyn Andros De La Rue, 2nd Bt and of Lady De La Rue (nee Francklin) of Rusper, Sussex

Buried Taukkyan Rusper Cemetery, Rangoon, Myanmar, Plot 19 Row G Joint Grave 1-2, Register Burma 3 Part 2

Extracts from original 1991 publication:

The De La Rue family then lived at Normans, and St George was the youngest son. He was killed on Wingate's expedition, now part of history (ES)

He was educated at Wellesley House, Broadstairs and Trinity College, Oxford.



Victor St George was born on 20th August 1918 in Hatfield, Hertfordshire. He was so named as he was born within a few days of the victory in WW1.

After leaving school, in 1936, he then spent a time with his older brother Ian, in Southern Rhodesia.

With the coming of war, on 29th October 1940, he was commissioned into the King's Royal Rifle Corps. He was then posted to India, transferring to the 3rd Battalion 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (part of the 77th Indian Infantry Brigade).

St George was given the role of Intelligence Office in Lt-Col Alexander's Brigade, part of the Southern Group. This group crossed the Chindwin River on 15/16 February 1943 and made their way to Kyaikthin Railway Station. The Japanese lay in wait a short way up the

tracks. A chaotic battle ensued. Lt-Col Alexander managed to lead most of his Headquarters away and he made the decision to continue to move towards the Irrawaddy River. Wingate then ordered the Brigade home – an account of this can be found on the Chinditslongcloth1943 website (see sources at end of folder).

On 29th April, the group was attacked by the Japanese. The War Diary says that "...the last mortar had blown away most of the Colonel's and officer De La Rue's legs. Ft Lt Edmonds and some orderlies had carried them away into the jungle". Edmonds kept a note of the location of the burial site and in April 1946, the Army Graves Search Team located the graves. It was impossible to accurately identify the two men and so they were re-interred in a joint grave in the Mandalay Military Cemetery. Later they were transferred to the Taukkyan War Cemetery.

Six years after his death his mother his mother was still trying to find out what had happened to him. She had to wait until early 1949 before she was finally informed of his fate.



FARLEY Pte Ronald Eric

14442502

2nd Battalion The Gloucestershire Regiment

Died of Wounds 25th November 1944, aged 18

**Buried Venraij British War Cemetery, Netherlands Plot 4 Row D Grave 8;
Register NL 161**

Extract from 1991 publication:

*Mr Farley, Ron's father, kept the butcher shop in Rusper.
It was Ron's uncle who was killed in WWI. He may have
joined under age. Ken de Bow was the last person from Rusper
to see him alive.
Lived High Street, Rusper*



Ronald was born on 24 March 1926 in Horsham district, almost certainly in Rusper. He was the son of Charles Farley, the Butcher in Rusper, and his wife Doris Amy (nee Dancy). Ronald had an older brother George, born in 1923 and referred to in his letters home, and at least three siblings, Peggy Kathleen and the twins Peter and Pamela.

Ronald was admitted to Rusper School in September 1930 and his address is given as High Street.

Ronald's grandparents also came from Rusper. They were George and Emily (nee Johnson). George was a wheelwright and lived in Star Cottages. His great-grandparents were John and Mary Farley who were wheelwrights and publicans, running the Plough Inn.

After he joined up Ronald wrote several letters to his mother -

See "Dear Mum" letters home See end of folder

The original booklet suggests that Ronald is the nephew of Frank Farley who died in WW1 but I have been unable to find any connection between Ronald's branch of the Farleys who were all born in Rusper and that of Frank whose family came from Slinfold. George and Emily had nine children but none I can trace called Frank or Francis.

However two of Ronald's maternal uncles, Alfred Jack and Charles Payne Dancy were killed during WW1 and so perhaps this caused the confusion. Alfred Jack Dancy was with the Royal Sussex Regiment and I wonder if the Sussex cap badge referred to in Ronald's letters home was Jack's.



GANDER Cpl William Roy

2358931

Royal Corps of Signals

Died 8th June 1945

Buried: Rusper, St Mary Magdalene Churchyard, Sussex Register UK 4517

Roy's family was farming at that time from Porters, Friday Street. Roy was educated at Miss Higg's school in The Causeway, Horsham, and then Collyers, the grammar school. He worked in a Horsham bank and married Rita. They had a son, David Michael, who now works for the Ministry of Agriculture in charge of a wide area. David is married and has three sons, William, Richard and Edward.

William Roy Gander was born in 1920 (Oct quarter in Horsham district) . His parents were Horace (who was born in Twineham) and his wife Hilda M (nee Stevens).

The couple appear to have had at least three more children: Michael J (born in 1925) who farmed for many years at Great Benhams Farm, Friday Street., Evelyn N (born 1922) and Janet A (born 1932).

Horace was a Dairy Farmer at Porter, Friday Street.

Roy married Marguerita Chapman in 1942 (Oct quarter) in Huddersfield district.

