


Background – Lieutenant Commander Donald George Brown RN

In March 1941 when SS Britannia III was sunk, Donald G Brown RN survived his 2nd sinking of the war. My Grandpa was shelled (or hit by a mine – reports differ) whilst attempting to evacuate troops at Dunkirk on 1st June 1940. He was Boatswain rank at the time but acting as 1st Lieutenant on ST.Fagan. He was one of 8 survivors out of a crew of 25 (again, reports differ) who were rescued by ST.Tanga. He had suffered head injuries that put him out of active service for several months.

1832. Revise of 1898.



CERTIFICATE FOR WOUNDS AND INJURIES

These are to Certify the Right Honourable
the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that

(Name in full) (Rank or Rating) (Official or Regimental No.)

Donald George BROWN Boatswain
belonging to His Majesty's Ship "St Fagan"
being then actually upon His Majesty's Service in
transporting troops from Dunkirk
was wounded on 1st June 1940 by
the ship striking a mine.
He sustained a scalp wound
and a fracture of the second metatarsal
bone (right).

Age about 26 years. Born at or near Portsmouth Height 5 ft 7 ins.
Hair fair Eyes blue Complexion fresh

Particular marks or scars None

Date 3rd August 1940

Signature of Commanding Officer of Ship or of Coast Guard or Marine Division: W. Allen
Rank: Lieutenant

Signature of Person who witnessed the accident: [Blank]
Rank: [Blank]

Signature of Medical Officer: W.D. Murray
Rank: Surgeon Captain R.N.

NOTE. The grant of a Short Certificate to a Petty Officer or Man is to be noted on his Service Certificate.

The Navy, however, was his life, having worked his way up from the lowest ranks from the age of 15 and he was keen to get back to active service. He was subsequently posted to HMS Barham. Barham was stationed in the Mediterranean and therefore he needed to take passage on a civilian ship, by way of Cape Horn to India and then onto the Red Sea, in order to avoid the very dangerous Straits of Gibraltar. This is how he found himself on Britannia III that fateful day of 25th March 1941, when she was sunk by the German raider, Thor. He subsequently was able to recount the story of the Britannia sinking to King George VI. A copy of the story of his survival from detailed notes that he typed, probably in the 1970's, are elsewhere on this website and I hope, make for interesting reading.

