NEWSLETTER of the WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

# WESTENDER

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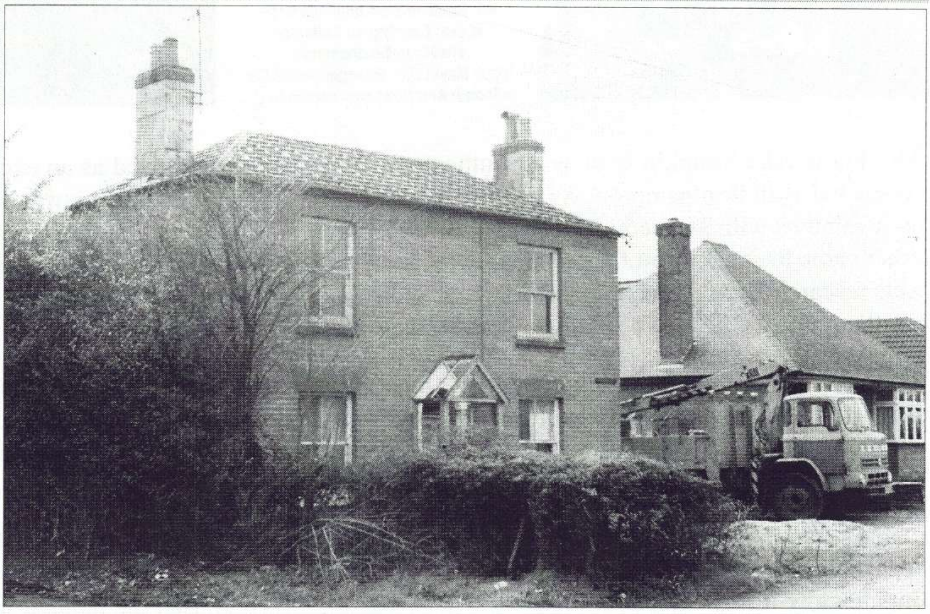
## GONE ... BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



Our cover picture in this issue was one of two kindly donated to our archive by Mr Colin Mockett recently. The cottage in the picture stood next door to The Old Bakery, Botley Road, West End opposite Moorgreen Hospital and was taken in 1982. Little else is known except that it appears it is being demolished, the roof is stripped and there is a pile of brick rubble in the front garden. A lorry parked in the sideway could be from the demolition salvage company. Does anyone recognise this cottage and has anyone got any more information or pictures regarding this cottage that they would be willing to lend or donate to the museum. There is a more recent building now standing on the site. If you have any information or pictures please contact the editor - contact details are shown opposite.

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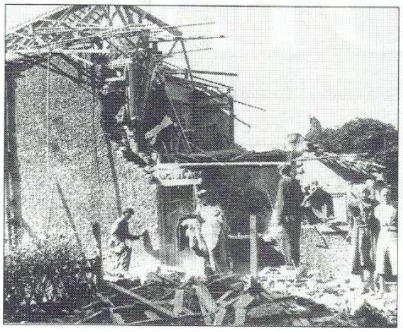
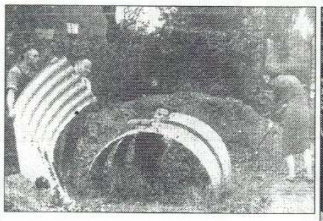
# WARTIME SOUTHAMPTON REVISITED

## A review by Stan Waight





*left*: **Southampton bomb damage.**
*above*: **Erecting an Anderson shelter in Southampton.**
*right*: **Mayor Rex Stranger greets the millionth American serviceman in UK.**




We know Jake Simpkin both as a Southampton Blue Badge guide and as an excellent speaker on subjects connected with Southampton. As a result, his talk to us at our June meeting was well attended and this time he regaled us with an account of *Southampton from Blitz to D-Day*. He was not born until after the War, so was unable to speak from the personal experience that many of the audience possessed, but his account was well-researched and accompanied by a great number of excellent images (incidentaly, I refer to Southampton as the 'town' in this report because it didn't achieve city status until 1964)

Southampton, with 57 air raids, was the 7th most heavily bombed town in the country and also the principal seaport from which the 1944 invasion of France was launched. Jake's technique was to set out, chronologically, a number of themes and then to explore each theme in detail with appropriate slides.

