

Flight Sgt Robert Edwin Tinham WWII



Flight Sgt Robert Edwin Tinham was born on 16 April 1917 and his mother was an Australian nurse called Margaret Tew, shown in the photograph (Figure 1), but his father was unknown, although rumoured to be a doctor. Clearly a very difficult situation for a young woman at that time, and obviously most distressing for her as with great reluctance, she gave him up for adoption before returning to Australia.

Alec, a Keatinge gamekeeper, and Elsie Tinham, a Keatinge housekeeper, were at that time, childless and believed that they were unable to have children and adopted Robert, who was known as Bobby and then Bob.

(Figure 2) is a photo of Bobby with his adopted mother in the form of a postcard which was sent to his natural mother, then living in 45 Hollywood Grove, Melbourne, (Figure 3) here as it is today.



Figure 1 - FSGT Tinham's Mother Margaret Tew



Figure 2 - Elsie Tinha with baby Robert



Figure 3 - 45 Hollywood Grove, Melbourne

The Tinha's were clearly loving and excellent parents living at the time in Kiln Cottage, Teffont Evias (Figure 4), shown here as it is today but when Bobby was living there it was just a two up two down cottage.



Figure 4 - Kiln Cottage Teffont Evais

Some six or seven years after adopting Bobby they had their own child, a daughter, Joan, who was the mother of Mrs Sarah Wilson. Bobby was baptised in 1929, and (Figure 5) is a copy of his baptismal certificate.

