

## Belstead, Suffolk– WAR MEMORIAL

Celtic Cross War Memorial in the centre of the village; Roll of Honour in the Church

There is a memorial book, compiled in 2003 by Jennifer Jones, in the Parish Church, containing photographs of the graves or memorials of most of the men of the North Samford Benefice (Belstead, Bentley, Burstall, Copdock & Washbrook, Sproughton and Tattingstone) who died in the First World War.

This document was researched by Jean Austin 2006 with later updates.



Unveiling of the War Memorial  
early 1920's



The war memorial today



Unveiling of the War Memorial  
early 1920's

**In Honoured Memory of  
The men of this Parish  
Who fell in the Great War 1914 – 1918**

:


<b>Baker</b>	<b>Ernest (Charles Ernest)</b>	Private Ernest Baker, 66359 12th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) formerly 39982 Northamptonshire Regiment, enlisted Ipswich was killed in action on 31 July 1917 France/Flanders. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Menin Gate at Eiper and on the Belstead war memorial. His parents were Charles Baker, born 1850 at Snailwell, Cambs and Ann Maria, born 1850 at Weeting Norfolk. In 1891 the family were living on the main road at Belstead and near the windmill, Charles was a gardener. Charles Ernest was their eldest child and he had two younger sisters, Isabel and Victoria. Charles Ernest Baker was an apprentice wheelwright (very probably to Thomas Josselyn) at the time the 1901 census was taken; his mother was a widow.
<b>Brooks</b>	<b>George</b>	Private George Brooks, 27270, 7th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). Enlisted Ipswich was killed in action on 28 April 1917 France/Flanders. Born 1890 Belstead He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, France and on the Belstead war memorial. Husband of Mrs Emily Brooks. George Brooks married Emily Steward Samford district September Qty 1915. (Emily Brooks, widow, married Reginald Norfolk Samford district March qtr 1921 - Reginald Norfolk was schoolmaster at Wherstead). <i>It has not been possible to identify George Brooks' family - he may have been the George Isaac Brooks, son of Isaac Brooks (a gamekeeper) and Emily nee Southgate who appears to have been born in 1897 - did he, perhaps, add a few years to his age to join up?</i>
<b>Burton</b>	<b>George Ethelbert Earnshaw</b>	Lieutenant George Burton 4th Battalion Suffolk Regiment, died of wounds 16 July 1916, he was buried at Heilly Cemetery, Mericourt L'Abbe, France and commemorated on the Belstead war memorial. Born Ipswich 1892. EADT 20 July 1916 - news item: Lt George Burton was the younger son of Mr and Mrs Bunnell Burton of Belstead Road, Ipswich and soon after the war broke out, he joined the Suffolk Territorial Battalion but only recently went out to the front. Prior to the outbreak of war, he was engaged in the business of Messrs Burton, Son and Saunders. He was married and leaves a widow and a young son only a few weeks old. He was educated at Cheam in Surrey and at Eton and before entering upon his business career at the Manchester branch, spent a year in France. George E E Burton married Frances White, Ticehurst District September qtr 1914.

