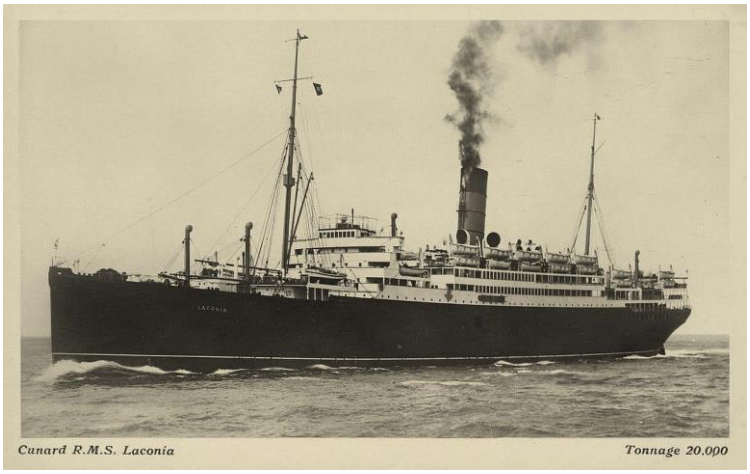
Emmanuel Winstanley Garbutt





Rank: - Petty Officer

Number: - P/JX 136444

Service: - Royal Navy H.M.S. Victory III (S.S. Laconia)

Died: - Lost with the sinking of SS Laconia 12/09/1942 Age: 33 years

Memorial: - Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 62, Column 2.

Emmanuel Winstanley was born on 1 Aug 1911 at East Hirst, Ashington, Morpeth the son of John and Ethel Blanche Garbutt nee Corbitt who had married in the summer of 1910. His father died shortly after his birth following a pit accident, aged 24 years.

In 1920 Ethel married Andrew McDermott who came from Elland. Mary was born in the Dewsbury District later that year and John in 1925.

Emmanuel attended Park Road School, and Park Road Baptist Church and later St. Thomas's Church, Batley. We worked at Peacock's Pit, Gomersal before joining the Royal Navy in about 1928. In 1939 the family lived at Brookroyd Lane, Batley.

In 1942 he wrote home from South Africa in early September 1942, to say he was coming home soon but his mother did not hear any further news until she heard that he was missing on war service.



OFFICER MISSING.

Mrs. E. McDermott, Brookroyd Lane, Brownhill, Batley, has received news that her son, Petty Officer Emmanuel W. Garbutt (31), R.N., is missing on war service. He wrote from South Africa seven weeks ago to say he was coming home shortly. P.O. Garbutt has been in the Navy 14 years and previously worked at Peacock Pit, Gomersal. He attended Park Road School, and Park Road Baptist Church, Batley, and later St. Thomas' Church, Batley. He had served on the cruiser "Enterprise."

E. W. Garbutt.

Batley News, 24 Oct 1942 (photo)

On 12 September 1942, a German U-boat, sank the British ship 'The Laconia'. The Laconia was a former Cunard White Star passenger liner that was requisitioned by the British Royal Navy and was used as a transport ship for British troops. The Laconia was suitable for the transport of troops as it was large and had many cabins. The Royal Navy added some guns and anti-aircraft weapons to the ship. It was heading for England when it encountered U-156, a German U-boat or submarine. The Laconia had no defence against the U-boat. The sub attacked the ship with torpedoes and they hit the Laconia's stern below the waterline. The lives of all the passengers some 2200 were placed in danger. The ship began to sink very quickly.

The commander of the German sub, Capt. Werner Hartenstein tried to rescue as many of the survivors as possible, this was because he realized that there were many Italian POWs on board the sinking ship. The German sub immediately informed the Allies by morse code that they had surfaced for humanitarian reasons, to ensure that they were not attacked by any Allied planes or ships. The Allies believed that it was a trap and ignored the German communication. An American B-24 Bomber was sent to the area where the Laconia was sinking. The German U-Boat commander had draped a Red Cross Flag around the hull of the submarine. Despite this the B-24 bomber ignored it- he believed that it was a

ruse. The B 24 began to bomb the submarine and damaged it and forced it to submerge. This meant that the there was no ships or vessels in the area to rescue the many soldiers and sailors in the water. This meant that approximately 1400 men were doomed to drown in the icy South Atlantic waters.

The supreme commander of the German U-boat fleet, Doenitz, had been monitoring the rescue efforts. He was angered by the B-24s attack on the U-boat that had been trying to rescue people from danger and death. He issued an order that no more efforts be made to help any survivors from sunken ships in the future because of what became known as the 'Laconia Incident'. The sinking of the HMS Laconia and the subsequent attack by the B 24 led to a new and more brutal phase in the naval war.

Emmanuel Winstanley is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial, Addenda and Portsmouth Naval Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group