Sgt Alfred William Swinburne Thomas 562935 RAF

Alfred was born in 1912 in Torpoint, Cornwall, the eldest son of Lt Walter Swinburne Thomas RN and Edith Thomas nee Wenman. In 1938 he married Mary Edith Robins in Northampton.

Educated at Devonport High School, on leaving in 1928 Alfred joined the RAF and served with 204 Sqn in Egypt and 36 Sqn in the Far East.

Originally trained as an Air Gunner, Alfred was selected for pilot training and was awarded his wings in 1936 and was posted to 18 Sqn at RAF Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire.

On the outbreak of War, 18 Sqn were deployed to France as part of the BEF Air Component with the role of strategic reconnaissance. When Germany invaded France and the Low Countries, the Sqn also took part in bombing missions against German troop positions.

On 30 April 1940, Alfred was on a reconnaissance sortie when his compass failed in a storm. Forced to land at Evere, Belgium Alfred and the crew were interned. They were released after the Germans invaded Belgium on 10 May and they flew back to the squadron.

On 15 May 1940, at the request of 52 Wing for the loan of a crew, Alfred and his crew departed Meharicourt in Blenheim IV L8863 (WV-S) for Vitry. A successful reconnaissance was carried out on the 15 May, but during a second sortie on 16 May the aircraft was hit by ground-fire. Despite a bullet passing through his neck and out through his jaw, Alfred managed to force land the aircraft back at Vitry. Alfred and the Observer, who had been hit in the arm, were sent to the Casualty Clearing Station. Two days later Alfred succumbed to his injuries, which were exacerbated by the enforced move of the Casualty Clearing Station.

Alfred is buried in Houchin British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

Alfred is commemorated on Wall Panel 252