

## Introduction

Until 2013, Conistone-with-Kilnsey Parish had no war memorial recognising the men or women who died in the service of their country. Six men, all with strong connections to our parish, were casualties during the two World Wars. All six attended the local school in Conistone. Of these six men, two were awarded the Military Medal and one was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Nobody living in the parish today has any knowledge of why no memorial had been put up to commemorate them. A major reason for the absence of a First World War Memorial must be the fact that the casualties' families, (the Watsons, the Inmans and the Wilkinsons), had moved away from the parish by the end of the war.

**Felix Wilkinson** is to be found in both the 1891 and the 1901 census living in Kilnsey. His younger brother **George Emsley Wilkinson**, was born at North Cote and is shown as a five year old living at North Cote in the 1901 census. Both brothers attended Conistone School. The Wilkinson family had moved from North Cote to a farm at Walsden, Lancashire in 1903 and then to a farm at Kirkburton near Huddersfield, sometime before 1911.

**George W.A. Watson** is shown aged three in the 1901 census, born in Conistone. From 1904 to 1907 he attended Conistone School. In 1911 the census reveals that he was aged 13 years and boarding at Appleby Grammar School. Following the death of her husband James, Mrs. Watson moved from Conistone Old Hall to Headingley, Leeds, probably in 1917.

**John Inman** would have known George Wilkinson well. They were both born at Kilnsey and were the same age, and they attended Conistone School together between 1900 and 1903. John was born at the Tennant Arms and is shown on the 1901 census as living in Kilnsey. By 1911, the Inmans had left Kilnsey and moved to Grassington.

There can be no doubt that the families must have felt a strong connection to Conistone-with-Kilnsey Parish. As youngsters they had

all attended Conistone School, as did the rest of their siblings. There was a memorial service to George W.A. Watson in St. Mary's Church Conistone on Easter Sunday 1918, and the family had his name carved on the family grave in the churchyard.

The two casualties from the Second World War, **Sydney Daggett** and **Frederick Ellis Spink** had no memorial in our parish, perhaps because there was no First World War memorial onto which their names could be added.

**Map 1** (Page 5) shows the location of the homes of the six casualties from the parish.

In 2010 there was a discussion at the Parish Meeting about the absence of a War Memorial in Conistone-with-Kilnsey. It was agreed by the meeting that a memorial would be erected at a suitable location.

After investigation, it was decided that the memorial should be positioned on the west wall in St. Mary's Church, Conistone, in 2013.

The initial information for the casualties on the war memorial came from the website ***Craven's Part in the Great War*** ([www.cpgw.org.uk](http://www.cpgw.org.uk)). This excellent site is recommended to all interested in research for First World War casualties with connections to the Craven area. This website is built around the book, ***Craven's Part in the Great War***, compiled and edited by J. T. Clayton in 1919. The book was funded by Walter Morrison of Malham Tarn. Many casualties from the Craven area during the First World War are recorded in this book.

It should be noted that we have been able to find photographs of five of the men commemorated on the War Memorial. Thanks are given for the information provided by Keith Taylor in his book ***Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war*** (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4)



**Conistone School, where all six casualties were scholars**  
(The school was closed in 1948 and is now a house)



**Map 1 Details of the war casualties from Conistone-with-Kilnsey Parish**



**Conistone-with-Kilnsey residents on the village green, Conistone (c.1910)**

(No names, but it is likely that some of the First World War casualties are on this photograph)

**Private Felix Wilkinson**  
**No. 32626 15th (Service) Battalion**  
**Prince of Wales's Own (West Yorkshire Regiment)**  
**(1<sup>st</sup> Leeds)**  
**Died 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917 Aged 35**



Felix was born at Litton on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1881, son of Richard Armitage and Jane Wilkinson, née Sayer. He was admitted to Conistone School on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1886. In 1901, Felix, aged 19 years, was still living at North Cote, Kilnsey with his grandparents, and his brother George Emsley (*q.v.*)

He was reported as missing since 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1917, when the 15<sup>th</sup> West Yorkshires (Leeds Pals) part of the 31<sup>st</sup> Division, attacked German trenches near Gavrelle during the Third Battle of the Scarpe, a part of the Battle of Arras. The attack commenced at 3.45 a.m. and the first objective was achieved by 5.30 a.m. The attack had then swept on to the second objective but had been repulsed, and the Germans began a counter attack. At the end of the day, the Battalion had been driven back to their starting point. At 8.00 p.m. the enemy opened a heavy bombardment, but the rest of the night was quiet.

