James Clarke



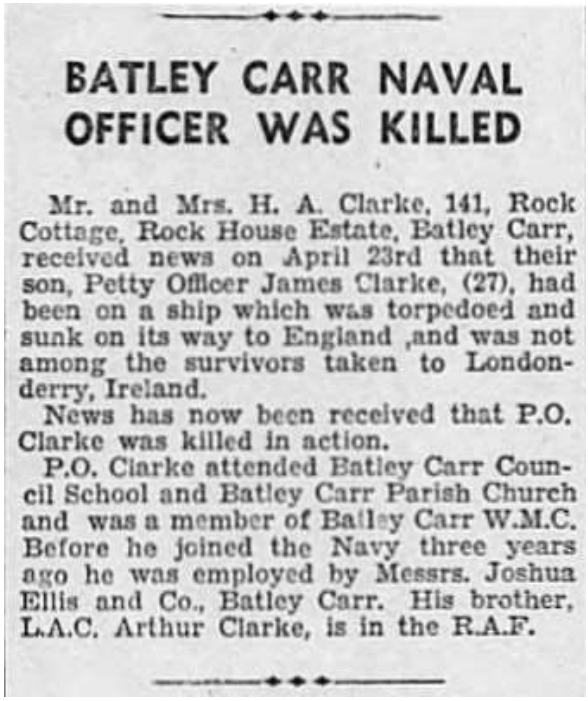
James was born on 3 August 1919 the son of Harry Ashton Clarke and Catherine Clarke (nee Rourke, m. 1918, registered Dewsbury). Arthur was born in 1921 followed by Dennis in 1923 and sadly Catherine died in 1926. On 14 June 1930 his father married Eleanor Auty at Holy Innocents Church, Thornhill Lees. His family was living at 135, Rock House Villas, Batley Carr. They later moved to 11, Rock Cottage, Rock House Estate, Batley Carr.

James attended Batley Carr Council School and Batley Carr Parish Church and was a member of Batley Carr W.M.C. Before he joined the Navy in 1940, he was employed by Messrs. Joshua Ellis and Co. Batley Carr. His brother Arthur was in the R.A.F.

On April 23rd 1943 his parents received the news that he was onboard a ship which was on its way to England and was not amongst the survivors taken to

Londonderry, Ireland. News was received in November 1943 that he was killed in action.

At 22.50 hours on March 29, 1943, SS Empire Whale (formerly the American SS Winona County) was sailing to the Tyne with a cargo of Pepel Ore when she was torpedoed and sunk by U-662. The position was 46.44N, 16.38W (425 miles NW of Cape Finisterre). Seven crew members, one DEMS gunner and two RAF personnel were rescued by HMS Spey and landed at Londonderry. The master (James Thompson Davitt), forty-one crew members, four DEMS gunners and one RAF personnel were lost. The crew members are commemorated on Tower Hill, Panel 47 and the Canadian Halifax Memorial.



BATLEY CARR NAVAL OFFICER WAS KILLED

Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Clarke, 141, Rock Cottage, Rock House Estate, Batley Carr, received news on April 23rd that their son, Petty Officer James Clarke, (27), had been on a ship which was torpedoed and sunk on its way to England ,and was not among the survivors taken to Londonderry, Ireland.

News has now been received that P.O. Clarke was killed in action.

P.O. Clarke attended Batley Carr Council School and Batley Carr Parish Church and was a member of Batley Carr W.M.C. Before he joined the Navy three years ago he was employed by Messrs. Joshua Ellis and Co., Batley Carr. His brother, L.A.C. Arthur Clarke, is in the R.A.F.

Batley News, 27 Nov 1943

CLARKE, Petty Officer, JAMES, D/JX 176085. H.M.S. President III. Royal Navy. Lost in S.S. Empire Whale, 29th March 1943, was one of those lost.

James was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.

He is remembered with Honour at Batley Carr Working Men's Club and the Holy Trinity, Lychgate, Batley Carr.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group