

THE GRAVES OF STREATHAM CEMETERY

Corporal Edward (Tiny) Foster VC

Wandsworth Dustman, awarded Victoria Cross in 1917

Grave 357, Block 15

On 24th April 1917 the 13th Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment, Wandsworth and Battersea Pals liberated the village of Villers-Plouich near Cambrai. Awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry that day was the six foot two, twenty stone, Corporal Edward Foster, known as 'Tiny Ted', a dustman from 92 Fountain Road, Tooting. Upon his return to Wandsworth he was feted by the Council and made 'Chief Dusting Inspector,' continuing in this job for 26 years. When interviewed about his life the modest giant replied 'The VC? I want to forget about all that, but it did me a bit of good. I was a dustman before the War, the VC made me an Inspector, and so I'm glad I won it'. The French also awarded him the Medaille Militaire.



In 1995 family and friends raised a headstone for his grave at Streatham Cemetery. Present that day were the 3rd Battalion, Princess of Wales Royal Regiment whose Junior NCOs have adopted Corporal Foster as a role model. The Regimental Badge of the East Surreys adorns the new headstone, and at the ceremony his son Dennis unveiled the memorial with an honour guard of seven Senior NCOs.



Villers Plouich was so devastated by the First World War, that in 1920 Wandsworth Council formally adopted the town, and raised £1,200 from private donations, which were sent to assist with the rebuilding. The Mayor of the village had a tablet set in the wall of the town hall to commemorate Wandsworth's assistance. In 2001 the Mayor of Wandsworth unveiled a plaque naming the main square 'Place de Wandsworth'.

In this centenary year, Wandsworth Council have placed a Commemorative VC stone to Edward Foster in the Town Hall Gardens and a green heritage plaque on his Tooting home. A new housing development in Battersea is to be named Edward Foster Court. Villers-Plouich are currently constructing a monument in his honour which will be installed in April next year. His medals are in the Lord Ashcroft collection and can be viewed at the Imperial War Museum.



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Captain Gilbert 'Gibb' Mapplebeck DSO

The original 'Top Gun', First World War Royal Flying Corps pioneer

Grave 528, Block P



In spite of his outrageous stunts and heroics over enemy lines, it was a trial flight over Kent that claimed the life of flamboyant flyer Gilbert William Mapplebeck, the son of a Liverpool dentist. The Royal Flying Corps captain died on August 24, 1915, two days before his 23rd birthday, while testing a new French monoplane near Dartford.

Learning to fly ahead of the war, the teenage 'Gibb' received his flying certificate at Hendon in 1912. Upon the outbreak of war, he joined the King's Liverpool Regiment, but was soon seconded to the fledgling Royal Flying Corps, joining 4 Squadron.



Mapplebeck enjoyed several distinctions. He flew the Royal Flying Corps's first reconnaissance mission of the war on 19th August 1914 and soon after was the first airman to drop bombs on the enemy. Not long afterwards, Gibb had the dubious honour of being the first British pilot to be injured in aerial combat. On September 29th, the 6ft 3in flyer who was apparently 'possessed of a personal charm that endeared him to many'

was shot in a duel with a German aeroplane while at 6,000 feet. He managed to reach British lines, 'being unconscious when he landed and his machine being filled with his blood.' He was hit by a bullet which sliced through the back of his thigh, exiting the inner thigh and grazing his groin. Having made a full recovery after multiple surgery, he received a DSO in the New Year's Honours. In March 1915 Mapplebeck was back in the cockpit taking part in the first ever aeroplane night raid.

Shot down just outside Lille, after destroying his plane, Gibb lay for three days in a wood, surviving on chocolate. His fluent French charmed the locals and tearing down his own wanted posters he passed himself off as a peasant, eventually making his way to London on 4th April. He reported himself to Farnborough on the same day. The fearless flyer who was known for his stunting and had previously been disciplined for looping-the-loop headed straight back to the front.

