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2021 NEWSLETTER

Very sadly our last survivor Archie Ross died on 6 May 2021. He was a Stoker 1st Class at the time of the sinking and had lived at home in Haliburton, Canada until the day before he died. He was ably supported by his partner who was able to be at his bedside when he died in hospital. Due to lock down he was cremated without flowers or wreaths.

In recent years our Association account has only been used to pay for surviving members' funeral wreaths. The account was therefore closed on 3 September 2021 with donations sent to Westminster Abbey and St Ann's church, HM naval Base Portsmouth.

Westminster Abbey has thanked us for the generous gift. For them things are rather grim financially as they have had so few visitors as they provide the basic income for the Abbey to survive. The gift is truly appreciated. We asked for the donation to be for the maintenance and preservation of the Standard Candlesticks that stand on either side of the nave altar. They bear the simple inscription: "May this gift ever preserve the memory of a gallant company: Captain GC Cooke, officers, warrant officers, and men in HMS Barham, lost in the Mediterranean, November 1941." Mrs Constance Cooke was largely responsible for raising the funds for their purchase from the families of those lost in the sinking. The oak candlesticks were made by Robert Thompson and gilded by AE Harper,

It is also for the maintenance and preservation of the Book of Remembrance of those Royal Navy Officers, Warrant Officers, Petty Officers and Men killed in the sinking of HMS Barham on 25 November 1941. On the title page it states: "In proud memory of those who lost their lives in HMS Barham". It was given to the Abbey by Mrs Constance Cooke in memory of her husband the Captain of HMS Barham. She was also to give a second book to the Royal Naval Roman Catholic Church, Portsmouth.

The St Ann's church Chaplain has thanked us for the kind donation to maintain and preserve the Chalice which is on display in the church and was given to the Royal Naval Roman Catholic Church, Portsmouth again with the funds raised by the bereaved families. HMS Barham was a Portsmouth based ship. The chalice

is hallmarked London 1937, it included a platen and carrying cover. The Chalice is inscribed: “To the Glory of God, and in proud and undying memory of Captain GC Cooke and the Officers and Men of HMS Barham, who gave their lives in the service of God, their King and Country - 25 November 1941 – this Chalice is given to the Royal Naval Church, Portsmouth by their bereaved families July 27th 1942”.

It is also for the maintenance and preservation of the HMS Barham Survivors Association Standard which was laid up in the church on 4 December 2011. The HMS Barham Survivors Association was formed in 1956. The standard was donated to the Association by the family of Bill Gidley at the annual dinner held on 18 May 1991. In 2002 the name of the Association was changed to the HMS Barham Association when its management passed to descendants of the crew.

The remainder of the fund raised by the families was used to open a Trust fund with the British Legion for the officers’ families and all dependants of those who lost their lives in HMS Barham. The Legion put Mrs Cooke in touch with Haig Homes who found homes for the wives and children to live. Jimmy Annandale who died in 2001 was the last dependant to be supported by this fund. He was the son of Chief Stoker Robert Annandale who was killed in the sinking. Although the fund had been augmented the British Legion had to support him before he died. Jimmy had for many years attended the Westminster Abbey Remembrance services in his wheel chair and later had a speech machine for communication.

The guestbook on our website still has occasional entries from members of families of those who served in HMS Barham which are often difficult to answer,

If you know of anyone without access to the internet who wishes to keep in touch please pass on the news.

The 25 November this year will of course be the 80th anniversary of HMS Barham’s sinking

Michael K Stratton-Brown, Chairman