

Hastingleigh

Second World War 1939 – 1945

BARTLETT, GEORGE FREDERICK. Private, 6288033.

4th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment)

Died at sea 23/24 October 1943. Aged 26.

Born and resided Kent.

Son of G. F. Bartlett and Harriett Helena Bartlett of Hastingleigh, Ashford, Kent.

Commemorated on the Athens Memorial, Greece. Face 5.

Pre war member of The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

George and his comrades had been granted leave in Alexandria, Egypt, but spent most of their six weeks in North Africa in a transit camp at Sidi Bishr, from where they were earmarked to join the 8th Indian Division. Before that could take place, however, on 23 October 1943, his battalion was rushed to the docks at Alexandria and boarded two destroyers, H.M.S. Eclipse and H.M.S. Petard (of Enigma machine fame) which set off at high speed for an unknown destination (as usual), to the troops. The battalion was in fact on its way to Leros, it being the last infantry battalion to be sent to bolster the island's defences, with the neighbouring island of Kos having already fallen to the Germans. H.M.S. Eclipse (Pennant HO8) was a 1405 ton E class destroyer, commanded by Lieutenant Commander E Mack D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N. which struck two mines off the Bay of Kalymnos during the ill fated Leros Expedition. At the time of her loss the destroyer was carrying 'A' company and part of the HQ company, of the 4th Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment), when she detonated a mine under her forward boiler room, setting the fuel tanks ablaze. She immediately took on a heavy list and broke in two, spilling burning fuel into the sea, and sunk within three minutes. 115 members of George's battalion died when she went down, as did 135 of the ships crew of 145.

WRAIGHT, REGINALD CHARLES. Lance Corporal, 6291771.

2nd Battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Died 30 September 1942. Aged 22.

Born and resided Canterbury, Kent.

Son of Percy and Kate Wraight of Stowting, Ashford, Kent.

Buried El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt. Grave Ref: XXVII. F. 13.

Also commemorated on Stelling Minnis, Kent civic war memorial.

Reginald died in the area of the Munassib Depression, located between El Alamein and the Qattara Depression, where his battalions casualties were light, most being the result of the activities enemy dive-bombers, and land mines.