

H G Daynes whose name appears on Harlovians War Memorial WW2 was in class Va with me and sat at an adjacent desk. A very decent and amusing young man of great promise, he left early - possibly before he was sixteen to join the Merchant Navy as an apprentice officer.

He came back to the school in uniform just once after he joined his ship and I recall that we had a long chat about his ship and its captain. We were all entranced by what he told us about preparations for his first long sea voyage. Just weeks later Headmaster Dames came into class one morning to tell us that Daynes' ship had been torpedoed and sunk and that he'd been lost at sea!

We never knew what happened but just recently by searching the internet I unearthed details of this sad old story. Daynes was the first of our class to be killed in the war but I can remember others who met Daynes in our classroom that afternoon in 1940 who also died in the war. From your list of Old Harlovians I can only identify Powers who will have memories of Daynes although there must be others who will be interested to read this. Here's his story.

The following article which was published in the March 2009 edition of Sea Breezes has been brought to our attention by Pat Browne and Ivor Little. It is the story of the sinking of the ss Bradfyne and Cadet Paul Bucholtz #911; 1937-38 a survivor.

CONVOY SC-11 AND.The ss "BRADFYNE"

British convoy SC-11 (slow convoy) – loaded to the gunnels with material for war-torn Britain in real peril of being starved into submission by Nazi Germany – attacked by a killer U-boat on a dark and stormy November night.

Montreal, Canada, October 1940. Just before the mighty Saint Lawrence River became closed by winter ice, the 4,740 ton British freighter Bradfyne (Reardon Smith Line, Bidford) was loaded with 5,000 tons of grain bound for Belfast.

The crew of 43 was made up of English, Welsh, Scots, Irish, one Finn, one American, one South African, and nine from the East of Suez – the latter were firemen and stokers, for the Bradfyne, although built as late as 1928 in West Hartlepool, was a coal-burner, almost 400 feet long and classified as medium size.

Sydney, Cape Breton, at the mouth of the Saint Lawrence on the North coast of Nova Scotia, was one of the gathering places for Allied convoys before facing the storms and U-Boats of the North Atlantic. Bradfyne sailed from there on 12th November 1940, in Convoy SC – 11 with 37 other Merchant ships.

Commander Alan K-Scott-Moncrief was Captain of the 282 foot Royal Navy sloop HMS

Enchantress, which, together with three destroyers of the Royal Canadian Navy, Ottawa, Saquenay and Skeena, and the corvette Bluebell, formed the convoy escort. Vice Admiral F M Austin was the convoy commodore sailing in the merchant ship ss Landilo, and he had the unenviable task of trying to maintain sailing discipline ~ ships' positions in columns and rows; spaces between ships night and day; speed; stragglers. Standard convoy formation dictated a 1,000 yards gap between columns, and 500 yards between front and back of the next ship in each column. As the average period of a transatlantic voyage was two weeks, the Commodore got very little sleep: his ship was at the front of the centre column.

The weather was fine, and there had been absolutely no contact with enemy forces until the afternoon of Friday, 22nd November. By then, the convoy was approaching the last leg of open ocean before turning into the comparative safety of the Irish Sea. Now the wind increased, and by evening it was blowing a full gale with winds from the West; great waves and horizontal, torrential rain battered the ships.

In the previous comparatively calm nights they had sailed in total darkness. Now, with zero visibility in the black, screaming storm, some of the ships made what could be interpreted as a fatal error - they broke the rules – they turned on their navigation lights so as to see each others' positions.

At 10.30pm, the convoy made an alteration of course. As hindsight would prove, this also was to help bring about a fatal occurrence in that it steered them directly into the path of a wolf of the wartime Atlantic Ocean, and the wolf had seen the lights!

Sliding through the black waters was Kapitanleutenant Joachim Shepke, one of Hitler's aces, in the submarine U-100. This was Shepke's third patrol, and already he had sunk twenty allied merchant ships and a destroyer (HMS Fury). He was 28 yrs old, blond, handsome and daring; a Nazi idol, and holder of the Knights Cross with Oak Leaves for bravery. Shepke's favourite 'modus operandi' was to locate a convoy, tail it while sending reports for other UBoats to home in on, then surface at night and pick off his victims one-by-one, right under the noses of the escorts. The low, black silhouette of a U-boat, even at close quarters, was

virtually invisible in the dark of night.

