



remembrance ni

## Royal Navy service WW2 - Killyleagh



Killyleagh Castle dominates the small village and is believed to be the oldest inhabited castle in the country, with parts

dating back to 1180. It follows the architectural style of a Loire Valley chateau, being redesigned by architect Sir Charles Lanyon in the mid-19th century. It has been owned by the Hamilton family since the early 17th century.

The Killyleagh War Memorial tablets grace the wall of Killyleagh Castle, at the junction of Frederick Street and Shrigley Road.

The memorials commemorate the residents of Killyleagh who died in the First and Second World Wars and the Falklands War.

The World War II memorial bears the inscription, "In Honoured Memory of those of this district who gave their lives in the World War".

Seven of the twenty men who gave their lives in World War Two and who are remembered on the Killyleagh War Memorial served in the Royal Navy.

## **Killyleagh men and their ships**

### **Able Seaman John Anderson, HMS Glorious**

Able Seaman John Anderson (D/JX 148096) sailed in HMS Glorious on the night of its infamous sinking. He died on board the aircraft carrier on 8th June 1940 aged 18 years old. The loss of the HMS Glorious remains one of the most devastating and controversial Allied losses in the Second World War. Born in Killyleagh, he was the son of William

John Anderson and Isabella Anderson. The Down Recorder reported on 16th November 1941, "John Anderson, of Killyleagh, one of the crew of HMS. Glorious, is now reported presumed dead. He joined the Navy five years ago." Twenty men from Northern Ireland were lost in Glorious.

