

# Sidney Ernest Wareham's War Story

*By his grandson Mark Wareham, last updated 28<sup>th</sup> October 2016*



## Introduction

A few years ago, thanks to my late aunt Pamela, I was able to get hold of a copy of my grandfather Sid Wareham's Second World War RAF record. This documentation was most revealing because I had only previously known a few bits of information about his wartime service. Whilst I knew that he had been RAF ground crew, I did not know exactly where he had served other than that he'd been in the Far East. Thanks to this official service record I was able to piece together a much more comprehensive story about what he experienced between his enlistment on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940 and his formal release in early 1946. Thanks to other information I was able to build a story of how the whole war affected him and his life on his return to the UK. This essay is my grandfather's war story based on that information and is the story of Sid Wareham's experiences in the war and on his return. This war affected people in all sorts of ways that are still being felt to this day.

### Before the War



Sidney was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1916 at Coombe, near Shaftesbury, although he was not baptised until 1921 at Donhead St Mary. He was the son of Walter George and Harriet Rosina (or Rose, nee Stainer) Wareham and his father was a gardener / groundsman on the Coombe House estate. Sidney had four brothers and seven sisters.

To the left is a pre-war picture of a young Sidney, aged about 14, near his parent's home at Landsley Cottage, just off the Salisbury Road near Shaftesbury, on the Coombe estate (now St Mary's School).

Sidney married Violet Doris Hiscock on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1935 at the Registry Office in Yeovil in Somerset, where they were living at the time. Their first child, Donald George, was born just a couple of months later and they returned to Shaftesbury shortly afterwards and lived in a house near to Violet's father's farm.

### Enlistment

War broke out with Germany in September 1939 and by October all men in the UK between the ages of 21 and 23 were required to register for military service and choose between the three armed forces. Whilst some men had volunteered early in the war, the numbers signing up were just not enough to be able to wage a war against forces of the size that the Axis powers could muster. Being 23 years old at the time Sidney would have been one of those who were forced to register at this time.



Since September 1939 Sidney's older brother (by one year) Reginald (*pictured left*), had been in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force and was serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 1940 his unit had crossed into Belgium to try to stop the German advance (one battle being at Tournai on 20<sup>th</sup> May), but they were soon in retreat and on 1<sup>st</sup> June Reg was one of those who was evacuated from the

beaches of Dunkirk. According my great aunt, Reg was so deeply affected by his experience on the beaches, whilst desperately awaiting evacuation, that for years after the war he would still duck for cover whenever he heard a plane overhead.

On the day that my grandfather joined the Royal Air Force, just three days after Paris was occupied, the new Prime Minister of France asked Germany for peace terms, effectively surrendering after an unstoppable German onslaught. Churchill made a stirring speech to the people on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1940, after the Dunkirk evacuations, that 'we shall fight them on the beaches' and 'never surrender'. Whether volunteering or being conscripted, Sidney may have felt that he now had to do his bit given that his homeland was about to come under direct attack from the forces of Nazi Germany.

On enlistment Sidney is recorded as being 24 years old in June 1940 and from Coombe in Wiltshire. He is stated as being married to Violet Doris (formerly Hiscock) and with two children - Donald George and Pamela Betty. A third child, Alexander Ernest, is added to the written record in late 1941. He was a shop assistant and his physical appearance is recorded as – 5' 8 ½ " tall, 33" chest, brown hair, brown eyes, healthy and with no scars. His home address was 'Butts Knapp, Shaftesbury, Dorset' and his religion is recorded as being Church of England.

He was assigned the military number 1156911 and his RAF trade was 'ACH/GD' which means 'aircrafthand – general duties'. The picture of my grandfather on the cover page is, I'm sure, from this early part of the war when he was based in the UK and in his blue RAF uniform, rather than the later brown uniform he would have worn in the desert of Africa and jungle of the Far East.

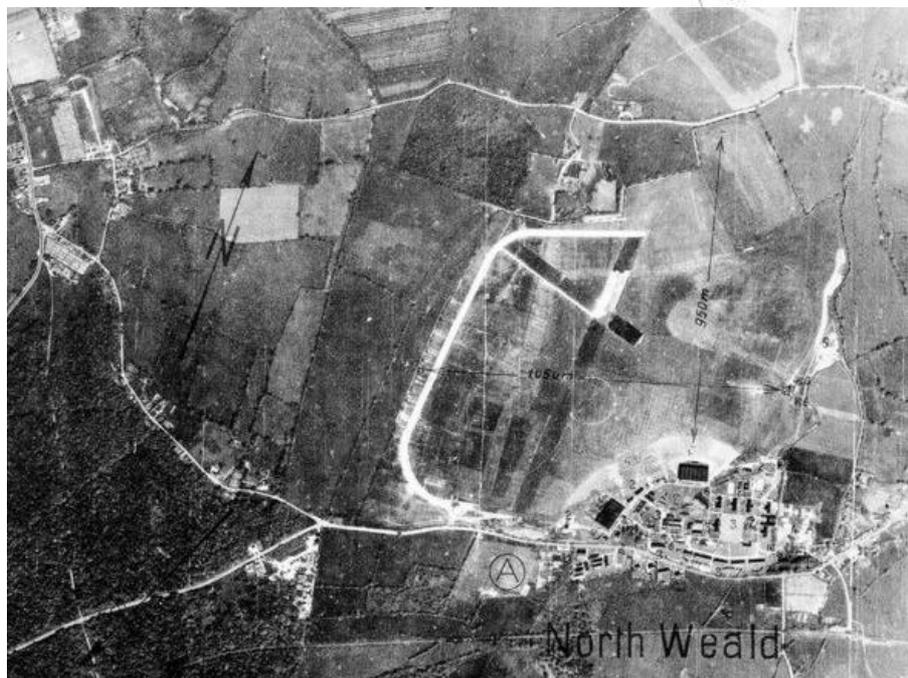
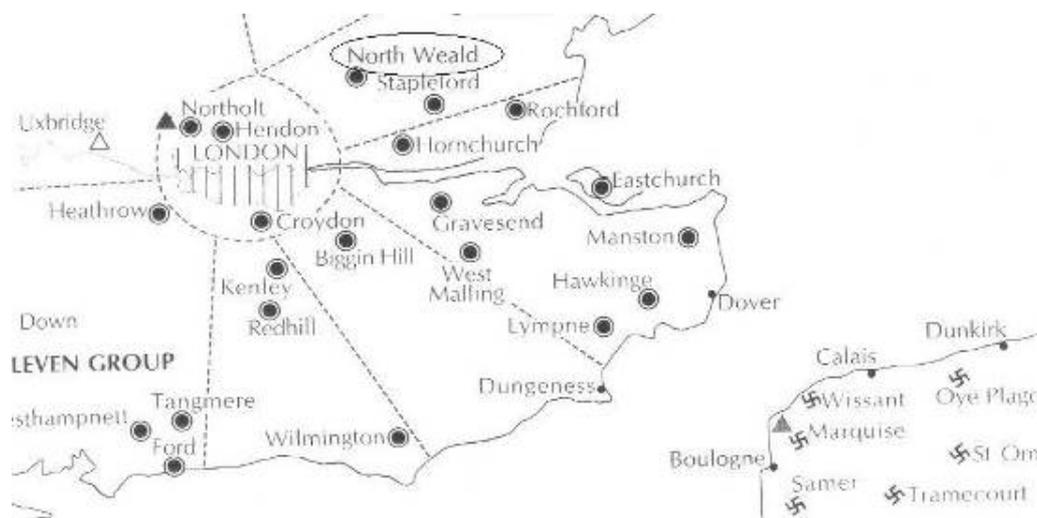
Throughout his military service his character is recorded as being 'very good' and his proficiency in his job, when recorded at the end of each year, was mainly 'satisfactory' to having been 'superb' in 1941 and 1944.

