# ROYAL NAVY DEATHS

**Able Seaman Roderick Maclean Macarthur C/JX259870**
**Trimmer John Maciver, Naval Auxiliary Patrol 197164**
**Able Seaman Roderick Mackenzie R238782**
**Able Seaman Finlay Mackenzie**
**Able Seaman Gregor Ewan Maclennan LT/KX 160101**
**Wren Elizabeth de Grey Vyner 34446**
**Sub-Lieutenant Charles de Grey Vyner**

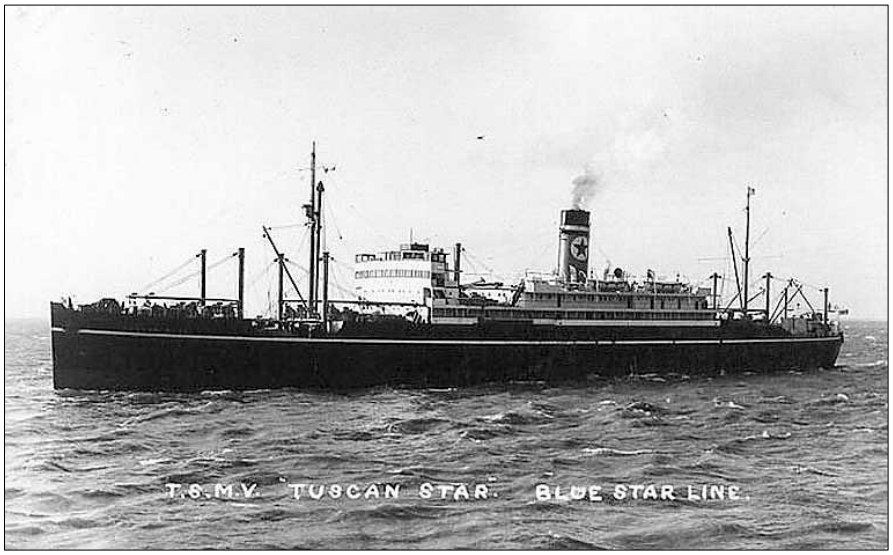
## RODERICK MACLEAN MACARTHUR

**Able Seaman C/JX259870**
**Died on the 6th September 1942 aged 27**
**Assigned to *HMS President III***
**but on passage on *MV Tuscan Star* (London) RN**

On 16th April 1909 Malcolm McArthur of the Free Church Missionary (bachelor) married Mary Ann Maclean (spinster), Schoolmistress at the Free Church Manse, Gairloch. Malcolm was aged 34 living at Durnamuck, Little Loch Broom, Parish of Lochbroom, and Mary was aged 27 living in the same community.

Roderick, their son, was born on 5th March 1915, at Clachan, Stenscholl. Apart from **Roderick,** Malcolm and Mary Ann had at least one other child, Mary, also born in Stenscholl, in 1917. Malcolm died of cancer at the age of 43 on 3rd July 1917 at the Western Infirmary Glasgow. His usual residence at the time was the Mission House, Staffin, Skye.

Roderick died whilst on passage on the ***Tuscan Star,*** a refrigerated cargo ship. On the 6th September, 1942, she was just north of the equator, off the Gulf of Guinea, homeward bound from Buenos Aires, via Santos in Brazil, and Freetown, with a full cargo, including 7,300 tons of frozen meat. The ship was carrying 25 passengers and had a crew of 88, and was sighted by ***U-Boat 109***, crossing her bows, and steaming at about 13.5 knots; it was close to 2100. At a range of only 800 yards, two torpedoes were fired, both hit the starboard side, one in Number 5 hold, the second in the Engine Room.



