

## **Raymond V. Steed / Empire Morn**

### **A Galley boy Named Raymond Steed**

The CWGC registers the names of 513 Merchant Seamen aged 14 to 16 who died between 1939-1945.

The youngest known recorded Second World War service death being that of: STEED, Galley Boy, RAYMOND VICTOR, S.S. "Empire Morn" (Barrow-in-Furness). Merchant Navy. killed 26th April 1943. After his ship hit a mine. Age 14. Son of Wilfed & Olive Steed (nee Bright) of 20 Christchurch Road, Newport, Monmouthshire.  
Buried Ben M'Sik Cemetery. Plot 59A. Row 1. Grave 1.

We are looking for any relatives and information on the young lad below.

**Any help appreciated.**

**AN APPEAL FROM**

**Billy McGee**

“I have been researching the short sea life of Raymond and have copies of his sea service and copies of the official Log Book report into his death along with 20 other crewmembers of the Empire Morn. I believe Raymond may of had 5 brothers and 3 sister's, one of the sisters who may have been named after him "Raye V. Steed" born 1943 shortly after his death. I have a photo of Raymond taken from his Seaman's ID, which is of poor quality and I am looking for a decent photograph. I also have a photo of his war grave in Morocco”.

“This is in the very early stages, but I am hoping to have a memorial in memory of Raymond made, if I can raise sufficient interest and funding. The idea is again to raise awareness of our war dead as well as highlighting just how young some of these boys were”.

Billy McGee. ( 20/06/2007 )

The story of Raymond Steed appeared in the South Wales Argus Wednesday 27 June after Billy was contacted by the journalist Mike Buckinham. The story attracted such publicity that he was contacted by the Wales News Agency, who are going to try and get one of the main tabloid papers to run the story.

Contact has been made with Raymond's brother Kenneth Steed and arrangements are now being made by Bert Bale, the Chairman, Newport Branch, Merchant Navy Association with the local council to find a suitable area to have a permanent memorial built to honour young Raymond.

A boy of 14 who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country during the Second World War should be remembered in his home city of Newport, local people say.

**‘Honour this child who gave his life so bravely’**

## **MIKE BUCKINGHAM reports:**

In a cool and shaded cemetery by the side of the road from Casablanca to Marrakesh lies the body of a Newport boy, the youngest person in British service to die in the Second World War.

Although the location of Raymond Steed is known to members of his family and, details of the 14-year-old's untimely sacrifice have never been made public.

Calls for a memorial in Newport to the ex-Scout who went to sea aged just 14 years and two months. Have been backed by a senior member of the Merchant Navy Association.

The short life of Raymond Victor Steed began on October 1, 1928 at Rimberley Terrace, St Mellons. From there the family moved to 20 Christchurch Road, Newport, where he was one of nine children.

His story has been pieced together by ex-merchant seaman and maritime history enthusiast William McGee, of Stockton-on-Tees. "I was researching the history of the ship the Empire Morn, which hit a mine off Casablanca in 1943, when I came across a mention of young Raymond," Mr McGee, 43, said.

"His ship carrying war material met up with its convoy in the Barry Roads and by April 26, 1943, was off Casablanca. At 9.45 pm an explosion rocked the ship, followed by another in the ship's stern as the magazine blew up, taking a large part of the crew's quarters with it.

The captain ordered 'abandon ship', and when a count was taken it was seen that 21 crew members were missing. The ship did not sink and was towed to Casablanca. A further search of the wrecked crew accommodation revealed the remains of Raymond and another crew member. The bodies of the other crew men were never found either being blown over board or incinerated.

On April 29 the two bodies were laid to rest in the Ben M'Silk cemetery in the presence of the captain and officers and members of the crew.

The Empire Morn had hit mines laid by the German submarine U-117. She survived the war and was taken to Gibraltar where she served as a depot ship before being sold to the Spanish.

Some memorial should be erected to mark the sacrifice of the youngest sailor to give his life in the last war" added Mr McGee.

Mr Bertram Bale, National Vice President and Chairman of the Newport Branch of the Merchant Navy Association, contacted surviving members of the Steed family.

Raymond's father and mother were Mr Wilfred Steed and Olive Steed, whose maiden name was bright. "It was a fair bet that there would be surviving members in a large family like that. I struck gold with my first call".

Mr Bale has been active in the local the local campaign to get the historic jolly-boat of the *Anglo-Saxon* repatriated to Newport.

The jolly-boat of the doomed *Anglo-Saxon* now in the Imperial War Museum in London is important because of the epic story of the two local men who sailed 1,500 nautical miles to safety in it.

