

My great grandfather was **Sgt Arthur Thomas** who joined the Royal Corps of Signals in 1940. He was initially stationed in Catterick and guarded the promenade at Scarborough (where 18 people had been killed by German naval gunfire in 1914). At the end of 1940 he was sent to North Africa, after marrying my great grandmother on embarkation leave. They did not see each other for the next five years.



1940



In the Middle East he worked in Palestine, the Lebanon and Syria (seized from the French), as well as Egypt, Libya and Tripoli during the Desert War. After the surrender of the German Afrika Korps in 1943 he was sent on intelligence duties to Turkey, a neutral country which both sides were trying to persuade to join them.



At the beginning of 1945 he was due to be posted to Bletchley Park, but instead was sent to Germany with the 15th (Scottish) Infantry Division, undertaking duties in occupied Germany until 1946.

My great great uncle was **Sgt Charles Thomas**, Arthur's younger brother. He joined the RAF School of Photography at Farnborough in 1935, as Boy Thomas aged 16. He did his aircrew training in old biplanes and attended the Air Observers' course in Scotland in 1938. This gave him accelerated promotion to Sergeant.





RAF Grantham 1937



He joined 77 Squadron at RAF Driffield where its first Whitley V medium bombers were delivered in 1938. He began to fly operational sorties at the outbreak of war in Sep 1939, with the Advanced Air Striking Force in France.



In November 1939 his Whitley flew a mission over Frankfurt and Stuttgart but was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed into a French forest while attempting to return. He was buried, aged 20, at a Great War cemetery in Lorraine. The whole town lined the route of the military funeral as the five coffins covered with Union Jacks were driven through.