<b>Creasy</b>	<b>Charles</b>	Corporal 43145, 7 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regiment. Killed in action 12 October 1916 France/Flanders. Formerly 845 Suffolk Cyclists Regiment. Born 1890 at Kettleburgh, son of Mr and Mrs Arthur Creasy of 30 Belstead. Commemorated on Thiepval Memorial and on the Belstead war memorial.
<b>Creasy</b>	<b>Ernest William</b>	Private 79167 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bt Royal Fusiliers. Died of wounds 18 November 1918, age 18. Born 1900 Hatcheson, son of Arthur and Caroline Creasey of Belstead. Buried at Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, Pas de Calais, France. Brother of above Charles Creasy.
<b>Death</b>	<b>Henry</b>	Guardsman 15198, 2nd Battalion Grenadier Guards. Killed in action 8 November 1914, Ypres area, age 27. Born Prittlewell Essex, enlisted Southend. Buried in New Irish Farm Cemetery, near Eiper and commemorated on the Belstead war memorial and also on the Southend on Sea County Borough Roll of Honour at Priory Park, Southend, Essex war memorial. <i>There is no apparent link to Belstead, further research is required.</i>
<b>Gill</b>	<b>Albert</b>	Private 88049, Royal Army Medical Corps. Killed in action 21 March 1918 France/Flanders. Born 1887 Belstead son of Walter and Charlotte Gill; husband of Mrs Amy Gill. Enlisted Ipswich, lived Belstead. Commemorated on Arras Memorial, France and Belstead War Memorial. Albert Gill married Amy Bullard Samford district December qtr 1917
<b>Gill</b>	<b>Henry</b>	Private 1383, 4th Battalion Suffolk Regiment. Killed in action 21 March 1915 France/Flanders. Possibly serving in Army prior to outbreak of war. Born 1885 Belstead son of Walter and Charlotte Gill. Enlisted Ipswich. Commemorated on Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France and on the Belstead war memorial.
<b>Hazelton</b>	<b>Alfred</b>	Private 3889, 4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. Killed in action 18 August 1916 France/Flanders. Born Belstead son of Alfred and Ada Hazelton of 41 Belstead. Enlisted Ipswich. Commemorated on Thiepval Memorial, Somme, France and on Belstead war memorial.

<b>Johnson</b>	<b>Ernest James</b>	Private 29711, 4th Battalion, Bedfordshire Regiment. Killed in action 27 March 1918, France/Flanders. Born 1887 Sproughton son of Joseph and Hannah Johnson. Wife of Florence Ada Johnson of Reading Room Cottage, Sproughton. Among his siblings were two sets of twins – William (who died soon after birth) and Arthur born in 1891 and George and William born 1893. Enlisted Bury St Edmunds, lived Belstead. Commemorated on the Arras memorial, France and on the Belstead and Sproughton war memorials. Also commemorated (with his brother George who was also killed in action in France) on his parents' gravestone in Sproughton Churchyard (at East end of Churchyard, between church and river and near a Horse Chestnut tree) Ernest Johnson married Florence Whitman Ipswich September qtr 1913.
<b>Knock</b>	<b>George Alec</b>	Private 19743, 10th Battalion, Gloucestershire Regiment. Died of wounds 7 April 1918 France/Flanders. Enlisted Cheltenham. Buried in Suzanne No 3 Military Cemetery and commemorated on the Belstead war memorial.
<b>Martin</b>	<b>Arthur James</b>	Private 6450, 2nd Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, formerly 5186 Suffolk Regiment. Killed in action 29 April 1915 France/Flanders. Born 1881 Shotley, son of George and Emma Martin. Enlisted Ipswich. Commemorated on the Le Touret Memorial, France and on the Belstead war memorial.
<b>Pilbrow</b>	<b>Frank William</b>	Rifleman S/11444, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Rifle Brigade (The Prince Consort's Own). Died of wounds 28 June 1916 France/Flanders. Born 1885 Henley, Suffolk, son of James and Emma Pilbrow. Enlisted Ipswich, lived Belstead. EADT 13 July 1916 – Deaths whilst on service: Pilbrow – on 28 June 1916 Frank William Pilbrow died of wounds in France. Second son of James and Emma Pilbrow of Belstead, age 31. Buried in Mailly Wood Cemetery, France and commemorated on the Belstead war memorial.
<b>Southgate</b>	<b>Albert</b>	Private Suffolk Regiment. No further information currently available - but was possibly 'Bertie Hazelton Southgate' the son of George and Ethel (nee Hazelton) Southgate, born 1898 at Belstead.
<b>Southgate</b>	<b>(Alfred) William</b>	Private 3995, 4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment. Died 18 January 1917 France/Flanders. Born 1890 Washbrook son of Oliver and Jane Southgate. EADT 23 January 1917 - Deaths Whilst on Service: On 18 January at 12 General Hospital, Rouen, France, Private A W Southgate, Suffolk Regiment, eldest and beloved son of Mr and Mrs Oliver Southgate of Belstead, in his 28 <sup>th</sup> year. Enlisted Ipswich. Buried in the St Sever Cemetery, France and commemorated on the Belstead war memorial.