## Part One – First posting (7/1940 to 4/1942) – RAF Station North Weald

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1940 Sidney is recorded as being enlisted at number 2 recruitment centre at RAF Cardington. He was enlisted as a 'Erk (from the cockney 'erkcraft'), an affectionate term for a non-commissioned aircraftman, and he was initially given the lowest RAF rank of 'AC2' which is 'Aircraftman second class' – a trainee rank, which was also nicknamed a 'plonk'. This was RAF ground crew and his first trade was 'aircrafthand equipment assistant'.

Of just over a million people to have served with the RAF in the war only about 193,000 were aircrew. The rest, including my grandfather, were on the ground working in support of the brave men putting their lives at immediate risk in the aircraft. Whilst the remark that 'never have so many owed so much to so few' belongs to the pilots, it is a fact, and one that the pilots recognised, that they would not have been able to do their job without the dedication and hard work of the ground crew that supported them.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July Sidney was posted to 'ETS' which I think is the RAF 'Engineering Training School' and on 5<sup>th</sup> September he passed an exam and gained a qualification with a pass mark of 56%. A posting to number 9 Flying Training School appears to have been cancelled, probably to assist in maintaining their aircraft rather than as air crew, and instead on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1940, in possession of his new skills and knowledge as aircraftsman, he was posted to RAF Station North Weald. The reason for the posting was given as 'dd', possibly meaning 'defensive duties'?



RAF North Weald, near Epping in Essex, was part of the important 'Eleven Group' in the Battle of Britain guarding London and the Home Counties. The photo above is German reconnaissance from 1939 and shows the two runways at the station and hangers and personnel accommodation bottom right.

By the time that Sid arrived at the station, on 14<sup>th</sup> September, the air battle had been taking place for about three months and since August the second phase of the battle, Germany's attempt to destroy the RAF on the ground, had been raging with heavy attacks on the RAF defences from German bombers and fighters. 200 German bombs had fallen on North Weald on 24<sup>th</sup> August. The RAF squadrons based at the airbase during Sid's posting there were –

- 1/9 to 8/10/40 - 25 squadron - code ZK flying Blenheims mark IV's – night fighters
- 11 to 12/40 - 46 'Uganda' squadron – code PO flying Hurricane mark I's
- 12/40 to 6/41 – 56 'Punjab' squadron – code LR/US flying Hurricane mark I's and then mark II's
- 6 to 12/41 – 71 'Eagle' (American) squadron – code XR flying Hurricanes and then Spitfires, mark II then mark V
- 7 to 12/41 – 111 squadron – code JU flying Spitfire mark II's and then mark V's
- 12/41 to ? – 121 'Eagle' (American) squadron – code AV flying mark V Spitfires
- 8/41 to 8/42 – 222 'Natal' squadron – code ZD flying Spitfire mark II's and then mark V's
- 9/40 to 5/41 – 249 'Gold Coast' squadron (which included a contingent of Polish pilots) – code GN flying Hurricane mark I's and then mark II's
- 10 to 11/40 – 257 'Burma' squadron – code DT flying Hurricane mark I's
- 12/41 to 5/42 – 403 'Canadian' squadron – code KH flying Spitfires

According to A. Morton, writing for the North Weald Museum, at the time my grandfather arrived in mid-September there was -

“... an opportunity for the station to catch its breath when German attacks on the airfield abated.” But Morton says that “... it was not long before the fighters were again in demand to combat German raids over London” after, thankfully for the RAF fighter squadrons, the Germans changed their tactics and “...North Weald played a pivotal role in the struggle to keep the skies above capital clear of enemy aircraft”.

On 29<sup>th</sup> October 1940, probably when my grandfather was at the base, North Weald was again attacked by the Luftwaffe and six people were killed at the airbase with forty-two others being wounded. The photo below right shows a bombed-out hanger and destroyed Blenheim fighter at about this time.



Later that year it became clear that the RAF could not be defeated as easily as the Germans may have thought and without clear air superiority Hitler abandoned Operation Sealion and the immediate plan to invade England. The main struggle of the Battle of Britain was coming to an end and Britain was still free to continue the fight.