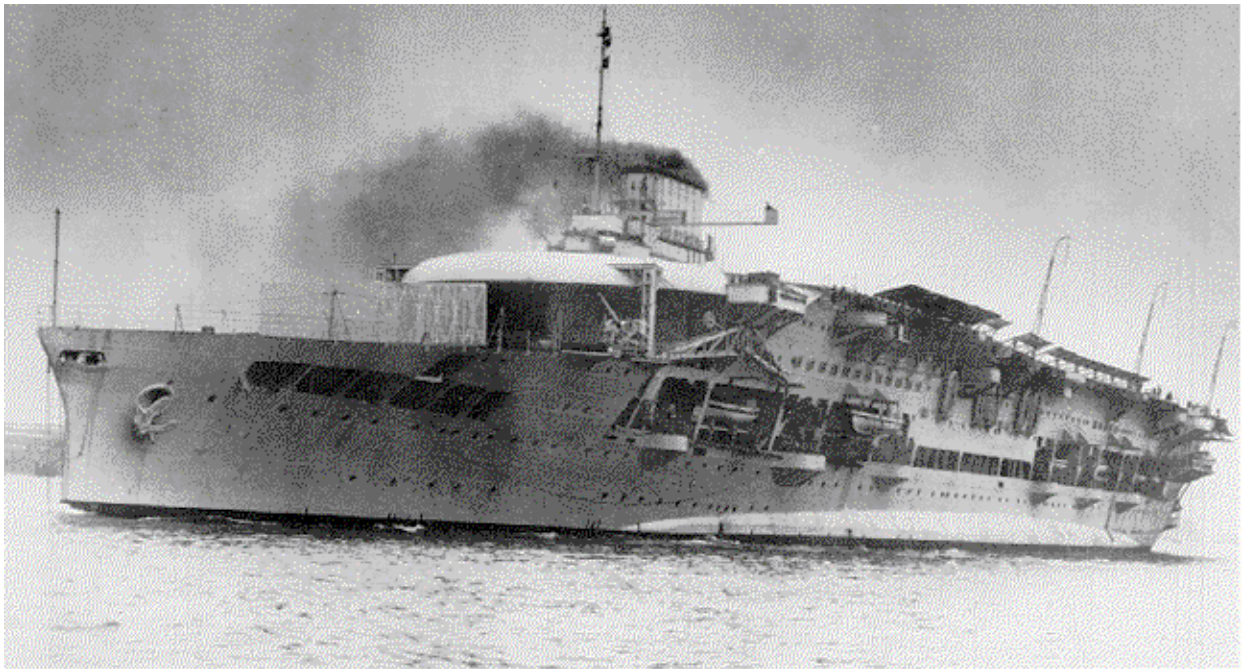


**On the afternoon of Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1940, the aircraft carrier HMS Glorious and her escorting destroyers HMS Acasta and HMS Ardent were intercepted in the Norwegian Sea by the German battlecruisers Gneisenau and Scharnhorst. The three British ships were sunk by gunfire in a little over two hours, with the loss of over 1500 officers and men of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and Royal Air Force**

### **Shortage of aircraft carriers**

In view of the important role played by aircraft carriers in WW2 it is a deplorable fact that the Royal Navy at the outbreak of war found itself shorter of these ships than those of any other category. At the start it possessed five large carriers, HMS Ark Royal, Furious, Courageous, Glorious and Eagle. Only the first named was modern. Courageous was lost whilst on anti-submarine patrol in the Western Approaches a fortnight after the declaration of war.





## ***HMS Glorious***

She had been escorted by two destroyers. Over 500 men were lost. Many naval air specialists are of the view that this was a case of an expensive asset being thrown away through being assigned to a duty for which she was not suitable.

After this loss it might have been thought that the utmost care would be taken to provide adequate escort for any other large carrier likely to be exposed to unusual risk. Yet in June 1940 the Navy learned with surprise and dismay that HMS Glorious, sister ship, of the Courageous, had been intercepted by a superior enemy force while returning from Norway practically unescorted. The lack of a German reaction to British operations in the Norwegian Sea lulled the Admiralty and the fleet into a dangerous sense of complacency. The carriers Ark Royal, Furious, and Glorious had, in the weeks preceding the action, repeatedly made the 2000 mile return trip to the Narvik area with only a destroyer escort. This was Glorious' fifth trip. The Admiralty appears to

have taken the safety of these valuable and vulnerable ships for granted.

The Admiralty did not pass on their knowledge of German movements to operational forces at sea. Bletchley Park had warned the Admiralty that analysis of wireless intercepts indicated that German heavy units had left the Baltic and might be moving north into the Norwegian Sea. The Admiralty did not pass this information on to the fleet or RAF Coastal Command. Receipt of this information might have led Vice Admiral Air to refuse Glorious' request to proceed independently.

Glorious did not exercise adequate measures to protect herself and her escort from unexpected attack. Glorious should have had at least one aircraft aloft during the day. This would have given the ship visibility of at least 40 miles, allowing her to avoid interception and warn the fleet by W/T long before the Germans could have threatened her. At the very least, Glorious should have been prepared to launch aircraft on short notice once German forces were detected.

### **Operation Alphabet - The evacuation of Narvik**

In the first four weeks of the Norwegian campaign almost the whole of our naval strength in home waters was engaged in escorting and carrying troops to and from Norway. With such efficiency was this work done that not a single soldier out of the thousands transported lost his life

as the result of submarine or surface ship attack, and very few from air attack at sea.

With the invasion of France on May 10, and the heavy demands of the Navy for help to that country, Belgium and the Netherlands, a sharp change came over the situation. With the evacuation of the British Army from Boulogne and Dunkirk, an exceptional strain was imposed on naval material, the majority of the available destroyers being either sunk or put out of action in these operations. Obviously, too, the threat of an enemy invasion attempt could not be ignored, imposing a further burden.

It was in these circumstances that plans had to be prepared for the evacuation of Northern Norway.

The evacuation of the Narvik area was mainly carried out in two groups; but owing to the variety of vessels employed, it proved impossible to concentrate them all in a single body on either occasion, some ships having therefore to rely mainly on diversive routing for their security. Despite these difficulties, the whole military force of 24,000 arrived safely in Great Britain.

