

## WILLIAM JOHN CALLON

9.9.1924–24.5.1941 aged 16 years

Boy First Class P/JX 5 X 181939 Royal Navy



William was born in London the eldest of four brothers and three sisters and joined the Navy at 14 as a trainee under a scholarship, but on the outbreak of war was dismissed as too young. He was evacuated to Gotham where he lived with Mrs Powdrill at 92 Leake Rd. On attaining his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday he rejoined the navy and after training on HMS *Ganges*, *Impregnable*, *St George* and *Victory*, he was posted to HMS *Hood*. HMS *Hood* was the largest ship in the Royal Navy, a newly upgraded battle cruiser. William's parents were pleased their son was on the largest, and therefore, safest ship in the fleet.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> May 1941 Admiral Lutjens, on the German battleship *Bismark*, with the heavy cruiser, *Prince Eugen*, left Bergen in an attempt to get into the Atlantic shipping lanes and join with the *Sharnhorst* and *Gneisnau*, which were in Brest, in a plan to sink allied supply convoys. The two ships were sighted in the Denmark Strait and Vice-Admiral Holland on the *Hood* with the battleship *Prince of Wales* made to intercept them. The four ships engaged at 0552 on the 24<sup>th</sup>. The modern German ships out gunned the British ship despite some hits to the *Bismark*. One of *Bismark's* shells penetrated *Hood's* magazine igniting a vast explosion which destroyed the ship instantly. Of the 1419 men on board there were three survivors from random parts of the ship. William was possibly the youngest on board at 16 years old. He is recorded on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial panel 51 column 3.