After his fatal accident Gibb's possessions were returned to his family and he was buried with full military honours in Streatham Cemetery at 11.45am on Saturday 28th August 1915. His mother received personal condolences from King George V 'His Majesty knows what gallant and distinguished services he has rendered during the war, and deeply regrets that a young life of such promise should have been thus cut short.'



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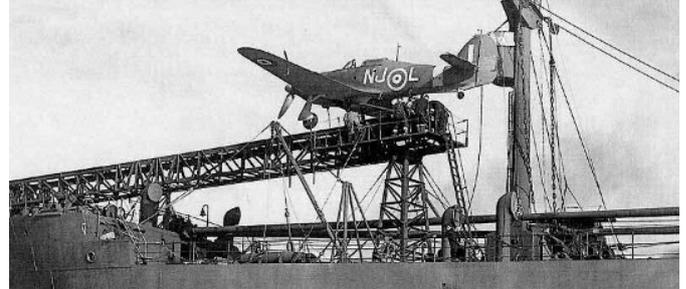
Flying Officer Paddy Flynn DFC

Second World War Hurricane hero

Grave 214, Block 9



Hurricanes were specially adapted to be catapulted from selected Merchant ships (Camships) in an attempt to combat the success the German Condor bombers were having in attacking convoys. Once the adapted 'Hurricats' had been launched there was no return to ship for the pilots, once their fuel had run out they had to bail out, with no guarantee of being picked up.



Launched just after 830pm, 'Paddy' Flynn climbed to 200 feet, and engaged with the Condor in a matter of minutes. He received blistering return fire and his Hurricane was repeatedly hit. As he closed in for another attack, a bomb from the Condor fell away right in front of him. Soon afterwards he felt the blast from the explosion as it hit the sea. Then, as the Condor pilot jettisoned the rest of his bombs, Flynn fired a final burst that exhausted his ammunition. He left the Condor pouring smoke and rapidly losing altitude. The combat had taken Flynn forty miles from the nearest ship. After 52 minutes in the air, Flynn managed to nurse his badly damaged aircraft to within sight of the Convoy before bailing out at 2,000 feet. Luckily, he only had to wait ten minutes in the water before being picked up by HMS Enchantress.



Flynn was with a convoy of forty ships sailing from Sierra Leone, when it left Gibraltar on 23rd July 1943 accompanying by the last two Camships in service, the Empire Tide and the Empire Darwin. The first four days proved uneventful, however, off Cape St. Vincent a Condor was seen approaching. Within minutes of this being shot down, another two appeared. Pilot Officer Stewart was launched from the Empire Darwin, and despite his guns jamming he shot down one of the Condors before having to bail out. Another Condor was soon silhouetted on the horizon ahead. The duty pilot on Empire Tide was a Londoner named Patrick John Richard Flynn. Like Stewart he had never before been in combat.

Returning to England, Flynn was posted to No. 616 (South Yorkshire) Squadron (Spitfire VI), Ibsley. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 1st October. After its subsequent move to Exeter, Flying Officer Flynn was tragically killed in a car accident, on 14th November 1943.