The aircraft carriers Ark Royal and Glorious had been sent to Narvik from Scapa on May 31, the former to provide fighter protection during the evacuation and the latter to bring back from North Norway much-needed Gladiator and Hurricane aircraft of the RAF. There seems to have been a misplaced assumption that the Germans lacked enterprise, presumably because for some months previously carriers and other heavy ships had been crossing the North Sea independently without incident. For this reason the Glorious was not allowed to accompany the second large group of

ships returning, as the Ark Royal did, but sailed independently. This unfortunate decision is understood to have been made on the grounds that otherwise Glorious would not have had enough fuel left to get home.

Thus at 03.00 on June 8 the Glorious parted from Ark Royal, which wore the flag of the Admiral (Air), in a position 17 degrees N. by 14 degrees 10 minutes E. She was accompanied by the destroyers Acasta and Ardent as an anti-submarine escort. Unfortunately they were sent tight into the jaws of the enemy.

### **No reconnaissance aircraft up**

An enemy squadron, comprising the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, ships of nearly 32,000 tons each, armed with nine 11-in. guns, and the cruiser Admiral Hipper, of nearly 15,000 tons with eight 8-in. guns, had left Kiel on June 4 and passed Bergen at midnight on June 5-6. Their orders were to attack British convoys



### ***Wartime colour photograph on the Scharnhorst***

proceeding from the Narvik area. No suspicion of their presence seems to have been entertained by British Naval Intelligence; at any rate, neither the Flag Officer, Narvik, nor the C.-in-C., Home Fleet, was aware of it.

At 0800 hours on 08/06 the Admiral Hipper sank the tanker Oil Pioner and rescued 11 survivors. A little later she did the same with the empty transport Orama and the trawler Juniper, picking up 112 from these ships. Hipper put into Trondheim.

Soon after 16.00 on the same day the Glorious sighted the two German battleships, the Admiral Hipper having put into Trondheim. No reconnaissance aircraft were up, nor had any been flown since parting from the Ark Royal, or the encounter might have been avoided. As it was, the Glorious did her best to escape to the southward under cover of a smoke-screen laid by the two destroyers. Though this caused the enemy to cease fire for a time, the forward upper hangar had already been hit, destroying the Hurricane aircraft and preventing any torpedoes being got out before the fire curtains were lowered. About an hour after the enemy ships had first been sighted, a salvo hit the bridge of the Glorious, and further heavy hits were sustained about 15 minutes later. Soon after this the order was given to abandon ship, and she sank with a heavy list to starboard about 17.40. The carrier's armament of 4.7-in. guns was, of course, quite useless against two such powerful adversaries.

Both the destroyers were sunk, the Acasta about 17.28 and the Ardent at 18.08. They had duly fired torpedoes, one from the Ardent hitting the Scharnhorst abreast of her after 11-in. turret, inflicting severe damage. As the result of this, the Scharnhorst made for Trondheim under escort of her sister ship, their cruise being abandoned. They took with them an officer and four ratings from the Glorious and one man from the Ardent as prisoner of war.



The Royal Navy knew nothing of the sinking until it was announced on German radio.

### **No intelligible report of the action**

No intelligible report of the action was received by any British ship, though at 1720 the cruiser Devonshire nearly 100 miles to the westward picked up the beginning of a wireless signal addressed to the Vice-Admiral (Air) from Glorious. It must have been made as the ship was being abandoned. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Ark Royal, Southampton and Coventry, other ships in the North Sea were keeping wireless watch on a different wave frequency. This applied to the Valiant, which was then about 470 miles to the south-westward. On the morning of the following day that battleship made contact with the hospital ship Atlantis, which reported having seen a transport being attacked by the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, and the heavy cruiser Hipper.