Knowing that Southampton would be in the front line of any aerial war, the city council appointed an Air Raid Precautions Officer as early as 1936. The experiences of more than 3000 Basque children who had been shipped to Southampton to escape the aerial bombardment of their homeland were drawn upon (incidentally it was Nazi aircraft, invited in by Franco who had used the bombardment as a practice run). In 1938 Southampton carried out the first blackout exercise to be held in England. The sirens were tested from time to time but from the declaration of war on 3rd September 1939 onwards they were only used for real. In all there were 206 full-time ARP wardens; the Bargate became a shelter, as did several of the town's ancient vaults. In September 1939 the British Expeditionary Force departed from Southampton to be deployed with the French and Belgian forces. The first refugees from the Low Countries began to arrive here in May 1940, eventually totalling more than 6000, and the B.E.F's. action in France culminated in the evacuation from Dunkirk in the same year.

Churchill's appointment as Prime Minister in May 1940 and his epic speech about 'fighting them on the beaches .....' was almost immediately followed by the first air raid on Southampton, and in August of that year a raid that made Hitler's 'Last Appeal to Reason' was marked by the airmens' failure to cut the strings on the bundles of leaflets! A series of air raids then continued until the last in September 1942, and Jake's presentation included many graphic scenes of the devastation that was caused.

Preparations for D-Day were already afoot in 1943 with the laying down of hards along Southampton's waterfront, the construction of Mulberry harbours and the arrival of the U.S. Major Transportation Corps. A series of slides then showed the build-up of Allied troops and equipment in camps around the town that reached epic proportions and then disappeared completely on 6th June 1944. Southampton became a U.S. leave centre in 1945 and Jake's presentation ended with the V.E. Day celebrations.

I think that the number of questions that followed the talk were indicative of the great interest, and memories for some, that it had invoked.

# THE BATTLE OF MESCO POINT

**By Roy Andrews**








**Left: Dance class armed trawler HMS Gulland. Centre: 12 pounder gun and crew. Above: Map showing Mesco Point**

During World War Two armed trawlers were considered maids of all work doing sterling work escorting slow convoys of merchantmen, leading landing craft to their destination, carrying out anti submarine patrols and so on. They did not often go 'looking for trouble' but that is just what a flotilla of these trawlers did at the 'Battle of Mesco Point' north of Spezia, Italy in December 1944. The battle was later described in Lloyds List and Shipping Gazette in January 1945 as a 'Big ship battle in miniature', when five armed trawlers took the parts of battleships and sixteen British and American torpedo boats acted as escorting destroyers.

The trawlers involved were HMS Minuet, as flotilla leader, HMS Twostep, HMS Gulland, HMS Ailsa Craig and HMS Hornpipe commanded by Lt. Cdr. Henry De Legh, RNR, later a resident of West End.

Intelligence had reported that the Germans were evacuating supplies to Genoa from Spezia by sea at night, heading up the coast away from the approaching Allied land forces. The flotilla was ordered to search for and destroy these convoys.

The trawlers left Leghorn before dusk and headed due west until nightfall when they turned towards the north. There was not long to wait until one of the torpedo boats reported a convoy of German merchantmen and E-boats heading north, well inshore and under the lee of the cliffs.

Immediately the line of trawlers headed towards the convoy and at a range of 2000 yards the Gulland and Ailsa Craig opened up with their 12 pounder guns firing star shells to illuminate the target. Ails Craig actually managed to fire 87 shells in nine minutes. Meanwhile the Hornpipe moved to within 800 yards of the convoy firing her heavier and archaic 4 inch gun into it. She was joined by the other trawlers who opened fire with everything they had including Oerlikon, Twin Browning and Vickers 0.5 inch machine guns

A few seconds after the first star shell burst the German convoy started to return fire quickly followed by German coastal batteries along the shore which according to British Intellegence were 'Non existent'. Fortunatly the battle was so close in shore that the land based guns could not be depressed far enough and the shells flew harmlessly overhead.

The battle only lasted for about ten minutes during which the trawlers were moving at about three knots. Then the order was given to clear the coast and making smoke they then moved off at full speed away from the scene.

