

Able Seaman KENNETH SEYMOUR NASH

D/JX 154824, H.M.S. Gloucester, Royal Navy

who died on 22 May 1941¹

Remembered with honour at the PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL



From the Mrs. Anthony



H. M. S. Gloucester

The Register of 31 May 1941 conveyed the worrying news:

A.B Kenneth Seymour Nash: TEWKESBURY SAILOR MISSING in H.M.S Gloucester

Mr and Mrs. Seymour Nash of Park View, Gloucester Road, received an official intimation that their son A.B Kenneth Seymour Nash had been posted as missing from H.M.S Gloucester, which has been sunk off the coast of Greece.

The missing sailor is the elder of Mr and Mrs. Nash's two sons. He joined the Navy about four years ago, and has seen considerable service abroad.

We are informed that Mr and Mrs. Nash's neighbour, who lives only two doors away has received news of a young relative who was also serving in H.M.S Gloucester. He, it is said, has cabled to his home stating that he is safe.

We are indebted to Kenneth's relative, Mrs. J. Anthony for enabling us to know more about the person who lost his life; even the CWGC did not record that he was 19 when he died:

Ken was the eldest in our family of four children. We were all born in Deerhurst, and our parents were Seymour Nash and Alice Nash. I do know that Ken won a Scholarship to Tewkesbury Grammar School and that there were not enough places for him so he continued his education at the Tewkesbury Secondary School, (Chance Street School) which he left when he was 14.. He must have started work straight away at a Garage at the top High Street. I don't know if it was a Warner's Garage or not., I do remember that every time my mother took me into town shopping we called to see Ken and he always gave me a ha'penny (25% of 1p) from his overall pocket!! (He couldn't have been earning very much either)!

Time went on and I remember him coming home and telling Mother that he had enlisted in the Royal Navy. She was horrified and when he came home for the first time wearing his uniform she was so upset with a mixture of pride and sadness that he was leaving home. I can remember him, standing in front of the fire hands clasped behind his back, smiling like the cat who had had the cream, feeling very pleased with himself and enjoying his uniform no end; he was showing me his collar and lanyard and the way the trousers were folded, which was all very important. I suppose

¹ Mrs. Bob Sayers, his sister, told me that he was 19 years of age when he was killed.

he was about 17 at this time and war had not yet broken out.

After training he was assigned to H.M.S. Gloucester and was so excited about going on a two-year cruise to the East Indies as it was called then. Mother was destroyed, of course, but off he went and my Aunt Gert who lived in Gloucester saw him off at the railway station. As it transpired, she was the last of the family to see him alive. Mother had copious letters from him, some arriving two or three together, and it was quite obvious that he was having the time of his life.

Then of course war broke out just as the Gloucester was returning from The Far East Cruise. The **Battle of Crete** in the Mediterranean ensued and all Mother had to show for her son was a telegram saying 'Missing, believed killed'. We had all gathered in the Living Room to hear the 6 o'clock news, as everyone did in those days, only to hear the news that The Gloucester had been sunk that day. Mother fainted, I cried, everybody else shouted at each other, which was purely and simply a reaction to the shock of the news and Mother fainting, I think. It was a terrible time and we were a very sad family indeed, like thousands of others at that time. Mother never believed that Ken was dead, and she used to say 'I shall see him walking up the road one day'. Her faith was very strong. , an ardent Church goer; in fact whilst we were all small, we went several times a day either to Sunday school, Evensong or Holy Communion, depending on our age at the time; Ken and my other brother Den were both Choir boys there. A few funny stories emanated from those two as well: I remember them relating stories of the Choir outings, and putting stink bombs under the Organists seat on the bus!! There was a young Chaplain there at the time Ken was choir boy and his name I think was 'Dean, Dixie Dean' who gave Ken a lovely prayer book, in which he had written some nice words. Rev. Dean was also killed on active service.²

At about the time Ken went missing, a neighbour down the road had a husband in the Royal Navy serving on the Russian convoys. **Petty Officer Eric Gyngell**,³ I can remember seeing him once or twice too, He went missing round about the same time as Ken; my Mother and Mrs. Gyngell commiserated together. All this was right at the beginning of the war in 1940, so it was a very long war indeed for people like that, always hoping, always praying that a miracle had happened and their loved ones would come home. I was only ten but it was agonising for me to see my Mother, bless her. She said she had had a dream and 'she had been told To Be Patient, Be Patient,' and I am sure that was what kept her going. She never ever came to terms with the loss of Ken.

HMS Gloucester⁴ was a Southampton Class Cruiser, built by Devonport Dockyard, completed 31 January 1939 and lost 22nd May 1941. She was dive-bombed and hit 4 times, with 3 further near misses, was abandoned and sunk shortly afterwards. Only 83 of her crew of 808 survived. The Gloucester was one of several ships who were sunk trying to defend Crete from the Nazi invasion. As a result of this, some 15,000 troops were saved but at a cost to the Royal Navy of 2,000 men killed.



² **Rev. J. O Dean** died of dysentery, as a Japanese P.O.W. See p9.

³ For the commemoration of P.O. Gyngell see pp 29-30 . It is P.O. Gyngell's grand-daughter, Vivienne, who put me in touch with Mrs. Anthony.

⁴ *HMS Gloucester -The Untold Story* has just been re-issued Nov 2004 in HB Edition