Some thought that submarines were unable to operate successfully in very stormy weather, but at 23:30 a torpedo from U-100 slammed into No 2 Hold on the port side of the Bradfyne, about one hundred feet from the bow, and it immediately took on a heavy list to port. The bridge structure was virtually destroyed, but there was no smoke or flames. Because of the 15-20 degree list to port, the starboard lifeboat could not be lowered, so the only other lifeboat (big enough for 30 men), on the port side, was ordered to stand-by by First officer Philip Evans. This was the boat-station of two of the four apprentices (trainee deck officers) on board, and they got into the lifeboat together with another sailor and lowered away upon the orders of the Captain, Rupert Vanner.

On reaching the water and steadying the lifeboat, they expected other members of the crew to join them. But the waves were running extremely high, and the rise and fall of the ship and the lifeboat caused the holding gear of the falls to unlock, allowing the boat to swing free.

As the foaming swells lifted the lifeboat to the height of the deck railings, another Able-Seaman jumped in. The with the Bradfyne listing over even more to port, the lifeboat drifted away with the wind and tide, with no engine or sail to power it , and not enough men to man the oars.

From their wildly rocking perch in the open lifeboat, the four men could see Third Officer Stanley Lewarne letting off rockets and the Captain signalling with an Aldis lamp to other ships that they were in distress. But nobody came to their aid.

At the official inquiry on 14th December, 1940, 18 year-old Senior Apprentice Paul Buchholtz (from South Africa) told how they had seen the light of flares in the direction of the Bradfyne and thought it could be that the destroyer escorts were around the ship rescuing their shipmates.

The lifeboat with the four survivors (Apprentices Paul Buchholtz and Terrence O'Neill, Ordinary Seaman Tomas Inpherry and Able Seaman William Walker) drifted for three days and three nights in the stormy, freezing Atlantic, in constant danger of being swamped;

stabilised only by a sea anchor and constantly bailing for their lives. On the fourth day they were picked up by the Norwegian ship Norse King, sailing in convoy SL-54, where their frostbitten limbs were attended to and they were treated with great kindness by the Norwegians. They were at last put ashore in Belfast on November 25th.

Apprentice Terence O'Neill, although only 18 years-old, had already survived a previous torpedo attack while serving on the SS Jersey City that was sunk by another U-Boat ace, Kapitanleutenant Otto Kretchmer in U-99 on 31st July, 1940, just four months earlier.

On the same night, and just an hour after the Bradfyne was hit, another explosion rent the air as another torpedo from U-100 smashed into the British freighter Justitia carrying steel and lumber. The corvette Bluebell picked up 25 survivors from the sea of the 39 crew on board. The torpedo had hit amidships, probably ending the lives of the engine-room staff immediately.

By now Shepke's radio "fix" had alerted U-93 to join the fray but, unaccountably, it failed to score.

Next, in the middle hours of this dark, stormy night, the Norwegian ship Bruse was torpedoed and sunk; then the Norwegian Freighter Salonica, carrying pit-props for Britain's vital coal mines went down. The hunter on each occasion was Shepke.

Escort destroyers Saquenay and Ottawa were ordered to pick up survivors. The destroyer Skeena had been absent from her convoy position for some hours, and was ordered to fire star-shell to indicate her location. She was now several miles to the rear of the convoy, hunting another U-Boat (possibly U-93?). She attacked with depth charges, with no apparent effect, but picked up a boatload of survivors. Enchantress was also busy recovering survivors.

And so, the battle raged all night, and at 7am on the morning of the 23rd November, with the light of dawn not yet showing, another tremendous crash, shook the convoy as the British Leise Maersk was torpedoed, yet again by Shepke in U-100. The crew were unable to lower the lifeboats, but eight managed to climb into a life-raft, and were later picked up – 17 others

died.

The convoy was now within 200 miles of the coast of Ireland, and the weather moderated to Gale Force 6. But the attack had not moderated, and that evening at 2000 hours, once again in pitch blackness, the Dutch ship Bassum, carrying grain, was torpedoed and sunk.

Shepke was indeed the constant and determined assailant, and very typical of the tough UBoat commanders. British air and naval support was now just 100 miles away, so, with his total bag a massive 25,000 tons of shipping and vital war material sunk over just two nights and one day, Shepke retired from the scene.

However fate had not retired from the scene and in the early hours of 24th November the British Alma Dawson struck a German mine which blew off her bow. The crew took to the life boats; there were no casualties.

