

Midshipman HUGH TALBOT BROOME SALMON

H.M.S. Barham, Royal Navy

who died age 17 on 25 November 1941

Son of Capt. Lionel Mordaunt Broome Salmon and Henrietta Elizabeth Salmon, of Apperley.

Remembered with honour on the PORTSMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL

The Register of 31 January 1942 recorded his death but provided no photograph.

MIDSHIPMAN SALMON H.T.B.: KILLED IN ACTION.

It is reported that on November 25th, 1941, Midshipman Hugh Talbot Broome Salmon, is presumed to have lost his life as the result of enemy action.

Midshipman Salmon was the fourth son of Captain L. M. B. Salmon, late of the 1st Battalion Welsh Regiment, and of Mrs Salmon, Apperley, Glos, and formerly of Folkestone, and Chart Sutton, Kent. He was aged 17 yrs, and educated at Gresham House School, Birchington –on-Sea, Thanet, proceeding to the Royal Naval College Dartmouth, which he left on April 1st 1941. Midshipman Salmon was an all-round sportsman, for besides being captain of his college hockey team, he gained his colours for cricket, soccer, and hockey. Captain and Mrs Salmon have three more sons serving in H.M. Forces.

It may be that **Midshipman Salmon** was part of the family which lived at Tewkesbury Park (now the golf club).



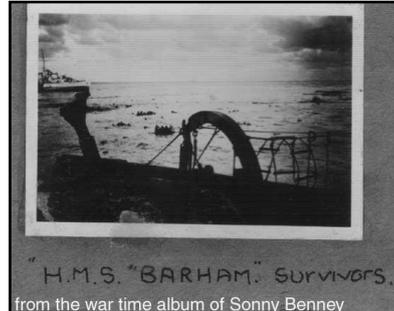
About the loss of his ship, we can learn much from the internet. The Royal Navy had planned to build four fast battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth Class*. The last of the original four to be laid down was *HMS Barham*, which was launched in 1914. She served in the Grand Fleet during WWI, significantly at the *Battle of Jutland* in 1916. In the battle she received six hits and fired 337 15-inch rounds.

Between 1930 and 1933 she underwent a major refit and was scheduled for a second major refit in the early 1940s, but the intervention of the war prevented this. She was withdrawn from the Mediterranean for Atlantic convoy escort duties. Early in the war, she collided with, and sunk, a British destroyer and was also damaged by a torpedo from a *U-Boat*. In 1940 she was slightly damaged supporting Free French forces off Senegal. After that, she served in the Mediterranean and took part in the successful *Battle off Cape Matapan* against the Italian navy. From 20th May 1941, she took part in the **Battle for Crete** and, on the 27th May she was hit by a bomb from a *Ju-88* in a dive-bombing attack off of Crete and was sent to South Africa for repairs. She left there on 31st July to return to the Mediterranean, arriving at Alexandria on 16th August. For another three months, *HMS Barham* took part in further operations by the Mediterranean Fleet.

On 25 November 1941, while steaming to cover an attack on Italian convoys, *HMS Barham* was hit by three torpedoes from the German submarine *U-331*. As she rolled over to port, her magazines exploded and the ship quickly sank with the loss of the Captain and 861 officers and men. The Vice-Admiral and 395 members of the crew were rescued. Sadly **Midshipman Salmon** was not amongst them.¹



Newspaper picture of *Barham's* sinking



Photographs of the survivors



A Bizarre Post-Script to the Sinking of *HMS Barham*

Helen Duncan & *HMS Barham*

This story was revived recently by Michael Portillo in *State Secrets*

[Information mainly from Wikipedia]



Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan (1897-1956) was a Scottish medium best known as **the last person to be imprisoned under the British Witchcraft Act of 1735**. She was famous for producing ectoplasm made from cheesecloth.

During World War II, in November 1941, Duncan held a séance in Portsmouth at which she claimed the spirit materialization of a sailor told her *HMS Barham* had been sunk.

