Herbert Charles DUTFIELD (1921 – 1945)



F/O, 154376

Herbert Charles Dutfield

RAF

186 Squadron

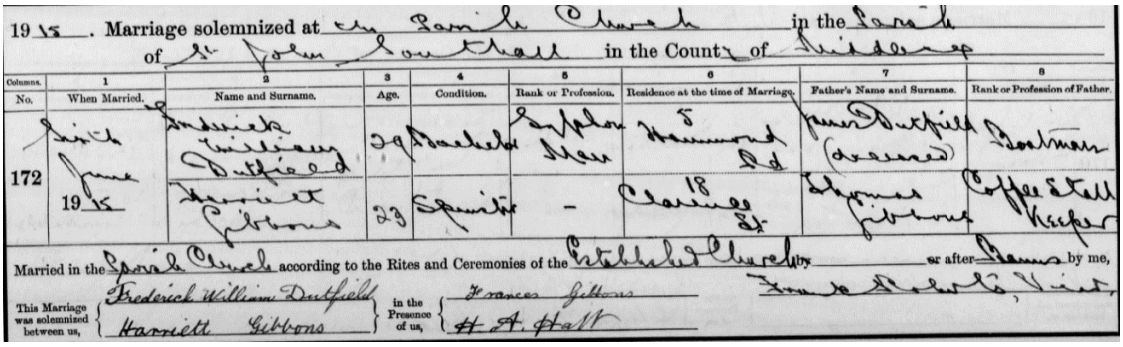
16 January 1945

Age 23

IN MEMORY OF HERBERT CHARLES BELOVED HUSBAND OF PATRICIA. ONE WE LOVED AND SHALL NEVER FORGET



Herbert Charles Dutfield (known as Bert) was the third of five children born to Frederick W Dutfield and Harriet (née Gibbons).



1915. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of St John Southall in the County of Middlesex

Columns. No.	1 When Married.	2 Name and Surname.	3 Age.	4 Condition.	5 Rank or Profession.	6 Residence at the time of Marriage.	7 Father's Name and Surname.	8 Rank or Profession of Father.
172	June 1915	Frederick William Dutfield	23	Bachelor	Syphon Man	5 Hammond Rd	James Dutfield (deceased)	Boatman
		Harriett Gibbons	23	Spinster	-	18 Clarence St	Stephen Gibbons	Coffee Stall Keeper

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Banns or after by me, Francis St Hewitt, Vicar

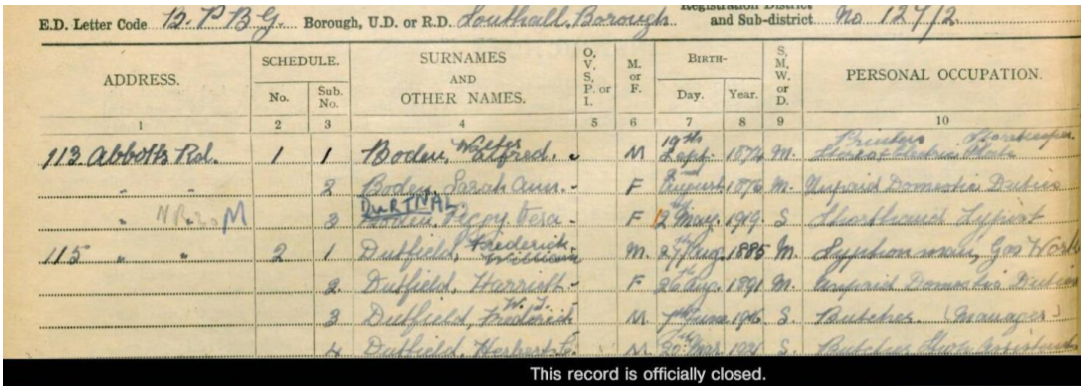
This Marriage was solemnized between us, Frederick William Dutfield, Harriett Gibbons

in the Presence of us, Frances Gibbons, H A Hall

When his parents married in St John's, Southall on 6th June 1916, Frederick William was employed as a syphon man in the gas works.

Frederick and Harriet's first born child was Frederick William Thomas who was born in 1916; Gladys Florence followed the following year; Herbert Charles was born in 1921; Ivy D was born in 1923 but died shortly after her birth. Finally, another daughter, Betty was born in 1931.

The September 1939 Register records the family living at 115 Abbotts Road, Southall. 54 year old Frederick is still working as a "Syphon Man in the Gas Works" and 48 year old Harriett is listed with the conventional "Unpaid Domestic Duties". 23 year old Frederick junior was still at home and is listed as "Butcher (Manager)" while 18 year old Bert is working as a butcher's shop assistant possibly alongside his brother. The closed record is possibly Betty. Gladys Florence had married the previous year and was living in Gloucester.



