

Clifford Wright



Rank: - Driver

Number: - T/259505

Regiment: - Royal Army Service Corps, 14 Gen.Transport Coy.

Died: - Reported Killed in Action whilst prisoner of war in Italian hands. POW transport ship sunk. 14/11/1942 Age: 22 years.

Memorial: - Alamein Memorial, Egypt Column 79.

Clifford was born on 29 July 1920 in Batley the son of John Charles and Nellie Wright nee Parker who had married on 24 July 1915 at St. Peters Church, Birstall. Elsie was born in 1918 and Harry in 1922 and in 1939 the family lived at 40, Roman Road, Brookroyd, Batley.

After leaving school Clifford worked as a gardener for Mr E. D. Taylor of Elmwood House, Upper Batley.

The SS Scillin was built in Scotland but was in Italian hands in 1939. The cargo/passenger ship was on route from Tripoli to Sicily with about 815 Commonwealth prisoners-of-war on board and was torpedoed by the British submarine HMS Sahib (Lt. John Bromage) 10 miles north of Cape Milazzo in the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Sahib rescued 27 POWs from the water plus the Scillins captain and 5 Italian crew members. Only then, when the commander heard the survivors speaking English, did he realise that he had sunk a ship carrying British prisoners-of-war and some Italian soldiers and had drowned 783 men. At a subsequent inquiry into this 'friendly fire' tragedy, Lt. Bromage was cleared of any wrongdoing as the ship was unmarked and at the time, he firmly believed that the ship was carrying Italian troops. The Ministry of Defence kept it a closely guarded secret for fifty-four years telling relatives a pack of lies, maintaining that they had died while prisoners-of-war in Italian camps or simply lost at sea. It was not until 1996, after repeated requests for information from the families of the drowned men that the truth came out. The Sahib was attacked by bombs from escort German Ju-88s and depth charges from the Italian corvette Gabbano in the counter attack immediately after the sinking. Badly damaged, the Sahib was later abandoned and scuttled.

Clifford is remembered with Honour at Batley War Memorial and was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.

**LOST IN SINKING OF
ITALIAN PRISON SHIP.**

Batley Driver's Fate?

Mr. and Mrs. C. Wright, Roman Road, Batley, have received official news that their son, Driver Clifford Wright, who was previously reported a prisoner in Italian hands was on board an Italian ship conveying prisoners of war from North Africa to Italy, when the vessel was sunk. The message stated that inquiries for information regarding survivors had met with no result.

It is a year since Driver Wright was reported missing in the Middle East. He had been a gardener for Mr. E. D. Taylor, "Elmwood," Upper Batley.



Clifford Wright

Batley News, 11 Sep 1943



Researched by members of
Batley History Group