### Hawker Hurricane



Maybe this is him on the right relaxing in the shade of a Hurricane whilst refuelling? It certainly would have been a task and situation with which he would have been familiar.

### Bristol Blenheim



## Supermarine Spitfire -



Below is a picture of a mark V Spitfire at RAF North Weald in 1942, possibly at the time that my grandfather was stationed there and certainly a view he would be familiar with.



*By F/O F.J. Brock, Royal Air Force official photographer - This is photograph CH 18083 from the collections of the Imperial War Museums., Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18008941>*

On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1940 Sidney was promoted to the rank of AC1 – Aircraftman, first class and on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1941 he was promoted again to LAC – Leading Aircraftman. As LAC, he would have worn the insignia shown on the right on the sleeve of his uniform.



Pictured below are Hurricane fighter pilots running to their aircraft at North Weald in 1940. Sitting in one of the airplanes waiting by the runway is one of Sid's colleagues, RAF ground crew. This photo looks staged and rather casual and so probably wasn't a real scramble.



Another picture of North Weald below, this time showing planes (probably Spitfires) parked in defensive 'e-pens' (see sources). Aircraftmen at the base would have been on high alert as well as the pilots to assist in quick re-equipping, refuelling and repair and help pilots with take-off and landing. This photo, with planes in pens near a landing strip, and the apparent urgency of the pilots, looks more like a real scramble.

The period from late 1940 till May 1941 is known to historians as the 'Blitz' when London and other industrial cities of the UK were targeted by heavy bombing. Sidney would no doubt have been very busy helping to maintain the aircraft and working on general manual or clerical duties on the station. Because he was still in Britain he would still have been able to visit friends and family at home back in Shaftesbury. He would have had a 48 hour pass once a month and, when exigencies allowed, longer periods of leave. During this time his third child Alex was conceived in early 1941, a few months after he was first stationed at North Weald.



Sid was part of a large operational air base and figures from a notebook kept by a member of 403 squadron shows that in January 1942 there were the following personnel at the station –

- RCAF Officers – Air crew – 9
- RCAF Officers – Ground crew 4
- RCAF Airmen – Air crew – 17
- RCAF Airmen – Ground crew – 142
- RAF Officers – Air crew – 2
- RAF Officers – Ground crew – 1
- RAF Airmen – Ground crew – 110 (or 109 plus grandfather Sid)

By summer 1941 the worst of the Blitz was over and much German air power was reallocated to the attack on Russia in the East. From late 1941 the pressure would probably have eased slightly on the Eleven Group of the RAF and so servicemen like Sid could be moved from primarily defensive duties in the homeland to defending British interests overseas. Early in 1942 Sid left the UK to join an army and air force facing the Axis powers at the only place face to face in the world at the time – North Africa. Sid left his young family, for the first time in his life, and for what would turn out to be a period of just under three years' absence.

## Part Two - Second posting (4/1942 to 10/43) – North Africa

On 11<sup>th</sup> April 1942 Sid arrived in the Egypt and was to be engaged in the ultimately successful North Africa campaign as part of the RAF Middle East Command with the Desert Air Force. After their Axis allies, the Italians, had suffered humiliating defeats in 1940, the German General Erwin Rommel arrived in Africa in February 1941 and succeeded in pushing the Allies back with victory after victory. The aim of the German army was to secure North Africa and to push on to seize the precious oilfields in the Middle East. By the time that Sid arrived in the area there was a crisis, Rommel was threatening Alexandria in Egypt and if that fell then the way would have been open for the Germans to take control of the important Suez Canal, which



served as a route for precious cargo and transportation to British interests in India and the Far East.

*Pictured left, RAF ground crew service a Spitfire in Tunisia in North Africa (© IWM (CNA 602).*

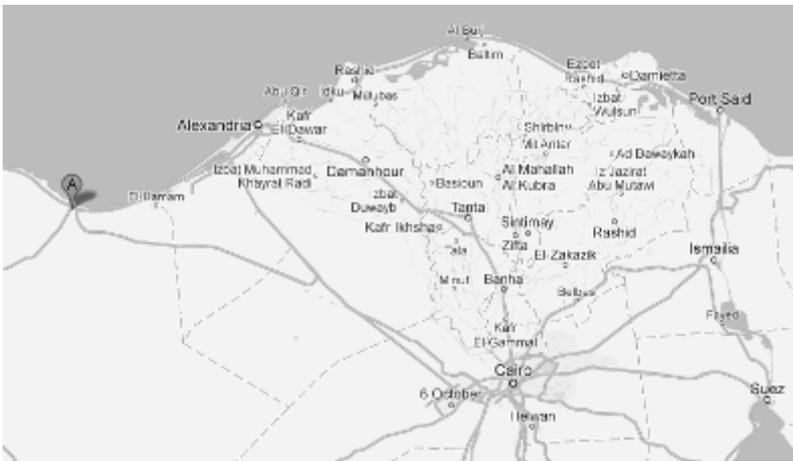
My grandfather was posted to the number 21 Personnel Training Centre, Middle East

Command on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1942, possibly for retraining on different aircraft than he'd been used to working on in the UK, for example the Kittyhawk *pictured on the right* (© IWM (CM 2895), or the Tomahawk fighter or Wellington and Maryland bombers. He was then almost immediately assigned to Number 52 Refuelling and Re-arming Party. This was a mobile unit tasked with refuelling and rearming aircraft using bases as forward operating airfields. Sid was in North Africa just a few weeks after Rommel had captured Tobruk, but at the end of June the Allies had stopped him at the first battle at El Alamein. The 52<sup>nd</sup> R&R was formed in August that year at Helman, near Cairo, in Egypt. Then from that main base the unit operated not far behind the front line to support the offensive push against the Axis powers of the German Afrika Corps and the Italians. Sid would have been a founder member of this RAF support unit and whilst he was continuing to work as ground crew, he and his colleagues would undoubtedly have been far from immune to attack because the Luftwaffe and Italians would have targeted enemy aircraft in a vulnerable position on the ground whilst being re-armed and refuelled.



