

PILOT OFFICER RICHARD CLARE WHITTAKER DFC (31-37)

The following is mainly taken from the 1968 Register, an article in Autumn 1995 OF Magazine, written by **Denis Kinnell (33-35)** and an article in Spring 2001 :-

He was born on 26 November 1919 at Yoxford, Suffolk and attended the College along with his younger brother **Glyn Whittaker (35-42)** who was also killed in WW2.

On leaving the College in 1937, Dick, as he was known to his friends, entered the RAF on a Short Service Commission. After completing pilot training, he was posted to No 17 (Fighter) Squadron which, at that time, was equipped with Gloster Gauntley biplanes. By June 1939 these had been replaced by Hurricanes.

He was involved in a series of scrambles before shooting down his first German aircraft on 11 May 1940 over Delf in Holland. On 19 May he destroyed a Dornier 17 over the front line at Valenciennes-Le-Cateau. He also shot down a plane over Calais. By June 1940 No 17 Squadron was heavily committed over France and Belgium, covering the British Expeditionary Force's withdrawal to Dunkirk. During this critical period he flew numerous combat missions, mainly from Kenley and Hawkinge. On 1 June his Squadron saw a Junkers Ju 88 near Dunkirk and dived on it from 9000 ft. Using a deflection attack he silenced the rear gunner and the aircraft dropped to sea level and went limping along the coast. In the short period of 10 days he shot down 4 enemy planes and damaged several others.

Time was running out for Dick, however. In the early afternoon of Thursday 6 June 1940, on his 2nd operational flight of the day, his Hurricane P2905 was seen to engage in a dogfight with 2 ME109's north east of Airaines. There was no further contact with him and he was officially reported missing that evening. A few days later Winston Churchill gave his "finest hour" speech.

A fortnight later he was posthumously awarded the DFC on 25 June 1940 "This officer has shown great courage and determination, completely disregarding his own safety in order to engage and destroy enemy aircraft. By his fine air tactics and marksmanship he has destroyed four enemy aircraft and severely damaged at least 4 others." His parents received his DFC from King George VI.

His body was never recovered. He is mentioned on Panel 10 of the Runnymede Royal Air Force Memorial near Egham in Surrey and on the Hertford Town War Memorial <http://www.hertfordtown.fsnet.co.uk/fallen.htm>

The following photos of Richard Whittaker (pictured on the right in both) were taken a year before he died.





As a postscript to this story, his medals came up at auction at Sotheby's on 22 September 2000 and they were bought by the Society of Old Framlinghamians for £3,700. The acquisition included not just the medals but also archive documentation, including some very touching correspondence and his DFC citation. See picture below of the medals with **Tony Martin (G47-55)** who spotted them up for sale and Gwen Randall.



Picture of the medals taken in Head's study, where they are on display.



In 2023 Claire Abbott (1st cousin twice removed) sent the following photo of her great grandmother, Ethel, with her parents and her two brothers. The boy on the right is Richard H Whittaker who was the father of Richard and his brother Glyn.

