

Sub- Lieut. Gilbert Parker Johnson RNR d 23 November 1939 on HMS Rawalpindi



The loss of HMS Rawalpindi was shocking news early in the war. Completely out-gunned, she was sunk very quickly. There are plenty of sites offering information on the internet.

AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE

ELIZABETH JOHNSON OF WALL END

DIED MAY 10TH 1935

PARKER, HER HUSBAND

DIED MAY 25TH 1939

ROSE BERTHA THEIR SEVENTH DAUGHTER

DIED MAY 16TH, 1937

FLORENCE MAY COLLINS THEIR SIXTH DAUGHTER

DIED APRIL 24TH 1932

SUB LIEUT. GILBERT PARKER, R. N. THEIR YOUNGEST SON

PRESUMED DIED AT SEA NOV. 23RD 1939, WHEN

H.M.S. RAWALPINDI WAS SUNK DURING NAVAL ENGAGEMENT

LIZZIE ANNIE JOHNSON DAUGHTER OF **ELIZABETH & PARKER JOHNSON**

DIED 12TH JUNE 1960, AGED 71 YEARS

Sub-Lieut. Johnson was a Commissioned Electrician.

On 26 August 1939 the passenger ship **Rawalpindi** of the P. & O. Steam Navigation Co Ltd, London was requisitioned by the Admiralty and converted to an armed merchant cruiser. Conversion was completed on 19 September 1939. On 23 November 1939, HMS Rawalpindi (Capt. *Edward Coverley* Kennedy, RN) on Northern Patrol was shelled and sunk by the German battlecruiser **Scharnhorst** southeast of Iceland in the Iceland-Faroe passage in position 63°40'N, 12°31'W. 275 dead and 37 survivors. The battlecruiser was operating together with her sistership **Gneisenau**. The ships returned to Germany to avoid the now searching warships of the British Home Fleet.

<https://uboat.net/allies/warships/ship/3329.html>

Captain Kennedy was father of Ludovic Kennedy, the writer and broadcaster.

See also https://ww2db.com/ship_spec.php?ship_id=509 NB The number of survivors varies from source to source.

Additional from CWGC: Age 43 years old. **Commemorated at** Liverpool Naval Memorial Panel 3, Column 2.

The *Barrow News* of 2 December 1939 reported the loss of the Rawalpindi:

FURNESS MEN ON RAWALPINDI REPORTED "MISSING – BELIEVED LOST" ELECTRICIAN AND CARPENTER



A Kirkby man, Mr. Gilbert Parker Johnson, single, was on board the armed merchant cruiser Rawalpindi when she was sunk by the German pocket battleship *Deutschland* (*sic* – Capt. Kennedy reported initially that he had sighted the *Deutschland*) and another Nazi raider. His sister, Miss Elizabeth Johnson, of Wallend, Kirkby, with whom he had his home, has received intimation from the Admiralty that he is missing, believed lost."

The family have lived at Wallend for some considerable time. Mr. Johnson was born there in March, 1895, and his father lived there up to his death in May at the age of 87.

As a boy Mr. Johnson first attended the Burlington School, which is a few hundred yards from his home, and he later went to Barrow Junior Technical School.

After serving his apprenticeship at Barrow shipyard he went to Liverpool and then entered the service of the P. and O. Line some 16 years ago. The Rawalpindi was one of his earliest ships, and after a spell on the Viceroy of India he returned to her at the time of the September crisis last year as chief electrician. On the outbreak of war he was commissioned as sub-lieutenant, Royal Navy.

BARROW MEMBER OF CREW

Chief carpenter aboard the Rawalpindi was Mr. William Pickering, son of Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Pickering, of 24, Marsden-street, Barrow.

Mr. Pickering, who was married and lived at Barking, Essex, had joined the ship at the outbreak of war, but had served some time with the P. and O. line.

His wife and parents are hoping that he may be among the men reported as picked up by the German raiders.

*For William Pickering, CWGC has **CARPENTER WILLIAM THOMPSON PICKERING Service Number: 99510***

*Naval Auxiliary Personnel (Merchant Navy) H.M.S. Rawalpindi Age 34 years old. **Buried or commemorated at Liverpool Naval Memorial Panel 20, Column 1.***

Additional Info *Son of William Mawson Pickering and Ada Pickering; husband of Edith Stanton Pickering, of Barking, Essex.*

The Johnson family lived in Wallend, Kirkby in the **1901 Census**, next to the Christian Meeting House. Parker Johnson (49) was a Gardener (Own Account), born Kirkby, Lancs; Elizabeth Johnson (49) is recorded as born In Silecroft, Cumberland; and the children then living with them were Florance (sic) M. Johnson (16) School teacher, born Ulverston; Benn Johnson (15) Slate Quarry Apprentice, born Kirkby Ireleth; George Johnson (13), born Kirkby – as were those following; Rose Johnson (10); Lilly Johnson (8); Gilbert Johnson (6). No occupations are recorded for the latter children, but they are likely to have been at school.

In the **1911 Census** Gilbert Parker Johnson was living with his parents and other siblings at Wallend, Kirkby-in-Furness. The household contained Parker Johnson (60) Head, Engine Driver (Slate Works), born Kirkby Ireleth (as were all the people below unless indicated otherwise); Elizabeth Johnson (60) Wife, who had given birth to 11 children, 8 of whom were still alive at this point; Benjamin Tyson Johnson (26) Single, Joiner (Slate Works); George Frederick Goulding Johnson (24) Commercial Clerk (Shipyard); Lily Octavio Johnson (19) Music Teacher (Own Account – at home); Gilbert Parker Johnson (17) Apprentice Engineer (Marine); Elizabeth Eleanor Titterington (11) Granddaughter, School, born Barrow, Lancs; William Parker Titterington (8) Grandson, School, born Barrow, Lancs.

The National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations) 1940 has:

JOHNSON Gilbert Parker of Wall End Kirkby-in-Furness **Lancashire** died 23 November 1939 on war service Administration (with Will) **London** 17 June to Lizzie Annie Johnson spinster. Effects £4784 8s 7d. (*About £285,000 today – 2022*)