

Eve, the niece of Alfie Harris by marriage sent the following information about her uncle.

Alfred (Alfie) Harris 17 June 1920 – 1 November 1944

'Alfie Harris was the uncle by marriage that my sister and I never met. Born in Hackney on 17 June 1920, the son of Rose and Hyam Harris, he was a friend of our aunt Kate Blom's brother, Nat. Alfie had a brother, Harry, but we know nothing about him. (Alfie's brother Harry's details have now been found).

We have no knowledge of when Alfie and Kate met, but assume they had known one another for some time before they decided to marry in 4 June 1944.

It appears from Alfie's Pay Book that he signed up to fight in 1939. According to entries in the book, he qualified as a Flight Engineer in May 1944.

We inherited all the papers relating to Alfie from his wife, our aunt Kate. They begin with the telegram informing her that her husband was missing, then the awful news that he had been killed. Then chart her search for information, the official letters of condolence, the location of the graves and then his final resting place. It is interesting to see the struggle she encountered with bureaucracy.

Two pieces of correspondence are particularly poignant, one she writes complaining that letters containing information about the fact he was missing presumed dead, were sent to the wrong address. She did not receive the information for a couple of months. The other is when she is trying to locate the camera, she had given Alfie as an engagement present. This had been confiscated because he had been put in detention for having his camera on the camp. It is unclear whether the camera was ever returned to her.

Kate contacted the Mayor of Halsteron when the bodies of the crew were located. She then writes to the War Graves Commission to ask for the cross on the grave to be replaced with a Star of David.

A postscript to the above began in August 2000, when our father Sid Gasson, brother-in-law of Kate and Alfie Harris, saw a letter in his local paper from Gordon Smith, a descendent of a crew member of the Lancaster bomber, who was searching for relatives of Sgt Alfred Harris, 900315 and other crew members

Sid contacted Gordon, who was researching RAF operation records of 106 Squadron based at Metheringham. These records state that on 1 November 1944, twenty Lancasters from 106 were in the third wave of bombing that formed part of a force of 226 Lancasters detailed to bomb an oil plant at Meerbeck, near the town of Homberg. It states that there was considerable flak and that the crew was seen to fall out of formation on its bombing run and that it fell behind the main formation on the return journey and finally disappeared into cloud. The record goes on to say that the plane crashed in Holland and all crew were killed.

What is interesting to note from Gordon's correspondence to Sid is that it confirms speculation that the ill-fated plane came down in a minefield.'

A genealogical search found that Alfie's brother Henry (Harry) also served in the RAFVR and he can be seen wearing his uniform in Alfie's wedding photo. Harry married Sylvia Samuels in 1951. They did not have children and Harry died aged 79 in 2003.