



Thame Remembers



Lieutenant Commander Hugh C J McRae

Hugh Charles James McRae was born on 29th November 1909, the only son of Sir Charles James Hugh McRea Kt JP and Lady Edith Sophia McRea (nee Farnie). He had one sister Marjorie. When growing-up the family home was in Hendon.

Hugh joined Lord Williams's Grammar School in 1918, and then in 1926 joined the Royal Navy as an officer cadet at the training school HMS Worcester. He was appointed a Midshipman in 1927 and went on to serve on a number of ships. He married Frances Mary Mason in Hendon in 1935 and they set-up their family home at Airandene, Wise Lane, Mill Hill, Middlesex. However when Hugh was stationed in China in 1936, Frances moved there too, albeit having to sail on a commercial liner – the Perseus – that departed Liverpool in September 1936. A daughter Jean was born in Shanghai in 1937. After serving in China for two years, Hugh returned to the UK and joined the destroyer HMS Grafton in July 1938. The Grafton was assigned to the 1st Destroyer Flotilla in the Mediterranean Fleet and his wife and daughter set up home in Malta in January 1939. In June 1940, during the evacuation from Dunkirk, and after successfully rescuing 1600 troops, the Grafton was struck by a torpedo from U-62., with the captain and 14 others killed, the ship was too badly damaged to be towed to safety, and she was sunk by gunfire from HMS Ivanhoe.

Lieutenant McRea was subsequently Mentioned in Despatches, and promoted to Lieutenant Commander, taking over command of the captured French torpedo boat Branlebas. The Branlebas had been designed for Mediterranean operations and so it was no real surprise when the Branlebas was lost in a storm, in December 1940, forty miles south-west of Eddystone. Only three men from the complement of 104 were saved.

Lieutenant Commander Hugh C J McRae, Royal Navy, died at sea on 14th December 1940 and he is remembered on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. He is remembered in Thame on Lord Williams's School memorial board..



**The
Thame Remembers Cross
was delivered to
Portsmouth Naval Memorial
on 14 June 2017
by
Cllr Tom Wyse
Mayor of Thame**