As dawn broke the flotilla crews assessed the damage. Apart from minor superstructure damage there was no major damage and the only casualty was Lt. Jack Nye, RNVR, and Commander of HMS Twostep who had had an arm broken by a shell splinter. He had been taken to his cabin where, he said, he had taken copious swigs of whiskey to 'dull the pain'.

On the German side, of the three E-boats and five merchantmen that made up the convoy one E-boat and three merchantmen were sunk and a fourth severely damaged.

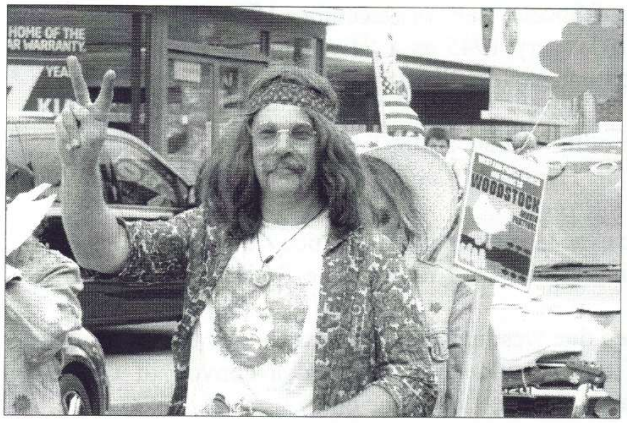
In March 1945,Henry de Legh relinquished command of HMS Hornpipe and in March 1946 she was transferred to the Italian Navy, he moved to the north of England for a few years and then moved into 2, Ardulie Lodge, West End where he lived with his wife Betsy and two children for the next twenty years.

# WEST END CARNIVAL 2011


















This year the theme for West End's Carnival was "The Sixties", and it was well supported by local people dressing the part; Hippies, CND, Flower Power etc.. were all represented, along with classic cars of the period and the Carnival Parade. Miss Le Havre and Dauphine came across from France along with Carnival Courts from Hedge End, Swanage and Bishopstoke and our own West End Carnival Queen and Court. The weather stayed fine and the day was a great success. West End Local History Society as usual had a stand at the Carnival Fete on Hatch Grange, offering local history books and publications and this year a Coconut Shy, which proved extremely popular. The day was a great success and we look forward to Carnival 2012.

# COLONEL FRANK WILLAN of THORNHILL PARK

**By Roy Andrews**



**Left:**

**Colonel Frank Willan**

**Right:**

**Thornhill Park House**



Frank Willan was born on the 8th February, 1846, in Plymouth, the only son of John Willan and Jane Willan nee Onslow a relation of the Earl of Onslow. He was educated at Eton and then went up to Oxford as a member of Exeter College. There he rowed for Oxford in its winning Boat Race crews in four successive years, in 1866, 1867, 1868 and 1869. In 1867 he was also in the winning Oxford Etonian crew in the Grand Challenge Cup at Henley Royal Regatta and runner up in the Diamond Challenge Sculls. In the same year he gave evidence in a legal dispute over the starting of a sculls race on the Thames. In 1869, he was President of the Oxford University Boat Club.

Also in 1869 Willan won the Grand at Henley with Oxford Etonian again and rowed in an Oxford coxed four race against Harvard University on the Tideway, Harvards first race in England.

Willan was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry Regiment of Militia on 26th April 1873,and eventually became Lieut.-Colonel Commanding and Hon. Colonel of the 4th Oxfordshire Light Infantry. On the 14th January 1875, he married Louisa Douglas daughter of the late Captain Charles Douglas, 32nd Bengal Light Infantry, who fell in the Indian Mutiny and stepdaughter of John Lightfoot, Rector of Exeter College, Oxford . They married in the Exeter College Chapel and went on to have two sons and two daughters.

In 1878 Willan bought Thornhill Park House and estate in the parish of West End where he continued to live until 1910. Over the years he extended the estate from 368 acres to 430 acres and enlarged the house into a white brick Italian style mansion complete with a large colonnade to the south side and with ten main rooms and twenty three bedrooms. A keen innovator he installed electricity in the mansion in 1900 run from its own generator. He was said to be a kind hearted employer and maintained a large number of staff on the estate.

In 1899 he became one of the first Hampshire County Aldermen, he was a Justice of the Peace for forty years and on 26th May 1904 he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant for the county of Hampshire. He was also Chairman of the Royal South Hants and Royal Southampton Hospital Committee of Management and a Trustee of the Southampton Free Eye Hospital. In his spare time he bred Jersey Cattle.