The Regimental History, *The West Yorkshire Regiment in the War 1914-1918* states,

Terrible indeed had been the losses of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

During that day's fighting, the battalion suffered heavy losses with 10 officers and 160 other ranks killed in action. Of these, only 1 officer and 10 other ranks have known graves. Felix was one of the 159 men from the Leeds Pals who have no known grave, and his name is commemorated on Bay 4 of the Memorial to the Missing at Arras.



**Leeds Pals Cap Badge**  
**Second Lieutenant**  
**George William Annakin Watson**  
**Royal Flying Corps 1<sup>st</sup> Supply Depot**  
**Died 7<sup>th</sup> March 1918 Aged 20**



George W.A. Watson was born on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1897 at Conistone. His parents were James and Emily Mary Watson, née Annakin.

The 1901 census, shows George Wm. A. Watson, aged 3 years, born Conistone, son of James and Emily Mary Watson.

On 19<sup>th</sup> September 1904, he was admitted to Conistone School. He left the school on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 1907, to go to Appleby School as a boarder.

The 1911 census for Appleby shows him as follows: The Grammar School, Battlebarrow - George William Annakin Watson, Boarder, aged 13 years, born Conistone, Yorkshire.



**Conistone Old Hall, home of G.W.A. Watson c.1910**

***Craven's Part in the Great War :***

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. G.W.A. WATSON, Royal Air Force, eldest son of the late Mr. James Watson, Conistone-with-Kilnsey, was killed in action on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Lieut. Watson was only 20 years of age, and when the war broke out he enlisted as a seaman in the Royal Naval Division. Later he joined the Royal Air Force, and went to France only a fortnight before he died. The deceased officer, who had a genius for invention, was formerly an engineering student at Leeds University, and a new fuse and engine have been made to his designs.

***West Yorkshire Pioneer Illustrated War Record :***

WATSON, Second Lieutenant G.W.A., aged 20, R.F.C., son of the late Mr. James Watson, Conistone and Mrs. Watson, Bainbridge Road, Headingley, killed in action March 7<sup>th</sup> 1918.

***Craven Herald*** (15 March 1918):



## CRAVEN AND THE WAR - DALES OFFICER KILLED IN ACTION

We regret to record that Second-Lieutenant G. W. A. Watson, of the Royal Flying Corps, was killed in action on March 7th. He was the eldest and only surviving son of the late Mr. James Watson, of Conistone-with-Kilnsey, a well-known and respected member of the Skipton Board of Guardians and Rural District Council. Second-Lieutenant Watson was only 20 years of age, and when war broke out was an engineering student at Leeds University. In his eagerness to serve he enlisted as a seaman in the Royal Naval Division, and afterwards he was sent to an important position in a Leeds shell factory. This did not content him, and he joined the Air Service, passing out of his novitiate period at the top of his class. He left for France only a little over a fortnight ago. Though so young, Lieut. Watson had a genius for invention, and a new fuse and a new engine are being made to his designs. We extend the sympathy of the Dales people to Mrs. Watson, who is residing at 1 Bainbridge Road, Headingley, Leeds, and who has lost husband and two sons in the short space of two years, her younger son dying last September under an operation. A telegram of sympathy has also been received from the Army Council.

***Craven Herald*** (29 March 1918):

### CONISTONE-WITH-KILNSEY

A Memorial Service will be held in St. Mary's Church, Conistone, on Easter Sunday at 2-30 pm. in memory of George William Annakin Watson, Second Lieutenant Royal Flying Corps, who was killed in action on March 7th, 1918.