**Their name liveth for evermore**


**Belstead born men not named on village memorial**


<b>Hardwick</b>	<b>Walter</b>	<p>Private 201349, 4th Battalion, Suffolk Regiment, formerly 4079 Suffolk Regiment . Killed in action 23 April 1917 France/Flanders. Born 1887 Belstead son of Charles and Emily Hardwick (who lived at Pann Cottages, Wherstead from about 1888). Enlisted Bury St Edmunds, lived Wherstead. Walter had his photograph taken on 17 April 1917 when on leave – six days later he was killed in action. Commemorated on the Arras memorial and on Wherstead memorial.</p> 
<b>Hazelton</b>	<b>Frederick</b>	<p>Private 235119, 2nd/7th Worcestershire Regiment. Died 18 August 1917 France/Flanders. Born 1886 Belstead son of Joseph and Amelia Hazelton. Buried at White House Cemetery, St Jean Les Eiper and commemorated on Wherstead memorial.</p>
<b>Hood</b>	<b>Alfred Thomas</b>	<p>Gunner 93731, 155<sup>th</sup> Heavy Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died of wounds 17 October 1917 France/Flanders. Born 1883 Belstead son of Thomas and Eliza Hood (Thomas Hood was one of the village carriers); wife of Mrs Elsie Hood of 25 Belstead; Alfred Thomas Hood married Elsie Maude Clarke at Belstead 1 May 1909. Enlisted Ipswich. Buried at Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Belgium and commemorated on the Tuddenham St Martin war memorial.</p>
<b>Norfolk</b>	<b>John</b>	<p>Private 21153, 9th Battalion, Essex Regiment. Killed in action 3 July 1916 France/Flanders. Born 1887 Belstead son of John and Rachel Norfolk and the grandson of Thomas and Rachel Pinner who lived at 'Charity Cottages' Belstead. Enlisted and resident Colchester. He is Commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial and on the Colchester War Memorial.</p>
<b>Rumsey</b>	<b>Frank</b>	<p>Corporal 203658 1<sup>st</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment. Died 5 October 1918 France. Born 1891 Belstead, son of William and Eliza Rumsey. Buried in Beaurevoir Communal Cemetery Military Extension and commemorated on the Copdock and Washbrook war memorial.</p>

**Not commemorated on the Belstead war memorial but  
Information included on parents' gravestones in Belstead churchyard**

<b>Mason</b>	<b>Wilfred Howard</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Royal Engineers, eighth son of George Claver and Loetitia Maria Mason, husband of Gladys Mason, killed in action at the crossing of the Dialah River, Mesopotamia 9 March 1917 age 32 years. CWGC information: 72 <sup>nd</sup> Field Company, husband of Gladys Mason, of "Choisy," Probus, Cornwall. Buried in grave XX G.13, Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery.
<b>Mason</b>	<b>Kenneth Ralph</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt 4 <sup>th</sup> Battalion Suffolk Regt. Youngest son of George Calver and Loetitia Maria Mason who was killed in action and buried at St Vaast's Post, France, 21 June 1915, age 27 years.

**Also of those who fell in the Second Great War 1939-1945**

<b>Green</b>	<b>William</b>	<p>PO/X3517 Royal Marines. Died 25 November 1941 on HMS Barham, age 22. Son of Frederick and Jane (nee Southgate) Green. Commemorated on Panel 59, column 1 Portsmouth Naval Memorial. William Green was one of the 862 men killed on the 31,100 ton battleship HMS Barham which was out on a sortie with other ships from Alexandria. German U-boat U-331 fired a spread of 4 torpedoes towards the group, 3 of which hit HMS Barham's port side causing it to list heavily and spread fire towards the ammunition storages. Only 2 and a half minutes passed from the torpedo impact until the ship rolled onto its side and the aft magazine exploded killing 862 out of its roughly 1260 man complement. HMS Barham:</p>  <p>(Additional information: Fred and Jane Green lived at No 32 Belstead, Fred was a milkman; they also had a daughter, Winifred. Jane was the sister of Frank Southgate. William Green was a first cousin of William Southgate, below)</p>
--------------	----------------	--

