

NORMAN ATHERTON WODEHOUSE

18.5.1887–4.7.1941 aged 54 years

Vice-Admiral, Commodore 2nd class Royal Navy



Norman is not listed on the World War II Roll, though he is recorded on the World War I Roll as a survivor. He was born at the Gotham Rectory, the son of the Rev Armine Wodehouse (see Arthur Powys Wodehouse). At the age of 15 he became a naval cadet at RNS *Britannia* at Lee on Solent. A year later as midshipman he served on HMS *Majestic* followed by HMS *Caesar* and *Bulwark*. At age 20 he passed his Lieutenant exams and served on HMS *King Edward VII* and HMS *Invincible*. He was a keen sportsman and played rugby for England. In 1913 he was appointed captain of the English team.

At the outbreak of WW1 he was a gunnery officer on HMS *Warrior* and just after his promotion to Lieutenant-Commander in 1915, he was awarded the Royal Humane Society silver medal for saving a drowning sailor. In 1916 he took part in the Battle of Jutland. After the war until 1920 he served in China with the rank of Commander and gained the Order of the Stripped Tiger of China medal. On his return to the UK he became assistant to the director of ordnance until 1923. The next three years were spent in the Mediterranean on HMS *Frobisher* rising to Captain prior to attending the Imperial Defence Course. In 1928 he returned to the Med on HMS *Ceres*, then HMS *Calypso*, before becoming Captain of the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth in 1931. In 1935 he was put in command of HMS *Barham* and was flag-captain to the first battle squadron Mediterranean. From 1937 he led the British Military Mission to Portugal and in 1939 was awarded the CB by King George VI and promoted to Rear-Admiral in charge of Gibraltar. One year later as Vice-Admiral Gibraltar he retired from the Royal Navy.

He was recalled to serve in Atlantic convoys and was Commodore of OB337 a Convoy of 42 ships from Liverpool to South Africa, his ship was the cargo ship *Robert I Holt*. On the 28th June 1941 off the African West Coast the convoy dispersed and ships proceeded independently. The *Robert I Holt* was attacked on the night of the 4th July by the German submarine U69 using its gun as it had used all its torpedoes. There were no survivors. Norman left a widow and two sons. He is recorded on the Merchant Navy Memorial, Liverpool and also has a memorial tablet in Gotham Church.