

## **David Oswald Smith DSC**

**Rank:** Lieutenant.

**Date of Death:** 09/04/1940

**Regiment/Service:** Royal Navy, **H.M.S. Gurkha.**

**Awards:** Distinguished Service Cross.

**Commemorated on PLYMOUTH NAVAL MEMORIAL**

**Panel Reference:** Panel 36, Column 1.

Also on all **Christleton War Memorials**

The **Story of HMS Gurka in WWII** in which David Oswald Smith served.

HMS Gurkha (Commander Anthony Wass Buzzard, Royal Navy) participated in the very first moves of the Norwegian Campaign sailing with HMS Afridi and a force of cruisers and destroyers from Rosyth, Scotland on 7/8th April 1940. On the 9th April at 1400hours, the force was attacked by Ju88 and He111 bombers. One bomb hit her aft end and blew a 40 foot hole in the starboard side. The stern caught fire and the after magazine had to be flooded. Soon the stern was awash and Gurkha had a 45 degree list to starboard. All the lights were out but the wounded were brought up and laid on the fo'c'sle. Many were blinded by fuel oil and everyone had to cling to the guard rails or anchor chains to keep from falling overboard. Some made it to the boats and Carley floats. It was now getting dark and cold. Useable guns fired air bursts to attract anyone's attention. HMS Aurora arrived on the scene. She stopped 200 yards away and lowered her boats. Gurkha heeled over onto her side. Those men who had not lost their hold on the fo'c'sle clambered through the guard rails and sat on the port side. At 1900, she rolled right over and sank about 35 nautical miles west of Karmoy Island, Norway in position 59°13'N, 04°00'E. Aurora managed to pick up 190 survivors. They were treated and eventually ended up in Devonport, England and given survivors leave. HMS Gurkha was the first Tribal and first British destroyer to be sunk by air attack.

## HMS GURKHA



The third GURKHA one of the famous Tribal class destroyers, was built in Glasgow and completed on 21st October 1938. At the outbreak of the Second World War she was serving in the 4th Destroyer Flotilla, Mediterranean Fleet, but was later transferred to the Home Fleet. On 23th February 1940 she destroyed the German submarine U53 by depth charges west of the Orkney Islands.

When the German Fleet was reported at sea on the 7th April 1940 on what proved to be the invasion of Norway, GURKHA was among the ships which left Rosyth to endeavor to intercept them. On the afternoon of the 9th April, when off Bors Fjord, Norway, in an attack by German aircraft, GURKHA was so badly damaged by six near misses that she subsequently sank. Most of her crew of 190 were saved by the Cruiser AURORA, but five officers and ten ratings were lost, including David Oswald Smith.

David Oswald Smith was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross which is a recognition for having done an act of exemplary gallantry against the enemy during active operations. I haven't been able to trace his records to date to find his action.

DC

Ref. Nigel Meyrick