Sid's work in the refuelling party was crucial to the eventual victory as this passage from The History of the RAF (*from <http://www.raf.mod.uk/>*) demonstrates -

“An ever-increasing force of fighters, fighter-bombers and bombers was now concentrated against the stores and supply dumps of the enemy, his shipping in the Mediterranean, his airfields and his retreating armies. Supply was, in fact, the crux of the desert battle. Ensuring your own supply routes was the only path to victory. Rommel's Afrika Korps was halted by lack of fuel as much as by anything else.”



The second, most famous, Battle of El Alamein was fought between 23<sup>rd</sup> October and 5<sup>th</sup> November 1942. This battle is featured on the honours of the RAF and Sidney would almost certainly have been heavily engaged in supporting the Allied action in this famous victory. The battlefield location is shown on the map on the left, with Cairo and Helwan bottom right. It was partly thanks to RAF air superiority that this victory was possible at all. Had Germany gained

control of the skies over North Africa then the battle and even the war itself may have taken a different turn and may have had a different outcome.

At Christmas 1942, whilst still based in Egypt, Sidney sent the card pictured on the right, to his mother Rose. The card confirms the information in his service record that he was in the 52<sup>nd</sup> refuelling party, 'B' section.



From 9<sup>th</sup> March 1943 the 52<sup>nd</sup> RRP was based at a primitive landing airstrip called LG (Landing Ground) 28 at Burg El-Arab. This was on the road between Alexandria and Cairo.

As the Allies pushed the Axis powers back westwards so the ground support units moved location and from 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943 52<sup>nd</sup> RRP were based at Neffatia West air base in Tunisia. Then on 9<sup>th</sup> April they were at Monastir, near Tunis,



shown on the map below. From 28<sup>th</sup> April they were slightly further south at Gabes. In these final battles in Tunisia the RAF thwarted attempts by the Germans to reinforce their ground forces by air from Sicily and in three weeks in April 1942 432 enemy transport aircraft and 35 fighters were destroyed.

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 1943 the axis forces under General Rommel surrendered and whilst Rommel and many of his men escaped to fight another day, 275,000 others became prisoners of war thanks to the RAF blocking their air escape route. Italian colonies in Africa were occupied and the way was open for the allied invasion of Italy. North Africa was a major defeat of the Axis powers both in terms of strategy, resources and manpower and the RAF Desert Air Force commander was full of praise for their part in this victory – “you have shown the world the unity and strength of air power”.

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1943 Sidney was awarded with his one and only good conduct badge of his war service, 1<sup>st</sup>



class, which would have been welcome as that attracted a bonus on his pay.

On 17<sup>th</sup> July 52<sup>nd</sup> RRP moved to Sorman West airfield to the west of Tripoli in Libya and on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1943 my grandfather was admitted to 24th Military Field Hospital, although the official service record does not say what health problem he was suffering with.



With the Axis having fled North Africa the mobile R&R units would no longer have been required in the field and on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1943 Sid was attached to 89<sup>th</sup> squadron RAF and joined them at their base at Bu Amud in Libya (*map location shown above*). The 89<sup>th</sup> Squadron RAF was equipped with the twin engine Bristol Beaufighther and they generally flew defensive night patrols along the North African coastline. The picture of 'Beau', from number 252 RAF Squadron, on the right shows a fighter taking off from a sandy

North African airfield, much like the ones that Sid would have worked on in 1942/43. Sid may have become familiar with this particular aircraft whilst working with the 52<sup>nd</sup> RRP.

Pictured below is a Beaufighther of 89<sup>th</sup> Squadron at RAF Bu Amud in August 1943, the same month that Sid joined them there (*picture source <http://raynor-field.blogspot.co.uk>*).



In September 1943 Sid returned to Egypt when his new squadron was based at RAF Idku, about 20 miles to the east of Alexandria

(map location on the map above). With the withdrawal of German nightfighter units further north in Italy, they were no longer required in North Africa and they did not join comrades in the invasion of Italy but were instead posted to a different theatre of the war to face another of the Axis powers, Japan.



The pictures above (© IWM (CAN 3922) and left (© IWM (CAN 3923) shows armourers of 89<sup>th</sup> Squadron in Libya in 1943 working on the Beaufighter's Browning machine gun.

The picture on the left shows members of the 89<sup>th</sup> squadron in Libya in 1943 working on the Beaufighter's 20mm Hispano cannons (© IWM (CAN 3925).



89<sup>th</sup> Squadron motto: *Dei auxilio telis meis* (By the help of God with my own weapon)