This information was at once passed to the Commander-in-Chief at Scapa, who sailed with the Rodney, Renown and six destroyers to cover the convoys. First news of the end of the Glorious came from an enemy broadcast on June 9. Though diligent search was made for survivors, aircraft from the Ark Royal actually passed close over a number of men on rafts without seeing them. Owing to the heavy sea, which capsized the Acasta's boats, and the extreme cold, men soon perished, the total death roll in the three ships amounting to 94 officers and 1,380 ratings,

## Andrew Andrews, HMS Pink

Enlisted April 1942. He was an electrical engineer on HMS Pink. Took part in the Battle of the Atlantic, widely regarded as the longest continuous military campaign of World War Two, running from 1939 to the defeat of Germany in 1945.

HMS Pink was on convoys between Londonderry and St. John's Newfoundland. She depth charged and fired torpedoes at German U-boats, many of which were sunk.

Andrew was in HMS Pink for the D Day landings. Pink anchored off Normandy to provide aerial cover for the soldiers storming the beaches but had to contend with German bombers flying overhead. Speaking to a local newspaper, the Down Recorder, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day he said, "What I witnessed will never leave me. I was one of the lucky ones. I lived to tell the tale, but what I witnessed is not something you talk about often. The sights, sounds and smells of what I witnessed 70 years ago have never left me. They never will. I witnessed things no man should ever see. It was the true horror of war."

HMS Pink's involvement in the D-Day landings was "action day and night" with no let up as the continual bombardment of the German lines continued.

It was during the D-Day landings when HMS Pink took the full force of a German torpedo. Andrew jumped in the sea and was rescued by an American torpedo boat. He was posted to HMS Duke of York, ending up in Tokyo at the end

of the war. New Line, Killinchy. Former President of Killyleagh and Killinchy RBL

## **Leading Writer Robert Victor Berner, HMS Hood**

Leading Writer Robert Victor Berner (P/MX 60040) served in HMS Hood, one of the Royal Navy's older battleships, she was a veteran of World War One. Victor died on board the Hood on 24th May 1941 aged 22 years old. The Hood was sunk by the Bismarck. Born on 23rd May 1919, he was the son of Robert Berner and Catherine Berner of Tullyveery, Killyleagh, Co. Down.



***HMS Hood off Iceland during April 1941. The photo is part of the HMS Hood Association archives having been sent over from a member in Canada some years ago.***

**On 24 May 1941 two mighty ships engaged in battle – the respective pride of the German and British navies: the *Bismarck* and HMS *Hood*.**

When HMS Hood was sunk, she had 1415 on board. There were only 3 survivors. 11 of those who perished were from Northern Ireland.

**Summary** - HMS Hood was a 42,100 ton battlecruiser built in 1920 for the Royal Navy. It held the position of world's largest warship for more than two decades. In May 1941 Hood and the new battleship Prince of Wales were sent out to search for the German battleship Bismarck, which had left Norway for the Atlantic.

On the morning of May 24th, the two British ships found the Bismark just west of Iceland. During this Battle of the Denmark Strait, one or more of Bismarck's fifteen-inch shells found HMS Hood's magazines and detonated in a massive explosion, killing all but three of her crew of 1,415. The event shocked the British nation and the entire world. The three survivors were Ted Briggs (1923–2008), Robert Ernest Tilburn (1921–1995) and William John Dundas (1921–1965). They were rescued by the destroyer HMS Electra about two and a half hours after the sinking.

**Fact** - Admiral Chatfield, in an article in *The Times*, summed up the sinking by saying "She was destroyed because she had to fight a ship 22 years more modern than herself. This was not the fault of the British seamen. It was the direct responsibility of those who opposed the rebuilding of the British Battle Fleet until 1937, two years before the Second Great War started"

HMS Hood had a crew of 1,419 and was faster than the [Bismarck](#) with a maximum speed of 32 knots. The Hood had been launched in 1918 and was armed with 8 x 15 inch



***The King during his final inspection of H.M.S. Hood on 06/03/1941. She was in Rosyth, undergoing a minor refit. In this photo, he is greeting an officer, who is most likely Captain Ralph Kerr.***

guns, 12 x 5.5 inch guns, 8 x 4 inch AA guns, 24 x 2 pound guns and 4 x 21 inch torpedoes.