Maintaining his interest in rowing he umpired the Oxford/Cambridge Boat Race from 1889 to 1902. In the 1894 race the future King George V rode in the launch with him. He also became a keen yachtsman and was one of the founders of the Yacht Racing Association (later the Royal Yachting Association), and was a member of its Council for fifteen years.

He acquired a steam driven motor car in the very earliest days of motoring and in 1903 represented fellow motorists in discussions on the use of Hampshire roads. In 1908 he owned a 6-cylinder 28-horsepower Lanchester.

After leaving Thornhill Park, Willan moved to Burley in the New Forest and during the First World War, when aged nearly seventy, he drove lorries for the British Expeditionary Force in France. He was later appointed to the local appeal tribunal, created on the introduction of conscription under the Military Service Act 1916.

Frank Willan died on 22nd March 1931, a memorial was erected in Winchester Cathedral by his family.

# CALSHOT - the flying years

## A review by Stan Waight

Colin van Geffen had already spoken to our meetings twice before about flying in the Southampton area. I particularly enjoyed *The Schneider Air Races* and *Flying Boats of Southampton* and looked forward to hearing more from him at our July meeting.

Having explained the difference between a seaplane and a flying boat, Colin started off by asking us to guess how many different types of these aircraft might have visited Calshot during its flying years. We learned at the end that the answer was 124, and the talk was really a succession of slides showing them all in chronological order. Colin knows his subject well, but I have to say that, for example, there didn't seem to be a great deal of difference between the Supermarine S5 of 1927 and the Gloster VI of 1929



*Supermarine S5*

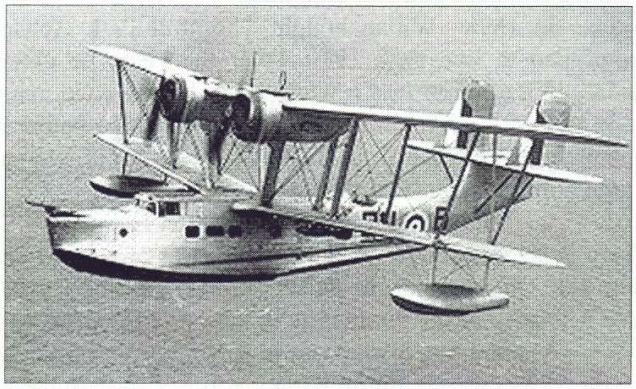


*Gloster VI*

or the Supermarine Southampton of 1925 and the Supermarine Stranraer of 1935




*Supermarine Southampton*



*Supermarine Stranraer*

The history of Calshot really spanned the period from 1910 to 1968, of which much time was occupied in testing and training. Winston Churchill made his first flight from there with Tommy Sopwith in 1913 and the great hangar later used by Sunderlands was built in 1918. The dropping of torpedoes was developed and successfully accomplished just one week before the First World War.

Calshot saw the start of the Round the World race in 1924 and the maiden flight of the Supermarine S4, the forerunner of the Schneider Trophy machines and the Spitfire, took place in the same year.

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Foreign visitors were mentioned and illustrated. The massive Dornier DoX flying boat visited in 1930 (my Mum told me that I saw it, but I was a mere infant at the time!) and the remnants of the Dutch naval air force arrived in 1940.

During World War Two, Calshot became primarily responsible for the repair, maintenance and modification of RAF flying boats, concentrating on the maintenance of the hugely successful Short Sunderlands.

Occupation by the RAF ceased in 1953, but not before the Sunderland squadron had taken part in the Berlin Airlift, when it was based on the River Elbe near Hamburg (I was there in the winter of 1948 as an Engine Fitter and spent the most dangerous part of my RAF career walking the icy wings to service the engines!).

Saunders Roe of East Cowes (my home town!) figured largely in the talk as an innovative aeronautical company, but few of its aircraft were militarily or financially successful - the SRA1 flying boat fighter might have made a difference to WW2 if it had been developed earlier, and the great, 6-engined Princess flying boats ended their short lives at Calshot in 1958.

