

ANOTHER BOMBER IS MISSING

Just before Christmas we made an impromptu visit to Priory Park, in Prittlewell just north of Southend-on-Sea, and in the park are the remains of the Cluniac Priory, demolished by King Henry V111 at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, his men just leaving the Refectory building (the Monk's dining room) still standing. This ancient building has recently been restored and amongst all the history stored therein, and on show inside, happens to be a Memorial to the fallen in the two World Wars, who were from the Southend area. From that list our surname leapt out with the name of Guy R. Wall, who was at that time an unknown person on our family tree.

Back at home, Ancestry gave us the information showing that Guy Reginald was the second son of my grandfather's brother, Frederick, known to us as Uncle Fred. We had rented the four upstairs rooms at the house belonging to Uncle Fred and Aunt May when we were married, and like the Priory, their house was situated in Prittlewell, only five minutes' walk away.

We were aware that Fred and May had a son, also a Fred, who lived in Tisbury, Wiltshire, where he and his wife ran a pub, but we knew nothing of Guy.

Further digging revealed that Guy had joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and had reached the rank of Flight Sergeant; he was killed on 9th April 1945, aged just 23. He was a Wireless Operator/Airgunner aboard a Lancaster Mk3, EA-S, RA531, whilst on a mission to bomb the synthetic oil refinery at Lutzendorf in eastern Germany; the aircraft was brought down and he and his crew were all killed and are buried in the Berlin War Cemetery.

He flew with 49 Squadron, at that time based at Fulbeck, near Newark, Nottinghamshire and the history of this, their last Mission was, that on the previous night, a group of Lancasters had attacked the Lutzendorf Refinery achieving only moderate success. Just after 18.00 hours on Sunday evening, 8th April, two hundred and thirtyone Lancasters and eleven Mosquitos, flying under the Lincolnshire 5 Group, set out to finish the job, that raid was a total success with the Refinery being rendered inactive.

The cost had been six Lancasters with their crews of seven, and two of those aircraft were from 49 Squadron that failed to return. Flying Officer "Polly" Perkins was the pilot with his Crew of RA531 who were brought down over Germany; they were on their ninth Mission. It was reported that their skipper, F/O Robert Perkins, had recently confided to a fellow pilot that he "knew" that he would not survive the war. The other crew members were Sgt. Prust, flight engineer; F/Sgt. Warrington, navigator; F/Sgt. Wilkinson, bomb aimer; Sgt. Manning, mid upper gunner, aged 19; F/Sgt. Hull, rear gunner, and he was just 18. Finally, 1614026 F/Sgt. Guy Wall. They were just seven of the 50 odd thousand who died flying on bombing missions during WW2.

The website of 49 Squadron gives a great deal of information, even down to photos of the familiar War Graves Commission headstones that Guy and his fellow crewmates have in that far off cemetery in Berlin.

We are sure that Uncle Fred and Aunt May were never able to travel to Germany to see, grieve and pay their respects at the final resting place of their second son.

So far, we have not managed to find out whether Lancaster RA531 was shot down by anti-aircraft fire from the ground or by night fighter, or even whereabouts, over Lutzendorf or over Germany on their way home. That information is probably available somewhere.

It was extremely sad that, like so many others in that conflict, they were victims only about a month before the war in Europe finally ended.

Guy was married in 1943 to Francis Lille Nesbitt, in Fylde, Lancashire and they had no children. Francis eventually remarried some time later.

Going back to Uncle Fred, he had been in the Essex Regiment during the Great War and it is with much regret that I did not ask him about his experiences during that time; Uncle Fred died in 1983.

We did have a minor coincidence for, way back in 1965, we had taken a driving holiday on the Continent and on our way home we happened to stay a night at the Hotel Marechal Foche in Arras. Apparently, at some time in that War, Uncle Fred was billeted in that same "Hotel" and did his square bashing at the front of that establishment in the Square Marechal Foche. More work to do now, follow up on the military career of Fred and the ancestry of Aunt May.



Dave and Pat Wall (EFSH10904)