<b>Southgate</b>	<b>William (William Alfred)</b>	RMB/X490 Musician, Royal Marines Band. Died 19 December 1941 on HMS Neptune, age 24. Son of Percy Oliver and Ellen Miriam Southgate of Belstead. Commemorated on Panel 60, column 1, Portsmouth Naval Memorial. The Royal Naval Cruiser HMS Neptune was sunk by mines in Libyan waters on the night of 19/20 December 1941 with the loss of 764 seamen. For more details see <a href="http://www.hmsneptune.com">www.hmsneptune.com</a> which has a picture of Royal Marine bandsmen, taken in July 1941.
<b>Warren</b>	<b>Albert (Albert William)</b>	14520010 Private, 1 <sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Norfolk Regiment. Killed in action 1 March 1945 in Germany age 21. Son of William and Alice Warren of Belstead. Buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Germany (48H.14). Albert attended Belstead village school.  A school photo taken Circa 1933   See last page for information on the fighting in Reichswald Forest area in February 1945.

**A 2<sup>nd</sup> World War soldier with connections to Belstead, not originally named on the Belstead War Memorial – but his name added was to the memorial in 2013**

<b>Wilkinson</b>	<b>Harry Stanley</b>	Gunner 905167, 67 Medium Regt Royal Artillery. Died 9 January 1943. Son of Harry Stanley and Alice Wilkinson, husband of Violet (nee Tye) Wilkinson of Belstead. Buried at Caserta War Cemetery, Italy.
------------------	----------------------	---

**Other conflict details**

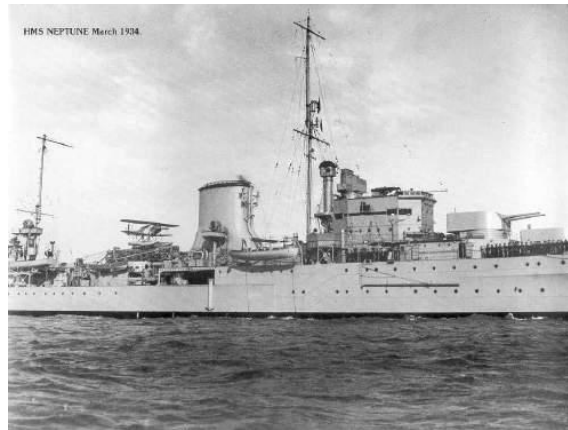
<b>Smith</b>	<b>Samuel</b>	On gravestone of his parents (Samuel and Harriet Smith) in Belstead churchyard: "Samuel Smith, their second son, died in Crimea 11 December 1854". (Location: righthand side of churchyard, threequarters of the distance from the road to the end of the churchyard, near the hedge)
--------------	---------------	---

**A 2<sup>nd</sup> WW soldier with connections to Belstead was Albert Lloyd (known to his family as James). He was the grandson of Walter and Annie Grimwood:**

<b>Lloyd</b>	<b>Albert</b>	Private 5830612 Albert Cecil Lloyd. Died whilst a prisoner of war on 3 October 1943 age 24 Grave ref 8-B-12 Kanchanaburi War Cemetery Burma (original burial in a small cemetery, re-buried here 8 February 1946 in a CWGC maintained war cemetery)
--------------	---------------	---