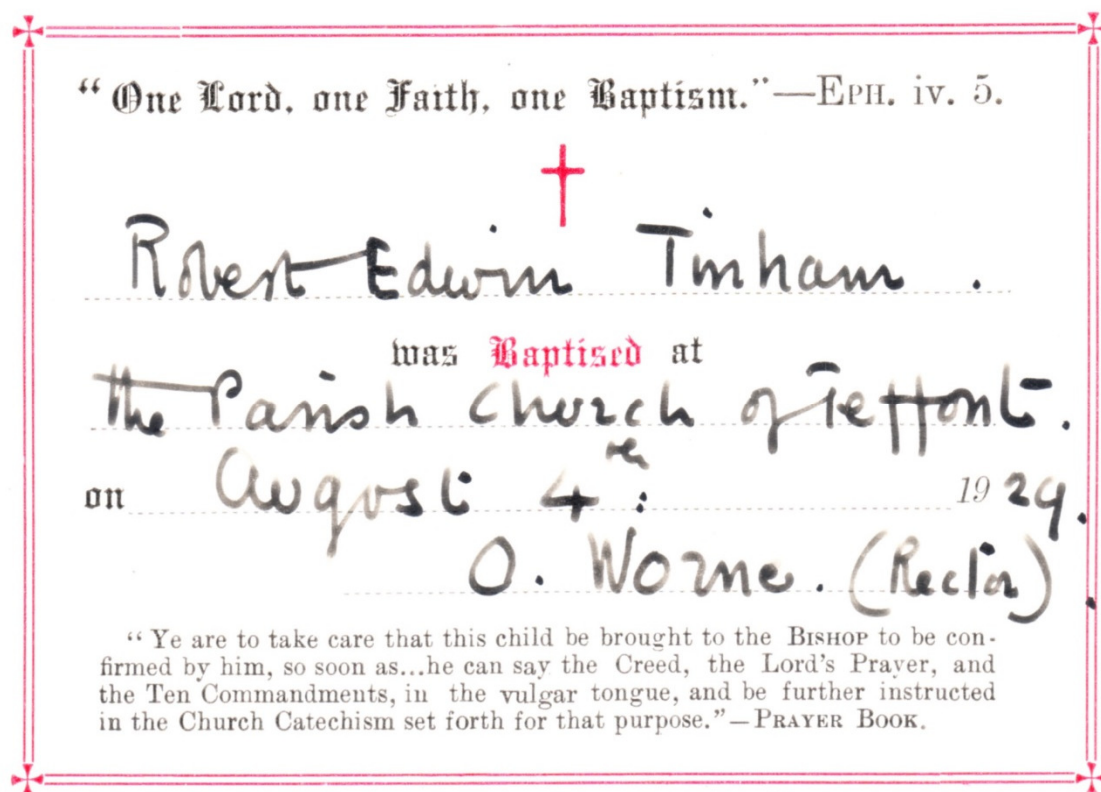


Figure 5 - Robert Timham Baptismal Certificate

Bobby was a very bright boy and gained entrance to the Bishops Wordsworth in Salisbury and successfully completed his Oxford University local examination shown in (Figure 6) newspaper clipping, school certificate (Figure 7) and school report (Figure 8). After leaving school he became an accounts clerk and married Flossie Waterman, of Wilton on 30 September 1939, just after the outbreak of the war, they lived at 68, The Hollows, Wilton (Figure 9) and it is believed they had a child but I don't know where they are today.

OXFORD LOCAL EXAMINATION

SALISBURY SUCCESSES.

The following scholars at the Bishop Wordsworth School, Salisbury, were successful in the Oxford University local examinations, which were held in July:—

Honours—A. Wattho and A. J. Willis.

Pass—P. J. R. Bryant, A. G. Chambers, R. C. Churchill, M. E. Drew, C. R. Fleming, F. D. Fulford, D. J. Gale, W. B. Gardner, R. D. Harding, B. S. Hewitt, D. D. B. Moloney, K. W. Moody, R. R. Penney, E. W. G. Rud-dick, J. A. R. Searle, F. G. Sims, J. Ma. G. Sowerby, D. Talbot, A. D. Tilley, R. E. Tin-ham, E. A. Trask, J. F. Watson, P. E. Webber, H. G. Wellsted, and P. Whitlock.

SOUTH WILTS SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

Bristol Higher Certificate Examination, Group II—Vera Davis (distinction in French), Muriel Usher.

School Certificate. — Honours—Catherine Bryant (distinctions in English, history, French, and religious knowledge), Margaret Earle (distinctions in English, history, and religious knowledge), Grace Eastman (distinction in history), Molly Goater (distinction in English), Vera Eastman, Marion Hamblin, and Muriel Spicer.

Pass—Violet Barker, Stella Beauchamp, Olga Bretherton, Elsie Cutler, Doris Essam, Marie Gould, Sybil Haines, Edith Hallett, Clarice Kyberd, Dorothy Mace, Barbara Mould, Frances Perry, Mary Phelps, Norma Rhys, Rhoda Shepherd.

Figure 6 - News Paper Clipping

Delegacy of Local Examinations

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



School Certificate A

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Robert Edwin Pinham

born the *16th* day of *April* in the year 1917,

I. *ATTENDED* for not less than three years

Bishop Wordsworth School, Salisbury,

and pursued a course of study in the Subjects enumerated on the back of this Certificate :

F. C. Hafford Head of School ;

and, having been examined in English Subjects (Group I), Languages (Group II), Science and Mathematics (Group III),

II. *WAS AWARDED* the OXFORD SCHOOL CERTIFICATE in the year 1933, at the *Salisbury* Centre, under the Index Number *39*, passing with credit in the following *three* Subjects :

English, History, Geography

Signed on behalf of the above-named Examining Body,

M. Lys

Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University ;

AND THAT

III. *THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAVE INSPECTED* the School and recognized it as an efficient Secondary School, and accept the Examination as reaching the approved standard and as being suitable for the School

Figure 7 - School Certificate

BISHOP WORDSWORTH'S SCHOOL, SALISBURY

SCHOOL RECORD

OF

ROBERT EDISON TINHAM

Date of birth 16/4/17

Date of entry 13/9/29

Date of leaving 31/7/34

1. STANDARD OF SCHOOL WORK

(a) Position on leaving with details of course Lower Sixth. Course including French, Economics and the Mathematics of Commerce.

(b) Public examinations passed

SCHOOL CERTIFICATE in 1933 Credits in Eng:Hist:Geog:

Passes in Art:Maths:Science.