E.D. Letter Code 12. PBG. Borough, U.D. or R.D. Southall Borough and Sub-district No. 12 7 12.

ADDRESS.	SCHEDULE. No.	SCHEDULE. Sub. No.	SURNAMES AND OTHER NAMES.	O, V, S, P, or I.	M. or F.	BIRTH- Day.	BIRTH- Year.	S, M, W, or D.	PERSONAL OCCUPATION.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
112 Abbotts Rd.	1	1	Boden, Alfred.		M	19th Sept.	1874	M.	Fitter & Turner Gas Works
"		2	Boden, Sarah Ann.		F	8th August	1876	M.	Unpaid Domestic Duties
"		3	DUTFIELD Betty Vera		F	12 May	1931	S	Schoolchild Typist
115 " "	2	1	Dutfield, Frederick		M.	27th Aug.	1885	M.	Syphon man in Gas Works
"		2	Dutfield, Harriett		F	26th Aug.	1891	M.	Unpaid Domestic Duties
"		3	Dutfield, Frederick		M	7th June	1916	S.	Butchers (Manager)
"		4	Dutfield, Herbert C.		M	6th June	1921	S.	Butchers Shop Assistant

This record is officially closed.



In October 1939, Bert attended his brother Frederick's marriage to Violet A A Cook.

(Photo: Bert standing left)

Bert's original Service Number of 1324220 suggests that he enlisted with the RAF in or after November 1940.

He advanced from LAC earning his commission as a Pilot Officer on 26th November 1943 before promotion to Flying Officer six months later on 26th May 1944. He served with 186 Squadron of the RAF's Bomber Command.

Shortly before his promotion, Bert married Patricia McGrath.



She was the sister of Brian McGrath who was serving with the 1st Cambridgeshire Regiment and who had died as a FEPOW in Hindato, Thailand on 9th May the previous year as the result of malaria. This will resonate with Haverhill families as many local men served with the 1st Cambridgeshires and 4th Suffolks who also found themselves as FEPOWs following the Fall of Singapore and like Brian McGrath, many did not survive.



More tragedy was to befall the family.

On 28th September 1944, Bert's brother Frederick was killed while serving with the 7th Somerset Light Infantry near Nijmegen, just south of Arnhem.

Photo left Pte Frederick William Thomas Dutfield

Bert was a member of a Lancaster crew that was kept very busy. This photo shows the crew in front of Lancaster NG137. They flew around 24 operations in this aircraft.

Left to right
Sgt T L Lenton, Tail Gunner
F/Lt R R Tait, Pilot
F/Sgt T B Darney, Navigator
Sgt P A Sumpter, F/Eng
F/O H C Dutfield, Air Bomber
P/O G S Haslam, Mu/Gunner
F/Sgt W S Gamble W/Op.



BOMBING - VOHWINKEL.

Summary. 14 Aircraft were detailed to attack the target. All took off and completed their duty. On their return aircraft were diverted, 10 landed at LINTON-ON-OUSE and remaining 4 at HOLME, EASTMOOR and MARSTON MOOR respectively. Weather was clear with good visibility. Target indicators were seen to drop somewhat late but were accurately concentrated. Bombing was concentrated round the marked area and target seemed tobe well ablaze. Smoke was seen rising to 5000 feet. 2 violent explosions, orange in colour were seen at 19.51 hours. Slight heavy flak in target area 18-20.000 feet mainly bursting below. Some Searchlights effective but no flak co-operating. One Aircraft attacked by F.W. 190 and after taking evasive action and fire exchanged enemy aircraft fell away to port. Generally considered a good attack.

On 1st January the crew took part in a raid by 146 aircraft of No 3 Group on the railway yards at Vohwinkel. They were one of several aircraft diverted to land at Linton on Ouse.

LANCASTER I "D" NG. 137	F/L. TAIT R.R.	PILOT	15.52	22.17.	Bomb load 1 X 4000 HC and 14 X 500 MC. Target VOHWINKEL. Weather: Clear, visibility good. Target identified on Red Target Indicators. Bombed at 19.38 hours from 21.000 feet. A large orange explosion was seen at 19.41 hours, this lasted several seconds. Considerable smoke. Good attack. Landed at LINTON-ON-OUSE.
	F/S. DARNEY T.B.	NAV			
	P/O. DUTFIELD H.C.	A/B			
	SGT. GAMBLE W.S.	WO/AIR			
	SGT. HASLAM G.S.	M/G			
	SGT. LENTON T.L.	R/G			
	SGT. SUMPTER P.A.	F/E.			

Two days later on 3rd January the crew were in action again, taking part in a daylight raid on the Benzol plants at Castrop Rauxel near Cologne.

