Alan Mullins





Rank: - Ordinary Seaman

Number: - P/JX 172207

Service: - Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Acasta*

Died: - Ship sunk after battle at sea with the Scharnhorst Died 8 June 1940 Age 21 years

Memorial: - Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 40, Column 1.

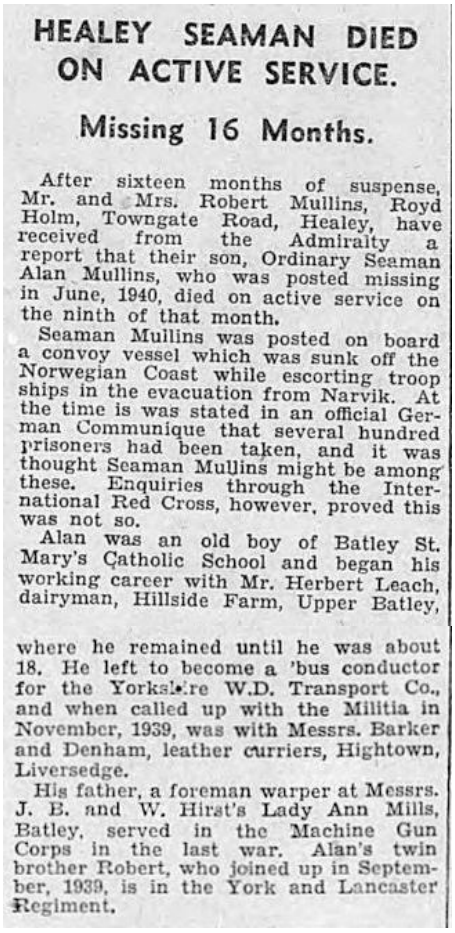
Batley News, 1 Nov 1941 (photo)

Alan was born on 10 May 1919 the twin son of Robert and Eva Mullins nee Smithson who had married in 1911. Elizabeth E was born in 1912 followed by Jane 1914, Bernard 1916, Robert "Bob" and Alan 1919, Terence 1923 and Louis 1929. The family lived at 39, Towngate Road, Healey, Batley.

Alan was an old boy of St. Mary's Catholic School, Batley and commenced work for Mr. Herbert Leach of Hillside Farm, Upper Batley where he worked until he was about 18. He left to become a 'bus conductor for the Yorkshire (W.D.)

Transport Co. Prior to being called up in November 1939 he was employed by Messrs. Barker and Denham, leather carriers, Hightown, Liversedge.

Alan had always expressed a wish to join the Navy and since enlistment he had been delighted with the work. He should have been called up for service in September, when his twin brother Bob had to report, but an operation delayed his leaving home for nearly two months. Alan's last letter home was written "somewhere at sea" and arrived on 29 May. His twin brother, Bob, was with the York and Lancasters and saw service with the North Western Expeditionary Force in Norway.



HEALEY SEAMAN DIED ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

Missing 16 Months.

After sixteen months of suspense, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mullins, Royd Holm, Towngate Road, Healey, have received from the Admiralty a report that their son, Ordinary Seaman Alan Mullins, who was posted missing in June, 1940, died on active service on the ninth of that month.

Seaman Mullins was posted on board a convoy vessel which was sunk off the Norwegian Coast while escorting troop ships in the evacuation from Narvik. At the time is was stated in an official German Communique that several hundred prisoners had been taken, and it was thought Seaman Mullins might be among these. Enquiries through the International Red Cross, however, proved this was not so.

Alan was an old boy of Batley St. Mary's Catholic School and began his working career with Mr. Herbert Leach, dairyman, Hillside Farm, Upper Batley, where he remained until he was about 18. He left to become a 'bus conductor for the Yorkshire W.D. Transport Co., and when called up with the Militia in November, 1939, was with Messrs. Barker and Denham, leather curriers, Hightown, Liversedge.

His father, a foreman warper at Messrs. J. B. and W. Hirst's Lady Ann Mills, Batley, served in the Machine Gun Corps in the last war. Alan's twin brother Robert, who joined up in September, 1939, is in the York and Lancaster Regiment.

HMS *Acasta* was one of eight A-class destroyers built for the Royal Navy (RN) in the 1920s. At the beginning of the Second World War in September 1939, the ship was assigned convoy escort duties in the English Channel and the Western Approaches that lasted until April 1940 when the Germans invaded Norway. That month *Acasta* was transferred to the Home Fleet and supported Allied operations in Norway.

*Alan was serving on H.M.S. *Acasta* which was then sent to Norway to take part in the evacuation of Narvik. On the 8th June 1940 the Destroyers *Acasta* and *Ardent* were detailed to escort the Aircraft Carrier H.M.S. *Glorious,* and were proceeding about 200 miles ahead of the main convoy carrying troops and equipment, when they were intercepted by the German battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisner.*

H.M.S. *Glorious* was heavily laden, not only with their own aircraft, but it was also carrying RAF Gladiators of 263 Squadron and Hurricanes of 46 Squadron. Glorious was soon overcome and was sunk. *Acasta* and *Ardent* tried to save *Glorious*, laying protective smoke, but then *Ardent* suffered the same fate. *Acasta* survived for some time longer, and might have got away, but it went back through the smoke and attacked with torpedoes, scoring a hit on the engine

room of *Scharnhorst* causing the enemy ships to abandon their sortie to the north and return to port, thus probably saving the Allied troop convoys, also HMS *Devonshire*, carrying the Norwegian Royal Family and Government. The Germans didn't wait to pick up any survivors, and 1530 men died.

With thanks to BBC –People's War WW2 *

Twelve hours after the radio announcement that HMS *Acasta* was one of five vessels presumed lost Mr. & Mrs. Mullins received a telegram from the Admiralty regretting that their son was "missing- believed prisoner of war." A telegram was sent immediately to his twin brother and in a reply to his parents Bob said that as Alan was stationed at an anti-aircraft gun, he would probably be on deck and stand a good chance of rescue if the destroyer went down.

Mrs Mullins told a reporter:

"*We had the worst night we could ever have on Monday. Father heard the broadcast in the nine o'clock news and we simply could not do a thing. We couldn't go to sleep,we just waited for more news. Then the telegram on Tuesday morning and that relieved us a little, but the suspense is awful."*

Sadly Alan had not been taken a prisoner and was lost at sea.

He was awarded the 1939-45 Star; 1939-1945 War Medal.

Alan is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group