Ten minutes after these torpedoes struck *Tuscan Star*, *U-109*, reported reading her emergency message "SSS SSS 01 degrees 34 minutes North, 11 degrees 40 minutes West, *Tuscan Star* torpedoed, sinking quickly, SSS SSS." [During WW2 the signal SSS indicated an attack by submarine.] The ship immediately started to settle rapidly by the stern and listed heavily over to starboard. Orders were at once given to abandon ship, and all boats except the motor-boat, which had been badly damaged by the explosion, were lowered, manned, and away from the ship in about 10 minutes. The ship took the final plunge and disappeared about four minutes later.

Soon afterwards the *U-109* surfaced, put a small searchlight on the lifeboats, and an English-speaking officer interrogated the survivors, asking the usual questions, as to the name of the ship, what cargo she carried, where from and whither bound. The submarine came back later, her officer saying that they had rescued Mr Gill, the Second Radio Officer, from the water and intended retaining him as a prisoner. The Germans, noticing women and children among the survivors, ordered the Third Officer's boat alongside, and passed down some tinned provisions. "I am sorry", he said, "but I have to do my duty". The U-boat then gathered way and disappeared into the darkness.

A little later the Third Officer reported his boat was leaking badly and that he had no room to bale her out, whereupon he was ordered to transfer the women and children to the Captain's boat. The boats lay round the scene of the wreck during the night in good weather, but with a fairly heavy southerly well. The Captain's boat gradually lost touch with the two other boats, and at 1500 on the 7th September it sighted the Orient Line's ***Otranto*** who took them on board, dropping these survivors at Freetown the next afternoon. They were all home in Liverpool by the 25th of September. The other two boats also made it to safety, but 40 crew members, eight gunners and three passengers were lost when the ship sank.

Roderick is commemorated on **Chatham Naval Memorial on Panel 55.1**. and **Dundonnell War Memorial.** He is also remembered on his parents' grave at **Gruinard Burial Ground, Lochbroom.** Note the wrong year for Roderick's death.

**Photo: Roddie Macpherson**

# JOHN MACIVER

**Trimmer 197164**
***HMS Forfar* (F30)**
**Died on 2nd December 1940 aged 31**
**Son of Simon McIver (1860-1943)** and **Mary Tullo (1875-1919)**

**Simon**

**Mary**

**Photos Morag Henriksen**

Simon hailed from Scoraig. Mary was born in Elgin. The letter, shown below confirms that she had been appointed as Teacher of the Scoraig Public School in October 1894, with a free house and a croft.

*School Board House, Ullapool, 1st October 1894*

*Madam,*

*I beg to confirm your appointment as Teacher of the Scoraig Public School under my Board. The Salary, to begin with, to be at the rate of £50 per annum with a Free House and a Croft. Two monthly notice to be given on either side to terminate the engagement. The House is partly furnished and I enclose herewith a list of the furniture.*

*The School is due to reopen on the 8th instant and it would be desirable that you should be here by that date or as soon as possible thereafter. The route is by Rail to Garve Station on the Highland Railway hence Mail Coach to here where you stop over-night going on to Scoraig the following day. Arrangements will be made for conveying you from here to Scoraig.*

*Yours truly, Ken Jameson*

Simon and Mary were married on 31st January 1900 at Scoraig Schoolhouse. In 1901 the family was resident at No. 4 Scoraig, Simon aged 41, a boat builder. At some stage before 1907 the family moved to the schoolhouse at Achduart, Coigach, where Mary was Headteacher. They then moved to Altandhu where **John** was born on 8th October 1909. He was one of 4 boys and 3 girls. Mary is listed in Souter's Ross-shire Directory as the teacher in 1915. They then moved to 21 Ladysmith Street, Ullapool.

An obituary for John's older brother Thomas reveals that when the boys were beachcombing in childhood they came across a box that had come from the troopship *ss Laurentic*, which had been sunk by two mines, north of Ireland in 1917. The box contained the ship's logbook.