Bombing. - CASTROP RAUXEL (Daylight)

Summary. 12 Aircraft were detailed to bomb the target, all took off and after completing their duty, returned safely to Base. Target was covered in 10/10ths Cloud and no results apart from smoke was observed. All aircraft bombed on Navigational Aid Leaders. Moderate Heavy Flak at times accurate 19-21.000 feet. Bombing generally appeared concentrated.

LANCASTER I "D" NG. 147	F/L. TAIT R.R.	PILOT	09.58	14.58	Bomb load 12 X 500 GP, 3 X 500 MC and 1 X 4000 MC. Target CASTROP RAUXEL. Weather 10/10 Cloud. Bombed on Navigational Aids Leader at 12.58 hours from 21.000 feet. Concentration of Red Target Indicators seen over target. Bombing seemed very good and Fighter escort was excellent.
	F/S. DARNEY T.B.	NAV			
	P/O. DUTFIELD H.C.	A/B			
	SGT. GAMBLE W.S.	WO/AIR			
	SGT. HASLAM G.S.	M/G			
	SGT. LENTON T.L.	R/G			
	SGT. SUMPTER P.A.	F/E.			

On 16th January 1945, the crew were in action again. According to records, ground fog increased with heavy condensation during the day reducing visibility to 20-30 yards. Twelve aircraft were detailed for a daylight operation but this was cancelled at 10.30 hrs and rescheduled for that night.

The first aircraft allocated to pilot F/Lt. R R Tait (Bob) and his crew was declared unserviceable at some point during the day and the crew given a prepared spare - Lancaster NG 147 AP-C.

At 23.15, the aircraft took off from 186 Squadron's base of RAF Stradishall, Suffolk, to take part in a mass bombing raid (involving a total of 138 aircraft from 3 Group) on another Benzol plant, this time at Wanne-Eickel, near Dortmund. Some 3 minutes after take off, the aircraft crashed near Gt Wilsey Farm between Kedington and Haverhill, and, with its full bomb load, exploded on impact killing all seven of the crew and creating a scene of devastation.

16.1.45		WEATHER.	Ground fog which increased with heavy condensation during the day.
			Visibility 20-30 yards.
		OPERATIONS.	12 aircraft were detailed for operations, but these were cancelled at
			10.30 hours, being again laid on for the night 16/17 January.
		(Night)	12 aircraft took off on a night attack on WANNE EICKEL. Aircraft 'C'
			NG.147 crashed three minutes after take-off, exploded on impact, killing the

Extracts from 186 Squadron Records and Summary of Events from National Archives.



Bert and two other members of the crew were buried in Haverhill Cemetery. His wife, Patricia, added a personal inscription to Herbert's headstone on Grave U.149.

"IN MEMORY OF HERBERT CHARLES BELOVED HUSBAND
OF PATRICIA. ONE WE LOVED AND SHALL NEVER FORGET."

Four members of the crew were returned to their home towns for burial but Sgt P A Sumpter and P/O G S Haslam joined Bert in Haverhill Cemetery.

F/Lt R R Tait, Pilot, was buried in Beverley, East Yorkshire
Sgt P A Sumpter, F/Eng was buried in Haverhill Cemetery
F/Sgt T B Darney, Navigator, was buried in Hindley Churchyard, Greater Manchester
F/Sgt W S Gamble W/Op., was buried in York Cemetery
P/O G S Haslam, Air Gunner was buried in Haverhill Cemetery
Sgt T L Lenton, Tail Gunner was buried in Ashton under Lyme Cemetery.

It seems that Patricia stayed in Ewell after her marriage to Herbert (perhaps with her parents at 64 Bradstock Road): the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's post-war records note that that she was from Ewell, Surrey. There is no record of Herbert and Patricia having any children from their just 12 months of marriage. In 1949, Patricia remarried. Her second husband was George J W Lucas.

The 75th anniversary of the crash was commemorated in 2020 when Marcus Field-Rayner, Kevin Betts and Jock Whitehouse visited the location to lay a bouquet of flowers and leave an accompanying note explaining what happened.



Photo by Steve Barton, Haverhill Echo

Local Kedington man, Kevin Betts, who has a keen interest in military history, is responsible for a fundraising effort to provide a memorial to commemorate the men who were killed in five aircraft crashes within the Parish during WW2.

One of these aircraft is the one in which Bert died.

George Smith an off duty home guardsman who rushed to try and help those in one of the aircraft is also commemorated.

The bronze memorial, being created by sculptor Sean Hedges-Quinn, will be placed in Kedington Community Centre.

The names will be on a separate vellum scroll.



Photo: The memorial – a work in progress photo courtesy of Sean Hedges-Quinn.

The artwork, which is currently in mould form, reveals an angel on a plane's propellers, with the five doomed aircraft in the sky and features flowers and plants from the states and nations of the aircrew, including survivors, with an oak leaf for George Smith.

With thanks to Chris Divine for providing precious family photos of Bert and his elder brother for this tribute.