However, the Hood suffered from one major flaw – she did not have the same amount of armour as the Bismarck. The fact that the Hood was faster than the Bismarck by 3 knots was as a result of her lack of sufficient armour for a naval battle fought in World War Two. What had been considered



sufficient armour in 1918 when Hood was built, was to prove a fatal flaw in 1941.

### **Bismarck - “There had never been a warship like her”**

Named after the 19th century German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, the *Bismarck* had been launched just two years earlier, in February 1939, by the chancellor’s great granddaughter. The ship was an impressive sight – one sixth of a mile long and 120 feet wide.

British writer and broadcaster, Ludovic Kennedy (1909-2009), wrote of the *Bismarck*: “There had never been a warship like her... No German saw her without pride, no neutral or enemy without admiration.”

The mission set for the *Bismarck* and the *Prinz Eugen* was to head for the Atlantic and cause as much damage and disruption as possible to the British convoys shipping vital supplies across the [Atlantic](#) into Britain. On board the *Bismarck* were two of Hitler’s most senior and able seamen – its captain, 45-year-old Ernst Lindemann, referred to by his crew as ‘our father’, and Fleet Commander, 51-year-old Admiral Gunther Lutjens.

From Poland, the two ships passed Norway where their presence was picked up by the British. British aircraft and ships, keeping a safe distance, monitored their progress as the German ships skirted north of Iceland and then south down the Denmark Straits between Iceland and Greenland. It was here, in the Denmark Straits, that the British fleet, led by the HMS *Hood* and *Prince of Wales*, was ordered to intercept.

### **Hood - “The embodiment of British sea-power”**

Built in 1916, the *Hood* was, according to Kennedy, “the embodiment of British sea-power and the British Empire between the wars.” But the *Hood* had been built at a time, during the [First World War](#), when enemy shells came in low and hit the sides of a ship near the water line. But in 1941 shells were more likely to arch across the sky and fall onto the upper decks. The decks of the *Hood* had never been reinforced and therein lay its weak spot. The “embodiment of British sea-power” had been built for a different war.

### **The Battle of Denmark Straits**

In the early hours of 24/05/1941, the opposing fleets with their imposing ships engaged. Thirteen miles apart the ships fired one-ton shells that, travelling at 1,600 miles per hour, took almost a minute to reach their intended target. The noise, which could be heard in Iceland, was horrendous.

The battle lasted merely twenty minutes and both the *Bismarck* and the *Prince of Wales* took direct hits, but it was the fate of the *Hood* that stunned the world. A shell from the *Bismarck* hit the *Hood* on its vulnerable upper deck, tore through the ship and penetrated its ammunition room, causing an almighty explosion.

The ship sliced into two, its front end dramatically lifting out of the water. A huge fireball rocketed into the sky, followed by plumes of dense black smoke, with pieces of molten metal shooting like so many white stars, as one German sailor described it. Within five minutes, the HMS *Hood*, pride of the Royal Navy, had sunk. It was no more. Of its crew of 1,421 men, all were killed – except for three.

The crew of the *Bismarck* was jubilant. For this they would be the toast of Germany. The *Prince of Wales* was also

struggling, having been hit seven times. The German crew wanted to give chase and finish her off but Lindemann, as captain, not wanting to expose the *Bismarck* unnecessarily, erred on the side of caution and resisted the temptation.

Also, of greater concern for Lindemann, the *Bismarck* had been hit by a shell that failed to explode but had caused damage to her fuel tanks. Serious damage.

Leaking oil at an alarming rate, Lindemann knew he had to get her back to safety. He decided on [Saint-Nazaire](#), northern France, a distance of 1,700 miles, a journey of some four days.

The *Prinz Eugene* and the *Bismarck* parted ways. The joy of the *Bismarck*'s crew had evaporated. Now there was nothing but concern – could they escape the British, could they make it all the way to France? The ship was limping – the fuel leak had forced the captain to greatly reduce speed. France seemed a long way away.