HIGHER CERTIFICATE in in the following subjects

OTHER EXAMINATIONS

2. PART PLAYED IN SCHOOL LIFE (including positions of authority, etc.) Captain of House Athletics, Swimming and Boxing.

3. ATHLETICS 2nd Athletic Colours 1933-4. Member of House Cross-country team. Represented School at County Sports, Trowbridge 1930-1933. Member House Rugby team & House Cricket Team. School Gym:display. School 1st XV Rugby

4. SPECIAL DISTINCTIONS

5. REMARKS

Character good.

F. C. Haywood
Headmaster

Figure 8- School Report



Figure 9 - 68 The Hollows Wilton Salisbury

He enlisted in the RAF on 3 June 1940 and was sent to the recruit centre at Uxbridge, in October, after which he attended a variety of training units until in September 1941 he was posted to the air observer and navigation school. From there in December he went to the school of general reconnaissance and was posted to 143 Squadron on 20 March 1942 as a Cpl navigator initially in Northern Ireland as a training Squadron and then subsequently moving to North Coates in the Lincolnshire in August 1942, where he would conduct convoy patrols and air sea rescue. In December 1942 he was posted to 144 Squadron, which was stationed at Leuchars in Scotland at that time and in January 1943 the Squadron converted to the Bristol Type 156 Beaufighter



Figure 10 - Bristol Beaufighter

The squadron's role was to attack enemy submarines and convoys. On 15 May 1943 he was posted with the squadron to North Africa flying out of an airfield called Protville 2 in Tunisia (Figure 11), some 25 km north-west of Tunis and another picture Figure 12), but no sign



Figure 11 - Protville 2 in Tunisia

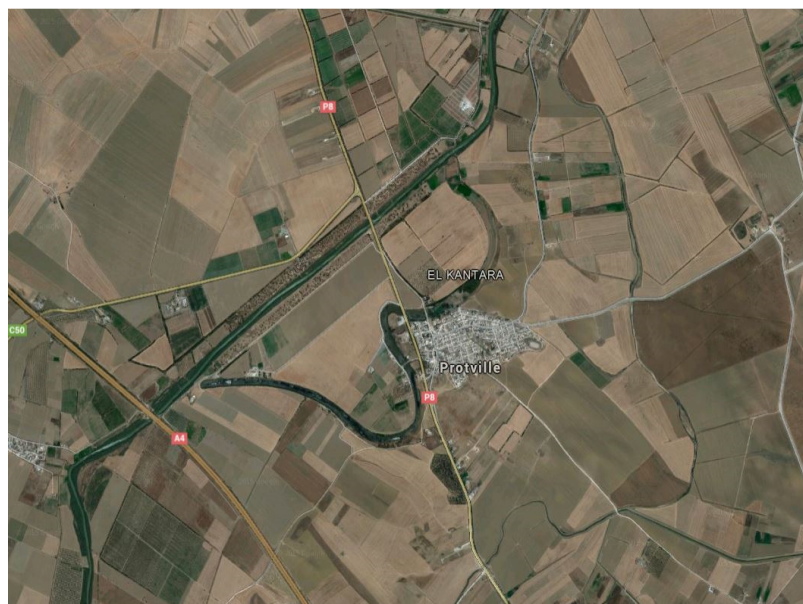


Figure 12 - Protville

of the airfield, which was built by the Americans and 144 Squadron shared the airfield with two American squadrons 415 and 416 equipped with the A20 Havocs (Figure 13).



Figure 13 - US A20 Havocs

(Figure 14) is a photo of a Beaufighter actually at Protville airfield

BEAUFIGHTER



Left: 'Happy' the Walt Disney character adorned the nose of another of No. 39 Squadron's Beaufighter TF Mk.Xs. The squadron formed part of No. 328 Wing at Protville II from June to October 1943 with No. 47 and part of No. 144 Squadron under the command of Wing Commander Nelson B. Harvey. In October 1943, following the German withdrawal from Corsica, the squadron began operations over the Adriatic and changed from a torpedo to rocket attacks. In 1944 the squadron flew escort to Allied convoys ferrying in supplies and troops in support of the push through Italy.

