

# ASHINGTON AT WAR

RESEARCHED AND WRITTEN BY NORTHUMBERLAND CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY - COLDSTREAM GUARDS COMBINED CADET FORCE

## Northumberland Fusiliers

During the First World War many men from Ashington joined the Northumberland Fusiliers. The Fusiliers earned 67 battle honours and won five Victoria Crosses but at the cost of over 16,000 dead. Nearly half of those listed on Ashington's War Memorial served with the Northumberland Fusiliers.

The Royal Northumberland Fusiliers ("Royal" was added in 1935) fought with distinction during the Second World War and were awarded another 29 battle honours. 4 more honours were to follow in the Korean War (1950-53).



Ashington's WWI landing strip. The cross-shaped wood was planted to help pilots locate the airstrip. 100 years later the site became part of the Potland Burn surface mine.

## Ashington Airfield

In 1916, 36 Squadron was formed at Cramlington and some of its aircraft flew from Ashington air strip. Second Lieutenant Pyott from this squadron was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for shooting down a German Zeppelin over Hartlepool in November 1916.

## Squadron Leader John Sample, Distinguished Flying Cross



Squadron Leader John Sample DFC shot down or damaged 7 enemy aircraft before being killed in a flying accident in 1941.

(Photo courtesy of Charles Sample)

John Sample was born in Longhirst near Ashington in 1913. He was a fighter pilot and fought in both the Battle of France (for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross) and Battle of Britain. On 17 October 1939 he helped shoot down the first German aircraft by an RAF fighter in the Second World War. Tragically he was killed in a flying accident on 28 October 1941. He is buried in St Andrew's Churchyard, Bothal.

## The Home Front

Tragedy came to Ashington in the early hours of 6 June 1940 when a Bristol Beaufort aircraft crashed onto 77 Fifth Row. The house was destroyed and Henry and Eleanor Cox were killed instantly. Their daughter Gladys, aged 18, died later in hospital. Their son, William, survived although badly burnt. Two of the airmen were also killed.



(Above)

The three members of the Cox family are buried in the churchyard of the Holy Sepulchre Church, Ashington.



(Right)

Sergeant Patrick O'Flaherty, air gunner, on the Bristol Beaufort is buried in Chevington Cemetery.