Peace Supplement to ***The Craven Herald*** (4 July 1919):

CRAVEN'S FALLEN OFFICERS: SECOND LIEUTENANT  
G.W.A. WATSON

Royal Flying Corps, eldest son of the late Mr. J. Watson, of Conistone-with-Kilnsey. Killed in action 7th March, 1918, aged 20 years. Enlisted as a Seaman in the R.N.D., joining the Air Force at a later date. Had a genius for invention and a new fuse and engine have been made to his designs.

***Flight Magazine*** (March 1918):

Second Lieutenant GEORGE W. A. WATSON, R.F.C., who was killed on March 7th, was the eldest and only surviving son of the late James Watson, of Conistone, near Grassington, and was 20 years of age. He was educated at Appleby Grammar School, and when war broke out he was an engineering student at Leeds University, where his work showed signs of great promise; and he immediately offered himself for assistant manager of a department in a shell factory; but this work did not satisfy him, and he soon applied again for a commission in the R.F.C., and was successful. At the end of his training he came out head of 300 in the examination. He went to the front only a fortnight ago, and was accidentally killed, as stated on March 7th.

**Information from Appleby School, Cumbria:**

George William Annakin Watson entered the school on 4 May 1907, aged nine. He was shown as the son of a 'gentleman farmer' and had previously been educated at home. He was a boarder, progressing from the Juniors to Form III, before leaving on 20 December 1911 to go to what is shown as 'Bedford County School'. This may be either Bedford School or Bedford Modern School, both of which were classed as public schools. It was a not unknown route for Appleby boys. In 1914 he went to Leeds University. The school's records don't mention whether he took a degree before joining the RFC. He was killed in France in March 1918. He was aged 20.

**From Leeds University Roll of Honour:**

Watson, George William Annakin. Lt. Royal Flying Corps (1<sup>st</sup> Aircraft Supply Depot) Date of Death: 7-3-1918. Age: 20.

**Extract from *Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war* by Keith Taylor (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4) p. 240-241**

The Watsons were a Conistone family of long standing. George's father, James Watson, had married a Thirsk girl, Emily Mary, and George was their oldest child. In around 1915, James died and Emily took her family to Headingley, Leeds, where George attended Leeds University on an Engineering degree. He had a genius for invention, a new fuse and engine having been made to his design.

In his eagerness to serve, however, he left his engineering studies and enlisted at Leeds in the Royal Naval Division, before being sent to an important position in a Leeds shell factory. This did not content him and he joined the Royal Flying Corps, passing out at the top of his class. George left for France to join the 1<sup>st</sup> Aircraft Supply Depot, only three weeks before he was killed.

The unit was based at the airfield at Marquise, between Boulogne and Calais and the Issue Section was at nearby Rety. Its job was to ferry new fighter and bomber aircraft arriving from England to the front line squadrons operating on French soil. George Watson was killed, together with his pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Lay, when their plane went down on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1918. He is buried in grave IV.G.1 Wimereux Cemetery, 5 miles north of Boulogne. Emily Watson had lost her husband and two sons in the space of two years, the younger son dying in September 1917 after an operation.

Information on 1<sup>st</sup> Aircraft Supply Depot, from the *Cross and Cockade* website:

In December 1915, St Omer was re-titled No 1 Aircraft Depot (AD) .... At this stage, St Omer comprised some 1000 technical personnel (including MT workshops in the town itself on the Rue Therounne and a sub-site at Arques, some two miles away, engaged in kite balloon repair and the production of hydrogen) organised into a wide range of repair and stores sections holding three month's stock of aeronautical and transport stores. The depot received, modified and issued direct to the front line new aircraft, maintained an attrition reserve and overhauled and reconstructed aircraft, balloons and vehicles. In order to keep 1800 aircraft in the field (the size of the

RAF at the Armistice) it was calculated that 1500 new aircraft would have to be delivered to France each month.