### **[Sink the \*Bismarck\*](#)**

Meanwhile, in Britain, a nation reeled in shock, stunned by the loss of the *Hood*. It demanded retaliation. Churchill, reflecting the public mood, issued his famous battle cry: [“Sink the \*Bismarck\*!”](#)

A fleet consisting of four battleships, two battle cruisers, two aircraft carriers, 21 destroyers and 13 cruisers was dispatched.

The chase was on.

### **[Hood memorial chapel in New Forest - family church of Admiral Holland](#)**

St John the Baptist Church, Boldre occupies a beautiful location, standing aside the valley of the River Boldre as it cuts it's way through the New Forest.



***Boldre parish church in the New Forest has a Hood memorial chapel***

Inside the church, a corner honours those killed when HMS Hood was hit. Amongst those killed was Vice Admiral L.E Holland CB, who worshiped at the church along with his family. Once it was realized that HMS Hood was to have no official memorial, Mrs Phyllis Holland did all that was required to establish a memorial in the church. It occupies a peaceful corner. This area, known as the "Hood Chapel", contains a number of *Hood*-related items to include, but not limited to an ornate Roll of Honour, a gun tampon, a large painting by the late artist Montague Dawson and models of

both *Hood* and *Bismarck*. There is a bench with an ornate Hood badge, runners and pillows featuring the ship's badge, plus a small, but ornate stained glass window also featuring the *Hood's* crest.

The very strength of such an ancient building is that it can carry with it the memories of so much history and the result is a very memorable historic site.

## **Leading Stoker William Alexander Dempster, HMS Cleopatra**

Leading Stoker William Alexander Dempster (C/KX 79089) died on 15th February 1942 in Valetta, Malta when a 500kg bomb struck the British cruiser *Cleopatra*. Born on 16th January 1910, he was the son of Frederick James Dempster and Elizabeth Jane Dempster of Ballymaccarron, Killyleagh, Co. Down. On 2nd April 1911, his name appears on the 1911 Irish Census living at 1 Pawle Island, Killyleagh, Co. Down. His father Frederick James was 34 years old, mother Eliza Jane 31. The family were Presbyterian and had a 19-year-old servant living with them called William Green. William Alexander Dempster's grave is in Capuccini Naval Cemetery, Malta. Next to Dempster, lie Able Seaman John William Mills and Ordinary Seaman W Walker of HMS *Cleopatra* and three men from HMS *Maori*.

HMS *Cleopatra* was a Dido - class cruiser. She was built by R. and W. Hawthorn, Leslie and Company, Limited (Hebburn-on-Tyne), with the keel being laid down on 5 January 1939. She was launched on 27 March 1940, and commissioned on 5 December 1941. *Cleopatra* went out to





Gibraltar early in 1942 , and on 9 February she sailed for Malta, where she was immediately damaged by a bomb. After repair, she was transferred to Alexandria in early March for the 15th Cruiser Squadron. She was Admiral Philip Vian's flagship during the Second Battle of Sirte, when his group of four light cruisers and 17 destroyers held off an Italian force which included the battleship Littorio, two heavy cruisers, a light cruiser and 10 destroyers, which had all been sent to intercept their convoy to Malta. Cleopatra served post-war with the 5th Cruiser Squadron in the East Indies until returning to Portsmouth on 7 February 1946 to refit.

**Able Seaman Edward Gilmore (brother of John, below)**

**Able Seaman John Gilmore, HMS Grove**

Able Seaman John Gilmore (C/SSX 18758) was 24 years old when he died on 12th June 1942 as HMS Grove was

torpedoed by U-77 off the North African coast. At the time of his death, he had eight years' service during which he survived two torpedo attacks and saw action at Dunkirk. He was the eldest son of Terence Gilmore of Maymore, Toye, Killyleagh, Co. Down. John had visited his parents at Christmas 1941. His younger brother Edward also served in the Royal Navy. John Gilmore's name is on Panel 54, Column 1 of the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent, United Kingdom.



