

PO Geoffrey Fawconer Harding 33438 RAF

Geoffrey was born in 1918 in Poole, Dorset, the son of Hubert Fawconer Harding and Eleanor Harding nee Hough.

After leaving education, Geoffrey joined the RAF as a Flight Cadet at RAF College Cranwell, Lincolnshire in Entry 37, and was granted a Permanent commission as a pilot on graduation in July 1939.

At the outbreak of war, 18 Sqn was sent to France as part of 70 Wing of the BEF in the reconnaissance and bombing role. Initially based at Beauvraignes, they moved to Meharicourt in October 1939. Geoffrey joined the squadron in early 1940.

At 09:15 on 10 May 1940, the opening day of the "Battle of France", Geoffrey and his crew departed Meharicourt in Blenheim I L1405 (WV-K) on a reconnaissance mission over the River Maase and Venlo.

Whilst flying to the West of Dusseldorf, the aircraft was engaged by a Me109 flown by Oblt Johannes Steinhoff of 11(N)./JG2 flying from Cologne Butzweilerhof Airfield.

At 10:20, the Blenheim crashed at Breyell, Germany killing Geoffrey and the Observer. The WOp/AG survived the crash and was taken as a POW, only to be shot by the Gestapo in July 1944.

Also killed: Sgt Kenneth Norman Shrosbree (Observer); WO Roland B H Townsend Coles MiD (WOp/AG) - died 15 July 1944

Originally buried in Ehrenfriedhof, Wesel, in May 1937 Geoffrey was transferred to the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

Geoffrey is commemorated on Wall Panel 176