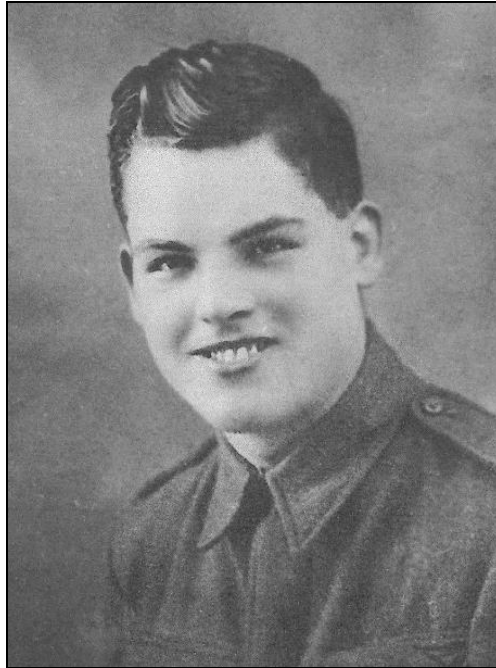


## **Oliver Frank WHITE**

Service number PO/X110353  
Royal Marines  
Died on 24 July 1945, aged 21

Born in Wells, Oliver went to the Central School for Boys and before joining up he drove the delivery van for Sealey's Bakery. Oliver joined the Royal Marines when he was 17½ and in December 1944 went to Leyte in the Philippines. In July 1945, he flew to Australia for a week's leave, but on the flight back the plane crashed into the sea. There were no survivors.



Oliver

Photograph courtesy of Mrs Betty Holland, Oliver's sister

Oliver was born in Wells on 3 December 1923, to William Joseph White and Alice née Payne. He had an elder sister and brother, Georgina and William, and a younger sister, Betty. Although called Oliver, he was usually known by his middle name of Frank or Frankie.

He went to the Central School for Boys, and attended the United Church Sunday School. Oliver was very fond of sports, and in 1937, he took part in the Coronation Day sports and came first in the over-11s three-legged race and joint first in another. He had a dog to which he was very attached.

In September 1939, Oliver was living with his family at 19, Mary Road. His father was a roadstone quarrier at Underwood Quarry. Before joining the Royal Marines, Oliver was a member of the Home Guard, and he drove the delivery van for Sealey's Bakery of 3, St Thomas Street.

His sister, Mrs Betty Holland, recalls:

Oliver voluntarily joined the Royal Marines aged 17½ years, served on Hell Fire Corner, Dover, later transferred to Australia, and from there [in December 1944] to the Philippines at a U.S.A. Base. Oliver was sent on a short break to Australia and on his return to the Philippines the plane crashed into the sea just before it landed, on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 1945, just two weeks before the war ended in the Far East.

The following letter was sent to Oliver's mother by Captain Barry Moore (British Naval Liaison Officer, Philippines):

This note brings you our sympathy and tells you what details I can about your boy. He worked as a M.T. [motor transport] driver with our small unit up here where we got to know each other fairly well & we miss him a lot.

I had sent him on a week's leave to Australia & it was on his way back that the accident happened just out to sea from the airstrip. A court composed of experts has been trying to find out the cause of the accident. I do not think that they will find anything definite owing to lack of evidence. The aircraft plunged into the sea suddenly just before it was going to land. People who saw it say that it seemed to break up when it hit the water. I believe this to be true since 5 days' sweeping & diving operations have failed to locate the wreck. I feel certain that all the occupants were killed or stunned on hitting the water. A crash boat was over the spot within ten minutes but several hours' search produced only some small bits of wreckage. Your boy's body was recovered from the sea a day or so later and buried in the U.S. Armed Forces Cemetery – Leyte – Philippines.

We held a joint funeral service on 8th August for all the victims. Our small British Party all attended of course & full ceremonial was provided by the U.S. Navy. The cemetery is very well situated & when finished with the grass growing it will be beautiful – it is very well looked after by the Americans.

I attach some photos – you will note the absence of wreaths. This is in accordance with the customs of the U.S.A.F. Cemeteries ... Please accept the sympathy of all of us here who knew him.



Oliver's funeral on Leyte  
Photograph courtesy of Mrs Betty Holland, Oliver's sister

Then in the margin it says:

The pilot was very experienced & this type of aircraft perhaps the most reliable flying today. The weather was bad but not impossible. The actual time was 5.30 p.m. on 24th July.

The plane was a Douglas C-47 Dakota IV transport aircraft belonging to 243 Squadron RAF. Its loss was reported in the Squadron's Operations Record Book on 25 July 1945:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Held at the National Archives, Kew, reference AIR-27-1475-19.

Signal received to the effect that Flying Officer STEEL in aircraft KN 530 (C.47) had crashed into the sea, south of TACLOBAN. The aircraft exploded on impact and there were no survivors. The crew consisted of Flying Officer STEEL [pilot], Flying Officer TURTON [Wireless Operator], Flight Sergeant SHOLES [co-pilot] and Flight Sergeant EVANS [Navigator], all R.A.F. The passengers were Commander CLARKE, R.N., Flight Lieutenant SLY, R.A.A.F., Signalman SHANK, R.A.A.F, Royal Naval Reserve Marine WHITE and Royal Marine FOWLER.

One passenger, Royal Marine Reeves, was missed off the list, and ‘Signalman SHANK, R.A.A.F’ was actually Royal Navy Signalman Shanks. Commander Clarke’s body was not found but the other nine were buried in adjacent graves.

Although Oliver was originally buried on Leyte in the USAF Cemetery Number 1, at Dulag, he was reburied on 28 October 1947 in the Sai Wan War Cemetery, grave I.I.E.4. Sai Wan War Cemetery is in the north-east of the island of Hong Kong, about 7 miles from the centre of Victoria. In Wells, Oliver is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery.

We would like to thank Mrs B. Holland, Oliver’s sister, for her help in writing this article.



Marine Oliver White  
Photograph courtesy of Mrs Betty Holland, Oliver’s sister