



Auxiliary Fire Service/ Kent Fire Brigade

### **William “Bill” Watson**

AFS Badge No.: 9642

Residence: 6, Cherry Gardens, Elham

#### **Before Service:**

Bill worked as a gardener at The Vicarage, Elham. He remembered giving wheelbarrow rides around the vicarage garden to the vicar’s daughters and their friends, including Audrey Ruston-Hepburn.

#### **During Service:**

Sunday the 17th May 1942, whilst waiting outside Christ Church in Sandgate Road, Folkestone for the morning service to start a German 'hit-and-run' raider was skirting the undercliff of the leas. Having spotted the troops assembling outside the Leas Cliffe Hall the raider made his attack. A single bomb hit the church and blew Bill’s fireman’s hat off and knocked Bill off his feet. The bomb struck the main body of the church and Bill’s lasting memory was coming to and looking up to see individual sheets from the hymnbooks fluttering down in the dust filled sky. Bill rushed to the church to look for casualties but was only able to recover the bodies of two ladies that had arrived early to arrange the flowers for the service. If the attack had happened half an hour later the church would have been full.



Whilst working for the Fire brigade Bill was responsible for the large turntable ladder.

#### **Family:**

Bill lived with his family in Cherry Gardens, Elham.

Bill’s daughter Mary was one of the first female firefighters in the UK.

Bill wrote a small booklet “My life and memories of Old Elham”.