The surviving 30 ships of convoy SC-11 limped into port on the morning of Sunday, 24th November 1940, together with the shocked and shaken survivors of the sunken ships, rescued from certain death by escort vessels despite the atrocious weather.

But what happened to the rest of the crew of the Bradfyne? All four survivors testified as to what they had witnessed as their lifeboat was carried away by the storm-driven sea; as Mrs O'Neill, mother of Apprentice Terence O'Neill, wrote to Doris Evans, wife of Chief Officer Phillip Evans, and Apprentice Paul Buchholtz.

"We saw Captain Vanner and, I think, all the crew, judging by the size of the crowd, on deck after the explosion. Being as the torpedo hit in the No 2 hold, it was possible that all the engine-room staff managed to survive and make it up to the deck, but it was too dark to identify anyone.

There was no panic, everyone was cool and calm, just waiting there quietly. There were two rafts left on the ship. We were quite helpless to manoeuvre and lifeboat and were soon swept away. We never saw the ship again." The remaining 39 members of the crew were never seen again.

but –

- The survivors had seen people on Bradfyne shooting off alarm rockets and star shell, and signalling with lamps to other ships close by.
- The ship had radio and two radio officers.
- Some survivors from all other ships attacked had been picked up in spite of the storm.
- The Bradfyne was already listing heavily to port when the survivors last saw her; did she suddenly capsize – roll over on her stricken portside and sink before the heroic escort vessels could find her in the storm-driven blackness?

Or did that equally heroic crew of the Bradfyne succumb at last to hypothermia and drowning in the bitterly cold North Atlantic Ocean, as would many more before the *Battle of the Atlantic* was finally won? They have no graves, but they are remembered with pride * SB

CONFIDENTIAL

Report of and interview with Mr P R N Buchholtz, Apprentice on the SS BRADFYNE

Shipping casualty section, trade division 14th December 1940

Mr Buchholtz

We were bound from Sydney, CB, to Belfast with a cargo of 4,500 tons of maize approximately, and were armed with a 4" and one Hotchkiss gun; we were not flying an ensign at the time of the attack. The confidential books were on board at the time, but I do not know what happened to them. The number of crew, including the master, was 43, of whom four were picked up, but I do not know what happened to the rest of the crew.

We left Sydney, CB on 12th November formed up in a convoy of 38 ships, our position being No.93. At the beginning of the voyage the weather was good, but after seven days we ran into bad weather, two or three ships dropping astern of the convoy as they were unable to keep up the speed.

In the evening the Commodore ordered two ships out of the convoy as they were showing lights. These ships were No 72, the Panaolus and the Nicolas Angolas, No 73 in the convoy. No 51 of the convoy the Henri Mory changed places with No 53 the Atlantian, but as she was unable to keep up with the convoy the Henri Mory dropped astern.

Nothing further occurred until 22nd November, at 21.30 GMT, we were struck by a torpedo on the port side, forward of the bridge by No 2 hold, about 100 feet from the bow, I do not know our exact position when we were torpedoed but our position at 2000 had been 55° 14'N. Our speed at the time was 6½ knots and the wind force 6 or 7 with a very choppy sea with huge waves. There was no flame or smoke, but all the superstructure and the bridge alleyway was broken and buckled. The ship listed immediately to port and we were unable to lower the starboard lifeboat. The Chief Officer ordered us to stand by the port lifeboat, and I got into this with a sailor as this was my boat station. The Captain gave the order to lower the boat, and just as this was being done the other apprentice jumped into the boat. By this time the Bradfyne was listing 15-20 degrees to port. Just as the boat was about halfway down a huge wave struck the boat, unlocking the falls and carrying away the painter. The boat remained against the ship's side with three of us in it. Another AB jumped into the boat when she was on top of a wave and about level with the railings in deck. We drifted rapidly astern and never had a chance to do anything and we never saw the ship again.

About an hour later we saw the light of flares from the directions in which the convoy had gone – we thought they might have been fired by destroyers round the Bradfyne. Before we lost sight of the Bradfyne we saw the Third Mate on the bridge letting off rockets and the Captain was signalling to some ship as we saw him with the lamp. The weather was very rough and the wind at gale force, so we were unable to do anything except lie to the sea anchor, even then we were continually shipping water. I tried hauling in the sea anchor and lying beam on to the sea, as being so light [only four in a lifeboat for 30] I thought we might be more comfortable, but the reverse was the case as we shipped several heavy seas. After this we streamed the sea anchor together with two buckets which we found much more satisfactory.