## Part Three - Third posting (10/1943 to 1/1945) – Ceylon and India



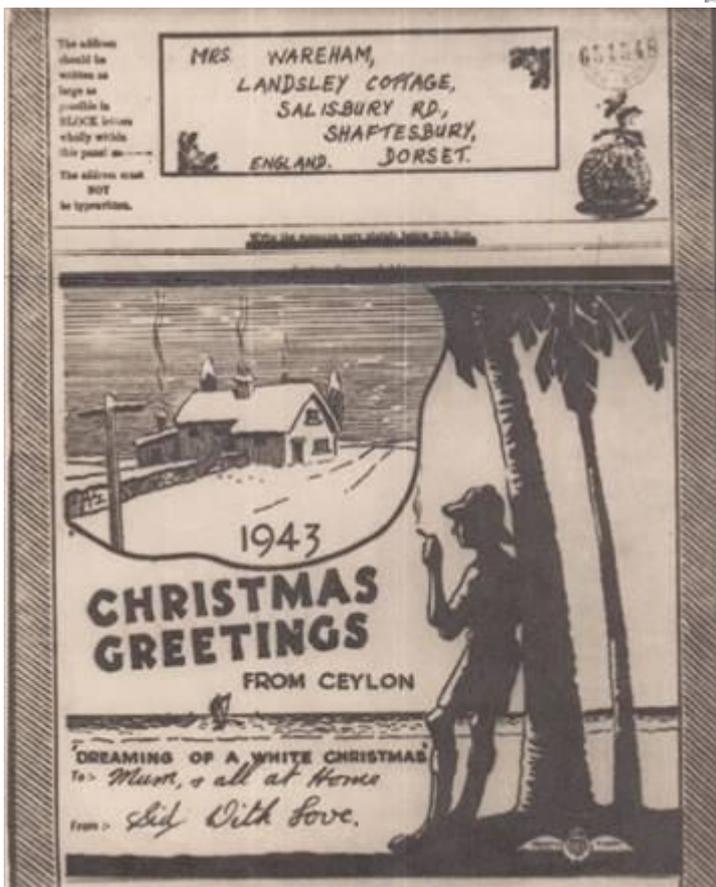
On 28<sup>th</sup> October 1943 Sidney Wareham left Africa and travelled to India, probably via the Suez Canal which his efforts had helped to secure. From October 1943 till March 1944 the 89<sup>th</sup> squadron, with their Beaufighters, was based at Vavuniya in northern Ceylon, modern day Sri Lanka.

The squadron's tasks were initially to fly defensive patrols, probably guarding shipping and allied bases in India and the far-east from Japanese attack. In 1942 the Japanese had threatened a full-scale



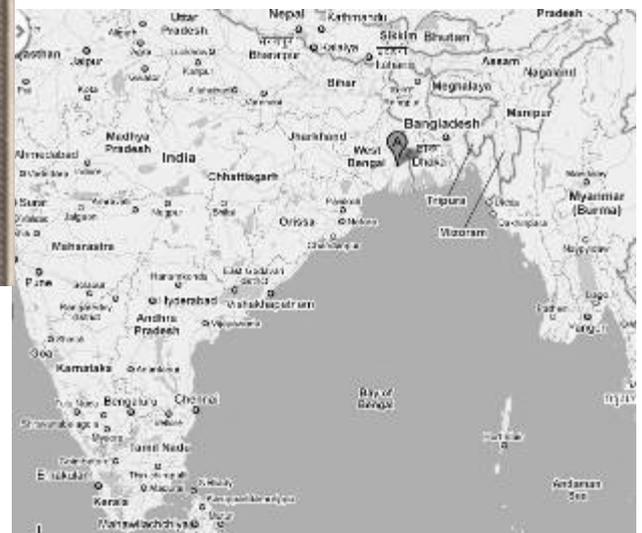
invasion of India and had occupied the Indian Andaman Islands on the eastern side of the

Bay of Bengal, which Ceylon borders on the south west.



At Christmas 1943 Sid sent the Christmas card on the left to his mother. His squadron was relocated a short distance south east to Minneriya in Ceylon from March to June 1944 before returning to Vavuniya from June to August.

In August 1944 the 89<sup>th</sup> moved to Baigachi in India, about 40 miles from Calcutta (indicated on the map on the right). This was because the role of the squadron changed from defensive operations in India and the Bay of Bengal to intruder missions into Burma.



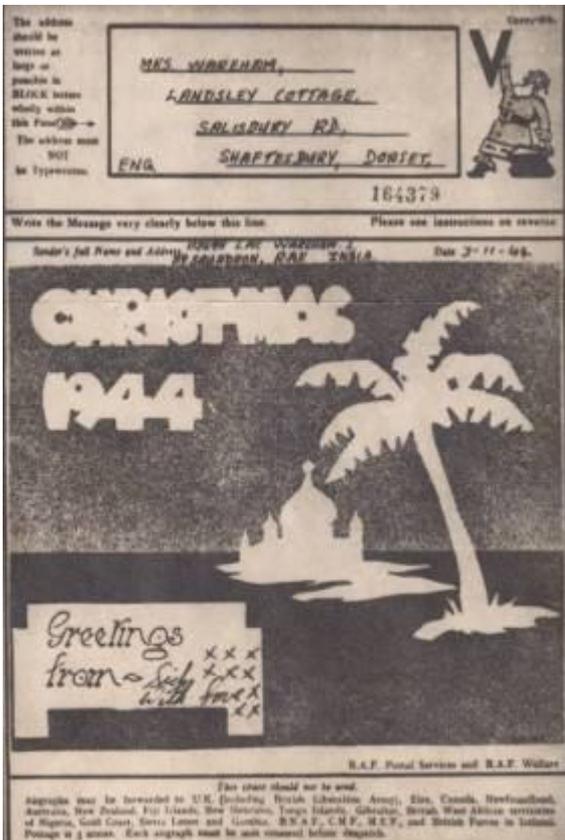
The picture below (Photo P G Hill courtesy Andy Thomas, from <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com>) shows Beaufighters of the 176 squadron at Baigachi in 1943. Note the RAF ground crew moving the aircraft, a task that Sidney would have undertaken in this very same location.



Pictured on the right is another scene which Sid would have been familiar with at the time and he probably worked on this very aircraft at some point. However, Sid wouldn't be in the photo as it is slightly later in the war and shows members of 89<sup>th</sup> Squadron RAF surrounding a landed Beaufighter in Burma (© IWM (CF 511)). Sadly, Sid did not make it into Burma with his comrades.