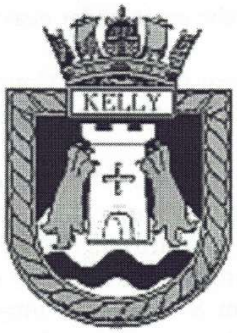
(Forgive the references to Yours Truly but he doesn't often get a chance to get in on the act!)

## THE WALLACE FAMILY HISTORY - Part 3

**By Peter Wallace**

My uncle Arthur George WALLACE was the eldest son of Archibald and Lena WALLACE (nee DALLIMORE) born on the 18th September 1920 at 2 Gladstone Terrace East Cowes on the Isle of Wight.






Arthur George WALLACE C/MX 65935 Electrical Artificer 5th Class, who was serving on board HMS Kelly when it was sunk by enemy action off of the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea on the 23rd May 1941 aged 20 years.

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**Arthur is commemorated on the Chatham War Memorial Kent.**

# HMS KELLY

Sunk by Air Attack South of Crete 23rd May 1941

HMS Kelly, was built by Hawthorne Leslie and Co. Ltd., at Hebburn on Tyne. Laid down on 26th August 1937, launched on 25th October 1938 and completed 23rd August 1939.

At the outbreak of WWII in 1939 HMS Kelly was at Portland, working up under the command of Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten as Captain D5. HMS Kelly later went to Plymouth where she was joined by HMS Kingston and together these two ships became the nucleus of the 5th Destroyer Flotilla of the Home Fleet.

In mid-November HMS Kelly joined the Shetland patrol and on 14th December whilst operating about 13 miles north of Tyne Breakwater, she struck a mine, which seriously damaged her stern, and she was towed back to Hawthorn Leslie's yard for further repairs, where she remained until the end of February 1940. She resumed A/S patrol and on 2nd May was at Namsos to assist in the evacuation of Allied troops from Norway, where she came under heavy air attack but escaped without damage.

The German threat to the Low Countries was mounting. On 7th May 1940 HMS Kelly was dispatched to Harwich with 7 other destroyers to reinforce the East Coast Defenses.

As she was passing St. Abbs Head on the 7th, orders were received from the C-in-C Home Fleet to intercept a German Mine laying force of destroyers, MTB's and minelayers near Little Fisher Bank. HMS Kelly and 3 other destroyers altered course accordingly to the Northward. The cruiser HMS Birmingham and 3 other destroyers were already on their way and a further force of 5 destroyers led by HMS Fury was ordered out from Scapa. HMS Fury's group was to engage the smaller enemy force - 6 MTB's. HMS Birmingham and her group were to engage the larger force of 3 destroyers, a torpedo and 4 minelayers.

At 19:40 an air reconnaissance placed the large enemy unit some 70 miles ENE of the expected position, but unfortunately, no speed was given. On the assumption that the enemy was retiring at high speed and that there was no chance of overtaking him before he reached Skaw, the chase was abandoned. It was not discovered until next morning that the enemy's speed was about 6 knots and that contact could have been made about 23:00 the previous evening.

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HM Ships Kelly and Kandahar had been detached to hunt a U-boat ahead and did not receive the air reconnaissance report until about 20:15, by which time HMS Birmingham was out of sight ahead. Both destroyers proceeded immediately to join her, but visibility was decreasing and they never managed to do so.

Soon afterwards, they were joined by HMS Bulldog, which had lost touch with HMS Fury's group. At 22:3 5 HM Ships Kelly and Kandahar then sighted enemy MTB's. Visibility was about 4 cables with banks of mist forming. At 22:44 a blurred object was sighted in the mist from the bridge of HMS Kelly, which proved to be an enemy MTB lying almost stopped in the track of the destroyers, which put a torpedo into the side of HMS Kelly, blowing a 50 foot hole in her side that extended from the waterline down to her keel. Flames rose internally and externally above the level of the bridge. The foremost boiler room was blown open to the sea and the entire ship was enveloped in steam and black smoke from the explosion.

