



Woodford Remembers

Pilot Officer Richard Reed DSO

5 May 1913 – 23 May 1944



Family

Richard Robert Reed was the son of Fred and Gertrude Florence Reed nee Hewitt (m 1912). The family came from Wellingborough to Woodford in 1913 when Mr Reed became headmaster of the junior school (13 November) in Church Street, a post he held until his retirement on health grounds in 19 December 1945 (except for his Army service in the First World War).

Richard had four siblings, Gertrude Joan b1914, Geoffrey b 1917, Sheila b 1923 and John b 1926.

He attended the Infant school from February 1919 and the Junior School from September 1920 Woodford School before winning a scholarship to Kimbolton School from August 1923. Initially the family had lived in Rose Terrace before moving to the schoolhouse in Church Street.

On leaving school he worked for Stewarts and Lloyds, Corby as an accountant in their buying department.

He married Audrey Mary Page in 1940, and the couple lived in Wellingborough.

Air Force Service

The date upon which Richard Reed joined the Royal Air Force is not known however, in March 1944 he was charged in a civilian court for causing the death of a woman working in a field near Deeping St Nicholas as a result of negligent flying. Mrs Clare Billings was decapitated by a low flying aircraft allegedly flown by PO Reed. Damages of £450 were awarded to Mrs Billings' widower, a decision challenged by the RAF and subsequently overturned.

In May 1944 he was part of a raid in southern France piloting a Lancaster Bomber. His actions resulted in him being awarded the DSO (albeit posthumously). The citation read as follows: ".....when nearing the objective, the aircraft was attacked by a fighter. The intercommunication system was put out of action, but although unable to receive any evading directions Pilot Officer Reed manoeuvred with much skill. His aircraft which had caught fire to the rear of the fuselage had sustained extensive damage and went into a steep dive. With the greatest of difficulty Pilot Officer Reed succeeded in regaining control. The fire had subsided, but the mid-upper and rear turrets were out of action, leaving the aircraft defenceless. Nevertheless, Pilot Officer Reed was determined to bomb the allocated target and went on to make a successful attack. Shortly afterwards another fighter attacked and further damage was sustained. Once more the aircraft was set on fire by the enemy's bullets but the flames were extinguished by the flight engineer. The situation was by now critical. The elevator and rudder trimmers were useless, the control surfaces had sustained damage, the hydraulic system was unserviceable, whilst the rear turret had almost severed and was hanging loosely below the fuselage. To keep the aircraft level it was necessary for two members of the crew to help with the control column and the rudder control.

Despite this, Pilot Officer Reed kept to his homeward course and finally reached base where he landed the crippled aircraft on one wheel."

Just a few days later he was piloting a Lancaster B1 of 576 Squadron, aircraft ME687 in a night raid on Dortmund. His plane was shot down homebound crashing at Hiddingsel five miles from Dulman.

Burial / grave

Reischwald Forest War Cemetery - Grave 27.D 1-11

Epitaph: Spes Durat Avorum (Let the hope of our forefathers endure)

Dependants

Wife – Audrey Mary Reed

Commemoration

Woodford Village Memorial

Woodford St Mary's Church Memorial



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