The ship on which John was serving was previously called the ***Montrose.*** Sailors' superstitions are that it is unlucky to change the name of a vessel as was proved in this case. On 4 September 1939, ***Montrose*** was requisitioned by the British Admiralty for World War II service with the Royal Navy and converted to an armed merchant cruiser. Her conversion was completed on 6th November 1939 and she was commissioned into Royal Navy service as ***HMS Forfar (F30).*** On 2nd December 1940 ***Forfar,*** operating on the Northern Patrol, was torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine ***U-99*** under the command of Otto Kretschmer. ***Forfar*** was en route to join convoy OB 251 and about 500 nautical miles west of Ireland. Forty one officers, including her commanding officer, Norman Hardy, and 143 men lost their lives. The survivors were rescued by the Royal Canadian Navy destroyer ***HMCS St. Laurent,*** the British destroyer ***HMS Viscount***, and the British cargo steamer ***Dursley*.**

Memorial to **HMS Forfar** in the East and Old Parish Church, Forfar

This article has been included on the **Wartime Memories Project** website by Morag McIver Henriksen.

*Trimmer. John "Jocky" MacIver, Royal Navy **HMS Forfar** from Ullapool, Rossshire) (d.2nd Dec 1940) Uncle John MacIver was lost in the Atlantic when **HMS Forfar** was torpedoed on 2nd December 1940 a few months before I was born. I never knew him, but my father took me to see his name in the War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle when I was ten.*
*He had been on the Iceland run in **HMS Forfar** and got two weeks' leave to go home to Ullapool while the ship was being refitted to go to Canada in a convoy, which, under the Lease Lend scheme would be met halfway. The family were relieved at this. It seemed safer than the perilous Iceland runs - but it wasn't.*

The headstone of the family grave at Badenscallie Burial ground, Coigach, reads:

***Mary (Tullo) & Simon McIver, sons John & George.***
***Erected by her family in loving memory of***
***MARY TULLO***
***beloved wife of***
***SIMON McIVER Ullapool***
***died 14 August 1919***
***also the above SIMON McIVER***
***died 9 December 1943***
***and their youngest son JOHN***
***lost on HMS Forfar 2 December 1940***
***GEORGE died 22 May 1977***

John is also commemorated on the **Liverpool Naval Memorial on Panel 24.**

## RODERICK MACKENZIE

**Able Seaman R238782**

***HM Tug Samsonia***

**Died on 21st April 1943 aged 20**

Details regarding Roderick can be found in the biography **"THE MACKENZIE FAMILY FROM LETTERS, LOCHBROOM"** on pages 101-104.

## FINLAY MACKENZIE

**Able Seaman**

***H.M. Rescue Tug Director***

**Died on 16th January 1945 aged 21**

Details regarding Finlay can be found in the biography **"THE MACKENZIE FAMILY FROM LETTERS, LOCHBROOM"** on pages 101-104.

# GREGOR EWAN MACLENNAN

**Seaman**

***HMBY Minesweeper 69***

**Stoker 1st Class LT/KX 160101**

**Died on 18th October 1943 aged 19**

Gregor's parents were married at Ardcharnich, on 16th March 1922. Alexander (39), a Seaman lived at Loggie, Lochbroom, whereas Isabella (née Maclean), from Ardcharnich was aged 35. **Gregor Ewan**, born on 8th December 1923, was named after his grandfather, Gregor Maclean. His older brother Duncan Donald, born 10th January 1923 was later a prisoner of war (see pages 63-64). Another brother Roderick was born in 1925.

The ship on which Gregor was serving was laid down on 6th May 1942 as ***BYMS-69*** by Wheeler Shipbuilding Corp., Whitestone, New York, USA. It was launched on 3rd March 1943, completed 30th March 1943, transferred to Great Britain and reclassified ***J-869.***

According to the Admiralty War Diary, the minesweeper arrived in Halifax from Boston on 7th June 1943 to "*retain at Halifax for minesweeping duties owing to present emergency expected duration three weeks."* It is apparent that this vessel was based in Halifax for several months. Gregor's death certificate states that he fell from the jetty at Halifax Harbour Dockyard and drowned.

