

BIRKETT ALBERT (Bill) - Died 22nd January 1944 aged 29

RME/10039: Marine, Royal Marine Engineers, H.M.S. Highflyer (Shore Establishment)



Photograph courtesy of Tess Strong, son of his sister, Olive

Albert was a bachelor, the son of Frank and Theresa (nee Holland) Birkett of Sands Lane, Scotter. Born on 6th May 1914. He had an older brother, Frederick William ('Fred') and three sisters, Olive, Kathleen Mary ('Kath') and Jessie Eileen. At the time of his birth his father was a farm labourer.

Albert was baptised at Scotter Primitive Methodist Chapel and was known as 'Bill' after his uncle William Holland, who was killed in the Great War and is also mentioned on the memorial.

He attended the local school and played football for Scotter Juniors. Later he became a keen pigeon racer, with two lofts in the back garden of the family home.

His close friend Harold 'Tarzan' King, (Also killed, and listed on the memorial), lodged at the house.

Bill became employed as a long distance lorry driver for Powells of West Street and then moved on to work for Arrands.

When war came he volunteered for the Royal Marines, joining up in May 1940 and being sent abroad in April 1942. He went to the Orkney Islands for special training and also served at Durban in South Africa.

HMS Highflyer was the name for various wireless stations in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

In a letter home he wrote that he was feeling unwell and jokingly said he might have 'Ghandi fever'. Unfortunately he had contracted cerebral malaria. A short time after the war had ended, his friend Fred Carney came and explained to his family that he had been taken by the illness within 24 hrs.

Marine Albert Birkett is buried in the Liveramentu Cemetery, Colombo, Sri Lanka. PLOT - I. Row M. Grave 2 .

The inscription reads:-

'Deep in our hearts a memory is kept of one we dearly loved'



Photograph by kind permission of Deborah Johnston.

Source: <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47263043/albert-a-birkett>