# The loss of HMS NEPTUNE in 1941

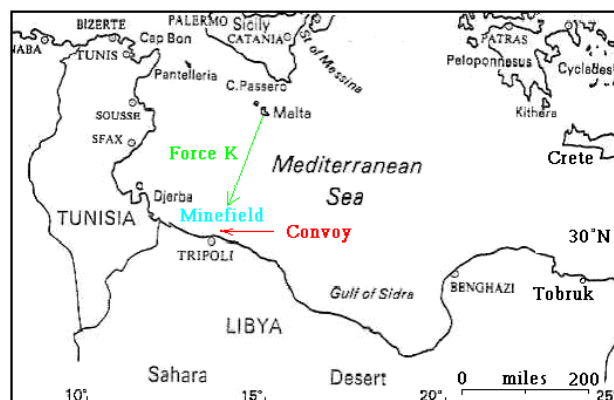
On the night of 19 December 1941, there occurred one of the most extensive but least known naval disasters of the Second World War. The Cruiser HMS Neptune ran into an uncharted minefield in the Mediterranean off Tripoli, and sank with the loss of 764 officers and men. Just one man was rescued by an Italian torpedo boat, after 5 days in the water.



HMS Neptune, commanded by Captain Rory O'Connor, was leading 'Force K', a Cruiser raiding squadron. Their task was to destroy German and Italian convoys carrying troops and supplies to Libya, in support of Rommel's army in North Africa. On the afternoon of December 18th the squadron was despatched from Malta to intercept an important enemy convoy bound for Tripoli. The three cruisers of 'Force K', the *Neptune*, *Aurora* and *Penelope*, supported by the destroyers *Kandahar*, *Lance*, *Lively* and *Havock*, were steaming south, in single line ahead on a dark, stormy night when at 0106 am, the *Neptune* struck a mine. The *Aurora* her next astern, hauled out to starboard but only a minute later she too exploded a mine; two minutes later an explosion buffeted *Penelope's* port side abreast the bridge. The *Neptune* going full astern hit another mine, which wrecked her steering gear and propellers and brought her to a standstill. The cruiser force had run into a minefield in a depth of water and at a distance from land which made it utterly unexpected.

## MAP - MALTA to TRIPOLI

This map shows the route taken by Force K on December 18th 1941.



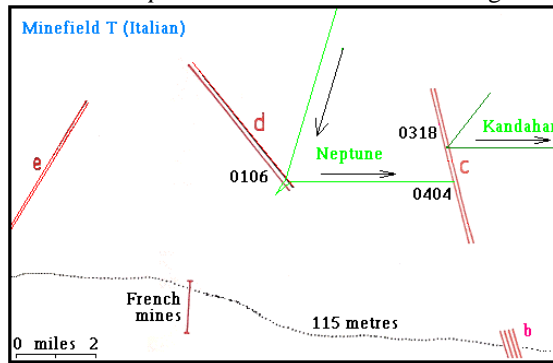
The *Aurora* contrived to turn and steam out of the field without further catastrophe, followed by the *Penelope*; Captain Agnew, in command of *Aurora* considered the situation in all its dire gravity. They were 15 miles from Tripoli and it was nearly dawn. The damage to *Aurora* had reduced her maximum speed to 10 knots, and his duty was to get her as far from the enemy coast as he could before daylight. The risk of sending another ship into the minefield to tow the *Neptune* out was hardly justified but the need to save life made it imperative.

The destroyers *Kandahar* and *Lively* then entered the minefield in an attempt to reach the *Neptune* and tow her out.