### **HMS Grove (L77)**

English shipyard Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd. completed British destroyer HMS Grove in 1942. On 27th March 1942, HMS Grove along with HMS Aldenham, HMS Volunteer, and HMS Leamington laid depth charges in the North Atlantic, which sank U-587.

The ship was en route from Alexandria, Egypt to Malta in Convoy MW-11 as part of Operation Vigourous.

The Grove sank after an attack from U-77 captained by Heinrich Schonder off the coast El Salloum on the Egypt/Libya border. Under the captaincy of Commander JW Rylands, Grove took two direct torpedo strikes at 0537hrs.

One hundred and ten men died on board leaving sixty survivors.

## **Able Seaman Charles Kelly, HMS Matabele**

Able Seaman D/SSX 17785, Charles Kelly served in HMS Matabele which was sunk by U-454 on 17th January 1942. Born on 21st February 1918 in Killyleagh, Charles Kelly's name is on Panel 65, Column 3 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Plymouth

HMS Matabele was a Tribal-class destroyer. Ordered June 1936. Built at Greenock. Launched October 1937 as the first RN ship to carry this name which originated from that of a people native to South Africa. Commissioned for service with the 2nd Tribal Destroyer Flotilla in the Home Fleet. In June 1939 she assisted in the efforts to rescue HM Submarine Thetis which sank during builder's trials in Liverpool Bay. In 1942 she was nominated for escort of a Russian convoy PQ8 and took passage as screen for HM Cruiser Trinidad from Iceland to Murmansk. On Jan 16, PQ8 came under threat of submarine attack. On 17th Matabele was hit by torpedo from U-454 and sank almost immediately after the explosion with loss of 238 of ship's company. Many who were able to leave the stricken ship succumbed in the ice-cold water before rescue was possible. Only two survived and were rescued by HMS Harrier.

## **Able Seaman Thomas Killops, HMS President III in SS Roxby**

Able Seaman D/JX 204718 Thomas Killops was on the strength of HMS President III. This was a shore base established on 28th August 1939 in Bristol to train men for Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. He died in SS Roxby on 7th November 1942 aged 29 years old. U-613 torpedoed and sunk the British steamship. Born on 24th May 1913, he was the son of Robert Killops and Anna Killops of Killyleagh, Co. Down. His wife was Rebecca Killops also of Killyleagh, Co. Down.

At 15.40 hours on 7 November 1942 the unescorted Roxby (Master George Robison), a straggler from convoy ON-142, was hit by one of two torpedoes from U-613 about 670 miles north of the Azores and sank at 16.05 hours. 28 crew members and five gunners were lost and the first radio officer died of exposure in the lifeboat and was buried at sea on 11 November. The master, ten crew members and two gunners were picked up after five days by the Irish merchant Irish Beech and on 21 November landed at St. John's, Newfoundland.

## **Able Seaman Samuel Rutherford Morrison, HMS Broadwater**

Able Seaman D/JX 198134 Samuel Rutherford Morrison died on 18th October 1941 in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean as Ernst Mengersen's U-101 torpedoed the HMS Broadwater (H81) leaving 56 dead and 85 survivors.. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William Morrison. He was husband to Kathleen Morrison of Maymore, Toye, Killyleagh. His name is on Panel 48, Column 1 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Plymouth

At 3.15am on October 18, 1941, the destroyer HMS Broadwater was escorting a British convoy south west of Iceland.

The lookouts were scanning the steely-grey seas for signs of enemy activity for, below the waves, a shadowy killer loomed.

Then, without warning, the ship erupted into a mass of bright orange flames as a torpedo from a German Uboat crashed into it.

A total of 45 men died, including an American officer by the name of Lieutenant John Parker, who enlisted in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve before the US entered the war.

But the loss of life would have been far greater if two armed trawlers had not been in the area at the time.

The Navy held a Board of Inquiry in Londonderry, where survivors gave evidence.

