

Do not despair
For Johnny-head-in-air
He sleeps as sound
As Johnny underground



0-666861
Capt.
BILLY BRYAN
18/5/1921
313th Fighter Squadron

Fetch out no shroud
For Johnny-in-the-cloud
And keep your tears
For him in after years



0-695310
2nd Lt.
DALE C FRANCIS
3/5/1921
81st Fighter Squadron

Better by far
For Johnny-the-bright-star
To keep your head
And see his children fed



0-411160
Capt.
NORMAN H NELSON
31/7/1919
313th Fighter Squadron



0-695340
2nd Lt.
DURAN F QUINN
2/7/1920
313th Fighter Squadron

St. Mark's Church, Ampfield



Ampfield Commemorative Committee

(Rev. Victoria Ashdown, Sally Kerson, Claire Ludwell, Bryan Nanson, Graham Roads (Chairman) and Julie Trotter) would like to thank:

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USAF Chaplain Corp
USAF 420 Munitions Squadron
Ampfield Parish Council
The Parochial Church Council of St. Mark's
The Church of England, The Diocese of Winchester
The Royal British Legion, Romsey
The Mayor of Test Valley, Martin Hatley,
Hampshire County Councillor, Alan Dowden,
Mrs Chamberlayne-Macdonald
Derek Allen
Linda Cullen, Cullen Memorial Masons
Agne Custance
Chris Kerr,
Allan Kirk
Kate McCallum
Reverend James Pitkin
Mr Marcus Roe, Executive Headteacher, Ampfield School
Inspector Chris Taylor, Hampshire Constabulary
The Church Wardens of St. Mark's, Jan Lidstone and Daryl Pugh
The Children of Ampfield School
The Friends of Chapel Wood
The Print Room, Chandlers Ford
Also grateful thanks to Janet Cox, Liz Easterbrook, Veronica Nanson and Sue Roads for their baking skills, providing the homemade cakes

Reference note: the photograph of the Republic P-47D Thunderbolt has been taken from the website: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/328410997819446659/> and that of the Cessna Bobcat UC-78 from the website <https://commemorativeairforce.org/aircraft/76>. No infringement of copyright is intended.

Remembering Five American Fighter Pilots 2nd July 2019



Republic P-47D
Thunderbolt



Chapel Wood
Ampfield
Hampshire

Historical Background

D-Day, 6th June 1944, saw the largest invasion force ever assembled embark in southern England to liberate Europe from five dark years of Nazi oppression. The liberating allied forces, under the direction of the Supreme Allied Commander - General Dwight D Eisenhower - had been meticulously planning the opening of 'The Second Front' in Europe. In the period leading up to D-Day, Southern England had been transformed into one vast military camp.

From March 1944, Fighter and Light Bomber Units of the 9th Airforce, USAAF began to arrive at their forward airbases established across Southern England. These units, along with the RAF 2nd Tactical Air Force, commenced daily operations against specific enemy strong points and centres of communication in Northern France. Their targets comprised road, rail and canal transport systems, munitions and fuel dumps, along with any suitable strategic targets that would delay the enemy's deployment of troops and supplies to the invasion beachheads.

On 2nd, July 1944, five American fighter pilots of the 50th Fighter Group, based at Carentan, Normandy France, boarded a Cessna Bobcat UC-78 light transport aeroplane, bound for the USAAF air base at Chilbolton, Hampshire. This was not a combat mission, merely transporting US service personnel between bases. Of the five pilots, two had been promoted to captain only the day before. Some were going on operational leave and one had turned 24 on that day.

The inclement weather experienced on that day made flying conditions very difficult. Several Ampfield witnesses recall thunderstorms with a very low cloud base. Sadly the aircraft never made its intended destination. The plane developed a failure in one of its engines. Shortly after 12.00 noon on Sunday 2nd July 1944, the Cessna Bobcat aircraft was seen to crash into woodland about 400 yards to the north-east of St. Mark's Church. There were no survivors.

Witnesses recall that the pilot and co-pilot crashed the plane into the woods to avoid hitting houses in the upper part of Knapp Lane. All five of these young men had gallantly and courageously given their own lives to avert further death or injury to the local residents.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1:50pm | Assemble at the memorial to the US Airmen in Chapel Wood, Ampfield |
| 2:00 pm | Service of commemoration |
| 2:40pm | Make way to St. Mark's room, where refreshments will be available |
| 3:15pm | A presentation with pictures in St. Mark's Church, covering the history of the events starting on the 2nd July 1944. |
| 4:15pm | Closing remarks in St. Mark's room led by the Mayor of Test Valley, Martin Hatley |



Cessna Bobcat UC-78



313th
Fighter
Squadron



9th Air Force



81st
Fighter
Squadron

Summer 1980 - A chance discovery

During the summer of 1980, the Vear family moved house from Hook Road, Ampfield to 'Hawkers Lodge' in Knapp Lane, Ampfield.

Shortly after settling in Knapp, Martin Vear, then aged 16, was taking a short cut through Chapel Wood towards the fields behind the family home, when a small piece of green-painted aluminium lying on the woodland floor caught his eye.

At the time, he had not realised that this small piece of aluminium, only 2" across, had once been part of an aircraft. Showing this artefact to a neighbour, he learned that during 1944 an American aircraft had crashed into the woodland in the vicinity of the church. That afternoon, he returned to the woods and, after several hours of searching, he discovered small fragments of an aircraft, lying undisturbed for 35 years in the dense woodland.

He also found an identification bracelet bearing a set of wings on the front with a name and serial number on the reverse, together with a pilot's whistle and the remains of three wrist watches.

These poignant personal possessions, which once belonged to five young men who tragically perished only 19 years before Martin Vear was born, compelled Martin to embark on an 18 year quest to trace and return these personal effects to their families.

For several years, Martin progressed with furthering his career as a quantity surveyor in the construction industry. It was during 1994, the 50th anniversary of D-Day, that his detailed and meticulous research into concluding the Ampfield incident accelerated. Today, with much help from others, especially Dr. Wridley A Fontenot, of the Allen Parish Libraries, Louisiana, all five families of the pilots have been successfully traced.

On 2nd July 1998, a permanent memorial in Chapel Wood was dedicated to the memory of these young Americans who lost their lives on British soil.

This commemorative service, conducted by the Reverend Victoria Ashdown and Chaplain Major Michael Carollo, marks the 75th anniversary of their tragic accident.