

## GREEK CAMPAIGN

### Corporal James George Robert Darling, RASC

The following is a brief extract taken from James' family eulogy

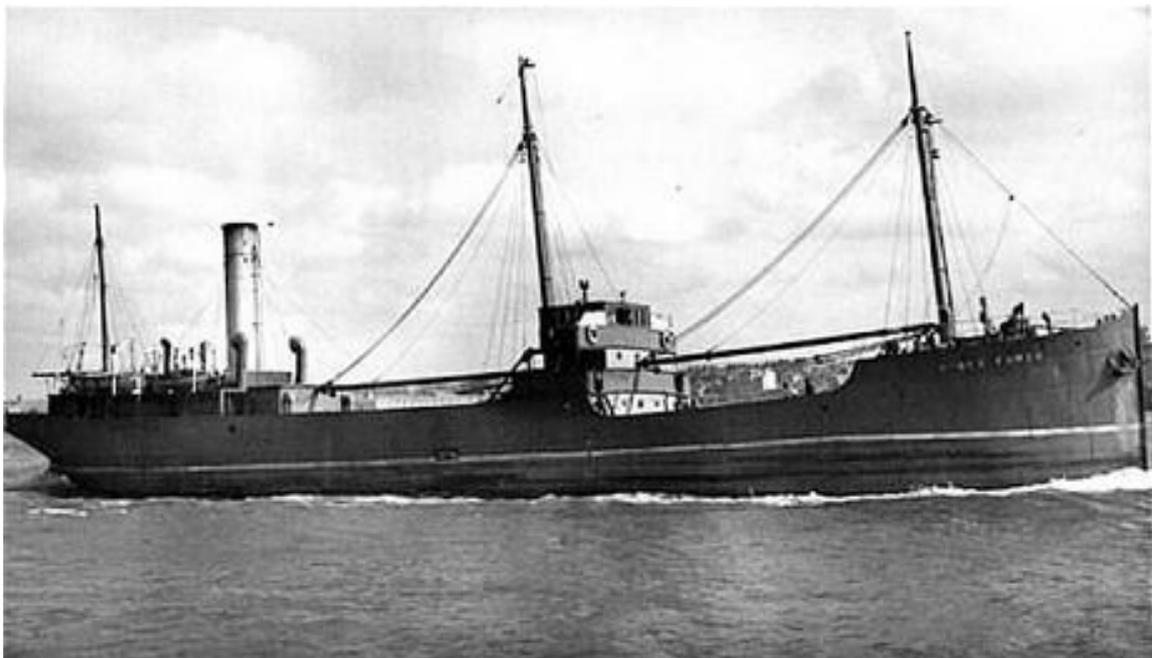
*"He was sent to Greece as part of the expeditionary force to resist Axis forces advancing from Albania and subsequently Bulgaria. During the retreat he was promoted for being able to improvise and machine scrap items into useable parts for vehicles, allowing repairs to be effected.*

*Eventually he was evacuated from Piraeus and joined the garrison on Crete some days later. During the German invasion of Crete James saw action as an infantry soldier at Suda Bay. He was originally evacuated from Heraklion on a Greek cargo ship, of Scottish origin, but the vessel was dive bombed and sunk\*. He was among the survivors who were picked up and returned to the island and he subsequently joined the withdrawal, which involved crossing over the mountains to Sfakia, foraging for food, being strafed by the Germans daily, and having to abandon his kit because the conditions were so hot and difficult. He was eventually evacuated a second time and reached Alexandria, although many others were not so lucky. The fact that he was young and incredibly fit, as well as being resourceful and practical, all probably helped him to escape from Crete unharmed*

*Following that experience on Crete, he wrote to his parents (on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1941 from Alexandria) and that letter epitomised the type of person James was. He makes it sound like a summer holiday, not a traumatic war experience. He clearly doesn't want his parents to worry about him, and keeps up the cheeky chap persona in this and many other letters and photos he sent home during the war."*

\*Evidently the ship was a collier, renamed 'Kiriaki'. The following is taken from the Brotherhood Newsletter dated Jan/Feb 2014:

*"... put on an old Greek ship, the 'Kiriaki', with a batch of (Royal?) engineers and transported away. However, it only got to Crete and after three days of bombing, was hit and sunk. Before the war it had been a Scottish collier. What sticks in Jim's mind is that when a ship sinks stern first is the sound of all the movable contents rolling, banging, rattling from front to aft. Quite reverberating when one is up close. All this meant that he was now stuck on Crete and just lived day by day. No officers. Groups were finding their own way of living. Seven of them found a group of marines who were located on a rim of Souda Bay. They fed with them, albeit an army biscuit with cheese and a mug of tea for breakfast. Then a careful dash to a cave at lunch-time for a hot tin of M & V. Sufficient."*



**\*Typical Scottish collier of the period**