

The 1939-1945 War Memorial board at Trinity

Many of us will recall the memorial board that used to hang on the wall of the main hall at Trinity. In the 1950s this was a salutary reminder of the war that was still in the recent past. Unfortunately, the board disappeared when Trinity ceased in 1962 and its whereabouts is still unknown. However, a fortuitous recent contact with Robert Hughes, a nephew of an old Trinitarian by the name of William (Bill) Hughes has yielded a booklet about the people commemorated on the memorial and the board. The booklet, "In Memoriam – 1939-1945" is now viewable on the Trinity website – see Stories, 'WW2 – In Memoriam'.

Robert's uncle William Hughes attended Trinity from 1930 to 1936 and is commemorated on the board, having died on active service in 1942. Robert has written a fascinating and moving account of his uncle, which is reproduced below:

William Walter Hughes, known as Bill to his brothers and Will to his parents, was born on 22 July 1920 at 6 Willingdon Road, Wood Green N22 where his parents Edward James Hughes and Mabel Ethel Hughes, née Lanham, lived. Bill had two older brothers: George (my father) who was born in 1918 and Ted (Edward) born in 1913.

Bill and George both initially went to Noel Park School and from there to Trinity County School. Bill left Trinity in 1936 and joined a firm of Stockbrokers in the City. I gather from his school report that he was quite good at French and I believe he might also have taken part in school plays as one of the old photographs that I used to have, showed a play being performed with him in it. I am also aware that Bill enjoyed train spotting as, again, I used to have an old booklet he made in which he recorded the numbers of steam engines. Bill was also an animal lover as, at the outbreak of war, he had a pet rabbit. Unfortunately, the rabbit was eventually killed by my grandmother to eat during the war, but when it came to being served no-one had any inclination to eat it.

After the outbreak of war in 1939, Bill was keen to join the RAF. Ted, the oldest brother, was in the Navy and my father was in the Army. I recall being told both by his mother and my mother that my grandmother was not keen on his joining the RAF and that she tore up his call-up papers when they first arrived. Nevertheless, on the 16 July 1940, shortly before his 20th birthday, he enlisted with the RAF. After initial training he joined Number 37 Squadron to become the Observer in a Wellington bomber, Observer being the title given to the person who acted as navigator in a Wellington bomber. At this time 37 Squadron was an overseas based squadron, being located somewhere in Egypt.

Bill was killed in action on 2 July 1942 when his plane came down somewhere over Turkey. At least two members of the crew survived and were alive after the war. One of them, Sgt Berry, was a prisoner of war held at Dulagluft in Germany. Bill was officially reported as missing, and my grandparents were in contact with the wife of Sgt Berry. However, a letter in my possession refers to the fact that Sgt Berry could not say what had happened to his colleagues. He was still officially considered to be missing in December 1942 but in May 1943, as no news had been forthcoming, it was concluded by the Air Council that he had lost his life with the official date of death being given as 2 July 1942. His father, my grandfather, died on 6 April 1943 so I conclude that he must have died in the hope that good news about the fate of his youngest son might still be forthcoming.

When I was at Stationers' School from 1961-68, I often used to call in to see my grandmother in Willingdon Road on my way home to Palmers Green. She believed that Bill was still alive, living somewhere in Turkey and being looked after because he had completely lost his memory. Who was I to challenge her beliefs?

Bill's life is commemorated on the memorial in El Alamein. I have his war medals and in 2018 I applied for the Bomber Command Clasp. Unfortunately, I was advised that it is only awarded to members of Bomber Command who were UK based and that, as 37 Squadron was based in Egypt, Bill was not eligible.

We are indebted to Robert Hughes for the "In Memoriam" booklet, the above account and the image of the memorial board, which is reproduced below.

Colin Marr - May 2021

1939



1945

TRINITY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| JACK AKERS | REGINALD JENKINS |
| JOHN ALLEN | DONALD LOYD |
| KENNETH BABINGTON-BROWNE | GRAHAME MACDONALD |
| EDWARD BACKHOUSE | JOHN MITCHELL |
| TOM BANKS | RONALD MOODY |
| ESTELLE BELASCO | RONALD MOORE |
| PETER BLIGH | VICTOR MORRIS |
| ARTHUR CARNEHAN | ROBERT MUNSON |
| HENRY CATCH | MALCOLM OXLEY |
| GEORGE CEENEY | DONALD PENN |
| ERNEST COWELL | DONALD PITT |
| DENNIS CROWSLEY | ALBERT RANDELL |
| ERIC CURTIS | CHARLES RICHARDSON |
| VICTOR DAVIES | RICHARD RILSTONE |
| GEOFFREY DEANS | HERBERT ROBERTS |
| ALAN DOWNER | RICHARD SELBY |
| RONALD EVANS | VIVIEN SELLWOOD |
| LESLIE FINCH | VERA SHARMAN |
| JOHN FRENCH | JAMES SILLS |
| LESLIE GORDON | BRYAN SONGEST |
| JOHN GOSNEY | RONALD SOPER |
| JAMES GRINT | CHARLES STROWBRIDGE |
| WILLIAM HABGOOD | JOYCE STROWBRIDGE |
| ERIC HARDMAN | FREDERICK THORPE |
| BERTRAM HEADLAND | VICTOR TURNER |
| NORMAN HOWE | RONALD WATTS |
| WILLIAM HUGHES | MAVIS WEBB |

LESLIE WILLIAMS

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM