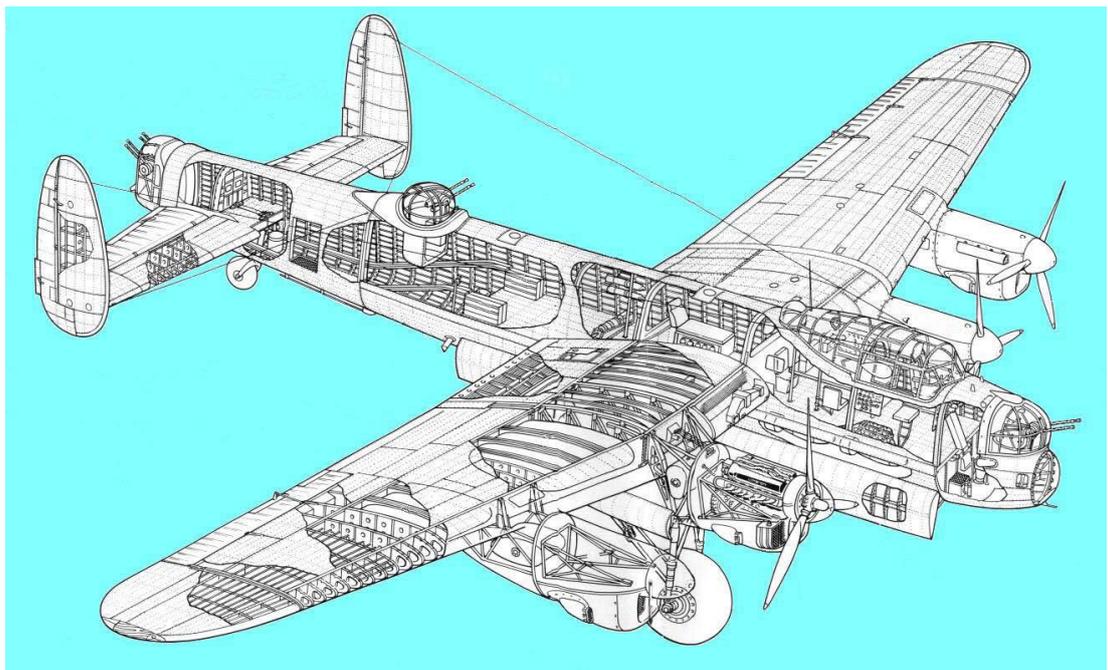




# The Story of Harold Gorton



## **My War and Early Childhood**

I was born in 1939, a few months before the start of the war. Looking back from today I can hardly believe how austere and Spartan life was. But, it was my world. I knew no other and I was happy. As the Beatles reminded me as a teenager, 'All you need is Love', and I certainly was born into a loving and caring family.

We lived in a two up two down, terraced house in Horwich. In front of the house was a large field we called the Croft. In the corner of the Croft opposite the house was a public air raid shelter which was built of thick brick, without windows, and a flat, one foot thick roof made of reinforced concrete.



**Public shelters were made of brick and concrete.**



**No-one liked them much. The insides were dark, dirty and smelly**

Note that all the girls (who were neither dirty nor smelly) were carrying square shaped boxes which contained their gas masks

At the far side of the Croft was a fixed anti aircraft gun which was there to protect the De Havilland aircraft factory from German bombers.

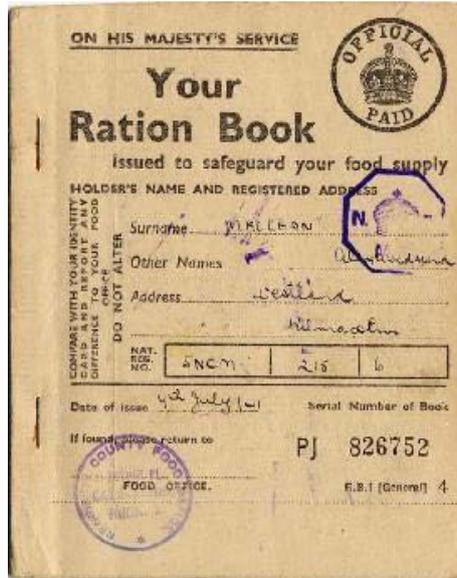


The factory produced thousands of propellers for the RAF, including many for the legendary Spitfire.

The streets and roads carried little traffic. Very few people owned a car and those that did found petrol difficult to come by. The only vehicles I can remember using our street were horse and carts for the milkman's daily visit, the coal delivery and the emptying of the dustbin. We called them dustbins because they contained mainly ash and cinders from the fire. The single fire was the centre of the house. It was the only provider of heat and hot water for the home. If you had any rubbish that would burn it went on the fire. If you wanted a cup of tea the kettle went on the fire. If you wanted toast you would cut a slice of bread from the loaf, stick it on the end of the 50cm long toasting fork then hold the bread, one side at a time, close to the burning embers until it turned brown. Any edible waste was taken up the street and put in the pig bin. Nothing was wasted - well, there was a war on.

At night, as darkness fell, you had to remember the blackout before the light was switched on. In our case it consisted of sheets of hardboard, cut to size by my father, that were fitted over the inside of the windows. This was to prevent any light spilling outside that could aid a German bomber. What good this did is unclear but at least it gave everyone the feeling that they were playing their part in the war effort.

Shopping was simple. Because of rationing you had to register at particular shops for each product. The shop would receive the exact quantity to supply its customers. Consequently you went to the same grocers, the same butchers and used the same milkman. You had to take your ration book to buy your goods and the shopkeeper would mark it to show you had received your ration.

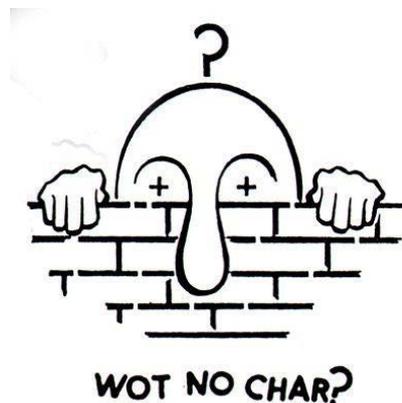


### Typical Rations for an Adult

Product	Amount	Frequency
Butter	50g	Weekly
Sugar	225g	Weekly
Cheese	50g	Weekly
Bacon	100g	Weekly
Tea	50g	Weekly
Sweets	350g	Monthly
Meat	1s 2d *	Weekly

\* One shilling and two pence (6p in our money) would buy approximately 540g of meat.

There was no guarantee that a shop would be able to supply a product. Problems with deliveries were usually to blame. To express frustration, graffiti showing Mr Chad, a cartoon man with long nose, hands and eyes peering over a wall.



Instead of CHAR, children might write SWEETS, mothers ORANGES, ladies STOCKINGS and men BEER.

Because so many fathers were away fighting the war many women, including young mothers, were needed in the factories to fill the gaps left by the men. Consequently, taking care of the children became a real problem. This was partially solved by lowering the age that pupils started school to 3 year olds, and sometimes younger. I recall one particular event in my reception class. Because the children were so young they had to have an afternoon nap in school. School provided dinners at a cost of 5d a day or 2 shillings (24d) a week. Two shillings in today's money is 10p. After dinner we returned to our classroom. All the desks had been moved to the side of the room and the centre space was filled with camp beds for each pupil. We were expected to have a sleep. Rarely did I sleep but I closed my eyes when patrolling staff came my way. One day the little chap next to me was crying non-stop and two teachers came to comfort him. I heard one say to the other, 'It's not right, we shouldn't be expected to look after children below the age of two. They miss their mothers so much'.

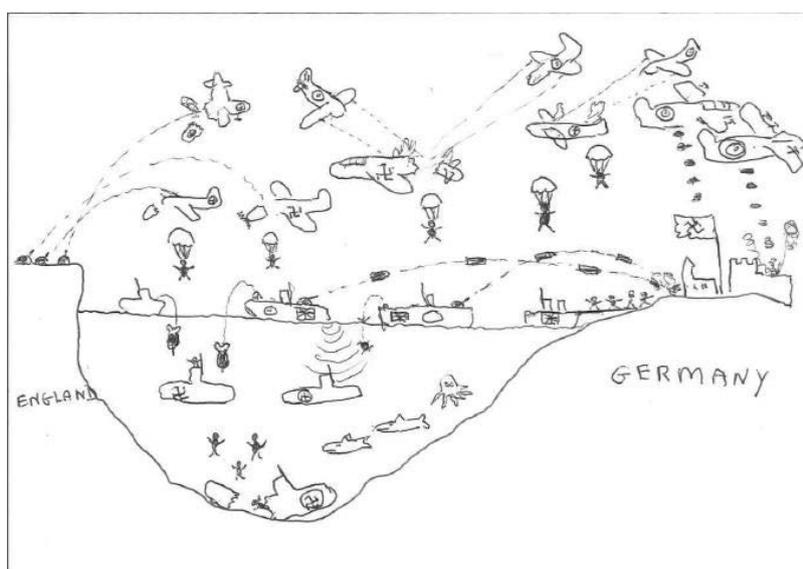
My first childhood memory was sitting in front of the fire on a peg rug looking, in our newspaper, at maps of the North Africa campaign and following our successes.

**Part of Churchill's 'Bright Gleam of Victory' speech on November, 10, 1942. at the Mansion House, London.**

General Montgomery, has gained a glorious and decisive victory in what I think should be called the Battle of Egypt. Rommel's army has been defeated. It has been routed. It has been very largely destroyed as a fighting force. ....

..... The Germans have received back again that measure of fire and steel which they have so often meted out to others. Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

I would amuse myself by making drawings of the war



Everyone, men, women and children hated Hitler, the Nazis and the Germans. But only the children (and perhaps Churchill) knew that we would win the war.

## The Gorton extended family

Joseph Gorton and James Arthur Gorton (always referred to as Arthur) were brothers. Lavina Whittaker and Serena Whittaker were sisters. Joseph married Lavina and had three children Leonard, Eva and Martha. Arthur married Serena. They had a daughter Alice and two boys Robert and Harold.

Mary Ann Whittaker was also a sister of Lavina and Serena and she emigrated to Australia. Before leaving she arranged to have a photograph taken of her with her nephews and nieces. This photo has survived until today.

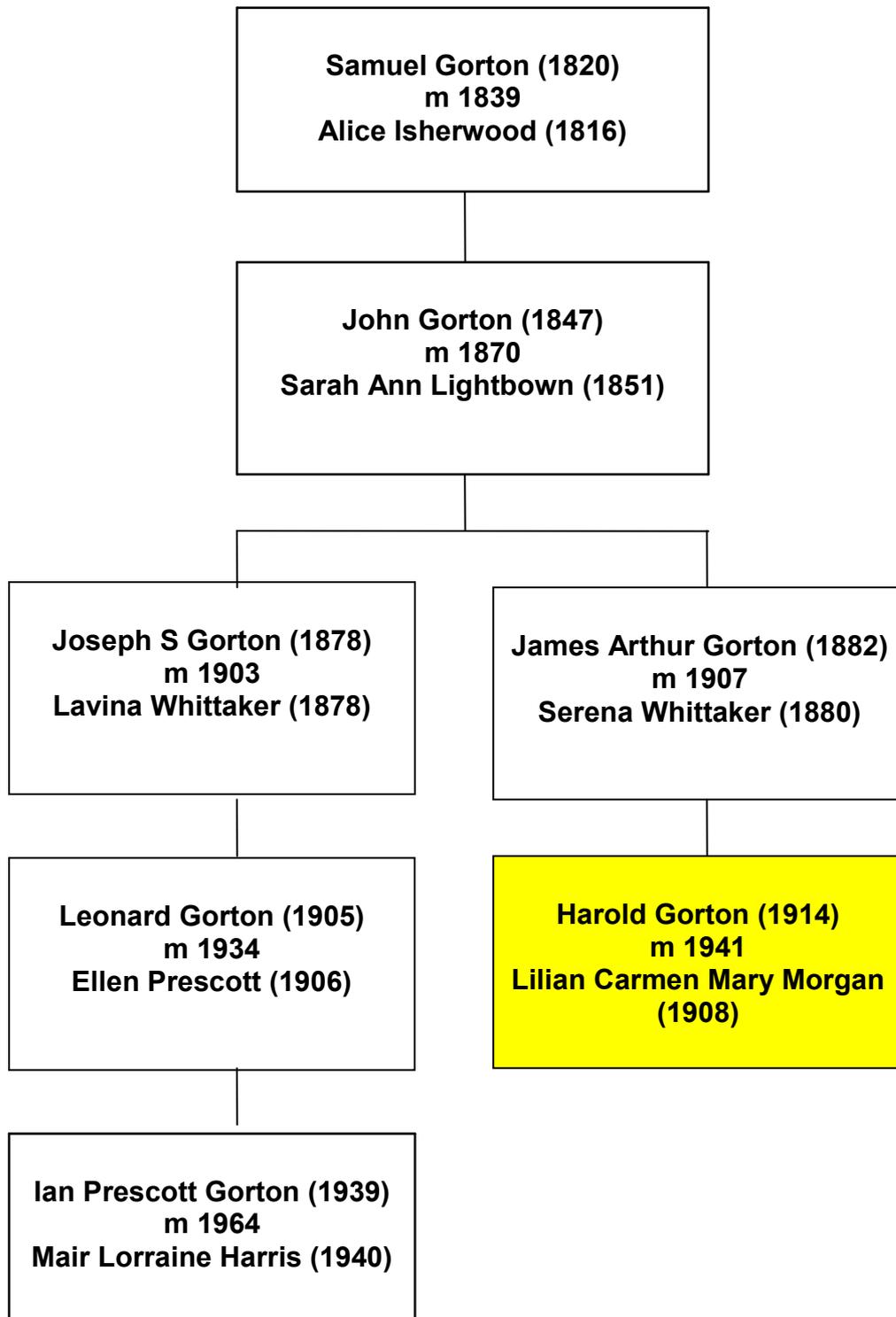


Standing from left to right are Martha, Leonard, Eva, Alice and Beattie (she was the adopted daughter of Lavina's brother John). Beattie, as an adult, emigrated to America.

Seated from left to right are Robert, their Auntie Mary, Jack (the son of May, another Whittaker sister), Harold.

Harold is the subject of our history. He was the youngest and brightest Gorton. The others used to tease him and called him bighead. This did not worry Harold, he simply told them it was because his head was 'bursting with knowledge'. Leonard and Robert became best man at each other's weddings

## Harold's Place in the Gorton Family Tree



Harold was as good as his word, uttered in jest, as a child. He won a scholarship to study at Oxford University.



Harold Gorton MA (Oxon)

At university he met a Welsh girl from near Abergavenny, South Wales with the exotic name, Lilian Carmen Mary Morgan. On the 19th of July 1941 they married in the Baptist Chapel, Llanvetherine. Harold was already a Leading Aircraft Man in the RAF.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF MARRIAGE  
 COPI DILYS O GOFNOD PRIDODAN



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE  
 RHODDWDYB YN Y GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 7378004/1  
 Rhif y Cais

**19<sup>th</sup> Marriage solemnized at** Baptist Chapel, opposite Waterloo Meadows, Llanvetherine **in the**  
 District of Abergavenny **in the** County of Monmouth

Column No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the date of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Religion of Father.
1	19 <sup>th</sup> July 1941	Harold Gorton	27 years	Bachelor	1386 & 5A, Waterloo Meadows, Llanvetherine, Monmouth	25, Waterloo Meadows, Llanvetherine, Monmouth	James Arthur Gorton	Presbyterian
2		Lilian Carmen Mary Morgan	33 years	Spinster	Temple Clerk (Retired)	New Street, Llanvetherine	Nicholas Morgan (deceased)	Quaker

Married in the Baptist Chapel according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Baptists by James David Griffiths Minister P. T. Williams Registrar by me, Harold Gorton in the Presence of us, J. A. Gorton L. J. Evans Morgan

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Marriages in the Registrar's District of Abergavenny  
 TYSTIOLAETHWYD ei fod yn gopi cywir o gofnod priodan, copi y tystysgrif addo a Gofnoder Priodau yn Neithari

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office the 16th day of May 2016  
 FFi rhoddyd y'n y GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, o dan ail y Sêl ydha a enwyd y

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FABRICATING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE @ GWRN/COPYRIGHT  
 GORFAL - MAE YNŵ DROSDODAU YN YMWNEUD A FFUGIO NEU ADDASU TYSTYSGRIF NEU DOSTYNGEDD TYSTYSGRIF FFUG NEU WYTH FOD AG UN YN EICH MIDDYNT. SHWALFRANT Y GORFAL  
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.  
 RHYBLLD: NID YW TYSTYSGRIF YN FROH FWY YDYCH CHIL

WMXZ 371563 

Harold and Lilian's Marriage Certificate



Baptist Chapel at Cagle Street , Llanvetherine, where they married

## Harold's Story is revealed

Of course I'd known for many years that Harold had lost his life in the war. In my late teens I was interested in where I'd come from. The only surviving family member of my grandfather's generation was my father's Uncle Arthur, Harold's father. So I jumped on my bike and went to see him. The visit was very successful because he had a family bible that had belonged to his grandfather, Samuel Gorton. In the front of it he had recorded all the family births and deaths that had occurred in his lifetime. So, mission accomplished.

I then asked if he could tell me anything about Harold. He jumped at the opportunity. Above all he wanted to talk about Harold and the effect his death had had on himself and his wife. I had my first insight into how painful the loss of one's child could be. Harold was the apple of their eye. They were poor working class people whose son had won scholarships to study at Oxford. He took me upstairs to Harold's bedroom. It had only a bed and wardrobe in it. He opened the wardrobe. The only thing in it was an RAF uniform. This, I was told, was Harold's old uniform. He had gone on his 49th bombing mission with a new uniform, a new Lancaster bomber and had simply disappeared, presumed dead. He said, he died over Hamm. Was that the same as Hamburg I questioned. No, Hamm he replied with tears in his eyes.

This was all Uncle Arthur knew, all, I believed, anyone knew. In the early nineteen nineties I went with Mair and my father to a service in the RAF chapel in Lincoln Cathedral. Because they knew we were attending they included Harold's name in the prayers and showed us his name in the register of those who had died on missions out of Lincolnshire but I learned nothing more.

## Lincoln Cathedral

Lincoln Cathedral means 'home' for all those who served in Bomber Command during World War II.



Glimpsed perhaps through cloud at first light or, as they limped home, in the midday sun, the Cathedral on its hill meant that men had survived and were safe.



**Lancaster Bomber returning Home**

## The Airmen's Chapel (Chapel of St. Michael) Lincoln Cathedral

The Airmen's Chapel is both an important place of national remembrance, and also a portent symbol of the strong link that exists between Lincoln Cathedral and the Royal Air Force.

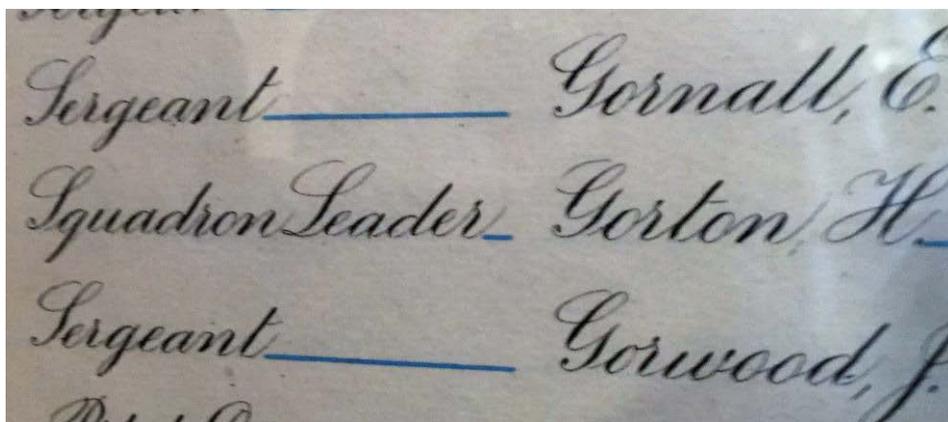


The names of 25,611 young men from Bomber Command, who gave their lives for our freedom are remembered in this chapel

On the visit of my father, Mair and I to a service in the Chapel, the Roll of Honour was opened at Harold's name and he was mentioned in the prayers.



Bomber Command Roll of Honour



Detail from the above Page

In the Autumn of 2015, KGS was visited by Frank Haslam. On the morning of the visit I went to the office, as usual, and found Dave White wearing an RAF tie which I recognised immediately because it was identical to my old school tie. He explained that he was wearing it was because Frank, like Dave, was an RAF man. I then told Dave what I knew of my father's cousin Harold. I then left to allow the office to get on with its day's work without further distraction from me.

As the working day drew to a close, Dave phoned me to say that he had passed on my Harold Story to Frank who in turn had consulted his RAF sources and provided an unimaginable amount of material. It was a miracle. After more than seventy years the Story of Harold Gorton was about to be rewritten.

On the night of 11/12 November 1944, 237 Lancasters and 8 Mosquitoes of Bomber Command's No 5 Group were dispatched to hit the oil refinery at Harburg, a suburb of Hamburg, Germany's second city. Piloting one of 49 Squadron's Lancasters, which were based at RAF Fulbeck, was Squadron Leader Harold Gorton, Commanding Officer of B flight. It was the 16th mission for Harold with this particular crew of seven.



### **Avro Lancaster, mainstay of Bomber Command**

Weather over the target was clear and much ground detail could be seen as the Lancasters passed over the oil refinery.



### **A Lancaster releases its Bombs**

One stick of bombs was seen to straddle the target and cause an orange explosion with clouds of grey smoke.



### **RAF Bombers on a night raid**

Aircraft returning to England were once again confronted with poor weather conditions over Lincolnshire. Fulbeck sent 49 Squadron's flock up to Carnaby in Yorkshire where most had landed by 21.56 hours. This just left O/C of B Flight, S/Ldr Harold Gorton (PB369) and crew, flying A-Able outstanding. It was later confirmed that the Squadron Leader's Lancaster had crashed in the Ohlsdorf suburb of Hamburg. It was one of seven that were lost on this operation. Harold, the pilot, along with three of his fellow crew members are buried in Hamburg War Cemetery, the other four have no known graves but are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial.

#### **Lancaster PB369 (EA-A)**

S/L H. Gorton (O/C B Flt) Pilot (Killed)  
F/O G.E. Illingworth 2nd Pilot (Missing)  
Sgt F.E. Jones F/E (Killed)  
F/S W.G. Hannon NAV (Missing)  
F/O D.A. Ellis RAAF W/OP (Missing)  
P/O F. Tingle A/G (Killed)  
P/O L.T. Francis A/B (Killed)  
P/O F.E. John A/G (Missing)



**Harold's Grave Hamburg**

**GREATER LOVE  
HATH NO MAN THAN THIS.  
THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED  
ON THE OTHER SIDE**

The largest, tallest, most dominant building in Abergavenny, South Wales is the multipurpose Town Hall. The ground floor consists of the Market Hall and Assembly Room (now the Borough Theatre). Above are the Council Chamber and Municipal Offices. On the wall of the Market Hall entrance is the Abergavenny and District War Memorial, World War II, 1939-45 and Subsequent Conflicts.



Thanks to Frank Haslam for all this information, I made a promise to visit Hamburg and Abergavenny early in the Summer of 2016.

## A Short History of Bombing

The bombing of Guernica in 1937 is considered one of the first raids on a defenceless civilian population by a modern air force. A prevalent view about the Luftwaffe and its Blitzkrieg operations was that it had a doctrine of terror bombing, in which civilians were deliberately targeted in order to break the will or aid the collapse of an enemy.



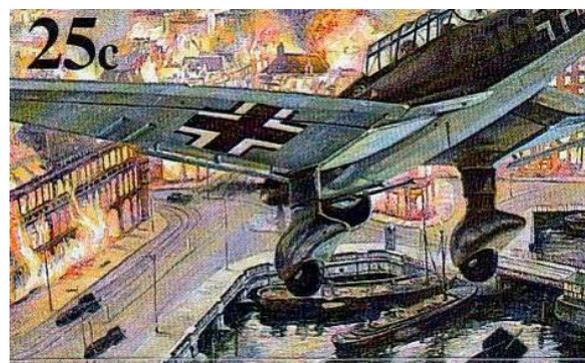
The attacks destroyed the majority of Guernica. Three quarters of the city's buildings were reported completely destroyed, and most others sustained damage. The Germans bombed Guernica in a deliberate attempt to destroy the entire town. Guernica was a testing ground or rehearsal for later bombing throughout Europe.



The civilian suffering resulting from conflict inspired Pablo Picasso to produce this painting. The protest is found in what has happened to the bodies, the hands, the soles of the feet, the horse's tongue, the mother's breasts, the eyes in the head—the imaginative equivalent of what happened to them in the flesh. We are made to feel their pain with our own eyes.

The Rotterdam Blitz was the aerial bombardment of Rotterdam by the Luftwaffe on 14 May 1940, during the German invasion of the Netherlands. The objective was to support the German troops fighting in the city, break Dutch resistance and force the Dutch to surrender. Even though preceding negotiations resulted in a ceasefire, the bombardment took place nonetheless, in conditions which remain controversial, and destroyed almost the entire historic city centre, killing nearly 900 people and making 85,000 others homeless.

The psychological and physical success of the raid, led the Germans to threaten to destroy the city of Utrecht if the Dutch Government did not surrender. The Dutch capitulated early the next morning.



An area of Rotterdam after the bombing and an artist's impression of the same scene for the 50th anniversary of the event. The painting was commissioned for a postage stamp.

## The Coventry Blitz

The Luftwaffe planned to be as destructive as was possible. Their plan was for an east to west flight over the city followed by a west to east attack. The intention was to create a firestorm within the city that would destroy factories and totally break the morale of the people there. The ultimate aim of the attack was to create such a feeling of shock that the government would sue for peace.

On the night of November 14<sup>th</sup> 1940, the Luftwaffe attacked. The bombing of Coventry was seen as the biggest test of British resolve. Over 400 bombers attacked Coventry that night and in the early morning of November 15<sup>th</sup> 1940. The night was very cold and also very clear as a result of a full moon.

The sirens first sounded in Coventry at 19.10. Pathfinder aircraft dropped parachute flares to mark the main targets. Incendiary bombs were dropped first. Many were booby-trapped so that when they exploded, hundreds of red-hot metal shards shot out. This first wave of bombings created over 200 fires. At 21.30, the first high explosive bombs were dropped. They caused extensive damage.

During the raid and in the immediate aftermath, it is generally accepted that morale in the city came very close to collapsing. The city's fire fighters had to fight the many fires with a limited water supply as most of the mains had been shattered in the attack.

By 23.50 the centuries old St Michael's Cathedral had been destroyed.



By 01.30 on November 15<sup>th</sup>, the flames were so intense they could be seen 100 miles away. It was a perfect target for the second wave of bombers that came in at that time.

In total the bombing lasted for 13 hours. 500 tons of high explosive bombs were dropped along with 30,000 incendiaries.

By the time the attack was over, 75% of all buildings in the city were destroyed; 33% of all factories were destroyed and 50% of all homes. Most people had to exist without water, gas or electricity. On the afternoon of November 15<sup>th</sup>, a rumour went round the city that a second attack was on the way. By night time, 100,000 people had fled the city for the surrounding countryside. There can be little doubt that the city was on the verge of collapsing from a morale point of view. The government feared that people in other cities might become distraught as a result of the belief that what had happened to Coventry might happen to their city.

However, this whole mood of despair changed on November 16<sup>th</sup> when King George VI visited the city. Observers noted that within the space of a day – and linked to the visit – the ‘Bulldog Spirit’ that Churchill wanted to capture was very much in evidence.



On November 20<sup>th</sup>, the first of two mass burials took place. In total 568 people were buried. While they were very sad and solemn affairs, people there noted an air of defiance, of not wanting to give in. Within two weeks of the bombing some factories had opened up. While food kitchens appeared, the basics of life had been severely disrupted – water, gas etc. People in the city were offered evacuation. However, only 300 took up the offer. The rest decided to stay in their city.

Sir Arthur Travis Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief RAF Bomber Command during the latter half of the war was affectionately known as Bomber Harris. Quoting the Old Testament he said:

'The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them. At Rotterdam, London, Warsaw and half a hundred other places, they put their rather naive theory into operation. They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind.'

The Battle of Hamburg, codenamed Operation Gomorrah, was a campaign of air raids beginning 24 July 1943 and lasting for 8 days and 7 nights. It was at the time the heaviest assault in the history of aerial warfare. Hamburg would reap the whirlwind.

Operation Gomorrah's first raid consisted of 746 RAF bombers dropping 2,300 tons of bombs on Hamburg in just 48 minutes. This tonnage was as much as Germans dropped in the five heaviest raids on London. Fires were visible for 200 miles. This was the first operational use of "Window" (radar-jamming foil strips dropped by aircraft). As a result only 12 planes were lost.



### **Lancaster bombers set Hamburg ablaze**

On the night of 27 July, shortly before midnight, 787 RAF aircraft, (353 Lancasters, 244 Halifaxes, 116 Stirlings and 74 Wellingtons), bombed Hamburg. The unusually dry and warm weather, the concentration of the bombing in one area and firefighting limitations due to blockbuster bombs used in the early part of the raid culminated in a firestorm. The fire created a huge inferno with winds of up to 240 kilometres per hour (150 mph) reaching temperatures of 800 °C and flames rising to altitudes in excess of 300 metres. More than 21 square kilometres of the city were incinerated. Asphalt streets burst into flame, and fuel oil from damaged and destroyed ships, barges and storage tanks spilled into the water of the canals and the harbour, causing them to ignite as well.

The majority of deaths attributed to Operation Gomorrah occurred on this night. A large number of those killed died seeking safety in bomb shelters and cellars, the firestorm consuming the oxygen in the burning city above. The furious winds created by the firestorm had the power to sweep people up off the streets like dry leaves.



Hamburg victims, the ugly face of bombing

Some people who walked along, were sucked in by the fire, all of a sudden they disappeared. You had to get as far away from the fire as soon as possible or the draught pulled you in.

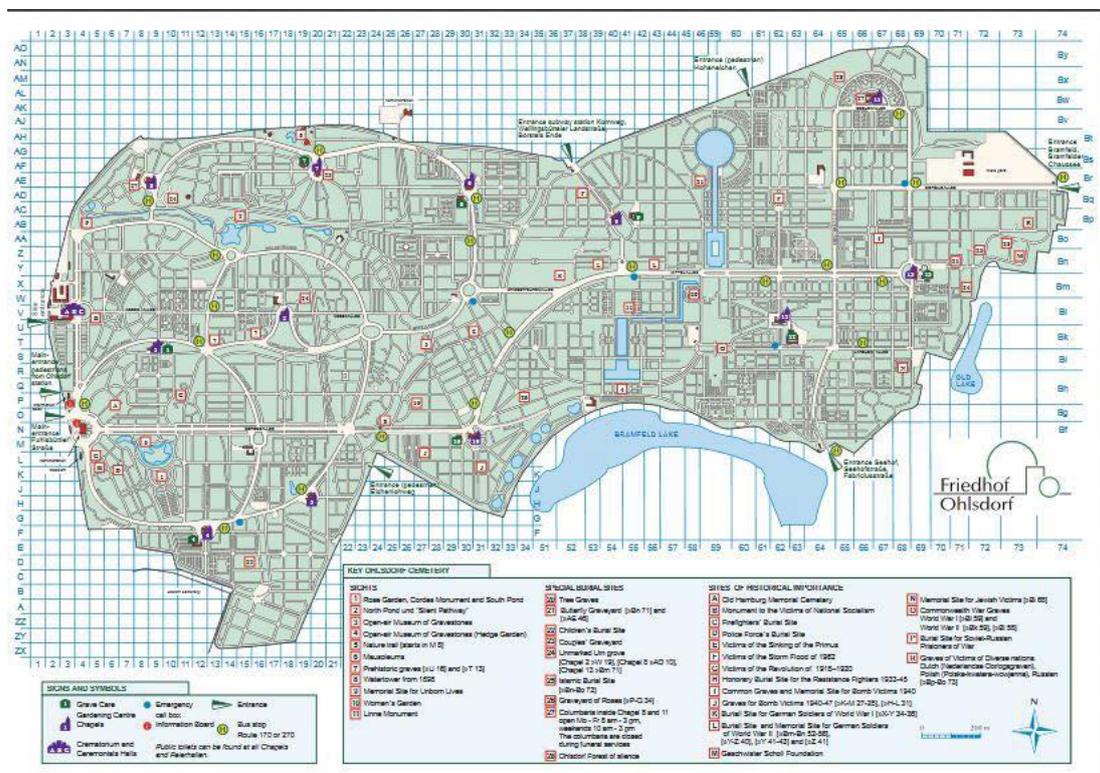
On the night of 29 July, Hamburg was again attacked by over 700 RAF aircraft. A planned raid on 31 July was cancelled due to thunderstorms over the UK. The last raid of Operation Gomorrah was conducted on 3 August.

Operation Gomorrah killed 42,600 people, left 37,000 wounded and caused some one million German civilians to flee the city. The city's labour force was reduced by ten percent. Approximately 3,000 aircraft were deployed, 9,000 tons of bombs were dropped and over 250,000 homes and houses were destroyed. No subsequent city raid shook Germany as did that on Hamburg; documents show that the Germans were thoroughly alarmed and Hitler told Nazi officials that further raids of similar weight could force Germany out of the war. The industrial losses were severe, Hamburg never recovered to full production, only doing so in essential armaments industries (in which maximum effort was made). Figures given by German sources indicate that 183 large factories out of 524 in the city and 4,118 smaller factories out of 9,068 were destroyed. Other losses included damage to, or destruction of, 580 industrial concerns and armaments works, 299 of which were important enough to be listed by name. Dwellings destroyed amounted to 214,350 out of 414,500. Hamburg was hit by air raids another 69 times before the end of World War II. In total, the RAF dropped 22,580 long tons of bombs on Hamburg.

# Ohlsdorf Cemetery, Hamburg, Germany

Ohlsdorf Cemetery is the biggest rural cemetery in the world and the fourth-largest cemetery in the world. Most of the people buried at the cemetery are civilians, but there is also a large number of victims of war from various nations.

The cemetery has an area of 391 hectares (966 acres) with 12 chapels, over 1.5 million burials in more than 280,000 burial sites and roads with a length of 17 km (11 miles). There are 4 entrances for vehicles and public transport is provided with 25 bus stops on two bus routes. The cemetery is not only used as a burial ground, but also as a recreational area and tourist attraction with its impressive mausoleums, rhododendron bushes, its ponds and birds, sculptures and funerary museum.



Map of the Cemetery

Under four wide, mass graves arranged in a cross lie 36,918 victims of the Hamburg firestorm, caused by the bombing nights of July and August, 1943. The wooden crossboards show the city sections from which the dead were transported to their final resting place. The square central building and the relief sculpture inside it were designed in 1947 by Gerhardt Marcks and dedicated in 1952. It uses a monumental and oppressive scene from Greek mythology.



### **Monument for the victims of the Hamburg firestorm**

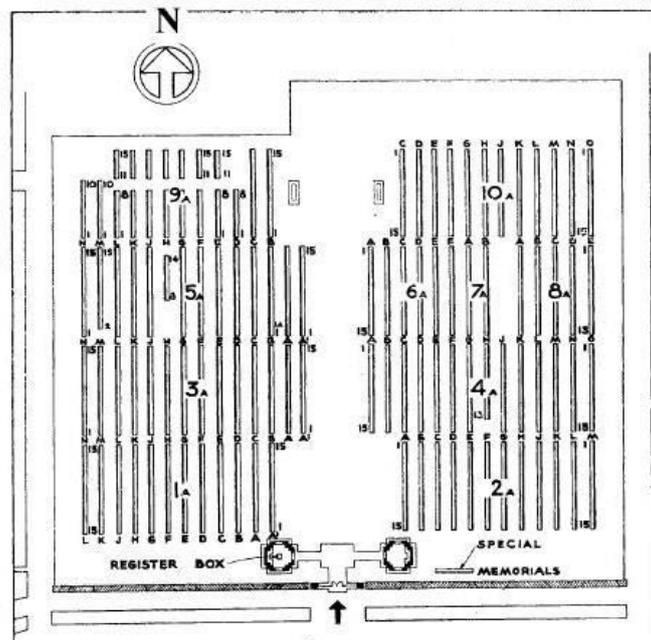
In the entrance, the sculpture shows the ferryman of the dead, Charon, transporting a couple, a man, a mother with child and an old man across the river Styx. He seems frozen and symbolizes the indifference to mass death. The other figures appear apathetic and carry, according to the artist, "their humanity across untouched." By the use of art, the piece tries to preserve dignity in the face of the terrible fate of the city



### **Passage over the Styx at the Ohlsdorf Cemetery**



**Entrance to the WW2 Commonwealth Cemetery where Harold's Grave lies**



Harold's grave is in block 5A (the 3rd on the left), row B (3rd in the block), position 6 (position 1 is the start of the block then move North along the row)

## The Pilgrimage

So it was, that in mid May 2016, Mair and I set off to Hamburg with the sole purpose of paying the family's respect at Harold's grave. I had familiarised myself with the events that had led to his death and the location of the grave. I would be content to stand by his grave for a few minutes to reflect on Harold and all the other victims of the war.

Because of the size of the cemetery and our diminished mobility I decided we should take a taxi from our hotel to the cemetery and then play it by ear. Our dear friends and travelling companions, Noel, who is fluent in German, and Charlie joined with us on the adventure. Armed with the map I navigated the taxi through the cemetery to the entrance of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's World War II plot. With Noel's help we negotiated a rate with the taxi driver to wait half an hour whilst we visited the grave then take us back to the centre of Hamburg.



**Centre front, Harold's grave**



**Grave Detail**



**Journey's end**

Standing amongst the graves the atmosphere was so peaceful, so tranquil, so still, so quiet, so friendly.

I was not stirred with a sense of heroism, glory nor triumph; just sweet sorrow.



**View back towards the entrance**

As we turned to leave, I experienced an emotion that surprised me. It was a feeling I'd never had before, a feeling I welcomed, a feeling I am unable to put into words, a feeling that I will remember and cherish for the rest of my life.

## **Abergavenny, Cattle Street and Llanvetherine**

Our second visit of discovery was based in Abergavenny, South Wales.

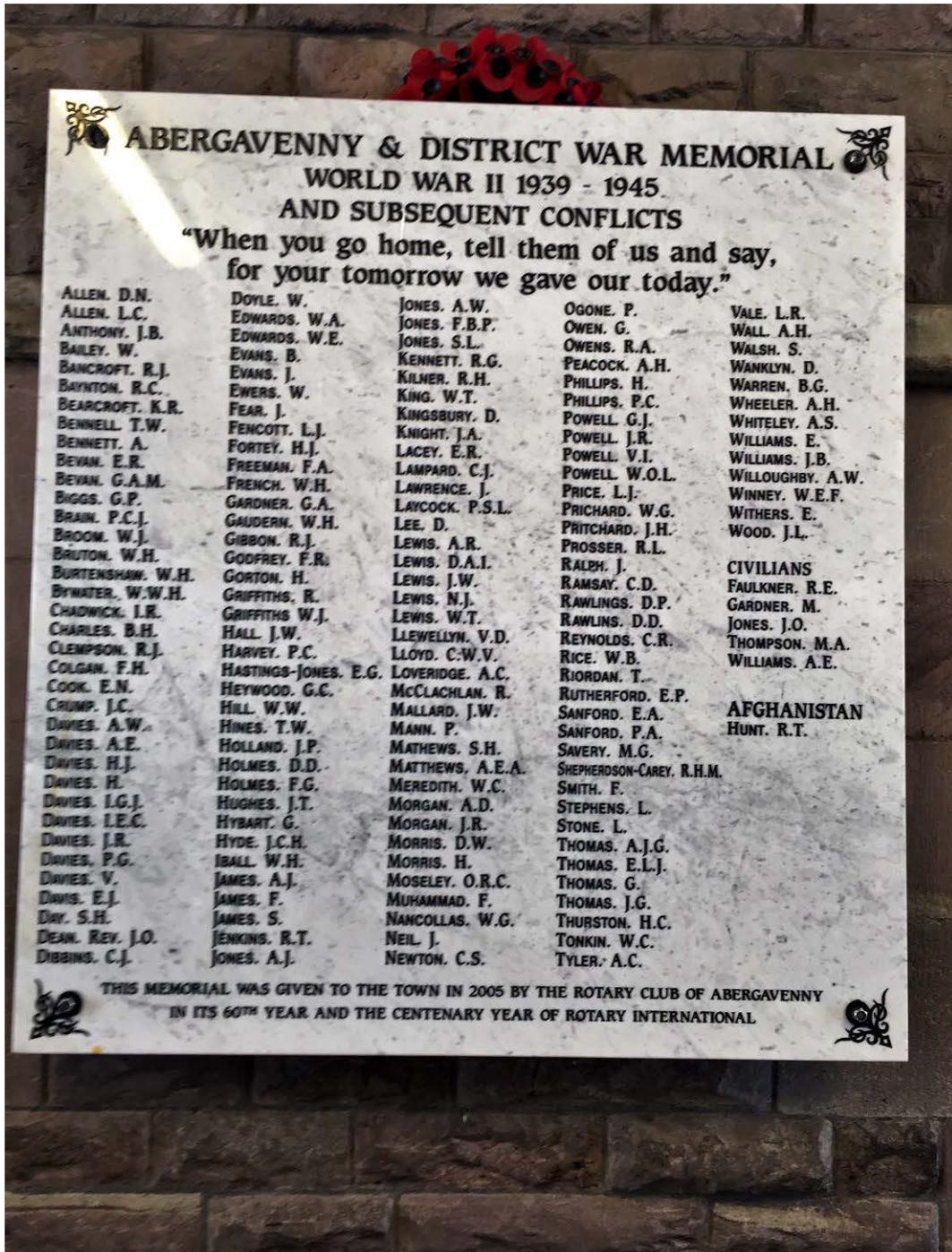


**Dominating the town is the clock tower over the Town/Market Hall**



**The central archway is the entrance to the market Hall**

As you pass through the archway, going to the Market the town's war memorial plaque is fixed to the wall.



GODFREY. F.R.	LEWIS. D.A.I.
GORTON. H.	LEWIS. J.W.
GRIFFITHS. R.	LEWIS. N.J.
GRIFFITHS W.J.	LEWIS. W.T.
HALL. J.W.	LLEWELLYN. V.D.

Detail from the Memorial

Harold was born in Farnworth, near Bolton, Lancashire, so how is it that his name appears on a war memorial in South Wales?

This marble plaque is the town's memorial to people with local connections who died in the Second World War.

The memorial was created in 2005 and was originally displayed upstairs. It was brought down to the Market Hall entrance at the same time as the First World War memorial on the wall opposite, so that both would be more visible to the public.

A list of names on the Second World War memorial was compiled by members of the Abergavenny Rotary Club. They looked through all editions of local newspapers from 3 September 1939 to 3 September 1947 for notices of war-related deaths. Their draft list was published in the Abergavenny Chronicle and Abergavenny Free Press, prompting relatives to come forward with additional names.

The list is 11 pages long and contained the following:-

**Gorton, Harold, Squadron Leader 120984. Died 12/11/1944 aged 30. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Buried Hamburg Cemetery. Son of James Arthur and Serena Gorton; husband of Carmen Mary Lilian Gorton of Llanvetherine. MA (Oxon.), DPA (Bristol).**

Most of the people named on the memorial lived in the town or married someone from Abergavenny. A few had no such connections but died there during the war.



**Passing the memorials is the thriving indoor market**

## **Caggle Street, near Llanvetherine**

Caggle Street is a tiny hamlet near Llanvetherine north west of Abergavenny.

Today the Old Ross Road (the B4521) at this point is always neat, but the name Caggle Street is thought to mean 'road littered with sheep-dung'. It contains the Welsh word cagl or cagal – meaning dung, especially of sheep or goats.



At the bottom of this hill the Old Ross Road (B4521) merges with Offa's Dyke Path and for a short distance they become part of Caggle Street. At this convergence is the Baptist Chapel where Harold and Lilian were married.

We had hoped to join the 3pm Sunday service but were disappointed to find the doors locked. The opportunity to meet members of the congregation who may have remembered the Morgan family was lost.



The old grave stones gave no clues but we still had our camera. We found Caggle Street to be clean, tidy and no longer living up to the meaning of its ancient name

From the marriage certificate, Lilian's address was given simply as New House, Llanvetherine. We were aware that the site included a number of barns and stables which had their origin in the early 17th century but were now in a state of disrepair and very much at risk. Fortunately the web pages that gave us this information also gave us an Ordnance Survey 10 figure map reference to pinpoint our goal. The site was about 1km from the chapel if you walked across the fields but, by car, it was 3 times as far along single track, country roads. When we reached our destination we drove slowly past a group of derelict farm buildings.



We had to continue driving for a few minutes before we could turn around then drive back. We pulled off the lane and parked by the gate to look around and take some photos.

We walked along the road and turned off down a gentle slope past more abandoned farm buildings on our left.



Turning to the right our flagging spirits were raised and delighted by what we saw.



**Our first glimpse of New House**



In the garden we met Cressida, a charming young lady who had moved into the farm house only 4 days earlier. We chatted amiably and exchanged email addresses so that if any further information of the Morgan family emerged it could be shared.

As we left, I knew our Abergavenny adventure was over, at least for the present. If only for a short time, we had thoroughly enjoyed walking in the footsteps of Harold.

This is not the end of Harold's story, indeed it may never end. The RAF are searching for Harold's service records, a copy of which I expect to receive in a few months time. I hope to discover more about Harold's and Lilian's time at Oxford University and to find some descendant or friend of the Morgam family who remembers Lilian. I eagerly await the completion of Bomber Command's Spire Memorial in Lincoln.



At 102 feet (31.09m) high, the wingspan of a Lancaster bomber, the Spire is the nation's tallest war memorial. It was erected in 2015. Work continues on the steel panels, laser cut with the names of the 55,573 aircrew who lost their lives flying during the Second World War. I am informed that Harold's name is already in position.

I conclude with the motto, Per Ardua ad Astra, (Through Adversity to the Stars).



It is peculiar to the Royal Air Force and has been made famous by the heroic and courageous deeds of its airmen over the years. Harold Gorton was one of them.