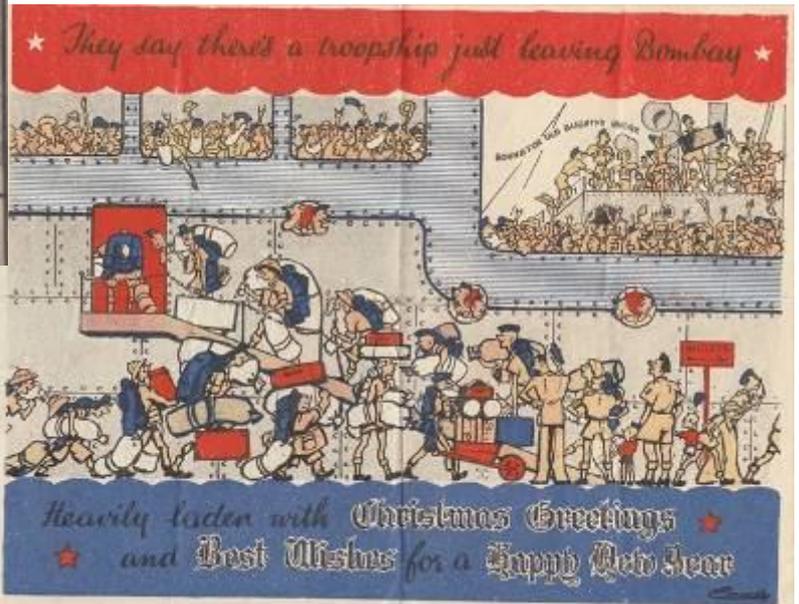


*Pictured left is a cockpit of a Beaufighter of the 89<sup>th</sup> Squadron in 1943. Sidney may well have worked in this very machine; he certainly would have been familiar with this view.*



caused some jealousy at home in an England suffering from rationing!

Sid also sent his sister a colour Christmas card, pictured right.



On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1945 Sid again wrote to his sister Kathleen and says that he is "...OK these days", comparing the weather to that in Britain he says that where he is located "... the sun shines every day and all day for about six months without a break..." and wonders whether this makes his sister at home in shivering England feel like an ice cream. He says "... I hope it gets a bit warmer by the time I return, which won't be long now. I am looking forward to it very much". He goes on to say that he gets to go to the cinema about twice a week and that they get quite up to date films where they are based, almost as quickly as they come out in London.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1945 Sidney was promoted to Corporal, but soon afterwards he became very seriously ill, having contracted malaria. It is believed that for some time his family did not know his whereabouts and there was a lot of concern that he may have died. However, Sid was alive, but he was very poorly and he was transported back to the UK and on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1945 he is recorded as being at RAF Station Torquay in Devon, England. This RAF station is now the Palace Hotel (*pictured right*) and was used as a hospital for recovering RAF personnel during the war.



On 5<sup>th</sup> September 1944 things started to go badly for Sid's health and he was admitted to 47<sup>th</sup> BGH (British General Hospital) in Calcutta. He was released on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

Then on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1944 Sidney posted the Christmas card shown on the left to his mother in the UK and on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1944 he wrote to his sister 'Kathie' and said that "... I am OK now." He says that the weather in India is dry, quite hot in the day but that it gets rather cold at night. He says that he expects that he will feel the cold when he gets back home! He also says that the fruit is plentiful, with lots of oranges, and that the bananas are cheap and that he even picked some from the trees. This must have

Sadly, my grandfather never fully recovered from weaknesses because of having suffering from this disease and through most of the post war years he suffered from poor health through to his premature death aged just 56 in 1972.



Another interesting story about Sidney's time in the Far East is that he was in the area at the same time



as two of his brothers; George and Frank Wareham (*pictured left and above, Frank on the right and George back row second from the left*). George served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dorset Regiment and was engaged in fierce fighting, often hand to hand, against the Japanese in Burma. Frank was with the 2962 RAF Regiment Squadron. The picture on the left shows the two brothers posing in uniform having met up in the area, the story being that the two brothers were so affected by the war in their general appearance, that they did not immediately recognise each other whilst eating in the same military mess.



It was also whilst in Ceylon, in April 1944, that Sidney was awarded his one service medal, according to his records. This was the 'Africa Star' which was awarded to serving personnel who were present in Africa during the famous and important victories over the German Afrika Corps. The picture left must have been taken in Ceylon or in India after April 1944 as it clearly shows him wearing the 'North Africa 1942-43' ribbon clasp for his medal (shown below) on his uniform.



## Part Four - Home sweet home? (1/1945)

There is a family story that Sid arrived back in Shaftesbury whilst my grandmother was in the old movie theatre on Bimport Road. In those days our family would not have had a telephone and he would probably have arrived unannounced back home and may have surprised everyone. Sidney was certainly home in Shaftesbury on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1945, just 24 days after he was recorded as being at the hospital in Torquay, because he is pictured at the wedding of his sister-in-law Iris Hiscock and Percy Bird at Cann Church in Shaftesbury. He is circled in the picture below and whilst it is only the top of his head it is unmistakably Sidney. He is standing near his father-in-law Robert Hiscock, who is wearing the trilby hat and is centre back row.



Very sadly, Sidney did not arrive back in Shaftesbury in time to see his father again because he had died on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and was buried on 20<sup>th</sup> April at Charlton, near Shaftesbury. This is his death notice in the Western Gazette newspaper (*courtesy of British Newspapers online*) –



ham, aged 70 years. Deeply mourned. [4  
WAREHAM.—On April 16th, 1945, at Lands-  
ley Cottage, Sallsbury Road, Shaftes-  
bury, Walter George Wareham, after a  
long illness, aged 79. |24466  
WHITE. — On April 15th, 1945, at High

Walter had become very ill after suffering from blood poisoning from a pesticide used on the roses of the gardens where he worked. He was bedridden for weeks before he died. He is pictured to the right in a greenhouse on the Coombe estate, where he had worked for – firstly Mark Beaufoy (former Liberal MP and Quaker industrialist), who built the house, the Wormald family when it was a hotel and finally during the war the house had become a hospital for recuperating US bomber crews. In 1922 Walter had been one of the pallbearers of Mark Beaufoy having been at that time one of his six

eldest employees having worked for him for about 35 years. After the war the house became a convent and is now a boarding school for girls. Sid's mother and Walter's wife, Rose (formerly Stainer), was to live until 1960.

