

R G HAMOND

Robert Gerald Hamond was born in 1879 in Gibraltar. He was originally christened Robert James Hamond.

In 1891 he was living at Thorpland Hall, Birmingham Terrace, Fakenham, Norfolk. His father Robert Nicholas Hamond had married Janetta Stewart in 1877 in Stoke Damerel in Devon. Janetta Stewart was the mother of Charles Morier Louis Stewart and Noel St Vincent Ramsey Stewart who are also recorded on the memorial in St Nicholas Church, Partney. The household had seven servants.

On 31st March 1901, the night of the Census, Robert was serving as a sub-lieutenant aboard the HMS Peterel. HMS Peterel was one of two Spiteful class destroyers to serve with the Royal Navy. She was built by Palmers, was 215 feet long and the 6,200 H.P. produced by her Reed boilers gave her a top speed of 30 knots. She was armed, as was standard, with a twelve pounder and two torpedo tubes.

Ten years later Robert was serving as a lieutenant aboard the HMS Viking. The Viking was launched on 14th September 1909 and again built by Palmers. It was a Tribal-class destroyer and served in the First World War as part of the 6th Flotilla and Dover Patrols. Destroyers played a vital role within a fleet. The ship's pace and long endurance meant that they could keep up with the battleships of the main fleet and defend them against smaller, short-range but powerful attackers such as torpedo boats, submarines and, later, aircraft.

At the battle of Jutland in 1916, Commander R. G. Hammond was commanding HMS Owl, an Acasta class destroyer (Admiralty K class) as part of the Fourth Destroyer Flotilla. HMS Owl was launched on 7th July 1913. She joined the 4th Flotilla on completion and served with the Grand Fleet on the outbreak of war. By summer 1916 she was at the Humber, moving to Portsmouth later and then in 1917 to Devonport. HMS Owl was sold for breaking in November 1921.

The Battle of Jutland was the largest naval battle of the First World War and the only full-scale clash of battleships in the entire war. It was fought from 31st May to 1st June 1916 in the North Sea near Jutland off Denmark. The combatants were the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Reinhard Scheer, and the British Royal Navy's Grand Fleet, commanded by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe.

Fourteen British and eleven German ships were sunk, with great loss of life. After sunset, and throughout the night, Jellicoe manoeuvred to cut the Germans off from their base, in hopes of continuing the battle next morning. But, under cover of darkness, Scheer crossed the wake of the British fleet and returned to port.

Both sides claimed victory. The British lost more ships and twice as many sailors, and the British press criticised the Grand Fleet's failure to force a decisive outcome. But Scheer's plan of destroying a substantial portion of the British fleet also failed. The Germans continued to pose a threat that required the British to keep their battleships concentrated in the North Sea, but the battle confirmed the German policy of avoiding all fleet-to-fleet contact, and they never again contested control of the high seas

The London Gazette of 14th September 1917 reported that Commander Robert Gerald Hamond had been mentioned in despatches. Its edition of 5th March 1918 carried the following announcement of the award of a D.S.O.:

Admiralty, 8th March, 1918.
HONOURS FOB SERVICES IN DESTROYER AND
TORPEDO BOAT FLOTILLAS.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve of the award of the following honours, decorations and medals to Officers and Men for services in Destroyer and Torpedo Boat Flotillas during the period ending 31st December, 1917: —

To be Companions of the Distinguished Service Order.

Cdr. Robert Gerald Hamond, R.N.

The Distinguished Service Order (DSO) was instituted originally to reward junior officers in the Army for distinguished service or acts of gallantry against the enemy. While the Order of the Bath had been available for senior officers and the Distinguished Conduct Medal for the other ranks, no award below the level of the Victoria Cross (VC) had existed for junior officers. The DSO was also made available to junior officers of the other services.

On 31st December 1919 Robert was promoted from Commander to Captain and on 8th March 1920 the London Gazette announced:

To receive a Bar to the Distinguished Service Order.

Capt. Robert Gerald Hamond, D.S.O., R.N.
For distinguished services in command of
the First Destroyer Flotilla.

After the War Commander Hamond retires from the Navy but continued to travel. On 1st November 1923 he left London aboard the SS Highland Pride for a voyage to Argentina. He was living at Cob Cottage, Scremby. The 28th August 1931 found him in Southampton where he boarded the Almazora for a trip to Buenos Aires and on to Paraguay. He obviously enjoyed Paraguay for he left again for a

trip there from London on 15th December 1934 aboard the El Argentino. The voyage was due to last 120 days. Robert was still living at Cob Cottage, Scremby and now gave his occupation as farmer.

We have a final record of a voyage he made to Montevideo in Uruguay at the age of 72. He left aboard the Alcantara from Southampton on 30th May 1952.