

## Bonner Greenfield Memorial Shield

### *In memory of 2 club members who gave their lives in the 1939 - 45 War*

*".....Ideally what we would have here would be some information on how these 2 brave young men lived, their interests and more about their love of cycling, all I have is information on their tragic deaths, if anyone has any information please get in contact with the club so we can update this page....."*

### **Leonard Bonner**

Born 1915

Son of Frederick & Margaret Bonner

Married to Stella Clare Bonner

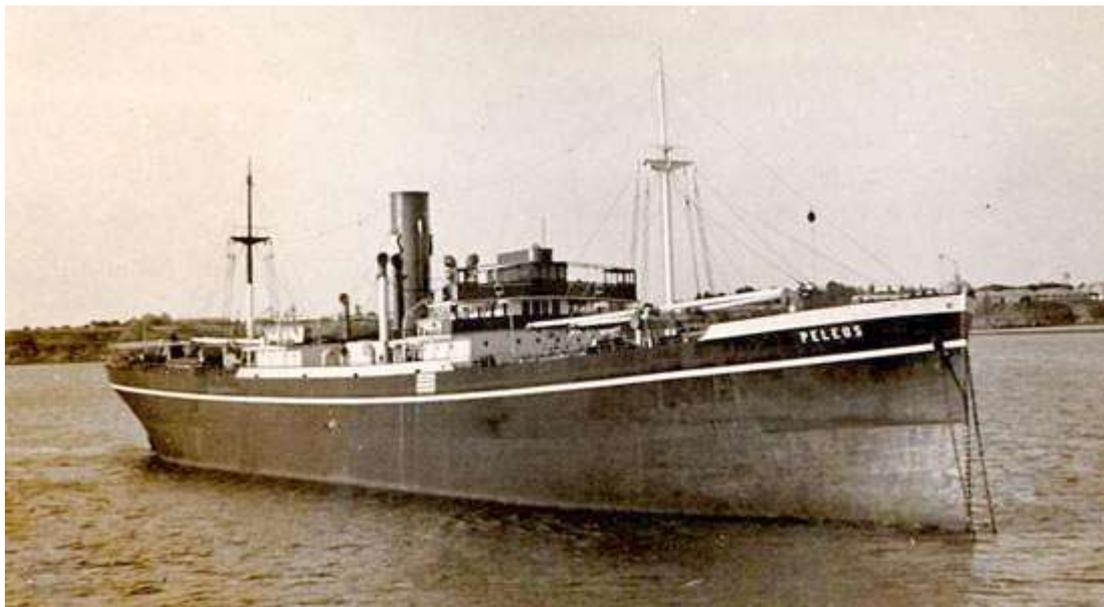
Died 13<sup>th</sup> March 1944 aged 29

Royal Navy D/JX 550875

Able Seaman (DEMS gunner) on board Greek Steam Merchant ship **Peleus** built in Hartlepool 1928 by W. Gray & Co and originally named 'Egglestone'.

Sailing from Algiers to Buenos Aires, cargo of ballast

At 19.40 hours on 13 Mar, 1944, the unescorted **Peleus** was hit by two torpedoes from U-boat U-852 and sank rapidly about 500 miles north of Ascension Island. The U-boat tried to destroy all evidences of the sinking by shooting at debris and rafts from the ship. During this action some survivors were killed and only four men were alive when the U-boat left the area. One of them later died, the remaining three survivors were picked up by the Portuguese steam merchant **Alexandre Silva** on 20 April and taken to Lobito, Angola. The master, 31 crew members and four British gunners were lost.



U-852, captained by Heinz-Wilhelm Eck, was scuttled on the coast of Somalia on 3 May 1944 after running aground following damage from depth charges dropped from 6 Wellington Vickers bombers from 621 Squadron. The crew was captured the day after by a British landing party. The British retrieved the ship's log (*KTB*), which Eck had failed to destroy, and from it learned of what

became known as the Peleus affair. Eck and his officers were tried as war criminals. Three were sentenced to death, but another two were acquitted and later released.

On 30 Nov. 1945 Heinz-Wilhelm Eck was executed in Hamburg, aged 29, with two of his officers, August Hoffmann and Walter Weispfennig, for his role in the **Peleus affair**.

Leonards name can be seen on the Frensham War Memorial and inside the village church.



### ***David Greenfield***

Born ???

Died 5<sup>th</sup> March 1943 age 23

Gunner Royal Artillery RA 35 Light A.A Regiment 144 Battery



David was captured with the fall of Singapore, has was taken to a POW camp at Changi then on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1942 they were told they would be moved from the camp to another camp in Japan.

600 prisoners, under the command of Lt. Col John Bassett, were taken to Singapore Docks where they boarded a ship believed to be the "*Masta Maru*" and endured horrendous conditions. Many men were sick at this time. On the journey, it was noticed that the ship was definitely NOT heading for Japan but was heading south. On 5th November the ship docked at Rabaul on the island of New Britain in Papua New Guinea.

Japan informed the British Government that the ship with the 600 men had been 'lost at sea with all hands'.

But the men were unloaded and marched along dusty tracks ankle deep with volcanic ash despite many being without footwear. During this period the men were made to work in the tropical sun with many beatings. At the end of November the prisoners were assembled and the fittest 517 were told that they were to be taken to build an airfield for the Japanese. 82 men did not to go with the party as they were not deemed fit enough - only 18 of the original 600 survived to return to the UK – these being from the 82 that did not go on to BALLALE. The 517 were taken by another hell ship on the two day journey to the small island of Ballale which is approximately 4 miles in diameter to build an air strip. In time, probably on completion of the air strip and the news being received by the Japanese that the Allies were closing in, orders were given that "PRISONERS OF WAR WERE TO BE DISPOSED OF BY WHATEVER MEANS WAS AVAILABLE".

Accordingly, on 5 March 1943, those who were still alive (some having died of illness and others as a result of Allied bombing as the Japanese had not allowed the prisoners to dig trenches to take cover) were massacred in cold blood and not one of those taken to Ballale survived.

However the fortunes of war changed and Ballale was by-passed when allied forces leap-frogged from Honiara to attack Rabaul. Japanese forces hurriedly withdrew from Ballale abandoning most of their aircraft but not before they executed all of the remaining POWs.

After the war, Australian Army personal landed on the island on November 10, 1945 and immediately located the grave of 57 POWs buried in shallow trenches. An atrocities commission was carried out on the island that led to the discovery of a mass grave, 438 bodies were exhumed with artefacts identifying them as British artillerymen. The remains were re-interred in individual graves at Bomama War Cemetery near Port Moresby.