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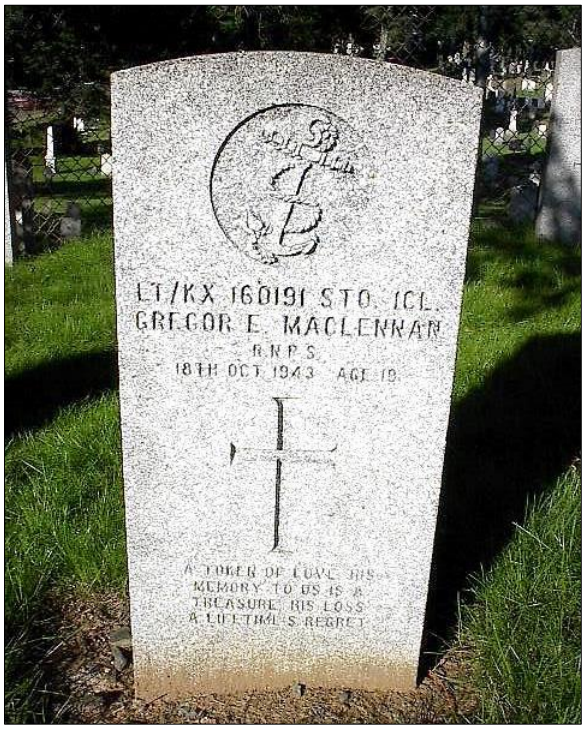
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2. | MacLENNAN, Gregor Ewen | LT/KX.160191 | R.N.P.S. | Sto.1. | H.M. B.Y.M.S. 69 | 8.12.1923 | Lochbroom, Garve, Ross-shire | 18.10.1943 | 5. Accidental Drowning | Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada |

Gregor is buried in **Halifax (Fort Massey) Cemetery** in **Grave 85 in Section E.**



## ELIZABETH DE GREY VYNER
**Wren 34446**
***HMS Beehive, WRNS***
**Died on 3rd June 1942 aged 18**

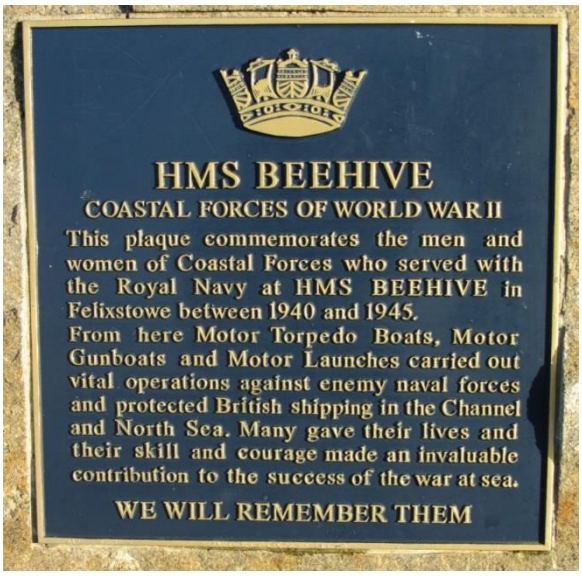
## CHARLES DE GREY VYNER
**Sub-Lieutenant**
**Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve**
***HMS Hunter***
**Died on 2nd May 1945 aged 19**

Both Elizabeth and Charles were born in London, Elizabeth in early 1924, and Charles on 21st January 1926. Their parents, Commander Clare George Vyner, J.P. D.L. R.N., and the Lady Doris Hilda Vyner lived at Fountains Hall, Studley Royal, Yorkshire, but also owned Keanchulish Lodge, southwest of Strathcanaird, and associated land near Ullapool

During the Second World War Fountains Hall and other estate buildings were used to house evacuees. Studley Royal became the wartime home of Queen Ethelburga's School from Harrogate and the school's sanatorium was at Fountains Hall. The stable block and courtyard was used for dormitories while one corner became the school chapel, at which Sunday Evensong was regularly said by the Archdeacon of Ripon.