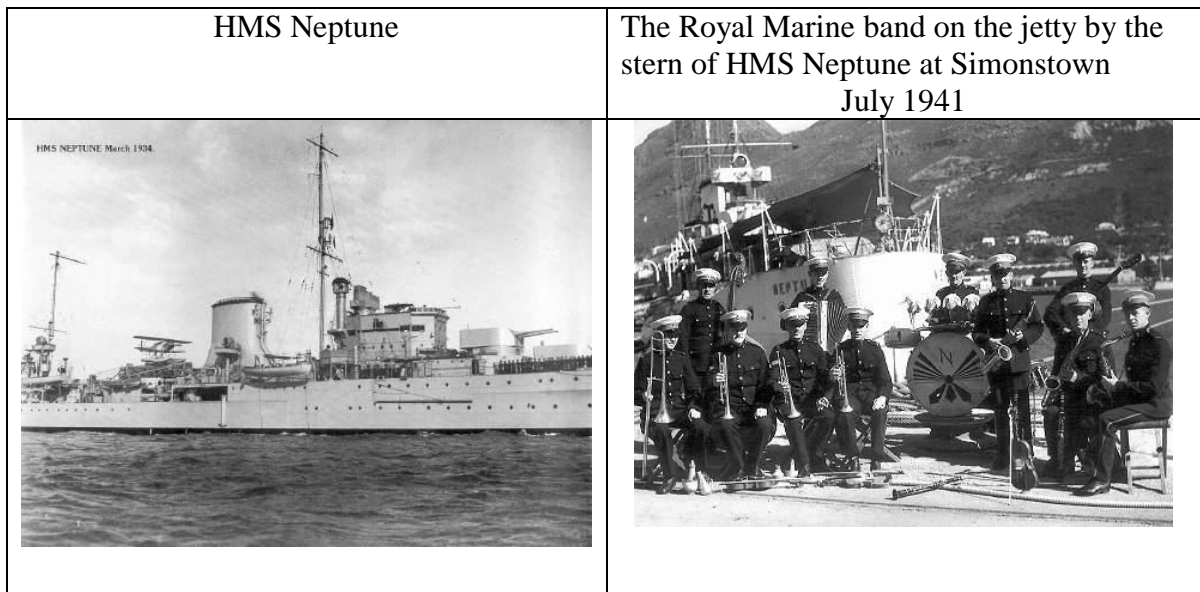
Captain Nicholl was also cautiously edging the *Penelope* towards her when at 0318 the *Kandahar* struck a mine. Captain O'Connor of the *Neptune* flashed a warning : "Keep away". At 0403 she struck a fourth mine which exploded amidships. This was more than her hull could take; she slowly turned over and sank.

Italian Minefield "T" showing detail of Minelanes "d" and "c" and the drift of *Neptune* and *Kandahar* after hitting the mines.



The Captain of the crippled *Kandahar*, made his last signal to the *Penelope*. "Suggest you should go" he said bluntly. "I clearly cannot help you" replied Captain Nicholl, "God be with you"; and to the *Lively* "course 010<sup>0</sup> speed 15 knots."

The dawn found *Kandahar* still afloat but submerged from abaft the funnel. Of possible survivors from the *Neptune*, nothing could be seen. All day they waited and with the darkness the sea rose. It carried the *Kandahar* clear of the minefield, but she was listing ominously. Then at 4 a.m. the destroyer *Jaguar*, sent to the rescue from Malta, appeared out of the darkness. With *Jaguar* positioning herself upwind of the *Kandahar*, the ship's company jumped in the water, and as the *Jaguar* drifted slowly down towards them a total of 8 officers and 170 crew were pulled out, but 73 men had perished. With dawn breaking, the *Jaguar* fired a torpedo into the *Kandahar* to sink her and set out back to Malta.



## THE SURVIVOR'S STORY

The one *Neptune* survivor, Able Seaman Norman Walton, spent 18 months in Italian prisoner of war camps before being released in 1943. On his return, he was closely questioned about the sinking and his story was this:

"We had been at action stations since 8 p.m., when just after midnight there was an explosion off our starboard bow. The captain stopped engines and went astern but we hit another mine, blowing the screws and most of the stern away. Then we were hit abaft the funnel. We were ordered up top and had a bad list to port and were down in the stern. *Aurora* had also been mined and badly damaged and *Kandahar* came up to take us in tow.

"With seven others, I was asked to go forward to help with the tow, but *Kandahar* then hit a mine and slewed off. Then we hit a fourth mine and we were lifted up and dropped back again. I got the Petty Officer of the forecastle from beneath the anchor chain but he had broken his back. Four of us Price, Middleton, Quinn and me, climbed down the anchor. They jumped in but I wanted somewhere to swim to, and not to just float around, and when I saw a Carley raft I jumped in and swam to it.