THE GRAVES OF STREATHAM CEMETERY

Constable Arthur Frederick Kenward RIC

Policeman killed in Crossbarry Ambush, Irish War of Independence

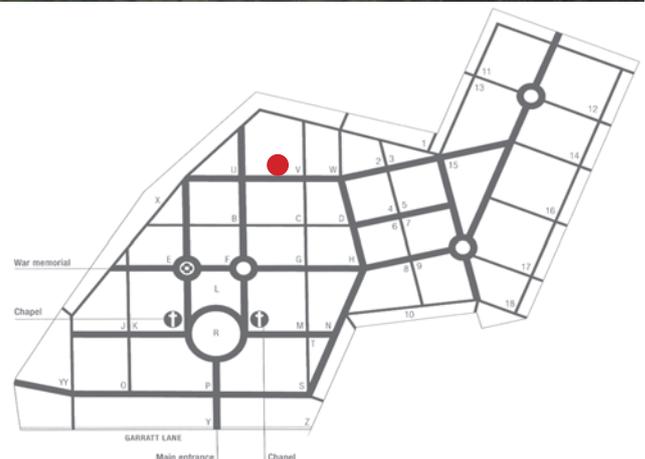
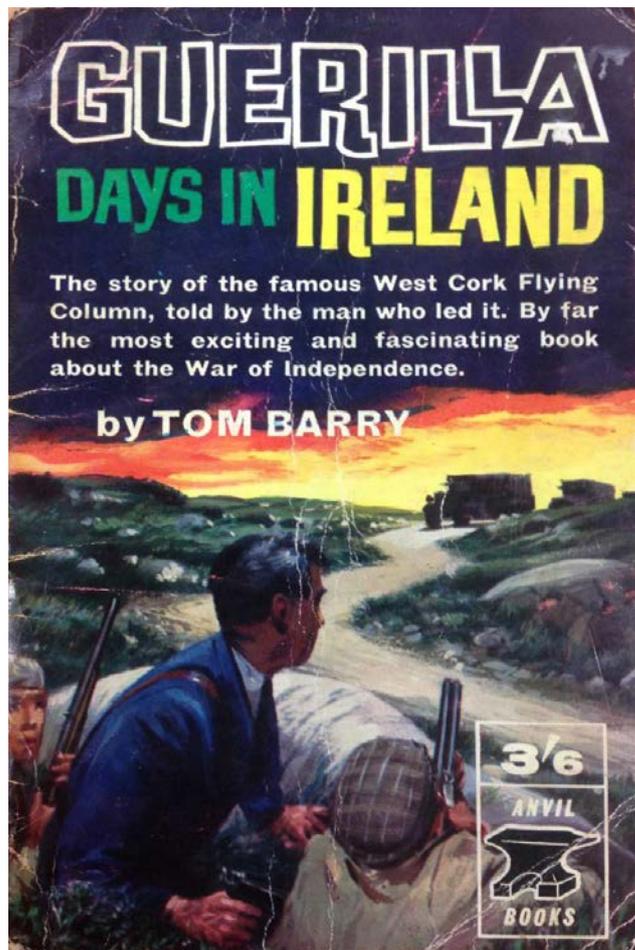
Grave 233, Block V



Arthur Kenward, aged 21, was killed in Ireland on 19th March 1921, at the height of the Irish War of Independence. The event is viewed as one of the largest engagements during the war between British Forces and the IRA. At 8am that morning a contingent of British soldiers and Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) were attacked by IRA volunteers at Crossbarry, six miles north east of Bandon in County Cork. At least ten of them were killed including Arthur Kenward who was driving one of the vehicles. The British Army in Ireland at this time were supplemented by the notorious 'Black and Tans' and the RIC police service contained many English recruits such as Arthur Kenward. He was born in Croydon and in the 1911 census was living at 17 Fernlea Road in Balham.



Thomas Barry, commanding the West Cork Brigade of the IRA led the ambush at Crossbarry. He was a soldier in the British Army in the First World War, serving amongst other places in Mesopotamia (Iraq). His book 'Guerilla Days in Ireland' features a vivid account of the ambush and recalls how his men fought to the accompaniment of a piper. In command of the Essex Regiment, of whom six soldiers were killed that day, was Major Arthur Percival who was famously in charge of the British surrender in Singapore in 1943.



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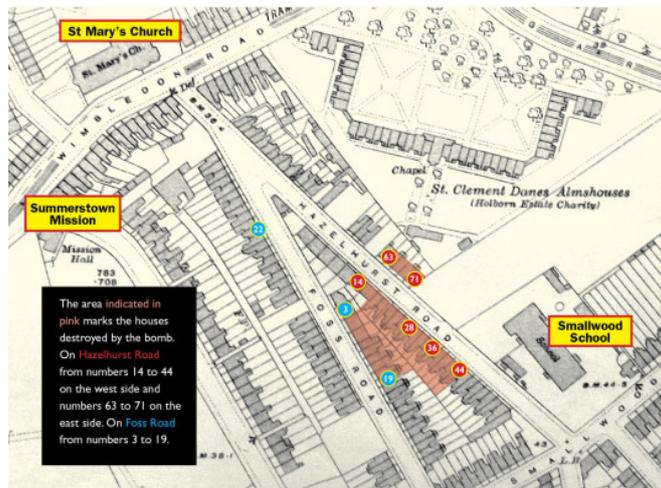