*"Young Steed's story supplements this heroism".*

*"At the very least there should be a memorial for the lad, and the Merchant Navy Association would be prepared to set the ball rolling" he said.*

**MIKE BUCKINGHAM**

*In tribute.*

**RAYMOND VICTOR STEED**

*By Joe Earl.*

*A Galley Boy named Raymond Steed joined the `Empire Morn`,  
At the docks in Newport, close where he was born,  
In The Merchant Navy now - but only just fourteen,  
He'd gone to sail in convoys - fighting fit and keen.*

*Nineteen forty three it was, aggression in full flow,  
Unmindful of the danger, he couldn't wait to go,  
Ray carried out his duties, earning meagre pay,  
Until alas in April, his world was blown away.*

*Not far off Casablanca, the `Empire` struck a mine,  
Laid there by a U-Boat with purpose and design,  
The consequent explosion, set cargo blasting then,  
Killing brave young Raymond and twenty other men.*

*His body's in Morocco, near the road to Marrakesh,  
In a nurtured cemetery surroundings trim and fresh,  
He was the youngest Seaman, to go and lose his life,  
While standing firm in jeopardy mid the wartime strife.*

*Greater than five hundred boys, were sent to Neptune's floor,  
Sixteenth birthdays never met, lost for evermore,  
They helped sustain our lifelines in a hostile time at sea,  
Those young and unsung heroes that sailed for you and me.*

**Capt. Earl.**

*Mr McGee recently wrote to Capt. Joe Earl, a retired Master and poet (The Men Who Missed the Tide ISBN 0 7223 3477-X) and asked if he would write a poem about Raymond. We at Tregenna have just received the above and have permission to use accordingly.*

**'General lies next to him'  
South Wales Argus**

**Kenneth Steed, 75 of Buttmore Way, Newport is one of the remaining who remembers Raymond as a scout and an errand-boy before joining the Merchant Navy.**

**"He was a good boy who never got into trouble", he said.**

**"Having specially requested it, General Claude Auchinleck, who had been in charge of the North Atlantic campaign, is buried next to my brother".**

### **A Galley boy Named Raymond Steed**

“Greater than five hundred boys, were sent to Neptune’s floor,  
Sixteenth birthdays never met, lost for evermore”

Raymond Victor Steed, Son of Mr Wilfred & Mrs Olive Steed (Nee Bright) of 20 Christchurch Road, Newport, Monmouthshire was born Monday 1st October 1928 at 2 Rimberley Terrace, St. Mellons, and died Monday 26th April 1943. Age 14 years & 207 days old.

Raymond’s official service record (CRS10) shows he joined the Merchant Navy Reserve Pool (MNRP) 29th December 1942, just two months after his 14th birthday, joining his first ship as a Stewards Boy, at Newport the same day. The ship being the former Royal Mail Line 15,620grt SS Atlantis, which had been converted into a Hospital Ship in 1939. He left this ship 13th March 1943.

After taking his leave Raymond joined the 1941 built Catapult Aircraft Merchant Ship Empire Morn, 7,092grt, (MOWT, Headlam & Son-Whitby) at Newport on 4th April 1943. The ship loaded with a cargo of naval, military and RAF equipment for Casablanca & Gibraltar left Milford Haven sailing to the Barry Roads anchorage while awaiting to join up with the combined 69 ship Convoy OS-46/KMS-13, which sailed from Liverpool on 15th April 1943. On 24th April the convoy split into two and continued to their individual ports of call.

On the evening of Monday 26th April at 9.45pm an explosion rocks the ship followed by a secondary explosion in the ships magazine seriously damaging the stern of the ship and blowing out a greater portion of the crew accommodation. At 10.05pm the Captain decides to temporarily abandon his ship until daybreak to assess the situation further. A thorough search and head count reveals 21 men are missing before the ships lifeboats are finally launched. The following morning at 5.30am the ships Captain, all his Officers and three crewmen re-board the ship and assisted in working the vessel into Casablanca with the assistance of the salvage tug USN Cherokee.

On 28th April at 2.30pm during a further search through the wreckage of the crew accommodation the remains of two crewmembers were found and extricated and immediately recognised as that of Raymond Steed and John W. Gardener, an 18-year-old Ordinary Seaman. Identity papers found on both the bodies confirmed with out doubt whom they were and it was stated that both had been killed instantly in the explosions. The remains of the other 19 men killed were never found, either being blown overboard or incinerated.

On 29th April 1943 at 2.00pm the bodies of Raymond & John were laid to rest at the Ben M’Sik Cemetery about 6 kilometres from Casablanca town centre, which lies between the main road to Marrakech and the road known as Oulad Zianc. Present at the service was the Captain, all Officers and surviving crew who could be spared from duty.