One report, stamped "Secret", gives a graphic account of the action and subsequent bravery of the crew.

Lieutenant Commander WM Astwood, the Broadwater's skipper, said:

"The bow and upper bridge were blown off and, at the same time, a torpedo was seen to pass astern of the ship by the 12-pounder gun crew.

"I was asleep in the chart house at the time and the first thing I remember was the coxswain reporting to me that the forepart of the ship had been blown away.



"As I sustained head injuries, my memories of succeeding events are in rather a hazy state.

"On inspection, the following state of the ship was found: From the bow to the after-hatch of the forward seamen's mess deck was completely gone, as was the structure above it, which contained the wardroom and officers cabins.

"The upper bridge was blown away, except for the hotchkiss (machine gun) mounting. The mast was snapped and had fallen aft. The front of the wheelhouse had completely gone but the wheel was still standing.

"A considerable amount of the wreckage of the bridge and forepart of the ship was found on the gundeck."

Lt Cdr Astwood said the ship's back was probably broken and the ship appeared to be sinking slowly.

He added: "HM trawlers Cape Warwick and Angle now appeared to be standing by. As I was becoming more weak and useless, I turned over (command) to the navigating officer, the only surviving executive officer, to carry out the ferrying of survivors to the trawlers.

"Work carried out by the trawlers'

small boats was most praiseworthy considering the weather prevailing.

The evacuation was finally completed at 9.45am "Seeing the chances of salvage were nil, I asked Cape Warwick to sink her with gunfire."

Lt Cdr Ashwood said the general behaviour of the ship's company was excellent. Sadly, at the time HMS Broadwater

was torpedoed there were on board 11 survivors from two other vessels sunk by German submarines.

After cheating death once, all perished.

Sub-Lieutenant Rook Smith, the Broadwater's navigating officer, was specially commended for destroying all confidential books and ensuring the safe evacuation of survivors, most of whom were covered in oil.

Chief Petty Officer Carthew, the cox, saved the life of a sailor who had been blown into an oil fuel tank and was in danger of drowning.

The trawler crews were praised for lifting men from the Broadwater in a heavy swell despite the threat of their own boats being dashed against the side of the sinking destroyer.

Retired policeman Chalky White, from Worthing, stumbled across the story of HMS Broadwater while researching the fate of another ship.

He was surprised there was no memorial to the warship in the town and began a quest to ensure the vessel and its crew were remembered.

The campaign culminated in 2003 in a special service at St Mary's Church, Broadwater, the unveiling of a plaque and a civic reception hosted by the Mayor of Worthing at nearby Broadwater Manor School, which on its annual speech day presents the HMS Broadwater Trophy to a pupil.

The plaque was provided free of charge by Monumental Masons, of Broadwater.

Four survivors of the ship, and their families, attended the moving service, joining relatives of those who died.

Another plaque was unveiled at Chichester Cathedral following a parade through the city earlier in 2003.

## **David Withers, HMS Exeter**

A presentation was made to him by the local community in Killyleagh Castle. (Bangor Spectator 23/03/1940). HMS Exeter played a heroic part in the battle with the 'Pocket' Battleship Graf Spee off the River Plate off Uruguay, on 13th December 1939. Northern Ireland members from Exeter, were presented to Lord Craigavon, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. HMS Exeter later was lost in the Second Battle of the Java Sea with several fatalities from N Ireland, and survivors who became Japanese prisoners-of-war.

## **Acknowledgments**

Argus newspaper  
Down Recorder  
Scott Edgar  
HMS Hood Association  
Naval History Net  
Wartime NI  
Wikipedia

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The **remembrance ni** programme is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD who served as Chaplain to 102 and 105 Regiments Royal Artillery (TA), as Hon. Chaplain to RNR and as Chaplain to the RBL NI area and the Burma Star Association NI. Dr McKelvey is a Past President of Queen's University Services Club. He may be contacted at [houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com](mailto:houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com)

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