He died at Aldingbourne House, Aldingbourne of pulmonary tuberculosis. His home address was given as Porters, Horsham Road, Rusper. His wife was in attendance. William's occupation is given as Royal Corp of Signals (Bank Clerk).



HART Flt Lieut (Navigator) Jack Percy DFC 131826

RAFVR 305 Squadron (Polish)

Shot Down 7th April 1945, aged 28

Son of Thomas Hart and of Kate Elizabeth Hart (nee White); husband of Constance Mary Hart of Harrow, Middlesex.

Buried Becklingen War Cemetery, Soltau, Germany Plot 19 Row A Grave 12 Register Ger 9

Extract from 1991 publication:

John farmed Highams Farm singlehanded before joining up. He married Constance (now Whitehead) and had a daughter Elizabeth, who was christened in Rusper Church. Elizabeth Bramo Hart was born 31.1.44 and has married (now Pickard) and has three children, all educated like their grandfather at Haileybury where his name is on the war memorial.

John spent all his operational service - and it was on his third tour when he was killed - with the 2nd Tactical Air Force, starting with 613 (City of Manchester) Squadron and then with 305 (Polish) Squadron. He did all his service in Mosquitoes, an aircraft he loved although they all described it as plywood wrapped round Rolls Royce engines. Numbers of them were produced in furniture factories! He was not the navigator, but trained as an observer and always wore the observer wing. The Mosquitoes only carried a two man crew so the observer carried navigator/bomb aimer dual role.

The Polish squadron was one of three that made up the wing. John flew with a Polish CO Wing Commander Gradichi but with an English Flight Commander, Phil Hanbury DFC, DSO and Bar.

John was killed one month before the end of the war. Posted missing, nothing was heard of him until the war ended. News came from a British army POW who, being marched by Germans deeper into Germany to avoid our advancing enemies, saw the plane go down. Apparently damaged, coming in to a forced landing, it went through high tension wires and crashed. The POW found a piece of parachute with John's name on it and reported this later. This was at Celle near Hanover. The local people buried him in the local cemetery. Later he was moved to Soltau. (From his widow Constance, 15.8.90)

Jack was born in 1916 in Hendon district, Bucks.

Jack was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in December 1944. This award was won while he was with No. 613 Squadron.

The RAF accident report states that when he crashed Jack was flying de Havilland HH98 Mosquito FB Mk IV, Registration SZ982. He was flying from B80 Volkel airport in the Netherlands to Advanced Landing Ground B113 Varrelbusch, Germany. The pilot, who was also killed, was S.Ldr Philip Hugh Capel Hanbury DFC. The report says that the plane swung on landing and under carriage collapsed.



RAPPOPORT Flying Officer (Pilot) John Gerald 117641

RAFVR Coastal Command

Killed in flying accident: 21st April 1943, aged 28

Son of Frederick Gerald Rappoport and Vera Rose (nee Tweedie); husband of Winifred Eve Rappoport (nee Trevaskis, later Seaward) of Rusper Rectory.

Buried: Rusper (St Mary Magdalene) churchyard Sussex. Register UK 4517

Extract from 1991 publication

John made friends with Ken Trevaskis (son of the then Rector of Rusper) at Cambridge. As his parents were in South America (his father was an engineer on oil fields) he often spent his holidays at the Rectory or lodging at Rutland Lodge. He liked reading the lessons in church. His father, who was half Russian, served with the Royal Engineers in WWI when the revolution in Russia took almost all he had and a great many friends too.

John joined the Malay Civil Service and acted, among other duties, as Third Magistrate in Singapore. He spent weekends learning to fly and when England was being bombed felt he must come home and help defend this country instead of living in comfort. Ironically the Japanese invaded Malay and Singapore not long after he left.

John was sent to Canada to train and gained his Wings there, coming back to England and Rusper in 1942. He and Eve were married in May 1942. There was a waiting list for training in fighting planes and he enjoyed a peaceful time flying around Hereford among other places. He was, it later emerged, helping with RADAR training.

He began serious training near North Berwick and then was put onto Coastal Command and was training with Beaufighters near Beverley, Yorkshire, when his plane crashed and he was killed. Later, Beaufighters were withdrawn because of faulty landing gear. John was anxious about having to kill anyone which, in the event, he did not do, but he said that at least with Coastal Command anyone he fought would be trying to attack England and kill our people. His son Quentin was born September 1943. His grandson, John, was born 18th November 1990



John received his commission on 19 December 1941 with rank of Pilot Office on probation. He rose to Flight Office on 1 October 1942.

An accident report lists John's plane as Beaufighter T4757. The accident occurred at Catfoss airfield. The report states; "The crew of this aircraft were undertaking a training flight when the aircraft stalled when coming in for a night landing at Catfoss. It crashed some 400 yards west of the airfield". John's Navigator, who also died, was Sgt John Henry Hicken aged 21 of Erdington Birmingham.



