

OBITUARY FROM A 1940 ISSUE OF "THE EDMUNDIAN"

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PETER LESLIE WATSON

At the beginning of the term we received the sad news of the first Edmundian casualty of the war: Midshipman P. L. Watson, R.N., lost his life in the sinking of H.M.S. Exmouth on the 21st of January. That one so young and so well remembered by both staff and boys should be the first Edmundian to give his life for his country in this war only served to bring home his death more sharply to us and to deepen the sorrow we all felt on hearing of it.

Peter Watson was born in 1920 and entered Talbot House in April, 1934. He left before he was sixteen to join H.M.S. Worcester, so that he had no opportunity of achieving any athletic or academic distinctions, but he was remarkable for an unfailing cheerfulness of disposition, a particularly lively sense of humour, and an ability to extract the maximum enjoyment from whatever was going on at the moment.

Soon after his arrival the O.T.C. founded its Corps of Drums and it was not long before Peter Watson had ousted all competitors and had established himself, despite his youth, as the first solo drummer of the Corps, a post in which he proved himself most capable. Another branch of the O.T.C.'s activities in which he busied himself was the sand-table, and a number of small wooden models now in use owe their existence to Watson's ingenuity and skill.

His keen sense of humour is best illustrated by the now well-known story of the Headmaster's chemistry class. Fr. Sherlock had given an explanation of some simple point, for which Watson had asked, and finished by saying: "Elementary, my dear Watson." Watson, obviously apprehensive as to the possible consequences, but equally evidently unable to suppress the bon mot, rose from his seat. "Quite, my dear Sherlock," he said. It is pleasant to know that not only did the Headmaster's sense of humour prevail but that it is also one of his favourite anecdotes.

After completing his training in H.M.S. Worcester, Peter Watson went to the P. & O. Steamship Co. as a cadet and made a number of voyages on S.S. Strathmore. From his letters about this time we gathered he had lost none of his ability for seeing things and doing things; whenever the ship touched at a port Peter was ashore discovering something of interest. Sometimes it was riding round Colombo in a rickshaw, other times going down the Grand Canal in a gondola or flying over the Panama Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but always once was sufficient; then he was satisfied. In April, 1939, he obtained permission to leave the P. & O. Co. to carry out his four months' training as a midshipman in the Royal Navy and was appointed to H.M.S. Rodney. In August his training was complete, but war was imminent and he was transferred to the destroyer Exmouth. Naturally we know little of his movements after this date, but we do know that H.M.S. Exmouth was engaged for a time in convoy work, and that her commander was awarded the D.S.O. in December last for "successful encounters with enemy submarines."

We offer our heartfelt sympathy to his mother and sister; we share their sorrow in their great loss, and we share their pride that he laid down his life in the service of his country.

Mass for the repose of his soul was offered in the Galilee Chapel, where as a boy in the school he heard Mass daily.

May he rest in Peace.