Because the sinking of *HMS Barham* was revealed, in strict confidence, only to the relatives of casualties, and not announced to the public until late January 1942, the Navy started to take an interest in her activities. Two lieutenants were among her audience at a séance on 14 January 1944. One of these was a Lieutenant Worth who was not impressed as a white cloth figure had appeared behind the curtains claiming to be his aunt, but he had no deceased aunt. In the same sitting another figure appeared claiming to be his sister but Worth replied his sister was alive and well. Worth was disgusted by the séance and reported it to the police. This was followed up on 19 January, when undercover policemen arrested her at another séance as a white-

¹ Website: <http://www.worldisround.com/articles/16107/text.html> and from "Queen Elizabeth Class Battleship" by Alan Raven and John Roberts (Bivouac Books, "Ensign 4", 1975) The captain of the *U-331* He had no idea which ship it was that he had sunk, by fate or luck. Only months later would he learn it was the *Barham*. He was so busy trying to escape and save his crew, he only heard the explosion. Ironically almost one year to the day, November 17, 1942 still serving in the Mediterranean north of Algiers, *U-331* was sunk by a torpedo-equipped aircraft from the British aircraft carrier, *HMS Formidable*. There were 17 survivors and 32 dead. The captain survived and was made a POW. The Captain, *Kapitänleutnant von Tiesenhausen*, was imprisoned first in England and then for three years in Canada. In 1947 he returned to Germany and worked as a joiner. During the autumn of 1951 he left Germany and went back to Canada, and there he lived for the rest of his life. He died on August 17, 2000 in West Vancouver, Canada"

shrouded manifestation appeared. This proved to be Duncan herself, in a white cloth which she attempted to conceal when discovered, and she was arrested.

Researcher Graeme Donald wrote that Duncan could have easily found out about HMS *Barham* and she had no genuine psychic powers. According to Donald:

The loss of HMS Barham, torpedoed off the coast of Egypt on 25 November 1941, was indeed kept quiet for a while, but letters of condolence were sent out to families of the 861 dead, asking them to keep the secret until the official announcement. So, allowing for perhaps 10 people in each family, there were about 9,000 people who knew of the sinking; if each of them told only one other person, there were 20,000 people in the country aware of the sinking, and so on – hardly a closely guarded secret. In short, news of the sinking spread like wildfire; Duncan simply picked up the gossip and decided to turn it into profit.

A leak concerning HMS *Barham* was later discovered. A secretary of the First Lord had been indiscreet to Professor Michael Postan of the Ministry of Economic Warfare. Postan said that he believed he had been told officially and was not arrested.

Duncan was found to be in possession of a mocked-up HMS *Barham* hat-band. This apparently related to an alleged manifestation of the spirit of a dead sailor on HMS *Barham*, although Duncan apparently did not know that after 1939 sailors' hat bands carried only 'H.M.S.' and did not identify their ship.^[9] She was initially arrested under section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824, a minor offence tried by magistrates. The authorities regarded the case as more serious, and eventually discovered section 4 of the Witchcraft Act 1735, covering fraudulent "spiritual" activity, which was triable before a jury. Charged alongside her for conspiracy to contravene this Act were Ernest and Elizabeth Homer, who operated the Psychic centre in Portsmouth, and Frances Brown, who was Duncan's agent and went with her to set up séances. There were seven counts, two of conspiracy to contravene the Witchcraft Act, two of obtaining money by false pretences, and three of the common law offences of public mischief. The prosecution may be explained by the mood of suspicion prevailing at the time: the authorities were afraid that she could continue to reveal classified information, whatever her source was.^[26] There were also concerns that she was exploiting the recently bereaved, as the Recorder noted when passing sentence.

Duncan's trial for fraudulent witchcraft was a minor cause célèbre in wartime London. Alfred Dodd, a historian and senior Freemason, testified he was convinced she was authentic. The trial was complicated by the fact that a police raid on the séance in Portsmouth, leading to the arrest of Helen Duncan, yielded no physical evidence of the fraudulent use of cheesecloth, and was therefore based entirely on witness testimony, the majority of which denied any wrongdoing. Duncan was barred by the judge from demonstrating her alleged powers as part of her defence against being fraudulent. The jury brought in a guilty verdict on count one, and the judge then discharged them from giving verdicts on the other counts, as he held that they were alternative offences for which Duncan might have been convicted had the jury acquitted her on the first count. Duncan was imprisoned for nine months, Brown for four months and the Homers were bound over.

After the verdict, Winston Churchill wrote a memo to Home Secretary Herbert Morrison, complaining about the misuse of court resources on the "obsolete tomfoolery" of the charge.

The Act repealed in 1951.