William George Lee 1902-1941

* Photo – no
* Where lived – born in Hensley Cottage in 1902
* Worlington family – in 1939 Register, his younger brother was living in Hensley Cottage with his family
* Military record – Joined Marines in 1920. Service record below (courtesy of The National Archives)
* Death – lost when his ship was attacked by Stuka bombers in the Mediterranean
* Buried – lost at sea

Service record: William George Lee service record.pdf

https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a2510272.shtml

https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/1235.html

Recorded on Plymouth Naval Memorial: https://rmhistorical.com/index.php/grave/6910?page=361

The sinking of *HMS Southampton* (account courtesy of https://uboat.net)

At 1522 hours… some 30 nautical miles astern of the convoy [the ships] were suddenly attacked by a dozen German Ju-87 'Stuka' dive-bombers. Fortune was against them. The attack came as an entire surprise and according to Captain Rowley of the *Gloucester* the 'aircraft were not sighted until the whistle of the first bomb was heard'. Six machines attacked each cruiser, diving steeply from the direction of the sun, releasing a 550-lb bomb each, at heights of around 1500 to 800 feet. The ships opened fire with 4" AA guns and smaller AA guns. They also increased speed and altered course to avoid the attack but two bombs, perhaps three hit *HMS Southampton* causing disastrous damage. Another hit and some near misses did some damage to *HMS Gloucester*, most important damage was to her DCT (director control tower).

Half-an-hour later seven high-level bombers attacked but they were detected in time and taken under fire as a result of which all bombs fell wide. During the attack the Walrus from *HMS Gloucester* returned and ditched alongside *HMS Diamond* which took off the crew and then scuttled the aircraft.

Rear-Admiral Renouf immediately reported the damage to his cruisers to Admiral Cunningham who went to their aid. He send Vice-Admiral Pridham-Whippell ahead with the *Orion*, *Perth*, *Jervis* and *Janus*. From Malta *HMS Griffin* and *HMS Mohawk* were sent. Before they arrived however, Rear-Admiral Renouf reported that the *Southampton* must be abandoned and that he would sink her. *HMS Gloucester* took on board 33 officers and 678 ratings of which 4 officers and 58 ratings were wounded while *HMS Diamond* took on board 16 wounded ratings. Upon this signal the battleships turned east again. *HMS Southampton* had caught fire badly upon being hit. For a time the ships company fought the fire successfully and kept the ship in action and under control but in the end the fire got out of control. Also it was found that some magazines could not be flooded. In the end the crew had to give it up and was taken off. A torpedo was fired into her by *HMS Gloucester* but it did not sink her. Soon afterwards Vice-Admiral Pridham-Whippell arrived on the scene and his flagship, *HMS Orion* then scuttled her with three more torpedoes (four were fired).

Memories of Frank Jerram, also aboard HMS Southampton when it was sunk, but who survived.

Early in January 1941, we were en route from Malta to Piraeus when we were attacked by German dive-bombers and suffered three or four hits; we were caught at a bad moment and about half our officers were killed and the ship was set on fire from the bridge to the stern; in due course we were unable to contain the fires and had to abandon our ship via an attendant destroyer; we were then transferred to HMS Gloucester who took us to Alexandria where I had two weeks survivor's leave.