HMS Bulldog who had been some distance astern, sighted HMS Kelly well down by the bows and with a heavy list to starboard. It had not then been established whether a MTB or a U-boat had torpedoed HMS Kelly, so HMS Bulldog dropped depth charges to the northward. By this time the fog had become very thick but HMS Bulldog succeeded in taking HMS Kelly in tow and was heading for home by 23:40 - that is, within an hour of the explosion and including a U-boat hunt. Onboard HMS Kelly, all torpedoes, depth charges and all moveable top weight was thrown overboard. With an excessive bow trim and starboard gunwale awash, she was a very cumbersome tow and HMS Bulldog was only able to make 6 knots. At about 00:10 on 10th May a German MTB came out of the fog at high speed and accidentally rammed both destroyers, causing further damage to HMS Kelly. HMS Bulldog was not seriously damaged and the MTB was thought to have foundered as a result of the collision. At 03:10 HMS Kandahar joined the two ships and about an hour later took off HMS Kelly's wounded. During this operation, whilst the ships were lying alongside, the German Bombers appeared. They were beaten off by gunfire and by an escort of 3 Hudson's that had just arrived. Later in the morning 1-IM Ships Fury and Gallant joined the escort and in the afternoon the cruisers Manchester and Sheffield as well. Repeatedly the enemy made bombing attacks but they were beaten off.

Twice on the 10th May HMS Kelly became unmanageable and the length and strength of the tow had been altered. On the morning of the 11th it was decided to ask for 2 tugs. At 14:00 her list had increased and it seemed that she might sink at any moment. Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten decided to send out of the ship everybody not required to man the guns. the escorting destroyers had stopped and sent boats to transfer these men, when the enemy made another bombing attack -their heaviest - but no hits were scored. 6 Officers and 12 men were left onboard HMS Kelly, all volunteers, and towing was suspended until the weather moderated. HMS Kelly was lying waterlogged and stationary when aircraft reported 5 enemy submarines in the vicinity. Her Captain, realizing that his ship was a sitting target, transferred his volunteer party to HMS Bulldog. All through the night HMS Kelly lay abandoned and the destroyers steamed round her in an endless chain patrol.

Early in the morning of the 12th, two rescue tugs arrived, the 'Watermey' and 'Brahman' and the volunteer party returned to HMS Kelly and got her in tow. The sea that had remained calm during the night got up again about 08:00 and washed right over from the starboard gunwale to the port side. At noon, a further bombing attack was carried out by the enemy, but the volunteers, who had to work the guns by hand since the electrical system was out of action, fought off the attack. Towards evening, the wind dropped and the rest of the tow proceeded without mishap. At 18:3 0 on 13th May, having been 91 hours in tow or hove to, HMS Kelly with her escort passed up the Tyne to her builders yard.

When she was ready for sea again HMS Kelly was sent for escort duties in the Western Approaches, occasionally taking part in mine laying operations off the coats of France. In April she joined

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the forces disposed to intercept and bring to action the German Battle Cruisers 'Scharnhorst' and 'Gneisenau'.

In April 1941 HMS Kelly was sent to the Mediterranean with the rest of the 5th Flotilla (HM Ships, Kelvin, Kashmir, Kipling, Jackal and Jersey, the cruiser HMS Dido and the fast Minelayer HMS Abdiel). This movement was known as operation 'Salient'. HMS Kelly next assignment was as part of operation 'MD4' - the passage of convoy Tiger to Alexandria with tanks. HMS Kelly was engaged in a bombardment of Benghazi, when five destroyers bombarded the port on the night of 10th/11th May. The Flotilla was dive-bombed and machine-gunned continuously from the time of ceasing fire until 01:30. This was the Mediterranean Fleet's first experience of dive-bombing by moonlight.

