

Pilot Officer W. H. Zillessen (86 Squadron RAF)

Note: *The following material has been extracted from our article “The Great Escape – The Farnhill Connection”.*

Walter Harold Zillessen’s war-time career was brief and tragic.

He joined the RAF and was assigned to 86 Squadron, Coastal Command.



86 Squadron insignia – the motto translates as “flying to liberty”

86 Squadron was formed at Gosport on December 6th 1940, in a coastal fighter role, equipped with Blenheim IVs. Walter joined the squadron on December 14th.

Following training, the squadron moved to Wattisham, Suffolk, in March 1941 and began convoy escort patrols off the East Anglian coast, with a move to North Coates, Lincolnshire, in May. Beauforts replaced the Blenheims from June 1941 with the squadron being fully equipped with the new type by July. These were used for mine-laying, reconnaissance and air-sea rescue patrols, with mine-laying sorties beginning on 15th July 1941.

It was on one of these very early sorties that Walter Zillessen was shot down over north Germany and killed, on 17th July 1941. He is buried in the Allied War Graves Commission Sage Cemetery, Oldenburg.

Zillessen, Walter Harold



Cemetery: Sage War Cemetery

Country: Germany

Area:

Rank: Pilot Officer

Official Number: 86 Sqdn.

Unit: 89302

Force: Royal Air Force

Nationality: British

Details:

17/07/41 Age 23 7. E. 5. Son of Eric Max Theodor and Rosetta Mary Zillessen; husband of Nina Zillessen, of Chatham.

He is commemorated on the War Memorial at St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick, and also on the War Memorial at St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe, Kent.