Figure 14 - Beaufighter at Protville II

Bob wrote at least two letters home during his time in Africa, one to his adopted mother and the other to his adopted sister Joan and both of these are reproduced here on the slides. In the letter to his mother (Figure 15), he assures her that he will be okay and saying sorry that he was unable to get to see her before deploying overseas as it happened so quickly.

Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below.
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:- MRS. A. TINHAM.
TEFFONT EWYAS,
MR. SARISBURY
WILTS,
ENGLAND.

571964

Write the message very plainly below this line.

4-6-45
Sender's Address 987868 F/SGT TINHAM, 144 SQUADRON, R.A.F., B.N.A.F.

Dear Mother, Just a line to let you know that I am now in Northern Africa. It certainly seems how to be warm out here but we are getting more used to that now. But I'm afraid we can't get out to the front as much. There is certainly no place like England and I am looking forward to my return. I sincerely hope you are keeping okay now. How is everyone at home, all okay I hope. What does Joanne do with herself now, tell her to write to me as letters will certainly be welcome out here. I suppose the old place still looks the same as I can't imagine it changing very much. There is certainly a change I can tell you, but it's not too bad and we are not doing too badly as far as food etc goes. Fruit is quite plentiful really but we have to be careful of what we eat and drink and I certainly take no chances. I have written to Alice. I am sorry I could not come to see you before I left England, but we were away before we knew what was happening. But I will be seeing you when I come home. Don't worry about me as I shall be okay. Remember me to everyone and look after yourself. For I shall be thinking about you. I will write again soon but for the moment I must say Ciao. Keep smiling
All my love. Your loving Son. Bob

This space should not be used.

MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

Figure 15 - Bobs Letter to His Mother

His letter (Figure 16) to his sister is wishing her a happy birthday and as far as we know may have been the last letter he ever wrote dated 18 Jul eight days before his death.