Commander Vyner bought Isle Martin in the 1930s. He decided to rebuild the ruins of the curing house into a flour mill. The workforce commuted from Ullapool. Wheat was shipped in from Liverpool via Vyner's own ship the *Penola*. The flour was then shipped down to the central belt of Scotland. Unfortunately the *Penola* sank off the Island of Bute as a result of a collision on 1st November 1941. Thereafter the flour was sold via Vyner's own chain of grocery stores, under the name Lochbroom Trading Co. Ltd. The mill closed down in 1948.

It is not known when **Elizabeth Vyner** enlisted into the Women's Royal Naval Service. ***HMS Beehive*** was a Royal Naval Coastal Forces Base commissioned on 1st July 1940 and headquartered at Felixstowe Dock in what was the Little Ships Hotel. Throughout the war the base was host to Motor Torpedo Boats, Motor Gun Boats and Motor Launches.




Elizabeth died of sleeping sickness at the East Suffolk and Ipswich Hospital and was cremated at Ipswich Crematorium. She is commemorated on the crematorium screen wall.

A memorial to those who served on *HMS Beehive* is located at Landguard Fort, Felixtowe.

**Charles** was appointed Temporary Midshipman on 17th May 1943 when aged 17. This letter, found quite by chance when researching his name on the internet, was sent (undated) to his mother from the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton, Somerset:

*"Today I flew a Spitfire. All I can say is that it is the most thrilling thing I've ever done in my life. It is an experience which I'm convinced is unequalled in flying as it is the first aircraft I've ever flown without having an instructor in the back seat for the first two hours or so. It is beautiful to fly and very small….. Comparing it to training aircraft is like comparing a racehorse to a cart horse. It is a little tricky to land but I imagine one gets used to it. It has been my ambition to fly a spitfire since the Battle of Britain and it is a thing I shall never forget.*

*So much for that. This is quite a nice station, comfortable, good food, don't get up too early etc.! We are here for 6 weeks. Then we have two weeks in Cornwall.*
*I think I shall enjoy this course quite a bit as it [is] very interesting – lots of dog fighting and things like that. All the instructors are ex-operational pilots who really know their stuff."*

By 1945 Charles was serving with 807 squadron flying sorties from the aircraft carrier *HMS Hunter* which had arrived off Ceylon on 20th March. She spent the next month in preparation for 'Operation Dracula', the reoccupation of Rangoon, which began on 30th April. *HMS Hunter* and other aircraft carriers, *Emperor*, *Khevive* and *Stalke*r provided the facilitation of air strikes and support for invasion troops until 4th May. Unfortunately Charles never survived to complete this mission.

The war diary for *HMS Hunter* reveals:
On 2nd May, 20 Beach Cover low sorties were flown. Whilst proceeding to take up beach cover, Serial 10 ran into a very heavy squall and at 0931, whilst descending to below cloud base Temporary Sub Lieutenant (A) Charles de Grey VYNER, RNVR, passed through the leader's slipstream and during the subsequent brief period of regaining control, he flew into the sea from 500 feet."

Charles was flying a Seafire 111. His body was never found so

He is commemorated on

**Lee on the Solent Memorial**
**on Bay 6, Panel 5.**

A memorial to Elizabeth and Charles was unveiled by HRH the Queen Mother on 9th April 1953 at Fountains Hall. A stained glass window with a stone cross in the centre has two stone figures representing the fallen brother and sister in uniform. The cross has two wreaths intertwined at its head with the regimental badges of the fallen at its base.

**Photo: Graham Roberts**

The wording underneath reads:

**WHEN YOU GO HOME TELL THEM OF US AND SAY**

**FOR YOUR TOMORROW WE GAVE OUR TODAY**