

Alfred Hunter Ballard was born 29th July 1896 in Shanghai, China the second son of James Adams Ballard and Mary Margaret neé Jessup-Clarke. His father was a general agent representing the Commercial Union Assurance Co and Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S.A. in partnership with Alfred Carroll Hunter. They traded as Ballard & Hunter and James had known Alfred since 1881 and named his son Alfred Hunter Ballard after him. In the First World War Alfred signed up on 20 September 1915 at Lincolns Inn and was posted to the Machine Gun Training Centre at Bisley Camp when called up on 11th August 1916 and finally embarked at Southampton 14th May 1917 for Le Havre as part of F Battalion Machine Gun Corps (Heavy Branch). He was part of the crew of Flying Fox II, a Mark IV tank, which was involved in the Battle of Cambrai & helped clear the Mesniere canal bridge before the Germans blew the bridge & the tank fell into the canal. The tank commander received the MC & as part of the crew Ballard was Mentioned in Despatches. He remained in the field until he was wounded on 10th January 1918 when he was transferred home and posted to the Royal Flying Corps to join the Officer's Cadet Wing. He seems not to have stayed with the R.F.C. for long though as he was demobilized as No. 201228 Private in the Tank Corps on 31st March 1919 & received the Victory & British War Medals. Alfred Hunter Ballard completed his training as a Chartered Accountant and on 12 August 1920 married Annie Davies. In 1925 he was made a Freeman of the City of London and in 1933 he gained his Royal Aero Club certificate. He and Annie had three sons but Alfred was not a man who thrived with a quiet home life and a rather staid professional life and he left his wife and young family, obtained a divorce & remarried in 1938.

The on-set of the Second World War gave Alfred an opportunity to return to a life style that had better suited his temperament and in January 1940 he enlisted in the Royal Naval Reserve, having lied about his age, as a probationary temporary Lieutenant. Thus Alfred became one of a very small number of people who served in all three branches of the armed forces and in both World Wars. It was not long before he was once again in the thick of things and in September & October 1940 he was mentioned in dispatches for his part onboard HMT Gaul during the actions firstly to land troops in Norway (the Namsos Campaign 19th April 1940), Ballard's first D-Day landing, & subsequently the withdrawal on the 1st May which is often referred to as the "first Dunkirk of the war" when combined French & British troops were evacuated from Norway. Gaul was eventually sunk in Namsos Fjord. Having recovered from injuries sustained he commanded the anti-submarine trawler HMS Danemen from 25th June 1940 to 8th July 1941. On the 8th & 9th May 1941 whilst undertaking anti-submarine duties for convoy OB-318 about 200 nautical miles south west of Reykjavik he firstly picked up 40 survivors from the Norwegian merchant [Eastern Star](#) that was torpedoed and sunk by German U-boat [U-94](#) & subsequently rescued a further 66 survivors of the British merchant [Gregalia](#) which had been torpedoed and sunk by German U-boat [U-201](#) east-north-east of Cape Farewell in position 60°24'N, 32°37'W. All survivors were landed in Reykjavik on 12th May. By early April 1942 Ballard had been transferred to HMS Monck, the Combined Training Headquarters, commissioned at Largs, Ayrshire

On 5th May 1942 Alfred was Joint Principal Beach Master for operation Ironclad, the invasion of Madagascar. A measure of the man can be gained from his own account of part of the action "That assault craft behaved like a fractious mule; in the rougher weather it did almost everything except sit up & beg. Twice it bucked me into the sea, and on the second occasion I was hauled out the worse for a couple of cracked ribs sustained by striking against the hull on falling overboard. However, there was neither time nor opportunity to get treatment until two days later, when a naval surgeon applied a strapping". By the 8th November of that year he found himself in the Mediterranean on operation Torch, the allied invasion of North Africa. Ballard was eventually to become acting temporary Lieutenant Commander in charge of a Tank Landing Ship and he was further decorated on 14 Nov 1944 with a DSC for gallantry, skill, determination and devotion to duty during the D-Day landing of Allied Forces on the coast of Normandy and again on 22 Dec 1944 when he received a Bar to his DSC for gallantry, skill, determination and devotion to duty in the assault and capture of the

Island of Walcheren. Alfred was injured on numerous occasions and suffered from exposure and just six years later on 9 September 1950 he died from pulmonary tuberculosis and exposure and injuries received during the 1939-45 war. Two world wars, all three services, non-commissioned & commissioned, MiD & medals in both wars & no less than 5 invasion landings!

Paul

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