

My mother's family were called Palmer, and Graham Palmer was killed aged 17 in the blitz. I note on his memorial on the site he is referred to as 'Son of Gordon Palmer'. So he was but I would request that 'And Florence Palmer' be added. My grandmother had been deserted by Gordon by that time and Graham Palmer "Curly"'s death devastated her.

Graham was 17 and awaiting call up. My family lived in Kingsmead Street. There were 5 children - only one, the youngest, is still alive. The night of the bombing, Curly was fire watching at a school - Kingsmead school¹? - or some other premises that was hit, but he wasn't killed there. He was dug out unscathed, so I understand. My mother, Dora, was aged 10 or 11. She heard the sirens go and looked out of the windows. She saw the blast of one of the first bombs, but didn't remember hearing the sound. I was unfortunate enough to be near a PIRA bomb in London in the 1990s and remember a similar thing. I don't remember hearing the bang; neither did Mum. By the vagaries of physics, the windows weren't blown in and she was dragged to the shelter. A week before, a relative in Gloucester had died, and therefore Uncle Norman (PRICE) and Auntie Ede were also down for the funeral. By the end of the first raid the house was damaged or destroyed - I don't know which² - and the family were making their way somewhere else. My aunt spoke of the broken glass all over the road (she had no shoes) and being passed from rescuer to rescuer to stop her feet being cut to ribbons.

Graham returned and as he had no means of knowing what had happened, (we presume) decided to make his way up to Southdown where his girlfriend lived to stay the night. As he approached the area, a plane came down and machine gunned the streets; he was caught out in the open and was killed in that way. Some said it was because he was wearing a uniform, but having flown a plane in the past I would be surprised if anything like that would be recognised. It always seems MORE inhumane to shoot someone rather than bomb them, but that is double think on my part!

His body was taken to a makeshift mortuary; my grandmother spent three harrowing days visiting all the temporary mortuaries trying to identify the remains of her son; looking at the blasted, burned, mangled and shot bodies of teenage boys and others before she found him. How awful. She bought a plot in Locksbrook for him big enough to take her too in time. He lies buried there.

The younger children went back to Yorkshire with Norman and Edie. He was a miner and had a car; he had been given coupons to get down for the funeral. He loaded them all up in the small vehicle and struck out for the North; the kids had no clothes and no belongings. As they left Bath, he saw a detachment of troops arriving "with a Bofors gun". An ex WW1 soldier and miner, he shouted at them, "You're too bloody late; they came last night!"

The kids lived up North for 6 months before they could come back.

In the later 1940s, my gran had to accommodate her mother (from Gloucester) who was too old and infirm to live alone any more. When she died the family were unable to afford the fare to repatriate the body to that City and she was buried - to my Gran's sadness - in the double grave with Curly, and Gran thought she would not be buried with him, as she had wished.

1 Kingsmead School was in Kingsmead Street, and it was bombed.

2 The Palmers lived at 13 Kingsmead Street, which was destroyed.

Gran died aged 83 in 1979 at St Martins Hospital. She was cremated, and against what had been expected, WAS able to be buried with her beloved son when her ashes were interred in the grave also. She was such a lovely lady; she had such a sad life, but it is comforting to know that her remains rest for eternity with those of Curly as she wished.

The experiences of the war had a very major effect on mother too. She was a difficult, cold woman when we were kids, always keeping herself in. She would never have forgiven the German pilot! Thankfully few of us are so merciless, and I agree that the poor guy was doing his duty as he saw it. Being a pilot over enemy territory and the possibility of being shot down on a raid certainly isn't comparable to being a guard in the concentration camps or a member of a death squad! Eventually she began to relax; then a virulent cancer took her two days before Christmas in 1987.

May they all rest in peace and meet up again in Heaven.