

# Great Chart

## Second World War 1939 – 1945

**BRIDGER**, CYRIL JOHN. Leading Stoker, C/KX 8312.

Royal Navy, H.M.S. Duchess (H64).

Died 12 December 1939. Aged 24.

Son of Harold and Elizabeth Bridger of Hothfield, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 33. Column 3.

Built by Palmers Shipbuilding & Iron Co Ltd of Jarrow-on-Tyne, H.M.S. Duchess was a 1,360 ton 'D' class destroyer which was commissioned on 24 January 1933. At the time of her tragic sinking she was commanded by 34 year old Lieutenant Commander Robert C. M. White R.N., and was only an hour away from docking at Greenock, Scotland, when she was accidentally rammed by the 31,000 ton battleship H.M.S. Barham, approximately nine miles off the Mull of Kintyre. From the ships compliment of 190, 6 officers and 123 ratings perished in the freezing waters of the Atlantic, including her Captain, who was son of Sir Robert and Lady White of Woodbridge, Suffolk.

**CLEEVE**, ANTHONY THOMAS RUSSELL. Flying Officer, (Pilot U/T), 160943.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Died 1 March 1945. Aged 22.

Son of Cecil Cleeve and Inez Cleeve (née Russell) of Great Chart, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated Charing (Kent County) Crematorium, Charing, Ashford, Kent.

Anthony was Pilot Under Training at the time of his death.

**MASTERS**, ALBERT EDWARD. Gunner, 1114012.

Royal Artillery, attached to Royal Armoured Corps.

Died 2 May 1944. Aged 35.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of Frank and Rosa Masters of Great Chart, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Rangoon Memorial, Myanmar. Face 3.

Holder of the Royal Horticultural Society's Certificate of Proficiency.

**MARSH, SIDNEY.** Flight Lieutenant (Flight Engineer). 159890.

Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

83 (Pathfinder Force) Squadron, Royal Air Force.

Died 21 February 1945.

Buried Mierlo War Cemetery, Noord-Brabant, Netherlands. Grave Ref: VIII. D. 8.

Sidney was the Flight Engineer on Lancaster bomber NE165 OL-Y, which was flown by 43 year old Group Captain (Pilot), Anthony Caron Evans-Evans, D.F.C. of Peterborough, Northamptonshire. The aircraft took off from R.A.F. Coningsby, Lincolnshire, at 1707 hours on 21 February 1945, on a mission to mark the Mittelland Canal near Gravenhorst, Germany, for the following bombers of 5 Group to attack. Above Rips, Noord-Brabant, Holland, the bomber was shot down by Luftwaffe night-fighter, and crashed at Gertruda Farm, the home of the Ypna family, killing seven of the Lancaster's crew of eight, who now lie in adjacent graves at Mierlo. Whilst this is a brief commemoration to Sidney Marsh, mention (albeit again only briefly) should also be made of his comrades that perished with him, as between four of them they had seven gallantry awards, Group Captain, Anthony Caron Evans-Evans D.F.C., the pilot at the age of 43, has the sad distinction of being one of the oldest senior officers to die on R.A.F. bombing operations during the Second World War, who at the time of his death was also the Station Commander of R.A.F. Coningsby. In stark contrast the aircrafts Navigator, Squadron Leader, William G. Wishart D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar, of Keith, Banffshire, Scotland at the age of 22 was one of the youngest of his rank to be killed in action. Flight Lieutenant (Air Bomber) William C. Fitch in addition to his D.F.C. was also a recipient of the George Medal. Flying Officer (Navigator/Bomber) Desmond A. J.W. Ball D.F.M., of Edmonton, Middlesex, had been awarded his Distinguished flying medal whilst flying with 207 Squadron, R.A.F. Flight Sergeant (Wireless Operator/Air Gunner) Richard J. Tackle also died, but Pilot Officer E .H. Hansen of the Royal Australian Air Force survived the crash.

**RAWLINGS, SIDNEY GEORGE.** Galley Boy.

Merchant Navy, M.V. Empire Light (Liverpool).

Died 7 March 1943. Aged 17.

Born 24 January 1926. Merchant Navy Discharge number: R275725.

Son of George and Amy Agnes Rawlings of South Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 43.

Built in 1925 by John Brown & Co Ltd, of Clydebank, Scotland, and named Lumen, the 6537 ton tanker was owned by H.E. Moss & Co, of Liverpool, Lancashire, and she was renamed the Empire Light in 1942, by the Ministry of War Transport (MoWT). Sidney's ship was a straggler from the convoy ON-168 on the day he died, when the tanker was torpedoed at 1820 hours, by the German submarine U-638, which was commanded by 28 year old Kapitänleutnant, Hinrich-Oscar Bernbeck when the tanker was approximately 400 miles off the coast of Labrador, southwest of Cape Farewell. Initially Kapitänleutnant, Bernbeck thought that he had missed the ship, but the Empire Light commanded by Master Frederick Dolton, was damaged and abandoned. 39 crew members and six D.E.M.S. gunners were ultimately lost, and as if to compound the tragedy, a Royal Navy vessel stood by to try and

rescue those who remained on the stricken tanker, but could not get close enough due to the prevailing weather conditions. In view of the known u-boat activity in the area, it was a commendable undertaking by the Royal Navy to attempt the prolonged rescue. The tankers master, three crew members and one gunner eventually managed to evacuate the ship in life boats, and were picked up by the Royal Navy destroyer H.M.S. Beverley (H 64), which was commanded by Lieutenant Commander A.R. Price, and safely landed at St.Johns, Newfoundland. At 2212 hours on 12 March, the U-468 commanded by Oberleutnant zur See, Klemens Schamong sank the abandoned tanker by two coups de grâce torpedoes. The U-638 was sunk on 5 May 1943 in the North Atlantic, north-east of Newfoundland, by depth charges from the Royal Navy corvette H.M.S. Sunflower, at which time the submarine was commanded by Kapitänleutnant, Oskar Staudinger who died with the rest of his 43 crew members. Hinrich-Oscar Bernbeck, a native of Roding, Oberpfalz, Bavaria, Germany survived the Second World War, and died on 9 October 1982, aged 68.

N.B. M.V. Empire Light (Liverpool), is not too be confused with the similar sounding vessel, SS Empire Light (Glasgow), that was sunk by the German Raider "Pinguin" on 25 April 1941.

**SCOTT, DOUGLAS RIMINGTON.** Lieutenant, 85543.

72 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.

Died Middle East between 31 May and 4 June 1942. Aged 23.

Born Bedford, Bedfordshire. Resided Nottinghamshire.

Son of the Reverend Walter Reginald Scott M.A. and Amy Harriet Mabel Scott of The Rectory, Great Chart, Ashford, Kent.

Pre war member of the Royal Artillery.