Hazelhurst Road and Foss Road V2 bomb

19th November 1944

Blocks 11,13

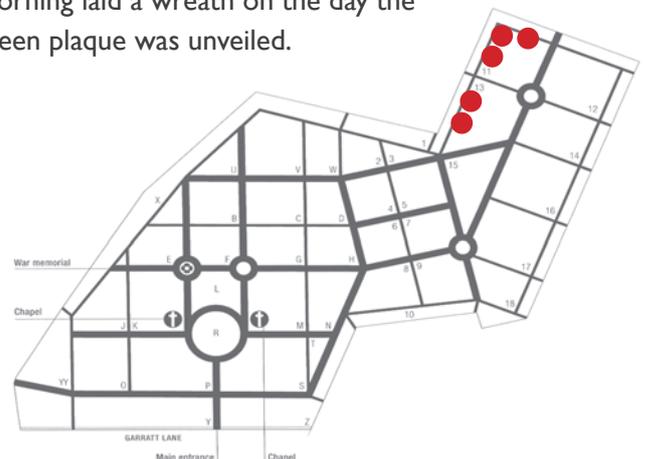
At 830am on Sunday 19th November 1944, a V2 rocket landed on the homes directly opposite Smallwood School. At least thirty five people were killed and over one hundred injured. Among the dead were fourteen children. The oldest victim was 92 years old, the youngest just six months. Fifty properties were completely destroyed.



The names of the 35 people living in Hazelhurst Road who were killed in the attack were: No22 Eileen McVicars (age 19, lived at 13), No18 John Arthur Harold Taplin (8months), No24 Alice Steward (72), Thomas Steward (74), Thomas James Steward (34), William Joseph Millward (51), No26 Josephine Doris Woodley (14), No28 Minnie Matilda Ware (59), Eileen Dorothy Ware (12), No30 Elizabeth Channell (25), John James Channell (27), John James Channell (4), Harry Ogilvie (92), Benjamin Leonard Farmer (37), Thirza Dorothy Farmer (34), Leonard Farmer (11), Dennis Farmer (7), Kenneth Farmer (4) No32 Florence Anne Gardner (38), Ernest George Gardner (32), Dorothy Gardner (32), John William Gardner (8), Ernest David Gardner (3), No34 Terence Bushaway (6months), Cissie Alice Susan Bushaway (42), No36 Florence Betty Ackerman (13), William Joseph Ackerman (10), Florence Nellie Biggs (26), Christopher Kitts (56), Douglas Kitts (24), No38 Winifred Hinson (37), Raymond Arthur Hinson (14), Robert William Hinson (5), Emily Florence Cooper (30), No71 Jane Elizabeth Wilson (66).

Quite a few of the victims are buried in a cluster in the top north-west corner of the cemetery, near the beehives. Douglas Kitts has a CWGC grave and he has the Stewards on one side of him, the Hinsons on the other. Halfway along the top edge of the cemetery is the grave of Minnie Matilda Ware and her daughter Eileen. A plaque appropriately also remembers Minnie's first husband, William Pitts of the Summerstown 182. The Bushaway grave commemorates a third family member, Cissie's eldest son, 20 year old Private Edward Bushaway killed in action in Holland. He is buried near Eindhoven. Close to this is the grave of the Hinson family, Winifred, aged 37 and two of her children, Ray and Bobby. Next to that is the grave of Emily Florence Cooper who lived downstairs in the same house as the Hinsons. Nearby is the grave of Jane Elizabeth Wilson.