"I took the tow rope back to Middleton, who had no lifejacket and when we got back to the raft it was crowded - about 30 people on and around it. We saw the ship capsize and sink and gave her a cheer as she went down. We picked up Captain O'Connor who was clinging to what looked like an anchor buoy and he and three other officers finished up on a cork raft attached to ours. The sea was thick with oil and most of us had swallowed a lot of it. A few died around us that night and at daylight there were 16 of us left. The weather was pretty rough and two officers tried to swim towards the *Kandahar* but they never made it.

"Three more ratings died and we picked up an oar and I tried to steer the raft but could make no headway. By the fourth day there were only four of us left including the Captain who died that night. I was in the water for three days before being able to find room aboard the raft. Most of the lads just gave up the ghost but I was very fit because of playing so much sport and this is probably why I survived. I had a smashed leg and by Christmas Eve on the 5th day, there was only Price and myself left. I saw an aircraft; waved to it and an hour later an Italian torpedo boat came alongside and threw me a line. I collapsed when I got on board and woke up on Christmas Day in a Tripoli hospital. They told me Price was dead.

"I was totally blind throughout Christmas because of the oil and was praying it was only temporary. On Boxing Day I got my sight back and looked in a mirror. My tongue was swollen to twice its size and my nose spread across my face, which was black from the oil and from exposure. Still, apart from my broken leg I was almost back to normal by New Year's Day, when I was put on a ship bound for Italy and full of German and Italian troops going on leave.

"I spent 15 months in various prisoner-of-war camps until told I was going to be repatriated and arrived home in June 1943. The Italians had told me I was the only *Neptune* survivor, but I could never believe that until the Navy confirmed it for me in 1943. Sometimes even now it is hard to take in."

## **THE BOARD OF INQUIRY**

A Board of Inquiry was held within a week of the disaster, on Wednesday 24th December 1941, on board HMS Ajax at Malta and after taking evidence from the witnesses the Board reported back to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean on 8th January 1942.

# The Daily Telegraph

and Morning Post

LONDON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1945

## BRITISH CLEAR FOREST ON WAY TO RHINE

From CHRISTOPHER BUCKLEY, Daily  
Telegraph Special Correspondent IN THE  
REICHSWALD, Tuesday.

THE whole of the Reichswald [State Forest] has now been cleared by Welsh and Scottish troops of the Canadian First Army under Gen. Crerar's command.

There was some heavy fighting at close quarters on Sunday, in which Scottish troops attacked the enemy with the bayonet - one of the very few authentic bayonet charges of the whole campaign - and drove him from a clearing in which he was attempting to establish himself.

But, apart from this, the enemy has yielded up this natural barrier more easily than we were justified in expecting.

The Reichswald is a forest of close-growing fir trees about nine miles long by six broad. It is situated on a low hogsback of ground that forms the watershed at this point between the Maas and the Rhine rivers.

It is traversed by a number of broad rides usually wide enough for two, columns of transport to pass abreast. In places one comes upon sudden unexpected clearings which provide a perfect field of fire to a defending force entrenched within the further fringe of trees.

### CLEARING UP SNIPERS

Our troops first secured these main rides. They thereby obtained routes along which guns could be moved. Then they fanned out on either side to clear up the isolated groups of snipers among the trees.

The Siegfried Line here is no more serious an affair than that sector of it which I saw on the forward side of the forest on Saturday, the second day of our offensive.

It is ridiculous to call it a "line" at all. It is just a number of bunkers with a single shallow connecting trench line.

Obviously no serious defensive line would be planned to run slap through the middle of a forest as this one does; for the defenders' field of fire is severely hampered.

By yesterday considerable reinforcements had arrived in the battle area and the enemy launched his first serious counter-attacks. They were directed into the Reichswald against the sector held by the Welsh.