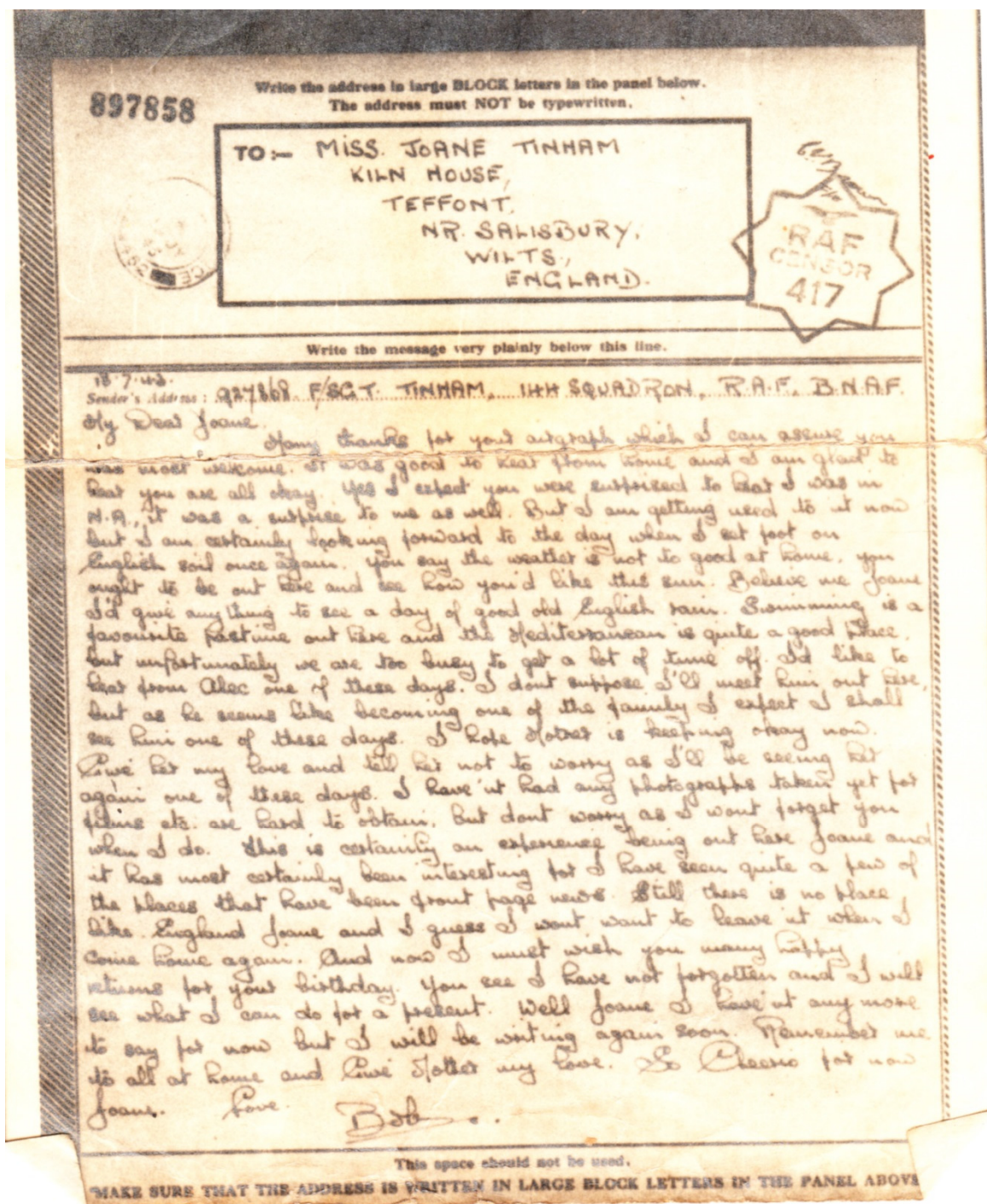


Figure 16 - Bobs Letter to his adopted sister

It was during an attack on enemy shipping off the coast of Sardinia on 26 July 1943, that his Bristol Beaufighter was shot down. (Figure 17), shows a page from a classified American report, which as you can see has been declassified and describes the very action in which Bob Tinham met his end.

DECLASSIFIED

the next week several offensive fighter sweeps were carried out, but enemy fighters, which were now almost entirely confined to the central and northern landing grounds, refused to rise to the bait. Enemy air resistance over Sardinia was to all intents and purposes extinct.

Fighter-bomber and "Cannon Mitchell" Attacks
On a number of occasions the U.S. Warhawk sweeps over Sardinia were carried out with the primary object of delivering fighter-bomber attacks.

On 20th July, for example, seventeen escorted Warhawk-bombers successfully attacked dispersed aircraft on Decimomannu airfield and, in addition, shot down five of the twelve enemy fighters which intercepted them at the cost of one aircraft missing. The most successful of the fighter-bomber attacks in the following month was that delivered by 44 U.S. Warhawk-bombers on a factory and smelting plant at *Pluminiagione* on the 28th; a by-product of the raid was the shooting down of six ME.109s without loss to the Warhawks.

During August, also, occurred the first "cannon Mitchell" (B.25 G) attack in the Mediterranean theatre of war. The attack in question was made on 5th August by four U.S. Mitchells, equipped with 75 mm. guns, on the large electric power switching station near *Guspini*. Three power lines entered the station and it was believed that these lines provided power for a large area in south-west Sardinia. The Mitchell, escorted by U.S. Warhawks, approached the target "on the deck", pulling up to 300 feet at a selected point about 4,500 yards north of the target; the building could not be identified, however, until the Mitchells were within 2,000 feet of it and fire was opened at this range. Nine rounds of high explosive shells were fired and direct hits were scored on the target; a ball of fire and flashes like lightning were seen to come out of the building and flashes and sparks ran along the power lines.