The headstone of two of the Gardner family, Florence and her son John, has been pushed forward by a recently fallen tree which has crashed through the boundary wall. Ernest and Dorothy Gardner are in a separate grave very close by with their children Ernest and Shirley. In a tragic twist, baby Shirley who was only two weeks old, died of meningitis in St James' hospital the day before the bomb fell. Six members of the Farmer family are all buried together. The lettering on this grave has completely disappeared and it is only identifiable by the serial number. Close by is the Ackerman children's grave. Their sister Maureen, a three year old who was pulled from the rubble that morning laid a wreath on the day the green plaque was unveiled.



THE GRAVES OF STREATHAM CEMETERY

Corporal Douglas Kitts

Escaped POW, killed on leave by a V2 bomb
Grave 916, Block 11

Corporal Douglas Kitts served in the Royal Corps of Signals and was evacuated at Dunkirk. A few years later in North Africa he was hospitalised in Tobruk and taken prisoner. He escaped from Italy in September 1943 and fought alongside partisans before making his way back to Tooting in September 1944. All his personal possessions had been returned to the family who believed he had died. In the autumn of 1944 he was staying at his cousin Charlie's home at 36 Hazelhurst Road, almost directly opposite Smallwood School.

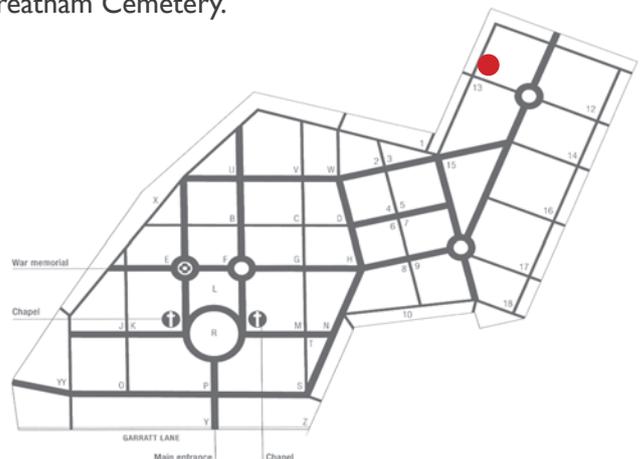


At 830am on Sunday 19th November 1944, a V2 bomb landed on Hazelhurst Road killing at least 35 people and injuring over 100. Two other family members, Doug's cousin Nellie Biggs and his uncle Christopher Kitts were among the dead. They are all buried together in the same grave. Doug's birthday would have been a few days later and the family believe a party was planned for him that evening. He would have been 24.



Doug was born into an extraordinary family, with a longstanding connection to Hazelhurst Road. He was the grandson of Francis Kitz, who worked with William Morris and was a leading light in the Socialist League. His soldier father moved around in the army and Douglas was born in Topsham in Devon. Charlie Biggs' daughter Lynda kept this story alive by posting details on a genealogy site. The family have a number of very poignant letters written by various members at the time including one written by Doug just a few weeks before his death. He mentions reading 'Pickwick Papers' and checks that its OK to borrow his cousin Charlie's bike.

Local interest led to a 70th anniversary commemoration event in November 2014 which in turn resulted in Wandsworth Borough Council placing a green heritage plaque at the location in June 2015. Many of the victims of the V2 attack on Hazelhurst Road are buried in Streatham Cemetery.



THE GRAVES OF STREATHAM CEMETERY

The Summerstown 182

182 names on a First World War memorial in St Mary's Church

Blocks D,E

The award-winning Heritage Lottery funded Summerstown 182 community history project is based on the 182 names on the First World War memorial in nearby St Mary's Church on Wimbledon Road. Over the past four years local volunteers have researched the stories of these men and through these, promoted knowledge and understanding of how the war affected this area one hundred years ago. Six of the Summerstown 182 are buried in Streatham Cemetery, all died either from their injuries in hospital, or from illness.

