

Sergeant Pilot Frederic Ralph Percival Burgess

Frederic was born in Derby on 14 March 1920, the son of Percy Alfred Burgess and Marguerite Burgess. He was known as Val to both family and friends.

Percy (1886 – 1961) and Marguerite (1888 – 1996) were married on 26 December 1911 in St Anne's Chapel, Derby. They had twins born 1917, John A C and Marguerite F M, who both sadly died as babies. They had another son, Christopher B, born in 1924.

Frederic was a pupil at Bemrose School Derby, an all boys grammar school, from 1931 to 1934. He then attended Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School Ashbourne, 1934 to 1939, before studying at Birmingham University.

He joined the RAF in July 1940 and obtained his 'wings' at the beginning of March 1941.



(1)

On 21st March 1941, Frederic took part in a navigation flight in an Avro Anson aircraft, registration K6248. Piloted by Flying Officer Eric Walwyn Padfield, the plane took off from the No2 School of Air Navigation, RAF Cranage in Cheshire. While undertaking a practice landing at Hawkswood Copse, Hawkswood Farm, Rednal near Oswestry, the aircraft's tail struck an oak tree and crashed into a wood killing all on board. There was an inquest into the crash which concluded that the pilot had failed to open the throttle in time following a practiced forced landing and that he was not authorised to undertake such a manoeuvre. The report concluded that the undercarriage had been deployed and that it was not known why the pilot was apparently attempting to land.

Frederic was buried in Alstonefield Churchyard. His coffin, which was covered with a Union Jack sent from his old school, bore the inscription "Sergt Frederic R P Burgess, died 21st March 1941, aged 21 years".

A full report of his funeral was reported in The Ashbourne News on 3rd April 1941.



(2)

**SERGT.-PILOT "VAL"
BURGESS**

FUNERAL SERVICE AT WETTON

The funeral of Sergt.-Pilot Frederic Ralph Percival ("Val") Burgess, son of Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Burgess, of Wetton Vicarage, took place last Thursday. He was killed in a flying accident on the previous Friday. Educated at Ashbourne Grammar School and Birmingham University, he joined the R.A.F. last July and obtained his "wings" at the beginning of March.

The funeral service was held in Wetton Church and interment took place in Alstonefield Churchyard. The Rev. S. Beresford, R.D. (Vicar of Alstonefield) officiated, assisted by the Rev. G. E. Raven (Vicar of Osmaston-with-Edlaston).

The family mourners were: Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Burgess (parents), Mr. Christopher Burgess (brother), Mr. F. Burgess (Stockport), Miss Burrows (Derby), Mr. and Mrs. W. R. Burrows, Mr. and Mrs. Newbold and Mr. H. C. Burrows (Derby). The large congregation included Mrs. G. E. Raven, Miss Brown, Mrs. Broad, Mrs. Holmes, John Holmes, Peter Holmes, Mrs. Cundy (Wyaston), Mrs. Knaggs, Mrs. Frost, Mr. and Mrs. H. Coward (Ashbourne), Mrs. H. Briddon (Ashbourne), Mr. and Mrs. T. R. Bonsall, and boys from Ashbourne Grammar School.

The coffin, which was covered with a Union Jack sent from his old school, bore the inscription: "Sergt. Frederic R. P. Burgess, died 21st March, 1941, aged 21 years."

The bearers were: Messrs. G. Bonsall, S. Bonsall, A. Mee, J. Stubbs, R. Taylor, and J. Tindall.

In addition to flowers from the relatives, wreaths were sent by Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School; W.V.S., Wetton; Wetton schoolchildren; Osmaston schoolchildren; Edlaston schoolchildren; Parochial Council and members of St. James's Church, Edlaston; Officers and N.C.O.s No. 20 B Course, No. 2 School of Air Navigation; Commanding Officer and Officers and Sergeants' Mess of the late Sergt.-Pilot Burgess's R.A.F. station.

Funeral arrangements were carried out by Mr. R. Riley, Ashbourne.

(3)

In addition to his grave in Alstonefield, he is remembered in St James's church Edlaston, Derbyshire (below), Bemrose School and Queen Elizabeth Grammar School.



(4)

Frederic's brother, Christopher, made and donated the altar table that stands in St Peter's church, Alstonefield. It is inscribed – 'C B BURGESS (Derby) 1957'

Sources of Information

1. Photograph – Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Ashbourne
2. Photograph – Alstonefield PCC
3. Newspaper Extract © Ashbourne News 3 April 1941
4. Photograph – St James's church, Edlaston