**Memorial Inscription on the Watson family grave in St Mary's Churchyard, Conistone**



**Royal Flying Corps**

**Cap Badge**

**Sergeant George Emsley Wilkinson M.M.  
No. 240112 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Duke of Wellington's  
(West Riding Regiment) T.F.  
Died 26<sup>th</sup> July 1918 Aged 23**



George Emsley Wilkinson was born on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1895, at North Cote, Kilnsey. His parents were Richard Armistead and Jane Wilkinson, née Sayer and he was the brother of Private Felix Wilkinson (*q.v.*). He was admitted to Conistone School on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1900.

In the 1901 Conistone-with-Kilnsey census he is shown as living at North Cote, Kilnsey, aged 5 years, living with his grandparents, Felix and Katherine Sayer. His parents, Richard and Jane, were also living at North Cote.

In 1903 the family moved to Walsden in Lancashire and later they moved again to Kirkburton near Huddersfield. A Territorial Force soldier at the outbreak of war, he went to France in 1915 with the 1/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment), part of the 49<sup>th</sup> (West Riding) Division. At the time of his death, the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion had been transferred to the 62<sup>nd</sup> (2/West Riding) Division.

***Craven Herald*** (05 October 1917):

CRAVEN AND THE WAR - A DALES SOLDIER RECEIVES  
MILITARY MEDAL

Corporal G. E. Wilkinson, Duke of Wellington's Regiment, has been awarded the Military Medal. Corporal Wilkinson is the third son of Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson, late of Cote Farm, Kilnsey, and later of Lane Head Farm, Kirkburton, and is 22 years of age. He was a Territorial when the war broke out in 1914, and went to France in April 1915. Corporal Wilkinson was previously employed by Messrs. Taylor & Hobson, cabinetmakers, Huddersfield. Mrs. Wilkinson has three other sons in the Army - Sergt. Tennant Wilkinson (who has been mentioned by Sir John French and Sir Douglas Haig in despatches), and is home on leave just now awaiting his commission, Pte. Felix Wilkinson, who has been missing since May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and Pte. Jack Wilkinson, who is in training in England.

The medal was awarded for the following acts of gallantry: - "For conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in the trenches. On the night of August 7th 1917, battalion headquarters in the trenches were heavily shelled and all wires were broken. Corporal Wilkinson, with two linesmen, went out and repaired the lines to two of the companies under extremely difficult conditions. On the night of August 13th, during the inter-battalion relief, the corporal and his linesmen again went out under heavy shellfire and repaired lines, which had been broken. On this occasion the relieving battalion had one of their linesmen killed and two others wounded within a few feet of them. On the night of August 16th all wires were again broken and he and his linesmen immediately went out along the canal bank, which was being heavily shelled with gas shells and high explosives at the time, and succeeded in getting the line through to the left front line company."

***Craven Herald*** (23 August 1918):

WILKINSON - July 27th, in hospital in France, died of wounds received in action, 204112, Sergeant G. Wilkinson, M.M., third son of the late Mr. Wilkinson, North Cote, Kilnsey, and Mrs. Wilkinson, Park View, Kirkburton.

Greater love hath no man than this  
- that a man lay down his life for his friend.



**G.E. Wilkinson's Military Medal**

**Extract from *Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war* by Keith Taylor (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4) p. 263-264**

George was the third son of R.A. and Jane Wilkinson who farmed Cote Farm, Kilnsey, before moving to Lane Head Farm, Kirkburton, a village just to the south of Huddersfield. George worked for the firm of Messrs. Taylor and Hobson, cabinet makers of Huddersfield. He was a Territorial soldier before the war and went to France in April 1915 with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion West Riding Regiment. Three older brothers also joined the army, and one of them, Felix, who had been born at Litton, in Littondale, had been missing since May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917. Eventually his mother would receive the news confirming his death. George won the military medal on the night of August 13<sup>th</sup> 1917 when the trenches were heavily shelled and all the wires were broken. Corporal Wilkinson, with his linesmen, went out under heavy shell fire and repaired the lines whilst men were being killed around them. He did the same on other nights during that period. Later he was promoted to Sergeant.