The war had changed some other important things at home and, like so many other returning British servicemen were to find, Sid was to discover that his wife had unfortunately not been completely faithful to him during his long absence and an American serviceman was to blame. Worse than having to deal with that privately he was to find out that the infidelity had also hit the regional headlines (*see appendix one*) and in January 1945 his wife had been found guilty at a court in Shaftesbury of having harboured an absconded US serviceman called Dougherty with whom she had clearly had an affair. Dougherty (possibly with the first name Eugene) was to be tried for being a deserter on having been captured. Violet avoided jail but was fined £10, a lot of money at the time, on the basis that she responsible for her young children on her own. The story was on the front page of the regional Western Gazette and reference was made in the news article to Sid by name and to his having been abroad for three years serving with the RAF. Unless he had seen a copy of this paper or been told by telegraph, I wonder whether Sid would have found out about this local scandal before he was back in Shaftesbury? One can then only guess at how upset he would have been given the circumstances of the public scandal but it may explain why on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1945 Sid was posted so far from home. With his service not quite over and not having been officially released, he was posted to RAF Station Millom in Cumbria with number 14 Aircrew Holding Unit. 29 such units were formed in June 1945; their main purpose appears to have been for the disposal of redundant aircrew upon the outbreak of peace in Europe. But there seems no logic as to why he was so far from home other than as an escape from the immediacy of his new home situation, maybe at his request.

I know that reference to this matter will upset some family members who may not be comfortable about reading such matters and having them published. However, whilst I am sorry about that, it is an unavoidable fact of history, particularly because it is a matter of public record having been on the front page of a newspaper, and it very much forms part of our grandfather's wartime experience. Our family were far from being unique in being affected by the trauma that war caused through the separation which left wives without the comfort and support of a husband for years on end. We are all human, capable of human frailty and error and if it helps at all, I can testify to the fact that our nan was a wonderful person and a loving mother and grandmother (and let them who are without sin throw the first stone!).

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1945 Sid was posted to number 3 GTS (Glider Training School), when, according to researcher Neil Jed, it was based at Wellsbourne Mountford near Warwick, which is a bit nearer to Dorset.



Sid was finally released from active service on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1946 (his effective release date was given as 19<sup>th</sup> April 1946). He was then able to resume home and family life properly,

No.241		Adelaide					
1947	1947	Patricia	Sidney 2 Violet	Wareham	Christy's Lane Shaftesbury	Builder's Labourer	H. H. Coley Rector
No.242							
1947	1947	Peter	Sidney 1 Violet	Wareham	Christy's Lane Shaftesbury	Builder's Labourer	H. H. Coley Rector
No.243							

although he was held in the reserves officially until 1959. He returned to live with his wife in a new family home at 13 Christy's Lane in Shaftesbury (pictured on the previous page, although it had a

neater hedge back then which went right around the front of the house). This home was possibly one of the new 'homes fit for hero's built by the post-war Labour government and is where he and Violet were to live until they divorced shortly before he died. Sid and Violet raised twelve children to adulthood, my dad and his twin sister Patricia (who sadly only survived 36 hours) being the second births after the war, twenty-three months after Sidney's release from military service. My dad was not expected to survive and was in fact baptised whilst in the Bimport Rd maternity unit and was given with a different name than that which he was later given on his civil registration. Sadly, my father's twin sister Patricia lived for just 36 hours and she was buried in the churchyard at Cann in Shaftesbury. My father's baptism shows that Sid had by this time found work as a builder's labourer.

**LODGER IN A COUNCIL HOUSE**  
 Because a tenant of a Council house had taken in a lodger without permission the Borough Council, at Monday's County Court, asked His Honour Judge A. H. Armstrong for possession of No. 13, Christy's-lane, from Sidney E. Wareham.—Mr. W. Farley Rutter, for the Council, said Wareham had been tenant of the house for some time, at a rent of 15s a week and lived there with his wife and six children. The house had three bedrooms, but notwithstanding this he took in a lodger without permission. The Corporation wrote to him pointing out that this was against the regulations, but no reply was received to their letter, and eventually he was given notice to quit.  
 Mr. Rutter said he understood that the lodger had now left, and if this was the case, and the defendant gave an undertaking that he would not take in other lodgers without the Council's permission, this would satisfy the Corporation.  
 Mr. Gervase H. Nicholls, for defendant, said the lodger was a friend of defendant, who took him in because he had had a certain amount of trouble, and had nowhere to go. Defendant assured him that the man had now left, and had said he would never take another lodger.—Mr. Rutter said, in those circumstances, he was satisfied.  
 His Honour gave judgment for £4 10s rent and mesne profits, and costs.

Post war life was not to prove easy for Sid and his growing family, as can be shown from these newspaper articles in November 1947 and January 1950. It appears that in 1947 they needed a lodger to help with the household finances and by 1950 they were struggling to support six children. There is no reference to Sid's work and sacrifices for his country in the war in these articles, I guess as was commonplace at the time, but only reference to Sid being a 'problem' for the council due to living on poor wages. It was no doubt a difficult period and one that was not to improve greatly through much of the 1950's and into the 60's.

**COUNCIL HOUSE POSSESSION CASE**  
 An order for possession in 28 days was made by His Honour Judge A. H. Armstrong at the County Court, on Monday, when Shaftesbury Borough Council (for whom Mr. W. Farley Rutter appeared) sought possession of a house in Christy's-lane from Sidney Ernest Wareham. Mr. Rutter said arrears of rent up to October 8th last were £9, and there were also mesne profits of £9. The man had given the Council considerable trouble in the past. Mr. Rutter said he had been informed that the amount owing had been paid into Court. Making the order, His Honour allowed costs and payment out of the money paid into Court.

## Part Five – His small part in the big victories

The remarkable thing about Sidney's wartime service with the RAF is that whilst he may not have been engaged in any direct fighting with the enemy, his support role took him to three theatres of the Second World War which were so important to defeating the Axis powers. There was the war at home in the air with the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. Then the war in North Africa which Churchill described as being the turning point of the war because before El Alamein in 1942 'there was nothing but defeats, but afterwards there were nothing but victories'. Finally, in the Far East he played his small part in stopping the advance of the Japanese into that part of the British Empire and, alongside his brothers George and Frank, in turning them back with the fight in Burma. These victories would not have been possible without all of the servicemen working to support the frontline fighting man. Sid's war service can make our family very proud, he put his life on the line for our freedom and must have worked strenuously to help the victories over the fascist powers of Germany and Italy and of Imperial Japan.

