



Woodford Remembers



Donald Davidson DSO

30 January 1908 - 18 October 1944

Family

Donald Montague Noel Davidson was born on 30 January 1908 in Higham Ferrers to Reverend Gerard and Florence Davidson, who at the time was vicar of Higham Ferrers. The couple had married in 1899. Donald was one SIX children. Donald was baptised at Higham Ferrers Parish Church by his father on 26th April 1908. In October 1911 his father took on the living at Woodford. It is not recorded where Donald went to school, (not Woodford). His father served as an Army Chaplain throughout the first world war and soon after the conclusion of that conflict Donald's mother died in November 1919. The Rev G M Davidson continued in his role at Woodford until his untimely death in 1933 at the age of 59.

In 1921 at the age of 13 years Donald was a boarder at Aldwick Place school (closed 1987) in Paghham Sussex. Donald is believed to have joined the Bombay Burma Trading Company in August 1930 and ultimately moved to the far east. In August 1934 the engagement was announced between Donald and Nancy Everilda Delacherois Irwin, elder daughter of Lt Col C D Irwin of Orchard House Oundle.

He married Nancy in Penang in 1936.

World War 2 Service

At the outbreak of WW2 Donald Davidson (Davo) joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserves (service no.) on 18 July 1940 his promotion to Temp Lieutenant was announced (later becoming Lieutenant Commander)

The gazette reported on 11 April 1944 that a DSO had been awarded to Temp Lt Donald Montague Noel Davidson, "For Gallantry, skill and devotion to duty in a hazardous enterprise".

This was almost certainly for the part he played in Operation Jaywick, as a member of Z Force. Z force was an allied commando unit of mainly Australian personnel but included multi-national representation. It specialised in being deployed behind enemy lines in the Far East / Asia theatre. "Davo" had been seconded to this unit from the RN. Operation Jaywick involved a small group of Z force personnel, sailing from Exmouth, Western Australia in a fishing boat, the MV Krait* posing as Malay fishermen.

On reaching Singapore under the cover of darkness six men boarded three small collapsible canoes and entered the harbour to attach limpet mines to Japanese ships. The resulting detonations at 5am on 27 September 1943 was deemed a great success and all personnel involved successfully returned to Australia. Approximately 39,000 tonnes of enemy shipping was destroyed.

Operation Rimau was a follow up mission twelve months later using a submarine to reach a forward base before commandeering a junk to take the canoes closer to Singapore. The junk was scuttled following skirmish with Japanese Naval vessel and whilst three of the canoes and six men reached Singapore harbour, and succeeded in blowing up four Japanese naval vessels, twelve of the special force were killed in action either during the expedition or on the return to Australia. The remaining ten were captured and executed by the Japanese. One report advises that "Davo" was wounded in gun battle on Soreh Island, escaped, but died on Tapai Island on 18 October 1944.

Other reports state that he was initially officially reported as missing in action 22 February 1945, which was subsequently changed to Killed in Action 18 October 1944, the day of Operation Rimau.

*The MV Krait is exhibited at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Sydney, NSW

Burial / grave

Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore. Plot XXIII. Row D. Grave 20.

Dependants

Wife – Nancy Donaldson

Commemoration

Woodford Village Memorial

Woodford St Mary's Church Memorial

Australia War Memorial (Singapore)