On July 18<sup>th</sup> 1918 the allied offensive began on the Marne, with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion ordered to capture the Bois du Petit Champ on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. At the centre of the wood they met with serious opposition from a strong point difficult to locate, and sustained heavy casualties. Meanwhile, "C" Company were threatened by a very strong counter

attack and were eventually surrounded. The enemy captured the most forward post, then charged the other two posts of the Company with fixed bayonets. A Lewis gun was put into action and compelled the enemy to retire temporarily. They came on again with stick bombs and the position became untenable.

During this desperate fighting on July 22<sup>nd</sup> George Wilkinson was severely wounded and taken to the Casualty Clearing Station where he died on July 26<sup>th</sup>. He was buried in grave 79 Vertus Communal Cemetery, a village 30 kilometres west of Chalons-en-Champagne. His mother, Jane, by now a widow, received the news of his death at 'Park View', Kirkburton, the second of her children to be killed in the war

**Duke of  
Regiment**



**Wellington's  
Cap Badge**

**Sergeant John Inman M.M.  
No. 801103 'B' Battery 295<sup>th</sup> Brigade,  
Royal Field Artillery T.F.  
Died 26<sup>th</sup> September 1920 Aged 25**





John Inman was born at the Tennant Arms, Kilnsey, on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1895. His parents were Harry and Agnes Inman, née Atkinson. The 1901 census records John Inman, aged 5 years, born Kilnsey, son of Harry and Agnes Inman. He was admitted to Conistone School on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1898.

John Inman attested in Bradford on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1915, joining the 2/2 West Riding Brigade, Royal Field Artillery. On active service in France, John joined the 295<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, part of the 59<sup>th</sup> (2/North Midland) Division. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1917 he was promoted from Gunner to Bombardier, and promoted to Corporal on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1918. His final promotion was on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918 to the rank of Sergeant. His award of the Military Medal was published in the London Gazette on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1918.

John survived the war, but died of Lobar Pneumonia in 1920. Although he was living in Bradford at the time of his death, he was brought back to Conistone-with-Kilnsey and buried in Conistone St. Mary's churchyard in the family grave. Just four days later, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1920, his and Elsie's only child, Lucy John, was baptised at St. Mary's Church, Conistone.

***Craven Herald*** (15 February 1918):

GRASSINGTON - The Lads. It will be noted with pride by the people in the district that three lads - Maurice Jackman (Linton), Albert Robinson (Linton), and **John Inman (Threshfield)** - have all for their conspicuous bravery in the field, been recommended to receive the Military Medal.

***Craven Herald*** (19 July 1918):

INMAN - HODGSON – married July 15th, at St. Philip's Church, Girlington, by the Rev. G. Pedley, vicar, **Sergeant J. Inman, M.M., R.F.A.**, only son of Mr. and Mrs. H. Inman, 'Woodlands,' Grassington, to Elsie, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Hodgson, Girlington Road, Bradford.

***Craven Herald*** (1 October 1920):

INMAN - September 26th, John, beloved husband of Elsie Inman, of Bradford, and only son of Henry and Agnes Inman, Woodlands, Grassington, aged 25 years. Was interred at Conistone, September 29th.

**Extract from *Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war* by Keith Taylor (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4) p. 296**

John was born in 1895 at the Tennant Arms, Kilnsey, in Wharfedale, the son of the landlord, Henry Inman and his wife, Mary Agnes. He was a local man, who also kept the Anglers Arms at Kilnsey, but Mary Agnes originated from Leece, near Barrow-in-Furness. John went to school and was christened in Conistone and later came to work for Dean Brothers, farmers and butchers at Grassington, with the family living at Woodland View, Threshfield. John became a journeyman butcher and by 1914 was working in the Manningham area of Bradford...