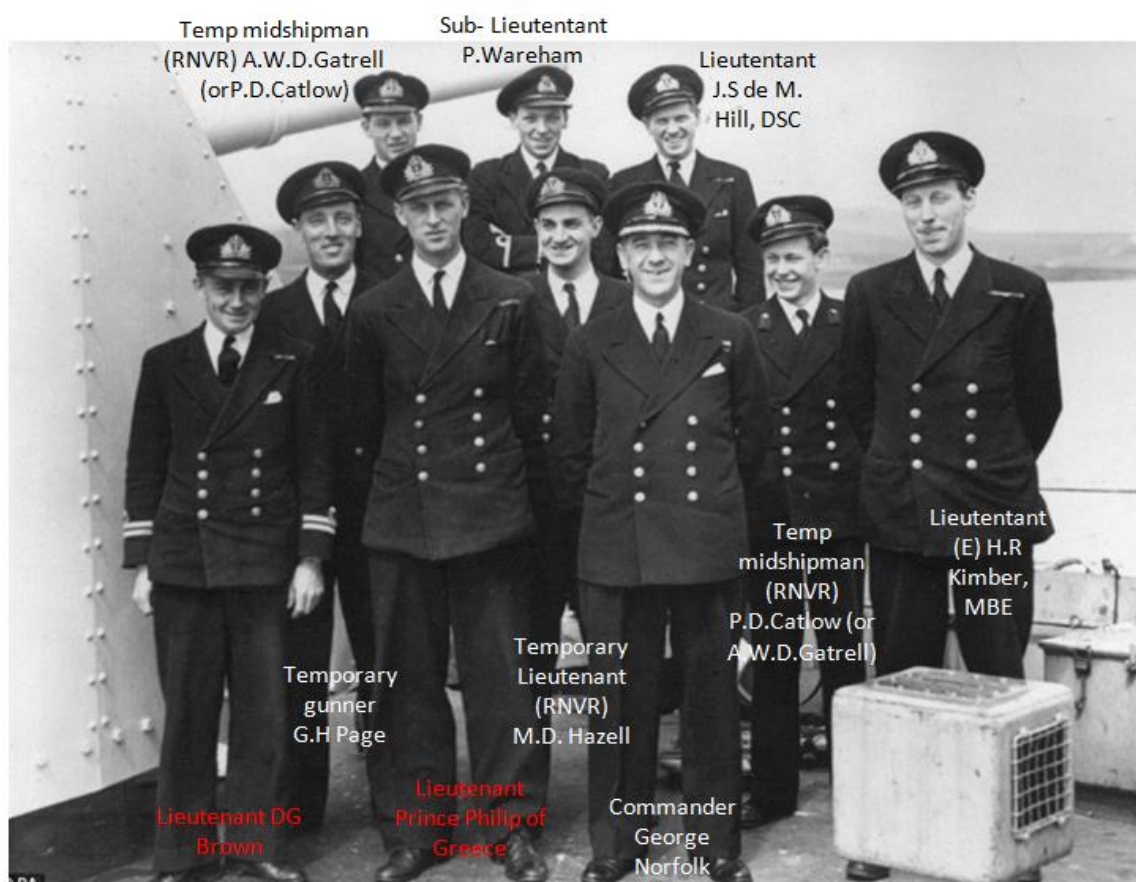


While at the barracks their Majesties heard the story of Mr. D. Brown, boatswain, R.N., of Portsmouth, who spent five days in an open boat in the Atlantic after his ship was sunk by an enemy raider. With about 50

other members of the crew Mr. Brown took to the boats, and before they were picked up by a Spanish ship the survivors had been reduced to seven. Other

Throughout his subsequent active service, he was not sunk again. Indeed, due to the circumstances of having been sunk on Britannia and his subsequent internment in Tenerife, he was unable to reach HMS Barham, before she too was famously sunk with a great loss of life. (Footage of her spectacular sinking was shown on British Pathé, and was also used for a number of war films following WW2).

Later in the War he served as Lieutenant in the East Indies fleet onboard HMS Whelp alongside Prince Philip of Greece; later, consort to Queen Elizabeth. We have an interesting letter sent to him as a friend to a friend, from Prince Philip. It appears that the correspondence was kept up, at least during the war years.



Officers of HMS Whelp 1944

My Grandfather went on to serve in the navy, until the mid fifties when he reached naval retirement age. During the Korean war he was mentioned in despatches. He also experienced his 1st Typhoon at an inopportune time; shortly after his ship had been riddled with shell holes!

After the Navy, he continued to utilise his discipline and organisational skills both inside and outside work. He went on to work in administration at Massey Ferguson, where he played a prominent role in organising the annual Royal show at Stoneleigh Showground. He provided his administrative expertise as Clerk to the Balsall Parish Council, was a member and sometime Chairman of the Leamington Spa Opera Group, was the President of the Massey Ferguson Male Voice Choir and then the Phoenix Male Voice Choir and was the Administrator for the Amarothers (specialising in Victorian and Gilbert & Sullivan music).

His love of order was reflected in his immaculate home, where the ship's bell from HMS Racehorse stood by the front door. A strong personal memory is that on each visit we were chastised for the state of our scuffed shoes, which were then left at the doorstep, to be returned when we left, fully polished with a military shine! He was a strict and imposing character, (from my then 7 or 8 year old viewpoint) but not without humour. A man well respected and loved by family and his community. He died, aged 70, in 1984 of a heart attack.

Simon Brown 06/03/18

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Appendix – Naval career postings