WATTS Marine Wilfred Herbert PO/X 109054

Royal Marines HMLCG 15

Drowned 25th April 1943 aged 18

Son of Sidney Herbert and Daisy Alexandra Watts of Horsham

Buried: Rusper (St Mary Magdalene) churchyard, Sussex Far corner near to the Old Rectory Register UK 4517

Extract from 1991 publication:

Tony joined the Royal Marines at the same time as his twin brother Wilfrid. They both did their training at Eastney Barracks, Portsmouth. Wilfrid was transferred to H.N. Landing Craft and was on exercise off Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire when the landing craft capsized in a storm - many lives were lost.

Wilfred's family lived at Rusper Nunnery when his father was employed by Sir Cecil and Lady Hurst (1927-1946) (from a letter from Mr Audrey Scott, Wilfred's sister)

Wilfred's parents were married on 25 September 1921 at All Souls, Harlesden. The marriage certificate gives Sidney's occupation as motor engineer.

Wilfred and his twin brother Anthony were born on 15 November 1924 in Wareham Dorset. Their sister Audrey was born in 1931 also in Wareham. It is possible there were two more siblings: Maurice born in 1926 in Wareham and Sydney born in 1922 in Frome. The family are living in Rusper by November 1927 when Sidney was admitted to Rusper School. His address is given as Nunnery Garage. The twins were admitted on 15th April 1929 and left on 21st November 1938.

Wilfred was one of 85 members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines who perished when three military vessels were lost during the same storm.

Wilfred vessel was a Landing Craft Gun (LCG).. Designed as support vessels for the planned invasion of mainland Europe, they were intended to fire on enemy positions as the forces approached the shore, to land men and equipment and then form a static gun position. They were shallow vessels not designed for rough seas.

Wilfred was on LCG 15 which, accompanied by LG16, left Belfast en route for Falmouth. They docked briefly at Holyhead before heading south across Cardigan Bay.

The weather started to deteriorate, so facing heavy seas and already shipping water into their open decks, they sought permission to shelter at Fishguard., For some never explained reason permission was refused by the authorities at and they were forced to press on to Milford Haven. They began to sink as they passed St Ann's Head. The local lifeboat was undergoing repairs and could not be launched. LCG 15 was overwhelmed and sank.

HMS Rosemary attempted a rescue of LG16 but it also was overwhelmed and sank. Later that night LG 16 also sank. Wilfred's was one of over 50 bodies were recovered but many were not and the site of the vessels sinking was declared a War Grave.



WICKHAM Flt Lieut. (Pilot) Anthony Trelawney DFC 103011

RAFVR Squadron 105

Killed; 14th June 1944

Son of Col. Thomas E P Wickham, Royal Horse Artillery & Betty Wickam of Rusper

Buried: Rusper (St Mary Magdalene) churchyard Register UK 4517

Extract from 1991 publication:

The Wickham family lived at Averys. When WWII started, Mrs Wickham was a widow. She ran the YMCA canteen in the village hall to which service men in this area came. There were many canteen dances during the war.

Tony was farming in Gloucestershire before he joined up. First he flew a Spitfire, going on bombing raids over Berlin by daylight and after one of these he spoke on the radio describing his experiences. He was killed when his plane was hit and damaged and he was trying to come in and land at the airfield where WAAFS and men were lining up at the canteen. In order to avoid harming any of these, Tony pulled his plane away and crashed.

Tony's father fought in both the Boer War, winning the DSO and WW1 where he won two bars to his DSO. He married Betty (Elsie Wagstaff). A son Michael Whalley was born on 11 August 1909 in Coventry and Tony was born in Fleet on 10 April 1913. Tony's father died suddenly at Venters on 24 July 1927. His home addresses are given as Averys, Rusper and 66A Elizabeth Street, Westminster.



Tony attended Marlborough College from 1927 until 1931, a member of Cotton House. In 1934 he went to Canada, listing himself as a student. He travelled to Quebec and then by Canadian Pacific Railway to Vernon BC where he stayed with his uncle William Grieve, a rancher. He returned home via California in 1935. Marlborough College's Roll of Honour lists Tony as a Farmer as does Kelly's Directory for 1939, giving his address as Hazeltote Hill Farm, Kingscote,

Photo: Tony Wickham seated

He was gazetted as a Leading Aircraftsman on 3 September 1941. He was awarded a DFC on 30 January 1943 for his part in the first daylight bombing raid on Berlin. By this time he was a Flying Officer with 105 Squadron which was equipped with de Havilland Mosquitos. On 18 February 1944 he took part in Operation Jericho, a low-level precision strike on the prison at Amiens. By this time 105 Squadron was a Pathfinder Squadron having had been fitted with Oboe (an aerial blind bombing targeting system) in the summer of 1943.



A report of Tony's fatal accident states the plane was de Havilland DH98 Mosquito T Mk II registration HJ863. The accident happened during a training flight from RAF High Ercall, Salop and when returning the engine cut on overshoot and the plane crash landed in a field.