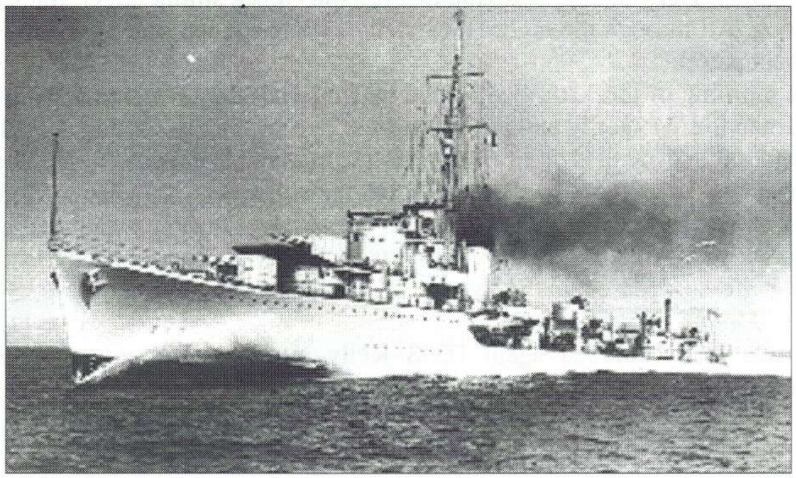
HMS Kelly then joined Force Al South of Crete on 22nd April 1941 to help to repel an anticipated German Airborne and Sea-borne invasion. HM Ships Kelly, Kipling and Kashmir were dispatched to search for survivors of HMS Fuji, which, with HMS Gloucester and HMS Greyhound had been sunk earlier in the day. Early on the morning of 23rd April HMS Kelly and HMS Kashmir sank a large caique full of enemy troops, after which the German air offensive increased unchecked. There was no British air cover for our ships and ammunition and fuel were being rapidly exhausted. The C-in-C Mediterranean ordered all naval forces to withdraw to the eastward.

After surviving two air attacks HMS Kelly and HMS Kashmir were south of Gavdo when they were attacked by 24 Ju.88 dive bombers. HMS Kashmir was hit and sank in 2 minutes. A large bomb struck HMS Kelly and she rolled over to port and, after floating for about 30 minutes upside down, finally sank. The dive-bombers then machine-gunned the men in the water, killing and wounding several. HMS Kipling was some 7 or 8 miles distant and immediately closed and picked up 281 officers and men, among whom were Lord Louis Mountbatten and the Commanding Officer of HMS Kashmir. During the rescue, HMS Kipling was the subject of six high level bombing attacks during which a total of 40 aircraft attacked her, dropping 83 bombs. HMS Kipling escaped unscathed.

## Battle Honours

Atlantic 1939 Norway 1940
Mediterranean 1941 Crete 1941

**Save, Preserve, Remember**



# IMAGES FROM OUR ARCHIVES






**TOP: 9th. Southampton (West End) Scouts in camp at Harefield Estate 1913.**
**BOTTOM: James Dunford's Garage, High Street, West End circa 1920's.**



## NAMING OF NEW ROAD IN WEST END

We understand that the new road created by the housing development at the bottom of Chalk Hill is to be named Rostron Close after one of our late illustrious residents. Captain Arthur Henry Rostron commanded RMS Carpathia which rescued 705 passengers from the ill fated Titanic in 1912, he came to West End just before retiring from the sea in 1927 and lived here until his death in 1940. He is pictured here on the left with his wife in retirement. The naming is very appropriate as he resided in Chalk Hill (the house still exists near the top), and the site of the road once formed part of the grounds of Cllr. Fred Woolley's house "Woodleigh" (he was the Secretary of the Titanic Relief Fund). Next year is of course the centenary of the sinking of RMS Titanic.

## THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE....

September 7
**THE CASTLES OF HAMPSHIRE**
*Don Bryan*

October 5
**WHO GOES WHERE - the night before D-Day**
*Stella Rutter*

November 2
**MONKS,MARQUIS AND MYSTERY .... The story of Netley Abbey**
*Geoff Watts*

## ON THIS DAY.....

**On this day (3rd August) in.....**

**1492** Christopher Columbus left Palos de la Frontera in SW Spain on his famous westward voyage, in command of the small 'Santa Maria', attended by the 'Pinta' and the 'Nina'.

**1721** Grinling Gibbons, English woodcarver, notably in St. Paul's Cathedral, died.

**1778** The famous Opera House La Scala in Milan, the work of Giuseppe Piermarini, was opened.

**1792** Sir Richard Arkwright, English inventor who developed the mechanical cotton spinning process, died.

**1858** Lake Victoria, the source of the Nile, was discovered by the English explorer John Speke.

**1881** William George Fargo, co-founder of the Wells-Fargo Express Traffic service in 1852, died.

**1916** Sir Roger Casement, Irish nationalist, was hanged in London for treason, because of his attempts to induce Germany to support the cause of Irish independence.

**1934** The German cabinet joined the offices of President and Chancellor and made Hitler 'Der Fuhrer'

**1977** Archbishop Makarios, religious leader and President of Cyprus, died.