

Notes on the life of Eric William Middleton.

Born Hammersmith 18th April 1904.

Chorister at Chapel Royal, Savoy 1912

Pangbourne Nautical College 1918

Merchant Service first with Union Castle Line, then F. and O. Company.

At the same time, joined R.N.R. and between voyages did his Naval Training.

Became engaged to Vera Ferris on her 21st birthday.

Married 1930. Lived in Acton.

Daughter Jill 1931. Daughter Angela 1934.

Moved to Ruislip.

Became Advertising Copywriter for Harrods.

Started own printing business 'Lynton Press'

Wartime Service

- * Running a pilot cutter/boarding boat out of Swansea Harbour.
- 2 Appointed Flag Lieutenant/ Aide de camp to Admiral Sir James Phipps, Ismailia, Egypt.
- 3 Vera became seriously ill, so he returned to England. Luckily she recovered.
- 3 Given command of small fleet of Anti-submarine/minesweeping trawlers.
- 4 Appointed Experimental Officer at Combined Operations H.Q. on the staff of Admiral Mountbatten. Involved with P.L.U.T.O., and later with Pontoon Landings. Went to Normandy with Royal Engineers.
- 5 Joined the British Military Mission in Moscow on the Naval Staff.
- 6 Returned to be Commanding Officer of Northney 111, a Combined Operations shore base, at Hayling Island.

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After the war, joined the R.N.L.I. as Western District Inspector of Lifeboats.

Then became Superintendent of the R.N.L.I. Depot

Was involved with RNLI for the rest of his life.

Started the Ruislip Sailing Club.

Started the Heron Association.

Wrote articles for the Yachting Press.

Wrote and published 'Great Sea Rescues'

'Discovering Lifeboats'

'Lifeboats of the world'

Also wrote a book about PLUTO, a book about a heroine of the Polish Resistance, a children's adventure called 'Pursuit Under Sail', and his autobiography called 'Simple Seaman'.

Keen amateur astronomer; belonged to the British Astronomical Association.

Interested in Weather and Forecasting.

Excellent navigator - and taught Navigation and Seamanship Evening Classes for many years.

Took a lifelong delight in Gilbert and Sullivan Operettas.

Retired and moved down to Milford.

Bought a plot and built a bungalow at Everton - sadly, Vera died before she could move there.

Lived there alone and did all his own cooking, housework and gardening.

Had five grandchildren - Andrew, Tim and Kate, and George and Jane.

Three great-grandchildren - Matthew, Paige and James.

Also had three godsons, whose fortunes he followed with keen interest.

Had spells in hospital in the last year, and was most appreciative of his care.

Moved to Kingsland Place three months ago, and was beginning to enjoy being looked after.

Commander Eric W. Middleton, V.R.D., R.N.V.R. died on May 22 nd this year, aged 94. He joined Pangbourne Nautical College in 1918, in the second year of its existence, on a bursary from the Union Castle Line. His Term was called Harbinger, and he was one of 45 new cadets. The Captain Superintendent then was Captain Montenaro, who sadly died in the great influenza epidemic of 1918. Eric has written down his memories of his time at Pangbourne. His recollections are clear and detailed, and include the names and personalities of his instructors and young colleagues, with amusing anecdotes of incidents remembered with affection.

He joined the Union Castle ship Dunvegan Castle in 1920, aged 16, and earned 12 pounds for his first year at sea. His whole life thereafter was bound up with the sea, first with the Merchant Service, then his wartime experiences and finally with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. He was an excellent navigator - in the days before electronic gadgets had taken all the fun out of it - and passed on his skills to many would-be seafarers in the Evening Classes he ran for many years. After the war he started the Ruislip Sailing Club, and a year or so later organised the Heron Association. He was always interested in the weather and forecasting, and he was a keen amateur astronomer.

He enjoyed writing, and produced many articles for the yachting press. He wrote three books about Lifeboats, and his extraordinary memory made his (unpublished) autobiography rich in detail and anecdote. He retired to live near the sea on the south coast, where well into his eighties he was still sailing.