...In July 1917 he married Elsie Hodgson from Girlington Road, Manningham, Bradford. Meanwhile he had been transferred to France and joined the Royal Field Artillery, where his expertise in handling horses could be put to use. John was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery, but during his time on the Western Front he was gassed and his lungs were badly affected. John returned to civilian life as a butcher in Bradford but his health was blighted by the gas attack and he died from Lobar Pneumonia at 167, Girlington Road, Manningham, on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1920.



**The Tennant Arms Kilnsey, c.1920 (The name Inman can be faintly seen on the wall to the left of the photo)**

**Field  
(T.F.)**



**Royal  
Artillery  
Cap**



**Badge**

**Military Medal**



**St. Mary's Church, Conistone c. 1920**

**P/O Sydney Daggett R.A.F.V.R.**

**10 Squadron R.A.F.**

**Died 29<sup>th</sup> January 1944 Aged 29**



Sydney was born on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1914 at North Cote, Kilnsey, son of Aaron and Maude Anne Daggett, née Pattinson. He was admitted to Conistone School on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1921. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1926 Sydney left Conistone School to take a place at Skipton Grammar School.

**Extract from *Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war* by Keith Taylor (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4) p. 399-400**

Pilot Officer Sydney Daggett (Wireless Operator) No. 169391 10 Squadron RAF.

Sydney was born in 1914, at Old North Cote, Kilnsey, the son of Aaron and Maude Daggett, who were farmers. A sister, Margaret and brothers Maurice, Alan and Norman completed the family. Sydney attended Conistone School before continuing his education at

Ermysted's Grammar School in Skipton. Each day he cycled to Threshfield Station and travelled by train to Skipton.

He left the grammar school at 15 to farm with his father at North Cote and continued working for his mother when his father died. In 1933, he and his mother moved to Toppan House, a smaller farm at Cracoe (opposite the old Methodist Chapel, which is now the Corncrake Restaurant). Sydney was very well liked in the district and played rugby for the Upper Wharfedale team.

As a farmer, Sydney was in a reserved occupation when war was declared. However, his mother retired from farming early in the war and Sydney volunteered for the RAF. During his training, Sydney married Doris Robinson, a farmer's daughter from Cracoe. He trained as a wireless operator and was eventually posted to 10 Squadron, based at Melbourne, near York, and flying Halifax bombers.

On the night of 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> January 1944 Sydney Daggett's Halifax took off from Melbourne on the crew's 12<sup>th</sup> mission, a raid on Berlin by 677 aircraft. The aircraft was one of 42 shot down, for the Germans had concentrated many night fighters over the city that night.

The port wing tanks and the overloaded fuel tanks were set on fire as a Junkers 88 attacked, causing the hydraulics to be knocked out and the plane to go out of control. The Australian skipper, Bill Kilsby, ordered his crew to bale out, but for some reason, Sydney Daggett remained with the skipper. His body was found close to that of his skipper's in the burnt out plane. The rest of the crew were taken prisoner as they landed near Tempelhof Airport and were taken from Berlin Central Railway Station by armed guards, who had to protect them from the anger of the civilians gathered nearby. The mystery remains as to why Sydney did not bale out, since an unopened parachute was discovered in the wreckage.

Sydney Daggett is commemorated on Panel 211 Runnymede Memorial.



**The Halifax Bomber  
Badge**

**10 Squadron**

**F/O Frederick Ellis Spink, D.F.C., R.A.F.V.R.**

**489 (New Zealand) Squadron R.A.F.**

**Died 8<sup>th</sup> August 1944 Aged 23**



Frederick Ellis Spink was born in Conistone on 27<sup>th</sup> January 1921, the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Ann Spink, née Fawcett. Elizabeth ran Conistone Post Office and Thomas farmed at Town Head Farm. Frederick Ellis was admitted to Conistone School on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1926, and he left to go to Skipton Grammar School on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1932.