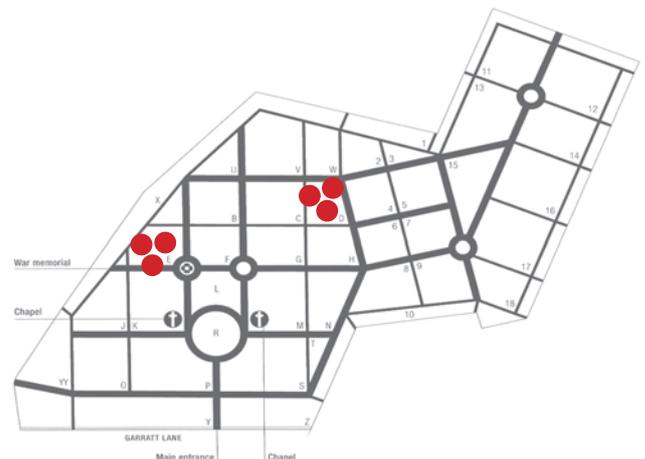


Arthur Mace and his brother William became sick, were discharged from the army and subsequently died of TB. Both were buried in unmarked graves but Arthur has now received CWGC recognition and will very soon have his name inscribed on the war memorial screen wall. **William Mace** was commemorated on the centenary of his death on 13th March 2017 with a very moving 'Remembrance' attended by relatives and involving local schools and residents.



Also in Streatham Cemetery with their names inscribed on the screen wall are **Albert Seager** of the East Surrey Regiment and **Charles Jeffries** of the Royal Engineers. Albert died in a Cambridge hospital, Charles in Birmingham. Both lived on Thurso Street so they are buried close to their homes. Two of Albert's brothers, Ernest and Edward were very tragically also killed in the war.

Charles Smith, aged 18 of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was based at Crystal Palace and like a great many other First World War graves in this cemetery, his death in 1918 was a result of the influenza epidemic. **William Nicholls** who joined the British Army in 1890 saw service in India and South Africa. He had a family of nine children and also died of illness, aged 46 in 1919. His headstone has the rather charming message 'A better husband never lived, a better father never died'.



THE GRAVES OF STREATHAM CEMETERY

The Magnificent Seven Women of Two World Wars

Seven commonwealth war graves in Streatham Cemetery



Out of the 383 Commonwealth War Graves in Streatham Cemetery, seven are women. Two of these are from the First World War, five from the Second. One of fourteen children, **Louisa Frances Latham** (Block B, Grave 277) from Stapleton Road, Tooting was a cook and forewoman in Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps, based at the Tank Corps Depot in Wareham. She died of sickness on 7th May 1918, aged 39.

Rosina Harriet Minnie Hucks (D161) on the screen wall in the cemetery, was a member of the Women's Branch Forage Corps and died, aged 25, on 12th October 1918 in St James Hospital. Her role would have involved gathering hay for feeding horses. Born in Newcastle, she lived in Fernlea Road, Balham.



Sergeant **Beryl Winifred Troke** (Block 17, Grave 459) was in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and died on 6th July 1944 at the age of nineteen. The burial register indicates a double funeral alongside a Winifred Marguerite Troke, possibly her mother, and suggests they died as a result of enemy action. **Molly May Coveney** (Block 17, Grave 265) served in the Women's Royal Naval Service and died on 2nd January 1945. Another 'Wren' was **Pauline Mary Gompers**, (Block O, Grave 336) the daughter of a French shopkeeper from Streatham. Working from HMS Condor, a naval base near Arbroath in Scotland, she was 23 when she died of illness on 27th July 1945. Lance Corporal **Emily Beatrice Riddiford** (Block 10, Grave 252) was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and died on 26th March 1947 aged 32.



The final member of this magnificent seven remains something of a mystery, as she is not officially listed as a military death. Superintendent **Emily Mayne Tait** (Block 17, Grave 292) of the Women's Voluntary Service died on 19th June 1944 aged 30 and has a war grave in Streatham Cemetery. By 1943 the WVS had over one million volunteers and was involved in almost every aspect of wartime life from the collection of salvage to the knitting of socks and gloves for merchant seamen. Curiously an Emily Mary Palmer Tate of the Women's Voluntary Service is listed as a civilian casualty with the same date of death. She died at Battersea Hospital after being 'injured at Bradmede School.' Her family lived in Laitwood Road, Balham.

