

## P.O. M.W.Lishman – Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve

Maurice Walter Lishman was born in 1920, the son of Walter and Lilian Lishman (nee Fitch) who lived at 'Beau Maris' in The Hildens, Westcott, and who later moved to 'Rosslyn', Tower Hill, Dorking.



Maurice joined the RAFVR and, after being promoted to Flight Sergeant, was commissioned to Pilot Officer in July 1940. In early 1941 he was serving at Thorney Island with 59 Squadron which had started the war as a reconnaissance unit equipped with Bristol Blenheim light bombers. The Squadron had been sent to France in October 1939 and remained there until May 1940 when it was one of the last squadrons to return to England. After stays at Odiham and Manston, the Squadron had moved to Thorney Island in a new role, carrying out anti-submarine patrols and bombing raids against German invasion ports. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1941, the Squadron was re-designated as a general reconnaissance squadron under Coastal Command, carrying out strikes against enemy shipping.

On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1941 Maurice Lishman took off on a search operation from Thorney Island flying a Blenheim IV aircraft VR 5962 coded TR-J in company with Pilot Officer A.W.Martin (Observer) and Flight Sergeant R.Fitzpatrick (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner). They left Thorney Island at 10.30 hours; they spotted a U-Boat off St Brieuc, Brittany, but went missing at 11.37 hours while sending a message which began '*seven escort vessels double line astern steaming 240 degrees...*' and ended abruptly. It is believed the Blenheim may have been shot down some 25 miles north of Morlaix by a Messerschmitt BF109 flown by F/w (Flight Sergeant) Eberhard Bauer of *II Gruppe/5 Staffel JG2* (a German fighter squadron).

By 1941 the out-dated Blenheims had become very vulnerable in the face of attack by the latest enemy fighter aircraft and 59 Squadron suffered heavy losses - 12 Blenheim crews from the Squadron were lost in the first six months of the year. In July 1941 the Squadron converted to US-built Lockheed Hudsons and was later equipped with Liberators which enabled it to fly long range patrols over the Atlantic.

Maurice Lishman and his two companions are remembered on the Runnymede Memorial which commemorates over 20,000 airmen from all parts of the Commonwealth who were lost during operations from bases in

**the United Kingdom and northern and western Europe, and who have no known grave.**

**A plaque to Maurice Lishman's memory is on the north wall of the nave of our church, positioned to the right of the main door. It bears the crest of the Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve and the inscription "I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself".**

**The portrait of Maurice Lishman shown here was presented to the Imperial War Museum by Mrs Vera Fitch in 1979. We thank the Imperial War Museum\* for giving us permission to use his portrait in this tribute.**

***\*(IWM reference: Art IWM ART LD 7378)***