**Advert from *The Buxton of Yorkshire being a Complete Guide to Grassington* by the Rev. Bailey Harker. 1903**



**The Post Office Conistone c.1930**

Frederick Ellis Spink trained to become a navigator and it was as such that he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross whilst serving with 489 (New Zealand) Squadron R.A.F.

His D.F.C. citation was printed in *The London Gazette* on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1944:

Flying Officer Frederick Ellis SPINK (151832), R.A.F.V.R.,  
489 (N.Z.) Sqn.

This officer has taken part in many sorties, including numerous attacks on shipping. He is a navigator of exceptional ability and has executed his assignments with great accuracy and precision, factors which have played a good part in the successes obtained. His sterling qualities have impressed all.

**Extract from *Swaledale & Wharfedale Remembered - Aspects of Dales' life through peace and war* by Keith Taylor (2006, ISBN 1 901214 66 4) p.422-423**

Known as Ellis to his family and friends in the dale and Freddy by his RAF pals, he was the youngest son of Thomas Frederick and Elizabeth Spink of Conistone, their other child being Ashley. Thomas had married Elizabeth Fawcett from Hebden and, in the tiny village of Conistone she ran the Post Office whilst Thomas farmed at Town Head Farm. He was also a butcher, with his own small slaughter house and in the 1930's travelled the dale in his butcher's van.

Ellis won a scholarship to Ermysted's Grammar School, Skipton, and went on to study at Skipton Art School, planning later to study at the Royal College of Art in London. This was not to be, as the war intervened. He joined the RAF and did his training as a navigator in Canada, before joining 489 (New Zealand) Squadron at RAF Leuchars in Fife, Scotland.

They had been flying Hampden aircraft on anti-submarine patrols but now they were re-equipped with Beaufighters and specialised in anti-shipping attacks, the most dangerous of all RAF roles. They moved to RAF Langham in Norfolk, to be closer to the invasion taking place across the English Channel. It was at this time that Ellis became the navigator for Squadron Leader Peter Hughes and he received the DFC for the accuracy of his navigation and the many sorties he undertook. Ellis was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1944.

On August 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> they had flown operations against German E-boats, in support of the invasion of Normandy, but on August 8<sup>th</sup> most of 489 Squadron joined other Squadrons at RAF North Cotes, south of Grimsby, to attack a convoy off Egersund, south of Stavanger, southern Norway. 45 Beaufighters, escorted by 48 Mustangs from American Squadrons, took off from North Cotes and three Mustangs and three Beaufighters would not return.

The convoy was near enough to shore to be protected by the fire from shore batteries, and the convoy escorts also sent up heavy flak. Two Beaufighters had already been shot down when Peter Hughes attacked a trawler acting as a flak ship, firing his cannons and then turning over land and giving the vessel another burst of fire, resulting in the death of 11 sailors on board.

It seems clear that their plane had been hit by flak, for Ellis called out to Peter that there was a fire in the port engine and the pilot took action to close it down, but the flames spread to the cockpit. Peter ordered Ellis to bale out but it appears that he failed to clip on his parachute before jettisoning the Perspex cupola and was sucked out without it, falling to his death on the hard surface of the sea.

Peter Hughes was also sucked out but his parachute and dinghy were strapped on and he survived the ordeal, landing in the sea some 10 miles from the coast. He paddled for 12 hours, landing at night, and was arrested by German troops next morning. In 1988, survivors of the Squadron organised a visit to Norway as guests of the Norwegian Air Force. Peter and other members were taken by helicopter to drop a wreath on the sea, near the spot where Ellis died.

The body of Ellis was never recovered and he is commemorated on the RAF Memorial at Runnymede and on a Squadron plaque in the church at Langham, Norfolk.

A tribute to Frederick Ellis Spink was published in the ***Craven Herald*** on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> August 1994, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his death.



**Headstone in St. Mary's Churchyard, Conistone**



**The Bristol Beaufighter**



**489 Squadron Badge**



**Distinguished Flying Cross**



***Published by Conistone-with-Kilnsey Parish Meeting  
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