

BEYOND THE CATSFIELD MEMORIAL



The Stories Behind Each of the Names on the

Memorial Plaque at Catsfield Memorial Hall.

This is a Summary of what has been learned So far.



Doug Glading

Last Update 30/6/2026

1. Geoffrey D Berney

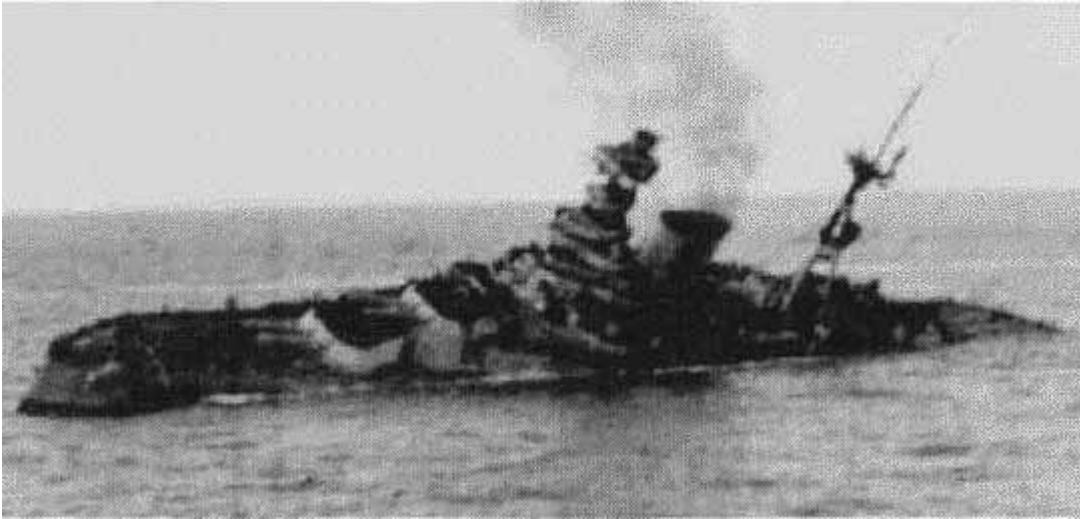
- **Supply Assistant Geoffrey Berney RNVR**
died 25th Nov 1941 aged just 20 years
(born 23 July 1921).

He was serving on the Battleship HMS Barham. HMS Barham was a 35,000 ton Queen Elizabeth-class battleship built for the Royal Navy during the early 1910s.



On 25th November 1941, Barham was part of the Mediterranean Fleet on patrol N of Sidi Barrani against Italian convoys to Libya.

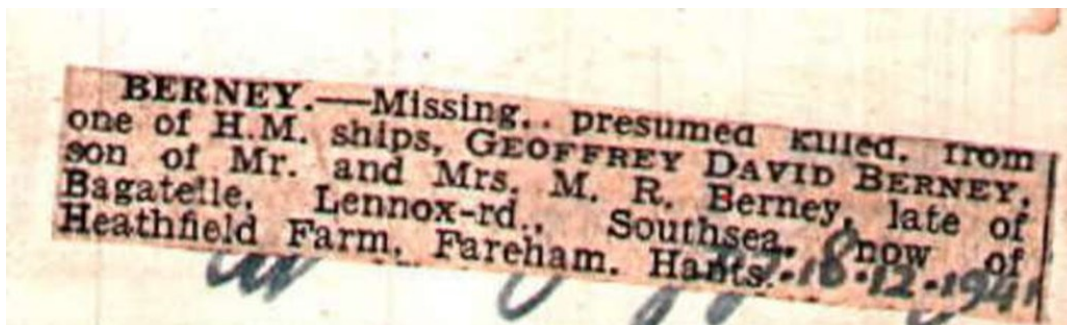
It was struck by 3 torpedoes from German U331. They struck amidships and the Barham quickly capsized to port and was lying on her side when a powerful magazine explosion occurred just four minutes after she was torpedoed and sank her. Due to the speed at which she sank, 862 officers and ratings were killed, and 450 survived.



To conceal the sinking from the Germans and to protect British morale, the Board of Admiralty censored all news of Barham's sinking. After a delay of several weeks the War Office notified the next of kin, but they added a special request for secrecy: the notification letters included a warning not to discuss the loss of the ship with anyone but close relatives, stating it was "*most essential that information of the event which led to the loss of your husband's life should not find its way to the enemy until such time as it is announced officially*".

The sinking was not made public until January 27th 1942.

The press notice about Geoffrey did not mention his ship. He died age 20 with no known grave. Commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial.



Catisfield connection:

Geoffrey was the son of Maurice Rupert Berney and Lily Berney, of Heathfield Farm, Catisfield. He is said to have had a wife (Tasha), but information is missing on her..

Mr Berney, who was born Moses Bernstein, built many houses in Southsea - in fact

Portsmouth named two roads after him - Maurice Road and Berney Road. Maurice bought the farm and later developed much of the its land between Catisfield Rd and Blackbrook Rd. He served as a Lieutenant RNVR in the war.

In 1954 he built Catisfield Scout's first hut as a memorial to his son Geoffrey. The gift also included the freehold of the land.