In early September the U.S. Warhawk-bombers turned their attention to *Pablonis* landing ground, north of *Villacidro*, which accommodated a number of single-engined aircraft. In all, on 5th, 7th and 8th September a total of 112 U.S. Warhawk-bombers dropped 672 x 20 lb. fragmentation bombs on the dispersal area and runways with good results.

Fighter-bomber attacks, meanwhile, were made on industrial and other targets, and Wellingtons extended their leaflet dropping activity to the Sardinian east coast and over *Cagliari* and *Sassari*. On 1st September a small force of U.S. Warhawk-bombers scored direct hits with 500 lb. G.P. bombs on the *Iglesias* zinc plant. Two days later thirteen U.S. Warhawk-bombers attacked the radar installations at *Pala* and *Cape Carbonara*; one and a half tons of bombs were dropped at *Pala*, scoring five near misses, and slightly more at *Cape Carbonara*, where four

direct hits were claimed on what was believed to be a Freya surrounded by a blast wall. On the 5th the attacks on the *Pala* installations were renewed by four U.S. Mitchells (B.25 Gs), escorted by 36 U.S. Warhawks, which dropped a small number of 30 lb. bombs and fired sixteen rounds of 75 mm. shells. The attack was delivered from a height of approximately 200 feet and cannon fire was opened at 5,000 yards continuing to the target, where the bombs were dropped at minimum altitude. Direct hits were scored with the bombs but the result of the shelling was unobserved.

Attacks on Enemy Shipping

While the attacks on land targets in Sardinia mentioned in the above section were in progress, sea reconnaissance Wellingtons, Baltimore and Marauders kept up a continuous watch for enemy shipping off the Sardinian and Corsican coasts and according to the information collected air and sea forces were briefed to deliver attacks.

The most successful shipping strikes off Sardinia in July were made on the 26th. Shortly before noon three Beaufighters of No. 415 (U.S.) Squadron on armed reconnaissance along the east coasts of Sardinia and Corsica sighted and attacked seven barges covered with canvas awnings; as a result of cannon strikes one barge was left with smoke rising from it and another with its cargo on fire. A few minutes later four torpedo and four anti-flak Beaufighters of No. 144 Squadron on "cover strikes" in the same area destroyed a couple of ME.323 transport aircraft at the cost of one Beaufighter shot down by escorting enemy fighters. The torpedo-Beaufighters carrying on with their patrol then sighted and attacked an enemy convoy; one merchant vessel of 1,500 tons was blown up.

One of the most successful air attacks in Sardinian waters during August was that delivered by U.S. Strategic Air Force Warhawks on the 5th, when returning from escorting the "cannon Mitchell" (B.25 G) attack on *Guspini* switching station. A surfaced enemy submarine was sighted off the south-west tip of Sardinia and two Warhawks went in to attack; hits were scored on the conning tower causing a big explosion which was followed by flames and smoke visible at 5,000 feet. The submarine listed 20 degrees to starboard and went down by the bows with the stern pointing upwards. A third Warhawk then made an attack and the submarine disappeared, leaving a streak of yellow-green foam and oil. The submarine was chalked up as a "probable".

The September attacks on enemy shipping engaged in the evacuation of Corsica are mentioned later.

The Evacuation of Sardinia

The first definite signs that the enemy was getting ready to evacuate Sardinia were provided by the 3rd Photographic Group's coverage of the

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Figure 17 - US Report

The Beaufighter that he was flying was LX784 when he was shot down and a drawing of this very aircraft is shown in (Figure 18).



Bristol Beaufighter MkX RAF 144Sqn N LX784 Tunisia 1943

Figure 18 - Bristol Beaufighter Tunisia 1943

All those who flew in the Mediterranean and lost their lives are commemorated on the Malta Memorial, here we see a copy of the war graves commission certificate for Bob which shows the same Memorial in the back ground.

In Memory of
Flight Sergeant
Robert Edwin Tinham

927868, 144 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 26 July 1943 Age 26

Son of Alec James Tinham and Elsie Tinham; husband of Flossie May Tinham, of Wilton, Salisbury.

Remembered with Honour
Malta Memorial



Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

We remember Bob and honour his sacrifice.