Sadly, I was not able to get to know my grandfather very well. I was just two years old when he passed away although I have one treasured memory of seeing him when I was on my mother's arm when we once met at Ten Acres in Shaftesbury. This essay is dedicated to the memory of my granddad Sidney Wareham who is pictured below in later life with my aunt Maureen at her wedding, at the wedding of my uncle Dave and Sue, alongside his wife Violet, with aunt Celia at the home at Christy's Lane, alongside my dad at his wedding reception in 1969 and in portrait.



**HARBOURING U.S. DESERTER**

**SHAFTESBURY WIFE FINED  
SAVED FROM PRISON BY  
YOUNG FAMILY**

At Shaftesbury Petty Sessions on Tuesday, Violet Doris Wareham, aged 27, a married woman, of Butts Knapp Cottages, Shaftesbury, was fined £10 for harbouring an American deserter. She was represented by Mr. W. Parley Rutter, and pleaded not guilty.—P.C. Baigent said on November 29th he visited defendant's house and she said an American soldier named Dougherty had left her house that morning. She was informed that it was a serious offence to harbour an absentee. On December 1st accused again said Dougherty was not there, but he was found in the scullery. Mrs. Wareham said she did not know he was there and that he must have just come in, but she was informed that the house was being watched by the police. When Dougherty was told to get his things together Mrs. Wareham produced his wallet from her handbag.

Corpl. Eotine Keith Waugh, U.S. Army Police, said Dougherty had been handed over for Court Martial as a deserter.—In reply to Mr. Rutter witness agreed that the "boys" were allowed to remain out at night, but they had to be off the streets by 11 p.m. It was in order for them to spend the night in a person's house as a guest.

**DEFENDANT'S STATEMENT.**

Accused said she was the wife of

**RINGWOOD'S FARM COTTAGES**

**COUNCIL CRITICISM OF  
THEIR CONDITION  
FOLLOWING A TENANT'S  
COMPLAINT**

When the Post-war Development Committee reported to Ringwood and Fordingbridge R.E.C. on Friday that Mr. Henderson, tenant of one of the agricultural cottages at Ringwood, had written complaining of its "very bad" state, Mr. Graham Smith said: "It seems these newly-erected cottages are seriously faulty in construction, and that either the architect or the contractors or both, have not carried out their job." He said he understood rain was getting in through the roofs through lack of flashings round the chimneys, and that windows were falling out. It seemed that tenants had every right to complain that they had not got the satisfactory places they had expected.

Sir George Meyrick Bart, committee chairman, replied that these cottages had been built more or less to plans issued by the Ministry and materials could only be got through the Ministry. "I am afraid—I don't like having to say so—the contractor and the architect are to blame in this matter," said Sir George, who added that the matter of

spend the night in a person's house as a guest.

**DEFENDANT'S STATEMENT.**

Accused said she was the wife of Sidney Ernest Wareham, who was serving in the R.A.F., and had been away about three years. She had four children, whose ages ranged from nine years to 18 months. She first met Dougherty, who was waiting outside her house for a lift back to camp at Dorchester and since then he had visited her house off and on. He often stayed the night and left early in the morning to return to camp. She had no suspicion that anything was irregular until the police came. On December 1st Dougherty came to her house about 8 p.m., a few minutes before the police arrived, and he was in the living room when the police called. She did not help him after she knew he was a deserter.

In answer to Supt. Cherrett defendant said she told the police he was not in the house because she was taken aback. She went for a ride in a car with him, but she did not know he was then working at a garage at Iwerne Minster. He was in uniform when he arrived with the car.

Mr. Rutter said the whole question was whether his client, harboured, aided and abetted the man knowing him to be a deserter, and there was no evidence of that.

The Bench, said the Chairman, had found the accused guilty of the offence, which was a very serious one. They had given the matter very serious consideration, and but for the fact that she had young children she would have been given a severe sentence. She would be fined £10.

**Mainly for Women  
OUR TOWN COUSIN'S  
LETTER**

**MEND AND BE DECORATIVE  
MY DEAR EVE—**

You will not discard a dress that has seen better days, at least you need not just because it has worn thin at the elbow, because the edges of the collar are frayed, or pleats have worn or become strained. It is possible to darn invisibly a worn elbow with threads drawn from the material of the frock itself. Unpatterned materials should be darned from the back, but where there is a pattern, it is less noticeable to darn from the front.

But more decorative than all this darning is to add a patch on the right side attaching it to the cloth with fancy stitching such as feather-stitching, herring-boning or button-hole stitching, letting the patch be in sharp colour contrast to the frock.

You might hide a worn elbow with a diamond—or a heart. To make it convincingly intentional, pair it off with a pocket on the bodice or skirt of the same shape and material.

The best way of tidying a frayed edge is to put on a wide binding, and this goes for collar edges, for pocket tops, as well as hems, waistbands and sleeves. You can make your own bias binding by folding a square of material into a triangle, cutting corner to corner then cutting into strips following the line of the first snipping. Join these bias strips end to end.

**TO THE**

**THE P**

Sir.—In reply to query of "Out of Camel's" Fartridge, I have a treat as a I seem to remember an inn at Hales rise to the equis a Wooden Cabas (And this must

**A TO**

Sir.—I have letters with me Gollidge certain job in her effort could, of a privately if am to do so (unfortunate family I have two stud five children, a suggesting an on to everyone are many people least a few to own children. either, I must sure in my Christmas more greater in the other children OFFICER'S WID

Sir.—"Soldier tainly sounds v would-be farm farmers are v district, but I size the fact th for our cottag our milk, size Christmas time

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