On Sunday morning, 23rd November, we sighted a ship but she did not see us: later in the day we sighted a flying boat coming directly towards us, but when it was about two miles off it turned and went away, although we lighted flares, fastening them to a boat hook and holding

them in the air. Just before dark we saw another flying boat, but it never saw us.

After we had been afloat for three days and three nights a Norwegian ship, the Norse King, picked us up and landed us at Belfast

No	DAYNES, HENRY GORDON LECHMERE	Apprentice	22/11/1940	17	Merchant Navy	United Kingdom	Panel 18.	TOWER HILL MEMORIAL
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SS BRADFYNE

Cargo ship Bradfyne, 4,740grt, (W. Reardon Smith & Sons Ltd) had sailed from Montreal with a cargo of grain for Belfast and joined up with the 33 ship Convoy SC-11 which sailed from Sydney, Cape Breton on the 9th November 1940. On the 22 November the Bradfyne was torpedoed by U-100 in the Atlantic South-East of Rockall and sank in position 55° 04N 12° 15W. The Captain and 37 crew were lost. 4 crew were rescued by the Norwegian ship Norske King and landed at Belfast.

Rupert Greville Vanner, Master, Merchant Navy. Rupert was Master of SS Bradfyne, a Bideford registered vessel. Bradfyne had sailed from Montreal with a cargo of grain for Belfast and joined up with the 33 ship Convoy SC-11 which sailed from Sydney, Cape Breton on 9 November 1940. On 22 November Bradfyne was torpedoed by U-100 in the Atlantic South-East of Rockall and sank. Rupert and 37 of his crew were lost, and four were rescued by the Norwegian ship Norske King and landed at Belfast. Rupert was 37 years old, and is commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London.

My Grandfather Donal MORGAN from CEFN CRIBWR, BRIDGEND was an apprentice officer on the BRADFYNE, best friends with Idwal WILLIAMS. He was due to be on the BRADFYNE as usual when it set sail but he broke his arm on deck and had to go to hospital instead. Isn't fate an amazing thing? They actually came to his parents address to advise them that he was dead - lost at sea. He answered the door to them!

MORGAN Donal Suddenly, at his home, on Wednesday Jan 13 2010, Don, of West Avenue, Cefn Cribwr

Master VANNER as my Grandfather has stated on numerous occasions did not like sailing with the convoys and instead used to lose the convoy and make his own way to the destination with no escort at all.

My Grandfather still lives in CEFN CRIBWR and I see him every week. Although this was an old thread, I can ask him any questions regarding the crew etc.

Harlovians War Memorial WW2

Bradbury, J.E

Jackson, J

Brazier, J.B.R

Kirby, E.J

Compton, P.A

McMichael, L.K

Crozier, F.C

Malbert, W.J

Daynes, H.G

Maynard, G.C

Gilpin, G.V

Meek, D.J

Hodges, J.C

Minett, H

Hosey, J

Morgan-Gray, H

Bradfyne 1928 23rd Nov. 1940 torpedoed and sunk by U.100 in 55.04N 12.15W. 4,740

SS Bradfyne, steamship, ADAM, William, Marine, PLY/19270, (President III, O/P), MPK , KIA 22 November 1940, age 42 (He would have been the ship's gunner - she was a DEMS)

Bradfyne was sunk by U-Boat 100 (Kptlt. Joachim Schepke)

Sixth and final patrol

On 9 March 1941 U-100 departed on its sixth and what would be its final active patrol. U-100 approached [convoy HX 112](#) from astern in the pre-dawn hours of 17 March 1941 and was detected at a range of 1000 meters by [Type 286 RADAR](#) aboard [HMS Vanoc\[2\]](#). U-100 was the first U-boat detected by RADAR during [World War II](#), and was rammed and sunk by Vanoc while attempting to submerge[3]. Six of the 53 members of its crew survived, spending the remainder of the war as [POWs](#) ⇒[1].

Bradfyne Rupert vanner

Posted by: [Lucy Vanner](#) (---.nhs.uk)

Date: April 06, 2005 07:18PM

My Grandfather, Rupert Vanner, was Captain of the Bradfyne which was torpedoed by Capt. Schepke on 23rd Nov. 1940. I know that 4 survivors were picked up by a Norwegian vessel called The Norse King and landed in Belfast. I would love to hear from anyone who knows anything about my Grandfather