German records show that the Empire Morn had detonated a mine laid earlier on 10th April 1943 off Casablanca by U-117. Raymond V. Steed was awarded the 1939 War Medal, Africa Star (with clasp). Atlantic Star & 1939-1945 Star.

Billy McGee.

**To: Paul Flynn MP**

Sir,

As have mentioned previously Mr Billy McGee, whom is well respected in both Merchant Navy and Internet circles is in the early stages regarding a ( statue ) memorial. He has been contacted recently by Bert Bale, Chairman of the Merchant Navy Association Newport Branch who has made contact with one of Raymond's relatives and he is awaiting a phone call with hopefully more news. Mr. Mike Buckingham, who works for the South Wales Argus ( Newport) contacted him of late and was given all details, this is I have been informed has gone to print and I hope to receive a copy by post soon, This I will be pass onto Mr. McGee.

Regarding the memorial idea itself. The last two large ones Billy helped raise funds for cost around £1700. They were both made from raised bronze 900mm x 600mm weighing around 60 kilo. One was mounted to a cemetery gate-post and the other mounted into a 3 ton piece of stone. He is thinking along the lines of a marble piece and if a decent enough photograph of Raymond can be found, this would be intended to be inserted into the plaque. He would still like to make some contact with the relatives before taking the next step, which would be needed to set up a fund. This he has also had previous experience of with when helping open the Bidadari Memorial Fund and later the Ropner Navy Memorial Fund, this was through the Lloyds TSB.

We at The Her Name Was SS. Tregenna Web Site, are involved wholeheartedly with tribute to those that have no known grave but the sea, The ships the crews, the families, the loved ones and those that died to help save us all. We do not entertain any monies towards our costs. However, may we be the first to offer £50.00 to the account as soon as opened and be the first to commence donations to such a fund. LEST WE FORGET. This from our own pockets. We appeal to all to do the same. Mr. Flynn to lead the way, The Argus to contribute, The people of Newport and indeed Wales to dig deep and all politicians, councillors, Newport's Mayor and the Welsh Assembly to prove that we both remember and care.

**AND EVERY CITIZEN, BUSINESS OR ORGANISATION IN:  
Newport, Gwent, South Wales.**

**We hope that you will all remember those that perished especially,  
the 14 year old Master Steed, of Newport.**

**“Newport's never to be forgotten hero”.**

**KG.**

**A Galley boy Named Raymond Steed**

**WE REMEMBER HIM AND ALL OF THE  
513 Merchant Seamen aged 14 to 16 who died between 1939-1945.**

**“Lest we forget”**

**A Galley boy Named Raymond Steed JOINED THE  
“Empire Morn”. Capt. Earl.**



**Billy McGee 2007**

**Billy has also superimposed Joe's poem over the photograph of young  
Ray's headstone and added his photograph. Joe is happy to have it  
used on the internet.**

**It is credited to Capt. Earl.**

To be continued.....

**The Tribute Web Site: Her Name Was Tregenna, is helping Newport remember. Newport has a proud history of service in the Merchant Navy. Many Newportonian Seamen suffered dreadful casualties in war. A memorial is erected to their memory.**

**We further ask that Cardiff and all, remember the SS. Fiscus, her crew and master. Welsh Brothers Kenneth James Lewis and Raymond Leslie Lewis**

**Late 1940, two Welsh Brothers Kenneth James Lewis and Raymond Leslie Lewis walked aboard their first ship, the Cardiff registered cargo ship SS Fiscus, 4,815grt, (W.H. Seager Co. Tempus Shipping Ltd). Within a few weeks both would be dead after the ship was torpedoed and sunk by U-99 on the 18th October 1940 in the North Atlantic with the loss of all hands while sailing to the Clyde from Sydney, Cape Breton in Convoy SC-7.**

**A tragedy in itself made worse by the fact they should never have been onboard to begin with. Kenneth Lewis was only 14 years old, His Brother Raymond 15. The two boys are believed to of forged a letter from their Father stating he had given permission for them to join the ship.**

**Kenneth and Raymond Lewis are commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial in London on Panel 49. Two of the youngest serving Merchant Seamen killed in WWII.**



**We further hope that if Terry Breverton does follow up his book "Welsh Sailors of the Second World War" That he may include much of our information in tribute in such a fellow up. With special mentions to the records of Welsh Ports, Ships and Seamen and a possible chapter or so on Irish losses and the Young Boys of the British Merchant Navy, still not Home from the Sea.**