BROWN Donald George

Lieutenant 13 March 1949 30 November 1913
Commander

SHIP	DATES	
St.Vincent.....	21 May 1929 - 8 Nov 1929	...Boy 2nd Class - Training.
St.Vincent.....	9 Nov 1929 - 9 Jly 1930	...Boy 1st Class - Training & Instr.Boy.
Emperor of India.....	10 Jly 1930 - 2 Jan 1931	...Boy 1st Class - Training Squadron.
Nelson.....	3 Jan 1931 - 18 Meh 1931	...Boy 1st Class - Home Fleet.
Royal Sovereign.....	19 Meh 1931 - 30 May 1931	...Boy 1st Class - Med. Fleet. ✓
Royal Sovereign.....	31 May 1931 - 7 Meh 1932	...Ord.Sea (Sp.Rtd) - Med. Fleet.
Victory 1.....	8 Meh 1932 - 1 May 1932	...Ord.Sea. - Barracks.
Crusader.....	2 May 1932 - 29 Aug 1932	...Ord.Sea. - Home Fleet.
Crusader.....	30 Aug 1932 - 5 Sep 1933	...Able Sea. - Home Fleet.
Victory 1.....	6 Sep 1933 - 17 May 1934	...Able Sea. - Barracks.
Excellent.....	18 May 1934 - 3 Oct 1934	...Able Sea. - Qualifying S.G.
Victory 1.....	4 Oct 1934 - 27 Nov 1934	...Able Sea. - Barracks.
St.Angelo (M/S).....	28 Nov 1934 - 9 Jan 1935	...Able Sea. - Med. Fleet.
Durban.....	10 Jan 1935 - 3 Sep 1935	...Able Sea. - Med. Fleet.
Durban.....	4 Sep 1935 - 18 Dec 1935	...a/Ldg.Sea. - Med. Fleet.
Despatch.....	19 Dec 1935 - 2 Sep 1936	...a/Ldg.Sea. - Med. Fleet.
Despatch.....	3 Sep 1936 - 21 Feb 1937	...Ldg.Sea. - Med. Fleet.
Despatch.....	22 Feb 1937 - 2 Jly 1937	...a/Petty Officer - Med. Fleet.
Victory 1.....	3 Jly 1937 - 21 Feb 1938	...a/Petty Officer. } Barracks for leave and
Victory 1.....	22 Feb 1938 - 22 Feb 1939	...Petty Officer. } qualifying Boatswain.
Victory.....	23 Feb 1939 - 10 Apl 1939	...Boatswain addl. for Divisional Course.
St.Fagan.....	11 Apl 1939 - 1 Jne 1940	...Boatswain as 1st Lieut. Lost at Dunkirk.
Victory.....	2 Jne 1940 - 9 Meh 1941	...Boatswain addl. for Haslar and awaiting app employed Seamanship Training Staff.
Barkam.....	10 Meh 1941 -	Boatswain. Addl. for passage but did not go there. Interned Teneriffe 4 months and returned U.K.
Victory.....	8 Sep 1941 - 30 Apl 1942	...Boatswain addl. awaiting appointment. Employed Seamanship Training Staff.
Wayland.....	1 May 1942 - 12 Aug 1943	...Boatswain. East Indies.
Victory.....	13 Aug 1943 - 31 Oct 1943	...Boatswain addl. for leave and awaiting crew
Excellent.....	1 Nov 1943 - 16 Apl 1944	...Boatswain addl. for Lieutenants Course.
Whelp.....	17 Apl 1944 - 16 Dec 1944	...Lieutenant W/K. East Indies.
Racehorse.....	17 Dec 1944 - 6 Nov 1945	...First Lieutenant. East Indies.
Racehorse.....	7 Nov 1945 - 21 Feb 1946	...In Command. Home reducing to Reserve.
Chieftain.....	22 Feb 1946 - 3 Feb 1947	...First Lieutenant. Med. Fleet

P.T.O.

Victory.....	4 Feb 1947 - 23 Feb 1947	..Lieutenant. Addl. for course.
Sirius.....	24 Feb 1947 - 12 Oct 1949	..Lieutenant & Lieutenant Commander. Mate of Upper Deck.
Woolrich.....	13 Oct 1949 - 16 Meh 1951	..First Lieutenant.
Mounts Bay.....	17 Meh 1951 - 9 Apl 1953	..First Lieutenant. Far East.
Victory.....	10 Apl 1953 - 27 Aug 1953	..Addl. for passage and leave.
Vanguard.....	28 Aug 1953 - 11 Oct 1953	..Addl. as R.F.A. Liaison Officer for Exercise Mariner - served in R.F.A. Wave Victor.
Victory.....	12 October. 1953	..For Divisional Duties.
Bellona	17 October 1955	.. R.F.P.O.

Awards

Naval General Service Medal - Clasps Palestine 1936-39 and 1945-48.
 1939-45 Star.
 Atlantic Star.
 Africa Star with clasp.
 Burma Star.
 Italy Star.
 War Medal.
 Korea Medal.
 United Nations Medal.
 Mention in despatches (Korea) - A.F.O. 3552/53.

Shore Establishments ... 3.	Time to count for retired pay & gratuity
Battleships ... 4	Half ratings time i.e. 3 . 7 . 11
Cruisers ... 3	Officer time 19 . 9 . 8
Destroyers ... 4	Reckonable time 23 . 4 . 19
Repair ships ... 2	Total time in Service ... 29 . 6 . 9
Minesweepers ... 1	NA. Up to 30 Nov. 1958
Frigates ... 1	Gratuity payable £1,000.
Fleet tugs ... 1	Retired pay £ 500. p.a.